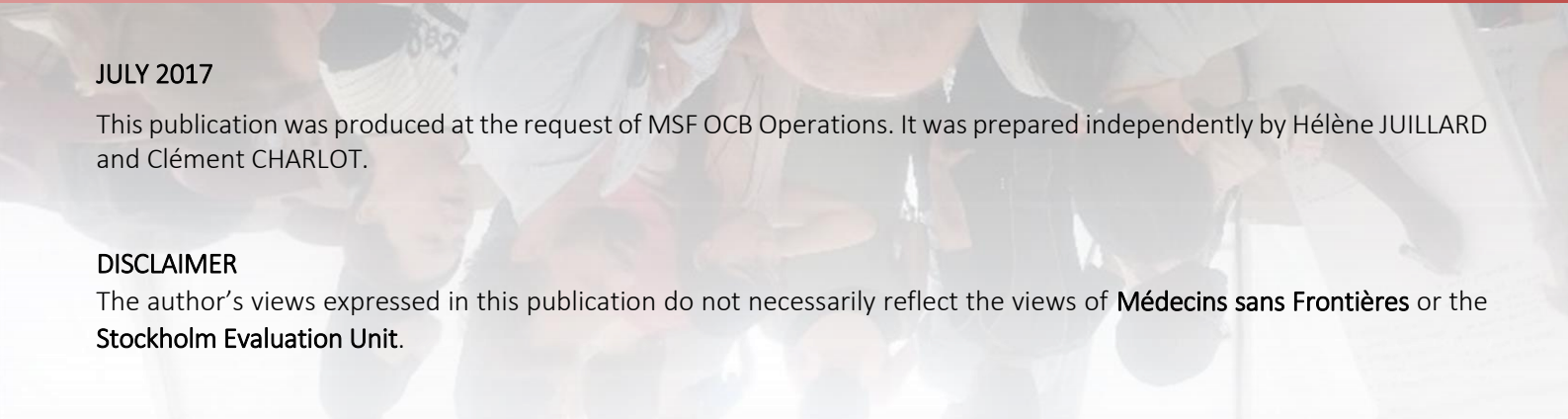


# MSF OCB FIELD OPPORTUNITY ENVELOPE REVIEW, 2017



**JULY 2017**

This publication was produced at the request of MSF OCB Operations. It was prepared independently by H  l  ne JUILLARD and Cl  ment CHARLOT.

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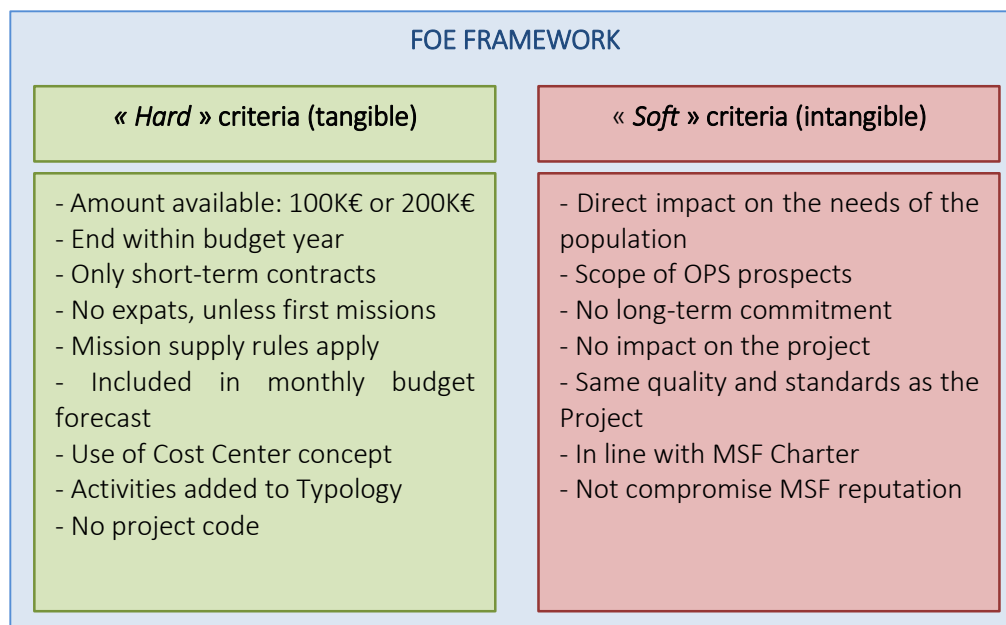
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# ACRONYMS

ARO	Annual Review of Operations
CGM	Cours de Gestion de Mission
COPRO	Project Committee
CPP	Country Policy Paper
FC	Field Coordinator
FOE	Field Opportunity Envelope
HoM	Head of Mission
KII	Key Informant Interview
Medco	Medical Coordinator
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
OCB	Operational Centre Brussels
OPD	Out-Patient Department
PCC	Project Coordinator Course
PUC	Pool d'Urgence
VOT	Victims of Torture

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2015, MSF-OCB launched a pilot initiative, the Field Opportunity Envelope (FOE), with the objective to give autonomy to field staffs to rapidly and without validation meet the needs of the communities in their intervention area. Each project could request either 100,000 or 200,000 euros, provided that their initiative met a set of criteria defined in the FOE Framework:



Over 18 months, FOEs were implemented ten times.

