

Politics, factions and violence: listening to local voices on Ebola Local media update #3 (February-April 2019)

This brief summarises local media and messages circulating via social media outlets including WhatsApp and local radio and press outlets in the Beni and Butembo areas of North Kivu, DRC between February and April 2019. It also captures the growing number of warning messages and written threats transmitted as part of the escalation of violence against Ebola response teams during this period. The brief was developed by Rachel Sweet (Harvard, University of Notre Dame) for the Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform with support from Juliet Bedford and Ingrid Gercama (Anthrologica). For further details on the issues contained in this brief please contact Rachel Sweet (rsweet2@nd.edu) or Juliet Bedford (julietbedford@anthrologica.com).

Overview

- During February-April 2019, escalating attacks against Ebola treatment centers (ETCs) repeatedly interrupted response activities. Significant shifts in messages during this period reflect the growing violence, most notably by directly threatening attacks or by implicating local political figures in propagating false narratives about response efforts. Local messages help explain some of the escalating violence and also expose numerous factions in local opinion about the Ebola virus.
- Some messages incite violence, although most demand more effective response efforts including a more transparent vaccination strategy and clearer, non-partisan commitment from response team members. Although the attacks are highly visible, communities continue to make repeated attempts to communicate peacefully with the Government of Congo and international responders to voice their concerns.
- Those inciting violence suggest that initial attacks against ETCs and personnel were a reaction, at least in part, to perceptions that political motives had tainted response efforts. The restriction of voting rights in Beni-Butembo during the 30 December 2018 presidential elections reinforced suspicions of political agendas behind (and/or manipulating) the Ebola outbreak. The political affiliation of key response leaders, involvement of state security forces in response efforts and the use of Ebola as a campaign tool in advance of the March 2019 legislative elections further undermined the perceived neutrality of the response.
- Since mid-April a more extreme set of messages has continued to threaten direct violence (including killings and arson) against response personnel as well as local authorities and civilians who support response efforts. One notable change over the last few months has been the increase in written threats again the response being made / distributed by self-described perpetrators of attacks. Other messages remind observers that armed actors involved in the attacks operate under the backing of 'political sponsors' and suggest that Ebola has become a tool of political infighting at the local level.
- Although some narratives still contest that Ebola is not a 'real' disease (that it is a 'hoax'), most do not question the veracity of the disease. Rather, concerns are couched in general fatigue and distrust, and many are incredulous that the virus continues to spread. Communities see themselves as 'doing their part' to contain Ebola (e.g., hand washing, safe burials¹) and question the motives of response teams: they view the significant financial and technical resources mobilised around Ebola as being at odds with the progress of the response. Some question whether political agendas and/or financial interests dampen the response's commitment to ending the outbreak.
- Messages repeat previous concerns that medical personnel may misdiagnose other illnesses as Ebola; that hygiene standards disrupt lifestyles including day-to-day gestures of community building and cohesion like greetings²; that local authorities and religious leaders who support response efforts receive money or bribes from response teams; and that response personnel are paid to kill patients. Ongoing attempts by local authorities and media outlets to curb 'resistance' were met by a round of messages threatening violence against them.
- Some new misinformation has also emerged, suggesting for example that response teams contaminate latrines with the Ebola virus.³ Messages by civil society leaders and local journalists allege that local politicians are behind the mis- and dis-information that is circulating.
- The third Strategic Response Plan stresses a shift towards local ownership of the Ebola response. In the context of North Kivu, ownership must go beyond conventional understandings of 'community' to be multi-factional and multi-associational and must avoid empowering certain individuals and/or population groups at the expense of others. Messages reinforce the need to build trust across communities and with the numerous different population factions, particularly by adjusting response activities in light of local feedback. Civil society leaders who have medical training should be actively included in the response and supported to have a greater role. The involvement of traditional associations such as Kyaghandanda-Yira, customary chiefs and religious authorities remains critical. Local journalists urge response teams to "*redo*" material so that communications are kept up-to-date and are responsive to the evolving situation. They continue to stress that all materials must be translated into local languages (Congolesse Swahili and Kinande).
- Systems that strengthen community-based surveillance and locally-led response actions require further investment. In emphasising local ownership, local stakeholders have suggested that positive incentives for community members to support the response would be welcome. These should not be in the form of financial remuneration, but suggestions include promoting a "*best prevention prize*" to award communities, neighborhoods, or villages who effectively support (and contribute to) the Ebola response. Changing the approach to instigate broader community-level incentives may also help reduce suspicions regarding the flow of Ebola money and power to the benefit of some individuals but at the expense of others.

Key developments in local messaging and related recommendations made by communities

A series of key trends are evident in the analysis of messages circulating between February-April 2019. These are presented below, along with a selection of direct recommendations made in messages over the period analysed. Many of these are closely aligned to suggestions highlighted in community feedback gathered as part of response activities (see, for example, the SSHAP data synthesis brief from February 2019, and forthcoming in May 2019).⁴ Despite frustrations and growing tensions, communities continue to clearly articulate their need for more in-depth information about the response, and make frequent suggestions about ways in which the response could be 'improved' at the local level, which would in turn contribute to greater levels of trust.

- **On-going local support to end Ebola** – Overall, messages reflect divergent local views about whether to support or oppose the response. Yet messages often describe Ebola as dangerous, emphasise that the outbreak must be brought to an end and reiterate the population's commitment to hygiene standards and involvement in diffusing information. Frustration is expressed when response teams attribute the spread of the outbreak to a lack of community buy-in, and messages challenge response teams to deepen their own commitment (see below).⁵ For the most part, mainstream local media outlets (primarily radio) promote factual messages concerning Ebola, or explicitly support the response by featuring respected authorities and patients that endorse it.⁶ The exception is media linked to Nande power outlets (Nande are the demographic majority in the Grand Nord of North Kivu province), as well as WhatsApp messages that circulate with greater anonymity (although local political figures are often alleged to be the key instigators). Throughout the affected area, there continues to be considerable local support of the response, including by youth, traditional authorities, and religious leaders.
- **Strengthen clear and streamlined information flows to/from communities** – Messages suggest there is a "cloud" around response activities and call for increased transparency and information from response teams. Community members circulate announcements and situation reports from WHO and other agencies via WhatsApp, demonstrating a determination to keep apprised of response activities. This level of engagement is positive and should be maximised. Across the response, an enhanced strategy of community engagement must deliver on repeated local requests for more in-depth knowledge about Ebola, the response and treatment procedures. Local authorities and journalists continue to affirm that improved information flows can de-escalate more politicised views of Ebola.⁷ Communities suggest more (facilitated discussion) forums in which local communities can ask questions and receive further detailed information about treatment and laboratory procedures. Actors both opposing the response as well as those supporting it call for greater civilian access to laboratories and treatment centers in order to build familiarity with procedures and medicines used.⁸ Given the environment of distrust, granting more direct access will help to overcome 'fear of the unknown' and can constructively dispel misinformation. Some messages have made the suggestion that schools should be given organised trips to ETCs to further dispel misinformation and cultivate local buy-in to response efforts, thereby cascading increased knowledge through different population groups including youth.
- **Create clear feedback mechanisms** – Community members continue to make multiple peaceful attempts to communicate with response partners and to explain concerns and opposition to the response in non-violent ways. They repeatedly call for stronger mechanisms to report perceived corruption or the undue use of force by response teams (in line with partners' call for greater accountability to affected populations). A number of messages also suggest that as well as the hotline to report suspected cases and community deaths, a dedicated hotline should be established to enable community members to make real-time reports of insecurity or suspicious activities. Whilst this may be open to abuse and would need to be carefully monitored, communities suggest it would improve the security of response personnel and structures, and potentially the security of community members too.
- **Continued demands for results** – Messages continue to demand a more effective response against the Ebola virus ("We don't want a single more death!"). They express concern about the perceived lack of commitment from international responders and the suspension of response activities. Many messages contain statements such as "We plead with the international community not to give in" to the attacks (e.g., when Médecins Sans Frontières had to pull-out of the ETC in Katwa in February 2019), but to stay focused on containing the outbreak.⁹ Local authorities supporting response efforts ask teams to "Expand the footprint of the response" and suggest that there is a need to "multiply laboratories for more rapid testing" and "create transit centers for the sick".¹⁰ The suspension of activities risks strengthening the view that response teams are less committed to ending the outbreak than the local population, and there has also been criticism that trainings for media, journalists and religious leaders have been cancelled. When activities must be suspended, it is important that this is fully explained to local communities.
- **Heightened politicisation and the involvement of state security forces** – There is growing consensus at local levels that Ebola serves political agendas and growing concern that Ebola is used as a tool of "political exclusion". Messages suggest that the government used Ebola as "pretext" to prevent voters in Beni-Butembo from influencing the presidential election. Ebola is seen as a vehicle for partisan influence (local leadership appointments were largely given to the pro-government majority; and there was heightened political positioning of/around the response during campaigns for the March 2019 legislative elections). This damages the neutrality of the response. Messages emphasise the ongoing nature of the outbreak as distinct from other Ebola outbreaks in West Africa and elsewhere in Congo, compounding views that epidemiological explanations do not fully account for the spread or duration of this outbreak. Communities remain highly concerned about the involvement and role of state security forces in the Ebola response, including the Congolese National Police (PNC) and the national army (FARDC). They are often regarded as being poorly disciplined and messages report instances unnecessary force being used against civilians during the response.¹¹ Whilst it is broadly understood that response partners require support to operate in the affected areas of North Kivu, heavy securitisation of the response and the use of the military is contested at the community level and interpreted as being detrimental to equitable response activities. As part of the feedback mechanism (discussed above), communities continue to call for a safer environment in which to report corrupt practices by state forces, both financial and coercive.
- **"Ebola as a business"** – The response is also viewed through the lens of economic agendas. Messages express concern that the vast financial and technical resources mobilised for Ebola benefit response teams but not the general population (who are "excluded from the spoils"). The optics of the response, with local hoteliers and politically-connected individuals benefiting financially, undermines its credibility and fuels these concerns. Consequently, the Ebola response has been labeled as a form of "exploitation" and financing associated with the response has started to be referred to as "blood money". Increasingly, health workers have been

included as a specific cadre of response worker who are seen to be actively benefiting from the outbreak. Perceived exclusion of the broader community has led to growing frustration, but has also created incentives for individuals to try and capitalise on potential opportunities by associating with or profiting from the response (including emerging security-for-ransom threats). Following local recommendations, response efforts must “*Address the suspicion of the poor who believe that the Ebola response is a large business affair*”. Building community trust requires greater transparency about the flow of money (at international, national and local levels) and about who is involved in the response and why. Communities also call for further clarity in decision-making procedures involving local authorities, doctors and health workers.

