



Benchmarking Activity Report

2025

Compiled by the MSF Intersectional Benchmarking Unit (BMU)



2025: The Year in a Nutshell

Like in previous years, 2025 was guided for MSF's Intersectional Benchmarking Unit by the implementation of the global MSF Rewards Review project.

The new biannual rotational cycle of benchmarks for all programme countries, as outlined in the Global Pay Policy, is now an established practice throughout the movement. Planning and preparation processes are routinised; capacities and resources better aligned with needs, and timelines now easier to anticipate and, consequently, to meet.

New routines and checks were introduced to improve the quality of our products: additional proofs and edits before distribution, a stronger focus on core requirements from our stakeholders in operations and the standardisation of tools and templates were closely monitored and evaluated through regular satisfaction surveys. The result was an overall more positive reception compared with previous years.

At the same time the development and launch of several new tools is expected to further increase the usefulness of our large data volumes for a variety of modelling applications and new user groups within MSF. With the help of a temporarily hired data architect, we started our work on a Data Warehouse, which will enable a broad range of topical, global or regional pay and benefits related analysis with the ability for timely supply of market intelligence to HR, Operations as well as Finance.

In terms of timeliness, we were able to meet nearly all anticipated deadlines. This was not in the least due to a better capacity of pool of skilled analysts and our project management and support team. First experiences with long term contracts for our Remuneration Analysts proved as promising as expected and we plan to further invest in this option to ensure flexible and reliable staffing. To buffer turnover and ensure we are able to meet the heightened demand for suitable and multilingual analysts in our specialist pool, our HR team worked on streamlining talent identification, recruitment processes, training, support and retention activities. In cooperation with Tembo, an eLearning course was developed to support first-time analysts to become confident in their role faster as well as a refresher training for returning analysts after a longer gap in benchmark assignments.

With the International Mobile Grid Survey, a new product was developed upon request and in collaboration with the International Office. This survey is unique not just in MSF, but in the whole market survey industry. Its finalisation and the analysis of the survey results dominated our activities and our involvement in Rewards Groups during the first Quarter of 2025. It also met considerable attention and interest within the INGO sector, shining a light on previously existing market data gaps.

Global developments such as the US Administration's funding stop, the dismantling of USAID and reduction of development aid spending in many countries sent shockwaves throughout the sector and seriously affected budgets and HR policies among many of our survey participants. We included monitoring questions in most of our benchmarks to report on their global impact.

MSF's Living Wage Policy was implemented in 2024. Economic volatility and high inflation necessitated the introduction of higher frequency monitoring of cost of living for our most vulnerable staff in levels 1 to 3. For this reason, several out-of-cycle benchmarks with a focus on living wage and mitigation measures (internally known as "*light benchmark*") were conducted, for example in Sudan, Myanmar, Malawi, Nigeria and Palestine. These are included in the overall count in this report.

Finally, more requests were received from MSF entities such as Partner Sections, Operational Directorates and Regional Offices. Three successful benchmarks for Operational Directorates took place: the second benchmark in Spain on behalf of OCBA took place between May and July. Original surveys for both OCG and OCP were kicked off in October.

