

PRESS RELEASE

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Save the Children Philippines raises concern on polio outbreak, calls on parents, LGUs to support immunization of children

Save the Children Philippines has called on communities, parents and carers to support the government's immunization campaign for babies and children amid the re-emergence of polio disease after 19 years.

The Department of Health (DOH) on Thursday declared a polio outbreak, three days after a poliovirus case was confirmed in a 3-year old girl from Lanao Del Sur. A second poliovirus case was confirmed in a 5-year old boy in Laguna.

Atty. Alberto Muyot, Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Philippines said children in deprived and marginalized areas are more at risk because they have weak immune system and live in areas with scarce water and poor sanitation.

He said local health officers and barangay leaders should assist parents and carers to have babies and children complete immunization as environmental samples of poliovirus were found in the sewage of Manila and waterways of Davao.

"No child should die from preventable causes like poliovirus," said Muyot in a statement. "We call on local health officials and parents to have babies and children complete immunization as children across the Philippines face risks of contracting polio with the emergence of a child infected with virus and contamination of water systems in cities of Manila and Davao."

Save the Children Philippines has advocated the passage of Republic Act 11148 or 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, or the first two years. It includes complete immunization to protect the child from dying due to preventable causes.

Dr. Amado Parawan, Health and Nutrition Advisor of Save the Children Philippines said the steady decline in polio vaccines coverage for children at 66 per cent in 2018 compared to the recommended 95 per cent contributed to the polio outbreak.

He said complete immunization is critical to the child's survival in the First 1,000 days, which is up to two years old.

Dr. Parawan called on parents and carers not to hesitate to have their children get complete immunization including polio and measles.

"A complete immunization is the first line of defense for children to have a healthy start in life," said Parawan. "We call on local health officers to intensify campaigns for complete immunization as these vaccines can save their children's lives."

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