



# From the Executive Director

Sam Taylor

Executive Director, MSF Hong Kong



This year, MSF Hong Kong marks its 25th anniversary and – because of your generosity – the last two decades and a half has seen MSF Hong Kong go from just an idea, to a major force in the essential work MSF performs today in more than 70 countries worldwide.

I started work as Executive Director in late March this year, but it is clear to me that MSF Hong Kong has developed into a mature, dynamic and effective regional hub which will play an increasingly important part in the future of MSF. All of this success is down to your support, and I would like to ask you to continue on this humanitarian journey with us, as we evolve and grow.

From around 100 monthly donors in 1994, we now have more than 150,000. This demonstrates clearly the generosity and empathy of Hong Kong supporters, and long may that continue.

As well as financial support, a key part of MSF Hong Kong's evolution has been the identification and recruitment of the field staff who make the admirable decision to travel to places to work alongside our national colleagues in providing life-saving, and life-enhancing medical care. Our first field worker, Dr Edwin Salvador, was recruited and sent to Kenya in 1994. Last year, we carried out 157 mission departures. This represents phenomenal growth, but more needs to be done in identifying and placing the major medical and non-medical talent that Hong Kong and the region offer.

What started as an office of three people has grown significantly, with the varied activities we undertake from here. In 2002, we held our first orienteering competition, as a way to engage supporters and raise funds. Today, the competition has turned into a landmark Hong Kong event with over 3,500 participants, which raised over \$6 million this year. Similarly, we held our first MSF Day in 2004, and from small beginnings, we now have around 6,000 people who generously donate one day of their salary towards our work.

MSF Hong Kong has long been a regional base for the organisation, and as such, we opened an office in mainland China in 2007, and in 2016 registered in Taipei. Being a regional centre for MSF means that when a major disaster hits this part of the world, we are ready to respond. When Typhoon Haiyan devastated large areas of the Philippines, we were able to respond promptly and send a total of 38 regionally-recruited staff to work alongside our national colleagues.

We have become a major recruitment hub for the Asia Pacific region and working with our colleagues in Japan and Australia, plan to expand further, to allow more people to support us, and work with us in our projects.

The last 25 years have been a really important time for MSF Hong Kong, and again, none of the achievements we have made would have been possible without your help. Thank you for your trust and support, and I respectfully ask that you continue this essential support in the next 25 years.

# Going back to where it began

In the summer of 1994, the three-month old MSF Hong Kong launched its first support operation. A Cathay Pacific cargo plane, loaded with emergency supplies purchased with the donations received in Hong Kong, was deployed to Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). The materials were used to assist refugees fleeing the Rwandan genocide and affected by the ensuing cholera epidemic.

At about the same time, Dick van der Tak, who had just completed his MSF training, was on his first field assignment in that region. Dick did not come across the cargo from Hong Kong, but in the years that followed, he became one of the key persons leading the development of MSF Hong Kong, and helped spread the humanitarian spirit in the Southeast Asian region.



### **Spanning 25 years**

A Dutch lawyer by training, Dick worked in banking and business consulting after graduation. Having never forgotten the human suffering brought by the war in the former Yugoslavia, Dick decided to join MSF. He was first sent to Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire to assist the Rwandan refugees. He then worked as the Head of Mission in Bangladesh and Afghanistan. In 1999, he went to China, taking charge of the prevention and treatment programme of HIV and tuberculosis. Dick and MSF Hong Kong first crossed paths when MSF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

"That was a milestone. For the first time, the Hong Kong public recognised MSF as a humanitarian organisation having very meaningful impact on the lives of millions of people across the world. They wanted to know more about us. So, MSF Hong Kong invited me to come over and introduce our work in China." Visiting Hong Kong for the first time, Dick was particularly impressed by the small yet energetic MSF Hong Kong team, which was very active in seeking new opportunities.

