Emergency surgery is one of MSF’s main activities in Cameroon. This is particularly the case at the Regional Hospital in Kousséri, where MSF supports the Ministry of Health (MoH) with free, high quality emergency surgery. Surgery requires having a large supply of healthy blood available and this is the challenge MSF has taken up in Kousséri. In collaboration with the MoH, MSF has set up a blood bank that is jointly managed by both entities to address the hospital’s difficulties regarding blood transfusion.

MSF is also very active in epidemic response and epidemiological surveillance worldwide and remains on the alert in Cameroon. The organisation has supported the MoH in responding to a recent surge of suspected cases of yaws by donating medicine and medical items.

To improve the efficiency of its interventions, MSF has conducted a survey through its research branch “Epicentre” to evaluate the health needs of the populations in Mayo-Sava and Logon et Chari. The ongoing conflict and insecurity in the country’s Far North has taken a heavy toll on both regions. Ahead of the final detailed report, the preliminary results of the study are presented in this news bulletin.
In September 2017, MSF launched a blood bank at the HRAK to ensure a sufficient supply of blood bags was always available. During the first few weeks, 345 blood bags were donated and the bank is permanently stocked with around 25 bags.

Blood is in great demand at the HRAK in Kousséri, particularly in the surgical unit. Its availability is vital for patients undergoing surgery after attacks, road accidents, and domestic violence. It is also essential for patients being treated for stab wounds, bleeding heavily while giving birth, and for children suffering from malaria during the peak season.

MSF has set up a blood bank in the hospital’s laboratory. It is the only one in the area. The hospital’s director, Dr Angaye, as well as the administrative and community authorities, welcome the initiative. The blood bank is jointly managed by MoH lab technicians and MSF staff.

When a patient requires blood, a family member is asked to donate. If the blood groups match, the blood is used for the patient. If not, the donation is added to the blood bank in exchange for a bag compatible with the patient’s blood group.

While donations among family members are well accepted, voluntary donations to supply the blood bank is a new activity that the community was initially sceptical about. It was presented during a meeting – followed by a visit of the blood bank – between MSF and the sultan, several imams, blamas (district councils), pastors and the youth associations’ president. Questions and concerns about blood donation were discussed to dispel any doubts. “The key messages were that blood donation is free of charge and that nothing can replace blood except blood,” says Moussa Algoni, medical coordinator in Kousseri. “Giving blood means saving lives and this message was well accepted by the leaders. One of the imams has started to motivate the community to donate after the weekly prayer.”

MSF is considering setting up the same equipment, accompanied by the same awareness-raising strategy, in the District Hospital of Mora, where there is a huge demand for blood to deal with mass casualties.
**EPICENTRE**

**Survey evaluates health needs in the Far North region**

MSF, through its research centre Epicentre, has conducted a survey on the health needs of the people in the regions of in Mayo-Sava and Logon et Chari. The aim of the research is to guide and facilitate MSF’s future action in these inaccessible regions by mapping the health situation and the access to healthcare of populations facing insecurity.

The results of the survey show that the mortality rate in these areas (0.47/10,000 people per day) lies below the threshold of a humanitarian emergency (1/10,000 people per day). Most deaths are due to violence (attacks) and malaria. Effectively, malaria is the most reported illness (16% of the population), despite the widespread use of mosquito nets (87%). The rate of access to healthcare rate is reasonable, with half the population seeking treatment in health facilities.

But the survey revealed that certain health structures had been vandalised, leading some to close temporarily. While eight health structures reported an increase in the number of patients due to the arrival of refugees, a third of the structures surveyed said numbers had generally dropped, mainly because of fear and insecurity.

The survey concluded that the health situation of the people in Mayo-Sava and Logon et Chari has been affected by the conflict in the region. Yet access to health structures in these areas remains reasonable and comparable to 2014.

The survey was carried out using mobile phones, which proved to be the most pragmatic method in these inaccessible areas as it is practical, simple and inexpensive.

Once the final report is available, the results of this survey will allow MSF to refocus and target its work in the regions of Mayo-Sava and Logon et Chari to ensure that healthcare services are appropriate for the needs of the population.

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**EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE**

**MSF supports the MoH in its response to the suspected cases of yaws in the Far North**

MSF supports the MoH in its response to the suspected cases of yaws in the Far North. In October 2017, an outbreak was reported in the Mokolo Health District, and the preliminary investigation shows the following:

- 689 suspected cases identified in six schools
- 3,260 contacts identified in these schools
- 5,310 contacts counted in households

MSF donated medicines and essential medical equipment after being contacted by the government agency responsible for disease, epidemic and pandemic control in Yaoundé concerning the outbreak response.

This collaboration is part of MSF’s work in the areas of neglected and infectious diseases and epidemic responses. With the end of the rains and the arrival of the dry season, the risk of meningitis epidemics rises and the need for rapid response becomes even more important.

Yaws is a chronic, infectious childhood disease that disfigures and debilitates. It is caused by the bacterium Treponema pallidum pertenue. The disease is endemic in Cameroon and belongs to the group of neglected tropical diseases.
Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is an international, independent, medical humanitarian organisation that delivers emergency aid to people affected by armed conflict, epidemics, natural disasters and exclusion from healthcare. MSF offers assistance to people based on need, irrespective of race, religion, gender or political affiliation.

**SELECTED MEDICAL DATA**

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<th>Activities</th>
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<td>General consultations</td>
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<td>Treatment of malnourished children</td>
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<td>Children admitted to paediatric care</td>
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<td>Surgeries</td>
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<td>Psychological consultations</td>
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<td>Psychological consultations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**Contact**

**Head of mission: Alberto Jodra**

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)
Head office 300m past ELECAM
Rue 1.828, Bastos
BP 12069 Yaoundé

Tel: (+237) 222 20 90 29
msfch-yaounde-com@geneva.msf.org