From the onset of the initiative, a **light** review was planned in order to assess *if and how it was used, if it had the expected outcome, and understand any concerns it encountered*. The review was undertaken from May to July 2017, over the course of 10 days. A workshop was conducted with 60 participants (heads of missions, medical coordinators and cell members) during the Coordinators' week, and 13 key informant interviews were conducted remotely. The objectives of the review were to:

1. Determine the track record of the Field Opportunity Envelope Initiative 18 months after its creation
2. Assess if and why the Field Opportunity Envelopes have been underused
3. Make recommendations on changes to the FOE framework that would increase its usage

The main findings of this review include:

- **Awareness is high:** The awareness of the existence of FOEs among field coordinators, heads of mission and medical coordinators is high, thanks to a regular communication, which could be further improved by sharing concrete FOE examples.
- **Many don't get started:** FOEs have been implemented 10 times, but during the course of this review the evaluators came across eight that have been thought of and then abandoned. This was due to:
  - Project's workload and turnover,
  - Misunderstandings of the FOE framework,
  - Informal validation mechanisms.
- **Difficulties with soft criteria:** While the *hard* criteria of the framework are well understood and followed, the *soft* criteria are interpreted differently among interviewees. This led to disagreements among missions and cells as to whether or not FOEs are relevant and compliant to the framework. Specifically two *soft* criteria were debated upon: scope of OPS prospects & no long-term commitment.
- **FOEs exacerbated tensions** between the project and the coordination, because they do not require a validation process and were sometimes used to overturn decisions taken during the Annual Review of Operations.

- **Framework needs refined:** Although the FOE initiative was usually appreciated because of the autonomy and ownership it provides field staffs, interviewees thought that the framework could be refined to avoid misunderstandings and to be better adapted to field realities.

Based on these findings, the evaluators propose the recommendations below, in order to increase the usage of the FOE:

- ⇒ Recommendation 1: **Communicate on implemented FOEs to give examples of potential use**
- ⇒ Recommendation 2: **Adopt a one-year rolling criteria**
- ⇒ Recommendation 3: **Add a self-assessment section in the FOE template**
- ⇒ Recommendation 4: **Propose an informal technical consultation system**

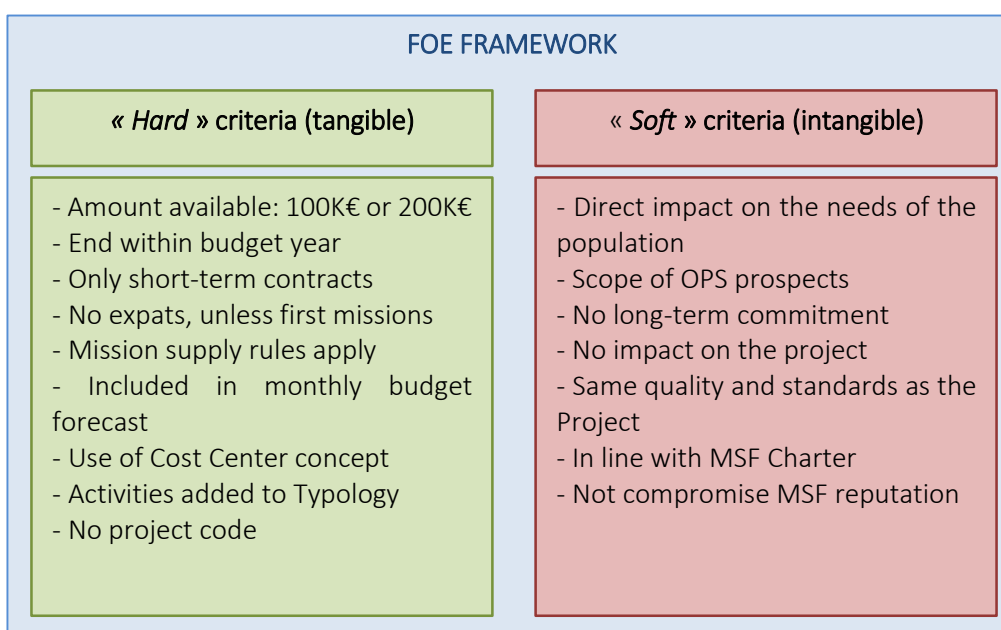
# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

MSF-OCB took the opportunity of a significant budget increase in 2015 to organise an operational workshop in April 2015, with the objective to generate ideas on “what can be done more and better”. The workshop gathered around 60 people, with different MSF profiles, backgrounds and experience. One of the ideas that emerged was the Field Opportunity Envelop (FOE), which was subsequently discussed at the Coordinators’ week, and officially launched in November 2015.

The FOE was primarily conceived to enable projects and support bases to design and implement activities to rapidly meet the short-term needs of the communities in their intervention area, without having to go through a COPRO. To a lesser extent, it was also conceived to foster field-driven innovation and out-of-the-box thinking<sup>1</sup>. Except for emergency projects, all regular projects have the opportunity to request a FOE of either 100 000 or 200 000 euros to implement initiatives, provided that the initiative meet a set of tangible and intangible criteria summarised in the diagram below:

Figure 1: Synthesis of the Field Opportunity Envelope Framework



MSF-OCB took the commitment to conduct a **light formative review** of the FOE initiative mid-2017, 18 months after its official start, with the objective to assess *if and how it was used, if it has the expected outcome, and understand any concerns it encountered*.

## 1.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this review is to assess if Field Opportunity Envelopes met their intended objectives and to inform their future orientation. The evaluation is exclusively done for learning purposes.

More specifically, the objectives of the review are to:

1. Determine the track record of the Field Opportunity Envelope Initiative 18 months after its creation
2. Assess if and why the Field Opportunity Envelope have been underused
3. Make recommendations on changes to the FOE framework that would increase its usage

<sup>1</sup> The objectives of the FOE, as laid out in the OCB Field Opportunity Envelope Handbook, are to “1. to give a stronger incentive for field team to explore and reflect humanitarian needs in their environment; 2. to reinforce field driven initiatives and connect faster actions to needs of the population close to us; 3. to give space to all team members for out-of-the-box thinking and to innovation.”

This report presents the final results of the evaluation process. It highlights common themes and draws comparisons when appropriate, before providing recommendations.

The evaluation matrix is available in Annex II of the present report.

### **1.3 EVALUATORS AND SCHEDULE**

This work has been undertaken by Hélène Juillard and Clément Charlot, independent consultants, under the management of Tim McCann, Evaluation Referent at Stockholm Evaluation Unit, and of Beatrice Barbot, Management Support OPS at MSF-OCB. The work was conducted between May 2017 and June 2017, over a total of 10 days.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 APPROACH AND TOOLS USED

The sample of Field Opportunity Envelopes included in this review was based on (a) the information available with MSF-OCB HQ and Carousel participants on past and current FOEs as well as those that have been abandoned along the way; and on (b) the willingness and availability of potential interviewees to participate.

