

Africa Infodemic Response Alliance

A WHO-HOSTED NETWORK



AIRA Infodemic Trends Report

3-11 January 2025

Weekly brief #146

Top concerns

[Concern about public health infrastructure in Angola and lack of access to safe water in South Sudan amidst cholera outbreaks](#)

Conversations highlight that the lack of access to proper water is a main barrier to stop the spread of cholera.

[Online users condemn the racial stigma of mpox in African media coverage of cases in France and China](#)

International coverage of mpox highlights lack of knowledge about mpox cases in Kenya, and the role of media in portraying mpox patients internationally.

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Public Health Infodemic Trends in the African Region

This weekly report provides key highlights and operational recommendations based on social listening data from 3-11 January 2025 in Africa.

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Angola, South Sudan

Concern about public health infrastructure in Angola and lack of access to safe water South Sudan amidst cholera outbreaks

Engagement/ Angola: **9 posts, 2188 likes, 223 comments**

- Social listening of Angolan conversations reveals a deep concern about the cholera outbreak and the urgent need for improvements in public health infrastructure. Many individuals are calling for enhanced access to clean water, better sanitation, and improved management of public services to prevent cholera in Angola. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Online users are concerned about the lack of proper sanitation and water quality, which are seen as key factors in the ongoing health crisis. There are calls for improved waste management practices, particularly regarding the disposal of waste materials in public spaces, as well as for better quality control of water supplied to communities. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Across three different media sources on Facebook, online users complain about the lack of access to safe water, a major barrier in stopping the spread of the disease. Below are examples: [\[LINK\]](#), [\[LINK\]](#), [\[LINK\]](#)

The water we're drinking is not drinkable

When basic sanitation is almost nonexistent this is the result, a little rain big problems.

And in our neighborhood that we have been without water for almost a month, how are we going to fight cholera? If the water we drink we carry in other neighborhoods and it's already dark with many microbes, only God can protect us.

If basic water and sanitation were in good condition, there was no need to build so many centers. We must fight the cause not the cure...

Our water is bad what to expect, there is little rain that Fall in Luanda is creating problems the water is coming muddy and very dirty people can't talk it's connected let's do what

The water that is leaking or coming out of the taps is not good.
A yellow, salty water with degrees of sand.
The result of this water is many diseases.

Why is it concerning?

- Epidemiological context:** According to the Angolan Ministry of Health, as of 10 January 2025, Angola has reported 24 new cholera cases: 20 in Cacuaco (Luanda province), 3 in Dande (Bengo province), and 1 in Catete (Icolo and Bengo province), according to the Cholera Newsletter by the National Directorate of Public Health in Luanda. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Rapid spread of the disease:** The recent data from the Ministry of Health highlights a concerning increase in new cases, with 24 reported in just 24 hours across multiple regions. This rapid spread, particularly in urban areas like Cacuaco, indicates that cholera is taking hold in densely populated areas where access to clean water and sanitation may be limited, exacerbating the situation.
- Socio-economic challenges in cholera-affected provinces:** According to a study about multidimensional poverty in Angola by the National Statistics Institute, published in November 2019, municipalities are classified on a scale of five levels of multidimensional poverty. Cacuaco falls within the first quintile, indicating it is relatively less poor compared to other provinces, despite still facing significant socio-economic challenges. [\[LINK\]](#)

Furthermore, according to the *Boletim Informativo da Cólera* (Cholera Information Bulletin), the distribution of cholera cases and deaths by neighborhoods in the Cacuaco municipality shows that **Bairro Paraíso** recorded the highest number of suspected cases, with 37 reported and a high Case Fatality Rate (CFR) of 10.5%. The area struggles with inadequate infrastructure, including poor sanitation, lack of access to clean water which exacerbate public health risks. [\[LINK\]](#), [\[LINK\]](#), [\[LINK\]](#)

- Limited access to vaccines means more focus on preventive measures:** The global challenge of cholera vaccine shortage highlights the need to focus on preventive measures, such as improving WASH systems, promoting proper sanitation and educating communities on hygiene. All are essential in controlling the spread of cholera, especially among vulnerable communities. [\[LINK\]](#)

What can we do?

- Share targeted messaging on water safety:** Since contaminated water is a major concern, tailoring messages to encourage proper water treatment is crucial. Messages should be relevant to the specific regions and communities most affected by the outbreak, considering their challenges. For example, in

areas like Cacuaco, highlight local health services available, the importance of avoiding contaminated water, and information about where to access safe water.

