



MSF-OCG MISSION: MSF-OCG
Policy title: **OCG Security and Safety Policy**
Owner: Operations Director
Author: Operations Department
Scope: MSF OCG Global Workforce
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Approved by: Christine jamet, OCG DirOp
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1 PREAMBLE

- 1.1 Having a sound security and safety policy is instrumental in creating a secure and safe working environment for MSF OCG's global workforce¹ in our operations around the globe. This policy is a reference document for managers in charge of MSF safety and security, and it is available to all members of MSF's global workforce.
- 1.2 The *MSF OCG Security and Safety Policy* is derived from the fact that "providing assistance to populations in distress, to victims of natural or man-made disasters and to victims of armed conflict"², inherently involves risks to the security and safety of our workforce. This means that our work may entail the risk of physical and mental harm to MSF OCG's global workforce³, including but not limited to the risk of injury, disease, sexual aggression, abduction and death.
- 1.3 The *MSF OCG Security and Safety Policy* constitutes the core of MSF OCG's security and safety management, which includes the *Security Management Manual* and a comprehensive set of safety, security and staff health policies and guidelines. This management reflects MSF OCG's commitment to the provision of humanitarian assistance while ensuring, as much as possible, the safety, security and wellbeing of its workforce. This policy should be read in conjunction with the MSF Charter.
- 1.4 This policy, as well as the MSF OCG country and project-specific security documents, are binding to MSF OCG's global workforce. In addition, MSF OCG may assume security responsibility for non-MSF OCG personnel such as dependents and visitors.⁴ When MSF OCG assumes security responsibility for those who are not staff members, this will explicitly be laid down in an agreement and the *MSF OCG Security and Safety Policy* will equally apply.

2 POLICY CONTENT: COMMON PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 MSF OCG considers safety and security management to be an integral part of its humanitarian operations. Therefore, MSF OCG will ensure proper and regular assessment of safety and security threats, risks and vulnerabilities with the aim of minimising the risk of violence and harm to the organisation and its workforce.
- 2.2 MSF OCG aims to ensure that the risks taken are not disproportionate to the impact of its humanitarian activities.
- 2.3 Each operational context presents a unique and complex set of threat factors. MSF OCG's best efforts cannot eliminate risk entirely. Residual risk persists and MSF OCG must assume that incidents, including serious ones, may occur.
- 2.4 A credible threat indicating a high probability of physical or mental damage being inflicted on MSF OCG or its workforce will lead to in the decision to mitigate or limite the exposure of the organisation or its workforce to such threat. This may include, but is not limited to, curtailing of activities and/or presence, limiting movements, hibernation, evacuation, and alternative operational approaches. Reversal of any measure taken in response to such threats will require approval of the higher operational level.
- 2.5 Safety and security will first and foremost be managed, on the ground, by the field personnel who interact with the local environment and are exposed to its risks. Such field personnel act within the scope of the project or mission security & safety guidelines, and in continuous consultation with the line-management.
- 2.6 MSF OCG and its workforce's adherence to core humanitarian principles is instrumental in gaining acceptance by all relevant stakeholders in the context. Whilst acceptance remains the dominant security strategy, protective and deterrent measures should also be deployed when appropriate.

¹ MSF OCG's Global Workforce implies all employees under MSF contracts working under the management of MSF OCG. Those MSF contracts include Swiss employment contracts, MSF employment contracts provided by other MSF Operational Centres, MSF Partner Sections, MSF OCG missions or specific employment contracts related to conventions between an external entity and MSF (i.e. HUG), and daily workers. Because of no subordination link, MSF OCG Global Workforce does not imply consultants/independents, sub-contractors and people receiving incentive payments.

² MSF Charter

³ From now on, OCG workforce.

⁴ The individuals for whom MSF OCG assumes security responsibility are required to comply with MSF OCG safety and security regulations and instructions as applicable to MSF OCG's global workforce.

2.7 Negotiated humanitarian access:

- a. MSF OCG will seek to negotiate access by obtaining acceptance from key stakeholders at all levels, both non-belligerents and belligerents, in a conflict and/or in the areas of MSF OCG's work.
- b. In exceptional circumstances, MSF OCG may choose to work in areas where acceptance by some of the actors present in the context has not been forthcoming or cannot be ascertained with certainty.
- c. In situations in which a significant level of uncertainty about the degree of acceptance and the level of risk persists, MSF OCG will apply the principle of caution.

