Extended Board meeting Report
20-21 January 2006
Médecins Sans Frontières – OCB

FRIDAY 20-01-2006
1. OCB Board role and functioning
2. Debate "Do we still dare taking risks?"

SATURDAY 21-01-2006
3. Overviews and forecasts & Budget
4. Strategic topics for the OCB Board

Presents:
Anneli Ericsson, Mauro Lucardi, Konrad Putz, Carlo Belloni, André di Prospero, Emily Chan,
Jean-Marie Kindermans, Chritina Boberg, Torben Bruhn, Stefano Vajtho, Alex Parisel,
Stephane Goriely, Murielle Deguerry.
1. **Discussion on the role & how the OCB Board will function – Chalet du Laebeek**

9 mainlines concerning the OCB Board functioning and role were defined as follows:

1. **Scope of the OCB-Board**
   The OCB-Board members reaffirmed the following:
   The OCB is built around the operational shared concerns: the operational plan, the resources needed to achieve the plan (HR, Budget) and the support structure (COM around operations).

   The Board will ensure this scope is respected.

2. **2005-2006 Overviews & Forecasts outcome**
   - Vote on the overviews & forecasts
   - Vote on the OCB budget
   - Identification of strategic OCB topics to be tackled in 2006 (the same as the executive or not).

3. **Shared debates:**
   Reference persons in the OCB Board will follow, organise and animate common debates between national Boards on the identified topics (see above) before decision making.

4. **Spirit**
   All OCB Board members commit to defend OCB operations before any national or sectional consideration (international mandate).

   In this respect, the OCB-Board will not be a «negotiation room» and OCB Board members need full delegation of their national Board (even if debating beforehand at national level enriches the debate).

   They will act as individuals also at the IC level (no group logic).

5. **Decisions-positions**
   - **Decisions:**
     Board members will always seek full consensus.
     If not, decisions and recommendations will require a 2/3 majority.

   - **Positions:**
     The OCB-Board will always try to come up with a common position at the end of each discussion.

   - In case of disagreement at executive level between the 7 GD, the OCB-Board will arbitrate in the interest of the OCB, this on request of Gorik or any other GD out of the 7.

6. **Focal persons**
   - **Jean-Marie is the focal person/interlocutor for the executive:**
     - will judge when strategic topics are OCB topics, will accompany the executive and judge when an OCB-Board (swift) decision is needed,
     - will share information & organise debates accordingly.

   - **André is the focal person for Budget/finance matters.**
     - will be part of the “Budget Commission”
     - will inform the OCB-Board members on financial matters he judges are OCB-Board matters.

   - **Other members might be identified for other topics.**
7. **Information sharing**
   
   o OCB-Board members will be given **access at least to**:  
   - “Info Matin”  
   - Dierbriefings  
   - Tukul (including Coops, Copro minutes, sitreps, CPP, AP, …)  
   - MSF-B associative website  
   
   o OCB-Board members will **share agendas and Board reports**  
   
   o OCB Board members are grateful and eager to continue receiving meetings **preparatory documents** well in advance, in order to be able to read and discuss them before.  
   
   o OCB Board members will **pro-actively look for information** (on issues relating to the scope of the Board only) through physical/phone/mail direct contacts with the OC executive. This without being compelled to pass through their respective GD and vice-versa.  
   
   o Board members will try and go on the field as much as possible and will **inform each others on their field visits**.  

8. **Meetings**

1. January: Overviews and Forecasts  
2. May: decision on accounts before the AGM (physical or TC)  
3. September: mid-year Overviews and Forecasts  

Besides closed sessions, meetings are open.  

Teleconferences on an ad-hoc basis.  

Meeting places will be chosen together with the Extended Codir.  

9. **Pow-Wow/AGM**

OCB-Board members are welcome at MSF-B’s AGM (not an imperative).  
Scandinavian sections are not ready now to open the PowWow to all the OCB sections.  

2. **Meeting with the DG7 + Rowan**

a) **OCB Board**

   The above issues and mainlines were shared with the GD7.  

