

## **Zika Virus Fact Sheet**

July 7, 2017

Peace Corps has been closely monitoring the current outbreak of the Zika virus across Latin America and the Pacific Islands in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of State.

### **What is Zika?**

Zika is a disease caused by the Zika virus, which is transmitted to humans from the *Aedes* mosquito, the same mosquito that transmits dengue, yellow fever, and chikungunya.

- Common Symptoms: Fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes)
- The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week
- Only about 1 in 5 people infected with Zika will get sick. For people who get sick, the illness is usually mild, which is why many most people infected with Zika show no signs of illness at all and might not realize they have been infected.
- Symptoms typically begin a few days after being bitten by an infected mosquito and last for 2 to 7 days.

Zika virus is not new—scientists discovered Zika virus in 1947. However, in 2014-2015 it spread rapidly to new regions of the world, more specifically, the Western Hemisphere. In addition, it has been associated with cases of microcephaly (small heads) in newborns and Guillain-Barré syndrome, a neurological disease. There is a link between Zika and microcephaly or Guillain-Barré; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is studying the relationship in more detail now.

### **Peace Corps Volunteers:**

The Zika situation is still evolving and Peace Corps' Office of Health Services continues to follow it. Peace Corps follows CDC guidelines on Zika, including discouraging pregnancy in Zika-endemic areas with significant risk. If a Volunteer does become pregnant in an area where Zika is transmitted locally, Peace Corps can medevac them to the U.S. for prompt pre-natal care, including diagnostic testing.

### Prevention

There is no vaccine against Zika, and there is no specific treatment for Zika illness.

- Peace Corps provides training for all Volunteers on prevention of dengue and chikungunya, and the same principles apply in preventing Zika—generally, to take precautions to reduce contact with mosquitos and wherever possible prevent mosquito bites.
- Peace Corps instructs Volunteers to use mosquito repellent and wear long sleeves and pants as part of a multipronged strategy to protect Volunteers from infection.
- For more updated information on Zika, please visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika>