

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
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PRESS BRIEFING OF MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ
WITH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SECRETARY TEODORO HERBOSA
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MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Magandang hapon, Malacañang Press Corps, and welcome sa ating press briefing ngayong araw, September 17.

In today's Cabinet sectoral meeting headed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the Department of Health presented the catch-up plans for the National Immunization Program focused on vaccinating children. It may be recalled that in 2021, the Philippines ranked number 5 amongst the top countries with zero dose vaccinated children; in 2023, the Philippines was no longer in the top 20. While this is good news, President Marcos directed the DOH to intensify the immunization programs in order to achieve a higher 'fully immunized children' goal.

The Marcos administration fully supports the National Immunization Program with an increased budget by 40% from the year 2021 to 2025, and this was an increase of 2.3 billion pesos to fund the vaccine acquisition and administration nationwide – and we will have the secretary talk about that in detail further later on. A nationwide school vaccination program by the DOH and the DepEd called "Bakuna-Eskwela" will be kicked off on October 7 where vaccines for HPV, measles, Rubella, tetanus and diphtheria will be administered. This covers grades 1, 7 and 4.

President Marcos called for a strong media and publicity campaign in order to reach families, mothers, children and the youth about the benefits and necessity of required vaccines. These programs are supported by all government agencies and the private sector. And, of course, we here at PCO are counting on our media partners to please amplify this message that the theme, "Every Filipino Deserves a Shot at Life-long Protection." This is aligned with the vision of Bagong Pilipinas.

At para bigyan pa tayo ng detalye tungkol dito, kasama natin ngayon si Department of Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa. Good afternoon, Secretary Herbosa.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Good afternoon, Daphne. And good afternoon to the Malacañang Press Corps. Allow me to give you details of what I presented to the President.

Some of the highlights, I actually updated him on the National Immunization Program of the Department of Health of the Philippines. It's actually based on three laws 'no, iyong Republic Act 10152, Mandatory Infants and Children Health Immunization Act Of 2011; iyong Republic Act 11148, Kalusugan at Nutrisyon ng Mag-nanay Act; and Republic Act 9994, the Expanded Senior Citizen Act.

Dito sa ating National Immunization Program, nagbabakuna tayo ng mga buntis, ng bagong panganak, ng mga infants below one year old, at mga children and adolescents and, of course, older persons, iyong mga senior citizens.

So nagbibigay tayo ng a total of 11 vaccines sa bata before the 12th month, before one year of age 'no: Isang dose ng BCG kontra sa tuberculosis; tatlong doses ng pentavalent vaccine, lima

pong bakuna ito, ito iyong diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, Hepatitis B at *haemophilus influenza*; at tatlong doses ng polio vaccine; at dalawang doses ng measles, mumps and Rubella vaccine. At nagbibigay din tayo ng pneumococcal conjugate vaccine sa ating mga bata.

So may schedule iyan 'no. Iyong BCG, within 24 hours pagkatapos ipanganak ang bata; iyong pentavalent, binibigay ito at six weeks of age, ten weeks of age and 14 weeks of age; iyong polio, binibigay namin sa six weeks, 10 weeks and 14 weeks; at iyong measles, mumps and Rubella – iyong Rubella iyon iyong German measles – binibigay natin ito at nine months and 12 months of age.

So currently, a total of 16 vaccine-preventable diseases iyan, kasi nagbibigay din tayo ng dalawa sa ating pregnant mothers. Iyong dalawang iyon ay ang tetanus at diphtheria, iyong TD vaccine, binibigay natin sa mga buntis. At nagbibigay din tayo sa mga senior citizen, iyon iyong pneumococcal vaccine.

So ang good news, binalita ko sa Presidente na because of our National Immunization Program, na-certify na tayo in 2017 na neonatal tetanus elimination. So eliminated na ang neonatal tetanus. May cases pa rin, a few, but we are below the parang accepted. So wala nang masyadong namamatay because of this tetanus and diphtheria vaccination sa mga buntis.

And also, in 2021, we were declared polio eliminated na rin 'no. So these are achievements of the vaccine and malaki ang nagiging programa para sa ating mga kabataan.

