



**World Health
Organization**

Western Pacific
Philippines

DOH, LGUs and partners to conduct Phase II of month-long nationwide measles-rubella and oral polio vaccine campaign starting February 1

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After a successful nationwide measles-rubella and oral polio vaccine supplemental immunization activity (MR-OPV SIA) Phase I last year in the Mindanao, Cordillera, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, MIMAROPA and Bicol Regions with a coverage of 93% for Measles-Rubella (MR) Vaccine and 89% for Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV), the Phase II of the vaccination campaign will be conducted from February 1 to 28, 2021 in the Visayas Regions, National Capital Region, Central Luzon and CALABARZON. The Phase 2 MR-OPV SIA aims to vaccinate 5.1 million 9-59 months old children for the MR vaccine and 4.8 million children 0-59 months old for OPV.

This campaign is a hard battle for the Department of Health (DOH), all local government units (LGUs), and other partners considering the triple threat of outbreaks on top of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an ongoing polio outbreak which started last 2019, with cases detected from the Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) surveillance and poliovirus isolates that were seen in environmental samples. At the same time, there is a threat of a measles outbreak and continuing spread of rubella virus in the country.

Measles or *tigdas* is one of the most contagious diseases in the world. It is characterized by high-grade fever, rashes, cough, sore eyes, runny nose and can lead to complications such as pneumonia, blindness, severe diarrhea, swelling of the brain, and even death. Polio, on the other hand, is a potentially debilitating disease that causes fever, neck stiffness, muscle weakness, and can eventually lead to lifelong paralysis. To date, there is no specific treatment for both measles and polio, and the only reliable protection is through vaccination.

“We can only halt an impending measles outbreak and stop the spread of polio if we vaccinate every eligible child. This is challenging but is necessary for the protection of our children. WHO and other partners continue to support the DOH and our frontline workers and local governments in addressing these multiple health threats,” said WHO Philippines Representative Dr. Rabindra Abeyasinghe.

“We at UNICEF remain committed in supporting DOH, as well as the national government and local government units, in ensuring that every child in the Philippines is vaccinated. Amid the challenges of COVID-19, it is even more critical to reach the most vulnerable children and give them the opportunity to grow healthy and reach their full potential. With the continuous technical and financial support of our key partners USAID and US CDC, we look forward to yielding high coverage for this second phase of the MR-OPV SIA,” said UNICEF Philippines Representative Oyunsaikhan Dendevnorov.

“We highly encourage parents and guardians to have their children immunized.” Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III said, adding that the measles, rubella and oral polio vaccines are guaranteed to be safe, effective, and free. “Vaccination saves lives and prevents disabilities from such diseases. These vaccines can give our vulnerable children a good start at life so they can grow into healthy and productive adults. Above all, no child should be left behind,” the Health Secretary concluded.