The review relied upon:

- A desk review of all FOE-related documentation (framework, templates, etc.) provided at the inception phase and collected from interviewees, as well as documents available on OOPS. Annex III lists the type of documents used for this review.
- A Carousel held on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, during the Coordinator's week, with 60 Heads of Mission (HoM), Medical Coordinators (MedCos) and cell Members. The participants were broken into 8 groups, which each produced a SWOT analysis answering the following question: "How fit for purpose are field opportunity envelope?".
- Semi-structured open-ended interviews, mostly with Field Coordinators working with projects where FOEs were completed, are currently being implemented or were abandoned. 13 interviews were conducted remotely in June 2017 with staff from Afghanistan, Egypt, DRC, Greece, Haiti, Mozambique/Malawi and South Africa and HQ. The topical outline used for the interviews is attached in Annex IV.

### 2.1 EVALUATION CONSTRAINTS

While conducting this review, the evaluators were faced with the following constraints: **limited sample** due to limited time allocated to the study and staff turnover, **non-systematic archiving of past FOEs**, and **anecdotal examples of abandoned FOE**.

This assessment focused on a limited number of FOEs and projects because FOEs have only been implemented 10 times since the launch of the framework by staffs, which are not necessarily in post anymore. The findings for each FOE are either based on interviews made with staff directly involved in the implementation, or based on the documentation available, or lack thereof<sup>2</sup>, when interviews could not be conducted. To identify FOEs, the consultants relied on the FOE templates available at HQ and/or information from Carousel's participants. Therefore, FOEs implemented in 2016 and 2017 may have been missed during the review.

While all implemented FOEs were used to form a global analysis, specific examples were only used when the evaluators were able to speak to field staffs.

Furthermore, abandoned FOEs could only be identified during the Carousel, Key Informants Interviews (KIIs), and Beatrice's Barbot's email archive. This list is therefore not representative of all abandoned FOE. Finally, as the number of days planned for this review was limited, it was not feasible to conduct a comprehensive data collection. Therefore, considering the variety of project and MSF missions, findings are not necessarily representative of all MSF's missions.

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<sup>2</sup> As the FOE template used for the reporting is at best sent 3 months after the start of the implementation, no FOE templates were available for the FOE implemented in 2017. Furthermore, as FOE templates are not systematically sent to a focal point in MSF-OCB's HQ, some of the 2016 FOE templates were incomplete/missing.



# 3. FINDINGS

## 3.1 FOE TRACK RECORD

### 3.1.1 FOE communication & awareness

Since the launch of the field opportunity envelope, there has been a significant amount of communication on the FOE initiative, especially in 2016. It started with emails sent to all MSF staff with an MSF email address, hard copies of the handbook sent out to missions, an article published in Contact, and a presentation made during the 2015 Annual Review of Operations (ARO). In addition, since November 2015, FOE-related documents are systematically presented during the OPS presentation at the CGM (Cours de Gestion de Mission – Mission Management Training) and the Project Coordinator Course (PCC), and are available on OOPS. From January to May 2017, FOE related documents were downloaded 135 times in total from OOPS. Finally, annual reminder emails are sent to HoM and FCs, the latest was sent in January 2017.

At field-level, although the extent varies greatly based on their support to the initiative, coordination offices have been reported to promote the field opportunity envelope with field coordinators via emails or meetings. Similarly, field coordinators reported to have promoted it to their teams, after receiving emails on the FOE initiative from HQ/coordination/cell, in order to collect ideas for a potential FOE implementation.

As a result, awareness of the existence of FOEs appears relatively high among MSF-OCB staff. 82% of the participants of the FOE Carousel were aware of its existence and availability for projects, and the majority of people not aware of it reported being new with MSF-OCB. Furthermore, the two field coordinators interviewed during the review and who reported having no knowledge whatsoever of FOEs, were new at MSF-OCB, had been in position for less than 4 months, did not undergo the PCC and were not briefed as part of their handover on the FOE by their predecessor or by the cell. Although this could not be explored further, it seems unlikely that a significant number of FCs are in this situation. It is therefore fair to assume that almost all intended users, provided that they have been with MSF-OCB for at least 6 months, have been exposed to at least one form of communication made on the FOEs and are aware of its existence.

Although its frequency was deemed appropriate, a majority of the sample stated they would have liked to get a more operational communication, providing them with examples of previous and on-going initiatives. Indeed, while their understanding of the FOE objective, i.e. to give autonomy to project to spend up to 200,000€ to meet unmet needs in their intervention area, and of the *hard* criteria of the FOE framework was high, they reported being confused on how to interpret and operationalise *soft* criteria.

### 3.1.2 FOE has been used 10 times...

While FOEs could have theoretically been used close to 120 times<sup>3</sup>, they have only been requested and actually implemented 10 times across five different missions over the course of the 18 months of the FOE pilot phase. They were used five times in 2016 in Afghanistan, Zimbabwe and in Italy; and five times to date in 2017 in DRC and Haiti. Please refer to the Figure 2: FOE mapping, for a list of location, year and typology of the FOE implemented. The mapping only includes nine FOEs, because it was not possible to collect data on the FOE implemented in Kinshasa (CD1-72).

As mentioned in section 2.2, this mapping may not be exhaustive because of the unsystematic archiving of FOE template and staff turnover.

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<sup>3</sup> The FOE 2016 per project.xlsx, available on OOPS, lists 60 projects eligible for a Field Opportunity Envelope in 2016. The list hasn't been published in 2017, but the evaluators were told the number of FOEs available was more or less the same.

