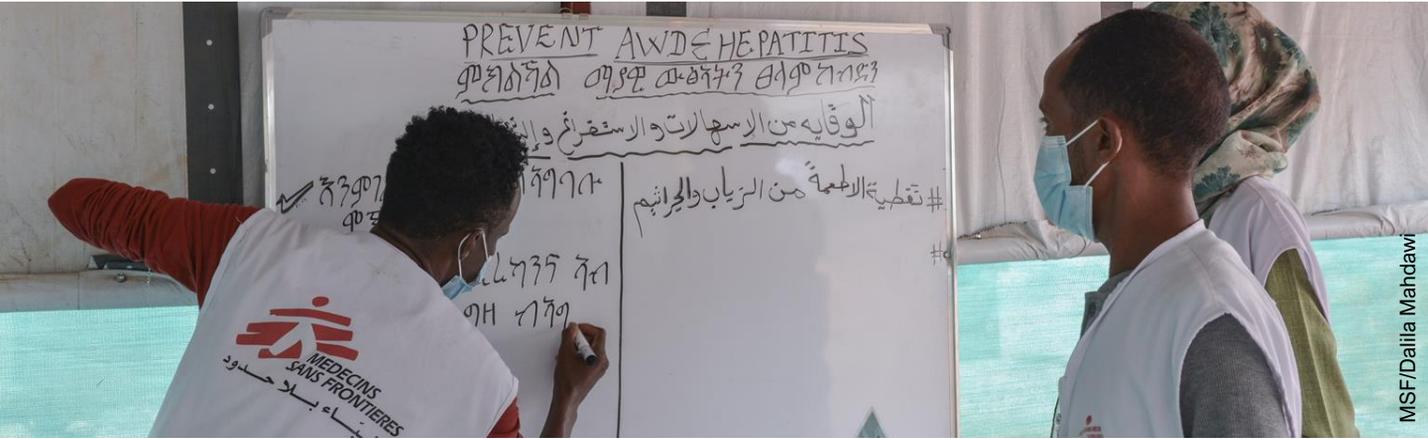


# The Common Frame

## National Staff Intersectional Remuneration & Benefit Policy Framework



MSF/Dalila Mahdaw

This explainer summarizes the contents of the National Staff Intersectional Remuneration and Benefit Policy Framework, commonly referred to as the “Common Frame”. MSF staff can access the full document on the HR Portal internal sharepoint or ask their HR department to provide them with a copy.

### A Common Remuneration Policy & An Intersectional Commitment

The “Common Frame contains all the policies regarding remuneration and benefits that have been approved by all MSF operational centres. In 2008-2010 MSF developed a common policy for all its **national staff (now called locally-hired programme staff\*)** and revised it in 2021.

This Intersectional HR Policy Framework is intended to ensure a common interpretation of being a “Responsible Employer”, improve coherence towards external parties, and facilitate the process towards joint missions.

This document is meant to be used by all actors involved in design, implementation and maintenance of labour terms and conditions for national staff. The policy frame is the standing remuneration and benefits policy framework for locally-hired staff in all current and future MSF programme countries.

In addition to the MSF International reference field function grid ([IRFFG](#)) which ensures all positions are graded consistently, the intersectional policy frame **consists of five main areas**:

#### The Common Frame is:

- the reference used by all OCs in the process of aligning HR policies for locally-hired programme staff
- a reference common policy used as a minimum and maximum standard for HR management of locally hired programme staff through a concerted alignment process



\*This explainer sometimes retain the «national staff» denomination to conform with original documents.

