Mogadishu, Somalia, 10 December 2017—The Federal Government of Somalia’s Ministry of Health with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF today launched a focused 3-day oral polio vaccination campaign targeting 726,699 children under 5 years of age in districts of Banadir and Lower and Middle Shabelle regions.

“No cases of polio have been detected in Somalia since August 2014, however, as a preventative measure; it is imperative that all children under 5 years of age in targeted locations, whether previously immunized or not, receive 2 drops of oral polio vaccine. We urge all families to get their children vaccinated to protect them against this dangerous disease,” said WHO Representative for Somalia, Dr Ghulam Popal.

The campaign will be conducted in 2 rounds through house-to-house visits by vaccination teams. The first and second round will involve the use of oral polio vaccine for children under 5 years of age. Inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) will be used in the third round to boost immunity among children between 2 and 23 months of age.

“This campaign has been carefully planned to make sure that all children in the chosen areas, particularly those who have been missed in previous vaccination campaigns, are reached this time,” said UNICEF Somalia Representative, Steven Lauwerier.

More than 4400 vaccinators and monitors, and around 800,000 doses of vaccine have been mobilized to conduct the activity.

Somalia has been polio free since August 2014, when the last case of polio was reported from Hobyo district of Mudug region.

Note for journalists

Banadir region reported the highest number of wild poliovirus cases in Somalia (72 out of 199) during the Horn of Africa outbreak in 2013–2014. Conflict and insecurity in South and Central Somalia especially has continued to hinder access to children during polio immunization campaigns in 2017, with approximately 240,000 children under 5 years of age reported as not accessible for more than a year.
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