- **Respond to preferences for a global vaccination approach** – There remains a vacuum of information about vaccination and concerns continue to circulate as to who is / is not being vaccinated, why and when. Community leaders including Civil Society Butembo and Nande youth in Kinshasa are vocal in their criticism of the ring vaccine approach as being susceptible to manipulation. These messages suggest that the ring vaccine is biased towards those involved in the response and local political and economic elites (who “profit” from vaccination) to the detriment of the broader population. They call for “global vaccination” (i.e., geographic approach) to improve the efficacy of the public health response. (“*Without this solution of global vaccines, there will always be resistance to the Ebola teams, because not everybody can be recruited to work in the response or profit financially from it*.”)

Selected local media and messages

Example messages from February-April 2019 that demonstrate the trends described above are presented chronologically according to six key themes:

- Heightened politicisation: national and local politics
- Views of “*Ebola as business*” that fuel opposition
- Medical approach: vaccination strategy
- Violence and insecurity surrounding the Ebola response
- Consistent supporters

A. Heightened politicisation

The politicisation of the Ebola response and the way it is linked to perceived political agendas must be interpreted against the backdrop of the *Grand Nord*’s status as an opposition stronghold and an area with complex mobilisation patterns of local armed youth.¹² Despite being far from Kinshasa, the area is highly politically engaged and residents seek political and economic autonomy over local affairs. The ability to participate in and influence political outcomes at both local and national levels is seen to be important, yet specific decisions surrounding the Ebola response have compromised the population’s ability to fully participate in a number of ways: (i) appointments to leadership posts in the response were seen to benefit pro-government political parties (PPRD and BUREC), raising suspicions of Ebola as a vehicle to extend government influence; (ii) the decision by the national electoral commission (CENI) to cite Ebola as a rationale to postpone the 30 December 2018 presidential elections in Beni and Butembo significantly aggravated perceptions that Ebola served a political agenda (most residents of the area supported opposition candidate Martin Fayulu but their votes were never counted.)¹³ Both these issues reinforce preexisting suspicions that political agendas fuel the ongoing insecurity in the area. The sudden and extreme nature of Ebola mirrored the sudden and extreme nature of the onset of the mass killings (from 2014 onwards), and some residents question whether Ebola may be a continuation of an underlying project aimed at killing civilians. The involvement of some military officers in supporting certain mass killings has also raised suspicions about the government’s potential role in the most recent security threat to the population: Ebola.¹⁴ Early in the outbreak, narratives cast Ebola as the most recent “*weapon of war*” but local authorities and associations helped dampen these suspicions and raise awareness around Ebola. The suspension of elections weakened attempts to overcome these narratives and reignited accusations of politicisation.

Local politics also shape narratives of the response. Some candidates from the *Grand Nord* used Ebola in their campaign strategies for the 31 March 2019 legislative elections.¹⁵ Messages continue to allege that local political figures spread false information about Ebola, suggesting Ebola has become a tool in local infighting. These two successive waves of explicit political have activity sustained the politicisation of Ebola and have made it increasingly difficult to de-escalate narratives surrounding political agendas.

National politics

1) Politicised appointments to response teams reduce community trust. Open letter to the DRC Minister of Public Health, the World Health Organization, MONUSCO and the Coordinators of the Ebola Response, Butembo (14 February 2019)

With this open letter, civil society members in Butembo sought to explain to international and national audiences why the Ebola response is viewed as a vehicle for pro-government majority political parties (PPRD, BUREC) to extend influence in the area. Originally written in French, this open letter also circulated via WhatsApp.

“...The politicisation of Ebola began with the installation of the response teams... Vehicles of the response team were repeatedly sighted in front of the buildings of the PPRD and BUREC political parties, motivating suspicions of the political nature of the response. In some cases, adherents of these parties were appointed to the leadership positions of the Ebola response. This is why some people ask themselves whether there is a link between political parties and the response teams. This is why some people who oppose the PPRD also developed disdain for the Ebola response teams. We are trying to understand why the health workers and responders would be complicit with these political actors.

Today, the logical conclusion is to note that the director of the response, Dr. Djokolo Tambwe Bathé, is a fervent adherent of PPRD. He used his visit to Beni to revitalise his political party by appointing members of this party to leadership roles in the Ebola response. Simply put, many sources that we met in the response and in PPRD state that the doctor was more concerned with political activities in Beni than with health responsibilities. Moreover, at the same time that he was leading the Ebola response, the Doctor was also campaigning in Pangi territory in Maniema, where he was a candidate in national legislative elections... While he was in Beni and Butembo, Dr. Bathé Djokolo devoted himself to supporting the campaign of Emmanuel Ramazani Shadari [President Kabila's hand-picked successor throughout most of the electoral cycle] and to assisting PPRD candidates for deputy positions in these areas... [The Doctor] began to mix politics with the Ebola response by carrying out political activities for PPRD during work hours and attacking opposition candidates.¹⁶

This is why some population members began resisting the response teams. Moreover, the postponement of elections in Beni and Butembo cities and Beni territory demonstrates that the epidemic became a political bargaining token. We believe that the decision by CENI to suspend elections was made for electoral reasons, not health reasons. The epidemic was not a valid reason to delay the elections... Sufficient precautionary measures were already in place to allow the elections to go forward.

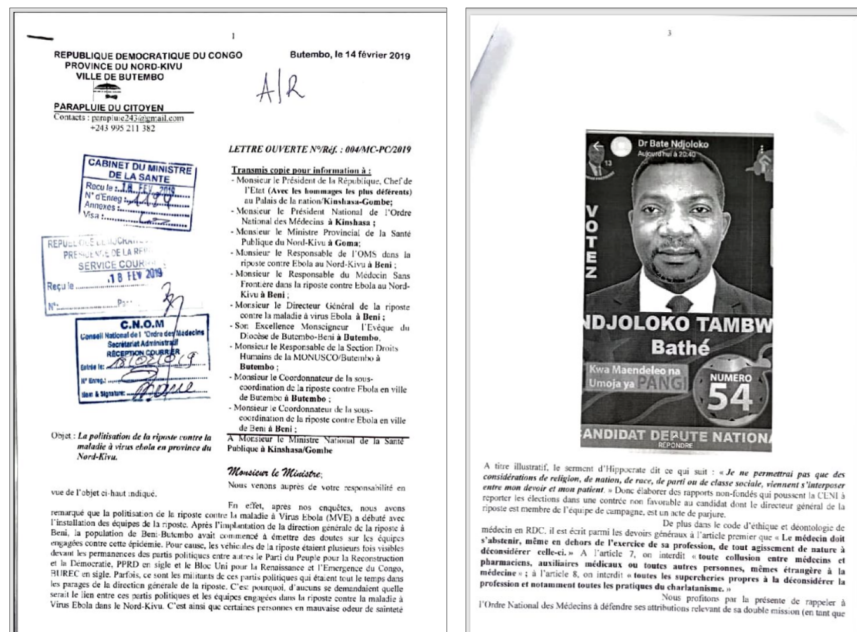


Image 1. Excerpts of the open letter. It included this campaign flyer for Dr. Ndjokolo Tambwe Bathé. The full text of the letter is available on request.

2) Ebola as a political plot to steal elections and endanger civilians, Beni-Lubero Online (15 February 2019)

The continuation of the Ebola outbreak is described as having the same root causes as the mass killings in Beni, and the national government is implicated in both (originally in French).

*"Of all the sad memories that will never leave the spirit of our people, we will remember how Beni and Butembo were deprived of their right to vote by a plot of [former President] Kabila a a plot which [President] Felix [Tshisekedi] has endorsed. The Ebola outbreak is the doing of the same actors that Joseph Kabila had used to exterminate the Nande community and to install his hand-picked successor as the new president... The Beni massacres were another crime organized by Joseph Kabila and his political system, a crime that Felix Tshisekedi fully supports."*¹⁷

3) Ebola as a "Weapon of War", Beni-Lubero Online (24 February 2019)

"Everything surrounding this devastating epidemic remains a bit mysterious: its appearance, its origin and even its persistence seemingly defy the "professional" medical devices set up to combat it... How, after all the time that has passed since August 2018, and with the involvement of international agencies like MSF, is it possible that this epidemic that was quickly controlled elsewhere is still ongoing?... Butembo and Beni are large cities with orderly populations that are very capable of diffusing information and organising educational campaigns. Under the guidance of civil society, churches, local politico-administrative structures, teachers, and the medical corps, the population has been fully involved in the fight against Ebola. There is no reason that the disease should have continued."