   Some of the addressed issues:  
   - Marine and Rowan to demystify the OCB at international level: no group logic at the IC level: OCB Board members act as individuals also at the IC level. Furthermore there are few presidents in the OCB Board; at the DG19, Partner Sections GD’s sometimes disagree with Gorik …  
   - The OCB Board is open. Also to other Board members, besides the closed sessions.  
   - The executive to clarify when it needs an OCB Board decision  
   - Need to have common debates between OCB sections and catalyse them  
   - OCB Board members to participate to the 5 OCB Working Groups on Growth: these working groups were set up by the executive to think about and pilot the OCB growth: how far to go, how to organise it.  
   - We are engaged in a learning process  
   - The OCB Board should act as a sounding Board
An OCB gathering in the form of an OCB Pow-Wow should be organised. However, Scandinavian sections are not ready yet to open the Pow-Wow to other OCB sections.

b) La Mancha
Rowan is there to answer questions regarding the LM process and conference:
- Will LM improve the crisis management?
  One of the main aim of the process was indeed to improve our governance. But will governance tools help in case of crisis? For JM the atmosphere is surprisingly good. The process has at least helped people talking together, what will be useful if a new crisis would occur. Differences seems to be better accepted than before.
- Some think the main challenge of LM should be to help avoiding the explosion of the movement in to many entities. As we saw with MSF-Greece, this could cost a lot to MSF in terms of operations and image.

The delegates for the OC-B to the La Mancha conference in Luxembourg were chosen:

Appointed by Op Direction - 11 people
Field: 07 pers x 05 = 35
Eric Goemaere, Paul Cawthorne, Duccio Staderini, Fasil Tezera, Christine Jamet, Marina, Herman (RSA)
HQ-OC: 04 pers x 05 = 20
Christopher, Mit, Helene, Jérôme,

Appointed by Op Direction 6 people
President: 01 pers x 19 = 19 Jean-Marie
GD: 01 pers x 19 = 19 Gorik
Field: 02 pers x 19 = 38 Genine Josias
Assoc/ other: 01 pers x 19 = 19 Barbara Kerstiens
HQ-section: 01 pers x 19 = 19 Michel Vasic
3. **Debate: Do we still dare taking risks?**

*Presentation:* Stéphane Goriely; Martial Ledecq

*Document:* slides

The debate was outlined as follows:

- Do we take too many risks or not enough?
- Do we perceive risks in the same way according to the contexts, regions or sections?
- When deciding to intervene in a risky context or not, are we guided by what we want to do or more by contingencies such as the number of volunteers ready to work in more risky contexts?
- When does a security problem become an associative or international problem? What are the consequences?

Haiti is taken as concrete illustrative case. Martial Ledecq, surgeon, back from “Cité Soleil” presents a movie (description) and gives his impressions on our operations in this highly risky context (see slides: ).

**DISCUSSION**

Some reactions:

**Enough or not?**

- Obviously, such a question is quite subjective, and in an absolute sense it cannot be answered. This being said, it remains to be assessed if MSF is switching little by little to more stable contexts, giving up to act in risky contexts. In a similar spirit, the GA voted a motion in 2000 requesting MSF to reinforce its presence in conflict settings:

  00-M24 : The GA mandates the Board of Directors to reinforce our risk culture within the association, to reinforce the appropriate training, and to support the Executive in keeping as a rule - and not as an exception - an expatriate presence in the conflicts side by side with the populations, being the basis of our solidarity.”

Today, the vast majority of contexts we are working in, are rather secure, only 7 out of 37 are considered as risky areas, including Haiti, Somalia, Chechnya, Colombia, etc. However at the level of the movement, the OCB seem to be perceived as taking too many risks compared to other sections and different approaches and visions coexist (for eg. the US sections is reluctant to send us HR for Haiti claiming we put the expats in danger; other sections are critical regarding our action in Somalia; …).

As a result we face contradictory pressures, and for this reason, it is important to affirm or infirm associatively our confidence in the OCB executive. What are the feelings today in MSF-B?

- It should be kept in mind that the disagreement between sections on risk taking inevitably contributes to increase the risks, especially if these different sections are present in the same context!

