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**COMM 202 (2185)**

Organization: Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

Issue: Lack of Healthcare

Website: <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/who-we-are/how-we-work/types-projects>

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) is a charitable organization that provides vital humanitarian services to those in need. These services include: emergency response to natural disasters, distribution of healthcare equipment, and medical research. However, above all they provide free access to health care to many people in poverty-stricken countries or after natural disasters.

Their main website, listed above, does a good job of explaining who they are and what they do. They list the various services that Doctors Without Borders provides while also providing detailed examples. Most of the projects that they list are hyperlinked, as if to encourage the readers to do some additional research on the topic.

The intended audience for this website is those in the general public who feel compelled to get involved with humanitarian efforts. There is a link at the top right of their front page that gives altruists the opportunity to donate money to any of their projects. The organization uses social media, in addition to their website, to inform the public about the different humanitarian projects they are working on. At the bottom of the page, they encourage the reader to share the website’s address or to share projects on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. They also have a YouTube channel where they consistently post videos bringing attention to health crises or to update their followers with progress reports on certain projects.

Overall, MSF has been quite successful with their social media use. For example, during the Ebola outbreak in December 2014, many people in the United States were inundated with news reports that predicted the worst. In contrast, MSF used their social media presence to reassure the general public about the low mortality rate and the variety of treatments that were available should anything happen. As a result, MSF had far more likes and shares than less reassuring posts from other humanitarian organizations such as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) (Guidry 2017).

However, MSF isn’t without its critics. In his article, *Deterritorialised territories, borderless borders: The new geography of international medical assistance,* Francois Debrix suggests that humanitarian organizations, like MSF, use international humanitarianism to intervene in the affairs of foreign countries. He claims that humanitarian organizations see themselves as the protectors of the “space of victimhood” and that global media networks aid them by finding more “victims” that need international intervention. Debrix argues that international humanitarianism is just a thin guise to keep the first world involved in the affairs of the developing world.

Considering the issues of Media Ethics addressed in Chapter 77 of the [*21st Century Communication: A Reference Handbook*](http://sk.sagepub.com.ezproxy.umuc.edu/reference/communication) , I would say that MSF represents themselves on their website in accordance to the Formal Public Relations Theory. This theory assumes that the organization’s public relations operates by explaining the organizations function and inviting the audience to get involved. MSF’s main website has information on the services they provide and what the readers can do to get involved.

**References**

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Eadie, W. F. (2009). *21st century communication: A reference handbook*. Los Angeles: Sage Publication. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.umuc.edu/10.4135/9781412964005.n77

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