Thus, certain facts reveal that the Ebola outbreak in Beni and Butembo is a weapon of war, a weapon of mass destruction against its population: (1) Timing of Ebola: the Ebola outbreak surprised the population of Beni in a time when the region was suffering under the scourge of massacres, insecurity, unheard of violence, pillage and malicious destruction... Ebola came... where people had already lost everything (land, houses, agricultural fields, business)... This epidemic appeared mysteriously in the region as another strategy to exterminate the population, the fulfillment of the plan that the massacres had started; (2) Ebola became the reason to deprive the population of Beni-Butembo of its voting rights: it didn't take long to discover the political significance of this epidemic. On the instruction of president Joseph Kabila, Corneille Naanga, the president of the Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI) prevented millions of voters from Beni and Butembo from participating in the 30 December 2018 elections, with the sole purpose of sabotaging an electorate who supported the opposition coalition..."

4) Ebola as a tool of "political exclusion" sparks attacks, North Kivu Provincial Deputy Simon Kazungu, DCF/N opposition party (11 March 2019)¹⁸

"The attacks against the ETCs in Butembo should be seen as retaliation for using Ebola as a pretext to not hold elections in this part of the province... Ebola was manipulated as a tool of political exclusion to stifle the civic rights of citizens. This manipulation is now turning against the medical assistance centers..."

Local politics

Ebola became a talking point in the campaigns leading up to the 31 March 2019 legislative elections.¹⁹ As a North Kivu Provisional Deputy asserted, *“Anyone with the least bit of insight can see that Ebola is being used as an opportunity by political actors to position themselves”* (further extract from message 4, above). Candidates assumed particular standpoints on the issue, bringing Ebola into a political battle. A selection of candidates’ views are presented below.

- 5) **Hon. Lusenge Bonané, National Deputy from Lubero territory (n.d. March 2019) Swahili and French:** *“Ebola is here, and it’s true. Lawyers or politicians might be smart in their own domains, but they haven’t studied biology and lack medical training... people who claim that Ebola is a hoax are a public danger for the population of Butembo.”*
- 6) **Hon. Jean Paul Lumbulumbu, Provincial deputy from Lubero (17 March 2019):** Called the population and local authorities to track down the perpetrators of the attack against the ETC in Lubero. He condemned the behavior of security forces who fired on civilians, killing one and injuring another.²⁰
- 7) **Provincial assembly candidate Kavira Musiya Esther (25 March 2019):** Alleged that leaders of ETCs pay health workers to harm patients. A WhatsApp message (in French) describes that the candidate *“Denies the existence of Ebola in Butembo in order to seek votes from the population. She claims to be a biologist who worked at ETC, where she was offered \$1,800 to continue the response’s work of killing people, but she refused. For her, Ebola equals the continuation of the massacres of Beni.”* In a WhatsApp audio message, the candidate was interviewed and explained (in Swahili): *“If you look at the doctors and human rights organisations closely, you’ll see that the disease of Ebola does not really exist. So I abandoned [the work]. Even the doctors, the nurses, I was a supervisor, I went to all the treatment centers and I told them, stop killing people, the disease of Ebola does not exist. Why does it just target us? It is just something to kill the Nande. Why does this only persist in our area, where the massacres broke out?”*

Other messages attribute violence to local political propaganda. As violence against the response escalated, local messages from civil society and local journalists attributed the resistance to the role of local political figures in stoking tensions and propagating false narratives about Ebola.

- 8) **Provincial Coordination of Civil Society North Kivu (Goma), supported by Civil Society of Butembo City and Lubero Territory (2 April 2019):** *“We invite the political figures [in Butembo] who are propagating rumors to stop the rumors, instead orient your party adherents to use a peaceful voice to eradicate the Ebola virus”.*²¹
- 9) **“Families United Against Ebola in Butembo”, local non-governmental association, Butembo (19 April 2019):** *“Familles Unies contre Ebola à Butembo”* called on elected officials in Butembo to support the Ebola response. *“We call the elected Deputies of Butembo and all major political actors to support the response and sensitisation teams, because the problem is that political discourse and rumors enflame the population. The population needs access to reliable information. [Politicians] must distance themselves publicly from politicised messages surrounding the response in order to restore trust and security. They should join with Civil Society teams and churches to establish a credible leadership that can address the lack of trust and to de-radicalise popular opinion.”*
- 10) **“The resistance is a problem of local politics”, local journalist Magloire Paluku (20 April 2019):** A well-known journalist in the Grand Nord, Magloire Paluku, also operates a radio station in Goma. He published 15 recommendations to re-launch support efforts that have circulated on WhatsApp. *“Recognise that the resistance to the Ebola response in Beni and Butembo is a problem arising from political clashes and differences between local leaders. We must identify the influential persons who won legislative elections due to their support for or resistance to Ebola. They can also be used to spread positive information in the future”.* The full recommendations are presented at the end of this document.²²
- 11) **Joint Communiqué of Civil Society of Butembo City and Lubero Territory (20 April 2019):** Signed by Georges Muhindo Katsongo, Prof. Abbé Telesphor Muhindo Malongo, President of Civil Society Butembo (in French). *“We call on the politicians propagating false rumours to stop taking advantage of the misfortune of the population. We call on all those, the purported members of armed groups and their collaborators, to stop exposing innocent persons to violence and to stop tarnishing the image of our community. We demand the Congolese Parliament to remove the immunities of the political actors who are intoxicating and spreading rumours about the response.”*

B. Views of “Ebola as a Business” that fuel opposition

Uneven financial benefits between response actors and the population became a rallying point for opposition to the response, with some messages going so far as to describe the funding for the Ebola response as *“blood money”* (see for example message 8 above). Such views contribute to suspicions that response teams may seek to prolong the outbreak for their own financial benefits, calling into question the motives and commitment of response members to eradicate the disease.

- 12) **“Response teams take all the resources for themselves”, President of the Civil Society Butembo, WhatsApp message in French (13 February 2019)**

“Those who work with the Ebola response are profiting from it... If the response coordinators, with their millionaire-partners and the government of DRC, really wanted to see Ebola eradicated, they would be able to stop it. When there is an alert or a confirmed case, response teams take all the resources for themselves: they get full tanks of gas... Millions of dollars are diverted to purchase fuel for the bourgeois responders and to rent the vehicles. This money circulating around has made the Ebola response into a form of exploitation

of the local population.”

13) Ebola as “blood money,” WhatsApp message in French (13 February 2019)

“Don’t touch blood money [in the Ebola response], it’s an abomination. The blood of everyone who you hand over [to the Ebola treatment centers] will be on your hands. No one is telling us the truth about Ebola: not the government, nor the traditional doctors nor the religious authorities. Are they complicit? ...The people of the response, MSF, Astrames, the World Health Organization, psychologists and local doctors are corrupt. If you go see a doctor, you risk contracting Ebola through the medicine you’re given. The doctor and the response team are there to exterminate us. To end to Ebola, we need to drive away the whole team, and cut off its financing. Or, make them stop their activities and go examine the laboratory and medicine that they use... Pass this message along to two people and you’ll save a life”.

14) “Response Teams Really Need to take Ebola More Seriously”, WhatsApp message in French (11 March 2019)

This WhatsApp Message includes a copy of a message from MSF-Geneva suggesting that at the epicenter of the epidemic in Katwa, response teams failed to identify the vector of infection for 43% of Ebola patients.

“Really, Ebola has got to be taken more seriously. But the general haze over the response, and the lucrative nature of the services provided under the cover of ‘humanitarianism’ give no hope at all that this epidemic can be ended. Even though this is the best financed of all epidemics ever seen in DRC, there is nothing to guarantee that needed water or soap would be provided to households so that they could wash their hands regularly. The lack of water and chlorine in the hand washing stations that certain NGOs set up in public spaces leads people to wonder whether the response teams even have the will needed to eradicate this disease”.

15) “Pay us our rightful salaries”, response team workers, Goma (5 April 2019)

Photographs of response personnel protesting at the WHO office in Goma to demand salary arrears have been circulating via WhatsApp.²³ This followed an earlier protest in February.²⁴ Protest signs read: “Pay us our rightful salary of three months”; “No money, no job! We need our pay. Please!!! WHO”; and “It’s urgent”.

C. Medical approach: vaccination strategy

Medical and technical aspects of the response also play into political and economic concerns. Messages criticise the ring-vaccine approach as enabling corruption in the administration of the vaccine. They express narratives that suggest that the individuals actually receiving the vaccine may not be on ‘real’ lists of contacts, but rather that response team members list their own relatives as contacts, or that local political and economic elites receive preferential access to the vaccine. Some messages call for a geographic vaccination strategy that would provide the general population in all affected health zones with the vaccine.

16) “De-politicise Ebola by vaccinating everyone”, President of the Civil Society Butembo (13 February 2019)

“When response teams make contact lists for Ebola patients, the first on the list - and thus the first to receive the vaccines - are people from the responders’ families! Those who receive vaccine first aren’t even those who are most endangered by the virus: they are other, well-connected and politically important people who may not even live in an area immediately threatened by Ebola. Why is this?

