To make a difference with your heart and hands

Join MSF Surgical Work on the Frontline
Dear Friends,

I’m glad that you picked up this booklet but be careful - it may change your life forever.

After reading this booklet, you may find it impossible to dismiss the notion of joining Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) on one of its many missions around the world. Before long you will probably be holding your breath as the small MSF plane that you are on glides over spectacular landscapes of a remote region in Africa or other neglected areas. You may experience the most rewarding three months of your life, alleviating suffering of people who have probably gone through unspeakable tragedies. When you return home after your mission, you will find yourself enhanced both professionally as well as personally. It will then gradually dawn upon you that this mission was only the beginning of your long journey in giving back to humanity while enriching yourself in the process.

We at MSF will be glad, and in fact honoured to facilitate your move into this worthy path and satisfy your desire to engage in meaningful humanitarian efforts. MSF was founded in 1971 and has over the years grown into an international medical organisation that provides professional humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations around the world in alleviating their suffering and saving countless lives.

Each year, MSF recruits around 2,000 medical and non-medical professionals to contribute their expertise in about 60 countries. Due to the ever increasing man-made and natural disasters the world is experiencing, MSF has strategically decided to intensify surgical activities in the field. As such, the need for motivated field workers with surgical related profiles such as surgeons, anaesthesiologists, nurse anaesthetists, and operating theatre nurses has increased tremendously in recent times. At the same time, around the world, our medical teams witness the exclusion of women from medical care due to poverty, insecurity, culture, or simply because there are no facilities within their reach. MSF is therefore launching more and more programmes focusing on mother-child and reproductive health care. Hence more operating theatre nurses, obstetricians / gynaecologists, and midwives are needed by MSF.

This booklet will serve as an excellent medium in answering the many questions that will arise in your mind when you begin to consider joining MSF on a humanitarian mission.

Jagmohan SINGH
Field Human Resources Director
Médecins Sans Frontières Hong Kong
The Médecins Sans Frontières Charter

Médecins Sans Frontières is a private international association. The association is made up mainly of doctors and health sector workers and is also open to all other professions which might help in achieving its aims. All of its members agree to honour the following principles:

Médecins Sans Frontières provides assistance to populations in distress, to victims of natural or man-made disasters and to victims of armed conflict. They do so irrespective of race, religion, creed or political convictions.

Médecins Sans Frontières observes neutrality and impartiality in the name of universal medical ethics and the right to humanitarian assistance and claims full and unhindered freedom in the exercise of its functions.

Members undertake to respect their professional code of ethics and to maintain complete independence from all political, economic or religious powers.

As volunteers, members understand the risks and dangers of the missions they carry out and make no claim for themselves or their assigns for any form of compensation other than that which the association might be able to afford them.
What is MSF?

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), or Doctors Without Borders, was founded in 1971 by a group of doctors and journalists. MSF was one of the first non-governmental organisations to provide emergency medical assistance and to publicly bear witness to the plight of the people it helps.

Today MSF is an international medical humanitarian movement with 19 partner sections. Every year, over 20,000 doctors, nurses, other medical professionals, logistical experts, water and sanitation engineers, administrators and local staff work in about 60 countries. They provide medical aid to people whose survival is threatened by violence, neglect, or catastrophe, primarily due to armed conflict, epidemics, malnutrition, and exclusion from health care or natural disasters.

Besides providing various forms of healthcare (e.g. primary healthcare, surgical care, mental health care, maternal and paediatric care, therapeutic feeding, vaccination, etc), MSF also provides non-medical support including water and sanitation facilities, distribution of food and non medical supplies, or training of local medical personnel.

MSF's decision to intervene in any country or crisis is based solely on an independent assessment of people's needs – not on political, economic, or religious interests. MSF does not take sides or intervene according to the demands of governments or warring parties.

MSF-Hong Kong

MSF-Hong Kong was established in 1994. It promotes MSF values, raises funds to support MSF field projects. MSF-Hong Kong also actively recruits medical and non-medical personnel from all over Asia (with the exception of India, Japan, and Korea) to work on the frontline.
We Need
Surgical Related Professionals

MSF recruits medical and non-medical staff to work in its projects. Due to the ever-increasing man-made and natural disasters the world is experiencing, MSF has strategically decided to intensify surgical activities in the field, especially in conflict settings. As such, the need for surgeons, orthopaedic surgeons, anaesthesiologists, nurse anaesthetists and operating theatre nurses has increased tremendously recently. At the same time, MSF is also launching more programmes focusing on mother-child and reproductive healthcare. Therefore, more OT nurses, obstetricians/gynaecologists and midwives are needed to help the women who are excluded from medical care.