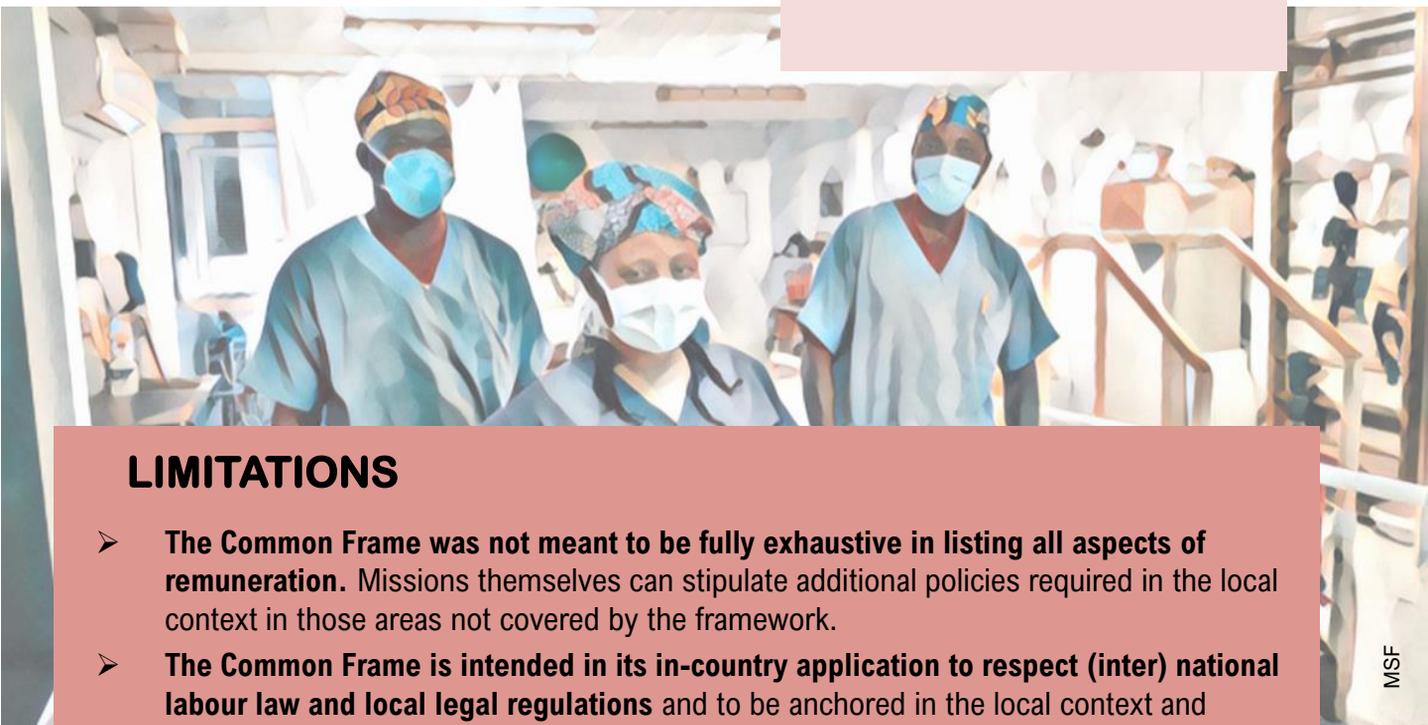
## HOW SHOULD THE COMMON FRAME BE INTERPRETED?

- Although the Common Frame covers locally-hired staff policies, it cannot serve as a document from which any (individual) rights can be derived. It is a guidance and directive to management.
- Actual provisions are at all times only laid down in Internal Regulations (or similar documents regulating a relationship between MSF and its employees) and local individual labour contracts concluded with the MSF representation in country.
- As such the document itself is not aimed at individual employees but only serves as a reference document for the management.
- Its content is summarized in this document.

The application of the Common Frame stretches across all MSF operational sections and their programme countries. It is designed for staff employed on a labour contract by MSF itself. **It thus excludes all other types of staff such as daily workers, consultants, service providers and staff receiving incentives.**

### LIMITATIONS

- **The Common Frame was not meant to be fully exhaustive in listing all aspects of remuneration.** Missions themselves can stipulate additional policies required in the local context in those areas not covered by the framework.
- **The Common Frame is intended in its in-country application to respect (inter) national labour law and local legal regulations** and to be anchored in the local context and 'translated' to an effective remuneration and benefits policy.



# REMUNERATION PRINCIPLES

The following organizational principles and values have impact on the locally-hired programme staff remuneration and benefits policy and provide a frame for it:

MSF must act as a socially Responsible Employer of national staff (IC\* resolution, 2004)

Promoting access to positions of responsibility (IC\* resolution, 2004)

Definition of Responsible Employer (IC\* approval, 2009)

- ✓ Decent and adequate living conditions
- ✓ Remuneration commensurate with responsibilities
- ✓ Promoting internal mobility
- ✓ Fair treatment and transparent HR policies
- ✓ Promoting commitment to the organization

(Improving) Accountability (IC\* resolution, 2007)

Furthermore, the Common Frame takes fully into account the **wider international labour regulations and principles as set by the International Labour Organization (ILO)**.

In its application the Common Frame is anchored in each country's specific legal and labour market context. **The MSF policy is always subsidiary to the local labour legislations when it comes to minimum standards and at no point can disregard local regulations or legislations.**

**When local regulations in certain countries fall short the MSF policy is aimed at securing a baseline for MSF acting as a socially responsible employer**, applying its own norm setting but not violating the countries' legal context. As such MSF tailors its local remuneration and benefits policy to the context of the various mission countries.