So sinabi sa inyo ni Daphne na ibinigay ni Presidente iyong aking ni-request na full budget, first time po ito – lagi pong 60 to 70 percent lang ng hinihingi. But this is the first time our President really allocated 7.9 billion para sa mga pambili lang ng bakuna po iyan; may pera pa para sa programa, iyong mga allowance ng mga health workers, iyong mga, you know, publicity para sa pagbabakuna. Nanggaling ito sa 6.4, so ang laki nang idinagdag 'no.

And then, naibigay din iyong ni-request ko, iyong human papillomavirus [vaccine] para sa ating mga batang babae. Iyong human papillomavirus vaccine, iyan ang nagpi-prevent ng cervical cancer. Cervical cancer ang pinakapangatlo sa number of cancer cases in the Philippines. And in other countries, binibigay na nila ito sa Canada, sa Australia pati sa mga batang lalake. Pero tayo, iyong budget natin for many years dahil medyo mahal ito, binibigay lang sa mga mahihirap na nine years old, so indigent. So hinihingi ko dapat lahat ng nine years old ay mabigyan to really do the 95% population immunity.

So mababa iyong ating national status ng fully immunized child dahil po nanggaling tayo sa COVID-19 – noong COVID-19 walang pasok, walang school-age vaccination kasi walang eskuwela so maraming batang na-miss iyong kanilang mga bakuna.

Number two, lahat ng mga health workers ay busy noon sa pagbabakuna ng COVID vaccine, lahat ang gusto ay mabakunahan sa COVID-19 so na-delay tayo at bumagsak nang bumagsak. Pinakita ko nga kay Presidente iyong ating decreasing immunization rate.

So mayroon tayong big catch-up tapos iri-restore natin iyong dati nating immunization rate at i-strengthen natin ang National Immunization Program, at ito ay gagawin natin starting October. Ito iyong ating programa, inimitahan ko si Presidente to help us and lead us in the Bakuna-Eskwela. It is a libreng bakuna para sa Grade 1 at Grade 7, bibigyan sila ng measles at Rubella vaccine, at tetanus and diphtheria. So makukuha na rin namin pati iyong zero dose children. Tapos iyong

Grade 4 na babae, na batang babae, nine years old ito, mabibigyan sila ng human papillomavirus vaccine or iyong anti-cervical cancer vaccine.

So may kick-off kami 'no, mangyayari ito sa October 7 sa Dr. Alejandro Albert Elementary School. At nationwide po ito, we will do the launch on October 7, pero every Friday for the month of October, puwedeng magpabakuna ang mga batang gustong magpabakuna sa lahat ng eskuwelahan ng DepEd. Kasama ko po dito si Secretary Sonny Angara sa pag-launch nito at pag-implementa ng programa ng school-based immunization.

So diyan po nagtatapos ang aking briefing, at I'm ready to answer questions.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Sec. Ted, I think, maybe we can also highlight infants. They are not covered by Bakuna-Eskwela, but how is the DOH going to address the newborns and the infants?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: So nagta-tie up naman kami diyan with Secretary Rex Gatchalian, mayroon tayong feeding program. Iyong kaniyang feeding program, kasama kami doon sa first 1,000 days. So kapag nag-feeding program, naa-identify namin iyong mga buntis na babae doon sa feeding program at niri-refer sa amin para mabigay iyong bakuna ng buntis; at kapag nanganak sila, we will make sure that they complete all the vaccines before 12 months.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you. Okay, let's open the floor, questions about the National Immunization Program and the catch-up. Okay, let's start with Eden Santos/NET25.

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: Secretary, good afternoon po. Ito po bang Bakuna Eskwela na ilu-launch ninyo on October 7 ay sa lahat lang po ng pampublikong paaralan? How about the private schools?

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Oo, sa public school lang muna ito ginagawa. Ang private sector, usually nagpu—kagaya ko at ang mga anak ko, pinabakunahan sa private pediatrician. Nagbabayad po kami, ganoon ang kadalasang practice but we will accept siguro. Ako, ang gagawin ko diyan, if there are kids of that age kahit nasa private school sila iyong malapit, I will make sure that the program will not refuse any child. Kahit nandoon sila sa nearby na private school, babakunahan din natin kasi hindi lang namin under talaga iyong—I'll coordinate with Secretary Angara about this.