Criteria for working in the field are:

- Valid degree and current license to practice
- Availability: 1 to 6 months
- Ability to live and work as a team
- Ability to manage stress
- Flexibility
- Cultural sensitivity
- Experience in developing countries is desired
- Willingness to work in conflict areas / unstable environments
- Fluency in English or French

Beyond these minimum essential requirements, MSF seeks personnel who embody the principles of independent humanitarian aid, as espoused in our charter.

Placements in conflict areas can be dangerous, but our strict security policies ensure that risks to field workers are minimised.

www.msf.org.hk

APPLY NOW
As a surgeon working for MSF, your overall responsibility is to ensure the quality of surgical service in emergency room, out-patient clinic, operating theatre, in-patient department, and dressing room. You are also responsible for providing the best surgical care to the patients by working in strong collaboration with your team (anaesthesiologists, operating theatre nurses and others).

Other responsibilities include:

- Providing surgical care and performing different types of surgeries (including abdominal, emergency obstetrical, basic orthopaedic, trauma and violence related surgery e.g. gunshots, spear wounds, etc)
- Managing and organising the surgical department (including out-patient clinic, emergency room, operating theatre, and surgical ward)
- Recruiting, training and evaluating the national staff in aspects related to surgery
- Implementing quality tools and protocols as per MSF guidelines and standards
- Collecting and analysing the medical data as well as making a surgical activity report

**Specific Requirements:**

- Ability to perform general surgery including Paediatrics and Caesarean sections
- Some experience in A&E, war surgery and orthopaedics is desirable
- Completed residency in surgery with valid degree and current license
- Ability to work with limited resources
- Availability at short notice
- Availability of at least 1 month, with greater opportunities for those available for 3 to 9 months
- Willingness to work in unstable environments
“Being a field surgeon, one needs to prepare oneself for having the only surgical expertise in the field. That means all general surgical, war wounded, trauma, orthopaedic, obstetric, even neurosurgical emergency cases may come under your management. You need to have some basic knowledge of all these pathologies.

Equipment and assistant skills may not be up to your expectation. Normally we operate with one scrub nurse who will be your only assistant. You also have to prepare to treat your patients from emergency room admission to operating theatre, in-patient care, recovery, rehabilitation to discharge.

Personal touch and care are of the utmost importance in our patient care in the field. It is really holistic care. All these may be challenges to a general surgeon working in a modern hospital. But that is the greatest challenge and drive for me to go for mission after mission.

Lastly, I always bear in mind this quote in my missions – ‘There is no question of cannot do but how to do.’ ”

“A frequent question other surgeons ask me is why do you leave your country to help others, instead of just staying in your own country and helping your own countrymen?

It is very difficult to explain the fulfillment of providing surgical care to others who otherwise would have no access to any quality surgical care. There is no financial gain, living conditions are difficult, and we deal with unfamiliar food and culture. Medical care provided in the countries we work in is less than optimum.

But it is exactly for these reasons that there is a need to go to these countries which lack surgical care. It forces me to challenge my thinking in how to best use the minimal medical resources, but still provide quality surgical care. It forces me to learn operations and medical conditions I have never encountered before. We gain the patients confidence and provide quality care despite the cultural differences and difficult field situation.

Having less than optimal medical conditions does not mean that quality of care is less. Facing these conditions brings out the best in myself as a surgeon and as a human being.”
As an orthopaedic surgeon working for MSF, your role is to supervise and coordinate the orthopaedic surgical service in emergency room, orthopaedic out-patient clinic, operating theatre, in-patient department, and dressing room.

Further responsibilities include:

- Managing and organising the orthopaedic department (identify the needed orthopaedic equipment such as material for osteosynthesis and external fixation, and with the help of the OT nurse, ensure these materials are in ready supply)
- Recruiting training and evaluating the national staff in aspects related to orthopaedic surgery
- Implementing quality tools and protocols as per MSF guidelines and standards
- Collecting and analysing medical data as well as making surgical activity report

**Specific Requirements:**

- Completed residency in orthopaedic surgery
- Valid degree and current license
- Ability to work with limited resources
- Experience in supervising, managing and training of other staff
- Availability of at least 1 to 3 months
- Experience in trauma and war surgery is highly desired
- Willingness to work in unstable environments
To make a difference with your heart and hands. Join MSF surgical work on the frontline.

Taweesilp BOONSANTIENWONG

From: Thailand
Field profession: Orthopedic Surgeon
Field Experience: Iran, Nigeria, Sri Lanka

“There are 2 main reasons why I work for MSF. The first is to help ease suffering, and the second is to experience the world outside of Thailand.

Before I worked with MSF, I had no idea how different people from different countries with different races, religions, and cultures could work together, and was uncertain of what this organisation could achieve with its limited resources.

After having been to missions in Iran, Nigeria and Sri Lanka, I’ve gained a better perspective of life, I feel I’ve grown as a person and attained a degree of fulfillment in knowing I’m helping the world to be a better place.

Now, after 5 missions with MSF, I can say without reservation it’s a truly wonderful international organisation, and I’m proud to be a part of it. It puts ideals into practice, makes the abstract concrete and simplifies the complicated. In addition, MSF enriches my life with unforgettable experiences, and helps ease suffering in many parts of the world.”

“I was the first expatriate doctor to ‘return’ to Iraq after all international NGOs withdrew expatriate staff from the country due to targeted attacks on aid workers. As an orthopaedic surgeon, throughout my two month stay there, I treated a large number of weapon wounded victims, with gunshot wounds occurring on a daily basis while bomb blast injuries taking place every few days, often bringing in dozens of patients all at the same time. It was an ongoing war-like situation without a defined frontline or enemy.

Besides operating, my role there was to assess the emergency preparedness of the ill functioning medical system for the mass influx of victims. I also needed to perform needs assessment for medical supplies and manpower support. More importantly, by having MSF international staff back in the field working side by side with our Iraqi counterparts, and demonstrating great courage and dedication to the humanitarian cause, we conveyed a strong sense of solidarity and fraternity to the helpless people of Iraq. The hospitality and generosity of the people we met were truly reflective of their grateful attitude and friendly nature.”

Wilson LI

From: Hong Kong
Field profession: Orthopedic surgeon
Field Experience: Iraq
As an anaesthesiologist, you will be responsible for supervising and coordinating the anaesthesia services in emergency room, dressing room, operating theatre, in-patient department, intensive care unit and out-patient clinic. You will also need to provide the best pre-, per- (intra) and post- operative anaesthetic care that allows patients to receive prime support in their surgical treatment.

Other responsibilities include:

- Providing anaesthesia care and performing different types of techniques (including intubation, mask or spinal anaesthesia, and local anaesthesia)
- Managing and organising the anaesthesia department (including emergency room, operating theatre, in-patient department and intensive care unit)
- Recruiting, training and evaluating national staff in aspects related to anaesthesia
- Implementing quality tools and protocols as per MSF guidelines and standards
- Collecting and analysing medical data as well as making a medical report

Specific Requirements:

- Completed residency in anaesthesia
- Valid degree and current license
- Experience in paediatric, obstetric, and trauma anaesthesia
- Experience in dissociation anaesthesia (e.g. Ketamine)
- Extensive experience in spinal anaesthesia
- Experience in supervising, managing and training of others
- Willingness to work in an unstable environments
- Ability to work with limited resources e.g. ventilation equipment
- Availability of at least 1 month, with greater opportunities for those available for 3 to 9 months
“As an anaesthesiologist, how long haven’t you kept watching the patient rather than the ECG, capnograph, wedge pressure and arterial pressure? It was my first time to use manual blood-pressure cuff when I was in Sierra Leone. It was my first time to see patient driven anaesthesia apparatus (Draw-Over) in South Sudan. There are only pulse oxymeter and manual cuff. In most of the circumstances, we really need blood to save the patient, and it's not always available. When there is no blood, no donor, the only thing I could do after all the medications is praying. Most of the patients make it through though few of them don't. Working in such resources limited environment makes me look back the vitality of survival – flesh and blood.”

“It is a great pleasure to be part of the MSF team to help the underprivileged in Afghanistan in relations to healthcare. Being an anaesthesiologist with MSF mission to Laskargah, it was a great responsibility to teach, to organise, and to put the protocols in place and is more than satisfying. The humanitarian grounds that we were working with limited resources are highly appreciated by the national staff and the people in Afghanistan. The joy in saving a life gives great satisfaction to me.

Living with other expats from all over the world is exciting and challenging. Interacting with the Afghanis is thrilling and they reciprocate with such warmth and hospitality. Let’s take some time to help others as time and tide waits for none as we will not pass through this world again. I enjoyed my MSF mission in Afghanistan. I would be pleased if I can be part of the team for my next mission.”
As an obstetrician/gynaecologist working for MSF, the roles you play may vary from setting up a maternal and child health department in a clinic or a hospital, establishing a sexual and gender based violence programme within a refugee population, to initiating a community maternal child health education programme.

You will have regular encounters with the local midwives. Understanding cross-cultural issues on childbirth will be crucial, you will need to listen to the women in their community and to understand the realities of their reproductive lives.

The responsibilities include:

- Performing normal and complicated deliveries, elective and emergency obstetric-gynaecology surgeries, and pre- and post-operative management
- Managing and organising the obstetrics and gynaecology department including emergency room, out-patient clinic, operating theatre, delivery ward and maternity ward
- Working in coordination with the midwifery team
- Recruiting, training and evaluating the national staff in aspects related to obstetrics and gynaecology
- Implementing quality tools and protocols as per MSF guidelines and standards
- Collecting and analysing the medical data as well as making a medical report

**Specific Requirements**

- Completed residency in obstetrics and gynaecology
- Current or recent practical experience
- Able to work together with midwife
- Experience in supervising, managing and training of others
- Ability to train and coach other health workers
- Willingness to work in unstable environments
- Availability of at least 3 months, with greater opportunities for those available for 6 to 9 months
TU Zheng

Profession: Obstetric-gynaecologist  
From: China  
Field profession: Obstetric-gynaecologist  
Field Experience: Liberia, Turkmenistan, Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Pakistan, China

“As an obstetric-gynaecologist working wherever in the world, I believe that I do not only help to give new life to a human being, but also work with hope and future. Working as an MSF field volunteer, I face the most vulnerable group everyday, experiencing the joy, sorrow, hope, disappointment, life and death together with them. I am happy when the mothers get healthy babies with my help; I am sad when a life disappears in front of my eyes, although I know it is beyond my limitation. Excitement of success and frustration of helplessness, beautiful songs of life and bitter tears of loss make my time in MSF field memorable.”

Heidi G. CRUZ

Profession: Obstetric-gynaecologist  
From: Philippines  
Field profession: Obstetric-gynaecologist  
Field Experience: Pakistan, South Sudan, Sri Lanka

“Joining MSF as an obstetric-gynaecologist has given me a new and invaluable perspective, which I have ever imagined before. Wherever it may be, it gives me a kaleidoscope of experiences to cherish anytime. Likewise, it brings me sighs and frustrations together with hopes, aspirations and tranquillity. Sharing my life and skills has taken me to the heights - personally and professionally - as well. To believe in my capacity to help, bringing a new life to this world and helping those less fortunate women with their reproductive problems have heightened my passion to continue the service. It also encompasses the opportunity to redefine my life in the mission.”
Other tasks usually required are:

- Training and coaching local operating theatre nurses in their skills and overall management of the operating theatre to eventually delegate all responsibilities to them
- Data collection and follow up of the patients’ file (in the operating theatre)
- Overseeing the sterilization of equipments and laundry
- Supervising the nursing care of pre- and post-operative patients
- Responding to mass casualty incidents in the region as part of an MSF intervention

Specific Requirements

- Licensed, registered nurse (RN) with years experience in operating theatre
- Experience in general surgery, trauma, orthopaedics and/or obstetrics
- General knowledge of all operating theatre duties so able to manage the operating theatre
- Experience in supervising, training and managing others
- Flexibility and availability
- Ability to work in a low-tech environment
- Availability of at least 3 months; greater opportunities for those available for 6 to 9 months

“My first mission was to close an orthopaedic programme in a regular hospital. Then I was in charge of an inflatable hospital in Gaza just after the Israeli and Hamas ceasefires in January 2009. My third mission was to work in an even bigger inflatable hospital close to the conflict zone, targeting 100,000 internally displaced persons. MSF gives me opportunities to use my basic nursing skills and my advanced operating theatre knowledge as well as put myself in management territory.

You can be everything in MSF. Step out into fields, work with the locals, and understand what is going on in our world.”

YIM Wai Ling

Profession: Operating Theatre Nurse
From: Hong Kong
Field Position: Operating Theatre Nurse
Field Experience: Iran, Gaza, Sri Lanka, South Sudan
As a midwife working with MSF, your experience in both complicated and normal deliveries will be essential. You may be involved in helping setting up a maternal and child health department in a primary health clinic, providing reproductive health care via mobile clinics, or treating patients in a secondary or tertiary health centres. And you will need to listen to the women you treat in order to understand cross-cultural issues on childbirth.

Another task usually required is the training of local staff. You have to work in collaboration with the obstetric-gynecologists.

Specific Requirements

- Valid degree and/or certificate for midwifery and current license
- Minimum of 2 years autonomous clinical experience
- Extensive experience in managing prenatal check up, normal delivery (including the use of partograph), and post natal check up
- Knowledge on complicated pregnancy and delivery
- Experience with family planning and mother-child health
- Knowledge of STDs and HIV/AIDS
- Experience in supervising, training and managing others
- Availability of 6 to 12 months

“I never had expected to see so many complicated cases in my life. In Guri El Hospital, Somalia, women walked in with pre-eclampsia or were brought in with eclampsia every single day. Management of high-risk cases were the priority of our training sessions to the local midwives.

