19 August 2018 – Despite having one of the lowest immunization rates in the world, Somalia has made great strides in increasing immunization coverage in recent years with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other health system strengthening partners. To enhance coverage even more, in early August 2018, WHO Somalia brought together all the major organizations and institutions involved in immunization to lay the foundation for better coordinated immunization efforts in Somalia.

Representatives from the Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the only major financial donor to immunization in Somalia, as well as implementing partners UNICEF, the Somali Federal Ministry of Health, and a number of nongovernmental organizations reviewed the progress of their collaborative efforts to expand immunization and identified key challenges in strengthening immunization coverage within Somalia’s fragile health system.

Immunization coverage had improved since the previous year, partners noted, thanks in large part to better coordination among stakeholders involved in immunization efforts at the regional and district level, as well as improvements in cold chain storage and vaccine supply. As a result, measles cases continue to decline. Another notable sign of progress was the successful
country-wide rollout of District Health Information Software, a platform for reporting, analysis and dissemination of health information, including immunization data. Better data will allow WHO and its partners to design better targeted interventions to close gaps in immunization coverage.

Shortages of qualified health workers, the uneven availability of cold chain storage and transportation for vaccines outside of major population centers, and ongoing hyperinflation and insecurity affecting immunization operations were all identified by partners as major challenges to overcome in improving immunization throughout Somalia.

Over the next year, WHO and health partners in Somalia will work to close staffing and capacity shortfalls in the Somali health workforce, support the Ministry of Health to develop annual immunization work plans, improve data management, and launch immunization outreach services for rural and underserved populations. Health partners also stressed the need to step up engagement with communities in order to promote the broadest possible involvement by parents and children in immunization campaigns.

Thursday 13th of February 2020 09:24:14 PM