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FEATURED Q&A

What More Must Be Done to Fight the Spread of Dengue?



Cases of dengue fever have soared this year in Latin America and the Caribbean. An *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which transmits the virus that causes the disease, is pictured. // File Photo: U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

Q More than 7,700 people have died of dengue fever this year in Latin America and the Caribbean, a more than 200 percent increase as compared to last year, the Pan American Health Organization said Dec. 10. Suspected cases of dengue in the region have soared this year to more than 12.6 million, a record level, according to the organization. What are the main reasons for the sharp increase in dengue cases and deaths in the region? How well are public health organizations and governments in Latin America and the Caribbean fighting the spread of the disease, and what obstacles are they encountering? What more must be done in order to more effectively fight dengue in Latin America and the Caribbean?

A Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine: "It is important to remember that the surge in dengue cases in Latin America and the Caribbean is not an isolated epidemic, but rather part of an increase in several virus infections transmitted by mosquitoes or other arthropods. In 2016, Zika virus infection became widespread in Brazil and other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, and there was a major yellow fever epidemic in Brazil between 2016 and 2019, with surprising yellow fever virus spread into populated states such as Minas Gerais and São Paulo. Chikungunya virus infection has also become widespread in Latin America and the Caribbean. A common denominator for these arbovirus infections is the role of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito as a principal vector. *Aedes aegypti* is highly adapted to urban environments. However, Oropouche virus infection transmitted by different insect spe-

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

More Than 100 Local Mexican Officers Arrested

Mexican authorities have arrested more than 100 local police officers in the states of Chiapas and Veracruz for alleged corruption and human rights violations.

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BUSINESS

ContourGlobal Acquires Stake in Chile Solar Plant

British energy firm ContourGlobal has acquired a stake in the Oasis de Atacama Solar plant in northern Chile. The plant is operated by Spain-based Grenergy Renovables.

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POLITICAL

Canada Sanctions Five Venezuelan Officials

Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly announced sanctions against five Venezuelan officials, saying they were involved in electoral fraud in the South American country's disputed presidential election.

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Joly // File Photo: Canadian Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Canada Imposes Sanctions on Five Venezuelan Officials

Canada's government on Tuesday imposed economic sanctions on five top Venezuelan officials on accusations that they perpetrated electoral fraud in the country's disputed July presidential election. The sanctions target Venezuelan Supreme Tribunal of Justice President Caryl Rodríguez as well as two judges, a prosecutor and a member of Venezuela's National Electoral Council, Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly said in a statement.

“All five individuals have been implicated in fraudulently declaring Nicolás Maduro the winner of the July 28, 2024, presidential election.”

— Global Affairs Canada

The measures were the fourth such round of sanctions that Canada has imposed on people connected to Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government, the Associated Press reported. The sanctions freeze any assets the targeted individuals have in Canada and ban them from entry into the country, said Global Affairs Canada. Also, people in Canada and Canadians abroad are barred from “dealing in the property of the listed individuals,” Global Affairs Canada said. “All five individuals have been implicated in fraudulently declaring Nicolás Maduro the winner of the July 28, 2024, presidential election,” it added. In the election, Venezuela's electoral council declared Maduro the winner, saying he received just over half the votes, an assertion backed up by the country's supreme court. However, neither the electoral council nor the government has re-

leased any proof. The opposition has released vote tally sheets, which independent analyses have said appear to be legitimate, showing that opposition candidate Edmundo González won more than twice as many votes as Maduro; exit polls showed a similar result. Also on Tuesday, Canada's government announced a spending plan to boost security at its border following U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's threat to impose tariffs of 25 percent on goods from Canada and Mexico, saying the U.S. neighbors must do more to fight the flow of irregular migration and illegal drugs, The Wall Street Journal reported. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government said it would spend 1.3 billion Canadian dollars (\$900 million) over six years to bolster border security. The funding will be used for helicopters, dogs, drones, mobile surveillance towers and hundreds of new border agents, The Wall Street Journal reported. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Dec. 13 issue of the Advisor.]

