

# TEMOIGNAGE CASE BINDER (TCB) / SPEAKING OUT CASE STUDIES

**In March 1998, the International Council recognized the need to complete the Chantilly paper on 'témoignage' and the Code of conduct and to 'build up a live memory' on MSF experience. MSF USA's General Director volunteered to start the process.**

**In November 1998, the International Council acknowledged that MSF's approach to témoignage cannot be define in purely instrumental terms, that 'the debate on témoignage [should] be taken out of the heat of current témoignage issues' and that there was a need to 'develop a better institutional memory' on this issue.**

**A commission was tasked to oversee the creation of a Témoignage Case Book.**



**Minutes** from MSF International Council **meeting**, 19 March 1998 (in English)

## **Extract:**

### 4) Further work on témoignage

It was decided and recalled during the Restricted Committee meeting that there is a need for a complementary text to the Chantilly paper and to the recently revised code of conduct for témoignage. P[hilippe] Biberson [MSF France President] was in charge of presenting a framework accordingly, but he could not do it. He added that unfortunately there was no summary of the témoignage workshop organised in Brussels.

There was an agreement in the meeting in reaffirming the necessity to build up a live memory by writing on our experience. This could be done by describing some typical situations for MSF, show how MSF reacted in terms of assistance and 'témoignage', and give our perception of what happened. This would be useful for the field teams and in the training sessions.

Joelle Tanguy [MSF USA General Director] took the responsibility to have this process starting and make sure it reaches some achievements.



**Minutes** from MSF International Council **meeting**, 6 November 1998 (in English)

## **Extract:**

### Témoignage

James Orbinski [MSF International President] briefly reviewed the importance of Témoignage for the MSF movement and highlighted the importance on following through on previous IC commitments to this issue. A discussion and clearer formulation of objectives followed.

The IC [International Council] strongly reaffirms that témoignage for 'populations in danger' is central to the identity, principles, values and purpose of the MSF movement. It also recognises that each context varies too much to create strict guidelines for

témoignage, and that MSF's approach to témoignage cannot be defined in purely instrumental terms. The exact nature of témoignage action in a particular circumstance is often contentious. The broader debate on témoignage needs to be taken out of "the heat of current témoignage issues" so that we can learn from past témoignage experiences, and develop better institutional memory on this core MSF activity.

To this end, the IC mandates a Commission to oversee the preparation of a CaseBook of Témoignage over the next year. The Témoignage Case Book will be primarily for internal use. It will emphasise témoignage as a core activity of the MSF movement, will focus on lessons learned, and will serve as a source of institutional memory for the movement. Both internal and external sources will be used to chronicle témoignage milestones in the MSF movement. These can include for example MSF témoignage actions in Cambodia, Kurdistan, Somalia, Rwanda, Zaire, Afghanistan and North Korea.

The challenge of 1) témoignage in non-emergency situations, and the new challenges of addressing our independence 2) relative to field-based co-ordination with other actors and 3) to NGO coalitions around issues of common concern will also be addressed in the Témoignage Case Book.

The Témoignage Case Book will be managed by a single co-ordinator under the supervision of the Executive Committee, which will be overseen by the IC Commission composed of four IC members who will monitor the progress of work. Those IC members who volunteered and were accepted are James Orbinski, Fiona Terry [MSF Australia], Jens Shillingsoe [MSF Hollande] and Phillippe Biberson [MSF France]. The commission will have the responsibility of ensuring that the Case Book reflects appropriate representation and input from across the MSF Movement, including particularly from the operational centres. Joelle Tanguy [MSF USA General Director], who has made a commitment in the past to the Case Book, reaffirmed this commitment and will also contribute. The Témoignage Case Book will be prepared for final presentation at the November 99 IC meeting, with progress reports to the interval RC [restricted committee] and IC meetings.

**In November 1999, the International Council selected MSF representatives with experience and expertise to compose the Témoignage Case Binder Editorial Committee<sup>1</sup>. They were to serve 'intuitu personae' and not to represent the MSF entity they were linked to.**

**Laurence Binet was nominated as coordinator of the project, in charge of researching and writing the studies. The MSF France Foundation was tasked with the administration of the project.**

**In June 2000, the Editorial committee proposed a criteria list to identify cases to study. The main criteria was that cases should address crisis where speaking out posed a dilemma for MSF.**

1. Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, Michiel Hofman, and Fiona Terry. Later on, the Editorial Committee will be enlarged by cooptation, welcoming the Secretary International.

**The scope of projects, the singularity of each study, and the time estimated to conduct rigorous and proper research of cases were largely underestimated.**



**Minutes** from MSF International Council **meeting**, 27 November 1999 (in English)

**Extract:**

Update on IC Commissions on Finance and Temoignage

Work on the “Temoignage Case Binder” has started. The editorial committee is made up of Françoise [Bouchet-] Saulnier, Fiona Terry and Michiel Hofman. Laurence Binet has been hired to write the Case Binder. La Fondation [of MSF France] is responsible for administering the project. Fiona Terry has resigned from the IC [International Council] Commission to join the editorial committee. A replacement will be sought. The role of the IC Commission now is to mediate and decide in the case of an irresolvable dispute in the editorial committee.



**Minutes** from MSF International Council **meeting**, 10 June 2000 (in English)

**Extract:**

Temoignage Case binder

Fiona Terry made an update on the Temoignage Case binder. The aim of the Temoignage Case binder is to document missions where MSF engaged in Temoignage, as well as creating an institutional memory. It is to show dilemmas MSF faced throughout its history and highlight the results of Temoignage within each context. A list of criterias was elaborated to facilitate the task of the Editorial Committee when it came to choosing the missions to be used. It was agreed that all cases should show a dilemma faced by MSF, such as expulsion, staff security, a risk for the MSF image, etc. The cases should also show different contexts, be based in different locations and involve several sections. Examples of missions/cases that will be analysed in the Case binder are<sup>2</sup>:

Famous cases such as Biafra (1972) will be included.

Vietnam 1978	MSF split around the ‘Ile de Lumière’ case
Ethiopia 1984-1985	Split between MSF-B [elgium] and MSF F[rance]
Liberia 1993	Access denied, & temoignage reached the highest level of the UN
Bosnia 1993	Example of the dilemma of denouncing v. operationality
Rwanda 1994	MSF B[elgium] declared a situation of genocide
North Korea 1998	Pullout

The process has now reached interview level throughout the different sections. The Temoignage Case binder is scheduled for completion in November 2000. Finally, although the mandate is that this is to be an internal document, another version may be published for MSF’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



*It was about going through MSF History, case by case, going in detail to show what was the debate going on within the movement, within the sections, between the field and the headquarters at the very moment that choices had to be made. So it was decided to go for a sort of chronological presentation, each day after each day, cross - referencing the information and the documentation to make sure that we were as close as possible to what was really happening and not to what was said later on.*

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal advisor from 1991, member of the Temoignage Case Binder/ MSF Speaking Out Case Studies Series Editorial Committee from 2000 (in French)

**TO BE CONTINUED**

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2. This list would be refined as the project moved forward.