And you [response teams] are really telling us not to resist in the face of these harmful practices?... You really want us to applaud your way of doing things? I am not against the response teams, but I am against this way of making fun of our people.

The millions of dollars that the World Health Organization and its partners mobilise would be enough to vaccinate the whole population of Butembo and all the areas affected by Ebola. I assure you, that if the response made the vaccine available to the whole population, Ebola could be eradicated in 10 days. Without global vaccines, there will always be resistance to the Ebola teams, because not everybody can be recruited to work in the response or profit financially from it. Plead for the vaccine to be made available to the entire population, then politics won’t have any more sway over the response”.

17) Open letter from the Nande youth association in Kinshasa, on resistance to the response teams, (late March 2019)²⁵

The association of Nande Youth in Kinshasa (COJENUAK) “regrets” that response teams have been unable to contain the outbreak and urges authorities to undertake a more effective response to eradicating Ebola. “The ring vaccine approach is poorly chosen. There is limited information and a misunderstanding of the role of the vaccine in preventing Ebola, and suspicions of corruption in the administration of the vaccine”.

D. Escalating violence and insecurity surrounding the Ebola response

Political dimensions of Ebola, inequities in the distribution of financial resources, and concerns surrounding uneven access to vaccinations are critical issues that underpin some of the reasons for escalating violence against the Ebola response. Attacks endanger local and foreign health workers alike, and a series of warning messages have been circulated since mid-April that threaten to escalate violence further still (a summary of recent insecurity incidents is presented in the notes at the end of the document).²⁶ Escalating violence lagged behind the postponement of the December 2018 elections, but the first message recovered from an attack site explicitly cited restricted voting rights as motivating the violence (see message 18 below regarding the 24 February attack on Katwa). Attacks became more frequent following the 31 March legislative elections. In late April, written threats escalated again and started to name specific local authorities as targets (see messages 20-23 below). These threats describe Ebola as a hoax. This is in contrast to earlier

messages circulating via WhatsApp that incited opposition as a result of the perceived inefficacy, political agendas or business motives of the response, but did not question the medical reality of Ebola. This new wave of threats also prohibits local media from carrying information about Ebola.

In the areas around Beni and Butembo, it can be extremely difficult to accurately attribute the perpetrators of violence (as numerous investigative reports have emphasised previously). Until the attack of 19 April 2019 on the Université Catholique du Graben, messages often attributed attacks to “youth” or “civilians” in the area. Others implicated armed groups or local defense forces known as Mai Mai. A wave of warning messages from self-described Mai Mai were recovered in the immediate aftermath of the 19 April attack. These purported Mai Mai warnings escalated the threats of violence to new levels: they threatened continued killings and arson against the response in general; against specific local leaders that support the response; and against civilians loyal to local leaders who support the response. Messages from civil society members and local journalists recognise that Mai Mai have “political sponsors” and raise questions about the political interests of who may be mobilising local youth or working through armed actors to instigate violence. Such local messages call on political leaders in Butembo to stop the propaganda and to adopt “a peaceful voice” (see messages 8-11 above that urge responders to “Recognise that the resistance to the Ebola response in Beni and Butembo is a problem arising from political clashes and differences between local leaders”). The analysis of ‘Mai Mai messages’ suggests that they should not be taken at face value and should not be automatically or prematurely attributed to armed groups.

Threatening violence: tracts and warning messages

In the *Grand Nord*, it is not uncommon for perpetrators to leave leaflets at attack sites or to communicate warnings in advance of attacks. Since late February 2019, a significant number of such warning tracts have been dropped. A selection is presented below.

18) Leaflet dropped at the attack on Katwa ETC (24 February 2019)

Actors claiming responsibility for the attack on the Katwa ETC link resistance to the Ebola response with resistance against political disenfranchisement (Swahili):

“Alert!!! Alert!!! Alert!!! Us voters, we won’t tire until we receive justice at the polls. We are informing you, all the citizens of Congo, that we will never tire until we receive our rights, so long as thieves steal the elections, even if Felix Tshisekedi became president though electoral theft. We are reminding them that we have no problems with the police or the national army, so long as they build up our homeland. Following these events [e.g., arson of Katwa treatment center], we will carry out even larger plans than what you have seen today. Citizens, let us rise up!!!”

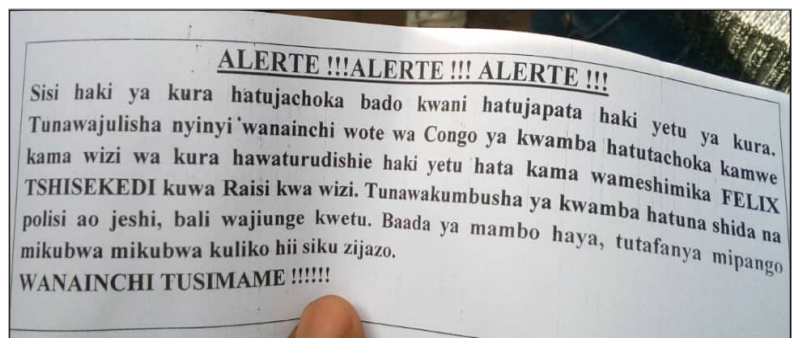


Image 2. Leaflet dropped at the attack on Katwa ETC, 24 February 2019

19) Leaflets warn of impending attacks, Radio Moto Butembo-Beni (18 March 2019)

Armed actors reportedly dropped more leaflets threatening attacks at Munzambayi, Vutsundo, and Butembo that stated: “The inhabitants fear looming attacks that have been recently threatened in tracts. The unknown authors of these documents promise to attack the Ebola Treatment Center at Itav, demand sums of money and forbid inhabitants of the area from staying in their homes”.

20) “Warning Message”, Butembo (20 April 2019)

This warning message is signed UPLC (*Union des Patriotes pour la Libération du Congo*), which is also referred to locally as “Mai Mai Kilalo” after its leader.²⁷ Signing a threat “UPLC” demonstrates that the authors intend the violence to be attributed to armed groups, yet this is insufficient to authenticate the message or definitely attribute the threat to UPLC (indeed, later communications attributed to UPLC denied involvement and a WhatsApp message signed UPLC and dated 10 May denounced attacks on ETCs, calling instead for dialogue with health workers). This warning message threatens violence against supporters of the Ebola response and instructs the population and local media to stop spreading information about Ebola. Translated from Swahili.

“We are informing the Ebola response teams that we will eliminate them by force. We will not tolerate any elected deputy in the city or in North Kivu who talks about the existence of the Ebola virus (ex. Tembos Yotama). No one should dare to talk about this Ebola because the disease does not exist. We warn the hospitals and treatment centers because they will face destruction here in Butembo and elsewhere. These people will be burned: [cites local authorities who have been supportive of the response] Melchisédech [Catholic Bishop of Butembo-Beni diocese], Silue Kanyamanza, Mbambo doctor at Katwa, Doctor Mundama and others... They have already sold out Christians and the population to the cause of Ebola. We also inform the media [radios and television programmes] that we don’t want to hear any more publicity about Ebola or about these bad people of the response. If you don’t take this warning seriously, you will regret it. Don’t be surprised at what will happen. Listen. UPLC.”

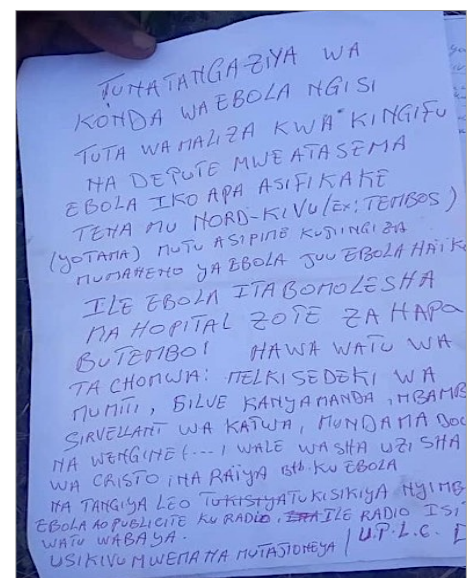


Image 3. Warning message, Butembo, 20 April 2019

21) “People are suffering because of you, Response Teams”, Warning from alleged Mai Mai, Butembo, (21 April 2019)

21 April 2019

First of all, receive our greetings, from the Mai Mai

This is a letter from us Mai Mai, please receive it.

People are no longer free to move about and are suffering because of you, the Ebola response.

We want to inform you of our serious indignation. We do not want your presence here in this city and the area. Leave before it's too late.

We give you four days for your voluntary departure, if not, don't be surprised [at what will happen].

Ebola [response teams], FARDC [national army], and Police: Watch Out!”

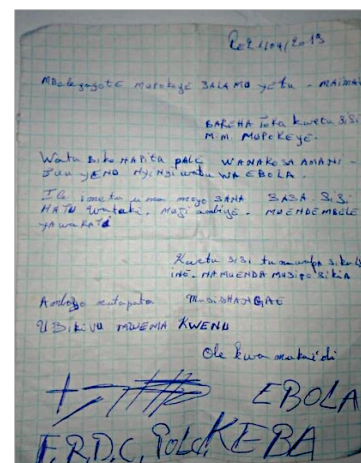


Image 4. Warning message, Butembo, 21 April 2019

22) “Announcement” threatening local authorities supporting the response, from alleged Mai Mai (22 April 2019)

Translated from Swahili. (Compare with the structure of the open letter by local customary chiefs – message 32 below. That letter was transmitted a week earlier in Butembo, and this alleged Mai Mai letter appears to mimic the format of that letter which was drafted by recognised traditional authorities). Point 2 below referring to church offerings is linked to the finances of religious authorities who are perceived to receive money from Ebola teams. Point 5 may be a reference to Mai Mai beliefs that their ‘dawa’ or traditional medicine that is believed to protect fighters against bullets, may also provide protection from Ebola.