Working with MSF, I’ve used everything I learned as well as all the experience I gathered to put into real practice. From setting up an antenatal clinic and delivery room, promoting family planning, to taking care of pregnant mothers and newborn babies, all have come into the responsibilities of a field midwife. I was once doubtful about how much a midwife actually can do. With MSF, there is a lot.”

LEE Hi Yeen

Profession: Midwife
From: Malaysia
Field Position: Midwife
Field Experience: Pakistan, Somalia, Kenya, Afghanistan
Life on a Mission

Hong Kong doctor Ben NG plays harmonica for the children and the mothers at MSF’s health centre in Ethiopia.

Life in the field varies from project to project. You may encounter harsh living and working conditions with unfamiliar food, living quarters (e.g. tent or tukul), pace of life, forms of entertainment, languages and companions. Privacy and leisure time may be reduced. In some cases, you may need to endure extreme weather or isolation due to remoteness of the project location.

Political instability and uncertainty can be a part of daily life in the field. For security reason, there may be curfews and restricted movement for the team.

An MSF mobile team goes to a village to provide malaria treatment in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh.

Field worker Edgardo MIRANDA (right) is cutting hair for his teammate in Bagh, Pakistan.
Hong Kong doctor Joyce CHING and her tukul in Cherrati, Ethiopia.

You will also be exposed to different cultural experiences. Local staff and patients will have different social and possibly medical practices and you will need to address critical health problems with limited resources within an inadequate infrastructure. You need to respect the views of local health care professionals, and remember that the local health professionals have lived through the same trauma as the patients: they will be the ones who remain after the field workers leave.

Team members have lunch together at an MSF outreach clinic at the border of Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in India.

An inflatable tent hospital of 120 beds in Bagh, Pakistan, which includes an emergency room, four operating theatres and an intensive care unit.

You can help save a life. Join MSF: www.msf.org.hk
Package Offered to
MSF Field Worker

Once a successful candidate is accepted into our Active Pool and a mission is confirmed, MSF will be responsible for all travel arrangements, visas and relevant vaccinations.

MSF will provide:

1. Round trip economy air travel;
2. Accommodation and transportation during your contract (including briefings and debriefings);
3. Monthly indemnity approximately EURO 800;
4. Field Per diem allowance in local currency based on the cost of living in project country;
5. Insurance covering health, luggage, professional liability, repatriation, accidents and flights;
6. Pre and post mission health checks.
Frequently Asked Questions

1. How is the recruitment process?
   - Application should be done online in MSF Hong Kong website after reaching the basic requirements.
   - Complete applications are then screened by the Field Human Resources Department. Short-listed candidates will be invited to have an interview and assessment (I&A) either at the Hong Kong office or during our recruitment visits to one of the countries where Information and Recruitment sessions are held.
   - Successful candidates will be accepted to the pool of active field workers and may be sent to an MSF training programme before going to a field mission.
   - Standby until a suitable project is identified. The stand-by period can be up to 3 months. Candidates are advised to continue working until a position is offered.

2. Do field workers receive a salary?
   Field workers do not receive a salary, but an indemnity. The indemnity is credited to the individual’s bank account each month to help field workers resettle upon returning home. In addition to the indemnity, field workers receive a field per diem allowance, to be used for personal items.

3. What insurance covers field workers?
   MSF has an insurance policy for all field workers to cover health insurance, accident insurance, professional liability, repatriation, and flight insurance.
   In case of an illness or accident for which there is no need for repatriation to the home country, the insurance covers all expenses from the place of work to the most appropriate qualified referral hospital.

4. Can I decide which country I work in?
   MSF places you on assignment based on the needs in the field and according to specialty and availability. Field workers do have a final say in accepting or rejecting a mission, but are expected to be open to a wide variety of locations and activities.

5. Is there an age limit for working with MSF in the field?
   No, however, one should be in good health and fit to work.

6. How does MSF manage safety and security in the field?
   Working with MSF is not reckless. MSF follows extensive risk-management procedures, and security guidelines are constantly updated for every project. Field workers are briefed on the security situation in their project country before going to the field, and are trained in specific security protocols upon arriving at the project site. Adherence to our field guidelines for personal and team conduct and safety is not negotiable.

For clarifying questions about working in the field with MSF after reading this booklet, please send an email to hr@msf.org.hk or call the Field Human Resources Department on (852) 2959 4232. Thank you.
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Hong Kong

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Come and Join Us