**Fears of Outbreaks Grow in Nigeria Following Severe Floods**

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) is highly concerned about the significant risk of malaria and waterborne diseases, including cholera, following the recent severe flooding in Nigeria that swallowed vast parts of Maiduguri. There is also a fear that this crisis could increase the levels of malnutrition in the area. MSF calls for urgent additional support, especially in terms of water, sanitation, and medical care, to protect people already heavily impacted by long-term insecurity and unprecedented levels of malnutrition.

On 10 September, heavy rain caused the Alau Dam in Borno State to overflow, leading to significant floods in and around the city of Maiduguri. The deluge heavily impacted houses, markets, fields, livestock, and several health facilities. According to Borno State authorities, close to 400,000 people have been registered in 30 makeshift displacement sites. Most of the sites are schools with too few latrines and a lack of safe drinking water.

“We are very concerned about the precarious living conditions and the potential outbreaks of cholera and malaria”, says Dr Issaley Abdel Kader, MSF Head of Mission in Nigeria. “The number of children affected by malaria and acute watery diarrhoea had already started to increase before the flooding, and we have seen some with clinical signs of cholera since the floods. We are afraid that the number of cases will rise without increasing medical and humanitarian support, especially regarding water, sanitation and hygiene.”

Last week, MSF teams went to several displacement sites (Galtimari, Yerwa, Ali Sheriff, Vocational Enterprise Institute, Teachers Village) to assess people’s needs and start providing essential services such as access to water through water trucking and tanks, the installation and repair of restrooms, and the distribution of mosquito nets.

Teams also run outpatient consultations in the sites, including mental health support, and refer critical patients to the facilities we support. Given the risks posed by malaria and cholera, MSF is also planning to expand the paediatric facility it supports by 100 beds, to meet the demand of the likely increase in malaria cases. Teams have begun setting up a cholera treatment centre that can be increased to a 100-bed capacity, if needed.

The Borno State government has announced the closure and merging of most displacement sites in the coming days. Three main sites will remain to accommodate people who still have no place to stay for one more week, and a mass cholera vaccination is upcoming.

“All parties involved in the humanitarian response must continue assisting the people affected by the floods as long as it will be necessary and ensure immediate and easy access to medical care for those who need it. The closure of most sites means that many will find themselves in a very vulnerable situation. For those remaining in the sites, prompt action must be taken to swiftly improve hygiene conditions, including access to latrines, safe water and mosquito nets”, says Dr Issaley.

Support for communities won’t just be needed at the new displacement sites. Well before the flooding, the entire population of Maiduguri was already facing huge challenges, including one of the worst malnutrition crises recorded in northeast Nigeria. In the past months, hundreds of severely malnourished children were admitted every week to the MSF nutritional care hospital.

“Admissions to the nutritional facilities had just started to reduce when the flooding occurred”, says Dr Ashok Shrirang Sankpal, deputy medical coordinator of MSF Nigeria. “With markets and businesses heavily impacted, the harvest damaged and livestock washed away, there is huge concern that the downward trend will reverse and admissions start to rise again.”

This is the second time in just a few weeks that MSF has had to launch emergency responses linked to flooding in northern Nigeria. In August in Gummi, Zamfara state, homes and farms were destroyed, and thousands were left newly displaced by severe flooding. Like Maiduguri, people in this area already face significant challenges, including malnutrition, persistent insecurity and lack of access to healthcare. MSF teams have supported communities in Gummi over the last few weeks by delivering clean drinking water, repairing boreholes and delivering kits, including plastic sheets for temporary shelter and mosquito nets.