Figure 2: FOE mapping

Country	Project code	Project Name	Year	Start date	Status	Typology	Project title
Afghanistan	AF1-83	Khost	2016	Dec-16	On-going	OPD	Construct and improve existing maternal health facilities at Comprehensive Health Centres in Khost province to improve access to maternal health care to women in remote areas
DRC	CD1-03	Base d'appui Goma	2017	Feb-17	On-going	OPD	Clinique mobile pour l'enfance des rues de Goma
DRC	CD1-24	Bili	2017	Mar-17	On-going	Health Promotion	Réduire la mortalité maternelle en collaborant avec les matrones dans les communautés
Haiti	HT1-43	Hopital Tabarre	2017	Jun-17	On-going	NFI, WATSAN, OPD	Multi-sectorial: Distribution of shelter and HP kits and monthly mobile clinic targeting 150 families, Rehabilitation of WATSAN infrastructures in 2 schools and distribution of 20 "Manivelle" wheelchairs
Haiti	HT1-??	Port-à-Piment	2017	42826	On-going	WATSAN	Rehabilitation of 10 water infrastructures in Port-à-Piment
Italy	IT1-13	Rehab of SoT Rome	2016	Jan-16	Completed	VOT	"Screening for Rheumatic Heart Disease within some groups of migrant population with known higher prevalence
Zimbabwe	ZW1-50	Mbare	2016	Oct-16	Completed	SGBV	Artists against Sexual Gender Based Violence in solidarity with survivors
Zimbabwe	ZW1-60	Out of district	2016	Sep-16	Completed	WATSAN, Construction	Community Support Initiative
Zimbabwe	ZW1-35	Mutare CAG & VL	2016	Oct-16	Completed	WATSAN, Construction	Multi-sectorial: Creation of additional consultation rooms at the Family Child Health Clinic (FCH) at Chipinge District Hospital (CDH); Rehabilitation of the laboratory at Chipinge District Hospital; Rehabilitation of the water supply system at Avilla Mission in Nyanga District, Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe

### 3.1.3...with mixed opinions on outcomes

With only four FOEs completed to date, it is not possible to draw conclusions on whether FOEs have been implemented according to the framework and have met their outcomes. Nevertheless, all field coordinators/project Medical Referents (PMRs) interviewed considered that their FOE met/would meet its stated outcomes and respected/would respect the FOE framework. They indeed followed/ planned to follow all the *hard* criteria, such as complying with the HR and logistic rules, and ending initiatives within the budget year. The only noticeable exception was for Khost FOE, because funds were requested in December 2016 and were then reported in the project budget of the following year. In addition, all interviewees also met/ planned to meet all the *soft* criteria of the framework, at least their understanding of them.

Yet, for a few FOEs, MSF-OCB stakeholders, such as heads of mission, medical coordinators and cell members, did not necessarily share their opinion. These mixed opinions first come from the fact that interviewees have different understanding of the soft criteria, especially those related to not creating long term commitment and to be within the scope of MSF prospects. For some, to be 'within the scope' means to implement activities that are related to MSF's portfolio of interventions, while for some others, it means activities that are currently being implemented in the country or are not too far-off the Country Policy Paper (CPP). For some, avoiding any form on long-term commitment means to launch one-shot activities with no implications on project design whatsoever, such as WATSAN rehabilitations or medical intervention on small-scale outbreaks. For others, it refers to any activity that can be completed within a budget year and does not commit MSF financially.

The FOE pilot was loosely defined on purpose, in order to give autonomy to field base to meet needs in their intervention area, and to be innovative. However, this flexibility leads to disagreement on what initiative is, or is not, compliant with the framework. This is, for example, the case with the street children mobile clinic in Goma, for which, although the relevance of the initiative is not questioned, the compliance with the long-term commitment and the linkage with MSF's strategy and prospects is not agreed upon by the different interviewees. `

Nevertheless, compliance with the framework is perhaps not the only reason why some FOEs create mixed opinions. Indeed, FOEs are sometimes used to overturn decisions taken by the coordination and cell during the Annual Review of Operations. The flexible framework enables field staffs to launch activities that were refused, because deemed not relevant or because of a lack of budget, by the coordination and/or cell. While this use of the FOE is not clearly against the criteria stated in the framework the FOE initiative was not planned to be used in such a way, and can exacerbate existing tensions between the project, the coordination and the cell.

## 3.2 THERE HAS BEEN MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO USE THE FOE

### 3.2.1 Some FOEs were abandoned before implementation

Although FOEs have been officially used 10 times, the data collection suggests that FOEs were at the very least contemplated, if not thought of and abandoned before implementation, on several occasions. The review was able to identify eight FOEs, which were abandoned before the implementation phase:

- **DRC (CD1-56 – Pool d'Urgence (PUC))**
- **Egypt (EG1-03 – Maadi MH-VoT)**
- Greece (EU1-06 – Athens VoT)
- Italy (IT1-42 – Trapani MH)
- Lebanon (LB1-13 – Syria support from Turkey)
- **Mozambique (MZ1-21 - Tete)**
- Pakistan (PK1-17 – Lower Dir Project)
- **South Africa (ZA1-40 - Khayelitsha)**

Given the limited number of days allocated to this review, it was not feasible to investigate all countries for abandoned FOEs, nor to investigate all identified abandoned FOEs. Only FOEs in bold were investigated during the review, because they were brought up by Carousel participants or interviewees. The reasons that accounted for the

fact that these Field Opportunities Envelopes were abandoned before implementation are similar to the difficulties faced by FCs who did implement or are currently implementing a FOE. These are detailed below.

### 3.2.2 Because of projects' constraints,

The turnover of project coordination staff, especially field coordinators, was reported as a constraint. On average, FCs are in position for 6-9 months, which makes it difficult to launch a FOE, as the first three months of mission are dedicated to understanding the context and on-going project, thus leaving only 3-6 months to design, implement and complete a FOE. For three out of the 10 FOE implemented, the field coordinators currently in position and implementing them are not the staff who have thought of and designed the FOE. Furthermore, several field coordinators mentioned that they would rather not move forward with a relevant initiative, than launch it and not see it to its completion.

Although it hasn't been reported as a reason why FOEs were abandoned during the process, the on-going workload of the project was reported as a tipping factor to decide whether or not to drop a FOE. Even if the framework allows to hire extra staff – both first-mission expatriates and national staff on short-term contracts – to implement extra activities, FOEs create an extra workload for project coordination positions, such as field coordinators, PMRs, logisticians, and admins. For example, at the time of the review, one field coordinator reported having to dedicate up to one full day of work per week to kick-start FOE activities.

