

Mogadishu, Somalia, 7 January 2018 – The Ministry of Health of the Federal Government of Somalia, in partnership with WHO and UNICEF, today concluded a 5-day national measles campaign, targeting 1 million children aged 6 months to 10 years in Puntland, and 4.2 million across the country.

In 2017, amidst a drought emergency, a total of 23 002 suspected measles cases were reported, which is alarmingly high compared to previous years. Among these cases, 83% were children under 10 years of age.

“It is a priority for WHO to continue supporting the Ministry of Health and maintaining the close partnership with the local health authorities and partners to control disease outbreaks like measles and ensure high vaccination coverage for all Somali children,” said Dr Ghulam Popal, WHO Representative to Somalia. “It is unfortunate that measles cases are still being reported while there is effective vaccine available,” he added.

In response to the outbreak, 2 rounds of measles vaccination campaigns were conducted in March and April of 2017, reaching 516 934 children aged 9 months to 5 years.

“Together with our partners, UNICEF was able to achieve great results for children and families affected by drought in 2017,” says Jesper Moller, UNICEF Representative, a.i. “However the crisis is far from over. The threat of famine continues to loom large, and so does disease outbreaks such as measles. The only way to protect children from this deadly disease is through mass vaccination campaigns. And we will remain vigilant and sustain our emergency efforts in 2018.”

During this campaign, a support dose of vitamin A will be administered to eligible children alongside the measles vaccine. Social mobilizers and health workers supported by WHO and UNICEF are also encouraging adults who are not fully immunized, or not sure of their immunity status, to get vaccinated as well.

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