



Credits: WHO

17 November 2021 – World Antimicrobial Awareness Week, commemorated from 18 to 24 November every year, aims to draw attention to the crucial issue of the proper use of antimicrobials, such as antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiparasitics.

This year, the theme for the campaign is to ‘Spread Awareness, Stop Resistance’. The theme calls on ‘One Health’ stakeholders, policy-makers, health care providers, and the general public to be antimicrobial resistance (AMR) awareness champions.

### **Improper use of antimicrobials a root cause of resistance**

The lack of a functioning national medicine regulatory authority, coupled with unregulated private pharmaceutical suppliers, personnel and quality of medication, has resulted in the circulation of substandard imported medicines and AMR in Somalia. In addition, the misuse and overuse of antimicrobials are the main drivers in the development of drug-resistant pathogens.

Anecdotal evidence states that health care professionals tend to oversubscribe antibiotics, offering them over the counter, without prescriptions, and often without the right advice. Together, these challenges have encouraged the spread of AMR, whereby microbes, such as bacteria, parasites, viruses and fungi, become resistant to antimicrobials. As a result of the high incidence and prevalence of AMR, it is likely that prescription medicines are becoming less effective at fighting infections, which in turn is increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.

### **Joining forces to “spread awareness, stop resistance”**



### Actions being taken to address antimicrobial resistance

In 2020, Somalia developed a national action plan to combat AMR, with support from the World Health Organization (WHO). The plan, which is yet to be endorsed formally by the Federal Government, outlines 4 pillars that would help control AMR — raising awareness, increasing

surveillance of cases of drug resistance to infectious diseases, infection prevention and control (IPC), and the proper use of antimicrobials.

Recognizing the interconnectivity between humans, animals and plants outlined in the 'One Health' approach, the national action plan also advocates for the prevention of AMR at the human-animal interface and in food chains, by raising awareness as well as by implementing concrete health actions.

Highlighting ways in which Somalia and its partners can address this situation, Dr Mamunur Rahman Malik, WHO Representative to Somalia said, "Education is a key component in driving action. Even though we have seen many other urgent health issues such as COVID-19 take over the limelight, we must have conversations about the impact of antimicrobial resistance on the health of both humans and animals, and to incorporate this topic at all levels of health education."



WHO EMRO | A forgotten conundrum: regulating the use of antimicrobials in a fragile context