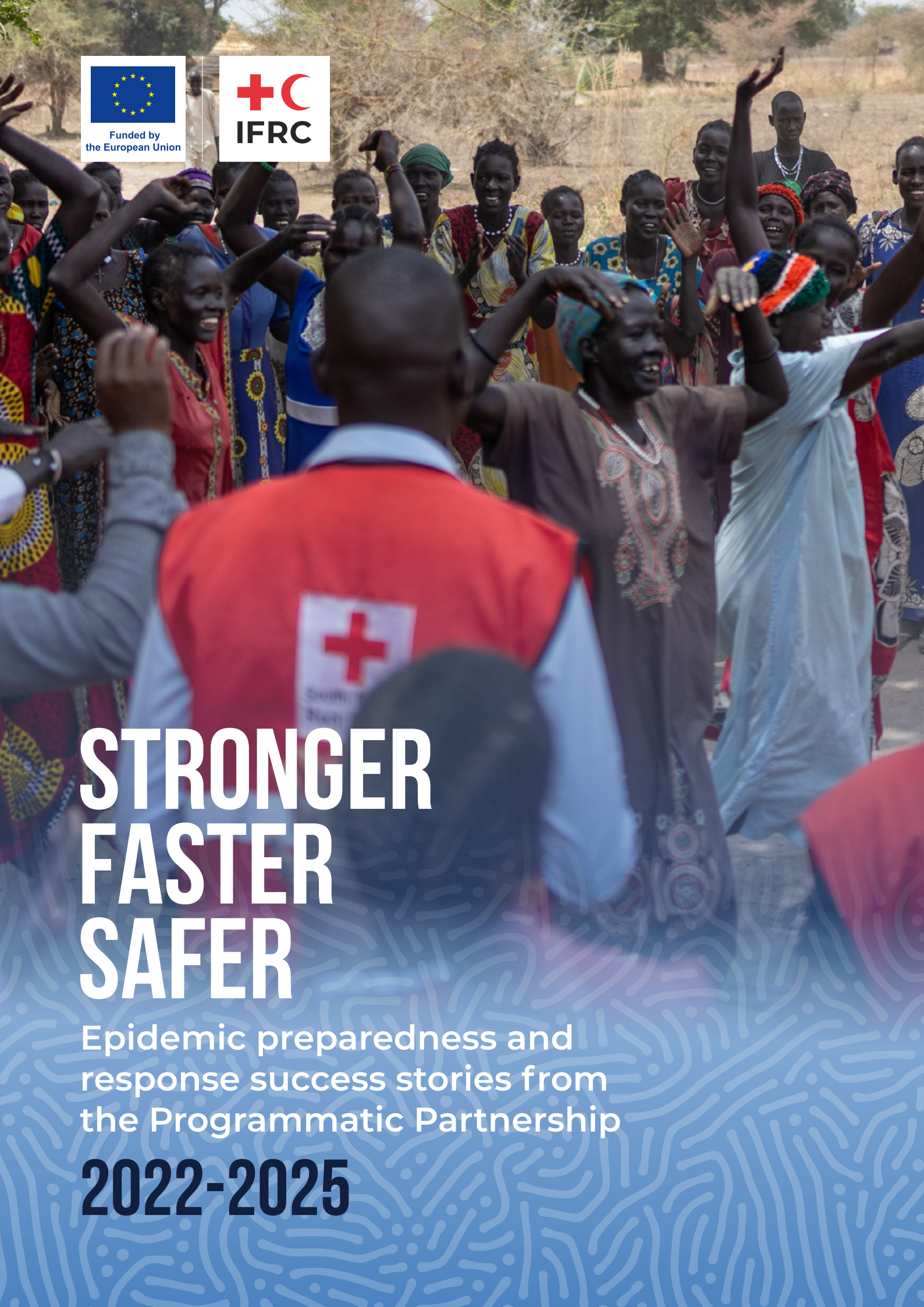




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STRONGER FASTER SAFER

Epidemic preparedness and
response success stories from
the Programmatic Partnership

2022-2025

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network. Our secretariat supports local Red Cross and Red Crescent action in more than 191 countries, bringing together more than 16 million volunteers for the good of humanity. Together, we act before, during, and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We are present in virtually every community on earth, reaching 160 million people every year through long-term services, development programs, and disaster prevention, risk reduction, response and recovery activities. Our strength lies in our volunteer network, our unparalleled community-based expertise and our independence and neutrality. We are committed to saving lives and changing minds. Through our work we enable healthy and safe communities, reduce vulnerabilities, improve people's resilience, and promote peace around the world.

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Cover photo: Women from Gakrol village in South Sudan dance and sing with South Sudan Red Cross staff and volunteers following the construction of a new borehole through the Programmatic Partnership.
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A Cameroon Red Cross volunteer visits a woman in her home to share information about cholera risks and how to stay safe during an outbreak in November 2024. © Lydie Ngui/IFRC

PREPARING FOR AND RESPONDING TO EPIDEMICS AND PANDEMICS

One of the five thematic pillars of the Programmatic Partnership is **epidemic and pandemic preparedness and response**.