- Use local influencers and community leaders:** Partner with local influencers, community leaders, and health ambassadors who are trusted by the community to highlight preventive measures such as handwashing with soap, boiling water.

For families with limited access to soap, distributing soap, water purification tablets, low-cost filters could ensure safe drinking water, while education on how to maximize hygiene with minimal resources—such as using smaller amounts of soap or focusing on key hygiene areas—can make a significant impact.

- Track both digital and offline conversations:** Community-based groups and offline conversations provide insight into concerns about regional health updates, misinformation and concerns especially in areas with limited internet access. By understanding concerns—such as fear of contaminated water or inadequate healthcare—communication teams can address misinformation, provide accurate prevention messages, and highlight local health resources.

Engagement/ South Sudan: 8 posts, 953 likes, 83 comments

- The sentiments expressed by online users regarding the cholera outbreak in South Sudan reflect a deep concern for the ongoing public health challenges.
- The predominant sentiment among online users reflects a significant distrust in local authorities, with many expressing concerns about the adequacy of the response and a perceived lack of urgency in addressing the cholera outbreak and its associated challenges. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Additionally, users stress the need for focused efforts on improving sanitation and raising awareness, especially in areas also affected by flooding.
- Online users are calling for government and health partners to increase the number of cholera vaccine doses given the scale of the outbreak. [\[LINK\]](#) Below

are some examples:

Those doses of vaccines are less compared to the residents in its counties plus those residing in IDP and Bentiu town...

Government should add on those vaccines 225000 doses are not enough the unity state is severely suffering 😞😞😞

As the Government and other health partners loops for more doses. Efficient utilization is needed for the little at hand to make sure that herd immunity is reached as soon as possible.

Why is it concerning?

- Epidemiological context:** According to WHO, “as of 7 January 2025, more than 17 581 cases have been reported nationwide, with a case fatality rate of 1.5%. Rubkona county is one of the 31 hotspot areas experiencing cholera outbreak accounting for 50 percent of reported cases.” [\[LINK\]](#)
- Distrust in local authorities persists whilst mitigation of cholera is ongoing:** The perception of the government's inaction in the cholera crisis is deeply tied to the broader, ongoing distrust in South Sudanese authorities. Many citizens have expressed their frustrations with the inability to address long-standing challenges—whether it's access to basic services, security, or economic development. This frustration is compounded by growing anxiety over the rising number of cholera cases. People are increasingly worried about the spread of the disease but remain uncertain about the concrete steps the Ministry of Health is taking to address the outbreak.
- Rising floodwaters in South Sudan exacerbate cholera outbreak:** The cumulative satellite-detected water data using VIIRS between 04 to 08 January 2025 reveals a significant increase in flooding across South Sudan, which exacerbates the ongoing cholera crisis. The analysis, covering approximately 630,000 km² of cloud-free areas, shows that around **55,000 km² is now affected by floodwaters**—an increase of 16,000 km² compared to the period between 14 to 18 December 2024. This expansion of flooded areas has a direct impact on public health, as standing water creates ideal conditions for the spread of cholera and other waterborne diseases. In Unity State alone, approximately 171,752 people are exposed to the maximum floodwater extent, intensifying the risk of contamination and limiting access to clean water and sanitation. [\[LINK\]](#)

- Cholera spreads in displacement camps amid rising population and poor sanitation:** According to the dashboard developed by IOM and UNHCR, nearly **987,000 people**, including South Sudanese returnees and Sudanese refugees, have crossed into South Sudan. These camps, particularly in Unity and Central Equatoria states, are facing poor sanitation and overcrowding, creating ideal conditions for the rapid spread of cholera. [[LINK](#), [LINK](#)]

What can we do?

- Transparent messaging from local authorities:** Provide consistent, accurate, and up-to-date information about steps taken by local authorities to mitigate the spread of cholera, including the ongoing vaccination efforts, and available treatment facilities. This will reduce confusion over the involvement of local authorities.
- Prepare Information for protection from flood waters and related risks:** Sharing information on how to protect oneself from floods is important in the context of cholera. This includes guidelines on safe drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation practices, instructions on evacuation procedures, emergency contact points, and ways to connect with local response teams will help communities respond effectively to the risks posed by flooding, reducing potential health hazards and promoting safety.

Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Madagascar, Nigeria

Online users condemn the racial stigma of mpox in African media coverage of cases in France and China

Engagement: 6 posts, 3604 likes, 453 comments

- Several Rwandan users expressed frustration at the frequent appearance of Black individuals in the Rwandan media coverage of the mpox outbreak. They questioned whether the use of these images was intentional to associate the epidemic with stereotypical images of Africa or Black people, and expressed dissatisfaction that the media didn't show pictures of White people affected by the same issue in France. [[LINK](#)]
- Many Nigerian users noted that China seems to be the source of multiple global health crises, referencing previous outbreaks like COVID-19. Similar to previous

sentiments on global health issues, there is skepticism about the media's reporting on the outbreak including questioning the use of images of black people in the confirmation of an mpox case in China. [\[LINK\]](#)

- Similarly to Nigerians, Kenyan users expressed frustration with China's repeated involvement in global disease outbreaks. referencing the perceived unsanitary eating habits in China and its impact on global health. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Online sentiments among South African and Malagasy users regarding the recent confirmation of an mpox case in China includes blame and stigmatising language with holding China responsible for global outbreaks, referencing past events like the COVID-19 pandemic. [\[LINK\]](#), [\[LINK\]](#) In addition, there is perceived anxiety about the possibility of the disease spreading to Madagascar.

Why is it concerning?

- Epidemiological context:** According to the Chinese CDC, a cluster outbreak of mpox subclade 1b was detected in China, traced back to a foreigner with a history of living in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an endemic region. Four additional cases were identified among close contacts, all infected through direct contact. [\[LINK\]](#)

According to the weekly communicable disease threats report by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, on January 7, 2025, France reported a case of mpox (monkeypox virus clade 1b) in an individual with no travel history to central Africa. However, the patient had been in contact with others who had recently traveled to the region. Based on the epidemiological investigation, it is believed that transmission occurred within France. The risk to the general population in the EU/EEA is low, citing a very low likelihood of further spread and minimal impact. [\[LINK\]](#)

- Frustration with portrayal of African people:** There was frustration with what was seen as an unfair or biased portrayal of African people. Users expressed concern that this representation reinforces harmful narratives and reduces complex issues to simplistic and stigmatizing images.
- Comparison to COVID-19 and stigmatization:** The mpox outbreak, like COVID-19's link to China, risks amplifying stigmas and racial stereotypes, fostering xenophobia and negative associations with affected populations.

- ❑ **Cross-border health risks:** The importation of mpox's from Africa to France and China highlights the interconnectedness of global health risks, and underscores how fragile the health system can be in managing outbreaks that transcend borders.

What can we do?

- ❑ **Contextualize reporting with evidence:** Reporting on mpox should take into consideration the context of the outbreak, noting that while mpox was originally more prevalent in certain African regions, it is now spreading globally, which underscores the interconnectedness of health risks. Media should avoid reinforcing stereotypes or unfair associations with particular regions or communities. Explain how the mpox subclade 1b has been spreading outside Africa to explain the shift in the disease's epidemiology.
- ❑ **Ethical reporting:** Provide training or guidance to journalists on how to report on infectious disease outbreaks ethically, ensuring that coverage avoids stigmatization. This could include providing tools for responsible language use, emphasizing the importance of avoiding racial or geographical associations with disease, and offering guidance on how to communicate health risks without fueling fear or prejudice.
- ❑ **Highlighting public health responses:** Media can spotlight how different countries and international health organizations are responding to mpox, including measures like vaccination, quarantine protocols, and public health education. This helps to inform the public about how mpox has been managed internationally.

Persistent trend

Mauritius, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria

Mauritian media misleads public about confirmed cases of HMPV. Wider conversations include blame, stigma and fear of new “COVID-19”

Engagement: 12 posts, 3927 likes, 869 comments

- ❑ The conversation around HMPV surged on January 7, following the publication of an article by L'Express Maurice stating that two cases of HMPV had been confirmed in the country. However, the article was later removed after the Minister of Health Anil Bachoo debunked the misinformation, clarifying that no

such cases had been confirmed.[\[LINK\]](#) However, through the analysis of social listening data on HMPV-related conversations in Mauritius, online users still shared screenshots of the article by L'Express Maurice causing confusion.[\[LINK\]](#)

