



DRC

COMMUNITY EPIDEMIC AND PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMME

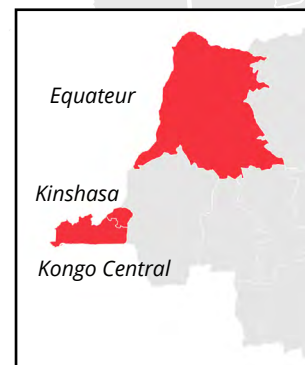
Early detection. Early action. Healthier communities.

Epidemics and pandemics are some of the biggest threats to a safe and healthy world. But with effective preparedness and response, we can minimize their impacts and even stop them in their tracks.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) ranks low at 104 out of 140 countries assessed in the [2021 Global Health Security Index](#). The country faces recurrent diseases outbreaks such as cholera, mpox, measles, and malaria. It has also faced 15 deadly outbreaks of Ebola since 1976. Weak public health and sanitation systems, insecurity and access challenges hamper adequate health care for the country's population.

The DRC 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 for and prevent the spread of diseases in the provinces of Kinshasa and Kongo Central since 2018. Since 2023, the programme has expanded its activities to Equateur province. The DRC Red Cross is working with the government, communities, local stakeholders and humanitarian partners to collectively prepare for and respond to epidemics.

Through an extensive network of community volunteers, the DRC Red Cross is providing essential information and referrals, in coordination with the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Fisheries and Livestock, to prevent and contain disease outbreaks.



■ Programme focus areas

2,981

children who had missed out on vaccination recovered from January 2020 to December 2023.

591,577

households reached by prevention campaigns for diseases of epidemic potential from January 2019 to December 2023.

330

volunteers trained in epidemic preparedness and response, from January 2019 to December 2023.



OUR WORK



Preparing communities

We make sure 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:

- Community education through door-to-door visits, activities in schools and group discussions.
- Strengthening community health referral systems.
- Engaging, training and collaborating with influential people in the community, such as teachers, chiefs and traditional healers.



Preparing first responders

The DRC Red Cross has more than 160,000 volunteers across the country, giving it extraordinary reach access at the community level. Through its auxiliary role to government, it is often central to emergency response during disease outbreaks.

Activities include:

- Developing a multi-hazard response plan with government and key partners.
- Strengthening infection prevention and control in Red Cross health facilities.
- Training and preparedness of volunteers and staff.



Preparing stakeholders

Epidemics don't just threaten lives. They threaten all parts of society, including trade, transport, and education. We work with a wide range of stakeholders in epidemic preparedness and response.

Activities include:

- Strengthening the capacity of One Health partners to respond to epidemics.
- Collecting critical data to support decision-making on epidemic risk management.
- Training media to report accurate, lifesaving information that helps people before and during disease outbreaks.

The DRC Red Cross played an active role in the response to a cholera outbreak in Lufu, Kongo Central in June 2020.

DRC Red Cross teams conducted risk communication and community engagement activities to raise awareness about cholera risks and how people could stay safe. This involved household visits, community meetings, and partnering with local radio to broadcast lifesaving information in local languages. They chlorinated water points, set up an Oral Rehydration Point, distributed Aquatabs, disinfected public and private spaces, and purified 1,000+ jerry cans of water. Volunteers also supported with active case searching, detecting and reporting suspected cases of acute watery diarrhoea to health centres.

Scan to watch a video:

