

# "We Share it First, We Think Afterwards"

Tracking Aid Narratives on Social Media: Recent Observations from the DRC

21 August 2026

This briefing by Insecurity Insight analyses public social media activity from 15 July - 07 August 2026 in the DRC



This briefing is part of a longer-term initiative for the DRC to examine how aid agency acceptance or rejection is expressed on social media. This edition covers reactions and responses to aid-related narratives between 15 July and 07 August 2026. It also covers narratives about UN peacekeeping and international human rights bodies, which, while not aid organisations, operate within the same public information environment and shape the broader conditions aid agencies work in.

**Ebola-related narratives were previously tracked in a separate, dedicated monitoring brief series; from this edition onward, Ebola-related findings are integrated directly into this report.** As of 12 August 2026, the outbreak had reached 4,665 confirmed cases and 2,184 deaths, the largest ever recorded in DRC ([WHO](#)). This edition focuses on the most prominent Ebola-related narratives on social media.

Content is selected based on narratives around UN agencies, international and local NGOs, civil society organisations, and related actors and themes that influence the humanitarian space in the DRC, identified through predefined organisation lists and keyword searches. Comments associated with these posts were analysed qualitatively to identify dominant narratives and their impact on the humanitarian space.

**This edition highlights the following findings to help understand how narratives affecting the aid sector unfold on social media:**

- Coverage of Damien Mama's appointment to a role combining MONUSCO's deputy leadership with the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator functions generated the highest comment volume of any story in the general dataset this period, with reaction overwhelmingly positive and the rare critical comments directed at MONUSCO's broader mandate rather than at the appointment itself.
- Coverage of three separate MONUSCO-linked stories this period, Bintou Keita's appointment to Guinea's government, the mission's denial of a role in Rwandan returns, and its Force Commander's visit to Mongbwalu, generated recurring identity-charged and witchcraft-coded hostility rather than conventional criticism, including under the mission's own institutional post.
- Coverage of a UN human rights experts' statement naming M23 directly in connection with sexual violence and arbitrary detention generated a small number of comments challenging the experts' credibility rather than engaging with the substance, a pattern consistent with previous editions of this series.
- Funding-corruption suspicion, not disease denial, was the dominant harmful narrative in the Ebola-related dataset this period, concentrated almost entirely in reaction to a single US funding announcement of \$242 million rather than spread evenly across coverage.
- Posting volume was highest on 16 July, driven by coverage of the UN Security Council sanctions imposed on Corneille Nangaa and other AFC/M23 and armed group figures. Posts were most concentrated in Kinshasa City, followed by Goma and Bukavu. X accounted for 62.30% of posts and Facebook for 37.70% across the monitoring period.

## Geographic distribution of posts

| Kinshasa | North Kivu | South Kivu | Eastern | Katanga | I'Équateur | Kasaï-Oriental | Kasaï-Occidental | Bas-Congo | Maniema |
|----------|------------|------------|---------|---------|------------|----------------|------------------|-----------|---------|
| 425      | 43         | 24         | 16      | 15      | 15         | 3              | 2                | 1         | 1       |

|                                                                |                                  |                                                      |                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>810</b><br>Public posts downloaded<br>15 July–7 August 2026 | <b>37</b><br>Posts with comments | <b>736</b><br>Comments analysed<br>manually reviewed | <b>24M</b><br>Reach<br>X + Facebook |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

## Key Takeaways

### Damien Mama's Appointment, 21 July 2026: solidarity dominant

Damien Mama was appointed as Deputy Special Representative and Deputy Head of MONUSCO, and interim Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in DRC, by the UN Secretary-General. Sources: [UNDP](#) and [UN DRC](#)

Coverage generated 13 posts, 11 on X and two on Facebook, reaching a combined total of 25,312 users, and 116 comments, the highest volume of any story in the general dataset this period. Of these, two comments were critical.

#### KEY NARRATIVES IDENTIFIED

- **Solidarity dominant:** The overwhelming majority of comments were congratulatory, several offering personal testimony about Mr Mama's professional record and leadership style.

had the chance to know him, an exceptional man of rare simplicity. A fruitful mandate, Mr Damien Mama." *J'ai eu à le fréquenter, un homme exceptionnel d'une simplicité rare. Fructueux Mandat Monsieur Damien Mama.*")

- **Dissent, questioning MONUSCO's broader role, contained:** Two comments departed from the congratulatory tone, both directed at MONUSCO's institutional effectiveness rather than at Mr Mama personally. **Only one** invoked Ibrahim Traoré, Burkina Faso's head of state.

