In October 2017, the second round of an oral cholera vaccination campaign was successfully conducted in cholera hotspot districts in the Banadir region of south Somalia. The campaign, which was implemented using a house-to-house vaccination strategy, mobilized 29 supervisors, over 20 monitors, and 196 social mobilizers from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Federal Ministry of Health.

Strong social mobilization and community engagement enabled the implementation of the vaccination campaign in the 11 targeted districts of the region. 149 trained vaccination teams of 4 members each were also deployed in target areas to administer the vaccine to the population.

The demand for, and acceptability of, the oral cholera vaccine in the districts of the Benadir region were overwhelming, especially in internally displaced persons camps and slum areas in which the vaccination was implemented due to the frequency of outbreaks of acute watery diarrhoea and cholera in these areas.

Hassan Nasir, a 34-year-old from the Wadajir district, came with his family to be vaccinated. The family – his wife and 4 children – had been administered the first dose 2 weeks earlier. “I am still scared and do want my family to receive the second dose of the vaccine,” said Hassan. “I saw quite a number of the people from the camp vomiting and becoming dehydrated because of cholera; it looked like they were going to die,” he explained. “I feel terrified when I hear about
the disease, especially in the camp where health services are very limited. It takes long enough to get a referral to the nearest hospital,” he added.

WHO and local health authorities in the region have linked the outbreak to factors such as poor water quality, sanitation, and personal hygiene.

A 9-year-old boy from Dayniile internally displaced persons camp receives the second dose of oral cholera vaccine. Ameen, a 9-year-old boy from Dayniile internally displaced persons camp was one of the first internally displaced persons in the camp to receive his first oral vaccine dose 2 weeks ago. His mother was standing outside the family tent waiting for the vaccinators to come and give her son the second dose. She was very happy to see the vaccination teams moving around the camp to administer the vaccine. It gave her a feeling of comfort and security, she explained.

Somalia has been experiencing cholera outbreaks for a decade. As of November this year, the cumulative number of suspected cases of acute watery diarrhoea/cholera reported from 55 districts in 19 regions of Somalia stood at 78,596, including 1,159 deaths, as compared to 15,621 cases, including 531 deaths, reported during the same period in 2016.

As an integrated part of the current outbreak response strategy, WHO has mobilized more than 2 million doses of oral cholera vaccine to be administered to vulnerable populations in 11 districts in Somalia determined to be at high risk of further spread of the disease. To protect an individual from contracting cholera, 2 doses of the vaccine need to be given in 2 rounds, separated by a minimum interval of 14 days.
The two acute watery diarrhoea/cholera vaccination rounds have been made possible through generous contributions from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Task Force for Cholera Control, and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Related links

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

Global Task Force for Cholera Control

United Nations Children’s Fund

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