- It should also be reminded that taking risks is part of our identity and Charter and should not be questioned.

- The same question can be raised in terms of MSF absence in specific contexts where MSF could have an added-value but to avoid taking too many risks issues we do not step in. If for some giving context, we know that taking risks would put our staff in danger (Iraq, Afghanistan), others are more questionable, e.g South Thailand, …
What balance between MSF’s added value in risky contexts and the risks we take?

• For Martial, MSF’s action in Cité Soleil is full of sense:
   In a ghetto context where poverty reaches its highest level, where educational - sanitary -
   health - justice systems are totally lacking, bringing health care to the population is a
   typical MSF action. With quality health care, we moreover
   - give people back the dignity and humanity they often lost
   - show compassion and proximity to people who were left alone to their sad destiny
   - can witness ad, hopefully help to prevent some actors from acting in non- acceptable
     ways.
   - participate to the “désenclavement” of the ghetto, as expats come in and out every day,
     as people from outside come to receive healthcares, but also though our catalyst role to
     motivate other NGO to come and work within the forgotten areas.
   Of course security is in the other side of the balance, we luckily didn’t had to pay a high
   price and hope nothing will never happen (we would of course be forced to leave, would
   something happen).

• How far are we ready to go in this balance? We already paid the price in Afghanistan and
   Chechnya …

   It would be easier to decide we don’t want to take such a high responsibility and
   consequently avoid taking risks. But if we still want to “go where others don’t go “, we are
   bound to keep on taking risks. The important issue in that case is to minimize the risks
   (see below)

• It remains difficult to quantify if we take too many risks compared to the project added-
   value. Field expats are better placed to assess this balance. If the association is to
   position itself, a well informed decision is imperative. This could be achieved by regularly
   inviting expats back from those contexts to give us their feelings.

• What are the criteria to assess if it is worth taking risks ?
  - Is it only in terms of life saving? – then we could be more efficient elsewhere without
    risks!
  - For some members, our added value is also to be found in our temoignage mandate, in
    the “politic” and humanitarian message we induce by our mere presence or eventually by
    speaking out. Others want to point that being close to people also has an added value.
    The majority of the situation in which we lost our staff is due to stupid accidents (car
    accidents, drowning).
  - Some underline also that speaking out can put activities at risk, but on the other hand
    we should also take more risks in speaking out. This is also a kind of risks that we often
    do not dare to take !

   There is obviously an agreement that the balance between risk taking and the project
   added value should be assessed on a case by case basis.
   This being said, many feels efforts should be done and more professionalism should be
   shown in the way the security is managed (see below).

Do we have the means? (HR, Know How)

• HR
   It seems to be harder and harder to find HR willing to go in risky context. This is probably
   part of a more structural problem, also related to the difficulty to find specialized people.
   Experienced people in stable contexts also tend to remain in professional contexts they
   know. This problematic is also linked to the age average and way careers are managed:
   expats are 33 years old in average. After 2 to 5 years most of them build a family and
   give the preference to stable contexts.
• **Know-How to minimize the risks**
  - Do we invest enough in training expats to make them ready to deal with high insecurity situations?
  - Expertise in evaluating the situations and better analyzing the contexts should also be built.
  - As contexts changed, security problems became more diverse. We should therefore adapt our approach in a continuous way. Security has moreover been re-oriented in a different way by focusing also on contacts, communication on what we do, side by side with technical security aspects.
  - Shouldn’t effort be made on the way we manage expats stress, “Aftershock”, in-time replacements?
  - Some think we should better check if there are alternatives in the way we act to diminish the risks. We should condition our activities, say it loudly and push for this, to the availability of a humanitarian space. Otherwise we should leave the context, like we did for Kismayo.

The 7 risky contexts require more attention, energy and expertise than the 30 stable ones. It would be very sad to have to leave risky contexts because of a bad security management. We should therefore refocus on our institutional capacity to be there, and always work to minimize the risks as much as possible.

