



**World Health
Organization**

Western Pacific
Philippines

Every newborn and mother, safe from tetanus

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Philippines eliminates Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus

After three decades of hard work and collaboration with partners, the Philippines, through the leadership of the Department of Health (DOH), has achieved Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus Elimination (MNTE) status. MNTE is achieved when there is less than one case of neonatal tetanus per 1000 live births in every province or city every year. This was declared by a joint UN mission comprising of technical experts from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Prior to this declaration, the Philippines was one of the 16 remaining countries in the world that have not eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus.



Secretary of Health Francisco T. Duque III receives the Plaque of Achievement of the MNTE Goal from Dr. Rajendra Prasad Hubraj Yadav, Officer-in-Charge, WHO Philippines Country Representative and Ms. Lotta Sylwander, UNICEF Country Representative.

WHO/J. Orbina

“The health department faced numerous challenges to reach every isolated and conflict-affected community, promoting the importance of clean birth deliveries, attended by trained health workers and vaccinating pregnant and reproductive age women with tetanus vaccine,” DOH Secretary Francisco Duque III said.

“Thanks to our health workers and our partners UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO, for achieving less than one neonatal tetanus case per 1000 live births per province or city. This is a big stride towards the realization of universal and equitable health care, especially for the mothers and newborns who come from poor communities,” the health secretary added.

Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus (MNT) has been among the most common life threatening consequences of unclean deliveries and umbilical cord care practices, and are indicators of inequity in access to immunization and other maternal, newborn, and child health services. Neonatal tetanus

is a painful disease that killed 34,000 newborns in 2015 worldwide. However, while the neonatal mortality is still high, MNT deaths can be prevented through hygienic practices in delivery and cord care, and by immunizing women and children with tetanus vaccine.

Through the years, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO supported the Government of Philippines in its goal of improving health outcomes, including achieving MNTE status. Since the 1980s, tetanus immunization for pregnant women was included in the national program. This was done along with strengthening of efforts in improving coverage for antenatal care and clean deliveries. Since 2009, intensive tetanus immunization campaigns were also conducted in high-risk provinces targeting women of reproductive age. In 2015, MNTE was validated in 16 out of 17 regions of the Philippines.

Despite the geographical isolation, armed conflicts, banditry and other security concerns ARMM was able to conduct three quality rounds of tetanus vaccination last year, protecting over 250,000 women at risk against tetanus. With full support from UNICEF and WHO and the tireless efforts of frontline health workers and local leaders, the campaign reached almost every corner and every reproductive age woman, especially those living in isolated and island communities. This led to successful elimination of MNT from the most difficult region of the country.

“Having eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus is a big achievement of the Philippines. Vaccine-preventable diseases such as tetanus are mostly affecting the hardest to reach and the most vulnerable people. Eliminating tetanus underlines the government’s commitment to improve the lives of mothers and children living in the most disadvantaged communities,” Dr. Gundo Aurel Weiler, WHO Representative to the Philippines said.

“While the MNTE status has been achieved, now the goal is to sustain this remarkable achievement. This is possible through a concerted effort to enhance access to quality antenatal care, skilled attendance at birth and tetanus vaccination for all pregnant women, including those living in the remotest areas of the country,” Ms. Lotta Sylwander, UNICEF Philippines Representative said.

“In emergencies, especially where families are displaced by ongoing armed conflicts, the government services have to respond to the needs of pregnant women, mothers and their infants, so that the gains are sustained,” Ms. Sylwander added.

The Government of Philippines is committed to the achievement of sustainable development goal (SDG), while ensuring the health and wellbeing of the Filipinos.