Epidemics and pandemics are some of the biggest threats to a safe and healthy world. They are on the rise, and in today's connected world, they are spreading further and faster than ever before. But with effective preparedness and response measures, we can reduce the impacts of epidemics and pandemics and even stop them in their tracks.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are best placed to **prevent, detect, and respond** to disease outbreaks and other health risks thanks to their unique **auxiliary role** to authorities and because their volunteers are **close** to communities, **trusted** by them, and can **act quickly**.

Under this pillar of the Programmatic Partnership, **24 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** have been working to keep communities healthy and safe from epidemics and pandemics, now and in the future.

They do so by **equipping communities with knowledge and tools** to stop the spread of diseases and by **setting up systems** so they can report outbreaks quickly, enabling a rapid response from authorities. National Societies have also **significantly developed their own epidemic preparedness and response capacity** through the Programmatic Partnership with technical assistance, advocacy support and coordination from IFRC and National Societies within Europe.

Among countless successes, this report features **seven powerful stories** of how National Societies have improved epidemic preparedness and response around the world through the Programmatic Partnership.

PARTNERSHIP FOR LOCAL ACTION

The [Programmatic Partnership \(PP\)](#) is an innovative and ambitious three-year partnership between the IFRC, many of our member Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), and the European Union. Launched in March 2022, the Programmatic Partnership supports communities around the world to reduce their risks and be better prepared for disasters and health emergencies.

The partnership is funded by the [Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations \(DG ECHO\)](#) and represents a new model for humanitarian action.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies already play a crucial role in supporting local communities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. This partnership provides the IFRC network with more strategic, flexible, long-term, and predictable funding, enabling National Societies to deliver more efficient and effective humanitarian support.

The partnership emphasizes the importance of investing in local preparedness and humanitarian action to protect communities and help them withstand future shocks, beyond merely responding to crises.

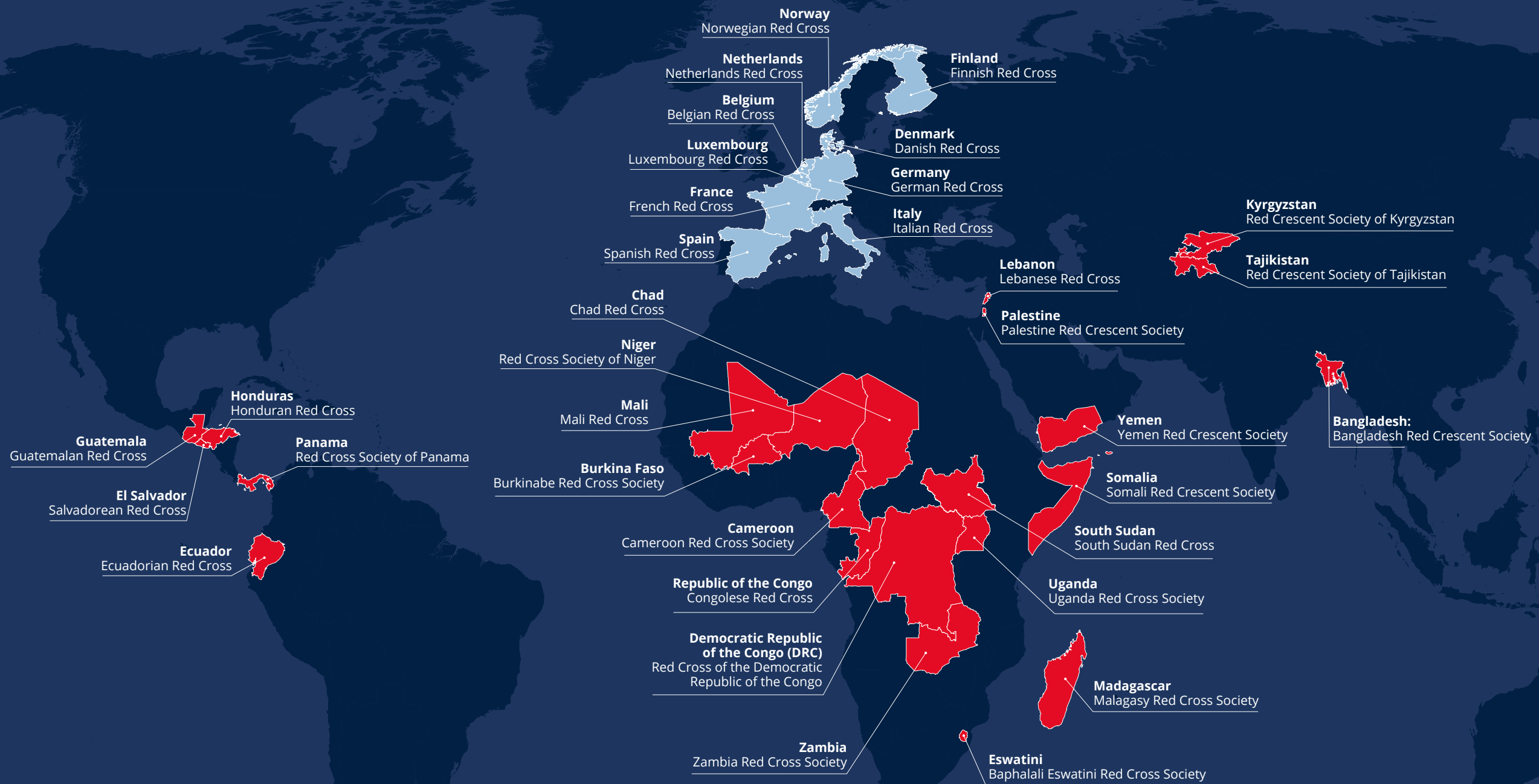
Guatemala Red Cross volunteers stand with members of a community health committee in Quetzaltenango, set up through the Programmatic Partnership, following a health awareness session on different disease risks. © Hermanos Corallo/David Quijano/Guatemalan Red Cross/IFRC



