29 May 2018 – Key stakeholders joined hands to draft a 5-year plan to reduce the incidence and mortality of measles and rubella in Somalia at a 3-day planning workshop convened by WHO from 22 to 24 May 2018.

Measles is currently a leading cause of death for children in Somalia. Less than half of children under 12 months were vaccinated through routine immunization services in 2017, which means Somali children are still bearing the burden of preventable diseases.

Somalia has had its fair share of man-made and natural challenges over the last few decades. Following a severe drought last year, Somalia witnessed a measles outbreak, in which more than 23,000 children were reported to be suffering from the disease. In 2018, around 5,600 suspected cases of measles have been reported so far.
To respond to this outbreak and surge in cases, rapid immunization campaigns were conducted in May 2017 in 22 hotspots in selected districts. Although the campaigns reached 472,033 children (94% of the target coverage), this rapid response was not enough. A mass measles immunization campaign was conducted throughout the nation in the first quarter of 2018, under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and supported by WHO and UNICEF. This campaign reached 4.5 million children out of a targeted 4.8 million, in all accessible and partially accessible districts of Somalia.

In order to brainstorm on how to boost measles immunization throughout the country, the 3-day workshop brought together partners — representatives from all the Somali health authorities, including the new States, GAVI (the Vaccine Alliance), WHO and UNICEF — to reach a consensus on the strategic 5-year measles and rubella control and elimination plan. This plan includes the introduction of a second dose of measles vaccine by 2019, as well as a vaccine against rubella by 2022. As part of this process, the existing Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) policy for Somalia will be reviewed and adjusted to integrate these changes, and the measles outbreak response plan and routine immunization improvement plan will also be updated.

These efforts will reduce morbidity and mortality caused by measles and rubella in Somalia.

Factsheets

Measles

Rubella

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