WHO is working closely with the Federal Ministry of Health of Somalia in order to prepare for any possible health emergencies resulting from the El Niño climate phenomenon expected to hit some countries of the Region in 2015, including Somalia. WHO and partner United Nations agencies have developed contingency plans and are scaling up preparedness activities, including pre-positioning of aid supplies in areas most likely to be affected by flooding. Flash floods have already affected thousands of people in the low lying areas of the southern and central parts of Somalia.

In Kismayo, Beletwein and Biodoa, WHO and the Federal Ministry of Health have pre-positioned three diarrhoeal/cholera medicine kits to treat 1500 cholera cases, and three interagency health kits to treat 30 000 populations for 3 months. Additional emergency medical supplies, such as trauma kits, are on their way to Garowe, Jowher, Adale, Brava, Merka, and Afgoy in order to deal with major and minor surgeries.

Federal Minister of Health and WHO Representative visited Beletwein to assess the readiness of health facilities. Emergency medical supplies have also been delivered. The Federal Minister of Health Ms Hawa Hassan Mohammed and the WHO Representative to Somalia Dr Ghulam Popal undertook a joint mission to Beletwein to assess the preparedness status of the health
sector and to deliver the emergency supplies to Beletwein regional hospital. A similar mission has also been conducted in Kismayo.

El Niño is expected to affect more than 600,000 people in southern and central Somalia and in the northeast. This might hamper the access of patients to basic services, increase the risk of communicable diseases and lead to reduced food security, malnutrition and physical injuries. “We will exert all possible efforts to reach communities all over the country who are at risk of being affected by El Niño conditions,” said Ms Mohammed, Federal Minister of Health.

Cholera is endemic in Somalia and given that the currently affected locations are in riverine areas which will experience flooding, the risk of a cholera outbreak is high. “All sectors should work together to prevent a major public health situation among an already over-burdened population. Coordination, joint preparedness and interventions, and information-sharing across sectors are critical to the success of the humanitarian response,” said Dr Ghulam Popal, WHO Representative.

WHO team meeting with the staff of Beletwein regional hospital; first batch of supplies delivered
Efforts are being intensified to enhance the disease surveillance system, including case definition, detection, management, and reporting. Currently, an outbreak of cholera, which started in Jowhar, is under control but new cases of cholera have been detected in Kismayo.

Related link


Cholera