**Thus mission countries can deviate from the Common Frame in their own policy (common to all OCs present) if legal and other contextual reasons exist and argumentation is supported through a validation process.**



*\*The International Council (IC) was MSF's highest authority until 2011 when the International General Assembly and the International Board were created after a governance reform.*

# SALARY POLICY - PRINCIPLES

The MSF salary policy for locally-hired programme staff is based on the following main principles:

## Remuneration Commensurate with Responsibilities and Market Value

MSF primarily remunerates on grounds of job weight. Jobs are ranked on the basis of the MSF job evaluation or classification system, the MSF International Reference Field Function Grid (IRFFG).

Remuneration is based on position.

Salary grids are built on MSF's positioning in the labour market of the country assessed by regular benchmarking and the operational needs of an MSF mission.

As a consequence, the salary progression between grades (salary grid) is firstly a result of the job ranking. This is the *internal equity* principle which promotes '*the heavier the weight of the job, the higher the pay*', but can be adapted, if necessary, to the market (and not vice versa).

MSF aims to be modest in its remuneration. We interpret this as being around the median of the labour market in the country.

## Ensure compliance with local Labour Law, Fair treatment of staff and Transparent HR Policies

A pay scale should reflect the Employee's current salary as well as future prospects.

'Same job level, same pay scale

The lowest paid salary should at least comply with the legal minimum wage.

## Promote Commitment to MSF/Provide the Opportunity to Professionally Evolve and Progress

A pay scale should involve salary ranges that accommodate for differentiation in relevant working experience with MSF and the possibility for salary growth

## Allowing for Decent and Adequate Living Conditions

The lowest paid salary should at minimum comply with established poverty lines.

Cost of living and/or minimum living wage information will be used as an additional component in setting the lowest paid salary, in addition to the market data collected

# SALARY POLICY – GUIDELINES\*

The principles described in the previous page translate into the following rules and guidelines to define salaries:

## International Reference Field Function Grid (IRFFG)

Remuneration is based on position hierarchy rating system: the higher the responsibilities, the higher the function and therefore the higher the remuneration. Internal logic or ranking of function grid is leading if discrepancies exist with market realities. The salary curve can be adapted to market if necessary.

There will be no differentiation between professions at similar level in the function scale (unless required for recruitment reasons - see 'position/location/salary adjustment').

### Referencing Salaries

When setting the starting salaries (Year 0) per level:

Not lower than the legal minimum wage

Not lower than the World Bank standard for the extreme poverty line; Not lower than the country poverty line minimum local living wage information if available;

No position lower than the 25th percentile

The main reference will be the median of the market

### Salary Grid Tension

There is no fixed rule regarding tension in a country salary grid. Tension refers to differences in basic pay levels between highest paid and lowest paid functions.

Although there are no fixed rules regarding progression between function levels, it is typically between 10% and 30%.

When recruiting a former Employee of any MSF section, the former Employee's period of service is taken into account for calculation of loyalty.

