

Rift Valley fever: Awareness and sensitization

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Introduction

The Uganda animal and human populations are vulnerable to these emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) due to increased movements of goods, animals and people, changing animal habitats and marketing options. The emergence of Rift Valley fever (RVF) has caused devastating effects on humanity, and is of paramount concern. The Joint External Evaluation of the International Health Regulation Core capacities for Uganda (2017) prioritized low zoonotic diseases awareness, declining trend of passive animal disease reporting, few or slow response interventions and surveillance coordination challenges; coupled with inadequate event based surveillance and real time reporting systems. VSF Germany under the BUILD program spearheaded awareness and sensitization campaigns as part of efforts to address the challenge of low awareness and poor reporting of disease events.

Methods

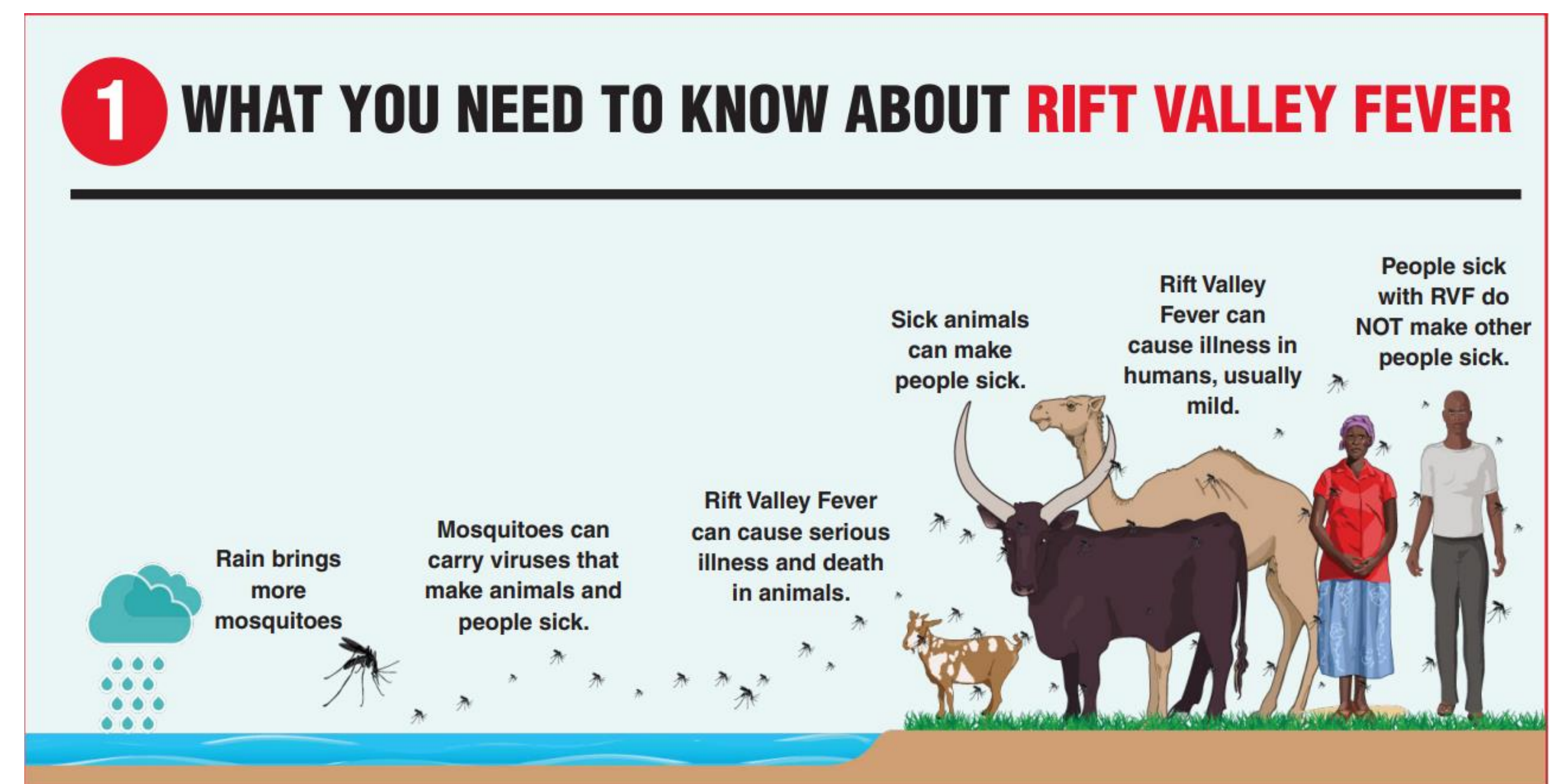
VSF Germany, MAAIF, MoH and ILRI through BUILD undertook informative, participatory and consultative engagements in 05 districts (Kagadi, Kazo, Mbarara, Budaka and Butebo) with technical personnel including environmental officers (120), political leaders (60), slaughterhouse workers (128), livestock owners (400), meat inspectors (12), livestock product transporters (72) and meat handlers (72) to facilitate exchange of information and experiences while creating awareness. 5,000 brochures and 1,000 leaflets with key messages on prevention and control of RVF were designed, produced and distributed to district and sub-county offices for display at strategic points and to participants during community meetings/barasas. Radio talk show sessions were also undertaken in 03 districts. Pre and post awareness assessments were undertaken for selected sessions and feedback comments documented.

Findings

- Pre-awareness campaign assessment revealed low awareness on RVF with exception of respondents from districts that had previous outbreaks.
- Poor drainage, poor meat handling practices and poor knowledge about RVF disease were the main risk factors in the transmission of RVF.
- Sanitation and hygiene conditions at slaughterhouses were the most urgent concern.
- No clear government position of vaccination against RVF.
- There is currently no policy promoting RVF vaccination
- Poor coordination and collaboration on risk communication, intervention responses among government agencies, development/research partners and communities.

Conclusions & limitations

- Rift Valley fever control in Uganda requires concerted efforts between private, civil society and government agencies. These efforts should include harmonization of risk communication, prevention and control measures. The main limitation is how stakeholders should balance between ensuring sustainable trade in animal products without compromising human health.



Contribution to Uganda's livestock development agenda

- Contributes to improved level of knowledge, awareness and capacity of different stakeholders towards enhanced surveillance, prevention and control of RVF in Uganda

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