

Medecins San Frontieres

Information Interview with Vector-Borne Disease Referent at MSF Belgium

Personal Work Experience: Prior to going to university, played professional ice hockey for a number of years. Undergraduate degree at the University of Coventry, followed by a number of volunteer projects in Kenya. This included 3 separate trips working on administrative support at health facilities; as a research assistant for an intervention in northern Kenya applying insecticide to cattle and camels for tsetse fly and anopheles control; and supplying pit latrines for IDP resettlement camps. Control of Infectious Diseases MSc at LSHTM. Following summer project, worked for the same research group in Tanzania for 8 months. Then joined The Mentor Initiative for a project in Liberia where he worked for a RCT of a new vector control product. Following this, moved to MSF in Jan 2016. Looking to start a PhD with MSF in the near future.

Average day in the job: Incredibly demanding job, out of 12 months has so far spent 9 months in the field. Always moving around to different projects. Really enjoys working on projects that are completely impartial, and not dependent on a donor-driven model of funding. Worked in a number of implementation projects across a number of different countries including dengue, *aedes* control, malaria, body lice etc. High proportion of the job is working on malaria due to the high burden, and a lot of the time is spent working with health centres and looking for integrated vector management in all health structures for mosquito and fly control. Not just applying insecticide, but looking at environmental and structural control measures.

Skills that are essential for your job: Being “polyvalent” and being flexible to do lots of different types of jobs – from research projects, implementation, innovation etc. Understanding vector control and always seeking to further your knowledge.

General pieces of advice: Picking your summer project is important – something that is not only interesting but also practical. An opportunity to work with people you may want to work for in the future and gain practical experience in your area of interest. Be enthusiastic to pick up low-paid jobs, to get the opportunity to work within a specific group/organization and always be open to try new things. Network!

What did you value you the most from your time at LSHTM: Wanted to be as practical as possible, so chose all the modules that would give me skills that could be applicable to the field. This included vector modules & statistical modules. Most jobs require some sort of data analysis, so made sure to have these skills.

How can you join the WATSAN team? The vector control programme of MSF falls within the WATSAN (Water and Sanitation) team of MSF. There are some very specific positions, such as for those with experience in hydrology etc. However, there are many general activities for those with data analysis skills and analytical capabilities. The team looks for people with the minimum BSc, and preferably a MSc. Field experience is preferred, however a couple of months of worthwhile experience is enough. You can apply and stay in the pool of WATSAN officers, and once they find a project to fit your requirements you could be sent on a mission for a couple of months. Projects can include anything from cholera response, vector control and/or food distribution.

Offices and projects worldwide.

Website: www.msf.org.uk/job-profile/watsan