



The Innovation Partnerships Project

THE FINAL
REPORT

Summary

This report forms the backbone of the Innovation Partnerships Project (IPP) which was conducted between March 2018 and January 2019 in response to a perceived **lack of capacity within MSF to negotiate well with other sectors**. In particular, this was in regards to innovation projects which often include some form of product development and can therefore require **partnership structures which go beyond the standard transactional model** which MSF is used to. It is important for MSF to understand its strengths and weaknesses when entering such partnerships in order to protect itself and leverage the best possible outcomes for our patients.

In the writing of this report, we have therefore **investigated a broad range of past and ongoing MSF innovation projects** (60+), as well as materials and interviews with external organisations to get a better understanding of the models and possibilities available to us. These possibilities are explained in more detail in the accompanying **toolbox**, hosted within the MSF Sweden Innovation Unit (SIU) SharePoint space. These resources will continue to be improved and built upon as a means to provide MSF with a stronger negotiating hand and improved efficiency and savings.

The data within the IPP have been anonymised in order to ensure the stakeholders interviewed were happy to talk openly about their issues or concerns. Although some of the tools from this project will remain internal, this report is free to be shared and hopefully represents some recognisable concerns for other actors in the sector too.

The SIU wishes to thank all those who have contributed to the project to date and hopes that the work proves beneficial to MSFers and our beneficiaries.

Table of contents

1. Introduction [3]
2. The Innovation Partnership Project [6]
3. Problems Identified [9]
4. The Ideal Innovation Process [18]
5. Annexes [31]

About the authors

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Having worked in the field with MSF and other NGOs, Louis is well acquainted with the practical hurdles of innovating in the MSF context. In addition, previous experiences have included roles in the government, tech, business and research sectors. He received his MSc in Global Health from the Karolinska Institute, Sweden. Since starting with the SIU in 2016, he has held a number of roles: Case Manager, Innovation Lead, and Innovation Advisor. Having a broad background has allowed him to assess MSF's innovation work through different lenses and — hopefully — provide insights which prove useful in an organisation which can sometimes struggle when outside its immediate area of expertise.

Edvard Hall – *Contributing author*

Edvard started his career as a commercial lawyer working for Linklaters but has shifted towards the humanitarian field in the last few years. He is the founder and CEO of a number of R&D-based start-ups which work in the area of sustainable development and have also engaged with a few NGOs. Edvard holds an L.L.M and a BSc in Economics from Lund University, and an MSc in International Development and Humanitarian Emergencies from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

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Vyoma is a Visual and User Experience (UX) Designer based in Mumbai. She went to the French design school, Ecole Intuit.Lab, and began her career as a Graphic Designer at a design studio. She then took up further studies at Hyper Island in Stockholm. Upon graduation, she began working as a User Experience Designer for a social enterprise — Impactpool —, and consults with MSF SIU as well for design projects.

