

VOLUNTEERS ON THE FRONT LINE OF THE RESPONSE

Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society

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Investing in disaster preparedness is worth it - both in terms of human lives saved and economic returns. In this story we learn how the preparedness of staff and volunteers of the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society (TTRCS) ensured they were able to be effectively mobilized to support COVID-19 response.

TTRCS continues to adapt its response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The Americas has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and Trinidad and Tobago is no exception. **TTRCS works alongside the State** and other partners in the fight against COVID-19 since March 2020 trying to limit its impact on the fragile health system of the country.

In response to the most urgent needs, **the first line of response was supporting the Ministry of Health in the provision of volunteers** to conduct contact tracing as well as in the mobilization of one doctor and several volunteers to a quarantine centre. Volunteers of the organization were also involved in the distribution of food vouchers to vulnerable people affected by the pandemic. In addition, food kits were provided for quarantined people, distributed through the Ministry of Health. Hand washing facilities were installed at 12 schools. **Health interventions also focused on mental health and psychosocial support** through a Hotline and a WhatsApp line with **more than 2,600 cases attended by volunteers**.

Quality health programmes already established by the National Society have also contributed to a better response to the COVID-19 pandemic. TTRCS health programmes have had a significant impact through ongoing HIV prevention and awareness work, the primary health care services provided by its Henry Dunant Clinic, located at TTRCS headquarters, as well as the health outreach conducted to support communities during the pandemic.

Preparedness of volunteers

The work of the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society would not have been possible without the support and previous preparation of its volunteers and their capacity to reach and support vulnerable people in the most remote areas where access to services is severely limited. They have had previous **training in Epidemic Control due to Zika virus prevention programmes** as well as **local disaster training** facilitated by the National Society. Volunteers provide invaluable support to improve the quality of services through community knowledge and understanding of local culture.

The dissemination of prevention measures in very rural and remote communities are maintained weekly. Since the onset of the vaccination roll out, the TTRCS ambulances and volunteers support teams were dispatched to different vaccination sites across Trinidad.



PREPAREDNESS AREA & COMPONENT RELATED

OPERATIONS SUPPORT



Staff and Volunteer Management

KEY STATS



Until September 2021, **more than 2,500 food vouchers (for a value of US\$300,000) have been distributed to vulnerable families** and 150 food vouchers and 150 hygiene kits were distributed to vulnerable migrant families.



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Keys to success



- TTRCS focuses its resources on providing communities with **disaster preparedness and quality health programmes** designed to empower the most vulnerable in the country.
- **Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society has trained volunteers on a regular and continuous basis** (Epidemic Control, local disaster training, psychosocial support, etc.) to be able to respond in times of pandemics and implement the required activities in the communities with the aim of reducing the risk of mortality.
- **Due to the usual zika epidemics in the region, pandemic preparedness** is a part of the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society health in emergencies programming.
- The goal of the Community-Based health and First Aid (CBHFA) approach is to have an integrated community-based approach in which **Red Cross volunteers work with their communities on disease prevention**, health promotion, first aid and disaster preparedness and response.
- **Good relations** with national, regional, and local authorities have greatly influenced the success of the response.



The Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross team prepares seedlings for a COVID-19 food security programme in the country.



For more information:

- Trinidad & Tobago Red Cross Society: <https://ttrcs.org/>
- National Society Preparedness: www.ifrc.org/disaster-preparedness

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