“Announcement

To the health care team fighting against Ebola: The population is unable to work because of you. For their sake, we cannot allow your efforts to continue. Us who live in the forest, we are still just in the first stage of harassing you.

And to Melschedek Sikuli (Diocese of Butembo-Beni) and Pastor CBCA [Baptist denomination] Mali, Mayor Kanyamanda of Butembo city, Colonel Mbambi of the PNC [national police] in Butembo city, all the doctors in the zone and city of Butembo, Mundama, Nzoli. As well as he doctors and all the workers at the health centres: we are going to cut off their heads.

And to you locals: do not go to church and don't give any more offerings at church, because we are going to burn down the churches too.

- 1. If you do not listen, we will begin to attack the churches*
- 2. We are aware that you have been giving offerings [at church]*
- 3. We know the whole city of Beni [and Butembo]. We even the hotels where you [response teams] are staying, we have already identified them.*
- 4. All the radio stations in Butembo must stop broadcasting or publishing messages about Ebola.*
- 5. We have not heard of a single soldier or Mai Mai who has died of Ebola*

Done at Butembo on 22/4/2019 by the Mai Mai KAMILI.

Call on this number [redacted]. We are not afraid”.

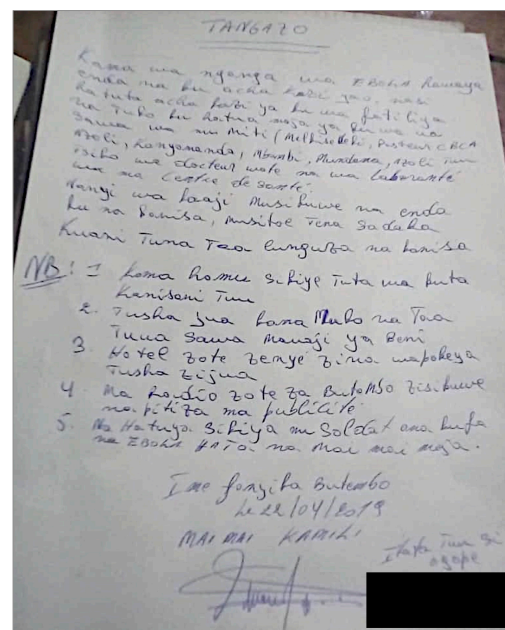


Image 5. Announcement, 22 April 2019

23) Response teams should “Evacuate”, Warning message from alleged Mai Mai Colonel (late April)

The proliferation of threats also includes lesser-known Mai Mai. This message (originally in French) prioritises the forced departure of response teams to be the way to stop Ebola. It illustrates the narrative that links Ebola to the massacres around Beni and as targeting the Nande ethnic group.

“I, Colonel Kakuthu give you one week to evacuate this area.

NB: You have massacred this Nande ethnic group too much.

STOP Ebola.”

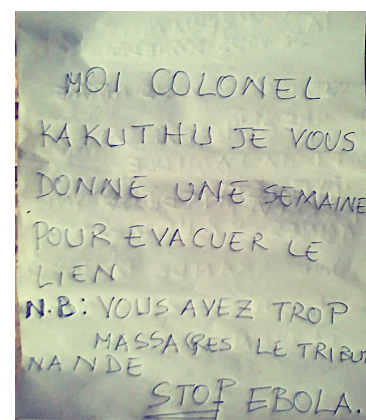


Image 6. Evacuate, late April 2019

Narratives of state forces aggravating opposition

The messages above implicate civilians and/or non-state forces in violence. Other messages allege that national political interests explain the attacks on response teams, or implicate state security forces including the national army (FARDC) and national police (PNC) involved in the response for abusing their authority and endangering civilians around Butembo and Beni.²⁸ The involvement of state security forces in the response can aggravate the political interpretations of the response. In contrast, other messages and media recognise a role for state security forces in protecting response personnel.²⁹

24) Population distrusts police who behave “like Rambo”: Butembo-based journalist (14 February 2019)

The quote, which circulated via WhatsApp in French, is attributed to a member of the WHO in Butembo. *“When you [police] come to communities with cars that kick up dust, and you jump out as if you were in Rambo movies, the community is wary of you, and when there is a problem, the community won’t call you because it considers you their enemy”.*

25) Government destroys ETCs to harm the local population, Beni-Lubero Online (24 February 2019)³⁰

“The intent behind Ebola was to devastate the population for the longest time possible. The well-planned criminal arsons of the ETCs reveal this... Such sadism cannot be attributed to the local population. Some authorities try to blame the Mai-Mai. Infantile and shameful lies! Who would dare to cross the city in broad daylight, armed with weapons and vehicles, to burn and systematically destroy a place so well protected as these treatment centers without, and do so without being disturbed?”

The criminal destruction of the two Ebola treatment centers in Butembo is part of the overall genocide plan against the Nande people. The executioners wanted Ebola to bring the same scope of destruction as the massacres. The engineers of this plan don’t want the epidemic to be easily contained. So they do everything possible to discourage the treatment team (attacking treatment centers, destruction of medical equipment and drugs, attacks on vehicles, physical injury etc.), while expanding the epidemic by sending Ebola patients fleeing into society, without any hope of treatment or preventing the spread of the virus...

We plead with the international community not to give in to this pressure... The international community should increase the capacity of international medical organisations already in the field, such as the MSF... to save the population of Butembo and Beni”.

26) Undue use of force against civilians by state security forces, local journalist at Liva, via whatsapp (14 March 2019)

“A hospital of Médecins sans Frontières has just been burned at Mambowa, in Bapere Sector in Lubero. Sources from Liva talked of a young man hit by a bullet in his legs [by FARDC]. These reports pushed the population so far as to chase away the vehicles of the response teams, which were supported by the soldiers and agents of state security forces. Everyone is talking about the death of a man at Ngazimoya, in the same region, who had a suspected case of Ebola. The response teams arrived to take care of his body, but the population refused to hand over his body to the response teams, and an exchange of bullets followed. For the time being, the population of Njiapanda is in the streets and in Bapere sector chanting against the response teams”.

E. Consistent supporters

In the February-April 2019 period, most messages transmitted by mainstream local media were either factual in nature, such as covering the activities of the Ebola response and spread to affected areas, or explicitly supported the Ebola response by featuring authorities and survivors that encouraged trust in the response.³¹ Community members circulate WHO announcements and updates via WhatsApp, demonstrating their commitment to accessing reliable information. Church leaders from different denominations (Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Catholic) encourage congregations to support the response, as do civil society leaders, and some political figures, city officials, and customary chiefs.³² In light of the support given to the response by local authorities, and even the popular presidential candidate Martin Fayulu, the current escalation of violence is particularly concerning. Violence against the Ebola response undermines the influence of public authorities in key leadership positions around Butembo and Beni, and this further disrupts the balance of power in the area. Subsequent to making the statements below, several of the political and religious figures cited have been directly threatened in warning messages.

27) “Resistance is Punishable by Law”, Prosecutor of the High Court of Butembo (published by Congo Sauti, 9 February 2019)³³

The *Procureur du Parquet de Grande Instance*, Valéry Mwaliyumande, called populations around Katwa and Butembo to stop their opposition to response teams, and stated that Butembo’s high court would bring to justice anyone propagating violence. The failure to stem acts of opposition despite legal threats risks undermining the authority of government structures.³⁴ *“Anyone who opposes these measures commits, without doubt, an infraction of rebellion against urgent and obligatory measures of public health and will be subject to punishment”.*

28) “I have never received any money to support the response”, Bishop Sikuli Paluku Melchisédech, Catholic Bishop of Butembo-Beni Diocese, (11-13 February 2019)

Melchisédech has been a staunch supporter of response efforts since the start of the Ebola outbreak in August 2018. Since delivering the following messages, the Bishop has been threatened by multiple warning (for example, see messages 20 and 23 above). It was recently reported that he has fled the country as a result and due to concerns for his safety.

On 12 February 2019, the Catholic Bishop visited the treatment center at Itav to provide his support. In front of the local media, he

pleaded with the population to trust the staff and conditions of the center. The subsequent attacks on this ETC demonstrated the current limits of the church's ability to influence non-violent behaviour.

"I see that the health care workers, doctors and all the experts are performing their duties well and providing a good service. We should not be afraid to seek treatment here if something is wrong... The ETC is not a place of death. People don't come here to die, but to be healed. People must arrive on time so that the treatment is effective",³⁵

In some areas, the support church leaders have given the Ebola response has led to a decline in church attendance. Leaders, including Bishop Sikuli, respond by invoking Ebola as a matter of religious adherence, or a "test of faith" (11 February 2019).

"You need to chose which way you will go. If you have chosen to no longer be Christian because of Ebola [by resisting the response], that will follow you... Jesus never forgets those who belong to him, but you are cursing yourselves".³⁶

The Bishop was accused of accepting money for promoting the Ebola response, a narrative he attempted to dispel on 13 February 2019.