### 3.2.3 and a lack of understanding of the FOE framework's operationalisation,

As one interviewee puts it *"when reading the framework, we understand the genesis of the FOE but we do not understand its operationalisation"*. This sentence summarises a trend, emerging throughout data collection, that the framework of the FOE is not clear enough, is subject to interpretation and deters potential users. Specifically, the following questions were expressed recurrently:

- **To what extent activities should be different from activities implemented within the projects?**

There is no clear consensus among intended users and Carousel participants on whether or not activities can be similar or complementary to on-going activities, e.g. a FOE to increase TB treatment from 10,000 to 11,000 patients. For a fair amount of potential users and Carousel respondents, it is understood that activities should be different from the portfolio of activities implemented by the project and found in the project Document (PD), i.e. an OPD project could for example carry out WATSAN activities in a neighbouring community but couldn't implement OPD activities, or otherwise a COPRO should be requested. This misunderstanding led field staff to believe that FOE could be requested to fund additional project activities or activities rejected during the last ARO, because of a lack of budget for example.

- **What initiatives fall within the scope of the OPS prospects?**

The OPS Prospects is a broad document encompassing all medical and support activities. Therefore, any activity implemented, or thought of being implemented, will in all likelihood fall within the OPS prospects, in order to give room for out-of-the-box thinking at minimal risk. Yet, a fair amount of participants considered that most FOEs were not meeting this criterion because activities were not usual MSF activities and/or were not part of the CPP. This is for example the case with Goma Street Children's Mobile Clinic FOE: for some, this initiative falls within the prospects, whereas for others, it doesn't because this initiative is closer to social work than humanitarian aid. Should meeting the needs that the project team has expertise for, or the compliance with the OPS prospects, be prominent?

- **What does it mean to avoid any form of long-term commitment for the organisation?**

This criterion is the least understood and agreed upon, because there is no clear definition of what long-term commitment for MSF entails. There is of course a consensus for obvious cases, such as committing MSF financially for more than the FOE duration. For other cases though, opinions are mixed and the line is blurry and often confused with the increase in expectations from surrounding communities. For some, MSF's presence in

the countries it operates in arguably creates a form of long-term commitment, thus this criterion should be understood as a FOE should not commit MSF financially.

- **What does it mean that a FOE should not compromise MSF reputation?**

Likewise, all participants do not understand this criterion in the same way. Some FCs reported that failing an activity would inherently provoke a loss of MSF's acceptance and reputation, like would any failed activities in a regular project. In contrast to regular projects though, FCs take on the full responsibility of the FOE while in their opinion responsibility is normally shared with the coordination office. This extra responsibility was perceived as a risk and a reason why more FCs did not launch a FOE.

- **How do budget request and management work?**

Designed to be simple, the cash request and management caused problems to field coordinators who implemented a FOE. As activities were launched in reaction to a need and no proposal was required, they were not sure how much money was needed to run the initiative and hence how much to ask for in their monthly cash request. Should they ask for the entire amount knowing that they might not need it, and thus deprive other FOE/projects? Or should they proceed by instalments and ask for funds if and when required? What happens if they run short of cash because they under-budgeted, and need an extra lump sum to complete activities?

### **3.2.4 and of drifts in the way the framework is being implemented/ followed**

Although the FOE handbook clearly states that "Initiatives proposed by the field team are decided and implemented under the responsibility of the FCs and his team, no other validation is required", most FCs expected that there would be informal discussions, either with the coordination or with HQ, in order to debate the relevance of the initiatives. In fact, most did seek to get have informal discussion and validation from the coordination or the cell. In some cases, they did not get any feedback. In others, informal validation mechanisms emerged, either between the project and the coordination or between the project and the cell: requests for proposals before disbursing the funds, requests for redesigning the activities, successful and unsuccessful attempts to "kill" the FOE.

These mechanisms mostly appeared when a FOE was requested to implement activities that were initially refused during the ARO. On one hand, field staffs saw it as an opportunity to pilot these activities and to demonstrate that they were in fact relevant. On the other hand, coordination and cell saw it as a mean to bypass a decision taken previously through the regular decision-making process. The review identified a similar trend to the one pointed out in MSF overall bureaucratisation report, that cells and coordination offices lack downward accountability. While a majority of field staff interviewed understood the importance of having a three-tier validation system for key decisions on project management, they also criticised the fact that detailed feedbacks as to why decisions were taken were not being given to them. This generated frustration and could perhaps explain why FOEs tend to be used as a mean to bypass the ARO and COPRO systems.

## **3.3 ALTHOUGH THE INITIATIVE IS GENERALLY APPRECIATED, FOE HAS PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES AND BARRIERS TO USAGE**

### **3.3.1 The FOE gives room for autonomy, reactivity and ownership**

Overall, most field coordinators, HoM, MedCOs and cell members praise the Field Opportunity Envelope initiative, because it gives room to projects to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and to think out-of-the-box.

The most recurrent strength quoted was its reactivity, because FOEs enable field teams to rapidly answer short-term needs in their intervention area, without having to wait for the ARO or going through a COPRO. Even when a FC didn't request it, the only fact that it existed was evidence that MSF was aiming to give more autonomy to the field and to counter-balance power dynamics that are too often giving the decision making ability to the coordination and the cell.

Except for emergency responses for which MSF's reactivity and flexibility was systematically acknowledged, field staffs often complained during the interviews that they had limited structural impact on the project strategy, because decisions had been taken by a predecessor or because they would not necessarily be in post when the strategy they participated in designing would be implemented. Staff complained about the length of the overall decision-making process and that it included a lot of different actors. FOEs are seen as a tool to rapidly take decisions and implement activities. They are considered to be a good human resource tool, because they empower field staff and provide them with a stronger ownership of their project and intervention area.

Furthermore, if properly implemented, FOEs enhance MSF's reputations in their intervention area.