"What use is MONUSCO to Congo? The day the Congolese have a leader like Ibrahim Traoré, the famous MONUSCO will no longer be in Congo." (*"À quoi sert l'utilité de la MONUSCO au Congo ? Le jour où les congolais auront un dirigeant comme Ibrahim Traoré, la fameuse MONUSCO ne sera plus au Congo."*)

#### WHAT THIS TELLS US

- At 116 comments, this was the highest-volume story in the general dataset this period.
- The two critical comments target MONUSCO as an institution rather than Mr Mama personally; unlike the hostility toward Bintou Keita documented elsewhere in this edition, criticism here did not extend to the individual appointee.

### Three MONUSCO-Linked Stories, 27-30 July 2026: Hostile and witchcraft-charged commentary

Bintou Keita, who served as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO from February 2021 to November 2025, was appointed by Guinea's President Mamadi Doumbouya as Minister of National Education, Literacy, Technical Education and Vocational Training. Separately, MONUSCO reportedly denied any role in the return of 39 people to DRC, individuals it had previously repatriated to Rwanda as alleged former combatants, a designation they dispute; MONUSCO's own account also reported, separately, that its Force Commander had met Nepalese peacekeepers in Mongbwalu to review operations protecting civilians and Ebola treatment centres. Sources: [Actualite](#), [MONUSCO](#) and [News.cd](#)

This period saw a recurring pattern of hostility toward MONUSCO and figures associated with it, expressed through witchcraft accusations, language accusing individuals of practicing witchcraft, in two of three stories, and ethnic-identity framing in the third, rather than criticism of policy or conduct. Coverage generated 13 posts, eight on X and five on Facebook, reaching a combined total of 411,656 users, and 46 comments. Of these, seven comments (15%) were critical.

## KEY NARRATIVES IDENTIFIED

- **Witchcraft-coded hostility toward Bintou Keita, limited but severe:** Her appointment, covered by Congolese outlets given her prior MONUSCO tenure, drew both political criticism and language that used her gender itself as a pejorative, alongside accusations of witchcraft.

**"She's going to bewitch the children. She left us the rebellion in Goma here in DRC! A teacher with the dye!"**  
(*"Elle va ensorceler les enfants. Elle ns a laissé la rébellion à Goma ici en RDC ! Une enseignante avec la teinture !"*)

**"She's the one who prepared the war happening in eastern DRC. A mediocre woman!"** (*"C'est elle qui a préparé la guerre qui se vit à l'Est de la RDC. Une médiocre femme!"*)

- **Ethnic and witchcraft framing, elsewhere, contained:** Two further comments, on separate posts, echoed the same pattern: one combining ethnic framing with an accusation of duplicity in the MONUSCO/Rwanda denial thread, another a single-word witchcraft accusation under MONUSCO's own Force Commander post. The second read simply: "Sorcerer/witch." ("Ndoki.")

**"Tutsi cunning in its actions."** (*"Ubwenge tutsi dans ses actions."*)

\* Other translations could be read as : *"Ubwenge is consistent in its actions."*

## WHAT THIS TELLS US

- Witchcraft-coded language appeared in two of three unrelated news items linked to MONUSCO this period (Bintou Keita's appointment and the Force Commander's post), posted by two different commenters; a third item drew ethnic-identity framing rather than witchcraft language specifically. All three reflect hostility toward MONUSCO and figures associated with it rather than reaction to a single event or a single repeated voice.
- In Bintou Keita's case specifically, the witchcraft accusation targeted her personally, as a woman, rather than the institution; ordinary political criticism of MONUSCO appeared separately in the same thread.
- This is a different kind of hostility than criticism of policy or effectiveness: two of the three comments were coded as hate speech, not general criticism, and in the case of Bintou Keita, in explicitly gendered terms.

## UN Human Rights Experts' Statement on M23, 21 July 2026: Recurring credibility challenges

UN human rights experts, including the Special Rapporteur on torture and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, appealed for an end to what they described as M23's "reign of terror by sexual torture and violence" in eastern DRC territory under M23 control, citing over 90,000 recorded cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2025 and reports of arbitrary detention, forced labour and deaths in custody. Source: [OHCHR](#)

The statement generated 14 posts, 11 on X and three on Facebook, reaching a combined total of 222,897 users; one post generated the bulk of discussion, with 15 comments, of which three were critical.

## KEY NARRATIVES IDENTIFIED

- **Credibility and bias challenges, contained:** Critical comments focused on challenging the credibility of the experts.

**"Sellouts, these experts!!!"** (*"Ces vendus expert!!!"*)

- **Frustration with continued impunity, isolated:** One comment expressed frustration with the lack of accountability, distinct from the two credibility-challenge comments elsewhere in this thread.

