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IOM Joins Emergency Cholera Response on Kenya-Somali Border

Somalia - In late April 2015, the number of acute watery diarrhea (AWD) and suspected cholera cases in the Kenyan-Somali border town of Dhobley in the Lower Juba region of Somalia started to increase rapidly.

In response, IOM, which has a strong presence in the border areas, started mass health and hygiene promotion, as well as oral rehydration salts (ORS) treatment in the most affected areas through a mobile outreach team and community hygiene promoters.

At the same time, IOM collected four samples from the suspected cholera cases and shipped them to its partner agency, the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Dadaab, Kenya, for laboratory testing.

On 2 May 2015, two out of four samples were confirmed positive for Vibrio Cholera 01 Ogawa. As of 17 May, five people had died and a total of 129 patients had been admitted at Dhobley General Hospital for treatment.

As co-chair of Somalia's Health Cluster, IOM has been taking a lead in the emergency response, as well as stakeholder coordination to contain the disease.

As of 18 May 2015, IOM had treated a total of 266 cases at two of its community oral rehydration centers; collaborated with partners to chlorinate two main water sources and over 1,000 donkey cart drums; conducted health and hygiene promotion with 1,092 households; and provided critical care medicine and rapid test kits to Dhobley General Hospital to treat severe cases.

In addition, IOM has been coordinating with local partners in the strategic distribution of the hygiene kits for 5,000 households throughout the affected area.

"Dhobley is a major migration route between Kenya and Somalia and is prone to waterborne diseases. While the rainy season continues, and the sanitation and hygiene situation, especially in the congested IDP settlement are poor, it is extremely important to continue and scale up our response, especially preventative intervention, in order to ensure the disease does not spread to other areas," said IOM nurse Fatuma Mohamed, who is leading the emergency response in the field.

While the on-going emergency response is currently supported by the Government of Japan, IOM is appealing for additional funding from donors to continue and scale up the intervention.

For further information please contact Dr. Chiaki Ito at IOM Somalia, Tel: +254.737.860.720, Email: cito@iom.int (<mailto:cito@iom.int>)

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