

Somalia: UN launches lifesaving vaccination campaign for children facing measles threat

25 April 2017 – Almost 30,000 young Somali children, many of them displaced by a searing drought, are being vaccinated against measles this week in a United Nations-backed emergency campaign in one of the country's hardest-hit towns.

"Among vaccine-preventable diseases, none is more deadly than measles," said UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) Country Representative Steven Lauwerier in a [news release](#).

[Measles](#) is a viral respiratory infection that spreads through air and contact with infected mucus and saliva, thrives in congested, unsanitary displacement camps.

Many children have never been immunized before as a decades-old conflict has made it difficult for health workers to reach remote areas from which they come.

So far this year, almost 5,700 cases of suspected measles have been reported across the country, more than the total number of cases in 2016.

More than 100,000 people have come to Baidoa, in Somalia's south-western region, in search of assistance, including at least 70,000 in March alone.

The threat of famine once again looms large over Somalia. Up to a million children are, or will be, acutely malnourished this year, with one in five requiring life-saving treatment.

"And we know only too well from the 2011 famine that measles, combined with malnutrition and displacement, is an especially lethal combination for children," said Mr. Lauwerier. "The only way to prevent sickness and death from measles is to make sure all children receive the vaccine."

The Baidoa campaign is being conducted in partnership with Somalia's Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), and several non-governmental organizations.

Children are also given a vitamin A supplement to boost immunity as well as de-worming tablets.