



EUROPEAN SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL
by European Scientific Institute



Paper: “Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Ebola Preparedness and Response in South Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo: A Scoping Review”

Submitted: 01 August 2026

Accepted: 25 September 2026

Published: 31 October 2026

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Doi: 10.19044/esj.2026.v22n30p140

Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Jay Jesus Molino

Universidad Especializada de las Américas (UDELAS), Panama

Reviewer 2: Dionysios Vourtsis

University of West Attica, Greece

Reviewer 3: Blinded

Reviewer A:
Recommendation: Resubmit for Review

The TITLE is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.

The title is clear, specific, and appropriate to the content and geographical scope of the review.

The ABSTRACT clearly presents objectives, methods, results, and conclusions.

The abstract clearly presents the objectives, methods, main findings, and conclusions. The comparative statements between the three countries should, however, be interpreted cautiously because the available evidence is uneven.

There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

The manuscript is generally well written and easy to follow. Minor grammatical, punctuation, citation, and formatting issues should be corrected through careful language editing.

The study METHODS are explained clearly.

The methods are generally clear and appropriately based on JBI guidance and PRISMA-ScR. However, the author should clarify who performed the screening and data charting, provide the complete search strategies, and improve the PRISMA flow diagram by clearly reporting the full-text assessment and exclusion process.

The results are clear and do not contain errors.

The results are logically organized into six relevant themes. However, the 41 included sources should be individually identified and characterized in a table so that the evidence supporting the thematic and country-level findings can be clearly assessed.

The CONCLUSION or summary is accurate and supported by the content.

The conclusion is generally supported by the findings. The comparative statements regarding Uganda, DRC, and South Sudan should be slightly more cautious given the unequal quantity and type of evidence available for each country.

The conclusion could also better highlight the complementary strengths of the three countries and the potential for mutual learning and regional cooperation.

The list of REFERENCES is comprehensive and appropriate.

This section requires substantial revision. The review reports 41 included sources, while only 15 references are listed, and the individual included sources are not presented. All sources contributing to the synthesis should be clearly identifiable and appropriately referenced.

Please rate the TITLE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

5

Please rate the ABSTRACT of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the LANGUAGE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the METHODS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the RESULTS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the CONCLUSION of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the REFERENCES of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

2

Overall Recommendation!!!

Return for major revision and resubmission

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

- This is a relevant and useful review.
- Minor language and formatting revisions are also recommended.
- The main concern is the transparency of the included evidence. Although 41 sources were included, the manuscript does not identify and characterize them individually. Please provide a table of the included sources with appropriate citations and ensure that all sources contributing to the synthesis are included in the reference list.
- The screening and data-charting procedures and the PRISMA flow diagram should also be clarified.
- The Discussion could also be strengthened by emphasizing the complementary strengths of the three countries and the potential for mutual learning. Uganda's experience in surveillance and rapid response, the DRC's extensive outbreak-management experience, and South Sudan's experience in complex humanitarian settings could support joint cross-border WASH/IPC training and simulation exercises, harmonized minimum preparedness standards, routine information exchange, and stronger regional coordination with support from WHO and relevant regional bodies.

ESJ Manuscript Evaluation Form 2026

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Please respond within the appointed time so that we can give the authors timely responses and feedback.

NOTE: ESJ promotes a peer review procedure based on scientific validity and technical quality of the paper (not perceived impact). You are also not required to do proofreading of the paper. It could be recommended as part of the revision.

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Reviewer Name: Jay Molino	Email:
University, Country: Universidad Especializada de las Américas (UDELAS), Panama	
Date Manuscript Received:	Date Review Report Submitted: 9 August 2026
Manuscript Title: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Ebola Preparedness and Response in South Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo: A Scoping Review	
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Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
1. The title is clear, and it is adequate for the content of the article.	4
The title clearly identifies WASH, Ebola, the three-country scope and the scoping-review design. However, the manuscript sometimes moves beyond mapping evidence toward broad comparative and policy claims. The title remains suitable if those claims are made fully traceable to the included evidence.	
2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.	4
The abstract includes the rationale, objective, information sources, selection counts, main themes and conclusion. Nevertheless, its	

country comparisons appear more definitive than the uneven evidence base permits. After revising the methods and results, the abstract should acknowledge the principal limitations and emphasise evidence mapping rather than implied comparative effectiveness.	
3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.	3
The manuscript is readable, but it requires a systematic language and formatting edit. Examples include ‘WASH constitute’ (use ‘WASH constitutes’), ‘One of this duplicated...’, incorrect citation punctuation around PPE/Nabwami et al. (2025), and ‘Authors’ compilation’ despite single authorship. Reference spacing, hyperlink presentation and consistency of British English should also be checked.	
4. The study methods are explained clearly.	2
The PCC framework and eligibility criteria are stated, but the review is not yet reproducible. The complete platform-specific search strategies and promised supplementary table are absent; the 2014 start date is not justified; and the number of reviewers, calibration, duplicate screening or verification, disagreement resolution, software and data-charting verification are not reported. The Google Scholar 100-record limit also requires methodological justification and explicit treatment as a limitation.	
5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.	2
The arithmetic from 861 screened records to 41 included sources can be followed, but the flow conflates title/abstract, summary and full-text screening and removes cross-platform duplicates only after eligibility. Full texts assessed, exclusions with reasons and records not retrieved are not reported separately. More importantly, Table 2 summarises retrieval platforms rather than the characteristics of the 41 sources; study-level results are absent; and the thematic findings contain almost no direct citations. The text also alternates between four and five WHO IRIS documents. These are major reporting deficiencies.	
6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.	3
The conclusion is plausible and appropriately notes that the independent contribution of WASH remains insufficiently measured. However, the comparative country statements and policy recommendations cannot presently be audited because the source-level evidence is not shown. The conclusion should be recalibrated after reconstructing the results and adding a dedicated limitations section.	
7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.	1
The reference list is not adequate for the reported review. Forty-one unique sources are said to be included, but only 15 references are listed; Peters et al. (2020) is cited but missing; and most included sources cannot be identified or verified. Every included source must appear in the bibliography and in the study-characteristics table, all in-text and reference-list entries must be cross-checked, and tracking parameters should be removed from URLs.	

Overall Recommendation (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	
Return for major revision and resubmission	X
Reject	

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

The topic is relevant and the manuscript shows substantial preparatory work, but the current version cannot yet be audited as a PRISMA-ScR review. This is a structural reporting problem, not a cosmetic one: 41 included sources are claimed, while only 15 references are listed and the characteristics and results of the individual sources are not presented. I therefore recommend major revision and resubmission. The revision should: (1) provide a complete 41-source evidence table with citation, country, source type, design, setting, WASH/IPC focus, key findings and limitations; (2) reconcile the full bibliography and cite the supporting sources throughout the Results; (3) rebuild the flow diagram to distinguish identification, deduplication, title/abstract screening, full-text assessment, exclusions with reasons and final inclusion; (4) provide reproducible search strategies and fully report the screening and data-charting procedures; (5) rewrite the thematic findings as an evidence synthesis with source citations and, where possible, counts; (6) resolve numerical and textual inconsistencies; and (7) add a limitations section and recalibrate the Discussion and Conclusion accordingly. If the screening register and charting file already exist, these revisions are feasible and may not require repeating the entire review.