

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



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

## EL SALVADOR: PNEUMONIA OUTBREAK

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries. For more information: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

### In Brief

This document is being issued

- *for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.*

*Please note that this pneumonia outbreak has no connection with SARS. Pneumonia is not one of the contagious diseases for which global funds are available: these are HIV/AIDS; malaria and tuberculosis.*

### The Situation

The Salvadoran government declared a state of emergency on 24 July for the next 30 days as a result of an unexpected surge in the number of cases of pneumonia. According to statistics from the Ministry of Health, to date 304 people have died, of whom 60 per cent are elderly people over 60 and 27 per cent are children under nine years of age. Data compiled by the national network of hospitals indicate that 1,277 patients have been registered. The majority of cases of pneumonia are occurring in young children, although the highest mortality rates are amongst the elderly.

According to information received from the health authorities, the majority of cases of pneumonia reported are concentrated in urban areas; in San Salvador alone 1,075 cases have occurred over the last two weeks; a further 731 cases were detected in Soyapango and 602 in Ilopango, the most populated municipalities within the metropolitan area. At national level, consolidated statistics indicate that 50,000 cases of pneumonia have been treated to date. The Ministry of Health states that the last week has not shown any increase in cases; neither has there been a reduction.

Nutritional factors, living conditions, environmental pollution, together with changes in climate have resulted in the most vulnerable population, children and the elderly, being most affected by the outbreak of pneumonia. This is exacerbated by a lack of awareness of the warning signs related to respiratory infections, all leading to an increase in cases.

The Ministry of Health has requested the collaboration of organizations interested in providing assistance in response to the emergency situation, and will be responsible for defining and coordinating all interventions to work to prevent further high mortality rates caused by pneumonia.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Salvadorean Red Cross Society (SRC), through its clinic in the headquarters, has been providing assistance with respiratory treatment, particularly for children under five years of age. Over the last week, the head of the department of health services within the National Society states that there has been a 300 per cent increase in the number of requests for treatment.

The Salvadorean Red Cross Society, with the support of the Federation and the PNS, is developing a plan of action to help respond to the crisis, based on the capacity of the National Society and the projects which it is currently implementing. The Federation, as the focal point for the PNS, is working with the SRC on the drafting of the plan of action which will form part of the overall emergency response strategy adopted by the Ministry of Health.

Three activities have been defined: intervention at community level where there is coverage by technical staff working on the SRC community health projects. This will take the form of a preventive approach through house to house visits, raising awareness of the population of the necessity of appropriate hygiene and of preventive measures. The second area of intervention is to provide logistics support in the area of primary health care in areas where pneumonia outbreaks are most prevalent. The third area aims to strengthen the service provided by the SRC through its clinic at headquarters level, following an analysis of the needs and treatment of cases carried out to date at the clinic.

This assistance is calculated at a cost of USD 27,000, available from current resources of the PNS and the Federation.

The American Red Cross, through its delegation in El Salvador, has made a donation of hospital medical equipment to the Ministry of Health.

## Needs

The SRC has defined its plan for assistance in line with its current capacities and available resources; as a result, needs are currently covered.

Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

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

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For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

