

Project Humanity Preparatory Materials

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IN COOPERATION WITH



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HUMANITY

1. Introduction

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Materials for preparation

These preparatory materials are designed to help all of you who will be participating in the project to have a **common foundation** to start from. Working through **the materials on your own** will give you a head start with the project and help you get a better idea about what you will be doing in class.

One of the main things you'll be focusing on are the four «Humanitarian Principles»: **humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence**. These are the basis for all humanitarian action around the world.

What do these principles stand for?

What kind of help do people in need require?

Can humanity be learned?

Materials for preparation

You will have a total of about 2 hours to work through the preparatory materials.

You'll begin by thinking about the question: What do we mean when we talk about humanitarian aid?

After that you will be presented with an introduction to the Humanitarian Principles.

In the final section you'll be given two assignments to complete.



2. What is humanitarian aid?

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A definition

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„Humanitarian aid is help that is provided to the **victims of crises and disasters**. Its purpose is **to save lives and alleviate human suffering**. It is provided without regard for the ethnic, political or religious identity of the victims.“ (Source: VENRO, 2003)

Humanitarian aid is...

... a response to humanitarian emergencies, whether they are the result of **natural disasters, epidemics, technological disasters or violent conflicts.**

Natural disasters



Earthquake in Haiti, 2010
Photo: msf.ch

Epidemics



Ebola outbreak in West Africa, 2014
Photo: msf.ch

Technological disasters



Nuclear accident in Fukushima, 2011
Photo: fukushimawatch.com

Violent conflicts



Ukraine conflict, 2014
Photo: n24.de

Humanitarian aid actors

Governments



e.g. the Swiss government through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

International Organisations (IOs)



e.g. the United Nations (UN) and the organisations that belong to it, such as the UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees)

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)



e.g. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF Doctors Without Borders)

Humanitarian aid actors

Switzerland as an example

The year 1863: Founding of the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** in Geneva and, with that, the commencement of Switzerland's humanitarian tradition.



Henry Dunant,
founder of the
Red Cross

Today, **Geneva** is the headquarters of many UN organisations, such as the UN Human Rights Council, and other international organisations (IOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The **Swiss government** ...

- is active in providing, through the SDC, humanitarian aid and development cooperation and assistance,
- encourages peace efforts and actively promotes human rights
- and has a tradition of providing protection for people suffering persecution.

The SDC's Swiss Humanitarian Aid (1)

Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA)

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The SHA's mission: through prevention and rescue measures, Swiss Humanitarian Aid seeks to contribute to safeguarding the lives of endangered people and to alleviating suffering.



Emergency relief



Reconstruction and
rehabilitation



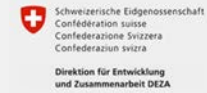
Disaster risk reduction

■ The three main tasks of SHA

The SDC's Swiss Humanitarian Aid (2)

Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA)

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Emergency relief

With the help of experts from the SHA, the SDC provides emergency relief worldwide in response to crises, conflicts and disasters. The overriding objective is to **save lives and alleviate suffering. For a swift and flexible response when crises occur**, a rapid response team is available for deployment to supply the basic needs of the victims by providing emergency medical assistance, drinking water, food and other relief supplies. (Source: admin.ch)

The SDC's Swiss Humanitarian Aid (3)

Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA)

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Reconstruction and rehabilitation

Reconstruction and rehabilitation is chiefly concerned with **restoring the living conditions** of the stricken community. The aim is to help people deal with the consequences of war and natural disasters and to contribute to **long-term improvements** in the areas of housing, infrastructure, and income. (Source: admin.ch)

The SDC's Swiss Humanitarian Aid (4)

Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA)

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Disaster risk reduction

Natural disasters strike rich and poor countries alike. Their impact can be very different, however, depending on the level of development in the country in question. Earthquakes and floods can wipe out the accomplishments of decades of development efforts overnight.

Reducing disaster risk is today an absolute prerequisite for sustainable development and strengthening the resilience of local populations.

(Source: admin.ch)

The SDC's Swiss Humanitarian Aid (5)

Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA)

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Where does SHA work?