"Some say that we received money [to support the Ebola response]... I have never received anything. You can ask [the response teams] how much they have given me and other priests... I have been involved in the response since Ebola arrived in Butembo, and I have never received anything, not even 5 dollars. So, if some people are profiting, I don't know about it. But Ebola concerns all of us. Whether or not some are benefiting financially, what's critical is that we eradicate this disease."³⁷ (13 February)

29) Former Presidential Candidate Martin Fayulu endorses the response at ITAV treatment center, Butembo, (February 15 2019)

Opposition candidate for the December 2018 presidential elections, Martin Fayulu, visited Butembo on 15 February 2019. Fayulu held overwhelming support in the *Grand Nord* during the electoral cycle. In Butembo, Fayulu visited the ETC at Itav, washed his hands at the ETC in a symbolic gesture of support, aimed to dispel misinformation, and urged the population to trust response teams.³⁸ His speech at the ETC at Itav circulated on WhatsApp in Swahili and French,

"Stop thinking that Ebola is just witchcraft or rumors. It exists. Don't support people who spread those rumours. We must all, all the citizens of Congo, participate in the eradication of the Ebola fever. This means that we must all observe the hygiene measures. Do you understand me?"

30) "Stop the threats", Civil Society North Kivu (Goma) and Civil Society in Butembo and Lubero Territory on local radio (2 April)³⁹

"We urge the population to stop the threats, attacks, and other acts of violence against the health structures, the Ebola Treatment Centers and the healthcare workers. [We] insist that the population abstain from violence, respect the hygiene rules, and scrupulously follow the directions given by health professionals. We also call on all those who claim to be members of armed groups or their collaborators or who are obstructing the response on the ground, to stop exposing innocent civilians to danger under the pretext of their protection."

31) Customary authorities in Beni and Lubero territories call for community support for response teams (14 April 2019)

Open letter written in Swahili and circulating in Butembo, signed by authors.

"Given the extreme danger of Ebola, which began in August 2018 in Mangina, spread to Beni and now reaches Butembo and its surroundings.

Us, traditional authorities from Beni and Lubero, who lead the populations of Butembo and surroundings areas affected by this disease, and areas that have lost lives throughout various wars, want to end this suffering. The health specialists and our customary baraza [association] agree that the Ebola virus carries a real danger.

This disease has killed people in Bandundu and Equateur here in Congo, as well as in Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Uganda elsewhere in Africa.

This is why we implore [the population]:

- 1. Don't keep allowing yourselves to be deceived by people that ignore sell this very serious disease, especially in the areas of Muchanga, Weyene, Mavono, Ruenda, Katwa and Vuhovi health center.*
- 2. Protect yourself by respecting the orders of doctors to avoid being infected with this dangerous disease*
- 3. Please receive and walk alongside the various teams involved in fighting this serious disease*
- 4. For women and children: we know our traditional customs concerning hygiene and raising children in the families. We ask you to continue to respect these.*
- 5. For the response teams: we advise you also to learn and to work in a way that will be acceptable to the local populations and culture in order to end this disease of Ebola.*

To conclude, we assure you that by the strength of God and our ancestors, if we all heed these requests, this disease will be fully eradicated. Written in Butembo, the 14th April 2019.

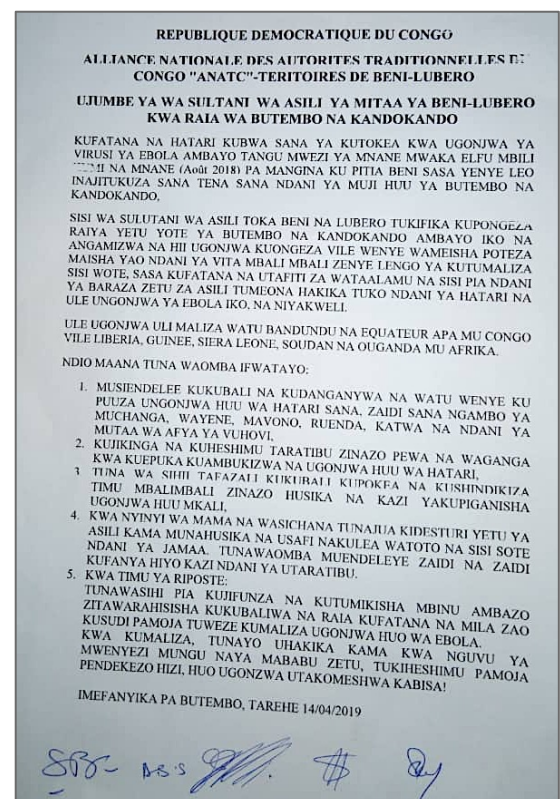


Image 8. Open letter from customary authorities in Butembo, 14 April 2019

Local denunciations of violence

The escalation of attacks is matched by widespread denunciations of the violence, beginning in February and escalating in late April following the 19 April attack on Université Catholique du Graben.

32) “Warning” following the burning of the MSF Hospital at Mambowa (14 March 2019)

This warning threatens the perpetrators of attacks against response efforts and demonstrates the ‘fend for yourself’ attitude of civilians, which can include organising armed defense forces to protect communities. It circulated in Swahili and Kinande.

“Warning

We bring to the attention of everyone implicated in the arson of the Ebola center that we will not tolerate their presence in the following areas:

Vutundo, Vusenzero, Katya, Nduko, Vukondi, Vubange, Ngule....

And we know everywhere they are lodged and hiding. We give them 48 hours to vacate these areas: if not, they will feel who we are... [threat of violence].

And all of the people who cry out against the response teams are known. They will pay dearly for their false accusations with the blood of the dead.

We are in Vurondo, Muhola, Kinyatsi, Vurusi, Mt. Lubwe.”

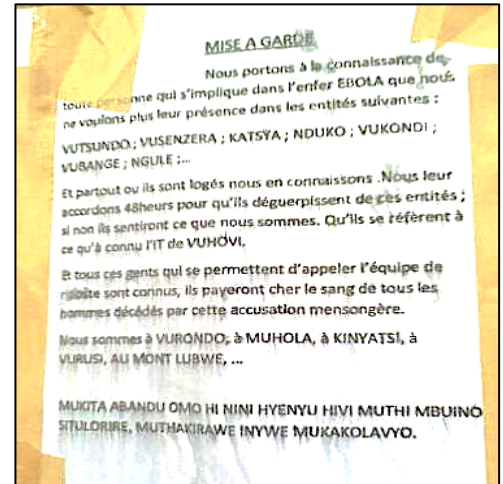


Image 9. Warning to those who oppose the response, 14 March 2019

33) “Abstain from violence” and “rumours” Joint Communiqué of Civil Society of Butembo City and Lubero Territory (20 April)

Signed by Georges Muhindo Katsongo, Prof. Abbé Telesphor Muhindo Malongo, President of Civil Society Butembo (originally in French).

“... We are profoundly shocked and concerned by the misfortune that has befallen the World Health Organization and other organisations in the Ebola response, following the death of Cameroonian Dr. Richard Mouzoko Kibung. We express our sincere condolences to his family, to the World Health Organization, and the Cameroonian state, and to all NGOs involved in the response against Ebola... We declare a city-wide shutdown throughout Butembo and Lubero territory in memory of the medical expert and others who have been killed, hurt, or threatened.

We forcibly condemn the repetitive attacks and violations against the response teams... As well as the arson of medical material, and the destruction of the Ebola treatment centres at the Université Catholique du Graben. We are concerned at the recurring arsons of the ETC at Katwa of Butembo/Itav, of the Transit Centre at Njiapanda/Mangurudjipa, the Triage Centre at the CBCA hospital, and the health structures at UCG, as well as the attacks against the response teams and the actors engaged in the fight against the disease.

We implore the population to abstain from violence, to follow the instructions of health professionals, to respect the hygiene rules, and to stop spreading false rumours.”

34) “Message of Indignation” Students at Université Catholique du Graben, Butembo (20 April 2019)⁴⁰

Students from the Université Catholique du Graben signed a memorandum as an open letter to response teams and Congolese authorities. Originally in French, excerpts are presented below.

“We, students of Université Catholique du Graben are most indignant about the repetitive attacks against our university, including the administrative offices at Itav the night of 18 April... And the attack on our University Clinic on 19 April that led to the death of the Cameroonian doctor... We consider these targeted attacks as a provocation and sabotage of our university, and this is inadmissible!

We demand... that a hotline be established so that we can transmit alerts in real time and denounce any suspicious activities.

...Also, since there is a cloud surrounding the activities of the Ebola response that has led perpetrators to commit these acts, we demand a serious audit of response activities to be carried out by independent agencies with needed technical expertise to study the suspicions that the response activities have become a business.

35) “Do not drive out the response teams”, Civil Society Butembo, WhatsApp message (23 April 2019)

Via a message circulating (originally in French), the Vice President of Civil Society North Kivu, Edgar Mateso, asserted,

“The response teams must not be overcome by the threats that some people make against them... When we hide those who are sick, when we spread false information or rumors in the community, it generates resistance, reluctance and even refusal to bring patients to the hospital when there is a case that requires rapid intervention, so unfortunately people continue to die. Do not drive out the response teams. We must welcome them and communicate with them.”

