

8 December 2019 – The first phase of a nationwide integrated polio and measles vaccination campaign has concluded in Somalia having achieved high coverage. WHO in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and UNICEF launched the first phase of the campaign from 24 to 28 November 2019, targeting more than 1.7 million children under the age of five for polio vaccination and more than 1.5 million children aged six to 59 months for measles vaccination and vitamin A supplementation. This is the first time that an integrated campaign such as this has happened in Somalia. Vaccinators went from door to door to reach every child with life-saving vaccines, leaving no one behind.

The campaign was particularly focused on children in districts with high concentrations of internally displaced persons and nomadic communities due to the need to improve routine immunization coverage among these populations and reach those missed during routine immunization programmes. These population groups often have higher mobility and are therefore at increased risk for transmission of these diseases.

More than 17 000 skilled community vaccinators, frontline health workers and social mobilizers took part in the campaign. At the end of it, a total of 751,811 children had received polio vaccine (84% of the target), 671,381 had received the measles vaccine (82% of the target), 481,332 (66% of the target) had received deworming tablets and 666,182 children (82% of the target) had received vitamin A capsules. A total of 20,000 children also received their first dose (zero dose) of vaccine. The remaining unvaccinated children of the 1.7 million targeted for polio vaccination and the more than 1.5 million targeted for the measles vaccine will be reached during the second phase of the campaign in December.

During the campaign, staff from the Federal Ministry of Health, WHO, UNICEF and nongovernmental partners were deployed in different districts to monitor the campaign. All had

been trained prior to the campaign on supportive supervision, conducting parent surveys and making rapid convenience assessments.

As part of campaign monitoring, 1656 households were visited and 5042 children (under the age of 5) were assessed for both polio and measles vaccination through a three-way verification process: recall, fingermark and presence of vaccination card. Social mobilization prior to the campaign demonstrated high success, with 980 mothers surveyed at vaccination sites during the campaign reporting bringing 95% of their children to the sites and 92% were aware of the campaign before it started. Only 79 fever and rash cases amongst the vaccinated children were reported by the mothers during the survey. No other adverse event following immunization were reported during the campaign.

Every year over 170,000 Somali children miss out on life-saving vaccines. This means that one in every 10 children do not receive life-saving vaccines. Unacceptably, it is often those most at risk – the poorest, the most marginalized, and those affected by conflict or forced from their homes – who are persistently missed.

Integrated vaccination campaigns are important for increasing immunity among children and avoiding the devastating consequences of these entirely preventable diseases on individuals, families, the local economy and health security in the Region.

The nationwide integrated campaign for measles and polio vaccination was funded by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. WHO thanks Gavi and other partners for supporting the routine immunization programme in Somalia.

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