



Impact of COVID-19 on routine immunization coverage of life-saving vaccines

Across the globe, while the highly transmissible disease and community spread seems to be continuing, the COVID-19 virus has also taken a swing at both the delivery of health services, and health-seeking behaviour. In Somalia, health facilities have recorded a drop in caregivers' visits to have their children immunized since March this year, when the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Mogadishu. When comparing overall vaccination coverage for the first half of last year with the same period this year, health facilities noted that pentavalent 1 coverage dropped by 11%, pentavalent 3 coverage reduced by 7% and measles 1 coverage dropped by 3%.



Since the start of the year, 744 children in Banadir have reportedly been infected with measles,

which accounts for around half the total number of cases in the country. This highly contagious infectious disease can cause a fever and rash among other symptoms in unvaccinated children.

Home to the largest number of displaced people in Somalia, and a hub for Somalis travelling internationally, Banadir also confirmed cases of 3 children with a rare strain of poliovirus that can be found in pockets of children with low immunity.

Two forms of polioviruses, in circulation in Somalia since the end of 2017, have caused paralysis in 19 children so far across the country.

Protecting children from preventable diseases

Dr Mamunur Malik, WHO Somalia Representative, emphasized to Somali communities that every adult has a responsibility to help Somali children lead healthy lives.

"I would like to encourage parents, caregivers and all adults in Banadir and surrounding areas to make the most of this opportunity and visit vaccination sites to ensure every child under 5 is vaccinated against polio and measles, and that every child receives additional supplements to keep them healthy. As caregivers we all have an obligation to ensure our children lead healthy and productive lives," said Dr Malik.



Note to editors

The integrated measles and polio campaign in Banadir is being conducted by Somali health authorities, with technical support from WHO, UNICEF and other Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) partners, and national and international partners, including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

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