Basta pumunta sila—ang mangyayari doon sa school, alamin lang noong private school and then mag-tie up sila with the public school and then we will... kapag nalaman naming pumayag iyong parents kasi may parental consent pa ito eh 'di ba para kapag pumayag iyong parents nila, 'di isama natin doon sa mga bakunang dadalhin doon sa eskuwela every Friday.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: That's great news. It's really... it's so important that you're considering allowing the private school kids.

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: In fact, I mentioned to the President, I need the help of the private sector kasi nakita ko noong COVID-19 naalala ninyo – private sector ang malaking tulong kaya na-reach natin iyong 74 million na babakunahan. So, the private sector really is going to help us through this. And then, we're also—ang isang fact sa National Immunization Program, when we present data, hindi kasama iyong data noong mga pediatricians na private. Hindi iyon niri-report eh so we missed data by 10 to 15 percent – iyon ang sabi sa aking i-estimate.

So, I'm trying to find a way to make it mandatory or online para madali lang mag-report. Pagkatapos niyang mag-clinic, may pupuntahan siyang link, ma-report na niya iyong ilang batang binakunahan niya para maka-count namin iyon. I'm sure our figures will increase by 10 percent; iyong ang estimate, the private sector immunizes about 10 percent of the two million children every year. Ang total estimate is, we'd like to vaccinate about two million children born every year – it's about 1.7 to 2 million every year kung mabakunahan natin iyon.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Next question, Racquel Bayan, Radyo Pilipinas.

RACQUEL BAYAN/RADYO PILIPINAS: Sec., for clarification lang po. Ito pong nationwide na pagbabakuna natin on October 7, mandatory po ito or kailangan pa rin po natin ng parent's consent?

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Kailangan pa rin ng parental consent, Of course, right of refusal pa rin. And then, ang usual process namin, kapag may nag-refuse na parent, iyong health workers na namin ang pumupunta at ini-interview o tinatanong bakit ayaw magpabakuna; and then we try to convince them, baka maling information. Maraming nababasa kasi sa social media that's why we need your help.

Ako, naka-tag ako lagi sa mga anti-vaxxer [laughs] madaming anti-vax—siguro nata-tag din kayo 'di ba, iyong mga istorya. But these are nag-a-agitate and it's not science-based. When I look at them, hindi naman siya science-based so I don't engage na. So, we need your powers to help counter this kasi some believes – nababasa nila sa ano, naniniwala eh.

RACQUEL BAYAN/RADYO PILIPINAS: Meaning to say, Secretary, kapag ayaw po ng magulang, iisa-isahin po natin na puntahan po para i-explain?

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Oo, pero hindi siya mandatory 'no. It's not mandatory. Kaya nga 95% lang ang target eh, we expect around 5% 'no – either baka may contraindication. Kung minsan, sinabihan ng pediatrician nila or doctor nila na may allergy sa bakuna, hindi pupuwedeng bakunahan so iri-research natin iyan; kung minsan belief nila, religious belief – mahirap yata iyon kasi that's their right, 'di ba.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Also, this would rely on the partnership with the local governments and the private sector because they are the legs on the ground.

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Correct.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: So, sa field work ko noon, nakikita namin iyan na iyong local government ang nag-a-approach; nagdu-door-to-door sila sometimes.

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Yes.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Allan Francisco, PTV-4.

ALLAN FRANCISCO/PTV4: Hi, Sec. Kumusta po iyong coordination ng department ninyo sa DILG, I understand sa smallest unit ng government, sa barangay, sir?

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Oo. So, may program ako ngayon - iyong PuroKalusugan 'no. Talaga namang naka-monitor ang local government units, iyong fully immunized child are one of those parameters, hindi sila mananalangin noong seal of good government na binibigay ng DILG – hindi sila

mananalo kapag sila ay mababa iyong immunization rate nila. So, talagang sila pa nga ang nagmamakaawa sa akin, “*Sige na, baguhin ninyo na para makuha.*” Kung minsan, doon sila lagpak, doon sila lagpak sa ano. So, sabi ko I cannot change that pero we can work together to improve the figures.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Maricel Halili, TV5.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Hi, sir. Magandang hapon. Sir, ano po iyong wisdom bakit Grade 1 and 7?

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Well, iyong Grade 1, para ma-catch mo iyong zero dose kasi if they get to DepEd school na hindi man lang sila nabakunahan, at least mayroon akong mga children na mababakunahan especially for measles ‘di ba, measles and TB iyon eh. Iyong measles kasi mabilis kumalat, naalala mo may measles outbreak ako last Holy Week sa BARMM? Sa school nanggaling iyon. Kaya when we did the measles outbreak immunization, pati 9 years old sinama namin kasi we counted mababa ang immunization ng BARMM so for many years, madaming batang lumalaki, walang—and then magkaka-measles sila sa school eh, maghahawahan sila.

Iyong reproductive number ng measles ay 16 – so isang bata, 16 na bata ang puwedeng [mahawahan]. Naalala ninyo ang COVID, Two. 1.5, ‘di ba – isa ay makakahawa ng dalawa! Iyong measles, ang bilis kumalat so this is the reason why Grade 1 tututukan na natin with the measles and TB, and tetanus and ano. So, kung hindi sila nadala ng mga magulang nila for whatever reason noong COVID times, at least mahuli natin dito.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: And how about iyong Grade 7, sir?

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Iyong Grade 7 is the 9-year old girls/females, iyon iyong... kasi around 9 years old, around Grade 7 iyon eh. So, before they become sexually active, iyong HPV kasi has to be given before they become sexually active – so Grade 4.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: So, sir, does it mean na iyong BARMM pa rin talaga iyong region na may pinakamababang immunization?

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Hindi na. Well, for measles dahil nag-measles outbreak kami, naka-reach kami ng 87%. We targeted 1.2 million children there, naka-vaccinate kami ng 1.—ay, 1.3, na-vaccinate namin, 1.2 so that’s 87%. So, doable talaga even in the BARMM region that’s always mga nasa 40%. Noong nagtulung-tulong lahat – the local government, the BARMM government, the DOH – nagawa namin. So, we’re hoping with this campaign, ganoon din kami.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: So, sir, saan iyong pinaka-problematic lang natin na area when it comes to immunization and how far are we from reaching iyong target natin na 95%?

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Okay. So, ang current status natin is 71% ang fully immunized child. Well, there are many ways to count now ‘no kasi nga noong araw, six antigens or six diseases lang ang pini-prevent natin – pero today, we prevent 11. So to attain fully immunized, napakahirap and other countries around us – Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia – ang binibilang na lang is the antigens deployed. So, mas marami kang bakunang na-deploy, mas maganda kasi many kids are given the vaccine.

Pangalawa, iyong mga bata na... iyong iba dinadala ng nanay on the first dose, iyon second dose hindi na dinadala, iyong third dose hindi na nakuha. So, iyon ang reason pala kaya kami maggi-

Grade 7, iyon ang booster din ng tetanus kasi kung hindi mo nabigay iyong full three doses eh kulang pa rin iyong bakuna noong bata kahit nabakunahan siya once – eh dapat three doon sa particular disease na iyon, so iyon ang very important ano, ma-complete talaga. So we're now counting antigens – total of 16 antigens na iyan kasama iyong sa buntis at sa matanda.

Pero sa children, 10 iyong mandatory sa national program, dinagdag iyong pneumococcal conjugate vaccine para sa luga/otitis media at pneumonia iyon. Pero hindi pa ganoon karami iyong napu-procure namin kasi hindi naman siya mandated.

Q: [OFF MIC]

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Totoo iyan, mahal po iyan – thousands of pesos.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: You mentioned the booster.

DOJ SEC. HERBOSA: Ah, iyon ang... ang lowest namin sa coverage is really Region VII at BARMM ng fully immunized child. Pero nakita ko iyong struggle namin sa BARMM, ang lalayo noong mga lugar talaga. They're really living in the—so, tapos ang isa pang struggle namin is really, what we call logistics and supply chain management; ang bakuna, kailangan naka-cold chain. Maalala ninyo iyong COVID-19, kailangan ay minus 70. Itong mga bakunang ito, at least four degrees lang ito pero that still requires refrigeration. And alam naman ninyo sa probinsiya, namamatay ang kuryente lagi. So, kapag dinala ko naman lahat ng bakuna sa probinsiya, bukas sira na iyon kasi baka the whole night walang kuryente, iyong refrigeration wala. Then kapag magbabakuna ka naman, nadi-delay iyong pag-deliver doon sa remote areas.

