

C. Africa headed for health meltdown: MSF

July 9 2013

The Central African Republic faces a meltdown in health care affecting millions of people after a coup in Bangui by rebels of the Seleka coalition, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) warned in a report Tuesday.

Following the March coup that plunged the poor, landlocked country of some 4.5 million people into chaos, vital health resources have been pillaged and aid is struggling to trickle through to those in need, said MSF.

The NGO is urging the transitional government set up under Seleka leader Michel Djotodia to "guarantee security conditions that will allow humanitarian organisations to provide assistance to people throughout the country".

Looting and attacks still take place in the capital and hospitals have been pillaged, along with homes, [public buildings](#), schools, government ministries, the report said. In the [health ministry](#), medicines, [diagnostic tools](#), patients' files and even the furniture have gone.

Security concerns led UN agencies and many NGOs to withdraw to the capital "leaving the majority of the country without aid", MSF said.

"The people have effectively been abandoned just when they most need help," the report added.

MSF observed that health care was already in a dire state for years before the latest coup, which ousted president Francois Bozize. The

system to distribute medication had become wholly inadequate and was now "totally inexistent", it said.

The charity said that it has continued to run nine medical programmes in the country throughout the recent crisis, while expanding services to other areas, but fears that "the international community looks on with indifference".

"Even before the coup, the country was in crisis, with [mortality rates](#) well above the emergency threshold in several regions. Malnutrition and [preventable diseases](#) are rife, while malaria is the leading cause of death," the report said.

"MSF teams are seeing alarming numbers of malaria cases, which are 33 percent higher than the same period last year."

"We are facing one of the worst years in terms of the impact of the disease," said Ellen van der Velden, MSF's head of mission in CAR, quoted in the report.

UN agencies, MSF and other NGOs have all suffered from repeated looting of their stocks, which has resulted in at least 11,000 HIV-positive people being deprived of treatment.

Vaccination campaigns have also been affected. In May, a measles vaccination drive reached only 122,000 enfants in and around Bangui, but nothing could be set up to help children in the rest of the unstable country.

"Funding is also an issue," the NGO warned. "Of the total funds requested in March 2013 by UN agencies and non-governmental organisations to face the current crisis in CAR, so far just 31 percent has been disbursed."

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