Every year, more than 20k people for doctors without borders, Medecins Sans Frontieres or MSF from around the world, are committed to providing emergency medical care and providing relief supplies to millions of people in distress in nearly 80 countries. This is possible thanks to financial support from more than 3 million donors worldwide. MSF is private, nonprofit humanitarian organization created in Paris in 1971 by a group of doctors and journalists. Now, an international movement, MSF provides impartial help to people in need, without discrimination and independent of political powers.

All branches of MSF movement share the same charter and respect humanitarian principles and medical ethics in their work. MSF teams do not expect to stop war or change the world. They work alongside people struggling to survive violence or neglect. Constantly aiming to improve the quality of the care they provide.

MSF unites direct medical care with a commitment to speaking out publicly which it does to raise awareness about forgotten crises, to mobilize other aid organizations, or to draw attention to flaws in the aid system. MSF publicly denounces situations in which aid is hampered, misused, or manipulated for political purposes.

“I appeal here today, to his Excellency, the ambassador from Russia, and through him to President Yeltsin, to stop the bombing of defenseless civilians in Chechnya.”

Since the first years of MSF’s existence, much of the organization's work has been in regions where civilians are trapped in armed conflict. Our team provides humanitarian assistance and medical care to the wounded and those fleeing war.

“It's the only program, the only place where patients can be sure to receive treatment rapidly.”

MSF also works in areas afflicted by widespread disease and epidemics, whether treating illnesses like cholera or organizing vaccination campaigns against measles. MSF teams are capable of responding swiftly to epidemics. The organization also provides healthcare to people suffering from diseases like malaria, AIDS, and TB in places lacking resources, health staff, infrastructure or suitable treatments.

In other programs, our patients are people excluded from society, without access to healthcare. Prisoners, undocumented immigrants, sex workers, drug addicts, street children, elderly people, or the homeless. MSF also helps people stricken by natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods. Whatever the crisis, MSF team will evaluate the situation and decide on the best course of action. Basic medical consultation, surgery, specialized care for women who are victims of violence and sexual abuse, psychological care, treatment of children suffering from acute malnutrition - our teams provide a wide range of care.

“The child should gain weight very quickly, provided he does not develop a secondary infection, which is a risk in such circumstances, he should be running around in 8-10 days.”

For displaced people, our teams provide shelter and ensure water supplies, and build sanitation facilities within the camps to prevent the spread of disease. We also organize food distribution to those most at risk of malnutrition. In order to provide such a range of activities, MSF relies on multi-disciplinary teams, composed of medical, logistical and administrative staff.

“I do not think you can imagine what she looked like, you can only imagine how bad she was...”
Since the 1980s, MSF’s field programs have been supported by a specialized logistics base. Medicine and essential supplies have been pre packaged, formed into kits and dispatched to field programs from logistics centers in Europe. This allows us to manage the whole supply chain of aid, from the first evaluation stage to supplying programs with high quality equipment, ready for immediate use.

MSF will not accept that good quality medicine is the reserve of rich people in developed countries. We strive to provide our patients with the best possible care, adapting advances in medical knowledge and research for patients living in precarious situations. Medical specialists at headquarters lead operational research, bringing their expertise to teams in the field.

In 1990s, our doctors became bitterly frustrated at the lack of effective and affordable medicines for the treatment of widespread diseases devastating poor countries. Since they do not represent a profitable market, patients in these countries interest neither the pharmaceutical industry nor governments. Faced with this intolerable situation, MSF launched a campaign in 1999 to push governments and drug producers to make accessible treatments for AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis sleeping sickness and other neglected diseases.

“Why are we medical agency here in Seattle ...Because our patients are dying. Our patients are dying. Not because their diseases are incurable, but because as consumers, they do not provide a viable market for pharmaceutical products.”

At the same time, MSF reviewed the drugs proscribed in its own programs, to ensure that the most recent and effective drugs are used. MSF is an international movement, made up of 19 national sections, each overseen by a general assembly and administrative council, elected by the organization’s members. Thanks to this large network, MSF has significant financial, logistical, and human resources at its disposal. More than 3/4 of our financial resources come from private donors, which guarantees our ability to act independently. More than 80% of our funds are spent on supporting our medical programs in the field. 12% is used for fund raising, and 6% used for administrative expenses.

In exchanged for the trust of our millions of donors, we are committed to being as transparent as possible about our accounts and the use of their money. More than 23,000 people work for MSF each year, representing dozens of nationalities. 3000 international staff work alongside more than 20,000 locally employed doctors, nurses, logistic experts, translators and drivers.

This local connection is vital in ensuring the quality and continuity of our programs. It enables us to understand the context in which we work, and to adapt our projects accordingly. In 1999, MSF received the Nobel peace prize.

“I hope this Nobel Peace prize is an acknowledgement of independent humanitarianism, free of all political and military influence.”

A reward for all those who at one time or another, have been committed to our organization, dedicated to independent humanitarian work, which demands the freedom to act and speak out.