

Terms of Reference – OCA ALFies (Associative Life in the Field focal points)

ALFies are experienced members of the MSF community, working in an OCA mission (or project) and supported as they lead on Associative life activities at mission/project level. Depending on the mission or project context, an ALFie may identify a support team of engaged individuals with whom they share ALF tasks and to which they delegate various aspects of the coordination of Associative life activities. Alternatively, an ALFie may take on the bulk of coordination themselves. This Terms of Reference outlines the role, responsibilities and support ALFies can expect.

Why do we have ALFies?

The Association is a key part of MSF's identity (for more information on the Association please check out the Souk in [English](#), [French](#), or [Arabic](#), password: msf / username: asso).

Having engaged, passionate, and informed members of the MSF Associative community will ultimately create a stronger MSF for the benefit of our patients and staff. In order to drive this engagement, each mission selects an ALFie who owns, and drives, Associative life.

The programme is owned and shaped by ALFies, with each ALFie being encouraged to feed into the process.

Moving forward, we hope to elevate the ALF programme, including representation at the OCA Council and Associative Standing Committee, to ensure that our leadership reflects the OCA workforce.

What makes a good ALFie?

MSF is what we make of it! Therefore, a good ALFie is a good MSFer. The OCA Association team ask missions to identify passionate members of their mission who are willing to lead on a variety of projects. It should be someone who is respected by their colleagues, someone who is comfortable speaking in front of people, someone who understands the importance of this role. The ALF programme is run in English and French, so it needs to be someone who is comfortable in one of those languages.

Most importantly, ALFies must want to drive positive change within MSF for the benefit of our patients and staff.

How long is the mandate of an ALFie?

The term of an ALFie is 'formally' two years. However, ALFies are encouraged to remain engaged and involved for as long as they want to. A new cohort of ALFies are trained every year, and previous ALFies mentor the new ALFies through a WhatsApp group.

ALFies can expect to devote several hours a week on associative life activities, depending on the level of interest in their mission/project and their own motivation. An agreement may be reached with a HoM/PC to allow for some time during working hours, but in principle an ALFie should be prepared to do some ALF-work outside of working hours.

What are the responsibilities of an ALFie?

ALFies take the lead to identify, develop, facilitate and evaluate associative life activities in their project or mission. All ALFies are expected to help organise the FADs in their mission (if happening) and to spread word of the OCA Café in their project and mission. ALFies are also encouraged to organise

satellite groups for the OCA Café.

What associative life activities look like in each mission or project may differ – this is for the ALFie and engaged staff to determine together. ALFies identify and link with interested colleagues in the project mission who can help to envision and to support associative life activities. ALFies proactively approach their line management to ensure space for associative life, including time and resources (meeting space, technological resources and a small budget) as needed. ALFies promote associative engagement and dialogue at project or mission level.

What support will ALFies be offered?

To facilitate the above, ALFies are provided by the OCA association team with a digital toolkit of associative life resources, which include associative presentations, films, resource-documents, planning documents, etc. These documents are aimed at helping ALFies understand the Associative structure of MSF; to understand what associative life activities can look like; to develop content for Associative discussions; to promote and present the Associative to interested colleagues; and to understand how to coordinate and facilitate an Associative event or activity.

The OCA Association team also put on webinars to engage and educate the ALFies on key aspects of MSF life, to help them deliver ALF as powerfully as possible.

The OCA Association team offer additional support by ensuring Country Management Team (CMT) members are briefed in the Association before being deployed to OCA projects, ensuring a steady flow of relevant information to ALFies, and organising engagement opportunities around important Associative moments (eg the OCA Café).

As mentioned above, it is expected that each OCA mission will devote a small budget to Associative life. The exact amount of this budget is at the discretion of the Head of Mission (HoM) / Project Coordinator (PC), and to be included in the overall mission/project budget at the ACP. The HoM/PC may want to liaise with the ALFie(s) in their mission/project to help determine an appropriate amount.

Reporting

While no formal reporting mechanism exists, ALFies should keep the OCA Association team up to date, and raise any concerns with them. Moreover, the HoM/PC may request an update on ALF activities and use of resources, which an ALFie should be able to provide.

Some reflections from a previous OCA ALFie

Please find a reflection from a previous ALFie below, written in 2020.

“Privileges

It was great experience that allowed me to get to know MSF better and take a closer look, understand how it works and of course meet many many great people from all around the globe doing their best to shape the MSF we know and pushing for the MSF we want it to be.

As I got to know more about MSF it made me like MSF as MSF not only as my employer and because I work there!

Challenges

I managed to challenge myself and overcome the old me. Come out of my comfort zone behind the desk to actually stand and speak out manage a discussion and learn to express my opinion and at the same

exact time respect and embrace the opinions of others.

Even if I managed to deliver the slightest information to one only MSFer on project, I still consider it a success and glad to contribute in MSF social mission.

It was very challenging to act and plan events with no official capacity or at least a title that is confirmed by mission.

Difficulties

Time, time was one of the biggest obstacles that held me back. As volunteer task it's really a lot of work and you mostly don't find interested people or people willing to help, so it gets really hard to plan and execute events and continues sessions. Especially where there is no guideline to follow a clear calendar event days to go with.

Sometimes when you have great support (like a supportive PC) it is much easier than opposing ones. And it allows you to achieve better.

Conclusion

With that being said, I would like to say I was honored to represent my mission as an ALFie. As I have completed 2 years, the time has come to pass the torch to the next ALFie. However that doesn't mean the end for me.

It will be my pleasure to keep spreading MSF spirit and contribute my voice to support MSF. Since ALFie is ongoing for as long as they feel enthusiastic and motivated to continue.

Remember, MSF is what we make of it."

Wrap Up

Please contact [Charlotte Lee](#) and [Stefanie Dressler](#) with any questions. We are here to support anyone connected to this programme to make it a success!