



A woman receives oral cholera vaccination in Kahda district, Banadir region, Mogadishu. Photo: Maryan Abdi Sheikh 23 June 2019 – Combating cholera is a challenge for Somalia. Due to protracted crisis destroying the water and sanitation infrastructure and dilapidated health systems, coupled with regular flooding, several states are recurrently being hit by cholera epidemics. Despite these grave challenges, the Ministry of Health of Somalia, WHO and other partners face issues head on to identify sustainable solutions.

Unlike in 2017, the country continues to report cholera cases sporadically. The country faced one of the largest cholera outbreaks in 2017 with over 78 000 cases, including 1159 deaths. In 2019, the country has so far reported 1041 cases of suspected cholera, including one related death from about 25 districts of the States, which are located in the basins of the Jubba and Shabelle rivers.

Owing to the improved capacity of the health system to detect, treat and prevent cholera in the country, the number of cases have decreased in recent times but the disease continues to claim lives and cause suffering.

Practical and solid steps are needed to save the people of Somalia from the recurrent threats of cholera.

One of the largest oral cholera vaccination campaigns in a fragile setting in Africa gets under way



Somali health authorities and WHO are conducting Africa's largest immunization campaigns using oral cholera vaccines (OCV) with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Task Force for Cholera Control.

The campaign, which runs from 22 to 28 June 2019 in high-risk areas of Somalia, will vaccinate more than 650 000 children aged one year and above to eliminate the risk of the disease among vulnerable populations and to prevent recurring cholera outbreaks in the country.

"No one should die of cholera in the 21st century, especially when we have an affordable and easily administrable cure. It remains our collective responsibility to save lives and end cholera from Somalia. We remain committed to keep the country free from future cholera outbreaks," said Dr Mamunur Rehman Malik, WHO Representative for Somalia.

Before the campaign was launched, social mobilization teams were successfully trained in Balad and other targeted districts. Ministry of Health staff facilitated the training sessions. Polio workers and UNICEF's 'communication for development' teams briefed front-line health workers on vaccination techniques, record keeping and also how to search for those who missed vaccination.



Social mobilization team training in Balad. *Photo by: Ali Hassan*

The Health Minister of Federal Government of Somalia HE Dr Fauziya Abikar Nur commented on the cholera situation in Somalia, highlighting challenges and efforts, saying, “Cholera remains one of our major public health threats. We now have the means and solutions to prevent outbreaks in Somalia. We continue to work with WHO and our other partners to save lives and prevent cholera on a long-term sustainable basis.”

On the first day of the campaign, a total of 111 010 people were vaccinated, which includes 52 518 people aged 1 to 15. The current pre-emptive campaign using OCV is expected to play a major role in eliminating the risk of occurrence of cholera among vulnerable populations. As part of the country-led strategy to prevent cholera outbreaks in Somalia, health authorities and WHO

are using the OCV in combination with other proven interventions such as improving access to safe water and sanitation and improving hygiene as a long-term sustainable solution to eliminate the risk of recurrent cholera outbreaks.

**Related link**

[Cholera situation report s](#)

For additional information, kindly contact:

Dr Mutaawe Lubogo  
Epidemiologist  
WHO Somalia  
+252 612 857 531/+256 701 733 699

Ms Fouzia Bano  
Communications Consultant  
WHO Somalia  
bhattifouzia34@gmail.com  
+252 619 235 880

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