# Social Media Monitoring: Democratic Republic of the Congo

Rumours and Allegations Featured on Social Media

This week: Latest rumours and allegations circulating on social media as locals in Équateur and other provinces react to the news of the new Ebola outbreak in northwestern DRC.

### **Misinformation and Threats Targeting International Humanitarian Organisations** Ebola reemergence in Mbandaka is smokescreen for COVID-19 vaccine testing.

 Reactions to the news of a new Ebola outbreak in Équateur province show that skepticism about the existence of the virus runs deep among locals. Clearly influenced by rampant misinformation about Europeans and American governments seeking to trial COVID-19 vaccines on Africans, some locals believe that the outbreak is a cover for COVID-19 vaccination testing.

Claims were also made that Ebola is being artificially induced in Équateur by local and international health organisations to receive funding.

These claims underline the perception widely shared on social media that aid organisations are willing to sacrifice locals for their own interests, whether for vaccination trials or for financial gain. This perception is at times expressed explicitly, with some social media users expressing their concern that the WHO and other organisations "have now gone to kill in Équateur".

### The "release" of another coronavirus disease by China.

• A social media post shared hundreds of times within hours of being published features renowned French microbiologist Didier Raoult claiming that the Chinese government has just released a new coronavirus disease three times more potent than its predecessor.

Such misinformation underlines the perception that COVID-19 has been artificially created by foreigners. However, it is relatively unusual that China is targeted with such disinformation. Most of the time, such actions are attributed to Europeans or Americans.

### Locals in Beni believe that the newly set up INGO COVID-19 centre is intended to spread the virus in North Kivu.

 Such mistrust in the intentions of health INGOs highlights the communication challenges frontline NGOs face. There are risks of attacks on COVID-19 treatment centres, as occurring frequently during the ongoing Ebola pandemic.

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This document is published by Insecurity Insight.

It shares key trends and insights from media monitoring carried out by Novetta Mission Analytics (NMA) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It highlights the critical necessity of sustained community engagement.

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#### Africans seeking to visit Europe are obliged to be vaccinated.

• Misinformation is being widely circulated on social media that presidents Macron and Trump want to make COVID-19 vaccination obligatory for Africans travelling to Europe and the US or "otherwise [face] a massacre at the airport".

These claims were followed by disinformation featuring Russian president Putin allegedly rejecting the need for that Africans to be vaccinated, arguing that vaccination campaigns are a European "conspiracy" to have people die - as ostensibly exemplified by the WHO's "rejection" of Madagascar's much-touted COVID Organics remedy.

This misinformation builds upon a narrative currently at play among locals within the DRC that Europeans and Americans want to use Africans as "guinea pigs" for COVID-19 vaccination trials. This narrative was further accentuated by the misinformation surrounding the public dispute between the Malagasy government and the WHO over the endorsement of COVID Organics, an Artemisia-based herbal tea claimed to prevent and cure COVID-19 and which has been exported by Madagascar to a number of African countries.

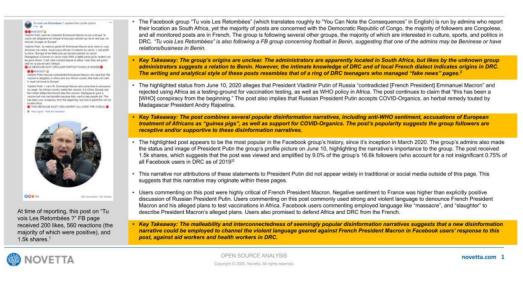
Preliminary research indicates that such disinformation, while quite likely written and produced by Congolese, may originate and be promoted from outside the DRC.

# Want to know more about the group behind the circulation of fake news and about President Macron's statements regarding COVID-19 vaccines?

Read <u>this</u> latest analysis by Novetta.

Find this extra information useful? <u>Get in touch</u>

#### Social Media Analysis of "Tu vois Les Retombées" Facebook Page



For more details on social media monitoring, please get in touch -

#### info@insecurityinsight.org.

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