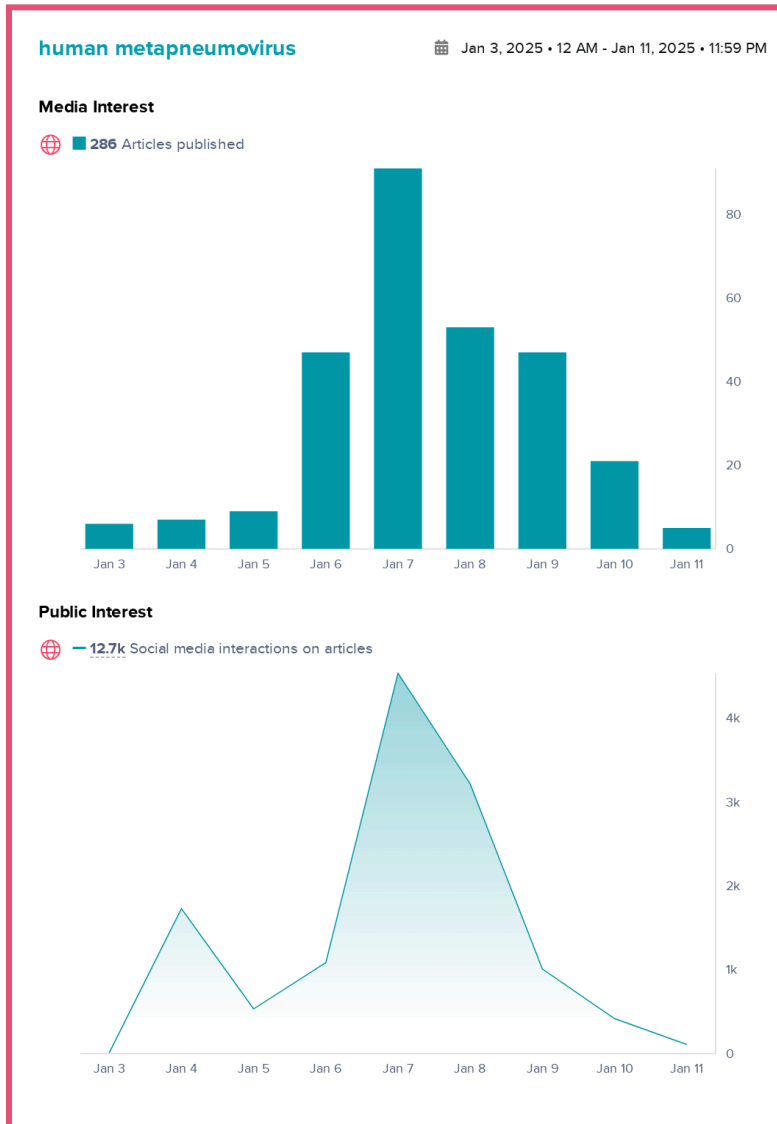


Figure 1: Media and public interest about Human Metapneumovirus from 3 to 11 January in Africa

- Across conversations from Kenyan, Nigerian and South African users, there is a strong blame and stigma placed on China, particularly for its food practices, which are perceived as the source of new viral outbreaks. This has fueled conspiracy theories relating to mRNA vaccines, Bill Gates, while blaming pharmaceutical companies' search for increased profit margins. [\[LINK, LINK, LINK, LINK\]](#)
- According to WHO's disease outbreak news released on 7 January 2025,

Trends of acute respiratory infection, including human metapneumovirus, in the Northern Hemisphere, “The observed increase in respiratory pathogen detections is within the range expected for this time of year during the Northern hemisphere winter. In China, influenza is the most commonly detected respiratory pathogen currently affecting people with acute respiratory infections. WHO is in contact with Chinese health officials and has not received any reports of unusual outbreak patterns. Chinese authorities report that the health care system is not overwhelmed and there have been no emergency declarations or responses triggered.” [\[LINK\]](#)

- Similarly, in late 2023, China saw a notable rise in respiratory illnesses, especially among children in the northern regions. This increase was linked to known pathogens, including influenza, *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). [\[LINK\]](#)
- Recommendation:** Continuously monitor the situation in your country and respond appropriately based on the developments. Highlighting HMPV without clear communication could inadvertently amplify conspiracy theories and stigma. It is crucial to address the issue carefully, ensuring that the public receives accurate information to prevent misinformation from spreading.

