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MENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

With **ÄRZTE OHNE GRENZEN/MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES** you will be working in crisis and war zones in which people are exposed, many of them every day, to traumatic experiences of violence, sickness and death. As an international member of staff in the projects you will above all be responsible for coordinating the psychosocial area. You will set up the psychosocial care team, with the responsibility for leading and evaluating it. You will additionally look after the training and coaching of counsellors.

Take the challenge – work with MSF

During your mission you will experience challenging working situations and living conditions that will connect you with the team and the local people. You will work with basic tools, share amenities with your colleagues, including computers, showers and refrigerators. Improvisational skills and independence will be essential, as will the ability to remain calm and capable of working constructively in a team even under strained circumstances. This is because you will be working on the ground with a small, international, multidisciplinary team and in close collaboration with your local colleagues. You will learn a lot: about the people in your project and about yourself.

To become a mental health officer with MSF you will need ...

- a complete course of study or accredited training in the fields of clinical psychology, psychotherapy or psychiatry
- at least two years of relevant professional experience, for example in clinical work with trauma patients, violence prevention, victim therapy or counselling for patients with Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS or chronic diseases
- ideally experience in management as well as in the training and supervision of other colleagues, supervision of groups and educational work
- ideally work experience with people from other cultures (such as refugees, foreign sex workers) or marginalised groups (such as prison inmates)
- experience travelling or working in a 'developing' country
- fluency in English; knowledge of French, Arabic and/or Russian an advantage
- 12 to 24 months availability

"My mission in Chad began with a sandstorm, which covered my bed and everything else with a layer of sand several centimetres thick. The following day I found myself in the Farchana refugee camp: as the sole psychologist for 17,000 people who had escaped from the horrors of Darfur – which left me feeling overstretched at first. My job was to construct a psychosocial programme for the refugees, which entailed training up suitable candidates as counsellors and organising a training session with teachers on how to deal with traumatised children, and many smaller training courses, for example, with traditional birth attendants. And this also meant a lot of waiting around, a lot of frustration and having to listen to many sad and shocking stories. What helped me was witnessing the strength and will to survive – not to mention the humour – of many refugees. We laughed a lot with the women – without understanding a single word of each other's languages." Petra Wünsche, Chad and other places

"My work in the Gaza Strip began with a briefing on the security situation. After all, there were days when we couldn't leave the office to get to our patients. When we got to the villages we mostly had children to treat. They were suffering from anxiety and behavioural difficulties, some of which amounted to dissociative disorders. We used one-to-one, group and family interviews to try to support them in their processing of their experiences. It wasn't at all easy, especially at the start, to work in the tense conditions in Gaza. Psychotherapy in Europe usually means 'working from a comfortable chair'. But here, the working day began with accounts of violence and the violent Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the totting up of the wounded and dead from the last 24 hours. But this is what these people's everyday lives were like." Franz Altenstrasser, Palestinian Territories, Sri Lanka and other places

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Project work opens up whole new realms of experience: both professional and personal.

INTERESTED? Then please go to
👉 www.aerzte-ohne-grenzen.de/mitarbeiten to find out more.
There you can also download an application form.

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