The Pan-African Society of Cardiology states that rheumatic heart disease remains a major cause of death in Africa, despite being preventable and imminently treatable.

In order to reduce morbidity and mortality in the continent, EMERGENCY has built a network of paediatric centres in Sudan and in neighbouring countries. These centres work as satellites of EMERGENCY’s Salam Centre for Cardiac Surgery in Khartoum and, in addition to the provision of paediatric care, host periodic screening missions aimed at identifying patients in need of cardiac surgery treatable at the Salam Centre. These centres also manage follow-ups for patients who have received heart surgery. The first Paediatric Centre in this network was opened in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, in March 2009.

According to the United Nations Human Development Index, the Central African Republic is 187th out of 188 countries, with a life expectancy of only 50 years. The under-five mortality rate is extremely high: 139 children in every 1,000 live births die of easily preventable diseases. The main cause of death is malaria.

In 2014, due to the crisis caused by the civil war and upon request of the WHO, EMERGENCY reopened the National Blood Bank.

In 2009 EMERGENCY opened a Paediatric Centre in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic. The Centre, which is open 24/7, offers medical care to children up to 14 years old and prenatal care to pregnant women in one of the poorest countries of Africa.

Since the beginning of activities in Bangui, EMERGENCY has treated more than 280,000 patients and has become a focal point for the population.

Over the past few years the situation has deteriorated dramatically. The civil war which started in December 2012 caused thousands of deaths and displaced approximately one million people, around a fifth of the total population. Notwithstanding the active fighting, EMERGENCY’s Paediatric Centre remained open, treating an average of 60 children per day. Our wards and clinics always work at full capacity.

Malaria is common among our in-patients; it appears in 60% of diagnoses. The lack of food and harsh living conditions increase the chances of getting ill, and poor security delays mothers’ decision to embark upon the journey to the hospital.

The Paediatric Centre, which is part of EMERGENCY’s Regional Programme for Cardiac Surgery, also has a cardiological clinic. International cardiologists regularly visit the Centre for screening missions of children and adults. Those who fail within admission and treatment criteria are transferred to EMERGENCY’s Salam Centre for Cardiac Surgery in Khartoum, where they receive cardiac surgery free of charge. After surgery, patients can undergo follow-up treatment at the Paediatric Centre in Bangui, where they receive the medicines they need free of charge. Over 80 patients were referred from the Central African Republic to the Salam Centre through the Regional Programme.

In 2014, in order to meet the needs of the local population EMERGENCY has started collaborating with a local NGO in the establishment of a training program for local medical personnel. The training focuses on emergency management, in particular with regard to paediatrics, and appropriate referrals to hospitals in Bangui. Thanks to this project, over a hundred patients were referred to secondary health facilities in 2016.

Additionally, in 2016 EMERGENCY renewed its collaboration with the National Blood Bank in order to reactivate it and improve the quality of service. The political crisis in the Central African Republic had compromised the regular provision of services, causing frequent discontinuance and negatively affecting the treatment of patients in need of urgent blood transfusions. Thanks to this project, blood bags are now freely available in the hospitals of Bangui. EMERGENCY also organised campaigns to raise awareness among the local population on the importance of donating blood.

PAEDIATRIC CENTRE

Activities: Paediatrics, Paediatric A&E, Prenatal medical care.

Facilities: 3 Paediatric consultation rooms, Obstetric consultation room, Radiology, Lab, Pharmacy, Ward, Storage, Offices, Reception area and outdoor playing area, Technical and ancillary services.

Bed Capacity: 9

International Staff: 1 medical and program coordinator, 1 paediatric nurse, 1 nurse (for the dispensary), 1 administrator, 1 grant manager, 1 logistician.

National staff: 79 including doctors, nurses and other medical personnel, administrative and ancillary personnel.

From beginning of activities to December 2016:

Outpatient consultations: 165,436
Hospitalised patients: 12,053
Antenatal care consultations: 39,823
Cardiac consultations: 1,009

From January to December 2016:

Outpatient consultations: 20,570
Hospitalised patients: 1,493
Antenatal care consultations: 8,156

NATIONAL BLOOD BANK

From beginning of activities to December 2016:

Blood bags distributed: 38,411

International staff: 1 nurse