

SITUATION UPDATE



An International Medical Corps doctor conducts a health check in Central African Republic.

In January 2024, Chad and Sudan declared epidemics of hepatitis E. Both countries share borders with the northeastern Central African Republic (CAR), and all three nations have experienced a massive increase in population migration due to conflict between state and non-state groups in both Chad and Sudan.

In April 2024, cases of jaundice and fever began appearing at an increased rate in the Vakaga prefecture in northeastern CAR. Initially, health professionals attributed the increased prevalence of these symptoms to other diseases that are more common in the region. However, in June, the CAR Ministry of Health and Population declared a hepatitis E epidemic in Vakaga after lab results confirmed 27 cases of hepatitis E and three related deaths across four health areas: Am-Dafock, Birao, Sikikédé and Zinzir.

The number of refugees hosted in Korsi Camp, on the CAR/Sudanese border, has almost quadrupled since the beginning of 2024, further increasing the demand for food, water, shelter and health services, which already were in short supply in the area. Poor water quality, sanitation and hygiene practices are among the most prominent drivers of hepatitis E infection, which spreads primarily through contaminated drinking water. The CAR Emergency Public Health Operations Center has held meetings among Health Cluster partners active in the area to outline the roles that each partner can take in the short-term to contribute to the response.

International Medical Corps Response

Our staff was already active in Vakaga prefecture, providing more than 207,000 people—including nearly 60,000 internally displaced people and 12,000 Sudanese refugees—with health and nutrition services, mental health and psychosocial support, and gender-based violence prevention and response services.

Our immediate actions in response to the outbreak include sensitizing communities on preventative measures, including: good hygiene practices and identification of hepatitis E symptoms; strengthening curative consultations in health facilities and maternity hospitals for early identification and treatment of hepatitis E; providing and maintaining a sufficient quantity of pharmaceuticals at health facilities; and supporting local health directors in efforts to coordinate a regional response to hepatitis E.

FAST FACTS

- The Central African Republic Minister of Health and Population declared a hepatitis E epidemic in Vakaga prefecture on June 14.
- Laboratory sample testing has confirmed 27 cases and three deaths across four health areas in Vakaga: Am-Dafock, Birao, Sikikédé and Zinzir.
- This follows epidemics of hepatitis E in neighboring Chad and Sudan, first declared in January.

OUR FOOTPRINT

- International Medical Corps has been present in CAR since 2007 and has provided assistance to 500,000+ people affected by complex humanitarian crises in more than eight health districts.
- We provide lifesaving services that span health (including maternal child and reproductive health), nutrition, gender-based violence protection, mental health and psychosocial support and health-system strengthening.
- In the Vakaga prefecture, International Medical Corps supports more than 207,000 people, including nearly 60,000 internally displaced people and 12,000 Sudanese refugees.

OUR RESPONSE

- International Medical Corps staff have raised community awareness of hepatitis E symptoms and prevention methods, and are providing curative consultations in health facilities and maternity hospitals for early identification and treatment.
- We provide and maintain medicines to treat outpatient cases of hepatitis E and are supporting local health directors with efforts around coordination of the response in Birao and Bangui.