

Africa Infodemic Response Alliance

A WHO-HOSTED NETWORK



AIRA Infodemic Trends Report

15-22 April 2024

Weekly brief #116

Top concerns

[Viral video about an adverse event following immunisation \(AEFI\) was widely re-shared on social media during the yellow fever vaccination campaign in Uganda](#)

During and after the yellow fever vaccination campaign that took place in Uganda between April 4th and April 14th, a video showing a child who experienced severe AEFI in Cameroon was widely shared on social media.

[Local authorities blamed for the persistence of cholera outbreaks in the African region](#)

As communities grapple with the impact of cholera, scrutiny of government actions and effectiveness in managing the crisis is at the centre of discussions across the African region.

Reference Guide

[Viral video about an adverse event following immunisation \(AEFI\) was widely re-shared on social media during the yellow fever vaccination campaign in Uganda](#).....Pg. 3

[Blame on local authorities associated with cholera outbreaks persists in the African region](#).....Pg. 5

[Key resources](#).....Pg. 6

[Methodology](#).....Pg. 7

Public Health Infodemic Trends in the African Region

This weekly report provides key highlights and operational recommendations based on social listening data from April 15-22 in Africa.

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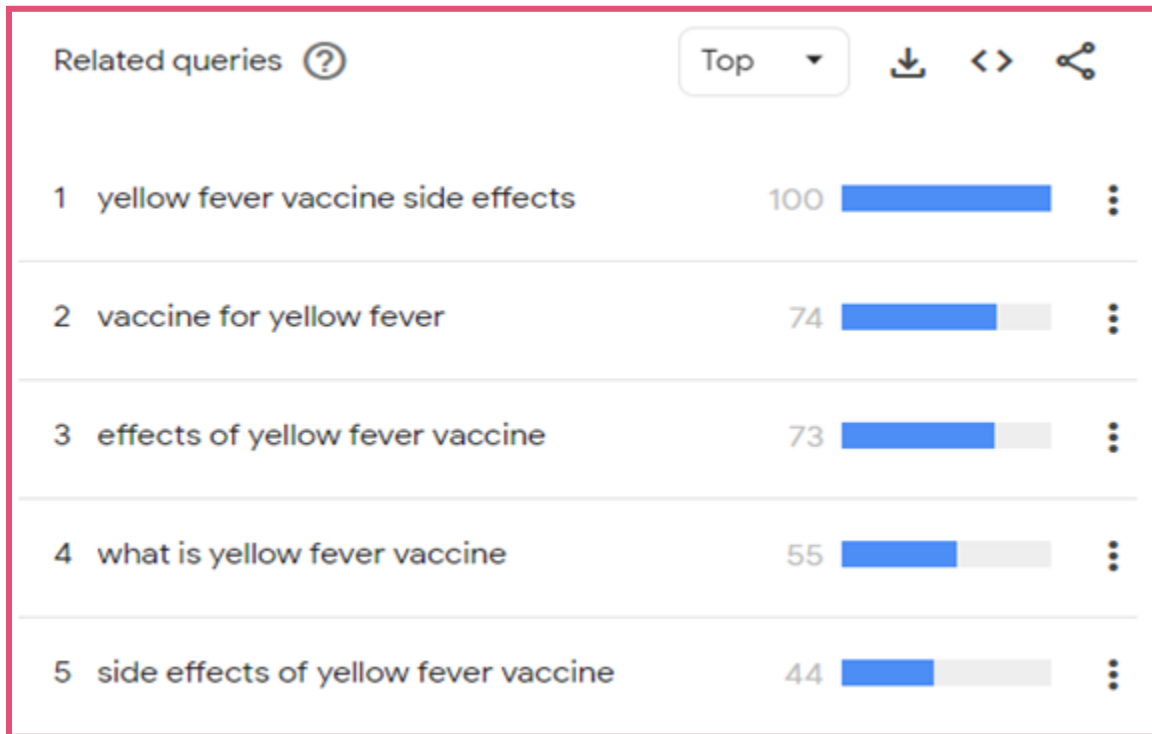
Uganda, Cameroon

