

Philippine polio free again after vaccine campaign

The Philippines is once again polio free, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Friday (June 11, 2021) after a successful vaccination campaign that has raised hopes for Covid-19 inoculations in a country plagued by mistrust of jabs.

Polio re-emerged in the country in 2019, nearly two decades after its last cases were detected, sparking nationwide effort to immunise millions of children against the crippling disease.

The Health authorities said they have not detected the virus in a child or the environment in the past 16 months.

"We are celebrating freedom from polio," said Dr. Rabindra Abeyasinghe, WHO representative in the Philippines.

More than 80% of vaccinated children were immunised in the nationwide effort, which Dr. Abeyasinghe said was "adequate to interrupt the transmission."

The 2019 outbreak began shortly after deadly dengue fever and measles epidemics and as vaccination coverage plunged partly due to the botched roll-out of dengue shot a few years earlier.

Polio is highly infectious and can lead to paralysis and even death. There is no known cure. -AFP, June 11, 2021