Mexican Authorities Arrest More Than 100 Local Police Officers

Mexican authorities arrested more than 100 local police officers for alleged corruption and human rights violations in two incidents on Monday, the Associated Press reported. Ninety-two municipal police officers were arrested Monday in the Chiapas city of Comitán de Domínguez after some of the officers reportedly drew their weapons against state security forces, which were trying to take command of a surveillance camera office, according to the AP. Local residents then protested the police officers' detainment, which led to 30 civilians being detained themselves on riot charges, local paper El Ciudadano reported. Chiapas state prosecutors allege that municipal police officers in Comitán de Domínguez have used the video cameras to inform criminal groups of federal and state anti-narcotics operations, the AP reported. Comitán de Domínguez is located near Mexico's border with Guatemala and is a key transshipment point for international drug, arms and human trafficking. In an unrelated op-

NEWS BRIEFS

Mexico's Slim Agrees Not to Buy Additional Shares of Talos Energy

Houston-based oil company Talos Energy said Tuesday that it has reached an agreement with Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim's conglomerate to end Slim's hostile takeover bid, removing a “poison pill” provision in exchange for Slim promising not to buy additional shares of the firm, Reuters reported. Slim's Control Empresarial De Capitales had acquired 24 percent of Talos' stock in October, the wire service reported. Talos operates a portion of the Zama offshore oil and gas field in the Gulf of Mexico.

Brazil's Nubank Invests \$150 Million in Singapore-Based Fintech Tyme

Brazilian digital banking provider Nubank announced Monday that it has invested \$150 million in Tyme, a Singapore-based fintech startup with customers in South Africa and the Philippines, Reuters reported. Nubank's investment equates to roughly 10 percent of Tyme's new valuation after its latest round of funding, which the company says is approximately \$1.5 billion, Reuters reported. Tyme is eyeing an initial public offering on the New York Stock exchange by 2028, the head of the company's South Africa division told the wire service.

BG International Plans Exploratory Drilling for Suriname Venture

Shell subsidiary BG International plans to submit an environmental plan and begin exploratory drilling for its offshore oil venture in Suriname in the first half of 2025, Reuters reported on Tuesday. Shell owns a 60 percent stake in the consortium operating Suriname's deep-water Block 65, according to Reuters. Qatar Energy controls the remaining 40 percent of the private venture.

eration on Monday, state prosecutors in Veracruz said they also arrested 13 local police officers in connection with three cases of forced disappearance, the AP reported. Prosecutors in Veracruz did not disclose details about the alleged abductions in Veracruz, according to the wire service. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Oct. 21 issue of the Advisor.]

BUSINESS NEWS

ContourGlobal Acquires Stake in Chile Solar Plant

United Kingdom-based energy firm ContourGlobal has acquired around one quarter of the Oasis de Atacama solar plant, which is located in northern Chile and operated by Spanish firm Grenergy Renovables, the companies announced Tuesday in a joint statement. Contour Global purchased three solar projects with a total generating capacity of 451 megawatts from Grenergy's portfolio in Chile, which is expected to reach two gigawatts of utility-scale solar capacity by the end of 2025, news site Renewables Now reported. The three projects have a total enterprise value of almost \$1 billion, and more than \$600 million in project finance debt is already in place, according to the company statement. Only one of the three solar projects that ContourGlobal acquired is currently operational—the 103-megawatt capacity Quillagua plant in Atacama—and the other two are expected to begin power production next year, ultimately bringing the energy generation value of the transaction to more than 400 megawatts, Renewables Now reported. The three projects also include battery storage functionalities, with a combined 2.5 gigawatts in storage capacity. Grenergy will retain a portfolio of 1.5 gigawatts of solar capacity and 8.5 gigawatts of battery storage capacity across the remainder of its assets in Chile, the company said on Tuesday. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Nov. 1 issue of the weekly Energy Advisor.]

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cies also became a public concern in 2024; both Zika and Oropouche virus infections, when they occur during pregnancy, may also cause significant congenital birth defects. The modern forces driving these arbovirus infections are under study, but among them, climate change, urbanization and, in some cases, deforestation appear to be critical factors. Because these same 21st century drivers are also happening in North America, we expect that parts of the Southern United States could also be at risk, especially in the Gulf Coast region between Texas and Florida. Therefore, we should prioritize expanded surveillance activities and consider exploring or stockpiling countermeasures including vaccines and innovative mosquito control technologies.”

A **Katherine Bliss, senior fellow and director for immunizations and health systems resilience at the CSIS Global Health Policy**