### **3.3.2 The FOE is not perceived to be adapted to field realities**

According to respondents and as mentioned earlier, a field coordinator stays on average six months in position, three of which are spent grasping both the project and its environment. That leaves him/her with only three months to implement a FOE. This results in FOEs being launched by one FC and completed by another, and limits the opportunity to draw lessons-learned from FOEs. It also prevents the capitalisation on FOEs and the identification of initiatives that are worth investing into.

The turnover is further exacerbated by the fact that the FOE should be implemented within a budget year. For instance, if a field coordinator starts his/her mission during the second semester, that leaves him/her with six months at best to design and implement a field opportunity envelope. Realistically, as the FOE will not be a priority at the beginning, he or she will most likely not implement it.

Furthermore, the absence of validation process is perceived as extremely risky in challenging environments where the context is versatile and/or field coordinators lack MSF experience. By not promoting discussion between the project and other stakeholders, the FOE is flawed in that it does not encourage collaboration and co-construction.

### **3.3.3 FOEs foster tensions**

During the data collection, a majority of interviewees pointed out that FOEs were creating tensions between the projects and the coordination offices. As the FOE bypassed the usual decision-making processes, it led to tensions because coordinators felt that it has been imposed on them. This weakness probably came out quite strongly, because a significant number of FOEs has been used to overturn decisions previously taken during the ARO and COPRO.

Furthermore, even if FOEs do not require a validation process from the coordination, they do require the coordinators to get involved in the FOE at some point in their implementation. For instance, hiring extra staff, be it a first-mission expat or national staffs, may require input from the HR Coordinator. Likewise, an international order of medicines, an in-kind donation or a loan, may require the input from the logistic and medical coordinators. Thus, an extra workload is imposed upon the coordination, without necessarily having involved them in the project's conception. This also was reported to have led to tensions between the project and the coordination.

However, tensions were not systematically reported for all FOEs. On the contrary, in some missions, coordination offices were reported to be very supportive of FOEs, actively helping out, showing flexibility and giving advice to field staffs. In most cases, FCs had consulted their coordination offices prior to making the cash request, in order to get feedback and a validation.

It is perhaps more accurate to say that FOEs exacerbate tensions that were already existent and simmering, rather than create new ones. Either way, the scope of the review is too limited to identify the root causes building tensions between projects and the coordination.

### **3.3.4 There is no validation process to ensure the framework is met**

Because there is no formal validation process to ensure that the criteria of the framework are being met, Carrousel participants were concerned with the fact that the FOE implemented were compliant with the framework, and were

advocating for the introduction of a validation mechanism. Various forms of mechanisms were contemplated, ranging from a simple validation through the coordination or technical departments to a formal review process similar to a COPRO.

On the other hand, when probed about a need for a validation process, all field coordinators admitted that it would be useful and reassuring to discuss the relevance of the initiative with other people, without going through a formal validation process that could lead to the FOE being rejected. In fact, seven out of eight FCs, who implemented or thought of implementing a FOE, consulted with the coordination offices. Additionally, one of the field coordinators even contacted stakeholders from other organisations when designing the FOE, in order to assess if the initiative would be relevant in the context.

Given the various understandings of the criteria, setting up a validation process that is going through the normal validation channel and hierarchy (project < coordination < cell) was perceived as against the very principle of FOEs, which is to grant projects with autonomy and reactivity. However, a light and informal validation process outside of the usual-validation process appealed to a majority of respondents.



## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Even though FOEs have been used to completion only a limited number of times over the course of the pilot phase and have caused mixed reactions, the track record of this pilot initiative is satisfactory. It was launched as a pilot, knowing that adjustments would perhaps be needed to improve its relevance and effectiveness.

The FOE framework may not be the best tool to generate innovation as designed, because there is no lessons learned process and no horizontal learning. **It is however a relevant tool to meet the short-term needs of surrounding communities and to increase MSF's acceptance, and as such should be continued.**

In order to increase its effectiveness and usage, slight adjustments could be done to its framework, to downplay some of the reported barriers to usage and perceived weaknesses.

⇒ **Recommendation 1:** Communicate on implemented FOEs to give examples of potential use

⇒ **Recommendation 2:** Adopt a one-year rolling criteria

⇒ **Recommendation 3:** Add a self-assessment section in the FOE template

⇒ **Recommendation 4:** Propose an informal technical consultation system

### 4.1 COMMUNICATE ON IMPLEMENTED FOES TO GIVE EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL USE

MSF-OCB should take the opportunity of the end of the FOE pilot phase to communicate to all projects and Missions on FOEs that were implemented in 2016 and 2017. The communication could include case studies presented during the PCC and CGEM and available on OOPS, an article on Contact to take stock of the initiative as well as regular updates published in this forum or another.

While communication was reported to have been sufficient, potential users and stakeholders would have liked to have access to examples, to help them understand how criteria are being met and what type of activities have been implemented. The combination of the lack of examples and of a loose framework was mentioned as a deterrent to implement FOEs.

### 4.2 ADOPT A ONE-YEAR ROLLING BUDGET CRITERIA

MSF should change the budget year criteria in the framework to a one-year rolling budget criterion. It would indeed allow field staffs starting a mission during the second semester not to automatically dismiss the FOE as being not feasible within a budget year. And it would reduce the pressure felt by FCs who launched it late to have to complete the activities before the end of the budget year.

De facto, this criterion is already in effect because a field coordinator could very well plan for activities over two years. He or she would simply have to make two requests and produce two templates. Furthermore, it was reported during the data collection that a FC could ask for a time extension if activities couldn't be completed within the budget year, which would be studied on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, while changing this criterion is mostly packaging, it would certainly reduce the pressure felt by FCs and encourage FCs who preferred not to implement a FOE by fear of not being able to complete its activities on time



### 4.3 ADD A SELF-ASSESSMENT SECTION IN THE FOE TEMPLATE

MSF-OCB could adapt the FOE template to add a self-assessment section on the compliance with the FOE framework (See Figure 3). When thinking of an initiative, the field coordinator and his team would assess if the design fits with the criteria. They could also update this section after the implementation in order to identify potential drifts. This self-assessment would be useful to minimise some of the perceived weaknesses and barriers to usage:

- For intended users first, providing them with an opportunity to reflect on the criteria and to decide if advice is needed on the design and implementation of the activities.
- For other stakeholders who fear the framework is not being followed. This would help them identify the logic behind the initiative.
- For capitalisation purposes, allowing for a monitoring and analysis of the understanding of the soft criteria. If the latter were to be recurrently misunderstood, the framework could be adapted/detailed in a later course. This would require all FOE templates be sent to a focal point in MSF-OCB's HQ, which is not currently the case.