MAP OF ACTIVITIES

National Societies involved in epidemic and pandemic preparedness and response through the Programmatic Partnership

- Local partners**
Activities are implemented by local Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- EU partners**
Activities are supported by European National Societies



SUCCESS STORIES

A Tajikistan Red Crescent volunteer provides information to a woman in Mullomir village about human and animal disease risks and how she can recognize and report potential outbreaks. © Yulia Bilenko/IFRC



CAMEROON

EARLY DETECTION LIMITS A CHOLERA EPIDEMIC

National Society: Cameroon Red Cross Society
Supported by: French Red Cross



Cameroon has faced recurring cholera outbreaks in recent years, with the Far North region among the hardest hit. But thanks to the Programmatic Partnership, the Cameroon Red Cross Society swiftly detected and helped contain an outbreak in late 2024, significantly reducing its impact on communities.

In November 2024, Cameroon Red Cross volunteer, Rouyatou, from Maroua received an urgent call from one of her neighbours, Habiba, who had suddenly developed stomach pain, acute diarrhoea and was vomiting.

Rouyatou rushed to Habiba's house. Thanks to training she'd received in community-based surveillance through the Programmatic Partnership, Rouyatou knew how to recognize signs of different diseases and quickly report them using a digital tool on her phone called Nyss.



When I saw Habiba, I had oral rehydration solution (ORS) with me, so I gave her a sachet and referred her to the nearest hospital. I also directly alerted my supervisor that it was a potential case of cholera,"
Rouyatou, Cameroon Red Cross Society volunteer.

Volunteer Rouyatou (right) speaks to Habiba (left) about her symptoms, referring her to the nearest hospital and reporting the case of suspected cholera to her supervisor. © Lydie Ngui/IFRC

Upon receiving the alert, Rouyatou's supervisor called her to discuss Habiba's symptoms and immediately escalated the alert to local health authorities, triggering a rapid response to curb the spread of disease.

In the days that followed, **Cameroon Red Cross teams formed an integral part of the cholera outbreak response**—continuing to alert authorities to potential cases and conducting a wide range of activities to keep the community safe.



We worked hard to raise awareness of the outbreak in the community—visiting people at their homes, mosques, water points, churches and markets and sharing messages over the radio. We told people about the importance of good hygiene and showed them how they could make their water safe to drink. We also conducted disinfection in homes around the neighbourhood," – **Ali Adoum, President of Maroua 3 District, Cameroon Red Cross.**

Ali Adoum from the Cameroon Red Cross Society briefs volunteers in Maroua before they head out into the community to raise awareness of cholera risks and how to stay safe. © Lydie Ngui/IFRC

Stocks of handwashing equipment and cholera kits—including oral rehydration solutions, glucose serums, and aquatabs for water purification—provided to local health workers through the Programmatic Partnership prior to the outbreak also enabled a swift and efficient response.

The November 2024 cholera outbreak in Maroua was contained within four weeks. Habiba, the first person to contract cholera in the outbreak, made a full recovery.

127 cases were ultimately recorded, with two confirmed deaths. While even one death from cholera is a tragedy, **local health authorities report that this epidemic likely would have been far worse, and claimed many more lives, had it not been for the Cameroon Red Cross.**



Thanks to the Red Cross, the cholera epidemic was brought under control by the provision of medicines, logistical support, and the sensitization work by community volunteers in the neighbourhood. I'd like to thank the Red Cross for its support, for its swift and effective action, which really limited the damage in our district," – **Dama Patrice, Head of Maroua 3 District Health Office.**

Cameroon Red Cross Society volunteers disinfect public areas in Maroua to reduce the spread of cholera. © Lydie Ngui/IFRC

Though the outbreak is over, the work of local Cameroon Red Cross volunteers never stops. They remain **close to their communities**, making sure people are informed about different disease risks, take steps to reduce them, and quickly report whenever they notice unusual health symptoms. Rouyatou puts it best:



If we hadn't detected this case, just imagine. The whole community would be suffering from this disease. I want the best for my community, and above all I want to see my community in good health. So, I am proud to volunteer."



BANGLADESH

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS KEY TO EARLY DETECTION AND RESPONSE TO FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

National Society: Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
Supported by: Danish Red Cross



When an outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in Rajshahi, Bangladesh threatened to wipe out a community's livelihoods, quick action from Bangladesh Red Crescent Society volunteers, trained through the Programmatic Partnership, helped stop the spread of disease and paved the way for a healthier, more resilient community.

