Present board members: Kristina Bolme Kuhn
                         David Lyrdal
                         Sophie Graner
                         Cecilia Adelöw
                         Jean-Marc Biquet
                         Anna Jansson
                         Mikael Engwall
                         Stefan Liljegren
                         PehrOlov Pehrson

Others: Muriel Cornelis
         Kerstin Åkerfeldt
         Erik Åkerman
         Johanne Sekkenes
         Eugene Bushayiija

Participating later in the meeting: Marita Fernstedt
                                    Hervé Kabali Beta
                                    Gunilla Ostblom
                                    Janet Corbishley
                                    Frida Lagerholm
                                    Henrik Olsson
                                    Maria Sjögren
                                    Hanna Pettersson
                                    Catherine Jonsson

§1 Chair person of the meeting
Decision: that Kristina Bolme-Kuhn was elected chairperson of the meeting

§2 Secretary of the meeting
Decision: that Kerstin Åkerfeldt is elected secretary of the meeting

§3 Controllers of the minutes
Decision: that Kristina Bolme-Kuhn, Sophie Graner and PehrOlov Pehrson will approve the minutes

§4 Discussion on the Convention

The Convention between OCB and the partner sections was finalised and signed in 2001. It is now time to evaluate both the executive and associative part of the Convention.

The two parts of the Conventions signed between MSF-B and PS are a tool for partnership, enabling the PS to take full part of the construction of the
movement. It is the only document that legally binds the different partners together. It is one module and it is the closest to a co-ownership between an OC and a PS you can get. Today we are co-owners but not co-managers since the latter implies shared operational responsibility.

The functional partnership between the executives
The present heads of department of MSF-S (Eugene, Erik and Johanne) expressed their feeling of satisfaction with the relations with OCB in their daily work.

**Human Resources**
Within HR the co-operation with OCB there is rather high satisfaction. Lately the participation in meetings on policy plans and monthly teleconferences with the recruiters in OCB have improved from before when we felt a bit ignored. Although time is a constraint the contacts are more regular. OCB has also started to prioritise Swedish volunteers and we commit to provide OCB with human resources. The dissatisfaction among Swedish volunteers is however still a problem. There are still things that need to be improved such as remuneration package and salary policy etc.

When the Assessment Centre was planned in a two-stage process, we were not included until the last stage. We are generally more positive now with the collaboration but, there is still some dysfunction in HR. Many of the problems that HR Department is facing in turn stems from their problems with the Operations Department.

*Do you have the feeling that other PS share your view?*
Italy send more expats and they seem more frustrated. They also have a strong position and want to have a saying and more co-management in general. Norway and Denmark and other do not have the same ambitions.

*How is the situation in other operational centres?*
There are big differences between the different sections. We should not really compare with other OCs since we have a different relationship with OCB. Considering our relation, the PS should be more included when there is a study such as the remuneration study. When it comes to our volunteers we should take this serious.

*It is one thing to recruit but another to keep our volunteers within the movement. Is there equal understanding regarding things within OCB?*
In some sections HR think that we should not work too much with this while others want to make more use of the experiences the volunteers bring.

**Programme**
The contacts with OCB so far have been very good.
With reference to paragraph D “Operations, operational support and information”, (see Annex) where the involvement of PSs in the decision-making processes is mentioned, the real situation is that we are not much involved. OCB is very good at sending information, but mainly after decisions have already been taken.
The same paragraph mentions the integration of skilled PS staff into the teams of OCB. One example of skills that we can contribute with to OCB are the result analyses that Sida asks us to do of the projects they fund. We can be a good resource for OCB. A prerequisite is of course field experience. We are also trying to get people with field experience to office and also think more about population in danger.

Co-ordination between a PS and OCBs mission in Sweden is also carried out well. Generally our involvement in OCB is improving.

**Finance (Erik)**

MSF-S is financially self-sufficient. Since two years we allocate maximum 10% to another OC. Technically, the co-operation with OCB works fine. Up until now Göran has been the only contact between MSF-S Finance Dept and OCB. There will be no replacement of his position and his tasks will instead be handled by other people. They will now have to involve the PSs more and we have been invited to Brussels for a meeting on financial and institutional fundraising matters.