01

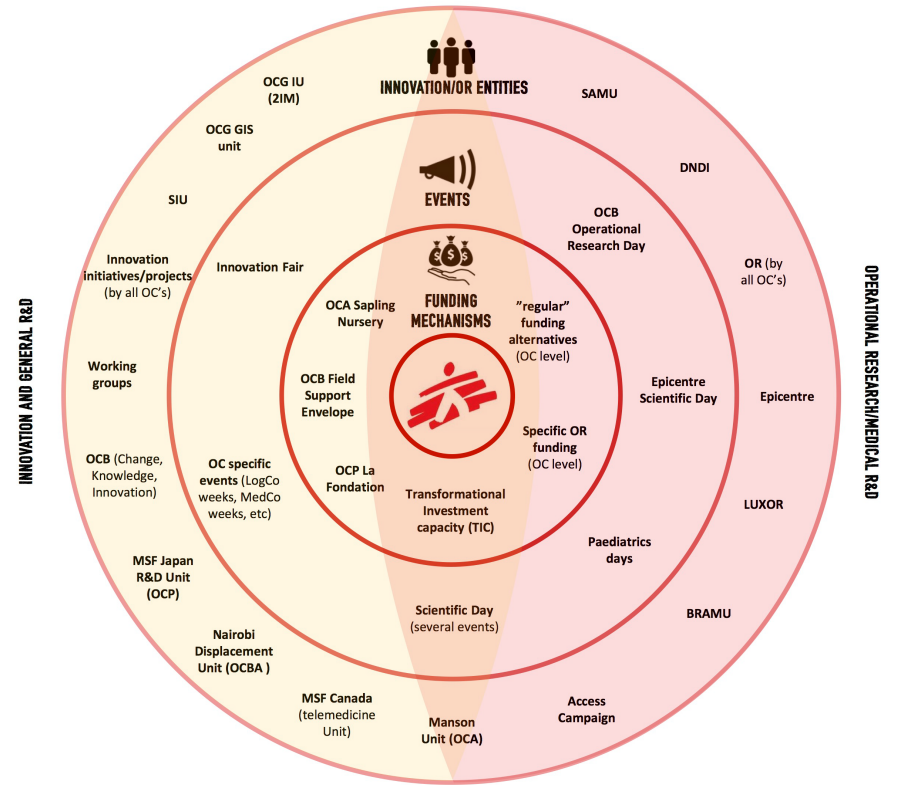
Introduction

Overview of Innovation in MSF

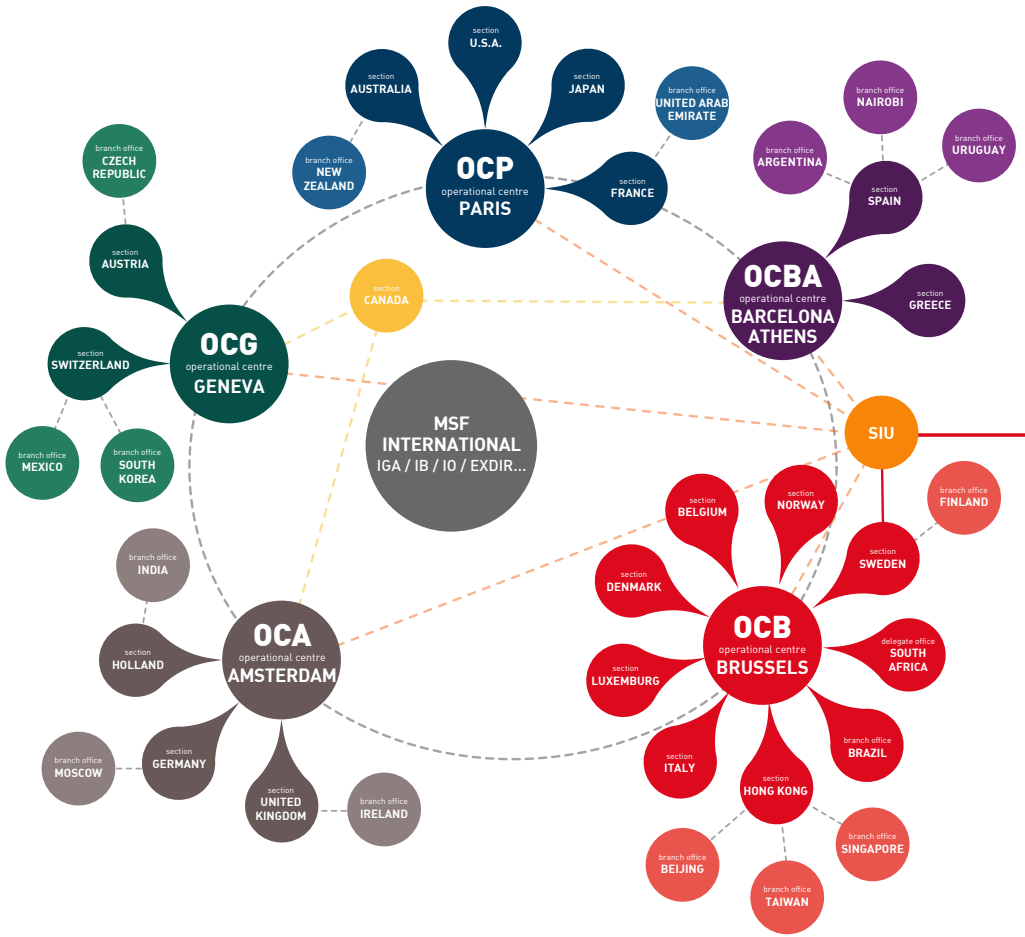
MSF is complex organisation, but one that has always prided itself on its problem-solving approach to challenges faced. In more recent years — in keeping with a general trend within the NGO sector — this has been formalised within the MSF ‘**innovation community**’. In keeping with the complexities of MSF’s associative structure, this community spans various groups, individuals, OCs and partner sections, many of which have specialist areas of interest.

‘Innovation’ is a broad term and one that can be interpreted in many different ways. The preferred definition for this project was ‘*the implementation of technology or services that had not previously been used by MSF in that way*’. Indeed, some will argue that this definition misses the technological development side of many projects, but the aim is to convey that, in many cases, introducing innovative developments into the humanitarian context can just mean re-purposing existing technologies. This sort of flexibility is also a founding factor in considering why there might be a wider market for products improved with MSF’s expertise and thus, why innovators within the NGO field should value our expertise more.




The figure to the left gives an overview of a the innovation community within MSF — many of whom contributed to this project.



Role of the SIU



The MSF Sweden Innovation Unit (SIU) sits within the previously-mentioned innovation community with a fairly privileged cross-sectional role. Operating in many ways like an internal innovation consultancy, the SIU provides services to the OCs and partner sections of MSF where needed. These can be strategic or more tangible services, and product design cases where a human-centered design approach is needed. As part of its upcoming strategy, the SIU aims to become a Centre of Excellence for Innovation within MSF, acting somewhat as a centralised library or resource to be used movement-wide.

 Innovation/ OR Entities	 Funding Mechanisms	 Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCG 2IM OCG GIS Unit Innovation Initiatives or Projects (by all OCs) Working Groups OCB (Change, Knowledge, Management) MSF Japan R&D Unit (OCP) Nairobi Displacement Unit (OCBA) MSF Canada (Telemedicine Unit) Manson Unit (OCA) Access Campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCA Sapling Nursery OCP La Fondation Transformational Investment Capacity (TIC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation Fair OC Special Events (LogCo weeks, MedCo weeks, etc) Scientific Days Paediatrics Days

02

The Innovation Partnerships Project

Reasons for the IPP

There seems to be a growing trend for more innovation projects within the humanitarian sector, as NGOs seek to standardise and rationalise their approaches to integrating new technologies in their operations.



Increased number of innovation projects

The past five years have seen an exponential increase in the number of innovation projects being pursued by MSF with external collaborators. At the MSF Sweden Innovation Unit (SIU), this trend has led to a significant increase in the number of ongoing partner negotiations and requests for help from MSF's Operational Centres (OCs).



No clear way of dealing with these partnerships

In particular, requests from OCs are often concerned with how to frame an agreement: is the collaboration a joint venture, or is MSF a service provider? And how would costs and ownership of results be split?

With an apparent lack of consensus throughout the movement on how to deal with such issues, the SIU applied to the Transformational Investment Capacity (TIC) for support to investigate these questions. This report and accompanying tools represents the initial output of this investigation.

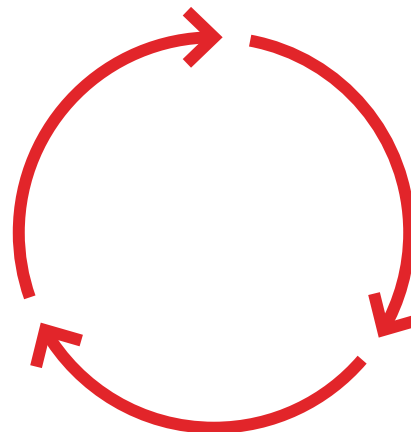
Methods of investigation

The IPP has taken a three phase approach to investigating the role that partnerships have and how negotiations might transpire in the context of MSF innovation projects. The first was to conduct **internal research** into the lessons learnt from existing and ongoing MSF innovation cases (60+). Next, armed with these initial findings, we approached **external organisations** — NGOs, companies and academia — to understand their strategies for such issues. Third, combining these two sets of findings, along with other insights - **dissemination**.

03. Dissemination

Taking the findings from both the internal and external research phases of the project, we will aim to synthesise our results into a range of tools that may be used by MSFers to improve the efficiency of innovation projects. This report will form an overview/framework for the tool box, while individual tools will dive into certain areas in more detail.