Addressing armed groups directly, the Civil Society representative went on to state, *“We recommend that they give free rein to the teams of the response, because the same virus can also reach them”.*

36) “Say ‘No’ to Insecurity”, health professionals in Butembo protest peacefully (24 April 2019)

Doctors and nurses involved in the response held a peaceful march in Butembo on 24 April 2019 and wrote an open letter to Butembo mayor Sylvain Musa Kanyamanda. One section of the letter read: (ADD PHOTO?)

“We are not here to kill. We are here to save human lives. We deplore the acts of violence that the victims of Ebola, the healthcare workers, and health structures have been subject to in our fight against the Ebola virus”.

Local authorities in zones recently exposed to Ebola

37) Territorial Administrator of Mambasa, Ituri, (1 April)

Administrateur du Territoire de Mambasa, Idriss Koma Kokodila urged community members to seek treatment at an ETC.⁴¹

“When someone has symptoms or is declared a positive case of Ebola, this does not need to be a death sentence”.

38) Call for “community participation”, President of Civil society, Basongora Groupement (26 April 2019)

As Ebola spread to Kasindi, the President of Civil Society of the administrative unit (Basongora groupement) Kapepya Ngali Nzolene, spoke at a press gathering and also called for the closure of roads linking Butembo to Kasindi to prevent the spread of the virus:

“Community participation is the factor that determines the success of the other measures to fight against the Ebola virus”.

39) Administrative chief, Basongora Groupement (30 April 2019)⁴²

In Kasindi, the chief of Basongora Groupement, Clovis Wavene of Basongora groupement asserted,

“I call on the population not to panic, but instead to observe the prevention measures, like washing hands, in order to prevent the further spread of the disease in this area.”

Contact

If you have a direct request concerning the response to Ebola in the DRC, SSHAP briefs, tools, additional technical expertise or remote analysis, or should you like to be considered for the network of advisers, please contact us.