FMD is a highly contagious viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals like cattle, sheep, and pigs. Symptoms include fever, drooling, and sores on the mouth and hooves. Without prompt treatment, FMD can lead to severe illness or death, making rapid detection and response vital to protect animals' health and prevent economic losses for their owners.



Bangladesh Red Crescent Society volunteers inspect a cow in Rajshahi for signs of foot and mouth disease. © Bangladesh Red Crescent Society

In November 2023, Bangladesh Red Crescent volunteers trained in epidemic control through the Programmatic Partnership were doing the rounds in their ward in Rajshahi city when they noticed their community was in distress. People's cattle—which they depend on to make a living—were falling sick and dying, sparking panic and confusion.

Upon receiving the alert, Bangladesh Red Crescent teams sprang into action—immediately notifying the city's Health and Veterinary Department and Department of Livestock Services to mount a coordinated response.

“ We knew something was terribly wrong when we saw cows drooling and struggling to even stand. These animals aren't just livestock — they are the lifeblood of our families. I couldn't wait. I called for help to our supervisor the very same day because every life human or animal matters here.” – **Saima Khatun Bithi, Community Volunteer**

It quickly became clear that farmers in the community lacked knowledge of how to properly manage sick cattle and safely dispose of dead animals to stop the spread of infection. So **volunteers got straight to work raising awareness through household visits and group activities**—educating the community about FMD signs and symptoms, how to isolate and report sick cattle, how to properly bury dead animals, and the importance of animal vaccination.



A Bangladesh Red Crescent volunteer records information from community members about cows showing FMD symptoms in Rajshahi. © Bangladesh Red Crescent Society

Following laboratory confirmation of the FMD outbreak, Bangladesh Red Crescent volunteers **supported city authorities to run a cattle vaccination campaign** in December 2023. Volunteers made sure people knew when and where to take their cows to be vaccinated, patiently addressing people's concerns and reassuring them that vaccination was free and would help prevent similar outbreaks in future.

“ We cried when our cattle died — it was like losing a family member. We didn't know what to do until the Red Crescent volunteers came. They spoke to us like brothers and sisters, not outsiders. They showed us how vaccination could save the rest.”
 – **Rozina Khatun, Community Member**

Though political unrest and vaccine shortages meant that a follow-up vaccine campaign couldn't be arranged until early 2025, the continued support of Bangladesh Red Crescent volunteers helped the community remain vigilant against FMD and keep their cows healthy.

This outbreak response by Bangladesh Red Crescent teams didn't just minimize the impact of FMD and build the community's resilience to future disease threats. It also led to strong and lasting partnerships with local and national authorities, who now recognize their deep, trusted presence with communities and the value of [community-based surveillance \(CBS\)](#) to rapidly detect, alert and respond to disease threats. As of 2024, CBS data collected by volunteers is integrated into Bangladesh's national surveillance system, with support from the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), to improve health security across the country.

“ Bangladesh Red Crescent volunteers are our eyes and ears in remote areas. With Bangladesh Red Crescent by our side, we don't just fight outbreaks, we prevent disasters. Their volunteers bridge the gap between our department and the community.” – **Dr. Most. Tanzina Khatun, Veterinary Surgeon, Rajshahi Department of Livestock Services**

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society also learned a lot from this outbreak to strengthen its epidemic preparedness and response capacity for years to come. Teams have developed a greater understanding of the importance of animal health, and its connection with human health and livelihoods, with volunteers now routinely monitoring for unusual animal deaths as well as human diseases in different parts of the country.



“ Through the Programmatic Partnership, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society has turned preparedness from a plan into action. Now, with trained volunteers rooted deep in the community, we shield livelihoods, dreams, and futures before crises even begin.” – **Nilufar Akhter Banu, Programme Manager for the Programmatic Partnership, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society**

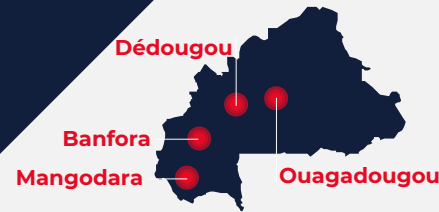
A community member in Rajshahi unties his cow that had just received the FMD vaccine at a vaccination drive supported by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society. © Bangladesh Red Crescent Society



BURKINA FASO

IMPROVING VACCINATION COVERAGE TO PROTECT CHILDREN'S HEALTH

National Society: Burkinabe Red Cross
Supported by: Belgian Red Cross



Immunization is one of the most powerful tools we have in the fight against infectious diseases. But in Burkina Faso, conflict and resulting displacement have disrupted routine vaccination efforts, increasing the risk of outbreaks. Through the Programmatic Partnership, the Burkinabe Red Cross has worked tirelessly to make sure that, despite these challenges, no child is left behind.

Every year vaccines save millions of lives. They help slow or even stop disease transmission, protect communities through herd immunity and reduce the burden on healthcare systems.

In Burkina Faso, more than 2 million people have been internally displaced in recent years due to fighting and insecurity. For families on the move, keeping up with a child's vaccination schedule can become an afterthought amid the upheaval. And once in a place of safety, knowing where to go or how to access health services isn't always easy.