After completing the field mission in China, Dick worked as the Humanitarian Affairs Advisor at the MSF Operational Centre in Amsterdam. He also became a member of the Board of Directors of MSF Hong Kong, contributing to the development of this young office. To Dick, MSF at that time was still a very western and white organisation, and he believed that MSF Hong Kong could be a platform to help the organisation transform into a truly international one. "I saw that many people in Hong Kong, mainland China and Southeast Asia were capable of taking part in international humanitarian work. I also felt that MSF needed to internationalise. and facilitate people from this region to join the organisation." Driven by this belief, Dick served as the Executive Director of MSF Hong Kong, from 2003 till 2010.



#### Instilling the humanitarian spirit

MSF Hong Kong started actively organising recruitment sessions in different cities in the region and encouraging professionals to join MSF. "Doctors, nurses and non-medics from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, China etc. have different cultures and backgrounds. They



MSF Hong Kong started its first support operation soon after establishment. Emergency supplies were sent to assist refugees fleeing the Rwandan genocide. ©MSF

help bring diversity to MSF. What they have in common is the humanitarian spirit. No matter where people come from, they have a strong commitment to get involved, to assist people who are in dire need. They also bring this spirit back to their home societies."

Not only did Dick witness highly motivated and dedicated professionals departing to the field one after the other, but he also met countless individuals who offered generous support to







Dick always remembers and cares for our patients, especially for the Rohingya he met when working in Bangladesh. @Cristina De Middel

MSF. "After the tsunami struck in 2004, a gentleman brought a shoebox full of medications to our office. Even though we had to decline his kind offer, we really appreciated that people were passionately trying to contribute in the best way they could." The tsunami was also a significant moment that highlighted MSF's core identity of accountability and transparency. "As MSF was overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from all over the world in just a few

days after the disaster, we took the extraordinary decision that we would no longer accept donations for the tsunami relief programmes. Most of our donors appreciated our honesty, but we were also criticised for not acting in solidarity with other organisations which were still welcoming funds."

### Caring for our patients

Having worked in many difficult situations, Dick knows that the

need of vulnerable populations is not limited to medical care and humanitarian assistance. "Perhaps it is because I used to work in Bangladesh. Once you have engaged with a population, they are always close to your heart. And the Rohingya at that time were still very much forgotten. Throughout the years, we continued our efforts to bring attention to their plight. Despite their continued suffering, at the very least, they are no longer as neglected as before."

From 2013 to 2018, Dick remained with MSF Hong Kong as a board member. Recently, he decided to follow his dream and return to the field. Dick is now the Head of Mission in Malaysia, assisting the refugees and migrants who have been stranded in the country, many of them Rohingya. "The reality of MSF is in the field. That's where our real action is." Twenty-five years later, Dick goes back to where he began his humanitarian journey.

"The reality of MSF is in the field. That's where our real action is."

Dick van der Tak



MSF's dedicated supporters MSF's dedicated supporters

**MSF Hong Kong** grew significantly over the last 25 years, thanks to the generous support of our donors, selfless contributions of our volunteers and all staff members. Here we feature their heartwarming dedication to the work of MSF.



### Rvan KO

Hong Kong field worker (surgeon) with MSF 11 years

"Thank you MSF for giving me chances during the past 10 years and more to experience the devastation and pains brought by poverty, natural disasters, wars and conflicts as well as epidemics. I am also glad to witness the joy of patients who are cured. I have no regrets in choosing to work with MSF from the very beginning."



### May SARAH

Indonesian field worker (logistician) with MSF 8 years

"I have worked with humanitarian organisations since the big tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia. I specifically enjoy working with MSF as I am always at the frontline as a humanitarian worker, working directly with the communities, especially during natural disasters, and able to help people who are most in need."



### **Rev ANICETE**

Filipino field worker (doctor) with MSF 11 years

"Some find this drive to engage with MSF early on with their professional life, others at a later time. While experiences differ from one person to another, a thing that is common is that most find the job rewarding in a very personal way. For sure there are frustrations along the way, but these make little successes in the field especially rewarding."



