

Unit 9: Reading Practice

Médecins Sans Frontières

The international non-governmental organisation (NGO), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), or Doctors without Borders, was founded in 1971. Its purpose was to help people who needed medical aid following natural disasters, or political violence and wars.

In the beginning, there were only thirteen doctors and journalists. Since then it has expanded dramatically and has offices all over the world. By 1972 there were 300 volunteers, including the thirteen original founders. In that year, MSF's first task was to help people in Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua, after an earthquake. Between 10,000 and 30,000 people died. In 1974, staff went to Honduras after Hurricane Fifi and the flooding that followed. The following year MSF assisted in its first refugee crisis, helping Cambodians who had fled their country.

During the 70s, there were problems for the MSF staff on the ground; there was little preparation before staff set off on a mission; doctors had little support and supply lines were not reliable. At that time, there were no humanitarian logisticians, so ports and airports became blocked because of aid packages that had been sent from all over the world.

Now things have changed. The organisation employs more than 36,000 people around the world. These people support the medical professionals and include logisticians, heads of fundraising, coordinators, managers and accountants. There are also many thousands of volunteers.

All operation bases need a manager and other staff to raise funds and plan how to deliver aid where it is needed. The manager has to resolve problems, as well as decide on and implement fund-raising strategies. He or she must also ensure that projects don't go over budget.

NGO accountants assist the manager with the financial side of the operation. They have to work out the budget, make sure that staff are paid, pay bills and train local staff to control their own budgets. The manager and coordinator train volunteers to do their jobs. The coordinator develops and implements training programmes and is responsible for making travel arrangements and arranging meetings.

The organisation is continuing its work, helping sick and distressed people wherever help is needed.

1 Read the article and decide if the statements are *true* (T) or *false* (F).

- 1 MSF started in 1972. _____
- 2 The organisation was started by thirteen doctors and journalists. _____
- 3 It first helped refugees in 1974. _____
- 4 In MSF's first few years there were logistical problems. _____
- 5 MSF only employs medical personnel. _____
- 6 The manager can give permission for a project to exceed its budget. _____
- 7 The accountant is solely responsible for making sure all staff receive training. _____

2 Read the article again and choose the correct option.

- 1 In which year did MSF start delivering aid?
a 1971 b 1972 c 1974 d 1975
- 2 Where did MSF not work?
a Honduras b Cambodia c Nicaragua d Managua
- 3 Which job title was notably absent during the first refugee crisis?
a manager b coordinator c accountant d logistician
- 4 Whose responsibility is it to train local volunteers?
a manager and accountant c coordinator
b manager and coordinator d manager
- 5 Who is responsible for staff training programmes?
a manager and coordinator c accountant
b accountant and manager d coordinator
- 6 Whose job is it to buy flight tickets?
a manager b coordinator c accountant d logistician