30 August 2020 – The Ministry of Health of Somalia has announced 68 new suspected cases of cholera, with one reported death, for epidemiological week 33 (10-16 August 2020). The cumulative total number of suspected cholera cases since the beginning of this year is 5485, including 30 associated deaths (CFR 0.5%). So far in 2020, active transmission has been reported from the regions of Banadir, Bay, Hiran and lower Shabele. The last cholera cases in Jowhar district of middle Shabelle were reported in week 17. Of the 5485 reported cases, 2567 (47%) are aged 2 years and below, while 17 (57%) of the 30 deaths are also aged 2 years and below.

The current cholera outbreak started in December 2017 following floods that affected districts in the basins of Jubba and Shabelle rivers. It was contained in five of the six regions while active transmission has continued to be reported from Banadir. Flash floods caused by heavy Gu rains in April 2020 led to contamination of water sources that led to increase in the number of cholera cases in Banadir (3314 cases), Hiran (948 cases), Middle Shabelle (560 cases), Bay (554 cases) and Lower Shabelle (109). Of the 30 deaths reported since week 1 of 2020, 19 (63%) were reported in Banadir region.

Of the 489 stool samples tested since January 2020, a total of 165 samples came out positive for Vibrio cholerae, Serotype V. Cholerae Inaba was isolated from stool samples collected from Baidoa. This strain in sensitive to tetracycline, chloramphenicol and ciprofloxacin.

The overall reduction in the number of new cholera cases as compared to the numbers at the beginning of the outbreak is attributed to improved implementation of preventive interventions including oral cholera vaccination (OCV) campaigns and the strengthening of water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) activities in hot spots. However, the current floods and cholera outbreak occurred at a time when COVID-19 cases are increasing in all regions of Somalia, stretching the already limited capacity to respond to the cholera alerts.

WHO continues to provide leadership and support to health authorities and partners in implementing activities that can mitigate the outbreak. Disease surveillance is being managed with the support of WHO through an electronic system known as the Early Warning Alert and Response Network (EWARN) and is currently being expanded to all health facilities across the country. WHO and the Ministry of Health continue to monitor outbreak trends through EWARN and promptly investigate and respond to all alerts.

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