

Headline	DOH not lifting measles outbreak declaration
MediaTitle	Philippine Star(www.philstar.com)
Date	30 Apr 2019
Section	NEWS
Order Rank	1
Language	English
Journalist	N/A
Frequency	Daily

DOH not lifting measles outbreak declaration

[Sheila Crisostomo](#)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Health (DOH) will not lift the measles outbreak declared in four regions in the country last February, an official said yesterday.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said the measles cases in the National Capital Region, Central Luzon and Central and Western Visayas are under control.

“We are seeing fewer measles cases. But I would not say that the outbreaks are over. You can probably do that at the local level but not at the regional or national level,” Duque told reporters during a vaccination program at the Baseco compound in Tondo, Manila.

Duque said they would lift the measles outbreak once the DOH reaches its target of 95 percent immunization rate for all vaccine-preventable diseases.

Barangay health workers vaccinated infants and children against measles, diphtheria, pertussis or whooping cough, tetanus, hepatitis B and haemophilus influenza Type B.

World Health Organization Philippine representative Gundo Weiler noted that herd immunity could be achieved if 95 percent of target children are vaccinated.

“When this happens, even children who are too young to be vaccinated will be protected,” Weiler said.

Duque said public confidence in the government’s vaccination program has improved, based on the study conducted by the Philippine Survey Research Center commissioned by Malacañang.

Based on the survey, 89 percent of Filipinos said that vaccines are safe, compared to 66 percent in April 2018.

Those who said that vaccines were effective rose from 68 percent to 91 percent.

DOH records showed that around 3.8 million children aged six to 59 months were immunized during the outbreak-response vaccination activities.

The agency will vaccinate more elementary students when classes resume in June.

Sen. Sonny Angara has called for a more aggressive immunization campaign to ensure that life-saving vaccines reach as many Filipino children as possible.

“We need to be more aggressive in ensuring that every Filipino child receives vaccines to protect them from preventable illnesses. We have to make sure that our immunization program reaches even the hardest to reach child,” Angara said.

He issued the statement after the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reported that an estimated 2.9 million children in the Philippines remain unvaccinated, making them vulnerable to potentially deadly infections such as measles, rubella and polio.

Angara said the government needs to step up its information campaign on the benefits of vaccination, which should include door-to-door approach in far-flung areas to provide parents with personalized immunization information.

“It is vital to identify those who are missing vaccination and reach them with life-saving vaccines,” he said.

“Improving vaccination coverage is the key to reducing diseases and deaths among children,” he added.

Close to 30,000 measles cases, including 389 deaths, were recorded nationwide since January this year.

According to UNICEF, measles immunization coverage in the country has declined to 73 percent in 2017 from 88 percent in 2013.

Last year, the immunization coverage went down to less than 70 percent, or way below the 95 percent required for population immunity. – **With Paolo Romero**