



# 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 find and stop outbreaks which will ultimately save lives, restore services and help build resilience.

### Early detection, early action at community level

Uganda is a fast-growing country that remains vulnerable to a variety of epidemics and pandemics, including Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers, measles and acute watery diarrhoea. Diseases coming from animals that can affect human health are also a threat, including Rift Valley Fever, anthrax and rabies.

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 Ebola. Focused in Kabale, Kamwenge, Kitagwenda and Bundibugyo, Red Cross works with communities, local responders, media, humanitarian partners 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 measles alerts, later laboratory confirmed, leading to vaccination campaigns and awareness raising activities at the community level.

**72 ALERTS**

meeting the community case definition were identified, investigated and responded to through the surveillance system

**47%**

increase in community knowledge on how to prevent Ebola through Red Cross mobile cinema activities in 2018.

**13,000**

household visits were done to sensitize communities about preventing diseases, including Ebola



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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 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 350,000 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:

- Contingency planning with government and key partners.
- Strengthening systems to enable a fast, scaled-up response.
- Strengthening partnerships with different sectors, including Ministry of Health and Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries.
- Training and readying community-based volunteers.



## 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 and the media 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 responders make informed decisions when a health crisis hits.
- Training media to communicate lifesaving information to affected populations.



### Halting Ebola's spread

Communities living along the porous borders of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo remain at high risk of the spread of Ebola. Volunteers are conducting "passive" community-based surveillance, which means they report alerts as they encounter them in the community through the Ministry of Health alert system while they conduct health awareness activities. If an outbreak occurs, volunteers are ready to proactively reach out door-to-door to ensure alerts are quickly identified for a faster, more effective response.

**“ I am proud that the community trusts me already and in case of any suspicions, I am the first one they call. This is what makes me proud – the response is so, so fast. ”**

*Mugenyi Adam, Volunteer with Uganda Red Cross*

More information: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/community-epidemic-pandemic-preparedness>

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