15 March 2017 – The Government of Somalia has launched an oral cholera vaccination (OCV) campaign today with the support of WHO, targeting over 450 000 people in 7 high-risk areas around the country. It is the first OCV campaign to be conducted in the country, and comes at a critical time after Somalia announced the ongoing drought as a national disaster and faces the possibility of another famine.

The campaign is being held in select communities in Mogadishu, Kismayo and Beledweyne through a combination of fixed and mobile sites for maximum accessibility by the communities. The vaccines, which will be administered to at-risk persons aged one year or older, are being delivered in 2 rounds. The first round of the campaign has commenced today and will continue until 19 March, and the second round of the campaign will be held from 18 to 22 April.

“This is one of the largest oral cholera vaccination campaigns conducted in Africa,” said Dr Ghulam Popal, WHO Representative in Somalia. “This vaccination campaign will contribute to the reduction in the number of new cholera cases, interrupt transmission and limit the spread of cholera,” he said.

Somalia is currently experiencing a large-scale outbreak of cholera with a total of 10 571 over 11 000 cases of cholera and 269 268 deaths with a case-fatality rate of 2.5% reported in 11 regions since the beginning of 2017. This is more than half the number of cases reported in total for 2016. The response efforts by the Ministry of Health, WHO, UNICEF and health partners have included active case search, effective case management, intensive household chlorination campaign, and community awareness.

The oral vaccination campaign was preceded by extensive social mobilization efforts to inform the community of the benefits, availability and necessity of the vaccine. Vaccination is a preventive measure against cholera that supplements, but does not replace, other traditional cholera control measures such as improving access to safe water and sanitation and hygiene measures/interventions.

Somalia has long experienced a humanitarian emergency due to conflict, insecurity, displacement of people and limited access to health system. This situation is further

compounded by drought, malnutrition and lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities. If the current drought and food insecurity continue, the number of cholera cases is likely to increase. Preventative measures such as oral cholera vaccine can mitigate these numbers, and save lives.

The vaccination campaign is supported by the Global Task Force on Cholera Control, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, UNICEF and health partners in its various stages of planning and implementation. WHO is also providing support for the campaign in the areas of planning, organization and monitoring.

http://www.emro.who.int/som/somalia-news/oral-cholera-vaccination-campaign-launched-in-somalia.html