It is important to note that this is an iterative project, so the tools and ideas will be refined over time. The IPP SharePoint site will host the most recent tools.



01. Internal Research

Firstly, we mapped as many MSF internal innovation projects as possible. We limited our criteria to smaller innovation projects (<€500,000) with fewer direct patient implications (or regulatory aspects). This was in part a natural demarcation based on what is usually considered an 'innovation project' within MSF, but also to differentiate from MSF projects which contained more clear-cut moral imperatives for following a particular course of action, e.g. the Access Campaign's commitment to ensuring access to the outputs of pharmaceutical trials.

The final list comprised 60+ innovation projects — coming from a broad range of MSF actors. We analysed them using qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, and through secondary analyses of legal documents/contracts where possible.

02. External Organisations

Looking outwards for the second phase, we interviewed a broad range of actors from the NGO, business, and academic world. The interviews were semi-structured and related to the initial findings we were seeing internally. Some interviews led to tangible recommendations in terms of existing tools, whereas others looked at the issues in broader strokes.

Generally, it was interesting to see that many of the issues MSF faces are shared by other NGOs. Likewise, the view that there must be a better way to approach humanitarian innovation partnerships from a view of mutual benefit was shared by a large majority of respondents.

03

Problems Identified

in the current innovation process

Innovation Process

In order to categorise the problems we identified during our research, we chose to place them along the ‘innovation process’ timeline. As the process is not linear, many of these issues were seen at various points for different projects. In section 3 we will revisit these problems with proposed solutions and tools.

INITIATION

Framing the challenge, performing research, analysing insights, designing objectives

DEVELOPMENT

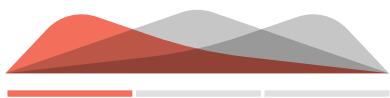
Generating and screening ideas, creating and testing concepts and prototypes

IMPLEMENTATION

Detailed implementation and design of solutions in the field, scaling up and diffusion

Step 1

Initiation



Encompassing the first three phases of the initiation process — framing, research, and analysis — here are some key themes we identified as problematic for MSF innovation projects.

01. O.S.S. ('Oh, shiny' syndrome)

It was highlighted that MSF can sometimes impulsively jump on new technology that has not yet been fully developed on the market, which can lead to: unnecessary spending; finding problems requiring solutions; or poor deals where MSF invests in technologies which are further from implementable reality than initially thought. It can be helpful here to think about new technologies from the perspective of a potential investor by ensuring a tech readiness assessment is conducted before any investment is made. This assessment should also include questions on where the technology or potential investors are heading — *how much will they benefit from working with MSF, and will we be able to leverage this for a better deal in the future?*

During interviews with MSF projects, we saw multiple examples of this — some amounting to tens of thousands of Euro wasted in pursuit of something that was not ready to be used.

02. Lack of realism in terms of time/budget

MSF budget cycle — it's an unfortunate reality that MSF runs on short one-year budget cycles which make it very difficult to work towards realistic budgets for longer-term innovation projects. Projects often drag on over-budget or get shut down because progress was not foreseen beyond a year-long period. Additionally, we suspect that projects systematically underestimate budgets in order to receive managerial approval. Even in cases where common interests had been articulated by multiple technical referents in the working groups, those interests could not be approved due to managerial control of budgets. This seems to suggest a lack of cross-OC accountability.

Interestingly, cases of O.S.S. were usually pushed ahead by those in charge of departments who did not have to reduce estimated budgets.

Finally, a recurring theme within project planning was a lack of forethought for 'if we reach stage X, then Y will kick in'. We believe this is linked to a lack of understanding of distribution and partnership models.

Step 1 Initiation

03. Duplication

With the complex parallel OC structures that makes up MSF, it's unsurprising that there is some amount of duplication. **However, the lack of clear procedures aimed at avoiding such mishaps is surprising.** Even in cases where cross-sectional innovation entities were involved, we saw a lack of landscaping at the initiation phase of projects, frequently resulting in the duplication of work and inefficiencies.

There are tools out there, but the lack of innovation coordination with an overview is an inhibiting factor for MSF. Even if two similar projects were not dealing with the exact same topic, we saw numerous instances where both would be dealing with the same issues in regards to contracting or licensing, and **there were few shared learnings.**

In particular, it was surprising to see how little the cross-sectional Working and Contact Groups were utilised during the start-up of projects. As the experts on their particular topic areas, and with a direct link to their colleagues in other OCs, one would have hoped that they would always be at least consulted during the early stages of projects.

We also would suggest the expansion of the Who-What tool, as a clear ownership and dissemination campaign for those starting new innovation projects.

04. Where's the 'average user'?

Human-centred design is a broadly accepted concept in the product design world and is something that has transferred to the humanitarian innovation sphere via organisations such as IDEO. Human-centred design has also started being implemented in MSF via the partner section innovation entities (Japan R&D, Manson Unit, SIU, NDU).

Design thinking methodology is not a magic bullet for innovation and there may be cases where it's inappropriate to apply to the context's inherent time constraints. However, during our research, there were a number of instances where it was painfully apparent how consideration of the end user was during the innovation process.

Often, this went hand-in-hand with the issues of OC silos — if an innovation is led by a single OC, it's unsurprising that the output will be geared towards that specific OC's operations or referent. However, without the end-user in mind, this can stifle MSF's aims for two reasons:

1. The output can become too technical — resulting in an unintuitive product that is not continually used.
2. The output can suffer potential market damage — by not considering the 'average user' in their designs, our projects' potential lives are limited beyond the OC or MSF.

Step 1 Initiation

05. What's the market?

An early market analysis was a key systematic oversight in MSF innovation projects. Of the 60+ projects investigated, a shocking minority (<10) had put any thought into the potential market for an innovation project output. The numbers were slightly higher when considering this question at a later stage in the innovation process, but too often there is a lacking fundamental understanding of the value in asking this question.

Understanding a product's market potential directly relates to the strength of MSF's hand in negotiations throughout an innovation project. If a product turns out to be of interest to a wider market outside of MSF, this should be considered as an important factor in any project.

