

Why Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) provides its members and people planning a mission with MSF - with courses and training?

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Is Humanitarian Assistance a profession or is it a vocation? This has been and still is one of the debates that lives inside the association of Médecins Sans Frontières. Humanitarian Action is not reduced to a technical act: Humanitarian Action appeals to people who feel indignation, compassion and have energy to act.

By exercising life saving skills in war and in acute ruptures of equilibrium, for instance in epidemics, each aid worker acquires responsibilities. These include, (1) to do the best possible action in accordance with the local environment and circumstances, (2) to reflect on the short and long term consequences of the aid actions (positive and negative) and (3) to expose the facts about the precarious situations treated, so as not to hide it behind a bandage.

The first responsibility, to do the best possible action, is why MSF develops training that assists its volunteers with medical and non-medical techniques and with team, budget and project management. The emphasis of the training is on the quality of the technical action as such, but also relative to the environment and circumstances in which an emergency takes place. The training assists the volunteers to design an emergency response according to the resources and constraints such as the emergency response infrastructure, the professionalism - that is a mixture of competency and experience - and finally, the context.