

Polio makes comeback in Venezuela after decades

10 June 2018

Polio has been reported in Venezuela, a crisis-wracked country where the disease had been eradicated decades ago, the Pan-American Health Organization reports.

The organization said the child had no history of vaccination and lives in an under-immunized extremely impoverished Delta Amacuro state.

Polio, or poliomyelitis, is a crippling childhood disease caused by the poliovirus, and preventable through immunization.

Doctor Jose Felix Oletta, a former Minister of Health, told AFP that the last case of acute poliomyelitis in Venezuela was reported in 1989.

"The virus especially affects people in conditions of malnutrition and unvaccinated, as this case," Oletta added.

Oletta slammed health authorities in President Nicolas Maduro's government for taking more than a month to notify the PAHO that it had identified the virus. International [health](#) regulations require it to do so within 24 hours.

Venezuela, devastated by economic and political crises, also accounted for 85 percent of [cases](#) of measles reported across Latin America and the Caribbean over the past year, the PAHO said.

Of the 11 countries that reported cases, Venezuela had the overwhelming majority of cases, but also 35 deaths since mid-2017, the international organization said.

More specifically, "there were eleven countries that reported 1,685 confirmed measles cases across the region," of which 1,427 were in Venezuela, a PAHO report released Saturday found.

The [disease](#) is on the rise in the South American nation led by leftist Maduro; the trend has

continued this year where cases have been reported in 17 out of 23 states, and in the capital.

In neighboring countries, where Venezuelans have migrated due to grim economic conditions, many of the reported cases have been among Venezuelan immigrants, the report said.

Venezuela says it does not have 85 percent of the basic medical supplies it needs even including vaccines. Maduro's government blames US sanctions for the woes.

The government on April 6 launched a new vaccine campaign against 14 diseases including measles and TB.

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