

Protecting communities from Mpox in the African region: key challenges and response

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Overview of the epi situation in the WHO African region

- ❑ The **epi situation is dynamic**, with **additional countries reporting a recurrence of transmission or first cases**
- ❑ The **total number of countries affected** since 01 January 2022 has **risen to 16** (with suspected cases under investigation in other countries); the total number of active countries stands at **twelve**
- ❑ Confirmed **first clade 1b transmission outside DRC into neighbouring East African countries**
- ❑ While the number of affected countries has risen, in 2024, **the overall number of confirmed cases** excepting DRC **remains relatively low but is rising**
- ❑ DRC has reported approximately 90% of confirmed cases in the region during 2024
- ❑ Data quality is often poor with delay in getting complete data from most countries.

Key Challenges (I)

- ❑ A few countries are reporting Mpox for the very first time. Inadequate awareness in the general population and in specific vulnerable groups
- ❑ Limited understanding of the behavioural factors driving transmission due to absence of behavioural research
- ❑ Stigma associated with the disease and the modes of transmission
- ❑ Misinformation and infodemics around Mpox coupled with absence of Mpox in functional community feedback and infodemic management mechanisms
- ❑ Insufficient contextualization of the response in province/counties/district levels

Key Challenges (II)

- ❑ Insufficient integration with existing community networks (e.g., PLWHA) to reach key populations and also assist with contact tracing, early detection and early case management
- ❑ Very many languages spoken in the countries in the region with inadequate translation capacity
- ❑ Inadequate resources
 - Inadequate financial resources for community protection interventions
 - Insufficient RCCE workforce (HR) in terms of quantity and quality. Most countries have not conducted RCCE training for Mpox

Ongoing Activities/Engagements

- ❑ Bilateral deep-dive with countries to understand their context and tailor the support (Burundi, Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Liberia, Cameroon, Chad, CAR, Mauritania, Nigeria)
- ❑ Coordination: In collaboration with HQ, Dakar Hub and with partners of WCA and ESA (joint concept note of operations and action plan)
- ❑ Sharing and facilitation of understanding of tools, guidance and materials
- ❑ Revision of plans, IEC materials development, production and dissemination
- ❑ Capacity building on RCCE for Mpox & Infodemic management
- ❑ Readiness survey for Evidence Generation (12 countries, June-July 2024)
- ❑ Updating information to countries (Q&A, media talking points, burning issues, etc.)
- ❑ Real time communication (WhatsApp groups)
- ❑ Deployment to South Africa and Burundi through GOARN and Collective Service

Priority Response Actions

- ❑ Support countries to finalize their plans, RCCE materials/messages (including for priority and vulnerable groups) and translation into local languages
- ❑ Evidence generation: Support countries to conduct behavioral research/KAP surveys and use of evidence to reorient strategies and interventions
- ❑ Build capacity on Mpox for national counterparts and partners (online sessions with translation)
- ❑ Support countries to contextualize the response in affected areas (provinces/counties/districts)
- ❑ Support countries with mapping of existing community structures, stakeholders/partners and assessment of workforce (quality and quantity)
- ❑ Support countries to co-design and implement effective community engagement for public awareness, buy-in for ownership and sustainability/resilience

Opportunities

- ❑ Existing networks and capacities that can be leveraged to enhance outreach to key populations (civil society organizations, CBOs, et cetera)
- ❑ Capacity in anthropology and lessons learned from Ebola virus, and COVID-19 can be leveraged to enhance effective RCCE in response to Mpox
- ❑ Africa Infodemic Response Alliance (AIRA) and other capacities developed during COVID-19 that can be used to track and respond to infodemics
- ❑ Engagement of partners able to expand their support to most affected areas (province/counties/districts)
- ❑ Active ESAR RCCE TWG working to respond to requests from countries and partners and share updates and resources/tools
- ❑ Collective Service interagency surge available (plus potential surge through GOARN) on request
- ❑ Remote regional support available for surge deployees for utilising interagency tools

Thank you! Questions?