Such consideration should influence:

1. The possible incentives for potential partners.
2. Partnership/development models that include scale up planning.
3. The partner selection.
4. The design itself.
5. The amount of money to be paid (without long-term return) by MSF.

06. Where's MSF's value?

This can include understanding the true value of the expertise it possesses which could be transferable. That is absolutely not to say that MSF should be looking to monetise its operations. However, should MSF innovation projects produce outcomes that could have implications outside of MSF, we should be able to calculate the monetary value that MSF's input has added to the project.

Such value can be paid back in various models (reduced-price licensing agreements, pay back clauses, accessible pricing agreements for the NGO sector), but it should be acknowledged that MSF's knowledge of contexts and emergency healthcare is valued highly externally. This should be considered internally too.

Step 2

Development



The development part of the innovation process includes the ideation, prototype, and testing phases of projects, and is where most of the making occurs. However, it's also the area where a lack of preparatory work can damage the progress that is made.

01. Perceived IP issues

One of the driving factors for the IPP project was a perceived lack of knowledge in regards to dealing with IP issues. While it's fair to conclude that there is a lack of knowledge on such issues, perhaps it's better to consider IP as a part of this broader understanding of the value of MSF's input.

The cases we investigated demonstrated a range of different approaches to IP, from open source to MSF ownership. Additionally, in almost all cases, significant time (and often money) had been spent on trying to negotiate IP ownership.

The point that it is unlikely MSF would be willing to pursue punitive action with donor funds against an actor infringing upon MSF-owned IP was raised a number of times; as was the point that even the largest corporations can struggle to conduct full patent searches with huge resources. Additionally, enforcing patents outside of Europe or North America can be notoriously difficult.

02. Knowledge gaps of MSF's resources

Many of those leading innovation projects for MSF expressed a concern that they didn't have the relevant knowledge on how to deal with the commercial sector. Based on the topics that these projects tend to cover and their technical nature, this is understandable. However, the lack of clear resources to help with this aspect of project management is worrying. Thus, when asked if they had approached the legal department, many said they didn't know it existed. Likewise, the existence of working groups or entities such as the SIU were a mystery. The OCs were again shown to be extremely inward-looking in their nature.

03. Contract issues

Most of the issues mentioned previously tend to fully reveal themselves during the contract phase of a project. Within MSF, sporadic legal support mechanisms and a lack of overall policy for innovation projects has led many projects to struggle deeply with this phase — in some instances, entire projects were completed without a single contract in place. This could put MSF in serious reputational jeopardy.

Step 2 Development

04. Negotiation skills

Linked broadly to the other points in this section, there were clear cases where MSFers highlighted the negotiation stage with potential partners as difficult due to a lack of previous experience in negotiations with the business world. It would seem that this is a symptom of the specialised nature of MSF's work which results in very technical profiles taking on the management of projects rather than, perhaps, those with a better-suited generalised profile. However, that in turn is caused by MSF's approach to hiring, which remains primarily focused on the set-field positions of Log, Admin, Medic — which often eschew other backgrounds in favour of humanitarian experience and technical expertise.

05. Briefing MSF's partners

Even experienced MSFers can find MSF's setup complicated, so expecting potential project partners to understand its intricacies without a formal introduction could easily result in misunderstandings.

In many cases, these take the form of convoluted communication lines where multiple sections have contacted the same organisation separately thus making it unclear whom they should be dealing with. Perhaps more importantly, a proper briefing would ensure that partners understand their agreement is with a particular section (considering use of logo etc.) and why there might be internal difficulties within the project.

We recommend a briefing document that can outline the structure of MSF to potential partners in order clear this up from the start.

Step 2 Development

06. Hierarchical levels

One trend that was noticed during out internal research was that the problems seemed to vary depending on where on the MSF hierarchical ladder the project originated.

For example, when the project had been started by those in managerial OC positions, the budget seemed to be less of an issue, as did access to legal resources. However, there were perhaps more issues with the projects moving straight to the development phase without completing the important groundwork of the initiation phase (market dynamics/landscape analysis etc.).

Conversely, for projects started lower down the ladder, issues around getting funding past the first phase of a project was harder, as was the ability to commit in a meaningful way to potential collaborations.

07. Partner size issues

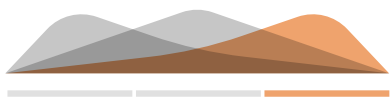
Depending on the size of the partner MSF is dealing with, the power relationship can be quite different. For smaller companies, disagreements can arise concerning funding sources. On the other hand, MSF is not particularly good when dealing with larger companies on a more transactional basis, thus choosing smaller partners can often be preferable.

Regardless, should the potential value of MSF's expertise be fully considered, our leverage will most likely increase against SMEs rather than larger corporations.

The phrase 'fishing with strawberries' was brought up in external interviews as a theory of how to deal with this — essentially laying out the terms of engagement publicly first so that the partner who does join the project fully understands the trade-offs. This may mean that field leaders with large legal departments may pass on projects, but that those smaller partners will have accepted the terms before engaging.

Step 3

Implementation



The final phase of the innovation process is to implement the solution. This is often harder than it seems as it is also tied up with scale-up strategies and commercialisation questions, which we saw often neglected at the earlier stages.

01. Links to field

Due to the lengths of innovation projects it can be tricky for the links to operations to remain intact due to staff turnover or changing priorities.

It is important to continually push for buy-in from operations to ensure that the implementation phase can go ahead. Early planning is essential for this and remains an ongoing issue for projects which start without a direct articulated need. Ensuring that a thorough initiation phase which includes end-user research can aid this process too as it will create an existing link to at least one field project.

Utilising the relevant Working Groups also seemed to boost the possibility of implementation as it incorporated multiple OCs early in the process. Again, the higher on the hierarchy the project originated, the easier it was to get field links.

Finally, the types of distribution models used in the field for innovation are somewhat unclear. Some projects aim to reach a supply catalogue, whereas others aim for straight purchase or RFPs. The process should be clarified to ensure alignment.

02. Commercialisation

There are so many potential issues when it comes to scaling up innovations within MSF, that this section could be many pages long. In summary though, MSF's lack of clarity on what is and isn't okay in terms of interaction with the market remains a serious obstacle to answering this question. Is it okay for MSF to sell branded products? Is it okay for MSF to buy its own products? Can we have a stake in a project if they are selling to the grey-listed? Should we be ensuring accessible pricing for the NGO sector or just MSF? Who falls into the NGO sector?