The finance departments are very passive as it is today. We find out by the end of the year where the money goes. If we could have a more continuous contact throughout the year this would also improve accountability towards our donors. Up until now there has been little transparency and we will bring the issue up.

We should for example take more part in the budget process within OCB, which should be at the core of the co-ownership.

In general the relationship is very much based on individual contacts. It is always easier when you have a face on the phone.

*Is it possible to relate to the field needs, through the contacts with OCB?*

Not even by working on the final year report do we really get the feeling of closeness. The PPD course for finance volunteers should be available also for finance staff at the office. That way you will also understand the whole process from Sweden to the field.

*Does the Programme Department use the resources at maximum in OCB when it comes to relations with Sida?*

It could always be better. We could always improve the collaboration better and by knowing Sida better we could inform OCB better. We have had many missed opportunities to get funding for projects and we could do more.

When it comes to Sida it is very important that we bring the volunteers to meet with them since we can provide first hand experience. When we do not have enough capacity in Sweden to provide information, we have got support from OCB. We could probably also use Combo more.

*How are the informal contacts within the different departments?*

Very good, The informal part goes hand in hand with the formal part.

Contacts between the HR departments take place on a daily basis. People know each other rather well and it is easy to express frustrations etc. The same goes for contacts between GDs and Muriels contacts in general, it is a very easy access to people.
Management (Muriel)
The main problem in terms of information flow between OCB and MSF-S is our responsibility to provide OCB with information and we could improve this.

You can work with inst FR without actually contacting OCB, but the more contact you have the better quality of work will be. It is also good to no longer hear about the "OCB does not care", since many things have improved.

How is the contact and collaboration within the Communications Departments?
We get a lot of information from OCB, maybe even too much. Unfortunately, important information arrives in the last minute. OCB has however improved many things regarding co-operation within the Communications Department.

The convention does not say anything about being part of the budget planning. Should we change the convention regarding this?
There could be some practical problems related to this. The budget is made having a lot background information, so it might be difficult. There should however be a way to get passed this. The tools are there but lack of two-way communication is the reason why it is not working today.

The functional partnership between the MSF Associations

The contacts between OCB and MSF-S on the Associative side is formalised into Extended Board meetings 4 times/year that P-O attends and meetings in the International Council twice a year.

OCB is also tampering with the same problem of division of roles between Executive and Association. Many of the board members in Sweden have been working at the office, which is both an advantage and disadvantage. It is difficult for the Board to deal with executive matters not knowing the office.

How can the Board become more proactive and active in different debates?
We do not know much of what is going on in OCB. Do we actually want to be more proactive? Maybe we should not go on for several years banging our head against the wall on issues that have been brought up before.

P-Os experience from attending extended board meetings is that it is difficult to take active part when you are not very familiar with how it works in executive work of the OCB. The difficulties in separating executive and associative matters become very obvious. The question is also how much you should separate executive and associative matters.
The discussions in the Board should be about MSF missions and there should also be a good understanding of the discussions in the OCB. It is important that MSF-S is represented there.
It takes time to get a good understanding of the debates and it is therefore a learning process. Many of the members of the MSF-S Board have done only a few missions.
What should the contacts with the other Scandinavian sections be like? Should we have MSF Scandinavia meetings?
We should have a clear objective for this. Instead of arranging meetings we could share the agendas of the different Boards’ meetings to follow what topics they are discussing at the moment.

Is it possible to take active part in the OCB Board meetings?
We are very much in line with the discussions in other sections. The topics discussed are SGBV, medicalisation, blurring of the humanitarian mandate etc. We could be better in following the discussion but focus more on pick up the main topics and share it in the PSs and our Association and make it one of our strengths.

The convention is a good tool to work with. There is not point in becoming operational here in Sweden. We should be part of the big associative movement and bring discussions back to the Swedish associative life and integrate them into our debates.

One example of being part of the movement is to be engaged in the MSF-evenings. The discussions between the office and Board are always fresh. More could be done with writing reports and spread them to the rest of the movement.

Swedish reflections on MSF experiences are very useful for the movement. By sharing and receiving information we can develop the debate and create a feeling of belonging to the movement.

Do we need to find new tools for getting associative life here more connected to the OCB?
We should carry our message further and make notes of our discussions. Only a few of us are directly involved in the debates in OCB and we are not really spreading information outside of the board. If volunteers returning from the field would feel that the debates are a source of inspiration they might also become more active.

The working group on medicalisation should discuss how to involve the association and ask the volunteers what they can do for the association. This could also be a topic for the GA.

Another idea is to distribute the minutes from associative evenings, which MSF-H is doing. We will also invite people to Stockholm by offering free tickets, in order to get more volunteers from outside Stockholm to come.

What do they do in Belgium to involve members more in the debates?
There has been a restructure within the movement concerning its role in civil society. In Belgium they have “Antennas” which function as a link between MSF and civil society. In the beginning this was very useful, especially for fundraising purposes but for this purpose there are today better tools. HQ had to feed the Antenna groups with material it became a very demanding effort. Many had very differing ideas to MSF and some left MSF because they
felt left out. MSF-B has since a long time had a strong link to civil society and the Antennas were not considered as needed anymore. The decision has been to freeze the situation and appoint someone who can investigate what MSFs relationship with civil society should be. Since one month there is now one person who will ask what do we want what can we really do in this issue.

The situation in Sweden is very different but there is a risk that associative life will collapse. The purpose of the satellite groups is not really clear but should mainly be for volunteers coming back from a mission to give them opportunities to meet, especially since it is not always possible to go to Stockholm. They are now very restricted to medical students. The fact that there are very differing ideas on what satellite groups are used for is a problem.

Returning volunteers from the field have a feeling about MSF that might not correspond to the debates about the convention. In order to keep this spirit alive, we should for example reach out in civil society more and feed the satellite groups with information. However, the potential of the satellites in this respect is only limited since they have not been to the field yet and even if you have you might still not have the MSF spirit yet.

There is a potential for satellite groups in Sweden. Here people are still very curious about MSF and if we could form satellite groups properly, they could be used for different purposes. It is a forum for informing about MSF.

The convention on the functional partnership between association is for the Board not only about sharing Board meetings. There are other tools and ways to contribute to other sections Associations. Except for Extended Board meetings there is also MiniAGs, the PowWow, attending other sections’ General Assemblies etc.

*Do we think these tools are working and are we satisfied with this?*
No, it is still difficult for the association to get access to the information from OCB. It is however the same situation for the association in Brussels. In order to have a good view on the convention you need to understand the MSF-B association better and the Swedish Board therefore needs to be better updated in this aspect. MSF-S should therefore discuss with the MSF-B Board and other sections’ Boards by working more on contacts with individual Board members and find counterparts. It should also be the Boards responsibility to pass information on to the Association.
By becoming more personally involved the Board can have the feeling of “owning” the issues which is important before we demand from the Association to be more involved. This would also make it easier to disseminate information.

The Swedish Board members should try to attend the coming General Assemblies in Belgium, France, Holland and other sections in May. For the GA in Brussels MSF-Sweden might raise a motion about sexual abuse/abuse of power but it should be discussed in the working group and in another Board meeting before.
Conclusion: The tools we have for improving the associative part is not working satisfactory today and more could be done in this area. The Swedish Board should attend Board meeting in MSF-B when possible, to assure and improve the general knowledge about important debates within the Board. Board members should in general take time to travel and meet people at MiniAGs, GAs etc. We should also start a report system for Associative events. The Board could also suggest to the other Boards to share their meeting agendas. In order not to counteract the convention, the involvement with other sections' Boards should be ad hoc and based on practical needs.

Decision that the Swedish Board should continue working for the association with the main objective of improving associative life in Sweden.

