



## FEATURE

## CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2017

# The BMJ charity appeal Christmas 2017: Médecins Sans Frontières' volunteer doctors need your support

The charity has decades of experience in bringing medical aid to the neediest people in emergency situations such as those in war torn Yemen, as **Jane Feinmann** writes. This is why *The BMJ* has chosen MSF for its charity appeal this year. Please give generously

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London

"People know when they see a doctor or nurse wearing the white T shirt bearing an MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières] logo that they will be treated and cared for irrespective of their race, gender, religion, nationality, political affiliation, or economic status," explains Javid Abdelmoneim, emergency medicine doctor and chair of MSF UK, an international humanitarian charity that sends volunteer doctors to help the world's neediest people in the most challenging circumstances.

## Civil war

Take Yemen's three year civil war that has left 20 million people in need of humanitarian aid, threatened by cholera and starvation. Both sides in the fighting have deliberately targeted hospitals, and more than 14 million people lack access to healthcare. In August 2016 an MSF hospital in the Haydan district of the Sa'ada governorate was bombed, killing 19 people and injuring 24 including a staff member, forcing the non-governmental organisation to evacuate all staff from the region.

But in February 2017 the charity's staff resumed medical work in the district, bringing back emergency care, a maternity unit, and inpatient beds to 200 000 local people. And, despite the risks, MSF's mission in Yemen remains one of its largest, with 1600 staff working in 12 hospitals and health centres and supporting 30 others. In 2016 in Yemen, MSF provided 435 500 outpatient consultations, assisted at 12 500 births, and treated 15 800 patients for war wounds.

Abdelmoneim first volunteered with MSF as a medical student at University College, London. He has since spent time with the charity in trouble spots including Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, and South Sudan, as well as on board one of MSF's migrant search and rescue vessels in the Mediterranean in 2016.

## Tackling outbreaks

Three years ago Abdelmoneim was in west Africa, treating patients during the Ebola outbreak. "The virus was first recognised by an MSF laboratory already established in Sierra Leone," he recalls. "At a time when the global response to Ebola was lacking, MSF worked to contain the epidemic and to bring it to attention of the world."

In Bangladesh, MSF is providing care for thousands of Rohingya men, women, and children who have recently fled there from Myanmar. It is also running a clinical trial to find better treatments for people with drug resistant tuberculosis. Last year MSF had 460 projects in 72 countries helping the neediest people on the planet.

"MSF has 40 000 staff globally and over 40 years' experience in rolling out rapid, well coordinated responses to medical emergencies building on its core identity of independence, impartiality, and neutrality," says Abdelmoneim. Funded principally through private donations, the organisation has the freedom to make independent decisions.

How can you help? Abdelmoneim says, "We face a constant shortage of the right highly trained specialist medics and paramedics. But there are other means of helping.

"We do a very good job at MSF. But all the goodwill in the world won't bring the help that's needed if we don't have the money to pay for it all."

Competing interests: None declared.

Provenance and peer review: Commissioned; not externally peer reviewed.

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**Please donate to MSF**

- £123 (€137; \$163) could pay for a blood transfusion for three people
- £65 (€73; \$86) could buy a stretcher to help move an injured person to safety
- £54 (€60; \$72) could provide antibiotics to treat 40 war wounded people

Donate online: [www.msf.org.uk/bmj](http://www.msf.org.uk/bmj)

Donate by phone: +44 (0)800 408 3897

## Figure



[Image: Ainhoa Larrea/MSF]