



## PRESS RELEASE – Latest violence in Mogadishu causes high toll of wounded children under the age of five

*Nearly one in two reported weapon-related injuries is a child younger than five*

**31 May, 2011 | Nairobi** – The number of weapon-related casualties treated at the three main hospitals in Mogadishu, Somalia reached a new peak last week and the World Health Organization (WHO) is concerned about the escalation of injuries in children younger than five. Data shows that the main causes of death among children younger than five are burns, chest injuries and internal hemorrhage caused by blast injury, shrapnel and bullets. Therefore, special attention is required on how to treat those cases. Of the 1590-reported weapon-related injuries in May alone, 735 cases or 46 per cent were children under the age of five, compared to only 3.5% in April.

"This is the highest number of injured children that has been reported since the beginning of this year", says Marthe Everard, WHO's representative for Somalia. "Many children are suffering from very severe wounds, burns and other injuries due to bullets, blast injury and shrapnel."

Fighting increased last March, especially around Bakara market. For many internally displaced persons (IDPs) and civilians, Bakara market is one of the cheapest places to rent accommodation. The high number of casualties among children is because of the high-populated areas surrounding the market, the scene of recent conflict.

Twenty years of civil war has devastated Somalia, hampering its health services. Since the beginning of 2011, more than 3900 people injured in the conflict have been admitted to three main hospitals within Mogadishu. The civilian population is especially vulnerable in the ongoing conflict because the fighting in Somalia's capital often occurs in the streets of the city.



Dr Omar Saleh, WHO trauma surgeon, trains Somali health workers on how to deal with the sudden increase of wounded children under the age of five.

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Health workers are stretched thin to treat the high number of war-wounded patients. In many cases, they lack proper equipment and means to cover all cases.

"Service delivery is hampered by accessibility issues, poor infrastructure and an insufficient number of health facilities," says Dr Everard. "Wherever health facilities are operating, they often lack very basic and essential medicines, supplies and equipment, operational and logistical support."

As response to the sudden increase of the many wounded children, WHO trained in Banadir Hospital (Mogadishu) 50 doctors and nurses from Mogadishu's two main hospitals, Banadir and Keysaney on how to provide the children the needed treatment for their burns and chest injuries. In addition to these capacity building efforts, WHO is supporting Banadir hospital with one trauma kit (one kit can treat 100 severe wounded people) and two operating theatre kits (one kit includes an operating table, operative lights, surgical instruments, medical supplies, drums and sutures to fully equip one operating theatre). The funding for the Health Cluster for Somalia for 2011 is currently at only 16%, with US\$ 9.4 million received from US\$ 58.8 million requested.

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