

EBOLA CHAMPION LEADS PREVENTION EFFORTS TO PROTECT HER COMMUNITY

How one woman and her family are mobilising communities to prepare for and prevent outbreaks of the Ebola Virus Disease in Uganda.

Introduction

Timbigamba Grace Safari, known to her friends and family as Adyeri, is leading efforts to help her community in Kabarole District in South-Western Uganda to prepare for and prevent outbreaks of the Ebola Virus Disease. Uganda neighbours the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which has been fighting an outbreak of Ebola since August 2018. The situation was recently declared an international health emergency by the World Health Organisation after cases were confirmed in Uganda and Goma, the largest city in DRC's North Kivu region.

In her native Nayakabira village in Harugongo sub-county, lack of funding for preparedness efforts has not stopped Adyeri's efforts to fight the threat of the disease spreading to her community. A volunteer for Uganda Red Cross Society, she is also a farmer, wife and mother of 10 children - four of her own and six orphans she cares for.

Adyeri has been organising community theatre sessions and house to house mobilisation to create awareness on the Ebola threat and educate her community on good preventive health practices.

She mobilised members of different ethnic groups in the region to form the community theatre group that sensitizes communities across different villages in all dialects and is also strengthening local cohesion.

Adyeri's family have also joined the efforts, with two of her daughters writing the educational songs and poems used during the theatre sessions and her husband, John, helping to transport the bulky equipment needed to different villages.

While conducting house to house mobilisation, Adyeri establishes what she refers to as 'model households'. "My approach has been to identify people implementing the good practices shared during our mobilisation, for instance those who have installed and are regularly using handwashing facilities, who then become Ebola champions and in turn can help in spreading the message to others," she said. For example, one of the Ebola champions identified by Adyeri now educates others in her church groups, as well as the savings loan group of which she is a member.



Adyeri (far right), monitoring adoption of safe hygiene practices in a model household in Nayakabira village.

In the response to the current Ebola outbreak in the DRC, IFRC and other actors have regularly stressed the importance of communities taking a lead role in initiatives to prepare for and prevent Ebola outbreaks. Adyeri's efforts demonstrate the strong capacity within local communities to lead these efforts and should be commended, supported and replicated.



One of the community theatres organised by Adyeri.