



## Outbreak investigation: AWD rumour verification in Bakool Region

15 October 2009

On 6 October 2009, rumours of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) were reported from Rabdhure District in Bakool Region. WHO staff based in Wajid investigated the rumoured outbreak from 8 to 9 October 2009.

Rabdhure District is located 90km west of Hudur and 60km north of Wajid. It becomes almost inaccessible during the rainy season. It is home to around 24 000 people, mainly pastoralists, residing in an area of 45km<sup>2</sup>. The main sources of water are unprotected shallow wells and open water catchments.

Currently, the outpatient department (OPD) in Rabdhure Town is the only functioning health facility in the district. A local partner, the Iftin Development Agency (IDA), supports this OPD. MSF Belgium previously supported a second OPD in the town centre while IMC supported a maternal and child health care centre and five health posts. Both partners have had to pull out due to insecurity. There are only two small private pharmacies with limited stocks of medicines.

Rabdhure District has had previous AWD outbreaks. An outbreak in Afgooye Village in 2006 affected twenty people and killed one adult. Another AWD outbreak was reported from Bodan Village in 2007.

### Investigation results

A total of 90 cases (99% < 5 years) including four deaths (overall CFR 4.4%) was reported from Rabdhure District between 19 August and 9 October 2009. The Rabdhure OPD has established a register to record the outbreak. Cases that were reported by community leaders in Washago Town could not be verified due to insecurity. In these locations, the reported cases were as follows.



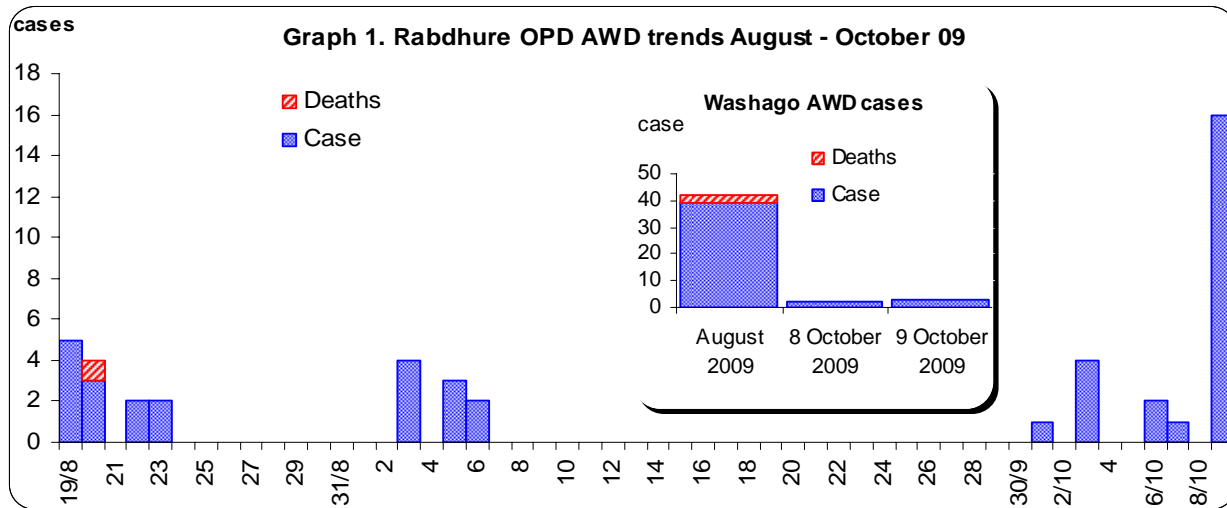
Key informant interviews with the community to gather details of cases of AWD



WHO conducting an AWD supplies inventory at Rabdhure OPD

Location	Cases		Deaths		CFR (%)
	<5yrs	>5yrs	< 5yrs	>5 yrs	
Rabdhure	44	1	1	0	2.22
Washago	44	0	3	0	6.82
Bodan	1	0	0	0	0
Total	89	1	4	0	4.44

The inventory of medical supplies at the Rabdhure OPD revealed insufficient supplies to meet needs should the outbreak spread. Other concerns include the shortage of health staff which hampers case management, especially for severely ill patients. It was also clear that there is no functioning referral system should the situation deteriorate.



### Laboratory confirmation

Samples collected from five patients with AWD were sent to Nairobi for culture. Transportation is currently a major challenge owing to the lack of flights to Wajid, Merka or Baidoa. More samples will be taken in Baidoa and sent to Mogadishu for onward transportation to Nairobi. Results are pending.

### Disease prevention activities

Rabdhure Health Organization (RHO) is conducting AWD prevention and awareness activities for visitors to their centre. They are encouraging the community to bring any child with diarrhoea and vomiting to the health facility for appropriate treatment and health advice. UNICEF is supporting RHO staff with basic WASH training.



**A sand basin originally created for water catchment in Washago with no adequate drainage and posing risk of communicable disease**

Between February and August 2009, UNICEF, in partnership with RHO, rehabilitated 15 shallow wells in different locations in Rabdhure District. They also constructed four public latrines in Rabdhure Town and conducted general sanitation campaigns (waste collection and disposal). RHO is chlorinating wells in Rabdhure Town once a month and donating waste collection equipment including spades, forks and brooms. They have also distributed household chlorination supplies from their stocks.

### **Current challenges**



**Well in Rabdhure District: Visible garbage in well and poor drainage**

Insecurity in Somalia's South Central zone is a major limiting factor for humanitarian activities. Conducting and following up on basic activities, including outbreak investigations is now extremely challenging. Major aid agencies are no longer operating in Bakool Region, resulting in critical gaps in humanitarian services.

### **Future actions**

WHO will train OPD staff at Rabdhure on effective AWD case detection and case management, and will advocate for intensifying water chlorination activities.

WHO and UNICEF have already pre-positioned initial outbreak response stocks in Wajid.