

Serious measles outbreak hits C. Africa

August 13 2013

A severe measles epidemic has affected the whole territory of the Central African Republic, which lacks any strong health infrastructure, Health Minister Aguid Sounouk announced Tuesday.

"I call on the national transitional government and all partners in health care to mobilise for urgent measures ... to minimise the impact of this epidemic," Sounouk said in a radio broadcast.

The minister blamed the spread of the disease on "outbreaks of [measles](#) in several administrative districts of the country where no action was organised to contain the epidemic" since December 2012.

At the time, the landlocked nation was undergoing an insurgency that led in March to the ouster of president Francois Bozize and placed power in the hands of a rebel coalition, which has since joined with other forces to form an interim government.

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF - Doctors Without Borders) warned in early July that the country was on the verge of a public health catastrophe, since widespread unrest and the coming to power of the rebels had been accompanied by the systematic plundering of health facilities.

The non-governmental organisation said that this situation would likely lead to an "increase in the mortality rate in coming months", including from "common and curable" diseases such as measles, which can kill people in developing countries if they develop complications without

adequate care.

Sounouk warned of the risk for very young people, because of "the highly contagious nature of measles" and since "the affected children have for the most part not been vaccinated against this disease".

A [vaccination campaign](#) took place in the capital Bangui in May and reached 122,000 children, but nothing has been done for about 1.5 million children who live in the depths of the country.

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