

REQUIREMENTS AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE FIELDS OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (DC) AND HUMANITARIAN AID (HA)

Professional and personal requirements for medical personnel

Expertise, professional competence, several years of work experience and a sense of responsibility are required. EZA is neither the setting for experiments nor for training of unemployed young doctors.

In addition to training in tropical medicine, an extended knowledge in preventive medicine, traditional healing, nutrition, water supply and the environment is needed.

Like in any other job, also work in development cooperation should consolidate professional knowledge and bring about new skills, especially in the areas of

- epidemiology
- gynaecology, obstetrics and family planning
- sexual education regarding HIV/ AIDS and other transmissible infections
- nutrition ecology in a tropical environment
- organization and administration of health care services including health care planning
- decision-making processes in public health
- evaluation of medical work in the health care sector

Working conditions

The unusual requirements of medical DC often represent high demands for doctors. They encounter a lot of diseases in developing countries that they never or only rarely see in industrialized countries. Major reasons for the existence of certain diseases in tropical countries are:

- socio-economical reasons
- climate conditions – certain disease-causing agents or vectors don't survive in moderate climates
- demographic reasons: high birth rates and a large number of children are the cause for an increase in pediatric and obstetric complications

Therefore, the following medical disciplines are more important in developing than in industrialized countries:

- nutrition
- pediatrics
- infectious diseases
- obstetrics
- parasitology

Nevertheless, the so-called "civilisation diseases" (eg. cardiovascular disease, cancer) occur in developing countries, and their number has risen in recent years.

The medical spectrum in tropical countries is heavily influenced by the difficult socio-economical conditions – one speaks of the "pathology of poverty". Consequently, the work of clinicians often has only palliative character – they can not change the socio-economical circumstances which are contributing to malnourishment, insufficient water supply and sanitation, overcrowded living conditions, inefficient medical care, etc.

Mental health during missions abroad

Professional helpers are often unaware of the repercussions their work has on their psyche and tend to ignore alarming signs. The following character traits might lead to stress situations and may require counseling:

- excessive identification with clients in need and their problems
- unrealistic expectations towards work and success
- refusal to delegate work
- changes in private and social life
- complete identification of the helper with his work which becomes his only purpose in life
- exaggerated perseverance, inflexibility and stubbornness in the attempt to reach goals
- feeling the urge to have everything under control