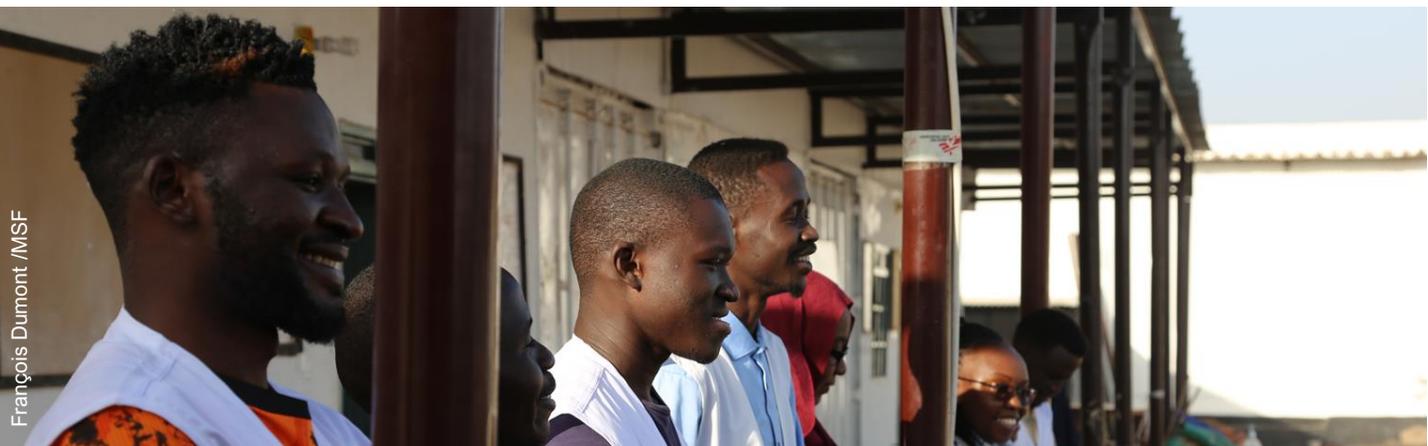
### Position/Location/Salary Adjustment

For positions that cannot be paid according to the MSF function and salary grid systems (due to labor market reality), 'Position Salary Adjustments' can be considered.

## Ad interim positions

In case an employee takes a higher position ad interim at 100% for more than one month, his/her salary is topped-up to reach the salary of the interim position (including his/her loyalty). This should not be mixed with splitting the responsibilities of one position among several employees during short periods (holidays, one-week sick leave etc.)

\* Note: As for the rest of this brochure, these are extracts from the Common Frame. The full document is accessible to staff through the MSF internal SharePoint.



# SOCIAL COVERAGE\*

As a responsible employer, MSF will provide ‘social coverage’ (i.e. the set of recommended benefits) for staff under an MSF contract only, and this coverage will start from the first day of work.

- The ‘social coverage’ (i.e. the set of recommended benefits) MSF can provide is subsidiary to national (social security) provisions.
- The ‘social coverage’ policy is aimed to help an Employee mitigate for risks and contingencies that would prevent him from working and earning his wages (such as sickness, accidents, death or disability occurring as a result of either, whether or not linked to his work).
- The ‘social coverage’ policy does not apply to daily workers, Ministry of Health (MoH) staff and staff under incentives as those groups do not have an employment contract with MSF and on that basis are not eligible for coverage provided to staff.

## Benefits Related to Sickness, Disability and Death of an Employee

These are standards MSF aims to ensure taking into account local legal provisions.  
If these are lower, MSF complements.

Temporary Disability/Illness		Permanent Disability		Death	
Work-related	Non Work-related	Work-related	Non Work-related	Work-related	Non Work-related
100% of salary and medical coverage to a maximum of 18 months	Medical coverage maintained for 12 months. Salary maintained for a maximum of 12 months according to the following schedule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st – 4th month: 100% salary</li> <li>• 5th – 8th month: 75% salary</li> <li>• 9th – 12th month: 50% salary</li> </ul>	<b>Permanent total disability:</b> Lump sum of 48 months of salary at the end of the contract (calculated on the basis of basic salary+loyalty)	<b>Permanent total disability:</b> Lump-sum of 6 months of salary at the end of the contract (calculated on the basis of basic salary+loyalty)	Lump sum of 48 months of salary paid to dependents (calculated on the basis of basic salary+loyalty)	Lump-sum of minimum 3 months and maximum 6 months of salary paid to dependents (calculated on the basis of basic salary+loyalty)
		<b>Permanent partial disability:</b> Payment of 48 months of salary to % of disability (calculated on the basis of basic salary+loyalty)	<b>Permanent partial disability:</b> Payment of 6 months of salary to % of disability (calculated on the basis of basic salary+loyalty)	This lump sums and the severance payment are not cumulative. Contribution to burial expenses if it is a custom in the mission country.	This lump sum and the severance payment are not cumulative.
		These lump sums and the severance payment are not cumulative.	These lump sums and the severance payment are not cumulative.		

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# HEALTHCARE COVERAGE\*

As a Responsible Employer and as a medical organisation, MSF will ensure access to health care for Employees under MSF contract and their dependents. The health care coverage will start from the first day of work.

## Overview Table of Health Care Coverage

These are standards MSF aims to ensure taking into account local legal provisions and other constraints (e.g., insurance products available). There may be some differences with specific local coverage in place.

