

GMDN Case Study – Medicine Sans Frontiers

Médecins Sans Frontières (www.msf.org/) provides essential medical assistance each year to millions of people affected by conflict, epidemics, disasters, or exclusion from healthcare.

MSF uses the Global Medical Device Nomenclature internally as part of its major international logistical operation that enables its life-saving work.

MSF was founded in 1971 in Paris by a group of journalists and doctors. It is a non-profit, self-governed, member-based organisation that today is a worldwide movement of more than 67,000 people. It was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999.

Often working in some of the world's most dangerous environments, MSF's teams are made up of tens of thousands of health professionals, logistic and administrative staff from numerous countries, all guided by medical ethics and principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality.

In 2018 it provided medical assistance in 74 countries around the world, including providing over 11 million outpatient consultations and undertaking nearly 105,000 major surgical interventions requiring anaesthesia.

To enable such a large volume of important medical work around the world, effective logistics are at the heart of every MSF operation. Part of this includes using the GMDN for identifying and labelling the thousands of different types of medical devices used by MSF's medical staff for treating diseases, injury and the effects of malnutrition.

Vinciane Cruyt, the Datastewards Coordinator in MSF's International Technical Coordination team, explains the three ways the GMDN helps MSF provide effective medical help around the world.

She says: "As we have medical specialists coming from many different countries, their usual name for each medical device can be very different. Using the GMDN ensures all devices are labelled clearly and with a uniform term to prevent any confusion.

"For instance, when a particular type of device is requested by one of our medical staff, we can check their term with the GMDN, helping us identify if the device is already one of the 10,000s of devices in our catalogue. We also use the GMDN as a reference in case discussions arise about a description on a device's label.

"The GMDN's terms indicate where materially different versions of a device exist, allowing us to get more information from the requester so they get exactly the right one. For instance, recently we received a request for an indirect ophthalmoscope, which is used for eye examinations. Looking in the GMDN we saw these can be binocular or monocular, line-powered or battery-powered, so this allowed us to make sure the device sent had exactly the right characteristics.

"We also use the GMDN's codes and terms in our discussions with manufacturers as it allows us to check if a device proposed by a manufacturer corresponds exactly to what MSF is looking for.

"We then use the GMDN definition to check if this corresponds to devices requested by our medical staff. This is particularly helpful as technical specifications are listed, enabling MSF to select the product features important for us.

“In fact the GMDN definition is very often used in the technical sheet we add to each of our medical devices listed in our catalogues to ensure they are clearly described and medical staff know exactly the purpose of the device wherever it is sent in the world”.