#### Grace HON

MSF donor since 2000. and volunteer of the Hong Kong office since 2016



"I appreciate MSF because it is a very independent organisation, treating everyone equally, despite religious and other affiliations. After becoming a volunteer at the MSF Hong Kong office, I occasionally meet the field workers in person. I admire their bravery in going to risky areas to save lives. I hope MSF continues to grow

with the times and gets recognised by more people."



Works at the MSF Hong Kong office for 15 years

"In MSF, what I appreciate the most is its principle of impartiality. Besides, it utilises most of the funds raised for people in need. All staff in the office are very passionate in the work they do. I see colleagues here as my sons and daughters, so I try my best to make them feel like family by creating a pleasant working environment."



Volunteers for the MSF Hong Kong office since 2011

"Everyone in the MSF Hong Kong office has a strong sense of mission. I hope it continues to contribute to the whole MSF movement in terms of fundraising, and serves as the bridge for more people who are dedicated to serve the world."





Kitty PANG

Worked at the MSF Hong Kong office for 11 years

"I joined MSF Hong Kong as a volunteer, and soon after became a full-time staff. At the beginning, the office was smaller that staff had close relations with volunteers. One of the most memorable part for me is the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. The donation enquiries kept flooding in on that day. I am so impressed because Hong Kong people are very sympathetic."

#### **Milestones**







were purchased locally,

were sent to Africa's

Great Lakes Region

to assist Rwandan

refugees.

MSF Hong Kong was established, during the time when it was providing medical care to Vietnamese boat people in camps in Hong Kong.

The first batch of field workers were assigned to Kenya and southern Sudan (now South Sudan): doctors Edwin Salvador, Chris Woo, and Kwong Chi-keung.

1996 Relief materials, which

Started lobbying the Hong Kong Hospital Authority (HA) for more flexibility for its employees to take leave for humanitarian work. HA made it a policy in 2000 to allow its staff to take a one year no-pay leave to carry out relief work overseas.



Supported MSF emergency teams to carry out humanitarian work in many provinces, including Anhui, Guanaxi, Guizhou, Hebei, Hunan and Zhejiang.



MSF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, further establishing it as one of the world's leading medical humanitarian organisations and earning the respect of the Hong Kong public.



MSF Orienteering Competition (OC) support the global MSF's was launched to raise advocacy which opposed awareness and funds for MSF. The OC companies from suing the enabled participants South African government to experience the challenges faced by medicines for reasons of MSF field workers on public health. Over 5,300 the scene of crises.

Made significant direct

operational support to

the Typhoon Haiyan

emergency response

contributing largely with

financial and human

in the Philippines,

resources.



The first MSF Day was A tsunami triggered launched. MSF Day is an annual campaign calling on the public to donate a day's income to the work of MSF. The event is a

fundraising event.

by an earthquake in the Indian Ocean hit countries in South Asia, resulting to many casualties. MSF Hong Kong sent 13 field major MSF Hong Kong workers to the severely hit Aceh Province in Indonesia, and raised over HK\$20 million for

the survivors.



Launched the exhibition "No Medicines for Patients?" when the WTO Ministerial Conference was held in Hong Kong. The purpose of the campaign is to advocate for increased access to essential medicines for patients in developing countries.



2006

Over 8,000 people The first MSF public visited the large public event was held in educational exhibition Macau which is a dubbed "Refugee photo exhibition on the Camp in the City" at forgotten war in the Kowloon Park. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Registered a

2007

representation office in Guangzhou; and set up a presence in Beijing four years later.

Recorded a total of 100 mission departures for the very

25 Key Milestones of MSF Hong Kong



Carried out 18 departures of field workers to the Sichuan earthquake response. MSF donated medical supplies and tents, provided support to hospital patients suffering from 'crush syndrome'. assisted a triage centre, and provided psychological Philippines, Indonesia, and care to survivors of the earthquake.