**Responsibility: associative/executive responsibility/ Individual vs MSF’s responsibility**

• Everybody has feelings regarding security issues and if something would happen, it would be everybody’s concern.

• With the benefit of its hindsight, it is the association’s responsibility to ring the bell if it judges that the limits are overstepped: indeed, excessive risks can understandably be taken more easily for people in the field, close to the population (loss of objectivity, passion, getting accustomed to danger, ...).

Others think the association as a whole has no expertise to evaluate the risks; this needs a specific analysis. Assessing the risks is the result of the preparation work and context analysis to do partly on the spot. The association should rather act as a “sounding Board” by raising questions, listening to expats and making strategic choices such as avoiding conflict areas systematically.

It was concluded these issues should regularly be discussed at Copro, Codir, and Board levels. How security issues are managed, and what support is given are more of an executive issue but the association also has the responsibility to raise questions to ensure that a good security management is provided.

• Even if some (rare) expats are ready to go to the most risky contexts of the world, it remains MSF’s responsibility not to put its staff in danger. MSF has the responsibility to check whether risks taken are acceptable or not (expats trust the organization in its assessment of the risks), even if it is also an individual responsibility to accept the offer (mixed responsibility). Expat should in any case be thoroughly informed on the risks before departure to be able to take an informed decision for themselves!

**Conclusion**
The OCB Board reaffirms
- working in risky contexts is part of MSF’s mandate and charter.
- the responsibility is a shared one

The Board therefore supports the executive decisions to work in such contexts and will support all the measures that need to be taken to minimise the risks.
The Board wishes to receive regular feedback on concrete situations such as for Haiti.
4. **Overviews and Forecasts**

**OPERATIONS**

*Presentation:* Christopher, Meinie  
*Document:* slides “OCB Board January 2006.ppt”

Some of the main issues that were pointed out:

- **Conflict axes**
  - Aim to reinforce our guidance and technical support to surgery to improve the quality and better assist victims of conflicts, but not only.  
  - **Set-up:**
    - one surgery post to be opened at HQ,  
    - 2 consultants  
    - international surgery group  
  - AAU to make an overview of the explo needs to check what assistance we could give in conflicts where we are not present.  
  - As expressed in the debate on “risk taking”, it was recognised efforts need to be done on security and a CDD will work on it. There is maybe also a lack of risk taking in testimonies in conflict areas. Better training and data collection will help.

- **Post-conflicts axes**
  - Discussion around the closure of missions such as Angola and the criteria’s we use to close missions/projects in stabilised contexts. Are they consistent from one context to another?  
  - Do we need to use public health criteria, humanitarian, or mortality rates criteria’s? … Angola is entering a stable phase and initiatives are taken at the level of the Ministry of Health, but did we perform surveys in Angola to get a broader picture of the health situation of the country (cf. Congo survey)? When a country is stable (ex.: Sierra Leone, Burundi), is the level of investment in access to care, malaria, … a criteria? How far? All this has also to do with our position towards substitution …

- **Epidemics-Endemics**
  - We are repeatedly confronted with epidemics that are due to a bad management and to a lowering of vaccination coverage in the countries were we work. Shouldn’t we document this and speak out? And be more creative regarding vaccination strategies? In our movement, some think immunisation is a development issue and therefore wonder if advocacy should go as far as how development has to be done (then same dilemma with AIDS, malnutrition, …).

- **AIDS**
  - *Rem.:* even if more attention to prevention has been asked at the last AGM (motion), we avoid to start prevention (counselling and testing) when we are not able to treat.

**Typology**

Meinie presents the typology study 2004. This study was asked by the IC: cf. slides.

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This work enlightened medical data collection is a weak point.
The Board underlines it is however a very good tool to discuss and pilot growth, to help us in our accountability towards resources. The Board encourages this data collection to be maintained and systematised.
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OCB Board report 20-21-01-06 8
HUMAN RESOURCES

Presentation: Benoit
Documents: slides

- Differences between Danish and Belgian doctors were pointed out as Danish Drs. need 2 year practice before leaving on the field. But this is due to differences between the study curriculum of Belgian and Danish doctors: in Belgium, internships are an integral part of the studies, in Denmark, 2 years practice after the studies are needed in order to be allowed to start practicing on its own. The only concern is to send Dr. with proper training.
- We always need more and more specialised medicals. Are we following with trainings? Yes, sometimes external.
- Tropical Medicine: with the Bologna initiative, all TM schools need to reorganise and harmonise the content of their courses. TM is still a criteria for the OC-B (not for all the OC's). It is the responsibility of each section to deal this with the TM school of its country.

