April 24, 2017 – WHO Representative for Somalia Dr Ghulam Popal and Somalia’s Minister of Health and Social Services H.E. Dr Fawziya Abikar conducted a visit to Baidoa, along with national, regional and local health officials, to assess the cholera situation and outbreak response in South West State. The high-level mission aimed to demonstrate the commitment of WHO and the Ministry of Health to outbreak and drought response activities in the state, and included visits to cholera treatment centres (CTCs) in Baidoa and Bayhow hospitals.

Since January 2017, a total of 18,126 cases and 317 deaths have been reported in South West State of Somalia – this is more than 60% of all cholera cases reported in the country since the start of the outbreak. Surveillance records show that the number of acute water diarrhoea/cholera cases is on the rise in South West State due to a severe drought that has led to water scarcity and food insecurity, which in turn has rendered many people severe malnourished, thereby aggravating the cholera outbreak.

WHO and humanitarian partners on the ground have scaled up response efforts in all cholera- and drought-affected areas in the country. This includes the establishment of CTCs, coordination of cholera response activities, enhancement of surveillance, rapid response activities, training of health workers in case management, provision of essential medicines as well as supporting the emergency response activities in remote and hard-to-reach areas.

“We appreciate the timely and critical support provided by WHO and partners to contain the cholera outbreak in the country,” H.E. Dr Abikar said.
A six-month plan has been developed by the Ministry with the support of WHO to enhance cholera response activities in all states affected by cholera, of which South West State is a top priority. The plan includes support for improved case management and surveillance activities, and strengthening WASH and community sensitisation activities.

“We are fully committed to supporting the Ministry of Health to contain the cholera outbreak, and restoring good health for the people of Somalia,” Dr Popal said.

Following a comprehensive cholera risk assessment, WHO and Ministry of Health have decided to launch a reactive oral cholera vaccination campaign in Baidoa in May 2017. The cholera vaccine is expected to contribute to the reduction of new cholera cases in South West State.

The campaign will provide vaccinations in 2 doses for over 230 000 vulnerable persons aged 1 year and above, thanks to the support of the Global Task force for Cholera Control and GAVI. The OCV campaign in Baidoa follows a successful vaccination campaign that has been implemented in 7 high-risk areas in Banadir, Hiran and Lower Jubba.

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