**"More reports, more condemnations, and nothing changes on the ground. As long as there is impunity and regional complicity, civilians will keep dying."** (*"Encore des rapports, encore des condamnations, et rien ne change sur le terrain. Tant qu'il y aura impunité et complicités régionales, les civils continueront de mourir."*)

## WHAT THIS TELLS US

- Of the three critical comments, two challenged the experts' credibility while one expressed frustration with continued impunity, two distinct reactions rather than a shared debate. This story reached 222,897 users but generated only 15 comments in total.
- This matches a credibility challenge recorded against a UN reporting body in the [29 July 2026 edition](#) of this series, where a comparable UN report also generated credibility-challenge comments as the dominant reaction. This suggests the pattern persists across editions when a UN body names armed actors directly, rather than being isolated to one statement.

## Public Reaction to the Ebola Response, 15 July – 7 August 2026

Across 2,902 posts and 4,641 comments monitored (2,027 on X, 874 on Facebook), the stories below generated the highest engagement and the most harmful commentary this period. Funding-corruption suspicion, not disease denial, was the dominant harmful narrative, concentrated almost entirely in reaction to one funding announcement. This narrative risks undermining trust in the response itself, including vaccine scepticism and fatalistic dismissal of the response's value.

*Note on method: Stories were identified through keyword and volume screening; comments within each were then individually reviewed and translated. "Critical" denotes comments containing misinformation, disinformation, or hostility toward the aid and health sector or an affected community.*

### ➤ **US \$242 Million Funding Announcement, 06 August 2026: Corruption and embezzlement suspicion**

**An additional \$242 million (USD) for the Ebola response in DRC was announced by Washington, bringing total US assistance to over \$512 million, aimed at strengthening surveillance, care, testing and community sensitisation. Source: [Radio Okapi](#)**

Coverage generated 17 posts, reaching a total of 468,496 users. One post (Radio Okapi, Facebook) accounted for 125,217 of that total (27%). This story generated 1,101 comments, more than any other story reviewed this period. Of these, 233 comments (21%) were critical.

## KEY NARRATIVES IDENTIFIED

- **Corruption and elite capture (Dominant):** 216 of 233 critical comments treated the diversion of funds as a foregone conclusion.

**"Embezzlement in progress."** (*"Détournement en téléchargement."*)

A further four comments questioned the nature of the funding itself, framing it as a loan tied to access to DRC's mineral resources.

- **Contested Ebola Death, Grand Équateur, 19 July 2026: Denial, corruption suspicion and ethnic stereotyping**

A family in Grand Équateur region reportedly refused to hand over the body of a relative the health team suspected had died of Ebola, arguing instead that he had died of tuberculosis. Coverage identified the family and wider community as Anamongo/Bangala. Sources: [Le Centre](#) and [Abdul Connexion](#)

Two posts reached a combined total of 48,248 users and generated 461 comments. Of these, 93 comments (20%) were critical.

### KEY NARRATIVES IDENTIFIED

- **Denial and corruption suspicion, dominant:** 84 of 93 combined denial of the cause of death with accusations that officials were exploiting the case for money.

"They lied, they made Ebola into their business so they could eat the money." (*"Bakosi ebola ekomi coop n'a bango po balia mbongo."*)

- **Ethnic stereotyping, limited but severe:** A further six comments moved into hostile characterisation of the community itself, including direct slurs.

#### ➤ **Unrest over a Suspected Ebola Death, Kyaghala, Butembo, 30 July 2026: Dehumanising commentary toward the population**

In Kyaghala district, Butembo city, North Kivu province, a team conducting a safe Ebola burial was obstructed by residents, who demanded that the coffin be opened to verify the identity of the deceased. Several young people subsequently handled the body, disrupting established Ebola safe burial procedures. Sources: [Radio Okapi](#) and [Bunia Actualité](#)

Coverage generated nine posts, six on X and three on Facebook, reaching a combined total of 294,258 users, and generated 50 comments. Of these, six comments (12%) were critical.

### KEY NARRATIVES IDENTIFIED

- **Dehumanising commentary toward the affected population, limited but severe:** A small number of comments (four) moved beyond criticism of the incident into hostile, dehumanising language directed at Kyaghala/Butembo residents themselves.

"Faced with such animals, only dictatorship works." (*"Face à des animaux pareils il n'y a que la dictature qui vaut."*)

A further two comments were isolated instances of a different kind: one dismissed the incident with "Ebola business," echoing the denial narrative found elsewhere in this dataset; another disputed the authenticity of the widely circulated video itself, claiming its location had been misrepresented.

#### ➤ **MSF's Ebola Communications, 15 July–07 August 2026: A solidarity counterweight**

MSF's own posts about its Ebola response drew a markedly different reaction: 41 posts generated 39 comments, none critical, dominated by direct affirmation.