Near and Middle East
North Africa Sahel region
South Sudan
Central African Republic
Democratic Republic of Congo
Horn of Africa
Sri Lanka
Myanmar
North Korea
Colombia
Haiti
Liberia

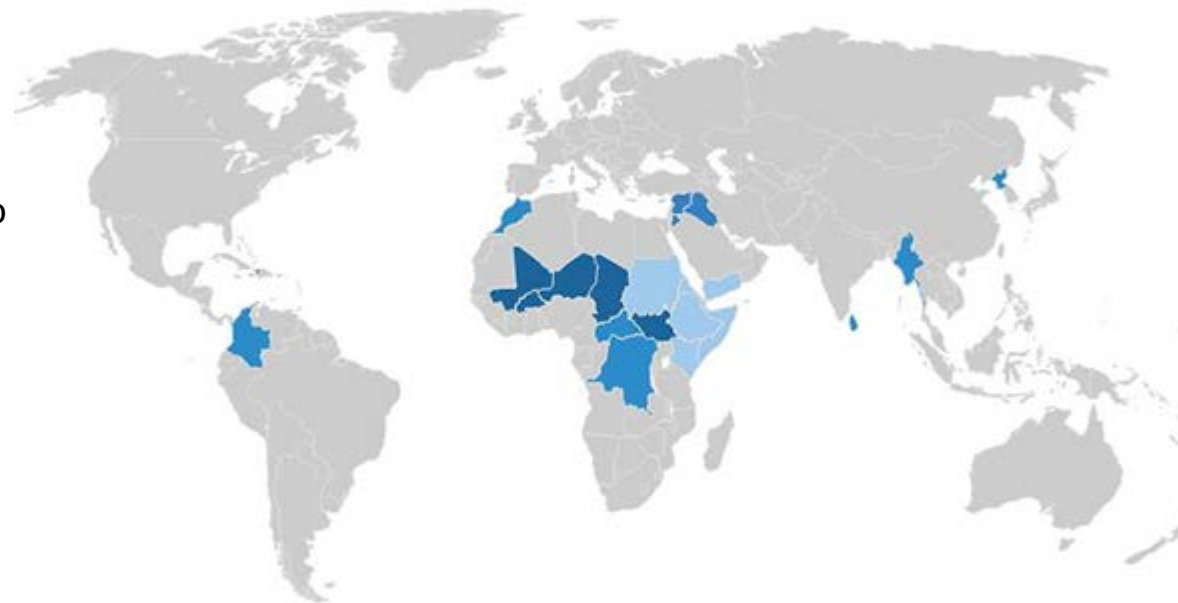
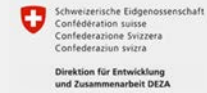


Photo: admin.ch, The SDC's Swiss Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian Aid

An example – Haiti 2010: Swiss relief aid following the earthquake (natural disaster)

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The SDC's Humanitarian Aid department carried out the largest emergency relief operation in its history following the earthquake in Haiti on 12 January 2010. 150 experts from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) were deployed to provide relief assistance in the areas of water supply, hygiene, medical care, reconstruction, coordination and logistics.



3. What do the „Humanitarian Principles“ stand for?

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The „Humanitarian Principles“

Four introductory questions



How should humanitarian assistance be provided?

- The four «Humanitarian Principles» (humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence) serve humanitarian actors as guiding principles for the conduct of humanitarian operations.

What purpose do the «Humanitarian Principles» serve?

- The principles play a central role in establishing and maintaining access to population groups stricken by natural disasters, epidemics, technological disasters, wars or other crises.

The „Humanitarian Principles“

Four introductory questions



Who invokes the «Humanitarian Principles»?

- The principles are central to the work of humanitarian actors, such as the UN, the organisations of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and non-governmental organisations.

Why is it important to know the «Humanitarian Principles»?

- Promotion and respect of the Humanitarian Principles is extremely important in order for humanitarian organisations to provide the help that is needed. This is something everyone can contribute to.

Humanity

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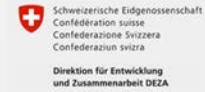
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«The Red Cross [and Red Crescent Movement], born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours - in its international and national capacity - to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, co-operation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.» (Source: The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross, Commentary by Jean Pictet, 1979)