Organised the first public

petition campaign to

39 pharmaceutical

on the use of generic

of the nearly 300,000

from Hong Kong.

signatures collected were

Expanded its communications activities in Southeast Asia to strengthen capacity in crisis management and emergency response, focusing mainly in countries where our field workers come from - the Malavsia.

In response to the Africa, 23 field workers were deployed to join MSF teams on the ground to contain the epidemic.

MSF responded to

the SARS outbreak in

Vietnam, Hong Kong,

and mainland China.

42 staff died in the Ebola outbreak in West bombing of the MSF trauma hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan. MSF Hong Kong launched a special petition demanding for an independent investigation.

Taipei.

Registered an office in

Held the MSF Film Festival in various cities: Hong Kong, Singapore, Taipei and Macau to raise public awareness.

2018

Supported field operations for the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh, and the tsunami response in Indonesia.

first time.



2019

MSF Hong Kong's 25th anniversary.

#### At the frontlines

# Responding to emergencies

MSF Hong Kong started recruiting field workers soon after its establishment. Over the past 25 years, the global need for humanitarian aid has never died down, with the unprecedented number of natural disasters and epidemics. With public support, MSF was able to mobilise field workers and resources shortly after emergencies occurred in order to save lives.

# 2003

#### **SARS** intervention in Hong Kong

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) broke out in various parts of the world in 2003. It is a new infection caused by a kind of coronavirus which was not known before in medical literature. MSF helped fight SARS in Vietnam, Hong Kong, and mainland China. Six members of the emergency medical team were recruited by MSF Hong Kong.

SARS cases were first spotted in Hong Kong in late February, and the epidemic gradually eased by the end of May. The outbreak caused 299 deaths and infected 1,755 people (of which 386 were medical personnel).

MSF Hong Kong office donated 40 boxes of protection gears to the Hong Kong Hospital Authority on 9 April to support frontline health workers in combatting the SARS epidemic in Hong Kong. At the peak of the epidemic, MSF Hong Kong mobilised more than 100 medical and nursing students, as well as local doctors to deliver 41 community talks to educate the public on SARS prevention. The target groups were the elderly and ethnic minorities who had difficulties in getting information about SARS.



@MSF



# 2013

# Typhoon Haiyan ripped through the Philippines

On 8 November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan swept across central Philippines, causing devastation on an unprecedented scale. It claimed 6,300 lives and displaced some 4 million people. A total of 38 field workers were deployed by MSF Hong Kong to provide emergency assistance to communities in three of the worst-affected islands. Over 10 million Hong Kong dollars were raised in one month to support the response.

MSF Hong Kong staff made up the first MSF team arriving in Cebu to set the groundwork for the massive response in the immediate aftermath of the typhoon. Dr Natasha Reyes, the then-manager of the Emergency

©Sophie-Jane Madden

Response Support Unit (ERSU) of MSF Hong Kong was one of the first team members. Later she became the Emergency Coordinator of the response.

This is the first time that ERSU responded to an emergency project of such a large scale, after its set-up in 2011.



©Yann Libessart/MSF

# 2014-2016

#### **Ebola outbreak in West Africa**

Ebola broke out in the West African countries of Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone in 2014. In over two and a half years, more than 28,600 people were infected and 11,325 people died, including 500 medics. It was the biggest-ever Ebola outbreak in the world. MSF admitted 10,310 patients, of which 5,201 were confirmed Ebola cases, representing one-third of all WHO-confirmed cases.

A total of 38 MSF field workers and staff were deployed by Hong Kong in response to the outbreak, including Hong Kong engineer Lucy Lau, who worked as a logistician in Bo, Sierra Leone in October 2014. She was responsible for water and sanitation, and waste management.

