

Combating the Escalating Mpox Crisis and Championing Vaccine Equity Across Africa: Amref's Interventions

Amref Health Africa joins the **World Health Organization** (WHO), the **Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention** (Africa CDC) and African governments in combating the alarming escalation of the Mpox crisis across the African continent; now declared by Africa CDC as a Public Health Emergency of Continental Security (PHECS) and by WHO a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).¹

Since 2022, Mpox cases have surged across Africa, with deeply concerning statistics as of July 2024. According to [Africa CDC](#), a total of 37,583 cases and 1,451 deaths have been reported across 15 African countries, with the Democratic Republic of Congo bearing the brunt, accounting for a staggering 96.3% of cases. The situation has further deteriorated in 2024, with 14,250 new cases and 456 deaths—a 160% increase compared to the same period in 2023 (July). The emergence of a more virulent strain of the virus in the DRC raises fears of its potential spread beyond the region, particularly in areas where access to vaccines and treatments remains limited due to fragile health infrastructure.

Ongoing outbreaks in countries like **Uganda, Kenya** and the **Central African Republic** underscore the urgent need for enhanced surveillance, vaccination, and public health measures to contain the virus. Collaborative cross-border surveillance efforts remain a strategic imperative to mitigate the impact of Mpox. Amref Health Africa is at the forefront of these efforts, providing critical technical support to affected countries to break the chain of transmission across the continent.

We commend the tireless efforts of the **WHO, Africa CDC**, and African governments to control this outbreak. Amref reaffirms its unwavering commitment to supporting preparedness, prevention, and response measures against Mpox, aligned with government plans and WHO guidelines.

This outbreak underscores the urgent need to finalise and sign an equity-based Pandemic Treaty². Any further delay is untenable. It serves as a crucial reminder that while health systems operate locally, health risks are global, and health security is a shared global responsibility.

Amref Health Africa is actively involved in developing country-level contingency and response plans, strengthening event-based and community-based surveillance, and providing technical support for outbreak investigations, risk communication, and community engagement—particularly at border points of entry and in hard-to-reach areas where this support is most needed. Additionally, Amref is working to enhance laboratory capacities for Mpox diagnosis and confirmation. We are also training health workers in infection prevention and control (IPC) and case management. Amref Health Africa country offices are collaborating with ministries of health and other partners in strengthening in-country health systems through Incident Management Systems and the One Health approach.

Our Response

Selected key interventions include:

- In **Tanzania** and **Kenya**: We are leading community awareness efforts on Mpox through direct engagement and training of health workers. We leverage existing digital platforms like WhatsApp groups to educate health workers, especially Community Health Workers, ensuring they are well-equipped to inform communities about symptoms, transmission, and prevention measures. Tanzania's response is anchored in the proven Community-Based Events-Based Surveillance model, integrated with the government's alert system and official channels, including the electronic EBS App, Hotline number 199, USSD platform, and WhatsApp platform, to facilitate rapid response and containment efforts.
- In **Uganda**: Amref is prioritising awareness campaigns through community radio stations and has been invited by the Ministry of Health to support contact tracing and surveillance at major border entry points.
- In **South Sudan**: Amref is a member of the Emergency Response Technical Working Group and has been invited by the Ministry of Health to support the training of health workers, supply IPC materials, and manage surveillance centres at border points, particularly at Nimule Border and Juba International Airport.

¹A PHEIC is defined in the International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005) as "an extraordinary event that poses a public health risk to other countries through the international spread of disease and may require a coordinated international response." This definition highlights a situation that is serious, sudden, unusual, or unexpected, with potential public health implications beyond the affected country's borders, possibly necessitating immediate global action ([WHO](#)).

²<https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2024-who-member-states-agree-way-forward-to-conclude-pandemic-agreement>

- In **Kenya**, Amref is assisting in identifying the epidemiological characteristics of the Mpox outbreak in Taita Taveta County. This includes surveillance at the Taveta/Holili border, contact tracing, and assessing potential risk factors. Amref Kenya is also contributing to the development of the Mpox Preparedness and Response Plan, which is pending endorsement by the Ministry of Health. Additionally, Amref is participating in national stakeholder engagements and is involved in the development of Mpox surveillance guidelines.
- **Amref Headquarters** has established a multidisciplinary team known as the '*Mpox Reference Group*' to coordinate, advise, and provide technical assistance across our response initiatives in various countries, as well as to support the Africa CDC through our involvement in the Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Commission. We have also launched an [Information Centre](#) to boost public awareness and advocacy on key issues related to the Mpox crisis via digital media.

In collaboration with the Africa CDC and supported by the Gates Foundation, we are aiding efforts in the 12 affected African countries. This includes procuring and delivering diagnostic supplies (GeneXpert cartridges) to DR Congo, Burundi, and the Central African Republic, conducting regional training for lab experts in sample analysis and informatics, and training healthcare workers on surveillance and strengthening Points of Entry (POE) monitoring.

The fight against Mpox is urgent. Strengthening surveillance and improving access to the Mpox vaccine are essential to protect vulnerable communities. Vaccine equity is critical.

- » We commend WHO and Africa CDC for their efforts to secure vaccines; we do not want a repeat the experience of COVID-19, where African countries struggled to access needed vaccines. As we know poor access to the vaccines will further exacerbate this crisis, which is already compounded by other ongoing health emergencies, such as cholera in some countries.
- » We ask the wider international community and partners to intensify their support by providing the necessary tools and resources to contain this global crisis.
- » African governments must also allocate adequate resources to support robust response and prevention measures.
- » Civil society, faith-based institutions, local community groups, and leaders must be actively engaged to raise awareness about Mpox and advocate for vaccine uptake.

We invite you to visit our [Information Centre](#) and follow Amref Health Africa's [social media pages](#) for more information and updates on Mpox. For further inquiries or media speaking opportunities, please contact us at global.communications@amref.org.

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