Ultimately, many of these questions are normative and the answer depends on whom you are talking to. Regardless, it's clear that scale-up experience within MSF is severely limited. Of the 60+ projects investigated, only a handful ended up on the open market. Some will say that the 'open market is not our aim' but if you replace the term with 'self-sustaining', it suddenly becomes much more attractive. As always, it's a question of translating between the commercial and NGO worlds — something that relatively few entities know how to do.

04

**The Ideal
Innovation Process**

Before you begin work on the project

The SIU has advocated for a systematic innovation process since its inception and, although it may not be perfect, we will present the process again in its ‘idealised’ steps. In reality, not all steps will take place at such clear differentiated points, and some projects may join the processes later on than would be laid out here in the ‘Initiation’ phase. However, we recommend that the points that appear in each step should be considered AT LEAST before reaching the indicated step. Ideally, all projects will have some idea of what might happen in all 9 steps before the project starts.

INITIATION

Framing the challenge, performing research, analysing insights, designing objectives

DEVELOPMENT

Generating and screening ideas, creating and testing concepts and prototypes

IMPLEMENTATION

Detailed implementation and design of solutions in the field, scaling up and diffusion

Some tools that may help

Coexisting with this document are a range of tools which aim to help MSFers through an efficient innovation process. These can be found in the SIU SharePoint space and will continue to develop over time. The aim is to include tools with the following:

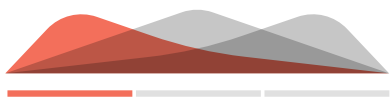
- Partnership structure overview.
- Glossaries for legal and IP questions.
- Briefings for potential partners.
- Guides for conducting simple market analyses.

Thinking beyond simple tools, it’s quite possible that there will be existing collaborations that can be utilised for individual projects. These could be agreements with business schools to provide market analyses or with lawyers to provide pro-bono advice.

Map these out before you begin and consider: lawyers, market analysts, other MSF entities who might be able to help.

Step 1

Initiation



Frame, research, analyse.

Problems identified

- ⊗ Duplication
- ⊗ Unrealistic budgeting

Tools that may help

- Working Group contact list
- Budget contingency of 20%

Frame the challenge

The first step of any innovation initiative must always begin with a simple question: *‘is this really needed?’* This question spawns a range of sub questions that should be thoroughly considered before committing significant resources to a project. These considerations can be laid out as:

Needs identification

1. *Is there a real need for a solution to this problem within MSF?*

It’s easy to jump to the conclusion that new technological solutions aren’t being implemented in our projects because no one has tried them. That’s often not the case. It can be down to a number of factors, but the key thing is to thoroughly investigate the need before moving onto any of the later stages. The Working Groups made up of technical experts from each OC are a great resource to approach here. A list of the groups can be found in the innovation toolbox.

2. *Is anyone else doing this within MSF?*

MSF is a large organisation and, chances are, someone else has already done some work somewhere on the same topic. The WhatWho tool (<http://whowhat.io/all/>) can help quickly find this out. Also, the members of the Innovation Club may have a better overview.

3. *How high is the demand and how much are we willing to pay?*

Although there may be an identified need, the potential volumes of the solution can make or break the start of the project. There may be no point investing significant money for a solution which will only benefit a single MSF project. Likewise, incentivising any partner to work with us will be harder if we do not know how many units we or others want and how much we are willing to buy.

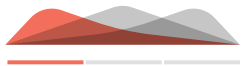
Tech readiness checklist to reign in unnecessary spending

To combat unnecessary spending we propose considering all new technology through a ‘Tech Readiness’ lens. A simple, systematic checklist can help ensure that partnerships exploring technology or product development are only entered into when they are at a stage of development appropriate for MSF.

Realistic budget planning

We suggest including a contingency fund for most innovation projects in order to combat the short term-ism of the MSF budget cycle. Full consideration of the implications of finding appropriate project funding is necessary in order to ensure innovation projects progress towards scaling up. Some methods of improving the budgeting process could be: identifying external funding (outside of the ordinary OC budget line); or the project into phases to include full landscape analyses to compliment the user research — although a larger investment at the start, passing through these stages ensures that MSF does not try to reinvent the wheel or get a bad deal later on.

Step 1 Initiation



Frame, **research**, analyse.

Problems identified

- ⊗ Person-focused innovation
- ⊗ OSS

Tools that may help

- Tech readiness checklist
- Human centred design approach

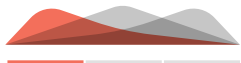
Perform research

Human-centred design methods within humanitarian innovation are not new and have been advocated by the SIU regularly. However, in some of the interviews and projects investigated, the lack of end-user focus remained an issue. There are a range of tools out there to increase competencies internally, or designers who can be brought in at this stage.

End-user focus

1. To ensure the outcomes of projects are sustainable, it's important to investigate the user needs of innovative solutions beyond just the expert-specific view. Not doing so risks producing a solution that is not intuitive to MSF staff or patients, or even worse, linked directly to the specific technical expert that helped design the solution. Based on MSF's quick turnover of staff, this can mean that innovations don't spread and can fail once that particular expert leaves their post.
2. There are a range of resources available online to help with researching end-user requirements. Succinctly, end-user research involves interviewing the 'average' and most 'extreme' users to understand their points of interest or concern. In dealing with an organisation which spans so many countries, failing to do so can often result in inappropriate design and a waste of money. It may cost more in the short term, but the long-term savings are evident. Additionally, such research can help shape the understanding of a product's potential outside the humanitarian market which will come into importance in the 'Analysis' phase.

Step 1 Initiation



Frame, research, **analyse.**

Problems identified

- ⊗ What's the market
- ⊗ Understanding MSF's value

Tools that may help

- Market analysis tools
- Ongoing collaborations with businesses or schools in that area
- Expertise from the commercial sector
- Engaging procurement departments for input

Analyse insights

Market analysis

The global market of the innovation, in particular the wider humanitarian market, should be considered at an early stage. This will provide MSFers with leverage in negotiations with partners and open doors to collaborations with other NGOs. Possibly the largest gap to be highlighted in our research was the lack of market consideration from an early stage.

To streamline this process we suggest ongoing collaborations with business schools or firms that can conduct these quickly and efficiently. There are even other NGOs that specialise in this. To illustrate what should be aimed for, Figure 1 shows how MSF can relate to the wider market, while Figure 2 shows how penetrating the humanitarian market can open up the development market for companies.

Support from the OC procurement departments can be useful here, particularly when considering MSF's market size.

Figure 1:

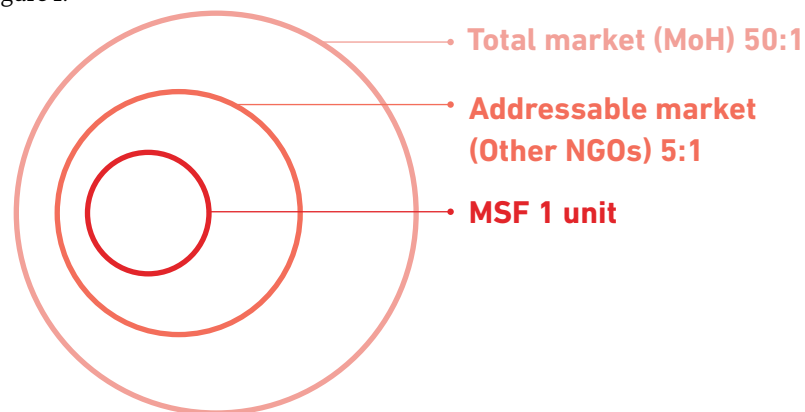


Figure 2:



Step 1 Initiation



Frame, research, **analyse.**

Problems identified

- ⊗ Poor budgeting
- ⊗ Lack of commercial understanding

Tools that may help

- Third party input
- Hiring profiles with an understanding of the commercial sector
- General sensitisation

01. Where would the funding come from?

At the end of the day, this is the question that will make or break most projects. If we at MSF are to explore new, more mutually beneficial arrangements for innovation projects, we should not fear this question, but we should — having done the preparatory work in the previous steps — have a complete understanding of what we want back for our investment in time or money. Knowing this will enable a much clearer view of the amount of funding required, as well as where it might come from.

02. It's a question of language

This was a phrase that repeatedly emerged as an identified issue; even where it wasn't explicitly alluded to, there was an undeniable feeling that this was a problem. Using traditional business terminology such as 'profitable' in the NGO sector was not considered acceptable. However, if a more 'neutral' term such as 'sustainable' was used, suddenly the concept was accepted. It's unfortunate this is the case, but dealing with this pragmatically — through a third party (ideally sitting within MSF) with experience of both sectors — seems to be the best solution to this.

In successful collaboration projects, the parties speak the same language, and vice versa. Here, there's a potential advantage in having a third party bridging this gap who can effectively mediate to ensure that both parties are reaching a point of mutual benefit. This could either be someone in the Innovation Club, whose members tend to have plenty of experience in dealing with different kinds of organizations, or an external advisor.

Step 2

Development



Ideate, prototype, test.

Problems identified

- ⊗ Poor negotiation
- ⊗ Knowledge gaps
- ⊗ Contract issues

Tools that may help

- Briefings for potential partners
- IP glossaries/standard positioning
- Capacity building
- Mapping of legal resources
- Who can/should we work with checklists

Generate ideas

The ideation phase is the point at which all the previous groundwork that has gone into the initiation phase can be put to good use. Without that groundwork, ideation can all too quickly fall down the rabbit hole and re-emerge with a wholly inappropriate solution.

Partner selection

When selecting a suitable partner, a few aspects – beyond the obvious technical requirements – should be kept in mind. In particular:

- Keep more than the design phase in mind, if this is an organisation willing to support MSF in the implementation phase.
- Does the organization live up to MSF's corporate policy requirements?
- What will the selection of a certain partner mean for the availability of funds?

When initiating a dialogue with a potential partner, we recommend that the following are covered at a pretty early stage:

- Rough pricing
- Possible funding models
- Briefing on MSF and its complexities
- Outlined proposal on ownership

Partner negotiation

- A note on legal resources:

The amount of in-house legal expertise for innovation projects is limited. However, those working on the topic in the OCs are worth finding in order to scope what the solutions might be. For example, this could include a referral to an external firm that has previously done work for us.

- Pro-bono vs paid:

The experiences with pro-bono lawyers (and other advisors) are mixed. Although tempting due to the significant cost related to legal advice, pro-bono sometimes means slow and sub-par support. However, this varies from firm to firm and it is worth trying, ideally through an ongoing collaboration.

- MSF procurement units:

Procurement units are often not represented during the early stage of innovation projects. Not only are they essential to have on board for the later stages, they can also provide a lot of helpful information to the project on market size and procurement processes.

Step 2 Development



Ideate, **prototype**, test.

Problems identified

- ⊗ MSF strays into no-man's land
- ⊗ Developments become too specific

Tools that may help

- Clearer partnership/project documentation
- Better early stage agreements

Create prototypes

Division of labour between MSF and partner

As the needs-owner rather than the producer, MSF should normally take a step back during the prototype production phase, although this is often an iterative process. That's not to say that MSF should no longer be involved, it's more to focus on the idea that should the market incentive be there (based on the earlier market assessment work), then the partner should be more ready at this point to push forward with more conventional product development feedback loops aimed at a profitable outcome.*

Minimal Viable Product approach

The aims of MSF too often focus on a quick solution which hits the key points of the brief and is then left. Often, pursuing a MVP approach is preferable. The MVP approach means that the prototype is a product that just satisfies the basic needs the innovation is supposed to meet, and is enough to allow feedback for the future product development. Such an approach will not only deliver quicker results, but should also enable solutions to be more sustainable* as they will take into account a wider range of feedback at earlier stages of development. This will help prevent the solution becoming too expert (or organisation)-specific.

**As mentioned earlier, 'profitable' does not appear in the NGO lexicon. However, in this context, it can be taken to mean almost exactly the same thing as 'sustainable', which does.*

Step 2 Development



Ideate, prototype, **test**.