"The Ebola project was much more stressful than other projects. Everyone stayed alert. To protect field workers from being infected, a special rule was set - field workers could only stay in the field for one month

at most. As we all wanted to do as much as we could within that limited time, many colleagues were exhausted at the end of the month," Lucy recalled.

The Ebola virus first appeared in 1976 and can kill up to 90% of those infected. After more than 40 years, there is still no proven cure. MSF is currently responding to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa and taking part in the clinical trials for four potential new treatments for Ebola.



## Witness the changes

After returning from the field, Tu Zheng was invited by the newly-established MSF representative office in Guangzhou to share her field experience in the photo exhibition held in October 2017. ©MSF



Tu Zheng, a gynaecologist who had worked in one of the best hospitals in Beijing for over ten years, departed from Hong Kong to Liberia in West Africa in March 2007. She is MSF's first doctor from mainland China. "For me, MSF means miracle," Tu said. Her belief has not changed when recalling her experience with MSF 12 years ago.

MSF started working in mainland China since 1988, to deal with natural disasters, provide basic medical care, and cure preventable diseases. However, since no communications team was there at that time, reports related to MSF were rarely seen. Tu got the information from the official website of MSF.

When Tu arrived in Liberia, she was welcomed by a land with limited medical resources and massive needs, where over 30,000 patients shared one doctor, and 30% of children have life spans not exceeding 5 years old. During the last month of Tu's assignment, she performed over 60 caesarean sections, sometimes 7 to 8 per day. Tu said, "You can get the reward for your work immediately in the field by hearing words of thanks from others, and witnessing the changes you brought to the community."

It was the third month of MSF's presence in Guangzhou when Tu came back to mainland China. MSF organised an exhibition at the Yue Xiu District Library, where Tu was invited to share her experience in Liberia. With her sharing, people better understood the concept of humanitarian relief.

A strong earthquake struck Wenchuan in Sichuan Province in 2008. In the same year, 12,000 people visited an MSF exhibition on global malnutrition crisis in Guangzhou. This shows that people are not only concerned about the disasters around them, but also become sympathetic towards people suffering in far away places.

In 2012, Jiang Li, a student of Tu Zheng, joined an MSF mission in Afghanistan.

MSF does not have medical aid projects in mainland China at the moment, but more and more talented doctors and professionals get to know MSF through Tu and Jiang. These field workers were assigned to projects in countries like Yemen, South Sudan and Sierra Leone.



# Small beginnings

Dr Chiels Chen-kun Liu, an anaesthesiologist, and Joanna Chiao-yu Cheng, an accountant, are MSF field workers from Taiwan. After returning from their missions, they both became crucial in MSF's development in Taiwan.

The Taipei office now has a four-year history dating from its opening. Through events like photo exhibition, the "Emergency Assignment" exhibition for giving audience a unique glimpse into the reality behind delivering emergency medical assistance, Film Festivals and "mapathon", the office introduces MSF to the public in Taiwan. This attracts a pool of active supporters who are willing to donate through Hong Kong office for MSF's work, join our events in Taipei and become volunteers in the office, which do help the Movement stand steadily on this island.

Chiels, the current president of MSF Hong Kong said that there were lots of challenges in setting up the Taipei office. Joanna, the manager of the Taipei office, mentioned that building up a team is not easy. MSF is enhancing the interactions and support between Hong Kong and Taipei offices so as to let the Taiwan team get familiar with their jobs more quickly.

Witnessing the Taipei office gradually on track in public communications and field worker recruitment, Joanna hopes MSF becomes one of the top three humanitarian organisations in Taiwan. She also looks forward to having more frequent exchanges with external sectors. She recalled a student with cancer who was proactively calling the office several times, wishing to join the MSF Film Festival in Taipei. Last year, the office made his dream come true. This also gave a huge boost to the team in raising public awareness of medical humanitarian aid in Taiwan.

