

## **OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL RESPONDING TO ZIKA VIRUS OUTBREAK WITH EFFORTS IN EL SALVADOR AND HAITI**

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (January 28, 2016) – Operation Blessing International (OBI), one of the largest charities in America, has launched efforts to combat the Zika virus outbreak in Central America and the Caribbean with concentrated efforts in El Salvador and Haiti. Bill Horan, president of OBI, made the announcement today.

According to health officials in El Salvador, the country has confirmed 492 cases of Zika. Officials are advising all women of reproductive age delay pregnancy until 2018 over concerns about birth defects resulting from the virus.

In El Salvador, Operation Blessing has purchased more than 1,250 mosquito nets that are being distributed by teams of volunteers to pregnant women in order to reduce the risk of microcephaly. The charity has also partnered with the Ministry of Health to provide funding for the government's fumigation efforts in areas identified to have the greatest amount of Zika cases and other mosquito-borne illness.

Additional planned efforts for El Salvador include the purchase of a portable prenatal ultrasound machine that will be shipped from the USA and used to help monitor pregnant women who have been infected with the Zika virus, as well as mass distributions of pain relief medicine and mosquito spray.

Further, Operation Blessing is partnering with the Mayo Clinic's Program for Underserved Global Health (PUGH) to create a public service announcement that will educate the public about the Zika virus: who is considered high risk and how to avoid getting infected. The PSA will air on local media in El Salvador.

Operation Blessing is also exploring the possibility of setting up a fish hatchery to rear native *Gambusia minnows*, which eat mosquito larva are used globally to combat mosquito-borne diseases. Operation Blessing has used *Gambusia* to great success in post-Katrina New Orleans, where the city credited OBI for helping to avert an outbreak of the deadly West Nile disease. OB El Salvador leaders are currently meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture to identify native *Gambusia* species in El Salvador.

In Haiti, Operation Blessing has purchased 800 treated mosquito nets, sourced in the Dominican Republic, which will be shipped to Haiti and distributed to pregnant women.

For more information please visit: [www.ob.org](http://www.ob.org)

### **ABOUT OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL:**

Operation Blessing International (OBI) is one of the largest charities in America, providing strategic disaster relief, medical aid, hunger relief, clean water and community development in 37 countries around the world on an ongoing basis. In 2015, OBI was awarded Charity Navigator's coveted 4-star rating for sound fiscal management marking 8 years the charity has

received this prestigious ranking. Forbes also ranks OBI as one of its “100 Largest Charities” with an efficiency rating of 99%. Founded in 1978, Operation Blessing International has touched the lives of more than 292 million people in more than 105 countries and 50 states, providing goods and services valued at over \$4.2 billion.

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