So, ito iyong mga things, challenges na prinisent ko sa President and pagtutulungan, whole of society na tulungan na lang ito to be able to make sure. In fact, may isang soft drink company, lumapit na sa akin, sabi, we are actually deliver, kasi sabi noong soft drink company, nakaka-deliver kami ng cold drinks all the way to the farthest island in the Philippines. Sabi ko, isakay na nga ninyo iyong bakuna namin sa mga truck ninyo. Sabi nila, oo, puwedeng pag-usapan iyan, saging ganoon.

Q: Ganiyan naman kapag emergency, 'di ba, Sec.?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Oo, so I am thinking with public and private partnership, baka in the remote areas, madala iyon ng mga delivery. Kasi paliit ng paliit iyong truck nun eh, mayroon silang truck doon sa big depot nila sa city, tapos they have smaller trucks that are deployed to the smaller. Iyon ang wala pa kaming capability and we need private sector to help us there.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Sir, itanong lang po namin, na-mention po nila, catch-up plan ito. So, ilan po iyong target na mga children, iyong parang hard figures na gusto nating mabakunahan for these occasions?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: So every year, we target about 2 million. So, ang current rate natin, nasa 34% pa lang, so about 1.5 ang natitira pa noon ibig sabihin noon, of the 2 million. So, mga 1.5 million kids iyang gusto nating mabigyan nitong mga catch-up.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Tapos, kailan po natin expected ma-complete iyong 95% target natin?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Well, we are hoping, every year nakaka-95% tayo, 71% lang ang nakukuha natin. With these two programs, itong school-based at saka iyong big catch-up, we are hoping to increase that by the end of the year, by December.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: And once you catch-up, it's going to be an ongoing program?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Yes, after ma-catch-up mo siya to 95%, every year, may natitirang 5%, so hinahabol uli namin iyan, every three years nagkaroon ng tinatawag na supplemental immunization activity. Narinig din ninyo dati iyan 'di ba, iyong MR – SIA, Measles Rubella Supplemental Immunization Activity. I think we did that before COVID eh, pero since pumasok iyong COVID, walang nagawang supplemental, so dumami iyong zero-dose children natin or iyong walang booster. So, ganoon iyong strategy noon: You never get a 100%, you try to get 95% and then, iyong mga remainder, habulin sa catch-up.

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: Hi, sir. Change topic lang ako, sir, leptospirosis. I understand nagtapos na po iyong two weeks na period of incubation at may latest figures po ba kayo kung ilan po iyong nadagdag sa leptospirosis cases?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Wala akong exact figures now. But I know, mayroon pa rin kaming naa-admit na lepto, that is what I can say. Kahit matagal na iyong baha, August 18 ba tayo nagkabaha, and then two weeks after that, the end of August, September. Actually, may na-admit pa ring cases of lepto being reported in our Epidemiology Surveillance Group.

So, ang good news ko diyan, last week nag-meeting ang Metro Manila Council at iyong MMC naglabas ng resolution na pinagbabawal sa buong Metro Manila ang maglaro, magtampisaw. Pero kung ikaw ay lulusong sa baha para iligtas ang bahay mo, ang kamag-anak mo, hindi bawal iyon. Ang bawal ay iyong mga naglalaro, nagtatampisaw at nagtatambay, naliligo sa baha. Ang bayan pala ng San Juan, City of San Juan, has long had a penalty for this, parang ₱500 to ₱1,000 kapag bata, ₱1,000 to ₱2,000 kapag matanda, kapag adult.

So, ang sinabi ng Metro Manila Council, lead ang president ngayon, iyong mayor ng San Juan, si Mayor Zamora, sabi niya, bahala na iyong mga city mag-implement ng ordinansa on penalty. Pero at least kumampi sa akin iyong naglabas ng resolution. So, I am already very happy as a Secretary of Health na kumampi sa akin iyong mga local chief executives na talagang mahal naman talaga iyong lepto – naa-ICU ka, tapos puwede pang mamatay; we have about 30 deaths, since August 30, madami-dami iyon. That's still 30 deaths.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Sir, speaking of immunization, ano po iyong possibility for the resumption of a nationwide dengue vaccine campaign using second generation dengue vaccines? I understand that before you mentioned na iyong Japanese company has already applied for registration here in the Philippines?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Let me explain the science of the dengue vaccines. All of them now know, after a lot of implementation and experiment, that the dengue vaccine has the greatest value in the immunization of someone who has had a first infection of dengue. That means, it protects them from the second which is usually the one that is dengue hemorrhagic or severe dengue, so it prevents a more serious illness.