### From Mei Foo to Sai Wan



The facade of the Hong Kong office in Sai Wan. ©MSF

Before moving to Sai Wan, the MSF Hong Kong office was located at Laichikok Bay Garden in Mei Foo for some time.

Anne Lung, at first an MSF office volunteer, became a full-time staff member of MSF since 1997. Looking back, she can still vividly recall the old days working at the Mei Foo office. "We greatly appreciated the owners for leasing the property at a nominal rent, so that MSF can focus the valuable resources raised to its frontline work," said Anne, "But the property was a kindergarten, not an office accommodation. As the staff number increased, we had no choice but to use the warehouse for extra office space. In the summer. we needed to consider first before turning on the air conditioners to ensure that the power consumption would not exceed the capacity."

At the Mei Foo office, the lighting was dim, the staff were only using second-hand computers, and only essential refurbishment was done.

Karen T Lee is one of our longterm donors who has witnessed the subsequent changes in the MSF Hong Kong office. More than a decade ago, Karen took the initiative to contact MSF as she inherited the giving spirit of her father. She admitted that she was a bit shocked in her first visit at the Mei Foo office. "It was so primitive that people seemed to be working in a cave," said Karen, "But when I had in-depth interaction with the staff members, I found them very professional and committed, and as I fully agree with the principles of MSF, I decided to contribute my part."

As time flies, the scope of work and the scale of projects supported by MSF Hong Kong have been expanding, and so did the size of the organisation, with new departments such as IT put in place to provide essential organisational support. The configuration of the Mei Foo office has long been overwhelmed, and at the end, the Hong Kong office was relocated to Pacific Plaza in Sai Wan in 2006. Anne said that the rent in Sai Wan was much cheaper than that of an industrial building unit in Cheung Sha Wan at that time. She

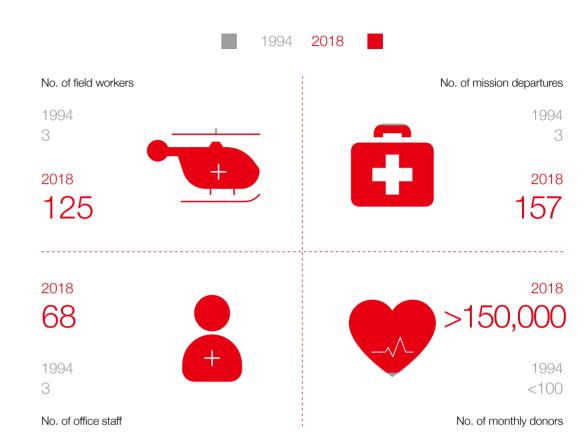
is thankful that moving to the Hong Kong Island did not discourage the volunteers from coming. On the other hand, she believes that the space of the Sai Wan office has provided the necessary "hardware" for MSF Hong Kong to develop into a regional office and gradually extended its core work in recent years.

While witnessing the development of MSF in Hong Kong, Karen is glad to see that the office has always retained its "feeling of home". She explained, "People are having lunch together like a family, and this tradition remains unchanged years after the relocation." As a long-term donor, she also has high hopes for another "tradition" of MSF. "I hope MSF will continue to do well in governance, to keep living up to the expectations of its supporters."



Anne Lung (left) has been with MSF Hong Kong since 1997 and has gone through the ups and downs with colleagues. ©MSF

## Thank you for being with us



"I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to donors and supporters who have been with us over the years. Every dollar donated represents your trust and recognition of our work in dire situations. Your generous gifts have been turned into countless lifesaving actions, delivering aid to people trapped in conflict and crisis, as well as helping to restore patients' dignity."

#### Jenny Tung

Director of Fundraising and
Development of MSF Hong Kong



Jenny Tung (second from the right), Director of Development and Fundraising of MSF Hong Kong, with the emergency team in Lubunga, northern Democratic Republic of the Congo. © Anthony Kwan



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