MSF-Italy and its view on the partnership with OCB

MSF-Italy has pushed strongly for the separation of OCB from MSF-B and they have requested feedback from other sections regarding this issue. Is this something that we should support?

What are the main arguments?
MSF-Italy is arguing that the 6 partner sections should be co-owners and on the same level. The convention is legally and economically binding and according to MSF-I there should be higher demands on the convention. What will happen when there is a split between OCB and MSF-B, who will be the head of OCB? What would it mean economically? Does it mean creating a new partner section? What would happen if one section would leave?

Decision that the Board needs to have further discussions to decide whether to support MSF-Italy regarding their position in relation to OCB. Muriel will go to Italy and give feedback to the Board with more information and report back on the next board meeting on the 3rd of April.

§ 5 Sustainability

Jean-Marc who is working at the Research Centre in Brussels has been following the discussions within MSF on sustainability and presented different views on the concept. (see Annex OH)
A decision has recently been taken for the 2003 plan within OCB that sustainability is not one of the priorities of MSF.

The way Jean-Marc has seen humanitarian assistance was to accompany the larger assistance process, do no harm, but also to prepare for the people to go back for normal life. The purpose is to leave after emergencies.

Is it really acceptable that we are abandoning sustainability?
When we started, sustainability was one of the indicators when to leave and hand over.
There is now a saying within the organisation “We have to kill the myth of sustainability”
We have to decide whether sustainability is one of our main values. We are no longer a young organisation, which means that in some countries we are there for 30 years where we are still doing the same thing. When for example a new HoM starts to question whether we should stay, pointing at the problems in the programme, the reasons for stopping the project are brought up.

There are three main factors that have created frustrations regarding sustainability:
- development of maturity or reaching the limits?
- a changing context where we work
- the limits of the Access Campaign.

We are used to work in emergencies and many new situations mandated a questioning of sustainability. We have always considered MoH as our partner but we see that these ministries have no means/money or motivation because they are underpaid we loose confidence in working with them. The idea to work with churches and other NGOs is also difficult for us. There are also more private agents and it is not natural for us to work with them. There has been a backlash of the Access Campaign. We have discovered the power in the campaign but it is a small part of a bigger problem: access to health care. Medicines are useless if they can not be distributed. If we want to work on sustainability we must work on access to health care.

We are obliged to work with cost recovery but we are in countries where people are so poor that they will never be able to pay. Is it feasible that MSF, who should work for the most vulnerable populations, work in a system where people will not be able to have access? Last year growth in financial expenses was the big debate and we decided to work more on quality. Then you realise that we must work more with local HR but they are not motivated without an expatriate boss. It was then decided to invest more in volunteer human resources and that we must accept that we should work as a substituting actor in order to assure quality.

Now we have a new battle: Aids
We are facing the limits of our actions. In Mozambique we are treating 800 people but our commitment is only short term for under 5 year-olds. When it comes to Hiv treatment it is impossible to work without an element of sustainability.

Sustainability is no longer a goal and instead MSF has launched a new motto: to “throw away the taboo of substitution”. We should not throw away the concept of sustainability as such but rather continue to be innovative. We must find new ways to tackle a problem, which can be handed over to other partners.

We must also work more on the campaign on access to health care now that we know what we can do on access to drugs, by finding new ways as in the trial in South Africa. There is now a new campaign that will go beyond the idea of
access to essential medicines. We should however be careful and not abandon sustainability completely.

We must also be careful with going back to the Comfort Zone, where we choose only to work in emergencies which sometimes is the easier choice. France and Holland are focusing on emergencies while MSF-B is more prone to stay on longer terms.

We should also develop new partnerships and have a better knowledge about what happens to our beneficiaries in reality. Where the team is not working according to the system this is a risk and we should instead listen to the people and force the system to adapt.

We must re-launch the debate on accountability. To who are we accountable, to the beneficiaries? Are they able to express their wishes?

The pilot project on Hiv/Aids treatment in Kaiyelitcha has become very successful. We can show that it is feasible to treat with few means and people within the project are trying to raise awareness. Also in general we have done the same thing but we could do so much more when it comes to showing the medical society and the world that it is possible.

