



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

Early detection, early action at community level

Kenya is one of the hotspots for emerging infectious zoonotic diseases, such as Rift Valley fever, Anthrax, avian influenza, African swine fever and rabies, among others. Many communities are at high risk of being exposed to these disease outbreaks because of their close 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 haemorrhagic fevers. There is limited reach into many communities in Kenya to detect, report and control disease outbreaks early and communities are not aware of actions to take during these outbreaks.

Kenya 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 and prevent the spread of diseases. Focusing in Bomet, Narok, Tharaka-Nithi and West Pokot, Kenya Red Cross is working with governments, communities, local responders 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, Animal Industry and Fisheries to help stop diseases from spreading before an outbreak occurs.

200

school health clubs, empowering students to help prevent, detect and respond to disease outbreaks

33,000

households reached with critical health messaging on diseases such as Anthrax, cholera, measles, polio and viral haemorrhagic fevers

44

true alerts matching community case definitions were identified and investigated in 2019

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 clubs and group discussions.
- 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: Ministry of Health and Ministry of 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.



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 mainly Maasai community. At the end of 2019 alone, it killed two people, countless livestock and caused many others to get sick in Red Cross programme areas. 26 cases of Anthrax have been brought forward and rapidly responded to thanks to students like Naisanta who helped their community dispose of Anthrax-infected cows before people could get sick.



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.



Naisanta Loso, Student and school health club member

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

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