



Somali Red Crescent Society

Success Story: Rapid Response to a Diphtheria Outbreak in Mudug Region

How rapid crisis funding and community vigilance stopped a deadly outbreak in Mudug, Puntland.

Background

Somalia's humanitarian crises is among the most complex, exacerbated by protracted conflicts, political tensions, and the impact of adverse climatic effects¹. Many communities that were displaced due to drought or conflict have been displaced a second or third time by floods or renewed conflicts.

In early 2025, a Diphtheria outbreak erupted in several parts of the country, with Mudug, Bari, and Nugal, in Puntland, being among the hardest-hit regions, where 71% of the reported cases had no history of immunization. The disease was spreading rapidly across neighboring districts, and the high case fatality rate posed a serious threat to children's lives.

Community Alert and Early Action

The turning point came from within the community.

"In the morning, while we were conducting awareness in our neighborhood, we received a call from another part of the village," recalled Bishaar, one of the community volunteers. "It was a young girl who told us that her neighbor, Halima, had a child with unusual symptoms and requested us to come and see."



Figure 1 Galkacayo, Wadajir IDP (internally displaced persons) community awareness sessions

¹ <https://www.unocha.org/somalia>

This early community alert triggered the first steps of the response. Volunteers assessed the child, referred the case to the hospital, and reported the incident as an official alert through Nyss². The Puntland Ministry of Health (MoH) and Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) team quickly escalated the case, confirmed the outbreak through investigation, and mobilized partners for an urgent response.



Figure 2 SRCS volunteers rising community awareness of Diphtheria outbreak.

Intervention

With immediate support from the Norwegian Red Cross (NoRC) crisis modifier fund, SRCS launched a rapid vaccination outreach campaign in collaboration with Puntland MoH (as a component of the wider response³). The intervention focused on halting the spread of Diphtheria across the entire Mudug region.

SRCS supported the Puntland MoH in vaccinating **9613** children in Jariiban, Haalaboqad, Wadajir and Shafici clinics catchments villages and IDP camps. This included cold chain and logistics support for the vaccination activities. 16 health workers and 100 community volunteers participated in the campaign to raise awareness in surrounding villages, reaching an estimated 40,111 caregivers and addressing vaccine hesitancy.

This campaign was alongside other SRCS epidemic response activities³ including: emergency mobile clinics, Epidemic Control for Volunteers, CBS, Community-Based Health

² Nyss is a custom software platform which can be used for community-based surveillance (CBS). Read more here: <https://cbs.ifrc.org/what-nyss>

³ Additional information about SRCS response activities can be found in the DREF Operation Final Report: <https://go-api.ifrc.org/api/DownloadFile/92164/MDRS0024dfr>

and First Aid (eCBHFA), Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), and health promotion campaigns.



Figure 3 SRCS launched a rapid vaccination outreach campaign in Galdogob District

Impact

The rapid availability of the emergency funding was critical. Complementing broader response activities, the NoRC crisis fund supported a rapid vaccination outreach campaign in the most affected areas. Within a short time, the intervention not only contained the outbreak in Wadajir but also prevented further spread across the Mudug region. Local authorities, volunteers, and communities united in a common goal: protecting children's lives.

Halima, the mother whose child was first identified, shared with relief:

"I was very worried for my child's life. But thanks to the volunteers and the vaccination campaign, not only is my child safe, but so many other children in the village are now protected."

"Without the rapid support from the crisis fund, we would not have been able to contain this outbreak in time," said Mr. Mohamoud, a Puntland Ministry of Health official. *"This shows how critical timely resources are in saving lives."*



Figure 4 Vaccination campaign in Mudug region

Conclusion

This experience highlights how community vigilance, strong coordination, and timely crisis funding can save lives in emergencies. The story of Mudug's Diphtheria response shows that when communities, volunteers, and health systems work together with rapid support, outbreaks can be stopped, and children's futures safeguarded.

Moving forward, lessons from this response will guide future preparedness, ensuring that similar crises can be addressed quickly and effectively across the region.