Discussion

The reality is not white and black and we do a lot that is sustainable. This is something we have to justify often in discussions with Sida, since they are questioning our capability regarding this but we can motivate our choices well. We are working with MoH although it is not really functioning and we try to find other solutions instead.

There is a risk that we throw away the baby with the bath water. There is now a high turn over at HQ and discussions are turning as well. Just because it is getting harder we should not abandon sustainability.

Sustainability has to do with resources. Lack of motivation of local staff and MoH is primarily because of lack of resources. The moment we step in we know that it is a big problem with health investment and IMF is not encouraging these countries to invest in health. This is based on the assumption that health must be organised by the government. There are however places where NGOs have taken over or private actors which could also be an alternative. In a situation where the state is not organising health services, the poor become the victims of the system. If there is no national structure or safety net these people will not get access to health care.

We should we give the people back the responsibility to mobilise. TAC in South Africa is a good example. In South Africa however there is a certain extent of democracy. TAC (Treatment Action Campaign) was created out of the tradition of ANC and it is rather unique. MSFs collaboration with TAC is really innovative, and if this is not sustainability, what is?
It is difficult not to substitute if you do not have local counterpart. However, if we open our eyes more and not limit ourselves to working with MoH we could find good solutions. We need to find new partnerships and together there can be changes. South Africa could be an inspiring example to other projects.

There are other partners than MoH. Often there are already other structures in the societies where we have projects. Instead of working against them, we could support and make use of traditional healers and doctors, TBAs, religious actors etc. instead of working with MoH supported clinics where we know that people will not go. These choices are of course dependent on the context.

The debate on sustainability partly has its origin in frustrations felt in the field. Why shall call it sustainable when we feel that things will collapse but it does not have to be either or. It takes time to do training etc. but it is also a matter of moral issues and it could be questioned whether you can leave the population for a more sexy project.

How much training of local staff are we doing? Isn’t this an aspect of sustainability?
Training will not be sufficient without a structure. Management is often needed as well and it is different from training.

We should not have to think about sustainability before we enter a mission!
This is what all donors are doing and they therefore hesitate to start a project. MSF does not really think in white and black but for the discussion to be clear it is good to show extremes.

The importance of sustainability should not be over inflated. It is not a goal, it is dimension. Maybe we have to denounce something in order to move further and that is why sustainability is being abandoned.

In Sweden it is not politically correct to say that you are abandoning sustainability. It is considered very important to have this on the agenda. It is closely linked to discussions on accountability.
We are questioning other actors’ meaning and practice regarding sustainability and we are demanding that the effects of for example IMF policies are being dealt with. Maybe we have to be politically incorrect to say that sustainability does not work.
We are very honest with Sida, explaining our motives well. By having a common campaign about sustainability it is possible to be politically incorrect and still build something new. In the society, especially governmental donors are all trying to find their own sphere without looking at what the others are doing.

What do we really mean by sustainability? Do we mean that it will be the same status when we leave? On what level do we define sustainability? When there is a structure we can hand over, but e.g. in conflict areas it is not really possible to think about sustainability.
Does anyone dare to go back to the projects where we started and have left to see what is left. It could be interesting for our insight regarding consequences of our presence.

What are the solutions?
We have successful experience in South Africa (Kayelitsha) and in Cambodia. But we should start listening to people instead of thinking that there are no local organisations or that they do not have the capacity.
It is important to create demands sometimes, and not be afraid to start and stop projects. There are many people who never thought they would do what they do today, for example working with the Access Campaign and it is showing unexpected results.

In some settings like Sudan it is not ethical for MSF to work for 3 years without having the means. We give people hope and then leave. However, we can not predict the future and we must however remember that we respond to humanitarian needs. Thinking in longer term planning would be the same thinking as many institutional donors who do not want to intervene because there is no prospect of sustainability. The Aids projects are started and we commit to support for 5 years and we do not know anyone who can take over. We should not avoid starting a project just because the prospect of sustainability looks bad but we should always start looking for partners for hand-over.
We start the projects where there is a need. That is the fundamental starting point.