Through the Programmatic Partnership, trained Burkinabe Red Cross teams in and around Ouagadougou, Dédougou, Banfora and Mangodara **mobilized to improve vaccination coverage among host and displaced populations.**

Volunteers actively searched for zero-dose and under vaccinated children, conducting household visits in communities and running awareness sessions within internally displaced persons (IDP) camps to refer children to the nearest health centre.

This work often involved **debunking harmful rumours and misinformation.** For instance, many parents believed they couldn't get their children immunized without a vaccine booklet. Others were scared and hesitant about vaccines, believing they might make their children sick. But thanks to patient engagement from trusted volunteers, families were supported to overcome their concerns.

And through **community-based surveillance**, **trained volunteers reported 142 disease alerts to health authorities** between April 2022 and December 2024—enabling rapid containment of measles, polio, dengue and hepatitis E outbreaks, and identifying potential hotspots for urgent vaccine interventions.



A Burkinabe Red Cross volunteer collects details to refer unvaccinated and under vaccinated children for immunization in a rural village outside Dédougou. © Burkinabe Red Cross

Responding to a measles outbreak

Measles is a highly contagious viral infection which spreads easily among the unvaccinated. It's a serious illness that can require hospital admission, cause permanent disability, and kill if not treated properly.

In response to a measles outbreak in Ouagadougou and Dédougou, volunteers identified and **referred more than 4,300 children who were not up to date on their vaccine schedules and 420 zero-dose children to health centres** so they could receive the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. Volunteers also **reached more than 47,000 people with risk communication and engagement activities**—helping communities to understand and reduce measles risks, recognize signs and symptoms in their children, and know how and where to access help.



A Burkinabe Red Cross volunteer vaccinates a young boy against measles. © Burkinabe Red Cross

“ My child is 9 months old but he hasn't had the measles vaccine. I don't have any documents, but thanks to the volunteers who gave me a piece of paper and accompanied me to the Urban Medical Centre (CMU), my child has had the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine.” – A displaced woman supported by Burkinabe Red Cross

Supporting a national polio vaccination campaign

Polio is a contagious viral disease which mainly affects young children. It can lead to permanent paralysis or even death but is entirely preventable through vaccination.

In Dédougou and Kaya, trained Burkinabe Red Cross volunteers teamed up with community health workers in November 2024 to **vaccinate more than 23,000 children under five against polio.** Going door-to-door with key polio messages, volunteers supported families to make sure their children received the oral polio vaccine and were also screened for acute malnutrition. To raise awareness of the vaccination campaign far and wide, they also took to the airwaves—broadcasting radio shows to reach more than 47 communes with trusted information about where and when to take children for vaccination, and challenging common rumours and myths preventing parents from seeking health services.

Through these vaccination activities, Burkinabe Red Cross teams not only helped curb active outbreaks, they also played a crucial role in reducing disease risks and protecting children's long-term health.

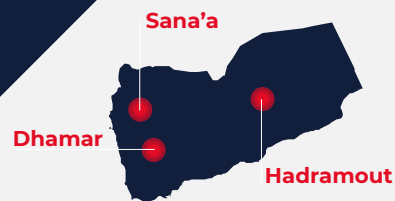


A Burkinabe Red Cross volunteer administers an Oral Polio Vaccine to a child in Dédougou. © Burkinabe Red Cross

YEMEN

CLEAN WATER, HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

National Society: Yemen Red Crescent Society
Supported by: Danish Red Cross, German Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross



Clean water, proper sanitation and good hygiene aren't just basic human needs—they're one of our strongest defences against epidemics. Through the Programmatic Partnership, the Yemen Red Crescent Society has provided communities with water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities and trusted health information so they can keep themselves safe from disease threats.

Yemen is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world. And, in recent years, conflict and climate change have made it even harder for communities to access safe, clean water—increasing the risk of infectious disease outbreaks, such as cholera and acute watery diarrhoea.

Through the Programmatic Partnership, the Yemen Red Crescent Society has worked hard to build or rehabilitate WASH infrastructure within communities so people can access clean drinking water, go to the toilet safely, and look after their personal hygiene—all vital steps for a healthy, disease-free life. In total, Yemen Red Crescent teams have **reached more than 100,000 people** with water scheme projects through the Programmatic Partnership—significantly reducing disease risks and improving people's quality of life. They've also worked closely with local authorities on water quality testing, successfully advocating for regular water quality checks at the household level to make sure the water people are consuming remains clean.



Yemen Red Crescent staff and partners celebrating the completion of a new water scheme in Dhamar city, funded by the Programmatic Partnership. © Yemen Red Crescent Society

Beyond simply building these facilities, their community-based volunteers have conducted **widespread health and hygiene promotion activities so communities have the right knowledge and adopt the behaviours needed to protect themselves from disease.** From teaching children in schools across the country about the importance of handwashing, to going door-to-door in internally displaced persons camps sharing information on cholera prevention, trained Yemen Red Crescent volunteers have been by the side of their communities, helping them build the health resilience needed to stay safe from disease in the long-term.



