

IAS statement: IAS calls for urgent access to mpox vaccines across Africa

IAS – the International AIDS Society – calls for the immediate distribution of effective mpox vaccines amid the upsurge in mpox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and across many other African countries.

“The IAS urges a three-pronged response: rapid and unbureaucratic vaccine delivery to African countries, the establishment of rapid and free testing facilities within communities, and clear non-stigmatizing messaging to inform communities about symptoms and how to prevent the spread,” IAS President Beatriz Grinsztejn stated.

The World Health Organization declared mpox a public health emergency of international concern on 14 August 2024 for the second time. One emerging mpox strain detected has a dramatically heightened fatality rate (3-4%).

The emerging mpox strain, which is transmitting through sexual networks and close household contacts, is an emergency not only for Africa but globally. The continued transmission of the 2022-23 strain also poses serious concerns, especially among people who are immunocompromised, including people with advanced HIV, who are more likely to develop severe illness.

“There is an urgent need to continue searching both therapeutic and preventive measures for all mpox virus clades and to foster a unified global health response to ensure a coordinated and equitable approach to this crisis, which disproportionately affects low- and middle-income countries,” Grinsztejn added.

The mpox outbreak underscores the need for increased global

cooperation and the transfer of knowledge and vaccine manufacturing capabilities to support and empower the affected regions. According to IAS President-Elect Kenneth Ngunjiri, “This outbreak highlights the urgent need for a global pandemic treaty, as well as enhanced local scientific expertise and medical manufacturing, which would enable countries to respond more quickly to emergencies.”