WHO EMRO | Getting medicine to flood victims in Somalia, no matter what

29 May 2018 – Recent flash and river flooding in Somalia has affected an estimated 772 000 people and displaced nearly 230 000 people from their homes. The World Health Organization in Somalia is responding to the health needs of the most vulnerable, including by airlifting emergency medical supplies to different parts of the country.

The Gu rainy season, which runs from late March to June, began with regular rainfall. However, in the first half of April, rain levels increased to some of the highest on record for the past nearly 40 years. In some places, nearly twice the normal average amount of rain came down, causing flash and river flooding across central and southern Somalia – an area that is already vulnerable because of repeated droughts and ongoing conflict. At least 25 people have been killed. The destruction caused by water has been widespread and devastating affecting farming, schools, roads and shelters for internally displaced people.

“We haven’t seen this kind of rain in decades. Now, hundreds of thousands of very vulnerable people are being hit again,” says Dr Ghulam Rabani Popal, WHO Representative for Somalia.

An estimated 772 000 people are in need of humanitarian aid, including food, clean water, and health care. The risk of water and vector-borne diseases like cholera, malaria, dengue fever, and chikungunya has also increased. To respond, WHO is leading health partners to work together on detecting disease outbreaks, building cholera treatment centres, training health workers, providing mosquito nets, and distributing medical supplies.
Since road transport is near impossible, this month WHO staff have successfully airlifted 45 tonnes of medical supplies to different states in the country, including Hirshebelle, South West, Jubaland, Galmudug, and Puntland. The supplies will have an immediate positive impact on the health needs of flood-affected Somalis, while longer term response plans are being put into place. As the Global Health Cluster lead agency, WHO is also coordinating the response of all health partners, to ensure the work gets done as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Dr Popal added: “These shipments of medicine and other medical materials will address the immediate needs of vulnerable people. WHO’s staff and all our partners in health are working around the clock to save lives, as well as plan for the long term health of all the people of Somalia.”

**Somalia flooding and funding needs**