

Philippines claims success on organ trafficking

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The Philippines said Wednesday that efforts to stop poor people from selling their kidneys to rich and mostly foreign patients had worked.

Transplants have plunged since 2008 when the health department launched a crackdown on kidney trafficking, said Ernesto Vera of the health department's National Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

"It has stopped, that much is clear," Vera said, referring to kidney trafficking.

Hospital data compiled by the Philippine Society for Nephrology, a group of kidney doctors, showed transplants dived from 1,046 in 2007 to 679 in 2008 as the government banned foreigners from receiving organs from Filipino donors.

Transplants fell further to 511 last year, and last month the health department further tightened the rules. Living donors are now banned from giving their kidneys to Filipino recipients who are not their relatives.

However, medics and the government said the crackdown on trafficking had done nothing to help alleviate the dire shortage of kidneys for the many Filipinos who require a transplant.

Seven thousand Filipinos -- nearly one every hour -- still die of renal failure every year, according to government data.

The government is counting on an organ donor registry, to be launched in about three months, to address the problem.

Just 65 Philippine patients received kidney transplants from dead donors last year, Vanessa de Villa, head of a health department working group on [organ donation](#) rules, told an industry forum.

Benjamin Balmores, president of the kidney doctors' group, said diabetes and hypertension were the top two causes of kidney failure in the Philippines.

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