Trend to watch

Ugandan Department of Meteorology warns against upsurge of malaria cases in January

- The Uganda Department of Meteorology has issued a warning on X for January 2025, predicting that the month will experience dry, hot, and hazy conditions across the country. [\[LINK\]](#)
- This weather pattern is expected to create a range of challenges, including an increased risk of malaria, allergies, and visibility issues.
- According to WHO’s global malaria report 2023, “Temperature, rainfall and humidity influence several dynamics of malaria transmission; when combined, they affect malaria vectorial capacity, which is a measure of the vector’s efficiency in transmitting malaria.” Malaria is transmitted by *Anopheles* mosquitoes, which thrive in warmer temperatures. At higher temperatures (generally between 20°C and 30°C), mosquitoes are more active, feeding more frequently and, consequently, increasing the chances of malaria transmission. In

areas where temperatures are consistently high, there is often an increase in mosquito populations, raising the risk of malaria. [\[LINK\]](#)

Key resources

Mpox

Resources for social listening analysts

- [WHO](#), Public health taxonomy for social listening on mpox conversations

Resources for journalists & fact checking

- [Internews](#), reporting on mpox, a guide for journalists
- [WHO](#), comprehensive list of mpox webinar series
- [AFP Fact check](#), WHO mpox emergency declaration does not advise lockdowns
- [DW](#), Fact check: No link between mpox and COVID vaccination
- [DW](#), Fact check: Four fakes about mpox

Resources/Content for social media

- [Viral Facts Africa](#), mpox social media kit with engaging explainers and debunks
- [WHO](#), LIVE: Q&A on #mpox. Join us and #AskWHO your questions!
- [WHO](#), Episode #124 - mpox: what you need to know

Technical update

- [WHO](#), Strategic framework for enhancing prevention and control of mpox
- [WHO](#), Mpox in the Democratic Republic of Congo
- [Africa CDC](#), Mpox situation in Africa
- [WHO](#), Multi-country outbreak of mpox, External situation report#44 - 23 December 2024

Public health guidance/RCCE

- [WHO](#), the Global Mpox Dashboard
- [WHO](#), Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) for monkeypox outbreaks: interim guidance, 24 June 2022.
- [WHO](#), Public health advice for sex workers on mpox
- [WHO](#), Considerations for border health and points of entry for mpox: interim guidance
- [WHO](#), Community protection for the mpox response: a comprehensive set of actions

Mpox vaccines

- [WHO](#), Mpox Q&A, vaccines
- [WHO](#), Mpox immunization

Cholera

Resources/Content for social media

- [WHO](#), cholera outbreaks, W&A
- [WHO](#), Cholera fact sheet
- [Viral Facts Africa](#), cholera social media toolkit with engaging explainers and debunks
- Social Science in Epidemics: [cholera lessons learned](#)

Resources for social listening analysts

- [Global Task Force on Cholera Control](#), clarifying rumors and community concerns

Human metapneumovirus

- [WHO](#), Disease Outbreak News, Trends of acute respiratory infection, including human metapneumovirus, in the Northern Hemisphere

Methodology

The social media listening process relies on a combination of social media analyses conducted for French, English and Lusophone-speaking countries. Engagements, otherwise known as interactions, **refer to the number of likes, comments, reactions and re-shares on a post.**

This is not a perfect measure of engagement:

- Some may have seen the post and chosen not to interact with it;
- Commenting on or re-sharing a post may constitute a more meaningful form of engagement than simply reacting to it;
- We are not systematically distinguishing between the types of responses that each engagement generates (e.g. while a post may contain misinformation, people may be countering/debunking it in the comments).

We seek to mitigate these limitations by:

- Scanning comments and monitoring reactions to qualitatively evaluate responses to each post;
- Assessing the velocity of a post (i.e. how fast is it obtaining reactions, likes, and shares) and the re-emergence of specific themes;
- Identifying whether the post is shared across a variety of platforms and sources (broad engagement), or simply soliciting a high level of attention within a given community/platform (siloe engagement).

The monitoring reports are produced using NewsWhip Analytics, Google Trends.

As a result, data may be biased towards data emerging from formal news outlets/ official social media pages, and does not incorporate content circulating on closed platforms or groups (e.g. private Facebook groups). We also rely on infodemic managers based in Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya to provide insights into relevant national infodemic trends or offline content, as well as country-level reports. As we produce more content, we seek to triangulate and corroborate information across these groups to strengthen our infodemic response.