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COTABATO CITY, Philippines — There have been 17 reported deaths due to dengue in Region 12 between January and April this year, the Department of Health regional office said.

According to Department of Health-12, there were 4,631 cases of dengue in that period.

The provinces of North Cotabato and South Cotabato lost seven residents each to dengue fever while Sarangani had three fatalities in the past four months.

DOH-12 tagged as “dengue hotspots” Barangays Sto. Niño in Koronadal City, Dumadalig in Tantaran town in South Cotabato and Malalag in Maitum, Sarangani because of the high prevalence of dengue cases there in recent months.

Region 12 covers the central Mindanao provinces of North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Sarangani and Sultan Kudarat, and the cities of Koronadal, General Santos, Kidapawan and Tacurong.

DOH-12 officials said the department has a continuing anti-dengue campaign program meant to reduce the prevalence of the mosquito-borne disease in all of the towns and cities in central Mindanao.

The controversy surrounding Dengvaxia, a dengue vaccine that has been banned in the Philippines after pharmaceutical giant Sanofi disclosed it put those vaccinated who had not previously been infected with dengue at risk of infection, has hampered DOH vaccination programs.