	Employee	Dependents <sup>1</sup>	Daily Workers
<b>General</b>	MSF only supports through its policy in-country medical care; MSF health policy holds some exclusions; MSF provides medical care in kind or covers for medical expenses in full (100%)		No
<b>Medical examination at time of hire and periodically</b>	Yes	N/A	No
<b>Primary and specialist healthcare</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Pre-Post natal care</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Hospitalization</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Emergency Dental care</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Vision care (as in policy)</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>Continuation of ongoing medical treatment – work related accident or illness</b>	Up to 12 months after contract is terminated	Up to 6 months after employee contract is terminated	Emergency healthcare and possibly follow-up
<b>Continuation of ongoing medical treatment – non work related accident or illness</b>	Up to 6 months after contract	Up to 6 months after employee contract	No
<b>Out of country care</b>	No, only at discretion of MSF	No	No
<b>Long-term incubation work related professional illness</b>	Case by case	No	No

Daily workers, MoH staff or other staff under incentives do not have an employment contract with MSF, and on that basis are not eligible for health coverage provided to staff. Only in case of work-related accident MSF will provide daily workers with emergency health care.

<sup>1</sup> Officially registered with MSF administration. MSF sets a limit to its responsibility by defining/limiting the definition of dependants to the staff member's spouse and children. Included are: Official spouses; Non-married couples living together provided they have official documents to prove this; Children until legal age for adulthood or if none, 18 years; Children physically or mentally dependent. Policy applies while Employee is under contract, and up to 6 months after Employee has died.

\* The Common Frame has more guidance and additional elements linked to healthcare coverage after the end of contract.

# OTHER BENEFITS AND PROVISIONS\*

## 13<sup>th</sup> Month, End of Year Bonus

Unless it is a legal obligation or an established local practice, MSF does not pay individual bonuses or thirteenth salary. In any case, all elements of remuneration, including year-end bonuses, are taken into consideration in the remuneration benchmarking.

## Working Hours

The maximum working time is 48 working hours per week for Employees on a normal schedule and based on a full-time employment.

Shift work: monthly average of weekly working time not exceeding 48 hours per week. Exceptions for guards will be up to a max of 60 hours per week (when legislation allows).

## Overtime (OT)

Overtime shall only be paid or compensated when it is work performed beyond the number of normal working hours defined in the Employee's contract. MSF will encourage Employees to take an equivalent amount of time off within the current month, to compensate for OT worked. If not legally possible OT should be paid.

Rate of pay: ILO provisions should be followed, unless the national labor law provides OT rates.

## Compensation if Termination of Contract by MSF or Closing Down of Mission/Project

In the event of closure of a project or reduction/reorganization of activities (individual or collective redundancy) decided by MSF, a closure plan must be proposed to accompany any layoffs, to include measures and provisions to help with reclassification and exit support (finding other job, training etc.).

Compensation to be considered is one month salary per year of service capped at 10 years (which includes any obligatory legal requirements) and based on last basic salary (including loyalty), for employees employed without interruption for more than 12 months regardless of the type of contract.

## Retirement

MSF will follow legal obligations of country: legal procedure to follow in case of retirement; legal mandatory allowances/benefits to be paid by the Employer etc. Retirement is a legitimate motive for contract termination that should be distinguished from resignation or redundancy. If no legal compensation for retirement exists refer to end of contract compensation above.

## Allowances: transport, housing,

MSF will not pay any allowance unless it is justified by concrete needs and other allowances carefully studied and approved by the HQ, required by the national law, or exceptionally, if practiced customarily in the country.

## LEAVES

### Paid leaves

MSF employees on a full-time contract are entitled to five (5) full weeks of paid leave per complete year of work, calculated on the basis of working days regardless if it is a 5- or 6-day working week. In practical terms, this gives a minimum of 25 working days of paid leave (for a 5-day work week) up to 30 working days (for a 6-day work week) per complete year of work.

Paid leaves are not accrued in case of unpaid leave and sick leave of more than 4 months

Paid leave days are in addition to all officially published public holidays announced during the calendar year. Work performed on public holidays will be compensated.

### Circumstantial leave

Each country will set its own policy, according to legal provisions and local customs. Unless required by law, the policy should not exceed a maximum of 13 days, between all the different circumstances included.

### Maternity Leave

Leave granted to a female Employee for the delivery and initial care of her new-born. The leave can commence before delivery and will in any event extend after to total maximum of 14 weeks.

### Support to relocation of employee

MSF can provide support to Employees who on MSF's request have to relocate to a (new) work location from their place of residence and/or previous work location.

MSF can provide means or reimburse costs made for the transportation to the new work location.

Depending on the context and situation, on a case-by-case basis, MSF can provide housing accommodation, cost-of-living allowance or reimburse other expenses related to the relocation.

\*This section is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all benefits and regulations that can exist. MSF will in principle, in all mission countries, limit itself to the benefit regulations as formulated in the Common Frame. Next to that, in a specific country, benefits can exist that are mandatory to be applied by local law (E.g., pension benefit regulations).

