**Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) “If we sit back and do nothing, these people will die”**

*Narcisse Wega Kwekam is the deputy emergency programme manager for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). He recently returned from Tanganyika province, an area where clashes between communities have forced large numbers of people to leave their homes. Many are subsequently living in informal settlements, and food remains a major concern. The prevailing insecurity is affecting people’s health and also their ability to reach existing medical structures.*

“As a result of intercommunal conflict, villagers left their homes in the hope of finding safety elsewhere. As the fighting intensified, informal settlements sprang up as more and more families arrived in Kalémie. People’s shelters are made of straw and other building materials found nearby. And although the settlements have been in place for months now, the aid afforded to people is minimal or non-existent; some have no water, no food, and no access to care.

We were responding to a large measles outbreak in Tanganyika province that had spread to difficult-to-reach areas when we arrived in the village of Moke. What we found was on a scale we’ve rarely seen before. People were listless, lying on the floor unable to get up. There were 1,500 people living in the village, and when we visited the cemetery we found 95 graves. Of these, 90 per cent were children. We undertook a malnutrition screening in April that showed 51 per cent of the children were malnourished, 23 per cent severely so.

We set up mobile clinics as quickly as possible and provided care for both malnourished children and adults. We also distributed items such as mosquito nets and tarpaulins, as malaria and pneumonia were the two most common conditions people were coming to us with.

These people are in a terrible situation. They are asking for two things: to be protected, and to return home. In addition to providing aid, MSF is calling on other actors to shoulder responsibility. If we sit back and do nothing, these people will die. Every time we come back to the village there are new deaths.

As MSF we will continue to describe what we see and bear witness to what we experience. Everyone needs to take responsibility. There are undoubtedly other pockets of displaced people in similar situations and with the same levels of need. We are ready to intervene, but we are also ready to raise our voices so that everyone feels concerned and takes action.”