Viral video about an adverse event following immunisation (AEFI) was widely re-shared on social media during the yellow fever vaccination campaign in Uganda

Engagement: 4 posts, 62 likes, 368 comments

Social media commentary

- Following last week's report highlighting vaccine hesitancy towards the yellow fever vaccine in Uganda, we detected this week a video circulating on WhatsApp, [X](#) and [TikTok](#) of a child who suffered adverse reactions after being immunised with yellow fever vaccine in Kribi, Cameroon, in 2023, at a private health facility. The parents, who are Nigerians, share their experience and express anxiety about the vaccine side effects.
- The video was shared by an African blogger with an anti-western discourse on her tiktok page. She promotes caution regarding vaccines imported from the West in Africa. A total of 354 online users commented on her tik tok post. Some users agree that Africans are considered guinea pigs and that local authorities allegedly receive financial gains from the West.
- In 2023, private users, bloggers, and social media influencers in Cameroon amplified on Facebook. The story of the child was notably shared by [N'zui Manto Yi Sep Sep](#), a Cameroonian "whistle-blower" known for championing the public interest with a distinctly anti-governmental stance. He wrote that a child had been left blind and paralyzed after receiving the yellow fever vaccine recommended by the Ministry of Health. The posts [[LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#)] gained traction during October and November of 2023 and accumulated over 4731 likes, 2115 comments and 760 shares. Commentators were alarmed, saddened mostly with a few mentions of distrust in local health authorities and vaccines.
- The Minister of Health in Cameroon, Dr. Manaouda Malachie gave more context to the video in a [public video statement](#). He confirmed that the baby suffered from cardiac arrest and went through reanimation and evacuation to India.
- We identified information gaps highlighted in a google trends search for the last 30 days in Uganda. Below is a screenshot of online users' queries:



Why is it concerning?

- The spread of the video to Uganda during and after the yellow fever vaccination campaign highlights the volatility of videos on social media platforms, especially WhatsApp.
- Past scandals about counterfeited yellow fever certificates and fake Hepatitis B and COVID-19 vaccines were still referenced in the social media comments for the yellow vaccine campaign.
- The conclusion of the yellow fever vaccination campaign prompts reflection on the impact of vaccine scepticism on other vaccination campaigns and public health initiatives. In April, Uganda is conducting Child Day Plus, a [vitamin A supplementation and de-worming campaign](#) for children.
- The yellow fever vaccination campaign was extended beyond its initial timeline, with only 53% of the targeted 14 million individuals vaccinated in the first vaccination phase. According to NTVUganda, one reason for that extension was [vaccine hesitancy amongst parents](#).

What can we do?

- Map and mobilise trusted communication channels to share RCCE messages about yellow fever and the yellow fever vaccine, such as [“Yellow fever is a mosquito-borne disease with the potential to cause large outbreaks and that can be prevented by vaccination”](#)

- Prepositioning of RCCE messages before the vaccination campaign including messages about the disease, its transmission, symptoms and treatment.
- Updating messages based on social listening findings including messages that explain the benefits of vaccination versus the risks, and explain the limited number of severe AEFIs reported so far.
- Monitoring conversations around the yellow fever vaccine and vaccines in general can provide more insights about the spread and escalation of the video on WhatsApp and other social media platforms.
- Collaboration with journalists and fact-checkers is needed to provide context to social media content including debunking misinformation, clarifying information gaps about the side effects of vaccination.

