



WOMEN'S HEALTH IN MASISI, DRC

Decades of conflict, lack of investment in the healthcare system and ongoing violence cause extreme hardship for people in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Humanitarian aid is concentrated around big cities and places that are considered secure, but there is a need for a rapid, flexible humanitarian response to acute needs throughout the east of the country. Teams from Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) are working to increase the availability of healthcare and respond to health emergencies.

DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS/MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES (MSF)

is providing lifesaving medical care to women in Masisi, North Kivu Province, DRC. The project ensures access to primary and secondary health care for a population made vulnerable by many years of violence and conflict. MSF also provides medical care to people suffering from infectious diseases: HIV, TB, and chronic diseases such as hypertension, heart disease and diabetes. MSF thanks the Anthony Cerami and Ann Dunne Foundation for World Health for their contribution to this project and others.

PROVIDING CARE TO **WOMEN**

In Masisi, MSF provides full support to the general hospital (internal medicine, surgery, gynecology, maternity services, pediatrics and neonatology) and to two health centers in Masisi and Nyabiondo. There is a 76-bed maternity village for women in their third trimester of high-risk pregnancies. MSF also works with community advisors to counsel victims of sexual violence. Comprehensive healthcare is provided at Mweso hospital, with mental health and sexual violence treatment services integrated into the basic healthcare program. Security incidents caused the suspension of the Mweso project twice in 2013, but the teams at Mweso hospital provided more than 140,000 consultations, carried out more than 1,300 surgeries and assisted more than 4,500 deliveries.

TREATING SURVIVORS OF **SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

MSF provides immediate, specialised medical assistance for those who seek treatment. Providing care shortly after sexual violence is critical to mitigate some of the health risks. The minimum package of care that should be available for a survivor of sexual violence includes a physical exam, treatment for wounds and injuries, emergency contraceptives, treatment for STIs, antiretroviral treatment to prevent transmission of HIV/AIDS, and hepatitis B and tetanus vaccinations. Psychosocial support and voluntary counseling and testing for HIV are also recommended. MSF also provides survivors of sexual violence with a medical certificate detailing their treatment. The certificate can contribute as evidence in court—and is sometimes the only evidence beyond the victim's own words.



TRAINING COUNSELORS

"Counselors are trained by MSF to provide psychosocial support to their own communities. Like the rest of the medical care that MSF provides in DR Congo, the mental health service preserves lives. Psychosocial care also restores dignity by helping patients grapple with their traumatic experiences in order to avoid chronic health problems and to heal. Some clients walk over 15 kilometers to attend their follow-up sessions. The majority of the people who seek help do get better."

- MSF mental health counselor, Mweso, North Kivu province, 2011



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