Yemen Red Crescent teams hand out educational materials on health and hygiene to kids in Sayon. © Yemen Red Crescent Society

Restoring safe water access in schools

For first-grader Alif, her school in Dhamar city should have been a place for learning and growth. Instead, it was a daily struggle. A lack of proper hygiene facilities and drinking water meant disease outbreaks were rife, with students frequently having to miss classes from falling sick. But through the Programmatic Partnership, Alif's school underwent a much-needed renovation. The Yemen Red Crescent Society installed a new plumbing system, repaired latrines, and built new water taps, restoring vital access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. They also provided essential handwashing supplies and ran fun educational sessions with pupils and teachers on the importance of hand hygiene to prevent disease.



I couldn't use the bathrooms or drink the water. I told my mom I couldn't stay in school because it wasn't clean. One day, I found out they installed clean water taps and fixed the restrooms, so I told my mom I wanted to go back,"
– Alif, student at Asmaa School for Girls, Dhamar.

Students at the Asmaa School for Girls in Dhamar wash their hands using new hygiene facilities built by the Yemen Red Crescent Society. © Yemen Red Crescent Society

Stopping an outbreak of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD)

In November 2024, a cluster of acute watery diarrhoea cases was detected among children in Tarim district, Hadramout. The Yemen Red Crescent quickly deployed a local team to investigate the reported cases.

After a rapid assessment, the team mounted an integrated health response. Volunteers distributed water purification tablets, chlorine and personal hygiene kits to affected households to ensure access to clean water. They also ran awareness sessions to educate people about AWD transmission and how they could prevent it by adopting proper sanitation practices such as thorough handwashing—helping to curb the spread of disease within the community.

This is just one example of how the Yemen Red Crescent Society has rapidly detected, reported, and responded to disease outbreaks. Through the Programmatic Partnership, **more than 100 community volunteers have been trained in community-based surveillance** to detect and report disease alerts, such as AWD, and facilitate rapid responses to stop outbreaks in their tracks—building strong partnerships with, and earning recognition from, local and national health authorities.



We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Yemen Red Crescent Society for their outstanding efforts and continued support through the Programmatic Partnership. Their support for the Community-Based Disease Surveillance (CBDS) team has significantly strengthened epidemic monitoring and rapid response, while awareness campaigns and the distribution of hygiene kits have helped reduce health risks and protect communities,"
– Dr. Tarq, Head of the Ministry of Health Office in Dhamar Governorate, Yemen



SOMALIA

EARLY DETECTION AND RESPONSE TO A DENGUE OUTBREAK

National Society: Somali Red Crescent Society

Supported by: Norwegian Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross



In a remote village in Bari region, Somalia, trained Somali Red Crescent Society volunteers quickly detected and reported a suspected dengue outbreak—resulting in a swift and effective response to curb the epidemic and local action to build community health resilience against this potentially fatal disease.

In recent years, the Bari region of Somalia has experienced climate-related disasters which have significantly increased communities' risks of disease outbreaks. After a period of prolonged drought, sudden heavy rains linked to El Niño in late 2023 brought flooding which led to an increase in mosquito populations and, with it, a heightened risk of mosquito-borne diseases.

Prior to the floods, the Somali Red Crescent Society had recruited and trained volunteers across Bari in [community-based health and first aid](#) through the Programmatic Partnership—equipping volunteers with essential knowledge to run health promotion activities in their communities and be on the lookout for potential disease outbreaks.

On 11 November 2023, one of these trained volunteers from the remote Qararsoor village was doing the rounds in their community when they noticed something alarming. Three people were suffering from high fever and were vomiting blood—signs of severe dengue fever, a viral mosquito-borne disease which can kill if left undetected and untreated. Without hesitation, the volunteer reported the cases to the Somali Red Crescent Society disease surveillance team.

“When we saw people with fever and vomiting blood, we knew something was wrong. Thanks to our training, we understood the urgency and contacted our supervisor immediately.” – Somali Red Crescent Society volunteer

Upon receiving the report, **the surveillance team promptly escalated it to the Puntland Ministry of Health (MoH)**, who confirmed that similar cases had been reported in another village which had tested positive for dengue fever. They requested Somali Red Crescent Society intervene immediately at the community level to support those affected and prevent further spread of the outbreak.

Somali Red Crescent Society teams mobilized quickly, **deploying two mobile clinics**—clinics on wheels that bring medical care directly to people in remote or underserved areas—to support case management and refer critical cases to the nearest health facilities, some 70km away.



A Somali Red Crescent Society mobile clinic provides health services to the community. © Somali Red Crescent Society

At the same time, volunteers began fanning out into 18 villages in the area to conduct **house-to-house visits and community meetings**—telling people about the signs of dengue fever and the steps they could take to reduce their risks.

One of the most effective steps is to get rid of stagnant or standing water, in which the dengue-spreading *Aedes aegypti* mosquito commonly breeds. Somali Red Crescent Society volunteers therefore supported community members to remove, clean, cover and treat containers or areas where water might collect to reduce mosquito populations as much as possible. They also encouraged people to cover their skin with clothing and to use mosquito repellent to prevent bites.