"What would the world be without MSF?" (*"Que serait le monde, sans MSF ?"*)

### WHAT THIS TELLS US

- Funding-corruption suspicion, not disease denial, was the dominant harmful narrative this period, concentrated almost entirely in reaction to one story rather than spread evenly across coverage. **This is not a new pattern: corruption and "Ebola business" framing has been the most structurally embedded harmful narrative across at least four prior monitoring periods in the dedicated Ebola brief series**, described in nearly identical terms each time. This period shows continuity of that pattern, with unusual concentration on a single trigger (216 of 233 critical comments, 92.7%) rather than dispersal across multiple stories.
- Denial and corruption suspicion recurred independently in both contested-death stories this period, Grand Équateur and Kyaghala, with no overlap between the two sets of commenters. Both also carried hostility directed at the affected community itself, not just at the aid response.
- MSF's own posts about its Ebola response drew no critical comments this period, in contrast to the widespread suspicion generated by the government funding announcement.

## Other Stories Noted

**14 July 2026: UNFPA/UNDP support to the national census:** President Tshisekedi received the Minister of Planning to discuss the launch of the general population census. Coverage generated two posts reaching 135,955 users and two comments, both raising questions about the census's ability to reach conflict-affected areas rather than about UNFPA or UNDP's role directly.

**22 July 2026: UNDP-FPI financial inclusion partnership (ACTIF II):** The Fonds de Promotion de l'Industrie, UNDP and the Swedish Embassy signed a \$5.69 million partnership to advance financial inclusion for Congolese entrepreneurs. Coverage generated four posts reaching 12,799 users and 19 comments; no critical narratives were identified.

**27 July 2026: Teacher salary arrears and Caritas payment-process criticism, Haut-Lomami:** Teachers in Malemba Nkulu territory demanded payment of three months' salary arrears (May, June and July). A teachers' union denounced irregularities in the payment process via Caritas and called for salary payments to be routed through TMB instead; DINACOPE later attributed the delay to a Caritas "délestage." Coverage reached 273,155 users across three posts and generated 18 comments; public reaction was mixed, including comments suggesting the payment issue reflects a broader systemic problem rather than conduct specific to Caritas.

**31 July 2026: UNDP/UNFPA justice programme for GBV survivors (JAD):** Coverage reported that the JAD programme had supported over 5,000 survivors of gender-based violence toward justice, with 1,858 judicial decisions obtained, 70% in survivors' favour. Coverage generated three posts reaching 30,594 users and no comments were recorded.

**07 August 2026: ICRC-facilitated Doha detainee transfer:** Congolese authorities reportedly transferred 15 detainees from Kinshasa to AFC/M23, facilitated by the ICRC as part of the Doha mechanism. Coverage generated 16 posts reaching 198,520 users; comment capture for this story was partial, with only 17 of 511 declared comments retrievable, so findings should be read as indicative only. One comment argued the transfer implicitly legitimised AFC/M23 as a governing authority.

## Key Numbers

As in previous editions, these findings should be read with the same caution: technical limitations in geolocation and platform coverage may lead to under-detection of relevant posts, and the analysis draws only on public posts, excluding content from private groups, closed networks, or encrypted messaging platforms.

### Scale of analysis

- **Total posts:** 810
- **Total comments:** 736
- **Total reach:** 24,087,346
- **Total engagement actions:** 63,103
- **Monitoring period:** 15 July – 7 August 2026
- **Platforms:** Facebook (305), X (505)

### Comment language

- **French:** 618 (84.0%)
- **English:** 56 (7.6%)
- **Lingala:** 25 (3.4%)
- **Emojis / no text (N/A):** 17 (2.3%)
- **Swahili:** 12 (1.6%)
- **Other languages** (Farsi, Indonesian, Spanish, Amharic, Arabic, Unclear): 8 (1.1%)



## Methodology

The analysis draws only on public posts, excluding content from private groups, closed networks, encrypted messaging platforms, or content that users did not intentionally make public. Public social media narratives are an important indicator of both dominant public discourse, the audience responses to discourse and the way political actors use and engage with the public discourse. Analysis of social media comments provides insight into how information is received, interpreted, and processed by audiences and as such goes beyond the basic analysis of the information made available through radio broadcasts and edited media. It can also reveal gaps in public understanding and identify areas where communication may be unclear or ineffective. Furthermore, harmful narratives that generate significant engagement on public social media platforms may indicate the types of narratives that are likely to be amplified in private or closed channels, where they can contribute to radicalisation and increase risk factors associated with real-world violence. As online discourse becomes more central to how aid is understood and contested, monitoring these narratives is an important component for aid acceptance, security management, programming and communication with affected populations.

## Data Use and Privacy Disclaimer

This report includes analysis of publicly available social media content collected from open platforms. All data has been anonymised to remove or obscure identifying details, and no content from closed groups was used. The analysis was conducted in the public interest and in line with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), under a legitimate interest basis. The purpose of this analysis is to support humanitarian dialogue, inform policy, protect aid workers and those they help, and contribute to public interest research. This document is published by Insecurity Insight - a Humanitarian to Humanitarian (H2H) organisation committed to the Humanitarian Principles. Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

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