



8 November 2016 – From 30 October to 4 November 2016, WHO epidemiologist Dr Amgad Elkholy facilitates group discussion during the training. Photo credit: Greta Isac conducted a week-long training workshop in Hargeisa, Somalia, to enhance the capacity of Somalia's rapid response teams for outbreak detection, response and containment in complex emergency situations.

The workshop, which was conducted upon request by Somalia's Federal Ministry of Health, was intended to strengthen the capacity of Somalia's federal and regional teams to investigate and respond to events of public health importance. The training workshop was attended by more than 30 health professionals from various regions, including Bakool, Bari, Galmudug, Jubaland, Hiraan, Galguduud, Hir-Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, Woqooyi Galbeed, and the capital city Mogadishu.

Somalia has been experiencing recurring outbreaks of communicable diseases in the last few years, including cholera, polio, measles, dengue, chikungunya, meningitis, Rift Valley fever and others. Given the prolonged humanitarian crises in the country caused by conflict, internal displacement of populations, food insecurity, drought and floods, many parts of the country lack access to basic health services and existing health structures have been severely impacted. This has left a majority of the population vulnerable to communicable diseases.

WHO, in collaboration with health authorities and partners on the ground, has set up sentinel-based early warning systems for epidemic-prone communicable diseases, under which national and regional response teams are responsible for the investigation and conducting a rapid field response to outbreak alerts from the communities. These teams are composed of regional medical officers, regional surveillance officers, zonal coordinators and data managers.

A well-constituted and properly trained rapid response teams should be the cornerstone of the early warning system for disease surveillance and outbreak detection in dealing with public health emergencies

The scenario-based workshop was intended to provide skills and knowledge necessary to form multi-disciplinary rapid response teams who can investigate and responds to outbreaks as they occur anywhere in Somalia. As a training of trainers, this course also equips attendees to provide training to teams at lower levels.

The workshop was conducted by experts from WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, based on knowledge acquired from training rapid response teams to handle the recent Ebola virus outbreak by capacity-building of teams at national and subnational levels to undertake rapid health risk assessments and timely outbreak investigation and response.

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