IRP

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<tr>
<td>the complexity of the IRS;</td>
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<td>the way it was led at international level until now;</td>
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<td>the serious questions it raises in ethical, identity, financial, administrative, and appropriate response to the initial problem (reinsertion) – terms;</td>
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<td>this issue is the 1st challenge for the OCB-Board in showing its commitment to OCB operations (as outlined in point 4 above), and hence the need to reach a common conclusion amongst the 7,</td>
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- Each member of the OCB-Board will ask to his/her section GD the rationales that led them to accept the conclusions of the international remuneration study, and how they thought to involve their Boards.
- HR remuneration study commission will
  - in a first stage gather informations (meeting with Jean-Michel Piedagnel and Florence on February the 10th at 13:00) to clarify the real stakes and principles issues.
  - assess if the IRS is effectively an OCB issue
  - and if yes will - within a 2 months deadline within which the IRS is put at a standstill and considered as an OCB issue - try and propose a consensus or harmonised solution amongst the 7.

Connection to OCB-Board: OCB-Board members are invited to take part; regular feedback will be given by mail, TC’s if needed.

Composition of the mixed executive-associative group:
Barbara, Francis, Michaël/Murielle, Jean-Marie + Kristina, André.
Benoit Deneys, Gorik.
FINANCE:
Presentation: Jan
Documents: slides « OCB Consolidated Budget 2006.ppt »

Jan presents the consolidated budget of the OCB group: see slides.

Discussion
  o The surplus increase is a good news but entails a need to manage the growth and think about the growth we want, do we want to grow, how, how far, the role of the HQ and of the PS in this growth, will the HR follow and how? Therefore the executive proposed to set-up 5 working groups on the OCB growth:
    See Gorik’s memo describing each of this WG.
    The OCB-Board should participate to these WG. HoM will also be briefed during the HoM week.

  o This also entails the need to discuss again our position towards Institutional Funds. Seen the level of the reserves in international, the pressure will go for less IF. But many think the IF policy should not change from years to years according to the results, and we need to maintain them to 25% to ensure our financial solidity in the future and maintain links with institutional donors (once broken these cannot be restored easily). Our capacity to re-shift to IF should be maintained.

  o The allocation of the surplus will need to be decided in June following the new Belgian law regulations.

CONCLUSION
Overviews and Forecasts & budget
The OCB-Board voted unanimously in favour of the 2005 Overviews & 2006 Forecasts and in favour of the associated budget.

5. Strategic topics for the OCB
Following these overviews and forecasts, some strategic topics for the OCB Board are identified:

OCB-Board Strategic topics for 2006
The following topics are already identified:
  - Topics related to the 5 working groups proposed by the executive:
    WG 1 (operations): Meinie, Phil, Vincent, Christopher, Jerome/Bertrand
    WG 2 (HR): Benoit, Dan, Seb, Willem, Marc Bouteiller
    WG 3 (financial): Therese, Jan, Koen, Peter, Manu
    WG 4 (HQ structure): William, Dick, Laure, Pierre, Michel
    WG 5 (OCB architecture): Patrice, Gorik, Stefano, Simone

  Further information on the scope of each WG will be given asap.
OCB-Board to be involved.

  - AIDS, including its weight within MSF
  - Access and MSF’s responsibility/role
  - How far do we go in our assistance to victims of violence
  - HR and remuneration study
  - Funding
  - …

Each OCB-Board member is requested to send to sophie.guillaumie@msf.be the list of items (s)he judges should be part of the OCB-Board strategic topics for 2006. Reference persons will be identified through mail amongst OCB-B members.