### 4.4 PROPOSE AN INFORMAL TECHNICAL CONSULTATION SYSTEM

In addition to the self-assessment section, MSF-OCB could set up an informal consultation system, which would not act as a validation process, but rather as a guidance mechanism available for field staff willing to have assistance on the design and implementation of their FOE. FOEs could be for instance discussed during the quarterly SMT meeting that the bureaucratisation review suggests.

While the autonomy given to field staff is what is praised the most about the initiative, it is also what creates the most concern, even among intended users. Implementing activities, without any oversight or guidance, can be seen as challenging and as counter-productive, because it is difficult to think out-of-the-box and to pilot activities alone. Arguably, for activities outside the scope of the project with innovative components, the outcomes would be of better quality if the design of the activity were the result of a collective brainstorming, where people with different background and experience have shared opinions.

As explained in the framework and in the communication made on the FOE, although its responsibility lies with the field coordinator, the latter can consult with its coordination, cell and HQ. This did happen regularly with field coordinators contacting Beatrice Barbot, their coordination and cell. However, these informal contacts were in the realm of existing hierarchy and decision-making process, which sometimes prevented the FOE from taking place and/or led to tensions.

To avoid this shortcoming, MSF-OCB could for instance advise intended users to consult with experts, internal or external to the organisation, and/or propose intended users to get in touch directly with the technical departments. If this consultation was mandatory, it is likely that the framework would be more likely supported by cell and coordination teams.

GENERAL ASPECTS
Title of the initiative Proposed by
MINIMUM BACKGROUND INFORMATION
General context and health overview Health and/or Humanitarian Needs
COMPLIANCE WITH THE FOE FRAMEWORK
Direct needs of communities Within the Scope of OPS Prospect Within MSF Charter Avoid any form of long term commitment Negative impact on the normal activities Same quality and standards as the project Not compromise MSF reputation
ACTIVITY SUMMARY
Operational Rational Expected results Budget Timing Human Resources
SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Support type & mechanism
ACTIVITY REPORT & LESSONS LEARNT
Results achieved Lessons learnt Feedback on the new FOE

Figure 3: FOE template with self-assessment section

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Terms of Reference



Subject/Mission	Field Opportunity Envelope (FOE) Review
Evaluation Sponsor/ Owner	OCB Operational Directors
Evaluation Focal Point (HoM?)	Beatrice Barbot
Primary Stakeholders/ Evaluation Communication Group	Operational Direction, Cells, Mission Coordination, Project Coordination (including missions & projects using FOE and those not). <i>To be elaborated during inception phase</i>
Starting Date	April 2017
Duration	8 weeks
Time period to be evaluated	Since FOE was launched (18 months ago)

#### CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The idea of this Field Opportunity Envelope (FOE) was born during the Operations workshop that took place in April 2015, where approximately 60 people with different MSF background and experience came together to discuss what MSF can do better and more. During the discussion on “what can be done more”, the idea to create a field envelope came out, different from the already existing COPRO system, as a field-based enabler to open new activities/initiatives to react faster to local short-term needs of the population. This initial idea was then discussed during the Coordinators Week 2015 and during other smaller meetings and resulted in the decision to go ahead with this new plan. The different comments that came out were taken into account to create the framework of the FOE contained in the handbook (see attached).

The Field Opportunity Envelope has been created for the projects at field level. The objective is 1/ to give a stronger incentive for field team to explore and reflect on humanitarian needs in their environment; 2/ to reinforce field driven initiatives and connect faster action to needs of the population close to us; and 3/ to give space to all team members for out-of-the-box thinking and to innovation.

In practice all team members can propose an initiative/activity that addresses the humanitarian need of the population living in the area of the project without having to go through the normal approval process.

#### REASON FOR EVALUATION / RATIONALE

FOE is in a pilot phase. A commitment to review the FOE was made at the outset, scheduled for 18 months into implementation (mid 2017) to see;

*if and how it was used, if it had the expected outcome, and understand any concerns it encountered.*

At this point it can be said that the use of the FOE has been less than would have been expected based on the perceived interest at the time of discussing the idea, so the review takes on extra importance to understand if the underuse of the FOE can be linked to the relevance of it, how it's framed, or linked to other barriers.

#### OVERALL OBJECTIVE and PURPOSE

Conduct a light formative assessment of the Field Opportunity Envelope Pilot initiative to understand overall effectiveness in achieving the intended objective and identify key learning to inform its future orientation.

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## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES / Evaluation questions

To be proposed by evaluation consultant and agreed with SEU to meet above objective, but to include questions linked to the overall relevance of the initiative, the appropriateness of its framework, and its overall effectiveness.

