



Visit of the Assistant Director-General for Health Action in Crisis, Dr Eric Laroche to Somalia on 22 November 2009



Photo: WHO

Dr Eric Laroche, WHO's Assistant Director-General for Health Action in Crisis and Dr Marthe Everard, WHO Representative for Somalia visited Hargeisa, Somaliland on 22 November 2009. The mission was received by His Excellency Abdillahi Dualeh, Minister of Foreign Affairs. The mission met with the President, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Planning as well as visiting Hargeisa Group Hospital.

On 22 November, Dr Eric Laroche, WHO's Assistant Director-General for Health Action in Crisis visited Somaliland to see the health situation and meet with local health authorities.

Highlights of the mission included:

Meeting with the President of Somaliland – His Excellency Dahir Rayale Kahin: The mission met with the President of Somaliland, His Excellency Dahir Rayale Kahin and discussed issues including the need of strengthening maternal and child health services and quality control of essential medicines.

Meeting with the Minister of Health and Labour - His Excellency Abdi Haybe: The mission met with His Excellency Minister of Health and Labour, Abdi Haybe and his staff. The mission had extensive discussions with the Minister and his team about different issues affecting health and health care in Somaliland. These included

- The importance of WHO technical assistance to the Ministry in training, provision of essential supplies and consultancies.
- Technical assistance from WHO in establishing the Health Cluster and emergency health policies in Somaliland
- Extension of the ongoing mental health training for nurses in Hargeisa. The Minister noted that the effects of the training could already be seen within the participants.

Meeting with the Minister of National Planning and Coordination – His Excellency Ali Ibrahim: Issues discussed included

- Strengthening cooperation schemes with the Ministry including making use of WHO's Country Cooperation Strategy
- Integration of all health issues falling outside the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health and involving all stakeholders including the community in improving health and health services
- Developing of strategic health policies i.e. policy dialogue with countries on the National Health Policy
- Strengthening quality control of drugs and regulation of the private sector
- Improving the sharing of health-related information
- The current situation of H1N1 and ongoing response activities

Visit to Hargeisa Hospital, Mental Health Ward: The mission visited Hargeisa Group Hospital – Mental Health Ward and spoke to patients, and health workers participating in an ongoing mental health training course. Dr Laroche and Dr Everard were able to see the current challenges of the hospital in meeting the needs of people with mental health disorders in Somaliland.



Photo: WHO

The mission had the opportunity to visit services for people with mental health disorders. Chronic conflict and insecurity, amongst other factors, contribute to the high burden of mental health disorders in Somalia.

In late 2009, WHO and partners will be assessing the situation to understand the full burden and the status of health services for people with mental health disorders.