The problem is when you have to make priorities. There is a reason why we have to close a project and we lack human resources.

Just because you hand it over to some other NGO does not mean that the problem is solved, but you will get responsibility off your back.

10 years ago sustainability was stressed a lot in the aid sector and it was perhaps even a fashion word. Is the denouncing of sustainability within MSF a way to escape the debate or is it because we know that in some contexts it is just not possible?

The launch of the Access to Health Campaign is a positive development. We are by what the donors expect to hear and maybe it is time for us to show the reality.

There is still no coherent standpoint on sustainability within MSF and we need more debate and propose more ideas to be sure of our view. Different approaches to the way of implementing projects can be seen between different sections. MSF-B has been in Congo for a long time, working with the local system with only a few expats dealing with management, while MSF-F now has many. We have different focus, which potentially may be complementary.

There is a debate among aid agencies about “eroding local capacities”, how humanitarian aid organisations are hindering the local capacities. Maybe we
should rebuild the local capacities before we withdraw and start building our projects more on the local capacities.

*How much does MSF collaborate with local NGOs? Is it supported by the operational centres or up to the HoM?*

It is very dependent on the projects. We do not collaborate as much as we could. In every Aids project we know now perfectly well that we have to work with local partners. In Burundi we give financial support to local NGOs. Rather than a general strategy we have to look at the context.

*Are there other “holy cows” that should be killed except for sustainability? It is good to re-evaluate these words that are main themes in MSF?*

We definitely need help to re-launch the debate. Three times in our history we have had big debates about independence and have discussed proximity many times. It is in our mentality of working to always discuss. This is also why it is so difficult to plan. We are now working on improving our long-term plan and therefore we must look at what we are doing today and ask ourselves if we are true to our missions. It is very healthy to discuss.

**Conclusion** that MSF-S should continue the discussion on sustainability. Questioning ourselves this is what we are and why we are different from other organisations.

**§ 6 Other issues**

**Collaboration with IHCAR**

Within the MSF-Sweden debate on how to keep our volunteers there have been discussions on collaboration with IHCAR. The Board and some office staff had a meeting with Johan von Schreeb and IHCAR staff about a proposal for partnership in research.

MSF would look into the possibilities of making use of the research skills at IHCAR that could benefit MSF and its volunteers and MSFs field base could in turn be used for research activities. There should be a common understanding of how this collaboration will be formalised and approved by OCB. MSF could have objections against this if the report is open for criticism depending on whether MSF feels that the data and the report belongs to them or not. EpiCentre will decide in these matters. There is a huge potential internationally of doing research with our access to the field.

If a volunteer is doing research on his/her mission, the work as a volunteer is prioritised and it should be something lying within your area of responsibility and related to the project.

**Decision** that Jean-Marc will look into the policy within OCB on diffusion of information.

**Nordic School of Public Health**

Also linked to discussions how we can better keep our returning volunteers MSF is now offer a Master’s Programme in Public Health. Volunteers would have the opportunity to take short courses during a period while also go to the field. The programme is funded by the governments of the Nordic countries and MSF have
been proposed to run a PSP course for our own volunteers as well as other students. This could be a new profile for MSF-S within MSF but it is an enormous task and we need collaboration with Norway and Denmark. Before asking Paris or OCB MSF-S wanted to make sure to have the capacity. The collaboration would start earliest in the fall 2004. The NHV is very interested.

**Decision**

that Sophie will forward the proposal to Denmark and Norway before bringing the issue to OCB.

**Update from the working group on The Election Committee**

Cecilia will send a mail with a new draft revision of the debate within the coming week. The board will meet with the election committee and they will be invited to a board meeting.

**Planning of Board Work**

The document prepared by Kristina, “Overview and forecast” will be developed into an annual plan for the Board by Cecila and Kristina.

Next international Board meeting will be on the 6th of June.

Kristina Bolme-Kuhn  
Sophie Graner  
PehrOlov Pehrson