So, ang mangyayari diyan, it probably should not be a nationwide program, it should be physician-based immunization. That means, you go to your physician, the physician will review your medical

history or your history of previous dengue, and then probably do some serologic test and then, we recommend to you if that is needed.

As an update, we were informed that the FDA is processing a new vaccine. I wouldn't say the brand, but it's from Japan. The studies are superior than that of the previous one, the first one. So, I am just waiting for whether they will give them a CPR or what sustained release or whatever issuance. When they do that, it's the private sector that will get it first. So, then we will study it, by law, if that one is approved and we want to implement it, it goes to two steps, the national immunization and technical advisory group, which is a group within DOH, and then the HTAC, the Health Technology Assessment Council, which is under the DOST. This was placed under the Universal Health Care Act. So, pagpopondohan siya ng PhilHealth, kailangan dumaan siya sa HTAC.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: Speaking of dengue, Sec., you said in a previous briefing na ang increase po natin is 68%?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Correct.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: Are we sounding the alarm that it's quite a big number, 68%?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Yes, for the same period, binibilang natin iyan sa epidemiology bureau, the number of dengue cases, kasi endemic iyan all year round, although this is our season for dengue. So, tinitingnan namin, kina-compare namin iyong numbers this year with the numbers last year from January to August – and we have a 68% increase, so iyong 100,000 ay naging 200,000 something. So, I announced that yesterday in our DOH press con. And many LGUs have actually declared a state of calamity para ma-access nila iyong emergency funds nila because their hospitals were full or nagkaubusan na sila ng blood in some of those regions.

And that's regions—Baguio City is one of them na nakita ko sa news – Region III, Region IV-A and Region VII yata iyong mga ni-report ko. So, reminders to all the people na tumataas ang dengue cases natin. For the past three or four weeks, there is a 25% increase, uptrend of cases. So, talagang dumami ang cases, so we are asking everybody to be more careful.

Cleanliness ang sagot, vector control ang sagot, kapag may dengue, epidemic or outbreak. We have to make sure, walang lamok. So, we can do that by making sure na walang places where the mosquito can lay eggs and have a larvae or kiti-kiti and the mosquito for dengue, *Aedes aegypti*, likes clean water. So, iyong mga naimbak na tubig-ulan. Iyon pala iyong exact figure – 208,965 cases as of end of August, that's compared to 100,000 something for the last same period.

So, very important iyong vector control. We also bought mga adulticide, insecticide and larvicide, nasa regional offices namin ito and they are usually distributed and help LGUs to actually use fogging methods to lower the vector, especially kung may clustering, ito iyong communities that have more. Pero may scientific method doon, hindi rin basta inaano iyon, they kind of circulate, kasi if you just fog one barangay, the mosquitos all transfer to the other barangay, doon naman iyong clustering next week, so, sini-circle nila iyan and then may technique. But we also supply and give to LGUs, nasa budget namin iyang vector control materials. Pati iyong pang-spray binibigay na namin.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: Sec., is it reasonable to expect numbers to even go higher given that we are experiencing La Niña until perhaps the first three months of next year?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Well, I'm hoping we can intervene, 'di ba, iyong mga cleanliness; iyong making sure our kids have ano, tawag doon, mosquito repellent or wear long-sleeves. It's a day-biter, so probably they'll get when they're outside or in the school sometimes. Malinis ka sa bahay mo, doon sa paligid ng school hindi. So it's also very important that we also clean up the whole environment.