Somali Red Crescent volunteers support community members to clean the environment around their homes to eliminate potential mosquito breeding sites. © Somali Red Crescent Society

“We didn't wait for confirmation—we acted based on what we learned. People in our village now know how to prevent mosquito bites, and they listen when we share health advice.” – Somali Red Crescent Society volunteer

A total of 252 dengue cases were eventually reported during this outbreak. While most people made a full recovery, the outbreak did sadly claim four lives. However, **local health authorities report that the toll on communities would have been far greater without the intervention of Somali Red Crescent Society teams.**

“Without early detection, infectious disease outbreaks - including dengue - in remote areas often go out of control. We typically only become aware of outbreaks when hospitals are overwhelmed, due to the absence of effective surveillance. However, in areas where surveillance is available, such as through the Somali Red Crescent Society community-based volunteers in some villages in the Bari region, we were able to receive outbreak information much earlier. This allowed us to intervene sooner and prevent further tragedy. In this outbreak, the volunteers' quick action made a measurable difference.” – Fahima Warsame, Primary Healthcare Officer, Rako Ministry of Health



A Somali Red Crescent health worker tends to a woman experiencing dengue symptoms. © Somali Red Crescent Society

Since this outbreak, Somali Red Crescent Society volunteers in Bari have completed additional training in both [epidemic control for volunteers](#) and [community-based surveillance](#) using the digital surveillance platform, [Nyss](#), developed by Norwegian Red Cross. These trainings and tools enable volunteers to identify and report signs of diseases even more quickly and accurately, making sure that no disease outbreak goes undetected—even within hard-to-reach communities.

In a region where access to health services is limited, and where the risk of infectious diseases such as dengue remains high, trained Somali Red Crescent Society volunteers have meaningfully built community-level health resilience. Not only springing into action in response to epidemics but also equipping communities with the knowledge, skills and tools to detect and prevent them in the first place.



CENTRAL AMERICA

COMMUNITY HEALTH COMMITTEES TAKING LOCAL ACTION

National Societies: Honduran Red Cross, Guatemalan Red Cross, Salvadorean Red Cross Society

Supported by: Spanish Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross



Communities can be the first line of defence against epidemics and pandemics when equipped with the right knowledge, skills, and tools to keep themselves safe. Learn how community health committees in Central America, set up through the Programmatic Partnership, are taking local action to reduce the risks of disease outbreaks.

In **El Salvador, Guatemala** and **Honduras**, Red Cross Societies have established community health committees—groups of motivated local people trained in key health issues—to promote healthy practices, lead disease prevention activities, and quickly detect and report unusual health events to authorities to stop epidemics in their tracks.

Guatemala

In Guatemala, rural women are life-saving messengers, providing trusted health information to keep their local communities healthy and safe.

In the small village of Xecaracoj, Quetzaltenango, the **Guatemalan Red Cross** [trained a health committee of 12 local women](#) to **detect, report and prevent disease outbreaks**, and provided them with water, sanitation and hygiene supplies to hand out. The women now go door to door around their village, sharing knowledge on how people can prevent common diseases—including dengue, chikungunya and Zika—and prevent deaths, especially among children.



Gladis (right), President of the Community Health Committee in Xecaracoj village, smiles as she speaks to fellow members of the committee about the disease prevention activities they'll conduct that day. © Hermanos Corallo/IFRC

More than 1,000 families in the rural area of Quetzaltenango have been supported with trusted, accurate health advice provided by local health committees, like the one in Xecaracoj.

“ We have spread the new knowledge given to us by the Guatemalan Red Cross to inform people about things as simple as handwashing, cleaning our homes and our streets, and the importance of breastfeeding and nutrition. We now know that healthy habits make the difference between having a strong and healthy community or continuing to take our babies to the hospital,” – Gladis Gómez, President of Xecaracoj Community Health Committee, Guatemala

El Salvador

In El Salvador, the **Salvadorean Red Cross** has equipped and trained 20 community health committees—now formally recognized by the Ministry of Health—in disease prevention, health promotion and community-based surveillance.

Red Cross teams have **supported these committees to develop community action plans**—identifying the biggest disease risks in their areas and the steps they can take to reduce them—and **equipped them with supplies** such as educational materials, first aid kits, cleaning kits and personal protective equipment.

16 committees are now actively identifying and reporting disease alerts—including diarrhoea, respiratory infections and any unusual health events—to local health posts, facilitating rapid response to outbreaks to reduce their impact on communities.



Community Health Committee Coordinator Ana (in the white cap) discusses health promotion activity plans with the local Salvadorean Red Cross team. © Salvadorean Red Cross

“ The project has had a great impact because we have learned so many new things. It has helped me and my colleagues provide information and care to the people in our community and to quickly detect unusual health events and collaborate with health authorities to improve care and quality of life,” – Ana, Coordinator of Santa Marta de Tecoluca Community Health Committee, El Salvador

Honduras

In Honduras, 17 community health committees, recognized by the Ministry of Health, have played a crucial role in **dengue prevention and community-based surveillance**, especially in rural areas where access to health services is limited. Set up and trained by the **Honduran Red Cross**, these committees help raise awareness about dengue risks in their communities and teach people practical steps to protect themselves. And in coordination with health centres, they are in charge of early detection and reporting of dengue symptoms to ensure timely medical care and reduce the risks of outbreaks.

