

Pandemic Preparedness in the EAC Region

Supporting the East African Community in its advisory and coordinating role for the Partner States

The challenge

The Secretariat of the East African Community is mandated to offer advisory and coordination support to its Partner States in combating communicable diseases. While East Africa was not affected by the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014/2016, the region frequently experiences outbreaks of the disease with fatalities as seen in the 2022 outbreak in Uganda. Rift Valley fever, Marburg fever, Dengue fever, Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever, Yellow fever viruses, to name a few, are endemic and pose a threat to public health.

The spread of infectious pathogens can compromise free movement and cross-border trade facilitated by the EAC's common market. The most dangerous infectious agents in the EAC region are harboured by wild and domestic animals and can spill over to the human population at any time. Global climate change also has a tangible impact on the ecosystems and has further increased epidemic and pandemic risks.

To prevent outbreaks of diseases that may affect public health, economic stability and the lives and livelihoods of the people, Partner States need to be prepared. This includes stark epidemiologic surveillance, detection and diagnosis capabilities. High levels of risk awareness among key stakeholders and continuous horizontal and vertical cooperation and information exchange are also important to meeting this objective.

Our approach

Through the project "Support to Pandemic Preparedness in the EAC Region III", GIZ assists the EAC Secretariat to improve the regional crisis response capacity. It advises the Secretariat on the sustainable integration of 'One Health'.

Project name	Support to Pandemic Preparedness In the EAC Region III
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	East African Community (EAC)
Lead executing agency	Secretariat of the East African Community
Duration	01.09.2022 – 31.08.2025

This approach involves disciplines and sectors that play an important role in preventing and responding to outbreaks of infectious diseases and other events of public health concern. The project offers technical expertise and builds capacity with the overall aim of improving the EAC's support for Partner States in pandemic preparedness. It is practice-oriented and pursues a participative strategy that involves stakeholders from the EAC Partner States. The project contributes to a uniform, effective, responsible and balanced approach to pandemic preparedness at regional and national government level.

The focus areas of Phase III of the project are: strengthening the technical capacities of the EAC Secretariat, Partner States and food safety agencies responsible for improving the microbial safety of food of animal origin; institutionalising risk and crisis communication at the EAC Secretariat and establishment of an EAC Regional Pool of Rapidly Deployable Experts.

The benefits

When outbreaks of disease with epidemic potential are detected early on and measures are taken rapidly, everyone living in the EAC benefits. Poor rural populations are often hardest hit by the impacts of epidemics as they lack the knowledge and financial means to recognise health risks and protect themselves effectively. They often have limited access to health services and



L. to r.: A trainer demonstrates proper handwashing technique; a scene from a regional simulation exercise held at Kilimanjaro International Airport.

