Overview

- Community-based surveillance occurs when members of a community actively participate in detecting, reporting, responding to and monitoring health events in their community.
- Information discovered during surveillance should be shared with the local branch and health authorities.
- Community-based surveillance helps detect outbreaks early, helps control outbreaks, and saves lives.

What you need to know

- Map the community properly. You should know where people live and work.
- Scan the whole community by making house-to-house visits. If the community is large, divide the work up into smaller sections or areas.
- Establish who is vulnerable in the community. Doing this will help you to identify people who are more likely to fall sick.
- Start surveillance. This will help you to communicate specific health messages and information, and to refer sick people promptly to health facilities.
- Remember that, through your surveillance and your presence in the community, you are able to obtain information that could be helpful to others who are tackling the epidemic.
- Communicate such information to your local branch, other volunteer teams and health authorities. This is called "reporting".
- Remember that reporting must be systematic. To avoid confusion, everyone who reports should follow the same methods. Talk to your local branch and the health authorities to find out what reporting system will work best for your work and your situation.

What you can do

- Map the community (see Action tool 2).
- Identify who in the community may be vulnerable to the disease.
- Familiarize yourself with the disease that may be present in your community, including its signs and symptoms.
- Establish surveillance teams to actively look for sick people. Allocate different areas of the community to each team.
- When you detect people who are sick with the disease, assess how severely ill they are and whether they need to be referred to a health facility (see Action tool 4).
- If sick people can be cared for at home, show their families what to do and provide them with information and supplies, where possible.
- Record the cases you find and pool your records with those of other teams to build a clear picture of how the disease is spreading in the community.

Community messages

See the following community messages to support community-based surveillance:

24 - Finding sick people