Dengue deaths on rise in Brazil's Sao Paulo

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A boy receives a handout as part of a preventive campaign against dengue fever in Brazil in 2011 (file photo).

Brazil's Ministry of Health has reported a nearly eight-fold increase in dengue fever for the most populous state of Sao Paulo as the country suffers from water shortages in the wake of a severe drought.

A total of 94,623 cases of dengue fever were registered in the state of Sao Paulo in January and February, 82,747 more than in the same period last year, the Ministry of Health stated on Friday.

The disease killed 24 people statewide so far this year, according to the ministry.

This is while Sao Paulo state and the southeast of the country continue to suffer water shortages in the wake of the worst, months-long drought in living memory.

"In many regions, owing to a lack of water, people were stocking supplies at home. That helped add to the proliferation of mosquitoes," which spread the disease, said **Health Minister Arthur Chioro.**

Sao Paulo state is home to 40 million of Brazil's 200 million inhabitants, but accounts for more than 50 percent of the nationwide total of 174,676 dengue cases in the first two months of the year.

Overall fatalities due to the disease in Brazil have reached 39 for January and February.

Chioro warned that the March to May period, which traditionally sees the largest spread of dengue fever, may turn out many more cases of the disease in the country.

Brazil plans to invest an extra 150 million reais **(USD 50 million)** to combat the problem, Chioro added.

Sao Paulo remains the third-worst affected state behind Acre, which borders the Amazon Rainforest, and the central state of Goias.

Dengue fever is a tropical disease transmitted by a mosquito bite. The disease causes high fever, joint pains, headache and nausea, as well as internal bleeding, liver enlargement, circulatory shutdown and death in extreme cases.

Symptoms include loss of appetite, general weakness, nausea, and vomiting.

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