Problems identified

- ⊗ Knowing when it makes sense for MSF to test
- ⊗ Lack of buy-in
- ⊗ No budget

Tools that may help

- The Working Groups
- Pre-purchase orders
- Advisory group on scale-up
- Briefing for Ops

Testing phase

The testing phase can be the most costly and time-consuming phase of an innovation project. To get the most out of it, it is important that clear milestones/metrics are set up so you measure the right things, and so that the testing forms the decision basis you need. You want to avoid an unsuccessful testing that results in nothing. The testing should be carried out in as close to its intended actual context as possible. However, it needs to be made clear to everyone involved – not least from a security perspective – that it is testing.

Advice from an advisory group

At this point, it is good to ask for guidance from those with up-scaling experience. Such ongoing collaborations with business people who understand and share MSF's motives could greatly build MSF's capacity to competently deal with this stage.

MSF as a test bed

Multiple requests come in for equipment testing from various parties — this isn't inherently a good thing and can require unnecessary use of MSF resources. In keeping with the earlier phases, only test a product if there is a clear identified need for it and proper research forms the basis for this. If there is such a basis, then ensure a full understanding of the situation (where is the company looking to sell, how much for, do they value the MSF brand) in order to leverage MSF into a favourable position. Generally speaking, a testing agreement that doesn't include any explicit benefits to MSF

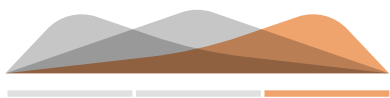
(such as preferential access or pricing) are bad deals for MSF. Manufacturers looking to profit off MSF's brand and expertise should compensate MSF accordingly.

Extending buy-in

At this point, it is extremely important to have buy-in from Operations in order to get to the field smoothly and also to ensure that the solution is actually tested against the requirements held by decisions makers within MSF. In order to ease buy-in and set out the ToRs early on, we think it important to have a document to brief operations on what a field trial of innovative technology can classically entail in order to streamline the processes in getting to field. This should include 'FAQs' covering budget, time, and resources, and clarify to how the next steps for implementation can take place. With this information in hand, it is hoped that Ops will be quicker to get on board with innovation project trials.

Step 3

Implementation



Pilot, plan, diffuse.

Problems identified

- ⊗ Informal contracting
- ⊗ Lack of clear goals
- ⊗ Informal contracting

Tools that may help

- Template of pilot ToR

Launch pilot

Systematic approach

Should the testing phase have gone well, a full pilot is the next step. To differentiate from the test phase, a pilot tends to fully implement a the solution in a particular area. It is no longer an iterative process and becomes part of the services that MSF offers. Should it be successful, it is likely to be rolled out further. It is therefore important to have a systematic approach in order make the process as efficient, ethical, and impactful as possible.

It is also at this point where the relationship with the partner may become more transactional as MSF becomes, in effect, one of the first customers for the particular product or service.

In such a situation, it is particularly important to ensure there is sufficient planning agreed upon for the goals, scope, and implementation. In particular, the cost sharing and maintenance commitments should be considered.

Step 3 Implementation

Pilot, plan, **diffuse**.

Problems identified

- ⊗ Lack of knowledge on options

Tools that may help

- Overview of pricing options
- Commercially minded advice earlier on in the project

Diffuse Product

Distribution models

By this point, the partner should be leading the development towards distribution models — this is not MSF's area of expertise and MSF has little to gain from investing in this capacity. That said, basic knowledge is useful to understand the production costs and options — also, if the partnership included a pay-back clause, it is important to ensure the partner has mechanisms in place to be open with MSF on the production costs and profits. There are many models available, depending on the product, ownership structure, and market. These include: licensing, own manufacturing, contract manufacturing. The MSF supply centres can be useful here in explaining cost implications.

The decisions made here, however, should not affect the accessible pricing agreements as these should already be signed. However, if such an agreement is based on a percentage mark-up price, then this may be higher for MSF at this point rather than further down the line.

05

Next Steps

Next Steps

Practical steps for MSF moving forward.

During the previous section, a broad range of measures were recommended in order to improve the level of efficiency at which MSF innovation projects can operate. In order to start to implement these, an action plan must be put in place. The SIU is prepared to take the lead on this (during 2019) in order to help build the capacity of MSF to deal with these issues. These actions are proposed as follows:

1. A part-time advisory position to talk with innovation projects as they start-up (estimated to start at 25% for 2019). In many ways, this is intended to act as a training resource rather than an ongoing service. As has been seen during the course of this project, very simple questions can re-frame innovation projects and it is hoped that having a reference point for this early on can help MSF avoid many of the pitfalls seen in the project.
2. Establish an advisory group for providing scale-up advice at later stages of projects.
3. Establish links to organisations who can provide quick market analyses on a needs-basis for minimal investment.
4. Iterate and add to the toolbox over the course of the year as learnings increase.
5. Spread the knowledge throughout MSF in as simple-to-use a form as possible.
6. Based on our research, we can see a worryingly large gap between the fairly simple principles that have been advocated for in the document, and their practice. To fund innovation projects without considering these recommendations is to do a disservice to our beneficiaries and risks wasting valuable finite resources.