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## EXPECTED RESULTS

- [Short report based on SEU standard \(max 20 pages\)](#)
  - Including brief description of FOE born projects
- [Short inception report based on SEU standard](#) (optional – only if useful for evaluators)
- Key recommendations on the future of the FOE in the MSF OCB Operational context (maximum of 5)
- Presentation to OCB Operations on outcomes of review (x1)

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## TOOLS AND METHODOLOGY PROPOSED

Agreed that the light review process will take advantage of the following methodology:

- Review the framework documents for the FOE
- Kick off/ Inception meeting in Brussels with Beatrice (26<sup>th</sup> April)
- FOE carousel at coordination week (suggestion of 29<sup>th</sup> April)
- Mapping of timing, locations and ‘typology’ of projects where FOE was triggered
- Targeted informant interviews with primary stakeholders where FOE was triggered
- Representative or random selection of primary stakeholders where FOR was not triggered

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## RECOMMENDED DOCUMENTATION:

This is a minimum for starting the review:

- FOE Framework document (attached)
- Project Documents for FOE born projects
- Final report for Bureaucratisation Review



## ANNEX II: EVALUATION MATRIX

EVALUATION QUESTION	HOW JUDGMENT WILL BE FORMED	LIKELY SOURCES	METHODS
<p>What is the track record of the Field Opportunity Envelopes (FOE) 18 months after its creation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why, when, how and where have they been used?</li> <li>Are they used as specified in the framework?</li> <li>Did FOEs meet their objective to meet needs, to increase timeliness and to foster field teams' innovation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of FOEs versus number of projects</li> <li>- FOE process as laid out in the original framework versus process used in practice</li> <li>- Perception of Field Coordinators and Heads of Mission of the relevance of the projects supported by the FOE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk review</li> <li>- Access to OOPS</li> <li>- Interviews with Field Coordinators</li> <li>- Group discussions with Heads of Mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysis of available FOE born projects documentation</li> <li>- Triangulation of qualitative data collected from Field Coordinators and Heads of Mission</li> </ul>
<p>Why have FOEs been underused?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are intended users aware of the FOE existence and of how it works?</li> <li>How appropriate and effective do intended users find the FOE framework?</li> <li>What are the perceived weaknesses and barriers to usage of existing and intended users?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of downloads of FOE documentation from OOPS</li> <li>- Mention of FOEs in MSF training materials</li> <li>- Time spent filling the FOE framework and related reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk review</li> <li>- Access to OOPS</li> <li>- Interviews with Field Coordinators</li> <li>- Group discussions with Heads of Mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysis of available FOE born projects documentation</li> <li>- Triangulation of qualitative data collected from Field Coordinators and Heads of Mission</li> </ul>
<p>What changes made to the FOEs could increase its usage?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are existing users with FOEs?</li> <li>What changes would existing users like to propose, if any?</li> <li>What changes to the FOE framework would incite intended users to use FOEs?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Field Co expressed satisfaction of the FOE process</li> <li>- Recommendations from the informants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews with Field Coordinators</li> <li>- Group discussions with Heads of Mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Triangulation of qualitative data collected from Field Coordinators and Heads of Mission</li> </ul>

### ANNEX III: DESK REVIEW

- FOE's Envelope Handbook VF\_0 EN.pdf
- FOE's Activity Report Template.doc
- FOE 2016 per project.xlsx
- FOE\_Activity\_Report\_BILI\_RCD.pdf
  - BUDGET FIELD ENVELOPPE.xlsx
  - Chronogramme.xls
- FOE\_Activity\_Report\_GOMA\_RDC\_Clinique\_Mobile\_Enfants\_des\_rues.doc
  - MSF\_OCB\_Rapport d'évaluation Enfants des rues\_Goma\_Mars\_2017.pdf
- FOE\_Activity\_Report OOD 2016.doc
- OOD FOE 2016.doc
- FOE interview for contact.doc
- 60 FOE budget file v1.4.1 OOD.xls
- FOE 2016\_Activity\_Report\_SGBV\_final - Finalization.doc
- FOE\_Activity\_Report\_SGBV\_final.doc
- FOE\_Activity\_summary sheet Mutare.doc
- MTR FOE 2016.doc
- Rheumatic\_Heart\_Disease\_project summary\_2016.pptx
- 20162809\_AF\_KH\_FOE\_CHC\_support\_2016\_Final.doc
- FOE\_SRH\_support\_Khost\_2016\_Final\_V1.pdf
- 20161205\_AF\_KH\_FOE\_CHC\_support\_Final.pdf
- 20161101\_AF\_KH\_FOE\_construction\_rehab\_agreement.pdf
- 20161205\_AF\_KH\_FOE\_Construction\_Overview\_December.pdf
- MSF Prospect 2014-2016.pdf
- AMENDMENT TO THE OCB 2014 – 2016 OPERATIONAL PROSPECTS.pdf
- PCC OPS prospects & plans 2017-02.ppt
- Overall Bureaucratisation report.pdf

## ANNEX IV: FOE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

The interview is meant to last between 45 to 60 minutes and will begin with an explanation of the interview's purpose and the interviewee's rights, including confidentiality.

- Describe your professional path? (How long have you worked for MSF for? And other organisations at all?)?
- Can you describe your project?
- How have you heard about Field Opportunity Envelop (FOE)? Could you please explain me how they work?
- Have you used or thought of using FOE? For which type of initiative? When & where?

### If the interviewee has implemented a FOE

- Why did you use a field opportunity envelope?
- Who within the field base team is at the initiative of the FOE?
- Did your FOE meet its intended outcome?
- How appropriate and effective do you find the FOE framework?
- How satisfied are you with the FOE?
- According to you, what are the strengths of the FOE?
- According to you, what are the weaknesses and barriers to usage of the FOE?
- What recommendations would you like to make on the FOE?

### If the interviewee thought of implementing a FOE but didn't

- Why in the end didn't you use the FOE?
- How appropriate and effective do you find the FOE framework?
- According to you, what are the strengths of the FOE?
- According to you, what are the weaknesses and barriers to usage of the FOE?
- What recommendations would you like to make on the FOE?

### If the interviewee didn't use a FOE

- How appropriate and effective do you find the FOE framework?
- According to you, what are the strengths of the FOE?
- According to you, what are the weaknesses and barriers to usage of the FOE?
- What recommendations would you like to make on the FOE?

### All respondents:

As part of the data collection, we conducted group discussions on the FOE with HoM and MedCo during the HoM week. Respondents reported common FOE weaknesses and I would like to know what's your take on them

- Do you think FOE creates/increases tension between the field base and the coordination? How so? Why?
- Do you think that the communication made around the FOE is insufficient and misplaced? How so? Why?
- Do you think that the FOE framework criteria are not all met by field base?
- Do you think having a validation process to ensure FOE criteria are being met would be useful?

**Stockholm Evaluation Unit**

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