

UGANDA RED CROSS



Emergency Operations Centre

Case Study

Summary

National Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uganda Red Cross Society
EOC Level(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Early Warning and Emergency Operations Centre (EWEOC)• In line with regionalisation, there is linkage to the Regional Warehouses in Mbale (Eastern), Soroti (East North), Fort Portal/ Kabarole (West), Mbarara (Southwest) from which prepositioned emergency response stock are activated and utilised.
Year Established	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2025
Administrative Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 51 Red Cross branches that cover 146 administrative areas (136 districts and 10 Cities) of Uganda
EOC Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fixed EOC supported in coordinating branch and operational field teams.
EOC Modality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Permanently active everyday
Supporting NSs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supported by IFRC, NLRC, 510 Team
EOC Specific Staff / Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 EPR Manager, 1 EWOC/ Early Warning Early Action Data Focal Person, 1 CEA Officer
Governance Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EOC for URCS reports through the Director DRM to SG as per the URCS Emergency Response Protocol (ERP) and Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs)

Connection with Authorities

- URCS as an auxiliary to the Government of Uganda, collaborates closely with Government MDAs and Humanitarian partners through coordination platforms, data sharing, joint assessments.

1. Context and Characteristics

Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) serve as essential hubs for consolidating information, resources, and decision-making in order to facilitate effective emergency management. In accordance with the IFRC Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) framework, an EOC strengthens a National Society's coordination, information management, and operational readiness capabilities.

Periodic reviews conducted by URCS through PER assessments in 2018 identified notable deficiencies in disaster risk management, standard operating procedures, EOC functionality, and the overall capacity for preparedness and response. These findings included gaps such as the absence of comprehensive coordination protocols, a lack of integrated and interoperable information management systems, limited 24/7 operational readiness, inadequate technical and physical infrastructure, and insufficient regular simulation exercises and learning opportunities.

Addressing these issues was deemed essential for URCS to improve early warning and preparedness for effective response, underscoring the necessity for an EOC that complies with IFRC standards.

URCS has now established a Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Emergency Operations Centre (EWEOC), designed in alignment with the PER Framework. The EOC collects disaster and emergency data from Branches, Operations, and external sources, monitors, analyses, and disseminates real-time information regarding hazards such as floods, fires, landslides, droughts, and disease outbreaks, along with community feedback. This process enhances early warning, multi-sectoral coordination, and ensures a timely response consistent with key PER capacities, ultimately helping to reduce disaster impacts and advance community resilience.

Furthermore, the EOC incorporates the URCS Call and Dispatch mechanism, guaranteeing continuous, 24-hour operational capability.



Uganda Red Cross Society coordinate the response operations of Ebola outbreak in Uganda. © IFRC

2. Core Functional Areas

a. Strategic

EOC gathers data for review by the Director DRM and discussion in the Emergency Task Force, led by the Secretary General. The EOC meets weekly.

During emergencies, the Task Force meets more frequently, especially early on, shifting to fewer ad hoc sessions as situations improve.

b. Operations

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is operated under the direct management of the EWEOC Coordinator, who is responsible for overseeing all daily activities in coordination with both headquarters and field teams. The EOC maintains a consistent daily operational presence, ensuring readiness to activate or deactivate emergency responses according to the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Emergency and EOC Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs).

Communication within the EOC and with external stakeholders primarily takes place through email and telephone. Additionally, SMS and WhatsApp Groups are utilised to facilitate timely information sharing and coordination. The Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) is also evaluating the possibility of reinstating its VHF Radio system to further strengthen communication capabilities.

c. Information Management

To support
decision

- Impact-based Forecasting (IBF) Platform
- Kobo for hydro-meteorological rapid disaster assessment, epidemics and pandemics, population movement, etc.
- Digital feedback dashboard
- Situational reports
- Assessment reports
- Social media Monitoring using the URCS handles e.g. WhatsApp, X, YouTube channels, etc.
- Mainstream News monitoring – International and Local TVs and Radios
- Documentation and pull-outs from movement and external partners
- Ambulance Call and Dispatch logs
- EPR GIS dashboards

Infrastructure and Equipment

- Office space
- 1 screen
- 2 high performance computers
- Life detectors
- FAFR kits
- 5 Drones/ UAVs
- Internet Server
- Office Furniture
- Toll-free line

3. Integration with Government and Partners

URCS, through its auxiliary role within the National Society, collaborates with government ministries, directorates, agencies, and humanitarian partners via comprehensive early warning, preparedness, and response frameworks. This coordination encompasses joint disaster assessments and responses, timely dissemination of early warning information—including disease outbreak alerts and hazard forecasts—and systematic data sharing. Additionally, URCS participates in strategic coordination meetings at all levels and engages in simulations and drills to strengthen preparedness.

URCS maintains memoranda of understanding that facilitate coordination with government entities, Movement partners, and support joint funding applications with Participating National Societies. Project and DREF funding from IFRC further reinforce operations under EWEOC for URCS activities.

4. Lessons Learned and Adaptation

Achievements

- Enhanced collaboration with partners has been achieved through improved data management and communication channels. Initially, there was no designated physical space for the EWEOC, but URCS Senior Management provided a start-up office, which has since been expanded.
- Key start-up equipment, including a TV display screen, computer, and visualisation software, was successfully acquired.
- Core staff, such as the EPR Manager, EWEA Data Focal Person, and CEA Officer, were seconded to establish the EWEOC. The Ambulance Call and Dispatch mechanism was also incorporated into operations.

- The URCS engaged in extensive benchmarking with other National Societies' EOCs, such as KRCS, Nepal RC, Ethiopia RC, and the EU ERCC. Collaboration with KRCS and NLRC contributed to developing EWEOC SoPs. Engagement with national stakeholders, including Government MDAs, helped strengthen ties with NECOC and related situation centres.

Challenges

- The EWEOC is currently managed by DRM EPR, EWEA, and CEA staff, with resource mobilisation ongoing to recruit specialists in data analytics, data visualisation, social media monitoring, text-scraping, and application development.
- While the current IT infrastructure is functional, additional funding is being sought to enable full operational capacity. A combination of open-source and proprietary software is currently in use.
- There is an ongoing need for resource mobilisation to support staffing and infrastructure development.

Adaptations

- Both internal and external stakeholder collaboration has been essential for effective coordination, early warning, preparedness, and response.
- Building upon the National Society's existing strengths has ensured continuity and effectiveness in operations.
- Learning from other National Societies' EOCs has been invaluable in developing a scalable and practical EOC mechanism.
- Priorities identified through the PER process have guided efforts in resource mobilisation, start-up, and operationalisation, ensuring the EWEOC's functionality.
- Close engagement with in-country Partner National Societies has been instrumental in securing resources for the EWEOC's establishment and growth.