



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## **HONDURAS, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA: DENGUE FEVER**

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### **The Situation**

Dengue fever is a viral disease spread by the bite of infected mosquitoes; it is particularly prevalent in Central America during the rainy season (May to October) and symptoms include bleeding of the nose, mouth and gums, accompanied by high fever. Haemorrhagic dengue fever can be fatal.

As of late June, outbreaks of dengue fever occurred in Honduras. A state of emergency was declared on 22 July by the Honduran government, given that the number of cases of "classic" dengue fever in 2002 had more than tripled in relation to the previous year, and the number of cases of haemorrhagic dengue fever had increased dramatically.

The statistics as of 25 July are given below, as compared with the figures for the previous year:

Year	Classic dengue	Haemorrhagic Dengue
2001	2,302	16
2002	8,785	317

In addition, a total of eleven deaths as a result of haemorrhagic dengue fever were confirmed in late July. The last time such a high caseload of dengue fever was experienced was following the hurricane Mitch disaster in 1998/1999.

This year the number of dengue cases in El Salvador has more than doubled compared to those in 2001, resulting in a state of emergency in four departments of El Salvador: San Salvador, Santa Ana, La Libertad and Cabañas. As of early July, there had been 1,386 reported cases, over half of which took place in the department of San Salvador. The mortality rate of the hemorrhagic dengue cases reached an alarming 5% in the month of June.



**Red Cross volunteers in Honduras carrying out community work.**

In Guatemala, in late July, the Ministry of Health (MoH) reported the following number of dengue cases throughout the country: classic dengue: 1,863; haemorrhagic dengue: 179 with one fatality. The worst affected areas are Suchítepequez, Quetzaltenango, Jalapa, Petén, Santa Rosa, Guatemala, Baja Verapaz, Huehuetenango, Escuintla, San Marcos and El Progreso. The Ministry of Health is implementing a strategy entitled “health action group” whereby teams are carrying out visits to affected departments to train health personnel in prevention and control of the disease and care of dengue fever patients. This training is replicated with local health personnel who then convey these essential messages to the communities. Clean-up activities and campaigns are also carried out and community leaders ensure further awareness-building and elimination of mosquito breeding sites.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The ***Honduran Red Cross*** (HRC) is supporting health centres in the event of suspected cases of haemorrhagic dengue fever and has put its ambulance service on alert nation wide in order to transfer patients. The National Society is also supporting the Ministry of Health in fumigation and clean-up activities, and coordination with the health authorities has been maintained both at national and departmental level. Red Cross youth brigades are participating in education and awareness sessions in schools. The Honduran Red Cross benefits from a community health network established together with the PNS present in the country, and is training its new category of “social” volunteers to carry out activities in dengue fever prevention. Home visits are being carried out in order to identify larval breeding grounds and to raise awareness of preventive measures, including cleaning of the immediate surroundings to eliminate stagnant water. The Canadian and American Red Cross Societies reproduced educational material for a total of 10,000 families.

As of 1 August, the following had been achieved in the *community*: 165 facilitators had been trained; 1,481 homes had been visited, 1,207 areas surrounding houses had been cleaned; 550 homes had been fumigated; and 3 clean up operations had been carried out. The following had been achieved in *schools*: 12 primary schools and 10 secondary schools had been visited; 232 children had received training in dengue prevention, 46 adolescents had received training and the surroundings of 4 schools had been cleaned of stagnant water.

In a three month operation, the ***Salvadorean Red Cross Society*** (SRC) has been carrying out awareness activities in the department of San Salvador, and is targeting three of the worst affected municipalities of Apopa, Soyapango and San Marcos through a child to child initiative. 50 schools were identified with an average of 1,500 pupils. Since mid June, the National Society youth department trained 70 volunteers in dengue prevention who, with technical support from the community health office, in turn trained 10 students per school, together with three teachers and a group of parents in order to build a chain of awareness. Each pupil in the schools then received training with a view to ensuring that each student’s family carried out cleaning and eradication of breeding sites for mosquitoes in the home environment. This operation is referred to as the “clean homes campaign”. The initiative is closely coordinated with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the national emergency committee (COEN) and the Pan American Health Organization.

In late July, an intermediate evaluation of the operation was carried out by the SRC health and youth directors. A total of 42 of the 50 schools targeted accepted the project. Others chose to carry out fumigation or chemical treatment only. A random baseline study was carried out before initiating activities in order to judge the level of knowledge of students, parents and teachers as regards dengue prevention prior to the awareness sessions. Partial results are as follows: 42,000 educational leaflets had been distributed; 504 pupils had received training, 126 parents, teachers and pupils representing the school boards had been trained, and mosquito breeding sites had been destroyed in a total of 51,580 homes. Responses to an evaluation questionnaire distributed in the schools proved a sound knowledge dengue fever and its prevention amongst pupils.

The ***Guatemalan Red Cross*** (GRC) is ensuring coordination with the Ministry of Health and other organizations to support activities to promote dengue prevention. The National Society is adapting the leaflet on dengue prevention drawn up by the Salvadorean Red Cross Society to the Guatemalan context. With the support of the Federation and the American Red Cross, 10,000 leaflets will be printed for distribution to affected communities. Red Cross youth volunteers are taking part in training activities organized by the MoH. The health department of the GRC is currently working with its branches in order to promote the organization of prevention campaigns in those regions most affected by the epidemic of dengue fever. Activities will also focus on care of patients and follow up within the communities with the highest levels of dengue cases.

For a full description of the National Society profiles, see [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

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