Sometimes nga, I remember when I was an undersecretary there was an outbreak in the posh subdivision. When I did an investigation, uso iyong bromeliad. The bromeliad, the water—'di ba, it's like a cactus, the water goes on that and nagli-lay ng eggs iyong mosquito. Sabi ko, bakit may outbreak dito ang mga mayayaman, malilinis na subdivision. It turns out, it was the bromeliad. It was the fad at that time, every house had a bromeliad.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Kasi parang may cup siya eh, nandoon iyong tubig.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Oo, parang baso.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA7: Sec., sorry, maisingit ko lang. In one of the photos in today's sectoral meeting, the President was wearing a face mask. Is anything ailing the President?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: No, he's just under the weather. So I supposed, it was his birthday last week, sa dami nang bumati sa kaniya, I'm sure someone passed him a bad bug.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. We have time for two more questions. Alvin Baltazar?

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Secretary, magandang umaga po. Secretary, kanina sa sectoral meeting, any directive from the President regarding those preparations ninyo sa Bagyong Gener?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Well, ang directive niya talaga is really the campaign 'no. Sabi niya nga – I was asking for an executive order, sabi niya, "Alam mo iyang executive order, kapag governor kami, binabasa namin iyon tapos tinatapon na namin iyon." So to him, what's more important was really the campaign, the media campaign to tell people, ang bakuna, dati na itong bakuna na ito. Hindi ito ... itong mga measles, polio, tetanus vaccines, lumang bakuna na ito at effective talaga sila; worldwide proven, they're safe, very little complications. So sabi niya, kailangan talagang massive, he was asking for a massive campaign. So I do hope matulungan ninyo ang Department of Health in that aspect.

And really educating ... a lot of them are really people who don't realize, especially our lower socio-economic classes, nakikinig sa rumor and then naniniwala sa rumor. So we hope that with valid information—and then, ang sabi ko sa kaniya, sa radyo po talaga ang pinakikinggan; he agreed kasi iyong radyo naka-on lang daw the whole day, talagang iyon ang nadidinig ng nanay. Eh iyong nanay iyong nagdadala ng bata sa bakunahan. So it's very important na ma-reach natin sila, ang importance ng pagbabakuna.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Secretary, ang tanong ko kanina, iyong any directive from the President in connection with Typhoon Gener sa inyong agency?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Walang directive kanina tungkol sa bagyo.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Secretary, anyway, ihahabol ko na lang itong question na ito. Nag-birthday si Pangulo noong Friday, at magandang balita iyong zero balance doon sa mga pasyente. Ilan iyong nakinabang, nag-benefit doon sa announcement ni Pangulo?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: That's a good question. But I think I will count. But, you know, ang masasabi ko kasi, noong sinabi nila, "Sana all," kasi PGH, all the public hospitals, pinalibre niya, kahit iyong private na pasyente doon. But what I can tell you about Universal Health Care, alam ninyo, na-achieve na natin ang Universal Health Care sa poor. Kapag indigent ka, pumunta ka sa public hospital, gagamutin ka. At kumpleto naman ang mga DOH hospital ngayon because of sin taxes – we have CT scan, MRI – nagagawa lahat and libre lahat, ang tawag natin, "no balance billing."

Actually, to me, we have achieved universal health coverage for the poorest Filipinos. My problem is kayo – the working class. Kasi kayo, iyong out of pocket ninyo, nandudoon pa rin kasi when you go to even a public hospital, a social worker will evaluate you and say, "you have income, you can pay." So iyon ang goal ko. My goal, at the end of my term, na sana pati iyong out of pocket—actually, sinabihan ako ng President, gusto niya lahat ng public hospital, libre, kahit na sinong pumunta doon.

I don't know if I can attain that, but I will try to get there kasi iyon ang directive niya. That's going back to the time his father was President. Kasi when his father was President, kapag pumasok ka sa public hospital, wala kang babayaran. Naabutan ko pa iyon, I was still an intern and a resident. Kapag pumasok iyong taong grasa sa PGH, kapag lumabas iyon, naligo na iyon, guwapo na, nalinis na, naoperahan pa – libre talaga lahat. Lahat ng laboratory, libre talaga noon, pati gamot.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Well, thank you so much, Secretary Herbosa. I was just advised that you have a meeting so we have to conclude this press briefing. Again, thank you for briefing us on the National Immunization Program and the catch-up plans. And to our friends in media, October 7 is the Bakuna-Eskwela. So thank you in advance for your support.

This concludes our press briefing today. Thank you, Secretary Herbosa and Malacañang Press Corps.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Thank you, Daphne. Thank you, everyone.

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