



Outbreak investigation: Rumour verification in Elwak district, Gedo Region

15 February 2010

Background: Elwak district in Gedo Region lies in close proximity to the Kenyan-Somali border. It is home to an estimated 58,000 population of which 10,000 reside in the Elwak town, with a sizeable IDP population hosted in the community as well.

Outbreak investigation: Rumours of an outbreak of diphtheria were reported from Elwak district, Gedo region on 13 February. Immediately, WHO and local partner HIRDA conducted a joint investigation of the rumoured cases.

Findings: The joint investigation concluded that between January to date, a total of 36 patients (52% of which were male and 44% were under 5 years) including 10 deaths (60% of children under 5 years) and CFR 27.8% were reported by elders and family members. Patients presented with mixed signs and symptoms of the illness. Some patients presented with upper respiratory tract infection, some with whitish coating in the throat and skin lacerations on the nostrils, and limbs. The number of affected persons has reportedly decreased since initial reports. Patients were treated with antibiotics and improved.



Location of Elwak district, Gedo Region in South Central Somalia



Conclusions and follow-up: WHO and partners are continuing to investigate reported cases of illness in the area. Despite difficult access, WHO and partners are closely monitoring the situation to determine if further interventions will be required. Diphtheria has been ruled out. As of 8 March, no further cases had been reported

Examples of symptoms seen during outbreak investigation