



Save the Children

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Save the Children Philippines appeals to parents to avail measles vaccine for their children's survival

Save the Children Philippines appealed to parents to complete immunization for children before reaching two years old to ensure survival and healthy growth.

Lawyer Albert Muyot, Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Philippines said children need not die of preventable diseases such as measles. He called on community health workers to intensify information drive to reach out to parents, caregivers, and guardians to have their children immunize especially with measles vaccine.

He said the First 1,000 Days law enacted in November last year mandates national agencies including the Department of Health, National Nutrition Council, and Local Government Units (LGUs) to ensure children's proper health and nutrition including complete immunization.

"The law is already in place to make sure children are given a healthy start in life through interventions such as complete immunization including measles vaccine," said Muyot.

Save the Children Philippines pushed for the enactment of the First 1,000 Days law that scales up health and nutrition support for pregnant and lactating mothers and children in the first 1,000 days of a child's life, which is the crucial window of opportunity to ensure that children in the Philippines achieve optimum growth and development.

Dr. Amado Parawan, Health and Nutrition Advisor of Save the Children Philippines said complete immunization is highly critical to a child's survival in the first 1,000 days of his life, which is up to two years old.

"Failure to complete and comply with immunization schedule can cause a child's death before reaching two years old," said Dr. Parawan. He stressed that children with measles die from complications such as pneumonia.

The DOH already confirmed measles outbreak after the number rose by 550 percent or 196 cases of measles in Metro Manila from January 1 to February 6 this year compared to the 20 cases recorded in the same period last year.

There were already 55 deaths from measles at the San Lazaro Hospital in Manila, most of them children from three months to four years old. There are still 248 children being treated for the disease at the San Lazaro Hospital.

Dr. Parawan raised concern on the steady decline in immunization rate as it will result to more deaths of children from preventable diseases.

The DOH said the vaccine coverage rate has plunged to 40 per cent last year from 70 per cent in 2017. In the first three quarters of last year, the number of non-vaccinated children rose to more than 960,000 from some 850,000 a year earlier.

“Everyday, there are already 95 children in the Philippines who die of preventable deaths due to malnutrition and the measles outbreak aggravates the problem,” said Dr. Parawan.

With 3.3 Million children who are stunted and 800,000 more who are malnourished, the Philippines ranks ninth among 10 countries in the world with the worst cases of stunting and malnutrition along with famine and conflict stricken countries in Sub Saharan Africa.

Dr. Parawan said Save the Children Philippines is developing a First 1,000 days scorecard program for LGUs to monitor the immunization rate for children in barangays.

“The scorecard will hold the LGUs accountable to provide acceptable coverage of all prescribed immunization as part of the child rights programming mandate,” he said.

Save the Children Philippines has been implementing maternal and child health and nutrition programs among poor families in cities of Navotas, Malabon, and Caloocan through access to immunization, prenatal check-ups for pregnant mothers and training of community health and nutrition workers.

Under Project NURTURE, the group is implementing nutrition-sensitive measures in among eight poor barangays in Navotas with focus on the first 1,000 days of the child to prevent stunting and improve the health of pregnant and lactating mothers. The program includes prenatal check-up, nutrition services for undernourished children, health services particularly immunization and a social protection support through conditional cash transfer.

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