



UGANDA

EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Communities at the heart of our work

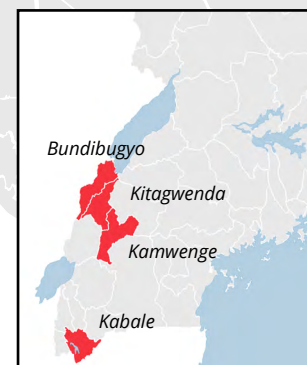
Epidemics begin and end in communities. When communities are engaged and trained in epidemic preparedness and response, they can stop outbreaks and ultimately save lives.

Early detection, early action

Uganda is a fast-growing country that remains vulnerable to a variety of epidemics, including Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers, measles and acute watery diarrhea. Diseases coming from animals that can affect human health are also a threat, including Rift Valley fever, anthrax and rabies. This vulnerability has been increased by periodic disasters such as floods, muds and landslides and perennial conflicts in eastern DRC with high population movement across the border into Uganda.

Uganda Red Cross, with support from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and funding from USAID, has been helping communities prepare and prevent the spread of diseases. Volunteers are sensitizing communities about health risks, with a focus on priority epidemic diseases. Focused in Kabale, Kamwenge, Kitagwenda and Bundibugyo Districts, Red Cross works with communities, local responders, humanitarian partners, private sector actors and government to collectively prepare and respond to epidemics.

Through Uganda Red Cross' extensive network of local volunteers, a powerful community-based surveillance system has been set up, in coordination with other actors including the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries. This system is designed to help stop diseases from spreading by detecting them early before an outbreak occurs. It has already identified several alerts, later laboratory confirmed, leading to vaccination campaigns and awareness raising activities.



■ Programme focus areas

512

safe and dignified burials (SDB) conducted by trained Red Cross teams during the 2022 Ebola outbreak.

34

alerts (for rabies, acute watery diarrhea, measles, COVID-19 and Rift Valley fever) reported by volunteers and confirmed by government officials between 2018 and December 2022.

125,900

household visits from 2018 to December 2022 to sensitize communities about preventing diseases, including priority zoonotic diseases.



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 mobile cinemas, drama and music.
- Strengthening community-based surveillance systems.
- Engaging, training and collaborating with community influencers, such as religious leaders and traditional healers.



Preparing first responders

Uganda Red Cross has an extensive network of volunteers across the country which gives extraordinary reach into communities. In their supporting role to the Government of Uganda, they are central to emergency responses. Activities include:

- Strengthening systems to enable a fast, scaled-up response.
- Strengthening partnerships with different sectors and ministries.
- Training and readying community based volunteers.
- 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 a variety of sectors to respond (including those affected by both animal and human health).
- Mapping critical data to help make informed decisions for epidemic risk management.
- Training media to communicate lifesaving information to affected populations.



Halting Ebola's spread

On September 20, 2022, the Ministry of Health in Uganda declared an outbreak of Sudan Ebola Virus (SVD). A total of 142 confirmed cases were line listed with 55 associated deaths.

This was the first time in more than a decade that Uganda had an Ebola outbreak. For Uganda Red Cross, a lot of preparedness work had been done since the previous epidemic, especially on Safe and Dignified Burials (SDBs). As part of preparedness activities linked to Ebola in DRC, the National Society had a pool of qualified trainers and SDB teams that were readily deployed at the onset of the epidemic. A total 512 burials were conducted by the 6 deployed SDB teams, ensuring that highly infectious dead bodies of Ebola victims were properly handled both at the community and hospital levels to mitigate further spread.