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Notes and references

- ¹ "We've been washing our hands since August. We've followed all the hygiene rules. We don't greet our visitors anymore. We don't bury our own dead—we've accepted the "safe and dignified burials" ... We've accepted everything, but to what end?". President of the Civil Society Butembo, 13 February President of the Civil Society Butembo, 13 February.
- ² "Today, everything gets called "Ebola": if you have a fever, it's Ebola, any diarrhea or vomiting, it's Ebola, if a woman miscarries, it's Ebola. What kind of doctors are these? No one is examined." Whatsapp message, 13 February 2019.
- ³ Based on a misunderstanding of actions by response teams to decontaminate toilets with disinfectant. Internews, "Bulletin Koma Ebola du 25 Avril 2019". <https://soundcloud.com/user-740750674/bulletin-koma-ebola-du-25-avril-2019-francais>
- ⁴ Bardosh, K., Gercama, I., Bedford, J. 2019. *Social science and behavioural data compilation, DRC Ebola outbreak, November 2018-February 2019*. Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform. https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/14389/SSHAP_data_compilation_brief_2_March_2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- ⁵ For instance, an open letter of Nande youth in Kinshasa criticized the "paternalistic" views of response teams: "And even worse, there is current trend to attribute the failure of the response to the community. Worryingly, some members of the response go so far as to grow angry with the population and launch slurs against the community ravaged by violent armed conflict." The open letter calls for a "stigma free" approach to communicating with the population. ADIAC Congo. 5 April 2019. "Maladie à virus Ebola: les jeunes Nande de Kinshasa écrivent au Ministre de la Santé Publique", www.adiac-congo.com/content/maladie-virus-ebola-les-jeunes-nande-de-kinshasa-ecrivent-au-ministre-de-la-sante-publique-0
- ⁶ Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 8 March 2019. "Butembo-Beni et environs : A 6 mois de la déclaration de Ebola, les foyers de contamination n'ont cessé de s'élargir", <http://radiomotofm.info/lireactualite.php?billet=5375Butembo-Beni%20et%20environs%20-%20A%206%20mois%20de%20la%20d%C3%A9claration%20de%20Ebola,%20les%20foyers%20de%20contamination%20n%20ont%20cess%C3%A9%20de%20s%20%C3%A9largir>; Radio Moto Butembo-Beni; "L'Archidiocèse de Kisangani affecté par le phénomène Ebola à Butembo", <http://radiomotofm.info/lirearticle.php?billet=5535> ; Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 4 February 2019. "Butembo: La partie du cimetière de Kitatumba réservée aux victimes de Ebola déjà saturée", <http://www.radiomotofm.info/lireactualite.php?billet=5391BUTEMBO%20-%20La%20partie%20du%20cimetiere%20de%20Ebola%20%C3%A9serv%C3%A9e%20aux%20victimes%20de%20Ebola%20%C3%A9%20%C3%A0%20satur%C3%A9>
- ⁷ Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 7 February 2019. "Des rapports reprenant l'aspect 'résistance de la population contre Ebola", <http://radiomotofm.info/lirearticle.php?billet=5405>
- ⁸ For example, local journalist Magloire Paluku recommends: "Program guided visits to laboratories and CTEs to allow specialists to explain the facilitates and to explain the evolution of the Virus, step by step from contamination to death, or from contamination to recovery".
- ⁹ Beni-Lubero Online. 24 February 2019. "Sonnette d'alarme!! Quand l'Ebola devient l'arme de guerre à Butembo-Beni", <https://benilubero.com/quand-lebola-devient-larme-de-guerre-a-butembo-beni/>.
- ¹⁰ Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 7 February 2019. "Des rapports reprenant l'aspect résistance de la population contre Ebola", <http://radiomotofm.info/lirearticle.php?billet=5405>
- ¹¹ For an analysis, see Gulland, A. 7 March 2019. "MSF condemns militarized response Ebola outbreak", www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0:msf-condemns-militarised-response-ebola-outbreak.
- ¹² Sweet, R., Bedford, J. 2018. *Key Considerations: the Context of North Kivu Province, DRC*. Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform.
- ¹³ <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/ds2/stream/?#documents/3660494/page/1>
- ¹⁴ Although the government suspended the 30 December 30 2018 election in Beni and Butembo, youth from Beni organized a parallel election this same day. The goal was to demonstrate the popular desire for political inclusion, to demonstrate that Ebola was used as a "pretext" to restrict voting rights when successful elections would have been possible, and to demonstrating that the area was more orderly than stereotypes might suggest.
- ¹⁵ Communities describe their suspicion of government involvement in harming the population against the backdrop of FARDC involvement in supporting some of the mass killings around Beni. Various investigative studies have found that certain FARDC officers were involved in organizing or supporting some of the killings (see Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo S/2016/644; Congo Research Group "Mass Killings in Beni Territory: Political Violence, Cover Ups and Cooptation" September 2017) Although this was not the only cause of the massacres, it is the one involved most often by the population. Some local media suggest an ongoing role of FARDC in the killings even after Felix Tshisekedi took office. Beni-Lubero Online. 24 February 2019. "Ce sont les FARDC qui tuent les civiles à Oicha et environs", <https://benilubero.com/ce-sont-les-fardc-qui-tuent-les-civiles-a-oicha-et-environs/>
- ¹⁶ The involvement of state security forces in the Ebola response may also be seen as political since it coincides with provincial elections. Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 18 March 2019. "Nord-Kivu: une attention particulière des autorités sur la sécurité du processus électoral", <http://radiomotofm.info/lireactualite.php?billet=5567NORD-KIVU%20-%20Une%20attention%20particuliere%20des%20autorites%20sur%20la%20s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9%20du%20processus%20%C3%A9lectoral>; Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 7 February 2019. "Des rapports reprenant l'aspect résistance de la population contre Ebola", <http://radiomotofm.info/lirearticle.php?billet=5405>
- ¹⁷ Dr. Ndjoloko continues to collaborate with the WHO, including co-authoring journal articles on the Ebola epidemic in Beni and Butembo as recently as May 2019. Yao, N., Ndjoloko, T., 2019. "Evolving Strategy and Incident Management Systems in Hard to Reach Areas and Fragile Security Settings: The Case of Ebola Response in the Democratic Republic of Congo". *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, Vol 34 (1). <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/prehospital-and-disaster-medicine/article/evolving-strategy-and-incident-management-systems-in-hard-to-reach-areas-and-fragile-security-settings-the-case-of-ebola-response-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo/106353A3FF274D746976B02744C7133>
- ¹⁸ Beni-Lubero online. 15 February 2019. "La population de Beni-Lubero ne reconnaît jamais Felix Tshisekedi, bouclier des bourreaux, comme Président", <https://benilubero.com/la-population-de-beni-lubero-ne-reconnaît-jamais-felix-tshisekedi-comme-president/>
- ¹⁹ The DCF/N is an opposition party founded by the elder brother of Mbasa Nyamwisi who leads the RCD/K-ML opposition party.
- ²⁰ According to the Congolese press, and audio messages circulating on Whatsapp, the *Synergie des Missions d'Observation Citoyenne des Elections* reported that armed actors described as Mai Mai secured some polling stations in Beni territory during elections, creating some worries that villagers were under surveillance at the polls. Specifically at reportedly in Kalunguta, Mabuku, Mbingi, Mundiba, Kyavisogho and Mambale. Actualite. 31 March 2019. "Législatives-RDC: La SYMOCEL confirme la sécurisation des bureaux de vote par des groupes armés à Beni", <https://actualite.cd/2019/03/31/legislatives-rdc-la-symocel-confirme-la-securisation-des-bureaux-de-vote-par-des-groupes>
- ²¹ Les Volcans News. 17 March 2019. "Incendie du CTE de Lubero/NK: Jean Paul Lumbulumbu appelle à une mobilisation pour retrouver les auteurs et les sensibiliser sur le danger de la propagation de l'Ebola", <http://lesvolcansnews.net/2019/03/17/nord-kivu-incendie-du-cte-de-lubero-jean-paul-lumbulumbu-appelle-a-une-mobilisation-pour-retrouver-les-auteurs-et-les-sensibiliser-sur-le-danger-de-la-propagation-de-lebola/>
- ²² Internews, "Bulletin Koma Ebola du 2 Avril 2019". <https://soundcloud.com/user-740750674/bulletin-koma-ebola-du-02-avril-2019-francais>
- ²³ Recommendations to relaunch support for the Ebola response: 1. Il faut redéfinir la situation générale de cette résistance contre Ebola. Elle est partie d'où et de qui? Avec cette redéfinition on peut responsabiliser ou empêcher l'origine des suspicions; 2. Il faut refixer ou corriger certains objectifs de la riposte qui n'ont pas été bien assimilés ou qui ont rencontrés des obstacles dans les groupes d'opinions; 3. Il faut encore identifier les personnes influentes qui ont gagné les élections législatives grâce à leurs propos contre ou pour Ebola. Ces personnes peuvent encore une fois jouer un autre rôle plus positif; 4. Proposer les leaders de la société civile qui sont forts en médecine ou qui ont été formés dans la riposte de bien collaborer avec les experts; 5. Définir la riposte contre Ebola à Beni et à Butembo comme un problème né des divergences et récupérations politiques entre les leaders locaux; 6. S'attaquer à la suspicion des pauvres qui croient que la riposte contre Ebola est une affaire de gros sous; 7. Associer les communautés traditionnelles du genre Kyaghanda,religieuses et les chefs coutumiers dans la sensibilisation; 8.Impulser un dialogue avec les chefs maimai et leurs mentors politiques ou de la société civile,afin d'empêcher des incursions qui prennent une autre allure en s'infiltrant dans les hôpitaux et CTE; 9.Utiliser les personnes guéries et rescapées pour des témoignages; 10. Refaire des messages contre Ebola en langue vernaculaire; 11. Créer deux Journées-Ebola, par semaine, pendant trois mois au niveau provincial et local; 12.Faire une évaluation nationale en direct à la radio et à la télévision à partir de Kinshasa avec les députés,les ministres,l'OMS. Cette évaluation médiatique sera reprise en direct ou en différé parles médias locaux; 13. Programmer des visites guidées dans des laboratoires et CTE afin que les spécialistes expliquent en composition des scènes et étapes par étape, de la contamination à la mort ou de la contamination à la guérison; 14. Créer un #TOUS CONTRE EBOLA; 15. Créer un prix meilleur prévention contre Ebola, à remettre aux communautés, aux quartiers, aux villages qui seront les meilleurs dans la sensibilisation et riposte contre Ebola.
- ²⁴ Les Volcans News. 5 April 2019. "Flash: le bureau de l'OMS/Goma assiéé par les manifestants", <http://lesvolcansnews.net/2019/04/05/flash-le-bureau-de-loms-goma-assiege-par-les-manifestants-2/>
- ²⁵ In February, agents involved in the response in Goma who manned handwashing stations at the international borders (Grand and Petit barriers) demanded 4 months of unpaid salary. Les Volcans News. 18 February 2019. "Ebola: les agents de riposte dans la rue à Goma", <http://lesvolcansnews.net/2019/02/18/ebola-les-agentes-de-riposte-dans-la-rue-a-goma/>
- ²⁶ ADIAC Congo. 5 April 2019. "Maladie à virus Ebola: les jeunes Nande de Kinshasa écrivent au Ministre de la Santé Publique", www.adiac-congo.com/content/maladie-virus-ebola-les-jeunes-nande-de-kinshasa-ecrivent-au-ministre-de-la-sante-publique-0
- ²⁷ Key attacks include: 9 February, Mutiri quartier in Butembo – initially attributed in messages to "youth" in Butembo; 11 February, Centre de Santé Mavono in Butembo, attributed in local messages to youth and civilians in Butembo; 14 February on Red Cross personnel during burials at Kitatumba, burying Ebola victims from Katwa; 24 February arson attack on ETC in Katwa; 27 February and 9 March arson of ETC Itav in Butembo city (following the earlier endorsements of this ETC by Martin Fayulu and Catholic Bishop Melcesidech Sikuli); 14 March, MSF hospital burned at Mambowa, Nijapanda, Mangerudjipa; 18 April, response team attacked at Kyondo, village of Vuehs; 19 April, Université Catholique du Graben in Butembo, killing Cameroonian WHO doctor Richard Valery Mouzoko Kiboung; 20 April, attack on Katwa hospital.
- ²⁸ On the UPLC, see the reports of the United Nations Group of Experts - S/2018/531, para. 95-108, available at: <https://www.undocs.org/S/2018/531> and <https://www.undocs.org/S/2017/672>, paras. 56-57, paras. 177-179, and annex 24 - available at: <https://undocs.org/S/2017/672/Rev.1>
- ²⁹ Les Volcans News. 17 March 2019. <http://lesvolcansnews.net/2019/03/17/nord-kivu-incendie-du-cte-de-lubero-jean-paul-lumbulumbu-appelle-a-une-mobilisation-pour-retrouver-les-auteurs-et-les-sensibiliser-sur-le-danger-de-la-propagation-de-lebola/>
- ³⁰ Radio Moto. 9 April 2019. "Lutte contre Ebola à Butembo: la police sauve les agents de riposte d'une attaque des jeunes de Mutiri", <http://radiomotofm.info/lirearticle.php?billet=5414>
- ³¹ Beni-Lubero Online. 24 February 2019. "Sonnette d'alarme!! Quand l'Ebola devient l'arme de guerre à Butembo-Beni", <https://benilubero.com/quand-lebola-devient-larme-de-guerre-a-butembo-beni/>
- ³² Including 7sur7.cd, Radio Moto, RCTC/Goma, TopCongo.
- ³³ The Episcopalian Archbishop and seven bishops wrote a joint statement expressing solidarity with the Catholic Bishop in affirming support for the Ebola response. Presbyterian leaders commissioned their own reports on the resistance and assembled pastors to strategize how to restore support for the Ebola response in their parishes (included in "practical recommendations"). In Mangina, the motorcycle taxi association again endorsed the efforts of response personnel. Kisangani church leaders also launched a press communiqué expressing support for Ebola response teams and encouraged widespread support for the response. Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 8 March 2019. "L'Archidiocèse de Kisangani affecté par le phénomène Ebola à Butembo", <http://radiomotofm.info/lirearticle.php?billet=5535>
- ³⁴ Radio Moto Butembo-Beni; Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 6 March 2019. "Mangina: le travail abattu par l'équipe de riposte contre EBOLA applaudi par les taximen", <http://radiomotofm.info/lirearticle.php?billet=5518>
- ³⁵ Congo Sauti. 9 February 2019. "Ebola: La Justice locale s'implique aussi dans la riposte à Butembo", <http://congosauti.com/2019/02/09/ebola-la-justice-locale-simplique-aussi-dans-la-riposte-a-butembo/>
- ³⁶ In early February, Butembo's Mayor and the Butembo-based Catholic Bishop called on the population of Katwa to stop protests. The *Procureur du Parquet de Grande Instance* in Butembo stated that he would have protesters arrested. Congo Sauti. 9 February 2019. "Ebola: La Justice locale s'implique aussi dans la riposte à Butembo", <http://congosauti.com/2019/02/09/ebola-la-justice-locale-simplique-aussi-dans-la-riposte-a-butembo/>
- ³⁷ Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 12 February 2019. "Mgr Sikuli PALUKU en visite des malades au CTE: « On ne vient pas ici pour mourir, mais pour guérir », <https://radiomotofm.info/lirearticle.php?billet=5425>
- ³⁸ Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 11 February 2019. "Ebola, une épreuve à la foi des chrétiens selon l'Evêque de Butembo-Beni", <http://radiomotofm.info/lirearticle.php?billet=5426>
- ³⁹ Radio Moto Butembo-Beni. 13 February 2019. "Demandez leur combien ils m'ont donné pour que je m'implique dans la lutte contre Ebola (Mgr Sikuli Paluku)", <https://bit.ly/2M02QWX>
- ⁴⁰ Also available online at Volcan News. 17 February 2019. "Martin Fayulu au centre de traitement de l'Ebola de Butembo", <http://lesvolcansnews.net/2019/02/17/martin-fayulu-au-centre-de-traitement-de-lebola-de-butembo/>
- ⁴¹ Internews, "Bulletin Koma Ebola du 2 Avril 2019". <https://soundcloud.com/user-740750674/bulletin-koma-ebola-du-02-avril-2019-francais>
- ⁴² Université Catholique du Graben. Message d'Indignation des Etudiants de l'Université Catholique du Graben (UCG) aux Autorités Politico-Administratives de la République Démocratique du Congo (Chacune Suivant ses Responsabilités) et à toute la Population de Butembo et ses Environs. Available on request from Juliet Bedford – julietbedford@anthrologica.com.
- ⁴³ Internews, "Bulletin Koma Ebola du 1 Avril 2019". <https://soundcloud.com/user-740750674/bulletin-koma-ebola-du-01-avril-2019-francais-1>
- ⁴⁴ Internews, "Bulletin Koma Ebola du 30 Avril 2019". <https://soundcloud.com/user-740750674/bulletin-koma-ebola-du-30>