1. What led your organisation to set up a repository?

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has been doing operational research for a number of years and have published a significant number of papers based on our experience. However, there was no way to showcase them.

MSF wanted to make this research freely available, particularly for healthcare workers and policy makers in developing countries. We also wanted to strengthen our reputation as a medical organisation, and knew showcasing such a collection of scientific output would help accomplish this goal. Also, due to high staff turnover, a repository was needed to maintain the “institutional memory” of work produced by MSF.

2. What attracted you to a hosted repository solution rather than running a repository in-house?

MSF did not have the in-house capacity to create a repository, so we decided a hosted solution was the best choice.

3. What specific benefits attracted you to Open Repository?

Open Repository was an established company that had experience in setting up this kind of archive. They were recommended at an open access conference in London and their website displayed a number of other repositories that seemed to be similar to what we wanted to have. The staff were also very helpful in answering all of our questions about establishing the repository. Other benefits were that the design of the homepage and search patterns were customisable for our purposes.

From the experience of other institutes, we knew that populating the repository from PubMed would be very easy. A recent new feature of Open Repository to “View Statistics” allows us to see which individual articles are being downloaded, how many and from where, which is a big benefit to us.

4. How does your repository fit with your organization’s open access initiative?

The repository administration team encourages MSF authors to publish in open access journals wherever possible. However, due to the wide range of subjects, some articles are published within subscription journals.

5. Which departments and/or individuals have been involved in setting up and running your repository?

The project was initiated by the Brussels section of MSF, but it was established as one repository for the entire organisation. It was led by two medical editors working for MSF, one in London and one in Brussels, and is still being managed by them.
6. How easy has it been to populate your repository with content?

Additional population of the repository has been very easy with requested PubMed feeds implemented for us by Open Repository. At MSF, the process of uploading content is predominantly done by 3 or 4 people who have uploading privileges, as the decision was made to manage the repository centrally. This is because MSF has a number of authors who have only published a few papers and so are not facile with the repository.

To ensure recent publications are in our repository, we regularly check with all MSF sections, as well as check PubMed for MSF affiliation.

7. How has your repository helped your organization?

The repository has achieved its goal of highlighting the scientific output of our organisation, which is better known for its humanitarian work. This has enhanced our scientific reputation which in turn, has led to further research collaboration opportunities with outside organisations such as the TB Union. The repository has also been used to help with recruitment of medical workers (via the enhanced scientific reputation) and to support fund-raising campaigns.

8. How has your repository been received?

The MSF repository has been received extremely well, both internally and externally. The medical departments within MSF have all contributed to the repository and the research staff are pleased to see their work showcased in this way.

Outside organisations have also made favourable comments, predominantly surprised at MSF’s considerable output given we are an organisation not known for research. Most importantly, it has made MSF research and experience available to health workers and policy makers in developing countries free of charge. The success of this is reflected in the “View Statistics” box which shows an average of an impressive 5,000 downloads in the last 6 months, with many from developing countries in Africa, Asia and South America.

9. How do you see your repository developing in future?

We hope to make it more interactive for the epidemiologists and researchers within MSF. There are plans to have a specific chat/share section for them alongside the repository.

10. Please add any additional comments you have about Open Repository and our service.

I can only praise the staff for being extremely helpful and supportive both during the establishment of the repository and subsequently with various modifications. In particular, the technical staff have been extraordinarily responsive to questions and requests for changes. Recently, the staff helped with a refresh of our site and we are delighted with the new “look” and simplified navigation. This was done entirely by the Open Repository staff. Very impressive service.