Center: “Urbanization, poor sanitation and changing rainfall patterns are among the factors driving record numbers of dengue cases and deaths in Latin America and the Caribbean this year. Periodic outbreaks over several decades led the World Health Organization in 2019 to list dengue as one of the top 10 threats to global health. In 2023, the Americas reported 80 percent of all cases globally, and cases this year have already exceeded previous records. Despite a long history of addressing dengue, regional governments have faced challenges in mobilizing an effective response to the current outbreak, with health centers in high-burden areas overwhelmed by the number of patients seeking care. Accurately diagnosing and reporting dengue is difficult, in part because other arboviruses that cause similar symptoms and which are transmitted by *Aedes aegypti*, including Zika and chikungunya, are also circulating in the region. Prevention includes management of mosquito habitats, but increased humidity and flooding, along with limited sanitation in

cities, pose obstacles to control of breeding sites. Brazil, which has reported the vast majority of cases in the region, has introduced a new dengue vaccine that targets adolescents, but reaching this age group, which doesn't typically frequent immunization clinics, with two vaccine doses spaced at least three months apart, can be difficult. More research into effective prevention, diagnosis and treatment options, as well as better use of data to anticipate outbreaks and pre-position resources, educating communities regarding how to prevent and control dengue, and strengthening primary health care services to ensure equitable access to existing treatment options will help inform the response to future outbreaks.”

A **Fernando Hellmann, professor in the Department of Public Health at the Federal University of Santa Catarina:**

“Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean have adopted different strategies in the fight against dengue this year. One of the main actions has been prevention through vaccination. Countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and Peru have intensified their campaigns this year, while Honduras plans to begin its efforts next year. However, the shortage of vaccines and political resistance, such as the stance of the Milei government in Argentina, have significantly hindered progress. It is important to recognize, however, that vaccination is only a complementary tool. The alarming increase in dengue cases and deaths this year in the region goes far beyond vaccine management. It reflects interconnected crises, such as the climate crisis and socio-environmental challenges. The climate crisis is one of the primary factors, expanding the reach of *Aedes aegypti* to regions previously unaffected. Global warming has intensified the conditions for mosquito proliferation, with heavier rainfall and higher temperatures. This exacerbates the region's historical socio-environmental issues,

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where environmental racism disproportionately exposes marginalized populations in densely populated urban areas lacking basic infrastructure, such as sanitation and proper waste management. This combination of factors creates a favorable scenario for dengue outbreaks. Children, especially in impoverished communities, are the most affected, facing heightened risks due to precarious living conditions. To combat dengue, governments must integrate predictive surveillance strategies and vector control with expanded vaccine coverage and primary health care. Added to this are community education campaigns to raise awareness and encourage proactive prevention. Promoting sustainable urban infrastructure, along with proper waste management and basic sanitation, constitutes a central and structural axis in combating vector-borne diseases, such as dengue, chikungunya and Zika.”

A **Robert Paulino-Ramírez,** principal investigator at the Instituto de Medicina Tropical & Salud Global at Universidad Iberoamericana in the Dominican Republic, and Arachu Castro, Samuel Z. Stone Chair of Public Health in Latin America at Tulane University’s School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine: “The dramatic rise in dengue cases and deaths across Latin America and the Caribbean this year, with more than 12.6 million suspected cases—a staggering 204 percent increase compared to last year—represents a multifaceted public health crisis. This alarming surge is primarily driven by environmental conditions highly conducive to mosquito breeding, significantly intensified by climate change. Elevated temperatures and increased rainfall create optimal breeding grounds for Aedes mosquitoes, which transmit the virus. Notably, all four circulating serotypes are actively contributing to the outbreak. Furthermore, the rapid pace of unplanned urbanization and poor waste management exacerbate the problem by fostering mosquito breeding in stagnant water. A critical obstacle in

addressing dengue is the lack of confirmatory diagnostic tests in many countries in the region. Without reliable testing, health care providers face difficulty distinguishing between dengue and other diseases with similar symptoms, such as the Oropouche virus. This diagnostic challenge is compounded by the limited availability of advanced testing infrastructure, especially in rural or remote areas. Misdiagnosis or delayed diagnosis can lead to improper treatment, worsening patient outcomes and undermining disease surveillance. Latin American public health organizations and governments are trying to address the epidemic with vector control programs, public awareness campaigns and innovative approaches like releasing genetically modified mosquitoes. However, these efforts often face significant obstacles, including resource shortages, logistical challenges and resistance to vector control methods. Despite advances in dengue vaccine development, current vaccines fail to provide adequate protection against all circulating serotypes, and their high cost poses a substantial barrier for governments and public health programs, particularly in resource-limited settings, to integrate them into national immunization strategies. In addition, protection against one serotype does not guarantee immunity against the others, making vaccine development challenging. Several obstacles include the inability to predict which serotype will dominate in each outbreak, genetic variations within serotypes that can influence vaccine efficacy and the unpredictable clinical spectrum of dengue infection, which ranges from mild symptoms to severe disease. Without a widely accessible and effective vaccine, preventive measures such as avoiding mosquito bites and controlling mosquito breeding sites remain critical strategies for reducing dengue transmission.”

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

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Gene Kuleta
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Jack Quinn
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