



# SIERRA LEONE

## EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

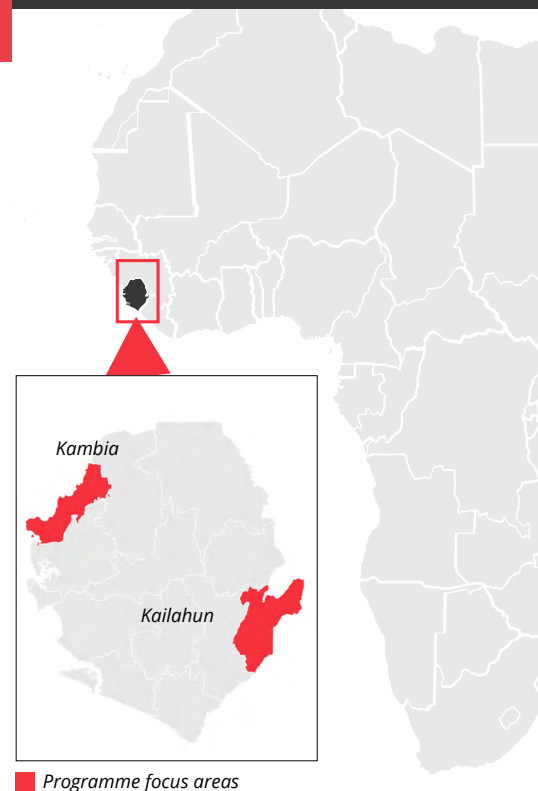
### Communities at the heart of our work

Epidemics begin and end in communities. When communities are engaged and trained in epidemic preparedness and response, they can stop outbreaks and ultimately save lives.

### Early detection, early action

Sierra Leone has one of the lowest life expectancy in the world in addition to having one of the highest mortality rates for children under five years of age. Six of the top ten causes of death in Sierra Leone are related to infectious diseases. Acute watery diarrhea, measles, viral hemorrhagic fevers, and rabies are among some of the most critical health concerns in the country. Nine years ago, the country faced the worst Ebola outbreak in history, which killed almost 3,600 people in Sierra Leone alone.

Sierra Leone Red Cross, with support from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and funding from USAID, has been helping communities prepare for, and prevent, the spread of diseases, including acute watery diarrhea, measles, viral hemorrhagic fevers, and COVID-19. Focused in Kailahun and Kambia, Sierra Leone Red Cross is working with governments, communities, local responders, and humanitarian partners to collectively prepare for, and respond to, epidemics. Sierra Leone Red Cross is providing critical information, community-based surveillance (CBS), and referrals in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, and Ministry of Education to help stop diseases from spreading before an outbreak occurs.



Programme focus areas

**566**

traditional healers engaged in epidemic preparedness and response from September 2018 to December 2022.

**522**

volunteers trained on epidemic preparedness and response from September 2018 to December 2022.

**5**

confirmed cases raised via CBS (2 cholera, 1 measles, 2 peste des petits ruminants) between September 2018 and December 2022.

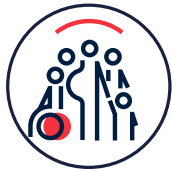


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## OUR WORK



### Preparing communities

We are ensuring communities have critical information about the spread of diseases and how to prevent them, systems to detect outbreaks and mechanisms that ensure information sharing and community engagement. Activities include:

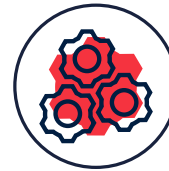
- Engaging communities through house-to-house visits, mobile cinemas and group discussions.
- Strengthening community-based surveillance systems.
- Engaging, training and collaborating with community influencers, such as leaders and traditional healers.



### Preparing first responders

Sierra Leone Red Cross has more than 16,000 volunteers across the country which gives extraordinary reach into communities. In their supporting role to the government, they are often central to emergency responses amid outbreaks. Activities include:

- Strengthening partnerships with different sectors and ministries.
- Training and readying community-based volunteers.
- Strengthening systems to enable a fast, scaled-up response.
- Contingency planning with government and key partners.



### Preparing stakeholders

Epidemics not only threaten lives but all aspects of society, including trade, transportation and education. We work with a variety of key stakeholders in epidemic preparedness and response. Activities include:

- Helping prepare One Health partners to respond to epidemics.
- Training and collaborating with media to communicate lifesaving information to affected populations.
- Engaging schools, teachers, and students on critical epidemic preparedness messages and referrals through school clubs.

## Working together with traditional healers to tackle future outbreaks

The Sierra Leone Red Cross has trained traditional healers to identify and report epidemic-prone diseases. This has already paid off, with the head nurse of Koindu reporting that a traditional healer in their area had referred five patients to the health center since 2021. The five patients recovered. Of the five patients, two were treated for malaria, two for acute watery diarrhea, and one for COVID-19.

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**The knowledge I received during the training organized by the Red Cross is helping me. I do not touch a patient that has suspected signs. I think about my household and the impact the disease can have on my children. I always refer patients to the health center.**

”

*Sahr James Korfeh – Traditional Healer Koindu Town Kissi Teng*

