



MOGADISHU, 4 May 2021 – Vaccines protect us against preventable diseases, including COVID-19. They bring us closer to a healthier world and are permissible to be taken during the holy month of Ramadan – these are the main messages the Federal Ministry of Health and Human Services, World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Somalia are sharing this World Immunization Week, running from 24 to 30 April 2021. On this occasion, the Federal Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF are renewing their commitments to ensure that every child is counted for vaccination against vaccine-preventable diseases.

This year, World Immunization Week comes at a time when the country is conducting one of its largest, much needed vaccination campaigns, against COVID-19. Every year, during the last week of April, World Immunization Week is observed to encourage the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against disease. The theme for this year is ‘vaccines bring us closer’ – to encourage greater global participation around immunization and to demonstrate to communities, politicians and other audiences that vaccines do indeed bring families, communities and countries closer together.

With support from the Federal and State Governments of Somalia, WHO, UNICEF and other agencies have been providing vaccines – while observing COVID-19 protocol since last year – to Somalis of all ages and backgrounds – against preventable diseases such as measles, pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus, hepatitis B, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, cholera, tuberculosis, polio and now against COVID-19.

Since the resumption of mass vaccination campaigns, which had been paused due to the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020, Somali authorities, with support from WHO, UNICEF and other partners, have conducted 5 targeted campaigns and one nationwide campaign, where approximately 3 million children were offered vaccines to protect them from polio. In addition, 514 567 (83% of the target) and 450 983 (73% of the target) children aged under one year received pentavalent 1 and pentavalent 3 vaccines respectively. Overall, 433 863 (70% of the target) children aged under one year received their first doses of measles vaccines to protect them against this highly infectious disease.

“Smallpox's last resting place was in Somalia. But, thanks to concerted and collaborative efforts, we were able to eliminate the disease. Polio is on the verge of being eradicated. In reality, with the help of partners, Somalia's circulating poliovirus type 3 (cVDPV3) outbreak was successfully stopped this year, 28 months after it was reported, with no further international spread from our country. That should suffice to convince us that we can do it again. If we act now and together, we will stop the spread of all vaccine-preventable diseases,” said HE Dr Fawziya Abikar Nur,

Minister of Health and Human Services, Federal Government of Somalia. “However, politicians, our foreign and national partners, societies, parents, women, youth, scholars, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations and donors all have a role to play. We should all play a role in ensuring that Somalis receive vaccines appropriate for their age groups. Since the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine on 16 March 2021, and until 28 April 2021, 121 743 people in Somalia had received their first doses of the Oxford Astra-Zeneca vaccine to protect them from COVID-19. The uptake remains considerably low (at 40.6%) though. There is a need to increase the uptake of vaccinations, by health workers, frontline workers, elderly populations and people suffering from chronic illnesses, with the first batch of 300 000 vaccines – which arrived in the country on 15 March 2021.”



[A man receives a COVID-19 vaccine at the Banadir Hospital in Mogadishu, Somalia, on May 12, 2022. Photo: WHO/UNICEF/WHO EMRO.](#)