



20 May 2020 – Somalia continues its fight against one of the most catastrophic outbreaks the country has ever witnessed. In spite of recurrent humanitarian emergencies, war and conflict, Somalia has successfully eradicated wild poliovirus and ended transmission of measles and cholera outbreaks in the recent past. However, the current outbreak of COVID-19 has exposed some of the gaping holes and weaknesses in its health system to fight and respond to an outbreak of this magnitude and scale where human-to-human transmission can go unabated and the potential for cases to double in a week if the health system is not able to rapidly trace, track, test and treat those infected with the virus who remain undiagnosed and undetected.

WHO has been supporting Somalia since the beginning of this outbreak to enhance its testing capacities. As the country lacks a proactive testing strategy for COVID-19, the number of cases has continued to rise since late March when local transmission was first identified. The country has not been able to trace back the sources of infection of these locally-transmitted cases. This resulted in a widespread cluster of cases and many of these people did not know that they were harbouring the infection until it was too late.