Impartiality

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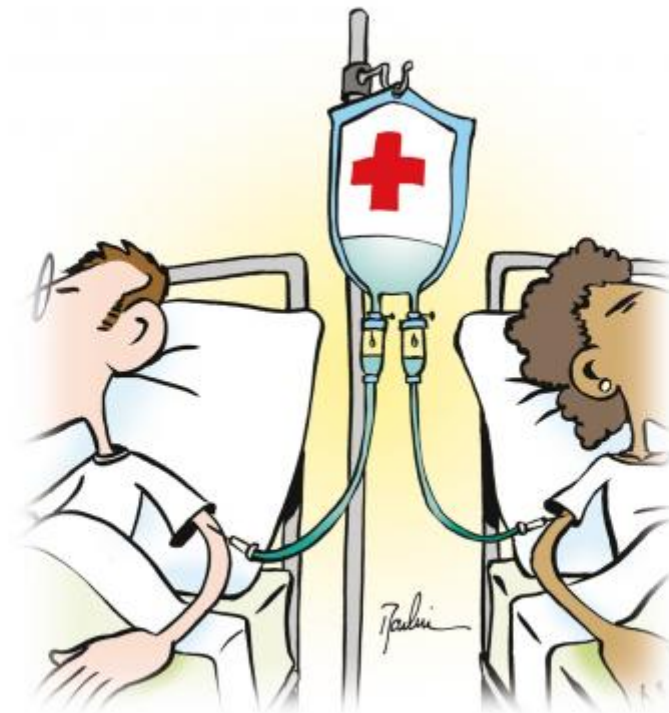
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«The Red Cross [and Red Crescent Movement] makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours only to relieve suffering, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress.» (Source: The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross, Commentary by Jean Pictet, 1979)

Neutrality

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Neutrality

«In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Red Cross [and Red Crescent Movement] may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.» (Source: The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross, Commentary by Jean Pictet, 1979)

Independence

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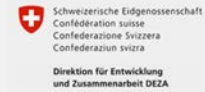
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Independence

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«The Red Cross [and Red Crescent Movement] is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their Governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with Red Cross principles.» (Source: The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross, Commentary by Jean Pictet, 1979)

4. Assignments

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Humanitarian Aid – a challenge

Group assignment A: Reading of two articles

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You have been given two articles to read: In the magazine ‘Humanité’, published by the SRC, there is a description of the refugee situation in Bulgaria. In the magazine ‘Reaktion’, a member of MSF describes the impact of the civil war in the Central African Republic on the civilian population.

Tasks:

For the article ‘Hiding is not a game’: In your opinion, what are the major challenges facing the Swiss Red Cross (SRC) in Bulgaria? Give the reasons for your answer.

For the article ‘Central Africa: last refuge for the Muslims in Carnot’: In your opinion, what are the main difficulties faced by the more than 2000 people who are compelled to survive months of waiting in a space no larger than half a soccer field? Give the reasons for your answer.



In a game of hide-and-seek, Haya can forget the war and how she and her family were forced to flee

Hide-and-seek is no game

Syrian families fleeing war

An estimated three million people have fled Syria since the outbreak of war. After a hazardous journey in hiding, they wait to be able to finally get back to a normal life once again. The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) helps ensure that refugee families in Bulgaria have enough to eat and somewhere to live.

"I'm going to hide now. Come and look for me." Four-year-old Haya is like a whirlwind. She looks up imploringly at her older sister, Sara, who is 12 years old, tugging her sleeve for such a long time that all Sara can do is sigh and nod. She covers her eyes and counts slowly to ten. Haya doesn't have a lot of places to hide. The room that she currently lives in with her family, on the outskirts of Sofia, is sparsely furnished and easy to search quickly: three bunk beds, a wardrobe and a table with a few cooking utensils. Haya quickly spreads a blanket from one of the bunk beds over herself, making her dark curls disappear beneath the improvised hiding place. "...eight, nine, ten, where are you?" calls Sara, and

pretends to look for her sister in the wardrobe. Haya giggles happily and peers out from behind the blanket. "I see you!" Sara plays along, giving her little sister a brief moment of a carefree childhood.

A family forced to flee

Such light-hearted moments were unthinkable for the two sisters in the last few months. Hiding wasn't a game but a grim battle for survival: Sara and Haya's family of five have been forced to flee. To flee from bombs, fighting, rape. To flee from the civil war in their homeland Syria. When it became too dangerous to stay in their home close to Aleppo, the family left their entire house and

belongings and set off to escape the turmoil of the war.

"I want to work, and my children should be able to go to school."

Their goal: Europe There is a better life waiting in Europe, according to father Zacharia (34) and mother Budur (32). A place that is safe, offers employment, and can provide education for both their daughters and son Mustafa (10). In short, a place where their family can actually have a future. They paid a large amount of money for smugglers to take them across Turkey to the Bulgarian border, the nearest entry point into the EU that can be reached overland from Syria. The family of five walked the last part to the border through the woods before reaching Bulgaria last October after a long and arduous journey, just like more than 12,000 Syrians since the outbreak of the war.