2.8 Armed protection:

- a. In order to remain perceived as a neutral and independent actor, MSF OCG will work without the protection of weapons and will not associate with any armed group – including government or non-government armies, militias or armed private security services – or participate in the use of violence.
- b. In exceptional circumstances, MSF OCG may use armed protection. This must be approved and reviewed on regular basis by MSF OCG Director of Operations and the MSF OCG General Director. The MSF OCG General Director will subsequently inform MSF OCG Board.

2.9 Protective measures: Some specific protective equipment, such as bomb-shelters, armoured cars, helmets, bulletproof vests, CBRNe Personal Protective Equipment have to be adequately justified, time bound and approved by MSF OCG Director of Operations.

3 POLICY CONTENT: MSF OCG RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 MSF OCG will carry out regular and timely threat and risk analyses in every mission to identify the key safety and security threats specific to the context. Reasonable risk mitigation measures will be implemented in line of an impact and probability assessment. MSF OCG will not expose its workforce to a significant probability of loss of life, serious harm to health or deprivation of liberty.
- 3.2 The acceptable risk exposure defined for each context is the same for all OCG workforce in the same context. MSF OCG recognises that the levels of risk to which its workforce is exposed in a context may vary according to their personal characteristics. The risk analyses will take into consideration the different profiles and their respective risk exposure levels (differential risk). In contexts in which people with certain identity features are exposed to risks beyond the acceptable risk exposure, MSF OCG may exclude these staff. This decision rests with the MSF OCG Director of Operations and will be subject to review, as necessary.
- 3.3 MSF OCG's scope of responsibilities in relation to safety and security depends on whether the individual involved belongs to OCG's Global Workforce or in case they've been providing recognised professional assistance to MSF's social mission or *témoignage* with MSF OCG.
- 3.4 MSF OCG will inform all members of its workforce on the relevant safety and security framework at the organisational, mission and project levels and ensure that OCG's workforce is prepared through relevant security briefings and training.
- 3.5 MSF OCG will ensure that its workforce members are aware of the risks and threats, and are able to make an informed choice about their willingness to accept the residual risks.
- 3.6 MSF OCG will make every effort to ensure that its workforce members do not feel pressured to expose themselves to levels of risk they consider unacceptably high. An OCG workforce member's decision not to work in a certain context or activity for security reasons at any given time will not have negative consequences on his/her future career with MSF OCG.
- 3.7 MSF OCG may decide to reduce, suspend or terminate project activities or MSF OCG's presence in an area when security risks are considered too high in relation with population needs or when risk mitigation measures are considered insufficient. Decisions to diminish, suspend or terminate project activities or MSF OCG's presence in an area must be strictly followed by OCG's workforce.
- 3.8 MSF OCG will maintain clear lines of decision-making for security management, involving the following functions (in hierarchical order): Project Coordinator, Head of Mission, Program Manager, Director of Operations, and General Director. In case of critical incidents, the MSF Switzerland Board will be informed in a timely manner by the General Director.

- 3.9 Information regarding significant contextual developments, including safety or security incidents, will be collected, reported on and analysed. Results of such analysis will feed into revisions of the relevant safety and security guidelines, security measures and people's briefings.
- 3.10 MSF OCG operational line managers, both in the field and at headquarters, have an obligation to share all relevant information regarding safety and security with their counterparts in other OCGs that are active in the same context. This includes context and risk analysis, and detailed information on incidents and threats.

4 POLICY CONTENT: MSF OCG WORKFORCE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 OCG workforce members are obliged to strictly follow all safety and security-related rules, regulations and/or instructions during their time of employment; and to avoid taking unnecessary risks, and to avoid behaviour which might put themselves, colleagues, or the mission in danger. Breach of these rules and regulations may result in removal from the mission, and suspension or termination of the employment agreement. In addition, OCG workforce members may be personally liable to MSF OCG or third parties in case of damage, injury or loss of life due to intent or deliberate recklessness or lack of observation of the rules and regulations by such OCG workforce members.
- 4.2 OCG workforce members should proactively question security measures when they have doubts about their adequacy and to actively participate in, and contribute to, the maintenance of safety and security measures, and to keep an active awareness of risks.
- 4.3 In addition, they may refuse to participate in MSF OCG activities when they consider the risk to be unacceptable.
- 4.4 OCG workforce members must explicitly accept responsibility for the safety and security risks related to MSF OCG's mission.
- 4.5 OCG workforce members brought to a location by MSF OCG have the right, and may request, to be evacuated from such location for security reasons when they judge the risk to be unacceptable. Such requests will be granted and the evacuation or repatriation will be carried out promptly, unless such evacuation or repatriation exposes the individual or team to greater risk.
- 4.6 At all times, OCG workforce members must consider the possible implications of their personal behaviour on the safety and security of OCG workforce members, and on the organisation's ability to provide humanitarian assistance.
- 4.7 No OCG workforce members should endanger their own life or the lives of others, whilst attempting to protect MSF OCG property or assets.

