

KENYA

EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Communities at the heart of our work

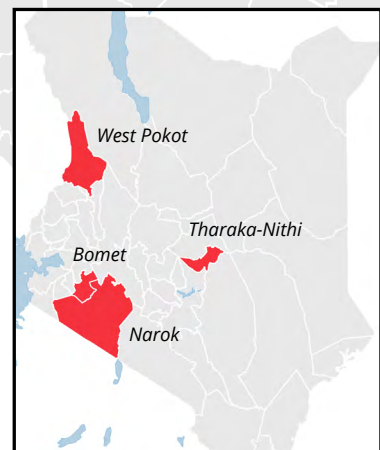
Epidemics begin and end in communities. When communities are engaged and trained in epidemic preparedness and response, they can stop outbreaks and ultimately save lives.

Early detection, early action

Kenya is one of the hotspots for emerging and re-emerging infectious zoonotic diseases, such as Rift Valley fever, anthrax, avian influenza, African swine fever and rabies. Many communities are at risk of being exposed to these diseases due to proximity with wildlife and livestock. In communities like the Maasai, there are deep-rooted cultural connections with livestock. Kenya also faces other major health vulnerabilities including cholera, measles, polio and viral hemorrhagic fevers. There is limited reach into many communities in Kenya to detect, report and control disease outbreaks early.

Kenya Red Cross, with support from the IFRC and funding from USAID, has been working with communities to prepare for, and prevent the spread of diseases. Focused in Bomet, Narok, Tharaka-Nithi and West Pokot Counties, Kenya Red Cross is working with governments, communities, local responders, private actors and humanitarian partners to collectively prepare for and respond to epidemics.

Kenya Red Cross is providing critical information, community-based surveillance and referrals in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development to ensure early detection, timely reporting and early action to stop diseases from spreading.



■ Programme focus areas

183

alerts (for anthrax, rabies, acute watery diarrhea, measles and Rift Valley fever) reported by volunteers and confirmed by government officials between 2018 and December 2022

471,500+

households reached with critical health messaging on diseases such as anthrax, cholera, measles, polio, COVID-19 and viral haemorrhagic fevers.

29,156

vaccinations of livestock and pets by end of 2022 to protect against priority zoonotic diseases such as anthrax and rabies.

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, school health clubs, focused group discussions and mobile cinemas.
- Strengthening community-based referral systems.
- Engaging, training and collaborating with community influencers, such as teachers, leaders and traditional healers.



Preparing first responders

Kenya Red Cross has more than 150,000 volunteers across the country which gives extraordinary reach into communities. In their supporting role to the Government of Kenya, they are often central to emergency responses amid outbreaks. Activities include:

- Contingency planning with government and key partners
- Strengthening systems to enable a fast, scaled-up response.
- Strengthening partnerships with different sectors and ministries.
- Training and readying community-based volunteers.
- Infection prevention and control assessment and training in Red Cross-run health facilities.



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 a variety of sectors to respond, including those affected by both animal and human health.
- Mapping critical data to support decision-making on epidemic risk management.
- Training and collaborating with media to communicate lifesaving information to affected populations.



Empowering students in Maasai communities to end anthrax

Naisanta Loso, 13, is a student in secondary school in Narok County, Kenya and a part of a school club, supported by the Red Cross. This club empowers students to become “champions” in preventing, detecting and responding to disease outbreaks.

Anthrax has been a reoccurring outbreak in this predominantly Maasai community. As of December 2022, a total of 24 cases of animal anthrax had been detected and reported in programme areas in Narok County. Few human fatalities have been recorded in programme focus areas, thanks to students like Naisanta who helped their community dispose of anthrax-infected cows before people could get sick.

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My community value cows. It was not easy to convince the community to dispose of a dead cow suspected to have died of anthrax. Today, my community ensures cows suspected to have died of anthrax are buried to prevent further infections.

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Naisanta Loso, Student and school health club member