Waiting and hoping

But the hope of a better life in Europe soon turned out to be an illusion. Bulgaria, which is one of the poorest countries in the EU, is completely overstretched by the sudden influx of refugees – it lacks accommodation, food and medical facilities. "We don't speak the language, there is no work, and we feel like we've been abandoned," says Zacharia. The family has been allocated a room in an old school building recently transformed into a refugee camp on the outskirts of the capital Sofia. The five of them have been living in this one room for several months now, sharing a toilet and a stove with more than 100 other refugees on their floor. They have no private space and no more money to help them travel to another country that would give them some prospects for the future. The children can't go to school because they don't understand the language the lessons are given

in. And there won't be any integration programmes or language courses any time soon. "I don't want to stay here. I want to work and look after my family. My children should be able to go to school," says the father.

The Red Cross in Bulgaria

The refugees' wish to work and go to school in Bulgaria is unlikely to come true in the foreseeable future. The country is facing chaos and large-scale problems as it is, even without counting the refugees. But at the very least, no one should go hungry or fall sick. The SRC provides financial support to the Bulgarian Red Cross active there with a contribution of CHF 200,000 and another CHF 100,000 from the payments for the 2nd Christmas campaign virtual parcels. This funding is mainly for food and medicines

"I am grateful that we at least don't have to go hungry and that medical care is available."

but is also used to buy household items, school materials or toys that are needed. Refugees at the camp can get three hot meal rations a day per family member. And there is an on-site clinic where anyone can be treated free of charge and get the medicine they need. "I am eternally grateful that in our desperate situation we at least don't have to go hungry, and that there is medical care available if we need it," says the mother quietly and holds little Haya close to her. Haya sees that her mother is fighting back her tears and tries to cheer her up: "Don't be sad, mummy. Will you help us play hide-and-seek?"

redcross.ch/syrische-fluechtlinge (de, fr, it)



"I've been living here for almost a year with Muslim people forced to flee because of the massacres. I have come to understand their suffering and despair like no other," explains Stanislas Tatalé. © Louise Annaud/MSF

MSF-REPORT

Central Africa: Last refuge for Muslims in Carnot

Stanislas Tatalé has spent the last ten months camping out in the grounds of a church which has become the last place of refuge for the Muslims from Carnot, the third-largest city in the country. The MSF health officer does a daily round asking each family about their condition.

"Since I arrived here in March 2014, I haven't seen anything else apart from these church walls and that part of the street that you can see through the railings of the church grounds. I don't know what has happened to my home and my family. At times there were about 2,000 of us living here. The church grounds are half the size of a football pitch and it was really cramped. I've been working for MSF since I got here. When someone gets sick, they call me and I take the person's temperature and do a malaria test. Then I take the patient to the MSF team that comes here once or twice a week for consultations. The most common health problems are malaria and diseases that are caused by bad hygiene conditions and the cramped living conditions. If there is an emergency, it's up to me to get help. Then the

doctors come in an ambulance and take the patients to the hospital in Carnot where they can be treated by the MSF teams. It's the only other place where Muslims can stay, but even then it's not without risk. Just a few months ago, one of the patients was stoned by crowds of people outside the hospital as he tried to get into the ambulance to come back here. Right before the doctors' eyes. They couldn't do anything. This morning I counted 683 people inside the church, including 109 children. Some of them try to get to Cameroon or Chad, and there are always new arrivals.

As a result of the crisis, MSF has significantly increased its operations in the Central African Republic since December 2013. The organisation now has 21 projects in the country with an additional five projects for refugees in

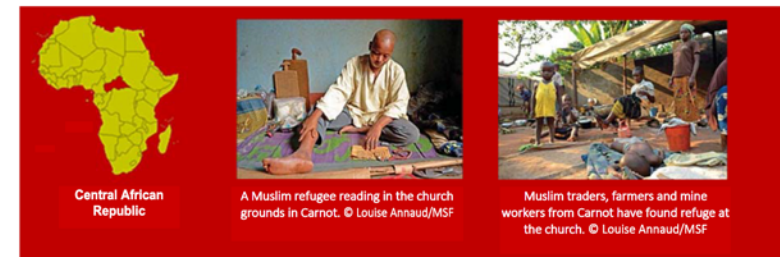
Transcribed by louise.annaud@geneva.msf.org

the neighbouring states. Our teams support the national health system, which is often inadequate or even non-existent, and help ensure that people have access to services such as emergency surgery, obstetric care, treatment for victims of sexual violence, basic healthcare and follow-up treatments, paediatric care and treatment for malnutrition.

Sometimes Muslim families make it to the church grounds after hiding for months in the bush. Almost every person here has lost a relative or been a victim of violence. I lost my brother. He was killed with a machete on 5 February 2014. We've survived the massacres, but we're living like prisoners. We can't leave without being afraid that someone might kill us. There's nowhere for us to go. There are UN blue helmets at the door. They're supposed to protect us from attacks. Two weeks ago, on 25 November 2014, a 22 year-old left the church because he really wanted to check on his field. He was attacked by local people wielding

machetes close to the bus station. Then they just left him lying there. His wife is still here with us. She only found out that he had left the church when MINUSCA troops brought his dead body back.