5 POLICY CONTENT: EVACUATION⁵

- 5.1 The decision to evacuate a team (in part, or whole) from an area for safety or security reasons may be made by the Project Coordinator, Head of Mission or Program Manager. These decisions are binding to OCG workforce members and others covered by the policy.
- 5.2 The decision of a Project Coordinator to evacuate due to an acute security threat may not be overruled by the Head of Mission or Program Manager. The Project Coordinator must establish with the senior line manager that such evacuation does not create a greater risk than remaining in the location. In case of discrepancy in the operational line, the more cautious approach will apply.
- 5.3 The decision to evacuate individual OCG workforce members or OCG workforce groups will be guided by their respective risk exposures. These risk profiles shall also be considered when deciding on evacuation routes, transport means and destinations.
- 5.4 The evacuation of OCG workforce members recruited at the project location will only be considered in cases where their work to provide assistance or *témoignage* with MSF OCG has created a specific threat for them.
- 5.5 The decision to redeploy to a location following a full withdrawal or suspension of MSF OCG activities lies with the Director of Operations.

⁵ For medical evacuation of OCG workforce members, please refer to [MSF OCG Med-Evac Protocol](#) and OCG workforce members health policies.

6 POLICY CONTENT: CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A critical incident is an event or series of events that seriously threatens the wellbeing of personnel, potentially resulting in death, life-threatening injury or illness. Most critical incidents – although they may have potentially severe impacts on individual OCG workforce members and programmes – do not have wider implications for the organisation as a whole, and are thus managed by regular management structures, with additional support from HQs if required.
- 6.2 MSF OCG will ensure adequate preparation, training, capacities and mechanisms to manage critical incidents. In the case of abduction, MSF OCG will make all reasonable efforts to secure the safe release of its workforce members, making best use of the knowledge, experience and capacities from within the MSF movement and seeking relevant advice as appropriate, with the specific resolution strategy to be defined on a case-by-case basis
- 6.3 The management of critical incidents will always be in accordance with the objectives outlined (in priority order) below:
- a. The primary objective is to ensure the immediate security, safety and health of MSF personnel directly involved in a critical incident and to secure remaining personnel in the field. Secure remaining MSF OCG workforce members in the mission.
 - b. The secondary objective is to limit the impact of the crisis on the operational activities developed by MSF in the area and to protect MSF's external and internal credibility.
 - c. In addition to these objectives, it is important to guarantee throughout a crisis the continuity of the overall MSF OCG operational project which must be preserved as much as possible from the impact of a crisis and its management.
 - d. MSF OCG strives to protect its image of as a credible, responsible, impartial and neutral organisation.
- 6.4 MSF OCG will ensure after-care is proposed and available to OCG workforce members involved in or affected by a critical incident. MSF will propose after-care to the employee taking solely into account individual needs. The employee is at liberty to accept or dismiss MSF's after-care proposal.
- 6.5 MSF OCG will review the critical incident and management thereof to identify lessons learned and timely adapt operational strategy and/or policy, as well as immediate measures deemed necessary to mitigate risks.

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DEFINITIONS AND TERMS:

Security: All circumstances inherent to the violent nature of the environment, caused by human beings and committed with malicious intent, and related protection strategies. It involves the sense of protection against hostile actions.

Safety: All circumstances of natural origin, or caused by nonviolent or accidental circumstances, and related protection strategies. It involves the condition of being protected against accidents or hazards, and do not cause them.

Threats (effects) generally *cannot* be controlled. One can't stop the efforts of an international terrorist group, prevent a hurricane, or tame a tsunami in advance. Threats need to be identified, but they often remain outside of our control.

Risk *can* be mitigated. Risk can be managed to either lower vulnerability or the overall impact on the business.

Vulnerability *can* be addressed. Weaknesses should be identified and proactive measures taken to correct identified vulnerabilities.

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