3 May 2017 – WHO and the Federal Ministry of Health of Somalia launched the first round of a preventative oral cholera vaccination campaign (OCV) today in Baidoa at the Baidoa Regional Hospital, targeting 224 000 persons aged 1 year and older.

The launch was attended by the President of South West State H.E. Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, Somalia's Minister of Health and Social Services H.E. Dr Fawziya Abikar, WHO Representative for Somalia Dr Ghulam Popal and state Minister of Health Issak Ali Subag along with the community, local leaders and representative of UN and NGO partners.

The vaccination campaign is in response to a major cholera outbreak in Somalia that began in January 2017. Since the beginning of the year, a total of 31 674 cases and 618 deaths have been reported in Somalia. Of these, 18 608 cases and 415 deaths have been reported in the South West State, which is nearly 60% of all AWD/ cholera cases reported in the country.

The start of the rainy season has brought some respite to the community where clean water sources are scare, however, the effects of the drought in Somalia have had its harsh impact. Lack of access to clean water and hygiene, food insecurity and malnutrition caused by drought have increased cases of cholera in the area.

The vaccination campaign is conducted in 2 rounds and will conclude before the start of Ramadan. The cholera vaccine does not replace traditional preventative measures such as access to clean water and safe hygiene practises. Supplementing the cholera vaccine, water treatment tablets were distributed to the community during the campaign by the WASH cluster.

H.E. Dr Fawziya Abikar thanked WHO for supporting the Ministry of Health in introducing oral cholera vaccines in the country. "This is an important step to prevent the further spread of cholera and we are thankful to WHO and partners for their continued support in containing this outbreak," she said.

The OCV campaign in Baidoa follows a successful vaccination campaign that was implemented in 7 high-risk districts in Banadir, Hiraan and Lower Jubba regions. A concurrent vaccination campaign has also started in Jowhar in Middle Shebelle region this week, targeting 239000 vulnerable persons aged 1 year and above.

Dr Ghulam Popal reiterated WHO's commitment to support cholera response efforts across the country. "We are working with health authorities at all levels and humanitarian partners to limit this outbreak," he said.

The vaccination campaigns are supported by the Global Task Force on Cholera Control, GAVI the Vaccine Alliance, UNICEF, Sweden and health partners in its various stages of planning and implementation. WHO is also engaged in planning, organization and monitoring of the campaigns.

http://www.emro.who.int/som/somalia-news/somalia-launches-second-cholera-vaccination-campaign-in-baidoa.html