

## Young Lions Media Competition 2013

### Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders (MSF)

#### *Background*

---

MSF is a leading medical humanitarian aid agency. We provide free, life-saving medical aid to people caught in wars, crises, epidemics or who are otherwise excluded from essential healthcare in over 65 countries. We do this without regard for race, religion or politics.

MSF UK is part of this international organisation and the money we raise supports the work done around the world.

#### *How we operate*

---

MSF is different from other major aid agencies in a number of ways. Firstly, we concentrate only on emergency life-saving aid; we are not a development agency. We don't give goats to villages, teach people to fish, or set up schools. There's nothing wrong with any of that, but it's not what we do. We work in emergencies and neglected places to provide immediate, life-saving medical care.

Secondly – and this is vital – we are almost entirely reliant on public donations to carry out our work; unlike almost all other aid organisations we are not reliant on money from governments. In fact, we always refuse money from certain big funders, including the US, UK and French governments, and for our work in conflicts we take no money from any governments at all.

Overall, nearly 90 percent of MSF's annual income of nearly one billion Euros comes from private donors. A few wealthy foundations do give larger sums but the mainstay is regular small donations from members of the public around the world. It is their donations that allow us to operate behind the lines in war zones and to respond immediately on a large scale to crises before many other agencies.

It's these private donations that ensured that when the Haiti earthquake hit in 2010, we were able to start saving lives immediately, performing more than 400 surgeries and treating more than 3,000 people in the first ten days after the quake. When lives were hanging in the balance, we didn't have to wait to raise money, draw up budgets or hope that an appeal would cover our costs. We could start saving lives immediately because we already had the money to act – money that came from regular donations from members of the public.

Additionally, it is these donations that allow MSF to work in places overlooked by the international community. We don't need to wait for the media to show interest or a government to release funds when we see a crisis occurring in a neglected part of the world: we can act fast and save lives based on need alone.

In summary, there are three ways people can support us:

- They can make a **regular donation** (e.g. regular monthly debit) – this is best for us!
- They can make an occasional or **one-off unearmarked** donation which is not tied to a specific project
- They can make a **'earmarked' donation** which they specify they want to go to a certain country (we try to accommodate this)

These donations allow us to plan our work knowing that money is always available. We always leave a certain amount in our pot each year so we can respond to something straight away, drawing on our own resources and not having to wait for money to be made available by third parties, such as governments.

Very occasionally, if there's a major disaster that we find is drawing substantially on our unearmarked pot of money, e.g. the Haiti earthquake or Syria conflict, then we will set up a single emergency appeal and ask donors and the public if they will contribute money just for that work. It is quite rare for us to do this as we find it hard to accurately estimate at the start of a crisis what the eventual cost to MSF may be. On occasion we have closed appeals, e.g. the Asian Tsunami in 2004, because we didn't want to raise more money than we would need for our operations there. (This is somewhat unusual in the charity sector and sets us apart from other organisations).

### *Present fundraising*

---

Compared to other organisations, we do not have a wide-ranging fundraising programme at present. Our main methods of recruiting new donors are occasional TV and print-media ads, emergency appeals, and newspaper and magazine supplements. We do not do face-to-face fundraising and rarely do direct mail. We are looking for new approaches.

### *The challenge*

---

We require a media campaign that demonstrates the importance of regular donations (e.g. monthly debit from a bank account) and convinces people that it's their regular donations to MSF that allows us to respond to the next emergency or disaster, not the last one.

The campaign needs to reflect that however 'small' a contribution, it really is the thing that helps us be ready and prepared when the next Haiti, Syria or similar emergency occurs.

The campaign can use generalities and proportions rather than exact annual figures to ensure it can be used for over a year. Other MSF offices around the world might also be interested in using this campaign, so it needs to be straightforward enough to translate easily to other languages and cultures.

### *Budget*

---

There is a limited budget of £25,000 with the possibility to increase it at a later stage.

## *Objectives*

---

The objective is to inspire the audience to make a regular donation to MSF. Ideally the campaign will drive people online in response – [www.msf.org.uk/donate](http://www.msf.org.uk/donate), although we are also keen to make other response channels available e.g. SMS regular giving.

## *What's the single most important thing to say?*

---

The key message is that your regular donation to MSF is what makes it possible for MSF's medical teams to reach the people who need help most, when they need us. It allows us to pay not only for the work we know we'll be doing in a given year but also gives us the ability to respond immediately to a new crisis.

## *Target Audience*

---

University-educated professionals aged between 25-39 years.

In general, the people who support MSF are intelligent, well-travelled, thoughtful – and old. We are keen to attract new, younger donors to MSF; the sort of people who may be cynical about politics and aid, but who would be drawn by the urgency, simplicity and life-saving effectiveness of what we do. Like them, MSF has an energetic and adventurous spirit. We want to see that energy reflected in the campaigns.

What we don't want to see are the standard stereotypes used in too many aid campaigns: starving African children, white saviours, manipulative images of poverty and despair. We also don't want to see any celebrities.

## *MSF communication guidelines*

---

In short, there are a few things to remember whenever communicating about MSF

- We are hands-on; doing what needs to be done fast and effectively. All communication about MSF must reflect the urgency of the emergencies we work in and our rapid response. We are medical professionals, providing free skilled healthcare.
- We are passionate and compassionate, but not sentimental. (No maudlin music over images of starving children, please)
- We try to tell it like it is – our audience is intelligent and we don't talk down to them.
- We try to avoid jargon (this is hard but important).
- We are independent in thought, action and funding.
- We focus on helping people survive where the need is most desperate.
- We are focused on the immediate needs of our patients, not the wider development needs in a country.
- We are international – committed people of all nationalities work together in MSF teams.
- We deliver the aid ourselves.
- We use individual voices wherever possible (quotes rather than descriptive sentences). We are positive and hopeful, but never glib. The situations we work in are terrible and desperate, but our communication doesn't wallow in suffering. We tell it like it is, but always emphasise that we are working to alleviate at least some of this suffering.

*Other sources of information that may be useful*

---

MSF's UK and international financial information can be found online at [www.msf.org.uk](http://www.msf.org.uk) and [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org)

However, please note that we would prefer not to use specific annual data for this campaign so that it will not date so quickly. In addition we may want to use it around the world, so it needs to be based on our international finances rather than just the UK ones.

CONFIDENTIAL