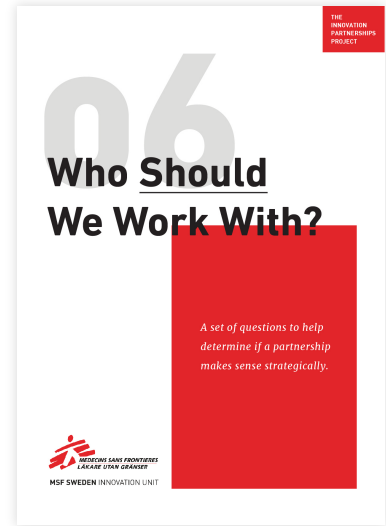
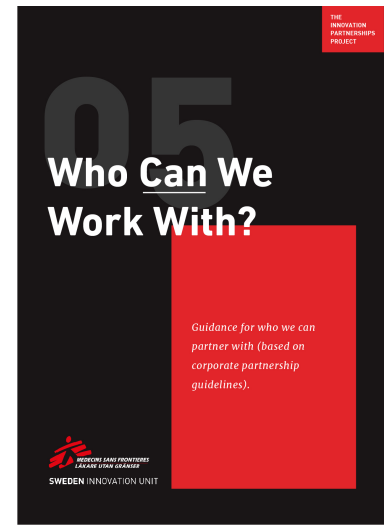
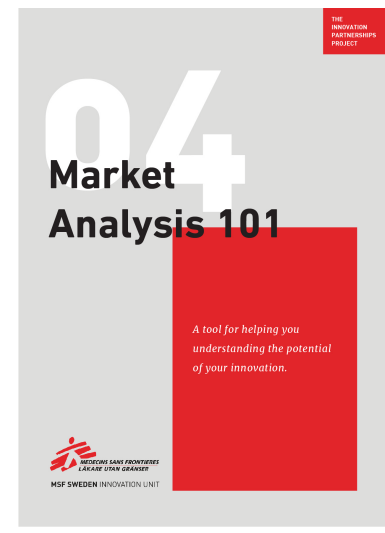
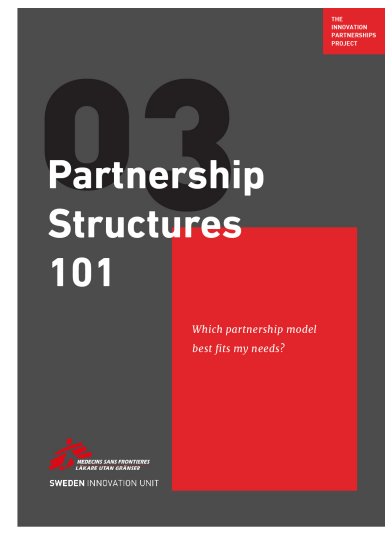
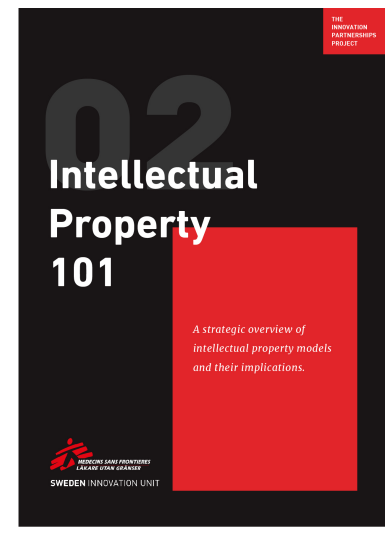
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Annexes

Annex 1

Overview of toolbox

These tools are being produced as part of this phase of the IPP. They can be found on the SIU SharePoint site.



Annex 2

List of projects investigated

Name	MSF Unit	Name	MSF Unit	Name	MSF Unit
Multiplex	Access Campaign	Doctorate work	MSF UK	AST app	OCP
VSAT project	IO, OCA	Photomicrography	OCA PHD	3D print field testing of prosthesis	OCP Fondation
IV holder	Manson Unit	SITS TIC	OCA, OCG, TIC	IoT and Handhygeine	SIU
MapSwipe	Manson Unit	Safe Water TIC	OCA, TIC	Cold chain labels	SIU, OCA
Sapling Nursery fund	Manson Unit	ELEOS	OCB e-Health	SOX	SIU, OCA
Ebola proof tablets	Manson Unit	JennerX	OCB e-Health	Negative Pressure Wound	SIU, OCA
Chemical Weapons Vest	Manson Unit, SIU, OCA	EasyNUT	OCB e-Health	Treatment (Ramtha)	
Global Health and Humanitarian	Manson Unit, TIC	Easyappointment	OCB e-Health	Real-time tele-surgery support	SIU, OCA
Medicine Course TIC		DHIS2	OCB e-Health, HISP India	Shelter catalogue	SIU, OCB
Innovation Portal TIC	Manson Unit, TIC	EMR - Bambi	OCB eHealth, Thoughtworks	Autoclave	SIU, OCB
3D Printing TIC	MSF Canada, TIC	FICT TIC	OCB, TIC, supported by all 5 OCs	PATHWAYS	SIU, OCB
Unique Biometric IDs TIC	MSF Canada, TIC	Respiratory Apps Software	OCBA	Fuel Consumption	SIU, OCB
Digital Humanitarianism TIC	MSF Canada, TIC	E-Partogram	OCBA	Essential requirements project	SIU, OCB, OCA
Treatfood	MSF DK	Dharma	OCBA	Solar AC	SIU, OCP, TIC
Intersectional Surgical Training	MSF Germany, TIC	Probiotics to reduce neonatal sepsis	OCBA		
Centre TIC		Biomarker	OCBA		
Urban MSF TIC	MSF Greece, TIC	TEMBO TIC	OCBA, OCG, TIC		
REACH TIC	MSF Hong Kong, TIC	Genetically Modified Mosquito (GMM) TIC	OCBA, TIC		
Drones	MSF Japan	Field Medical Simulation TIC	OCBA, TIC		
Neonate vital signs	MSF Japan	Smart PPE	OCG		
Japan Innovation Network	MSF Japan	E-Care	OCG		
Methanol Poisoning	MSF Norway	OCG portal	OCG		
Disabilities TIC	MSF Norway, TIC	GEO MSF TIC	OCG, OCBA, TIC		
Youth IEC TIC	MSF South Africa, TIC	Global Induction TIC	OCG, OCBA, TIC		
Leadership Education Academic	MSF UK, OCP, TIC	Access to Medical Literature TIC	OCG, TIC		
Partnership TIC		Minilab	OCP		
POCUS TIC	MSF USA, TIC				
Hospital Ship TIC	MSF USA, TIC				

Annex 3

List of external organisations interviewed

Name	MSF Unit
Barbara Scheel	Danish Ports
Chris Natt	Independent
Christine Widstrand	LU Innovation
Darin Zehrung	PATH
Elena Lucchi	Independent
Glen Mehn	Nesta
Glenn Meleder	Securaxis
Ian Gray	Partnership Brokers
Isabela Ruberio	DNDi
Johan Karlsson	Better Shelter
Kris Torgesson	Alima
Kristoffer Grandup-Marino	UNICEF
Linda Kokkula	Watersprint
Mohammad Moshtari	Tampere University of Technology, Finland
Nan Buzard	ICRC
Nikki Charman	PSI
Olivier de la Roux	GHL
Regina Gallego	Oxfam
Sharon Saacks	FIND
Steve Cornish	Suzuki Foundation
Svend Thomson	Independent
Tim Presterio	Design That Matters



Thank You.

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