The conflict between the communities that continues to divide the country has nothing to do with religion. It has much more to do with jealousy and the struggle for power. Christians and Muslims used to live peacefully together here, each one respecting the other's religion. Until the situation escalated. By the way, it was the Catholic bishops and priests who opened their doors to us to give us protection. And the refugees living here, who found protection in the care of the church, still clear away their belongings every Sunday when the Christians come for the service. We are all children of this country. We want to be able to leave this place at last, and lead a normal life again. We want to forget what has happened."



Central African Republic

A Muslim refugee reading in the church grounds in Carnot. © Louise Annaud/MSF

Muslim traders, farmers and mine workers from Carnot have found refuge at the church. © Louise Annaud/MSF

Background to the conflict in the Central African Republic

The Central African Republic was thrown into chaos in 2013 after a coup led by Séléka, an alliance of Islamic rebel factions that carried out unparalleled atrocities against the majority Christian population. The Anti-Balaka, Christian 'self-defence' militias, subsequently carried out no less brutal attacks against their Muslim compatriots. The conflict escalated and has been characterised by extreme violence. At least 5,000 people have been killed and tens of thousands left injured. More than 800,000 people are internally displaced or have fled to Chad, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The parties to the conflict signed a ceasefire agreement in July 2014 but violence quickly erupted again everywhere. The Central African Republic is de facto a divided country. Elections have been scheduled for 2015.

Transcribed by louise.annaud@geneva.msf.org

For a better livelihood in Pakistan

Group assignment B: Video (1)

In 2010, in the north of Pakistan, unusually heavy monsoon rains led to major flooding.



Assignments:

Watch the film and then answer the following two questions:

What were the main consequences of the floods that are mentioned in the film?

The SDC joined with the 'World Food Programme' in responding to the floods. What were the main measures taken, and what was their purpose?

Schools for Syrian Refugee Children

Group assignment B:Video (2)

As a result of the civil war in Syria, families with children were compelled to leave their country. For that reason, the SDC supports schools for the children of Syrian refugees in the neighbouring country of Jordan.



Assignments:

Watch the film and then answer the following two questions:

What problems already existed at schools in Jordan even before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, and how did the arrival of the refugee children from Syria make those problems an even greater challenge?

What measures did the SDC take in order to help overcome those challenges?

The ICRC in action

Group assignment C: Internet research (1)

Reporters from the Swiss radio and television network SRF accompanied ICRC staff members in Colombia, where a civil war had been raging between government troops, rebels, paramilitary groups, and criminal gangs for the past 50 years. Under these circumstances, the ICRC has, among other things, provided help to civilians and communities affected by the conflict.

Tasks:

Go to the [SRF website](#) and find the documentation on the ICRC's work in Colombia; then answer the following questions:

- *What are the concerns of ICRC staff in the field?*
- *What is one of the main reasons for the conflict between the government of Colombia and the rebel groups?*

MSF in the field

Group assignment C: Internet research (2)

The MSF movement is active worldwide in many humanitarian contexts. It carries out projects for the reconstruction and commissioning of hospitals, provides medical care in refugee camps, and helps set up health care systems for particularly vulnerable groups such as street children and slum residents.

Tasks:

Go to the [website of Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (MSF). There you will see where MSF carries out humanitarian projects, what exactly the Médecins Sans Frontières there, and when MSF goes into action.

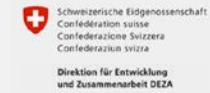
Answer the following question:

- *According to MSF, what disease poses one of the most serious threats to public health in the central Asian country of Kyrgyzstan?*
- *As you can see by looking at the different country profiles, MSF draws a distinction – as does the ICRC, for example – between local staff and international staff members. What arguments can be made in favour of maintaining such a distinction?*

Autobiographical story

Individual assignment

POWERED BY



IN COOPERATION WITH



DEVELOPED BY



Task:

Write a short story with the following title: “A situation where I myself was able to help”

Pay special attention to the following points:

- Describe the situation as precisely as possible.
- Describe the situation from beginning to end (not just the part where you were able to help).
- Explain in greater detail why it was important to you to be able to help. What was the feeling you had at the time?
- Write in the first person.
- You will be working with your story and the stories of your classmates when you do the classwork on the project. Well-written stories will make the classwork much more interesting. In other words, it will be well worth your while to take the time you need to complete this task.