

# CDC in El Salvador



The Center for Global Health and Prevention (CDC) has collaborated with public health institutions in Central America since the 1960s. Through these collaborations CDC has been able to address the region's priority public health burdens from malaria to influenza. These alliances have increased from a single field station in El Salvador for medical entomology and parasitology to a regional office located in Guatemala that serves the entire region. CDC's current programs with activities in El Salvador include HIV/AIDS, the Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP), and the Influenza Preparedness, Detection, and Response program.

## Staff

CDC office (physical presence)  
**No** U.S. Assignees  
**1** Locally Employed

## At a Glance

Population: 6,227,500  
Per capita income: \$6,420  
Life expectancy at birth  
women/men: 77/67 yrs  
Infant mortality rate:  
20/1000 live births

Source: Population Reference Bureau, World Population Data Sheet, 2011

## Top 10 Causes of Death

1. Ischemic Heart Disease
2. Stroke
3. Liver Diseases
4. Other Heart Diseases
5. Head Trauma
6. Diabetes
7. Pneumonia
8. Genitourinary System Diseases
9. Perinatal Diseases
10. Gastrointestinal Diseases

Source: El Salvador MOH, 2011



## HIV/AIDS

One model program in progress is the HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI) surveillance and control program focusing on the most-at-risk populations (better known by the Spanish derived acronym, VICITS). VICITS is a comprehensive HIV and STI prevention program linked to surveillance data analysis in Central America. It is an HIV prevention strategy that combines STI diagnosis and treatment among the most-at-risk populations, promotes condom use, implements behavioral changes, and uses an information system to monitor the impact of the project. The intervention program in El Salvador includes strengthening STI management by training healthcare personnel, strengthening counseling for risk reduction, and promoting condom use. The intervention will also improve laboratory STI and HIV diagnostic capacity by training healthcare personnel and by providing equipment and reagents.

## Influenza

CDC supports implementing the International Health Regulations and the Pan American Health Organization's Operational Guidelines for National Intensified Surveillance of Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI). CDC provided reagents and supplies to laboratories to support influenza surveillance at the national laboratory and other sentinel surveillance units at Santa Ana and San Miguel Hospitals, which help track the disease and detect potential outbreaks.



CDC influenza activities contribute to better understanding of the circulation of respiratory viruses and the seasonality of influenza outbreaks in El Salvador. CDC supported efforts to integrate surveillance of influenza, pneumococcus, and other respiratory viruses and conducted workshops on the effectiveness of the seasonal influenza vaccine. As a result of these studies the Minister of Health (MoH) increased the use and coverage of influenza vaccine in 2011.

### Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP)

The FETP in El Salvador is located in the epidemiology department at the MoH. The director of this department is a graduate from the first cohort of the Central America FETP, a two-year, in-service program that helps countries build sustainable capacity for detecting and responding to health threats. El Salvador implements the pyramid strategy of training, which employs three levels of training: basic - six months of training in applied epidemiology for local health staff; intermediate - nine months of specialization in applied epidemiology for mid-level district epidemiologists; advanced - two-year training for advanced epidemiologists. As of 2011, fourteen public health professionals have graduated from the advanced level of the program. An additional 169 public health professionals graduated from the intermediate level, which is accredited by the Universidad Evangélica. In addition, 230 public health professionals have graduated with basic level training in field epidemiology. The program is diversifying the profile of trainees by including military medical staff in basic-level trainings. In collaboration with the 6th U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU-6) based in Peru, the Central American and El Salvador FETPs are helping to strengthen the region's military capacity for response to public health emergencies and strengthening the ties between civilian and military public health, which have traditionally been distant from each other.

### Preparedness and Response

Over recent decades Central American has experienced countless natural disasters and civil unrest emergencies. Due to the annual occurrence of such disasters, CDC, in collaboration with the Central America Ministers of Health Committee (COMISCA) has developed and administered an emergency preparedness and response assessment that includes the functional areas of developing a public health emergency plan; command and control; communications infrastructure; public information and risk communication; logistic and operational processes; medical coordination; train, exercise, and evaluate; and surveillance systems. An emergency preparedness response exercise was conducted in the MoH as part of a regional preparedness effort.

### Impact in El Salvador

- The Director of Epidemiology of the MoH is one of the first graduates of the Central America FETP.
- Conducted an HIV behavioral surveillance study to determine the prevalence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections among most-at-risk populations.
- Based on surveillance studies of the burden of influenza and the seasonality and effectiveness of influenza vaccine, the MoH increased the use and coverage of influenza vaccine in 2011.

For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

**CDC-Atlanta**

1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30333

Email: [cgh@cdc.gov](mailto:cgh@cdc.gov)

Web: <http://www.cdc.gov/global>

For more country information: [http://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/el\\_salvador](http://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/el_salvador)

Publication Date: November 2013