The committees also lead hands-on dengue prevention efforts—organizing community clean-up campaigns to eliminate mosquito breeding sites, ensuring water containers are properly drained or covered, and fumigating areas where hotspots of dengue cases have been reported.



A Honduran Red Cross volunteer shares key dengue prevention messages with local Community Health Committee members. © Hermanos Corallo/IFRC

Though [climate change is worsening dengue risks in Central America](#), local action by these health committees is equipping people with the knowledge and tools needed to protect themselves and their families.

By training and equipping community health committees across Central America, the Programmatic Partnership has rooted vital disease prevention knowledge and skills within local communities—empowering them to take charge of their own health and protect themselves from outbreaks for years to come.



HOW AN INNOVATIVE RADIO TOOL HELPS SAVE LIVES

National Society: Chad Red Cross
Supported by: French Red Cross



In the fight against infectious diseases, trusted and accurate health information has the power to save lives. Through the Programmatic Partnership, the Chad Red Cross and French Red Cross teamed up to broadcast special health programming using an innovative tool called Radiobox, reaching remote communities with lifesaving information so they can stay healthy and safe.

Even in our increasingly digital world, radio remains an important source of information, entertainment, and connection in countries across the globe. And in isolated communities, where access to health services is limited, radio can be a lifeline: equipping communities with the knowledge needed to protect themselves and their loved ones from disease.

In Bongor, south-western Chad, the Chad Red Cross and French Red Cross joined forces to share vital health information using a unique radio tool.

Radiobox by [Making Waves](#) is an easy-to-use portable radio kit for broadcasting live FM and internet radio shows—designed to provide a space for conversation and information-sharing in under-served or hard-to-reach communities. Volunteers can easily set up the Radiobox kit in the heart of a community and be broadcasting to locals and across the airwaves within a matter of minutes.

Through the Programmatic Partnership, **Chad Red Cross broadcast 140 live Radiobox shows**, sharing trusted health messaging about epidemic-prone diseases, the importance of vaccination, and how good water, sanitation and hygiene practices go hand-in-hand with good health.



Chad Red Cross volunteers broadcast a live radio show using the Radiobox tool. © Guillaume Binet/French Red Cross

Radiobox shows aren't simply about volunteers communicating to the community, they are fully participatory. Broadcast in local languages and accessible to all, **community members shape the programmes around the health topics that matter the most to them.** They're invited to ask their most pressing health questions, share their and their families' personal experiences of infectious diseases, and air any feelings or concerns about how to best protect their health.

This, in turn, enables volunteers to better understand and respond directly to the community's needs, as well as challenge any harmful health mis- or disinformation which may be putting people at higher risk of disease outbreaks.

In total, **more than 10,000 people have participated in Radiobox shows in Chad** thanks to the Programmatic Partnership. And there are positive signs that the shows have had a meaningful and lasting impact on epidemic preparedness within communities.

In a Radiobox evaluation with participants conducted in April 2025:

- 80% of participants surveyed felt the health messages shared in the shows were either quite or very clear
- 91% of participants surveyed reported they had changed their daily health behaviours after taking part in a Radiobox show.
- 89% of participants surveyed felt that vaccinating children against diseases was very important.



A Chad Red Cross volunteer passes the Radiobox mic to a community member in Bongor so he can ask questions and share his thoughts about disease risks. ©Guillaume Binet/French Red Cross

Here's what community members had to say:

“ Through Radiobox I have learned the importance of using latrines and of handwashing. Radiobox brings me joy. Every time volunteers come to record the show, I even run to go and inform the other women. They [volunteers] do good work,” – **Jeanette, Radiobox participant, Bongor**

“ The Chad Red Cross volunteers are a good bunch. They explain about health risks, and that's a good thing. We've learned many things, for example handwashing and the importance of vaccination against polio and measles,” – **Mathieu, Radiobox participant, Bongor**

“ I learned about the importance of handwashing, the risks of open defecation, and the causes and consequences of diseases such as yellow fever and measles. Now I regularly clean the shower, I wash my hands before eating and after going to the toilet, I clean my yard, and I cover my food well. I really appreciate the work of the volunteers,” – **Alice, Radiobox participant, Bongor**



The success of Radiobox in Bongor reflects the deep trust and close relationships between Chad Red Cross teams and the communities they serve. By providing clear, reliable health information—and by creating a space where community voices are truly heard—Radiobox shows have empowered people with the knowledge and behaviours they need to protect their health and reduce their risks of disease.

A Chad Red Cross volunteer takes to the mic during a Radiobox broadcast. © Guillaume Binet/French Red Cross

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- [South Sudan: water is a key element for stability and health](#)
- [Chad: Keeping humanity alive by helping communities stay safe from infectious diseases](#)

For further information about the **Programmatic Partnership**, please visit:
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A group of women in Bongor, Chad gather near an urban health centre to receive information on how to stay safe from different disease risks from Chad Red Cross volunteers.
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