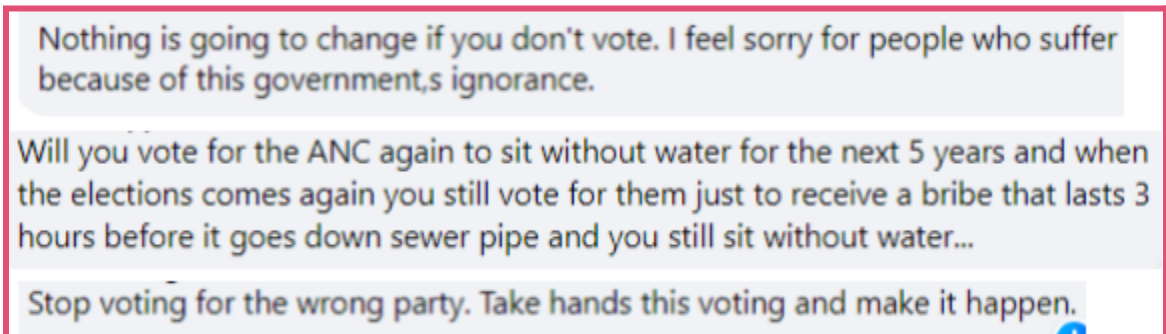
Union of the Comoros, South Africa, Mozambique

Local authorities blamed for the persistence of cholera outbreaks in the African region

Engagement: **14 posts, 1530 likes, 981 comments**

South Africa

- Ahead of the general elections in South Africa scheduled on 29 May 2024, Hammanskraal residents (in northern Gauteng province), affected by a cholera outbreak and lack of access to clean water since last year, continue voicing their concerns.
- According to an [article by health E News, journalism for public health](#), they say [nothing has changed since last year](#). They complain of faecal presence inside tap water, inconsistent deployment of water tankers by the municipality and sewage spills inside homes. [Online users](#) are discouraging re-election of current leadership in upcoming polls. Below are some examples:



Mozambique

- [RENAMO](#) opposition party members have raised concerns regarding the accountability of local authorities in the wake of the boat incident and misinformation surrounding cholera.

- Online users who comment on the Facebook post discuss suitable candidates for upcoming elections to be held in October 2024.

Union of Comoros

- As reactions to posts about risk communication and community engagement initiatives in the Union of Comoros, some online users blame local authorities for the increase of mortality and rise of cholera cases in the country. [[LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#)]

Why is it concerning?

- The persistence of the negative sentiment towards authorities and public health responders in countries affected by cholera outbreaks is a constant reminder that restoring trust between public health stakeholders and communities in need must be at the centre of the cholera response in the African region.

What can we do?

- Promote the consistent sharing of community feedback with local authorities and use social listening insights to adapt responses accordingly.

Key resources

Africa vaccination week

- [VFA](#), social media kit, Africa vaccination week

Cholera

- [WHO](#), global strategic preparedness, readiness and response plan for cholera 2023-2024
- [SSHAP](#), guidance note on community engagement for cholera outbreak response in the east and southern Africa ([ENG](#), [FR](#), [POR](#))
- [SSHAP](#), Enhancing Community Engagement Through Data Collection: Controlling the Cholera Epidemic in Mozambique
- [The collective service](#), cholera question bank for community level data collection
- [WHO](#), cholera Q&A
- WHO, Cholera RCCE key message bank ([ENG](#), [FR](#), [POR](#))
- [VFA](#), cholera toolkit

Yellow fever

- [WHO](#), yellow fever fact sheet
- [WHO](#), yellow fever in Uganda

- [WHO](#), Risk communication and community engagement readiness d response toolkit yellow fever

Methodology

The social media listening process relies on a combination of social media analyses conducted for French, English, and Lusophone-speaking countries.

The shift from a social media listening monitoring conducted by only one person for the whole African region into a combined one based on the analysis conducted by three different people may result in a less detailed and exhaustive report.

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, Crowdtangle, Google Trends, and UNICEF Talkwalker dashboards as well as the WHO EPI-WIN weekly infodemic insight reports and the WHO EARS platform.

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 (e.g. Whatsapp) or groups (e.g. private Facebook groups).

We also rely on our fact-checking partners, who provide invaluable insights into relevant national and regional trends or content, as well as country-level reports, including the South Africa Social Listening Weekly Report and the Mali Social Listening Weekly Report.

In producing these summaries and recommendations, we have consulted community feedback survey reports, as well as monitoring and recommendations from AIRA partners. We also draw from WHO EPI-WIN weekly reports and UNICEF monthly reports to formulate recommendations. As we produce more content, we seek to triangulate and corroborate information across these groups to strengthen our infodemic response.