



Cholera alert: WHO warns of a possible major outbreak in Mogadishu

18 October 2011

Background: Cholera remains endemic in Somalia. In 2011 alone, nine minor outbreaks were confirmed in South and Central Somalia: in Mogadishu (**Banadir region**), the Afgooye Corridor; Baidoa (**Bay region**), Xarardere and Bursalah/ Goddogob/Hobyo (**Mudug region**) Awdhegle and Wanlaweyne (**Lower Shabelle region**). The current population influx into urban areas especially Mogadishu, the rise of informal settlements, poor access to safe drinking water and poor sanitation, increases the risks of transmission and major outbreaks. The current onset of rains is the beginning of the second seasonal cholera transmission period for Somalia. Flooding has been reported in **Gedo region** but this is not to be seen as an isolated case. Riverine areas and Mogadishu is most likely experience similar situations which could increase the spread of waterborne diseases.



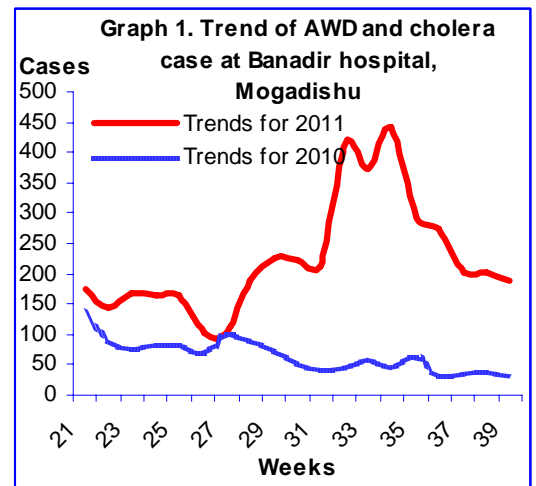
El-ade village in Gedo region experiences flooding following the onset of rains © NCA

Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD) monitoring: Since seasonal and sporadic cholera outbreaks occur all year round in Somalia, WHO conducts periodic stool sample tests whenever there is an increase in reported cases or as part of the pre-seasonal outbreak detection activities. During week 40¹, WHO conducted health situation monitoring visits to **Banadir region** and at internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in **Mogadishu**.

Results: A WHO team collected **34 stool samples** from AWD cases in several facilities in Mogadishu. Of all the samples **15 (44%)** tested **positive for *Vibrio cholerae* serotype 'inaba'**. Notably, **8 (61%)** of the positive stool samples were from patients above the age of five.

Action taken: WHO and partners have strategically pre-positioned sufficient supplies for AWD in various strategic locations in Southern and Central Somalia. Ongoing preparedness activities include monitoring of the number of reported AWD cases which are currently stable (see graph 1).

WHO is urging all partners to step up all their AWD prevention and surveillance activities and report suspected cases as soon as possible. WHO is requesting partners and stakeholders to refer to the nearest health facility and report “any case with severe dehydration due to watery diarrhea or death due to severe dehydration due to watery diarrhea with or without vomiting”. Reports can be sent to any WHO office/personnel in the field including district polio officers situated in each district and to the surveillance officers in the areas.



¹Week 40: 3-9 October 2011