Kosovo comm-update 015 (26 November 1998)

Internal document for MSF-press-departments

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Observations 16 November - 26 November
The first serious snowfall on 19/11 has caused more difficulties for the returnee/displaced population (cold and shelter). Most of the aid is currently distributed with 2 wheel drive trucks which are unable to operate if the snow is too deep. The shelter materials, food, hygienic items, stoves are getting out to the villages and the Mother Theresa distribution system is working effectively despite difficulties to move in less secure areas. Returnees in the Klina area are still not settling back into their homes due to the police presence and the level of destruction. Our team in Serbica/Vucitrn continues to meet Klina people who went back to their village and left again. Lack of confidence in the future situation remains a worrying factor for all returnees. There are more Yugoslav Army units in the Djakova and border area. Villagers in this area have access to Djakova by bus (about 15 mins), but due to the regular patrols fear remains high. The ambulanta in Molliq still occupied by the army. As presence of security forces increases difficulty of movement becomes more of an issue, this is a problem for young people and men but others can still reach the towns.

The food pipeline apparently has a gap in it as the main food agencies (WFP, CRS and Mercy Corps) are all waiting for a USAID ship which hasn't docked in Montenegro, this may cause problems but the actual break in delivery is not yet known.

The situation in health structures remains the same. Doctors are still returning but in some areas are afraid to work. The extent of destruction/damage to clinics seems to be less than previously estimated. According to our assessments in the Pec/Decan, where some of the heaviest fighting took place, out of the 28 official and Mother Theresa structures, 8 are damaged, of which 3 seriously.

Regional coordination meetings with UNHCR have now started in Pec and Prizren.

Press line
The main message remains the fate of the IDP's/returnees, and to draw attention to their needs. As far as the general situation is concerned, see above.

Because of the humanitarian situation, MSF would like to see a lasting political solution that guarantees longterm stability in Kosovo.

Activities mission 16 November - 20 November

Mobile Clinics
CONFIDENTIAL (see press line)

Observations
The fragile ‘ceasefire’ is still holding despite continued tit for tat actions (attacks and abductions) between the Serb forces and the UCK, with more involvement of civilians. Tensions have increased in the Pec and Decan areas. Last Wednesday night a respected Albanian doctor who worked in Pec hospital was shot dead in his house by 3 masked men who spoke Serbian. One of his children was injured by a bullet. More reports of harassment/intimidation against Albanians by police, and attacks on Albanian restaurants and cafes in Pec. More police presence in Decan, civilians harassed and beaten. Similar reports from Mitrovica and Suva Reka.

Mission in Kosovo (14)
Pec: Josette Benamane (nurse, F), Laurence Thavaux (nurse, F), Ingrid Geerinck (doctor, B), Piero Schipizza (watsan, l)
Prizren: Andrew Marshall (nurse, UK), Lone Gravgaard (nurse, Dan (Danish/Norwegian/Swedish, English))
Pristina: Tim Boucher (HoM, UK (English)), Kathia van Egmond (medco, B (English, Dutch)), John Farebrother (log, UK, on holiday till end of week), Ann Wouters (nurse, B), André Ritsema (watsan, NL), Stephanie van Peteghem (doctor, B), Bas Tielens (com, NL (Dutch, English, German).