



Accompanied by government officials and representatives of UN sister agencies, Dr Alwan visited an internally displaced people camp in Mogadishu to observe the ongoing polio vaccination campaign. 25 August 2014 – WHO's Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Dr Ala Alwan, concluded a visit to Mogadishu this week, where he launched together with the Somali Government and partners two new initiatives that aim at renewing the commitment to end preventable deaths of mothers and children.

In Somalia, an estimated one in five children dies before their fifth birthday because of pneumonia, diarrhoea or measles. Maternal mortality remains exceptionally high demonstrating no progress for the past 20 years.

Reducing maternal mortality

The first initiative, launched in a ceremony in Mogadishu, is the national maternal and child health acceleration plan that will be rolled out in nine regions targeting more than a million children and women. The second is the campaign on accelerated reduction of maternal mortality in Africa that will employ advocacy at all levels to help Somalia progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal of reducing maternal mortality.



Both initiatives are the result of a close collaboration between WHO, the Somali Federal Government, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

During the launch, Dr Ala Alwan, explained that: "The maternal and child health acceleration

plan aims to reduce maternal, newborn and child morbidity and mortality by increasing the access and use of quality basic and emergency maternal and child health services. The implementation of the plan is through the engagement of several sectors of the government which is being effectively delivered through national action and international partnership.”



WHO support

Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed said that the launch represented a milestone for the women and children of the country. “On behalf of all mothers and children in Somalia, this Government recommits to give every women the best opportunity of safe delivery so that every child has the best possible start in life.” During the ceremony the Somali Federal Government recognized WHO's support to Somali health authorities in building inclusive and equitable health system in Somalia. The Prime Minister presented a Shield of Honour to Dr Alwan for his effective leadership and support.



An estimated one in five children dies before their fifth birthday with the main causes including pneumonia, diarrhoea and measles - as well as infections and other problems in the first month of life.



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