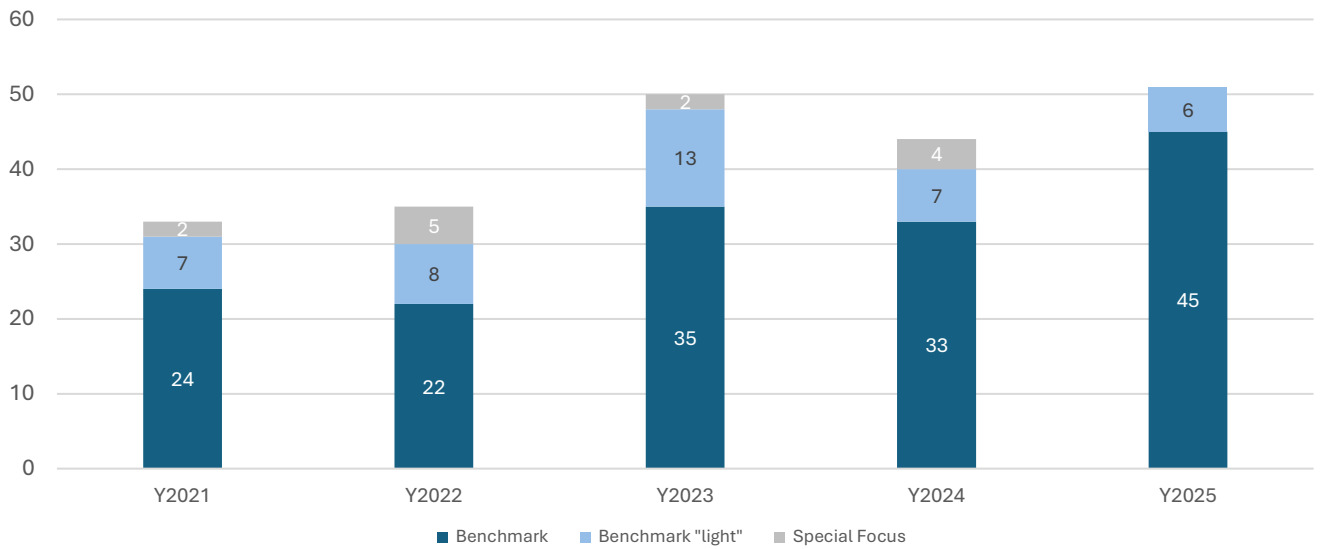
BENCHMARKING UNIT MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Benchmarking Unit is to serve as MSF's trusted centre of expertise, providing impartial analysis of pay, benefits, employment conditions, as well as cost of living insight to support strategic, evidence-based decisions across the movement.

Key indicators: Our work in numbers

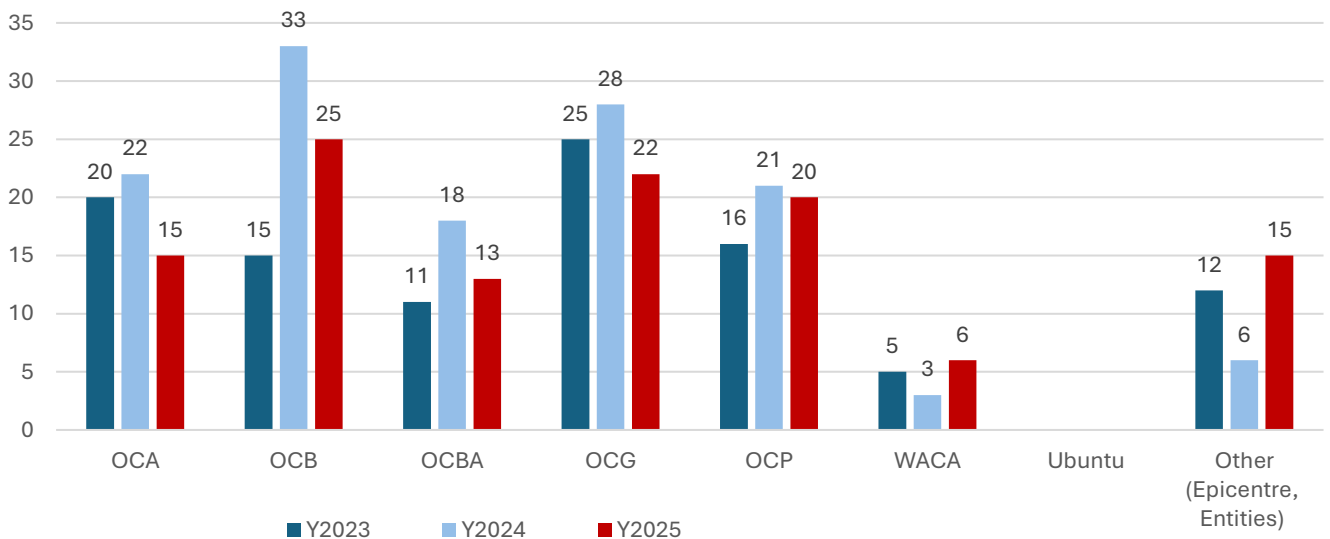
A total of 51 surveys were conducted in 2025. 45 of them were regular, cyclical salary revision surveys – the highest number in the past 5-year period. Six follow-up surveys (Benchmark “light”) monitored developments in countries with high economic volatility. Special Focus studies are short surveys of limited scope, addressing questions of specific interest only.

Completed Surveys 2025



Benchmarking surveys are conducted on request from the various autonomous MSF entities and Operational Directorates, e.g. Operational Centre Amsterdam (OCA), West and Central Africa (WaCA). The graph below shows the number of requests by our main stakeholders and their evolution over the past 3 years.

Survey Requests by Section 2023-2025



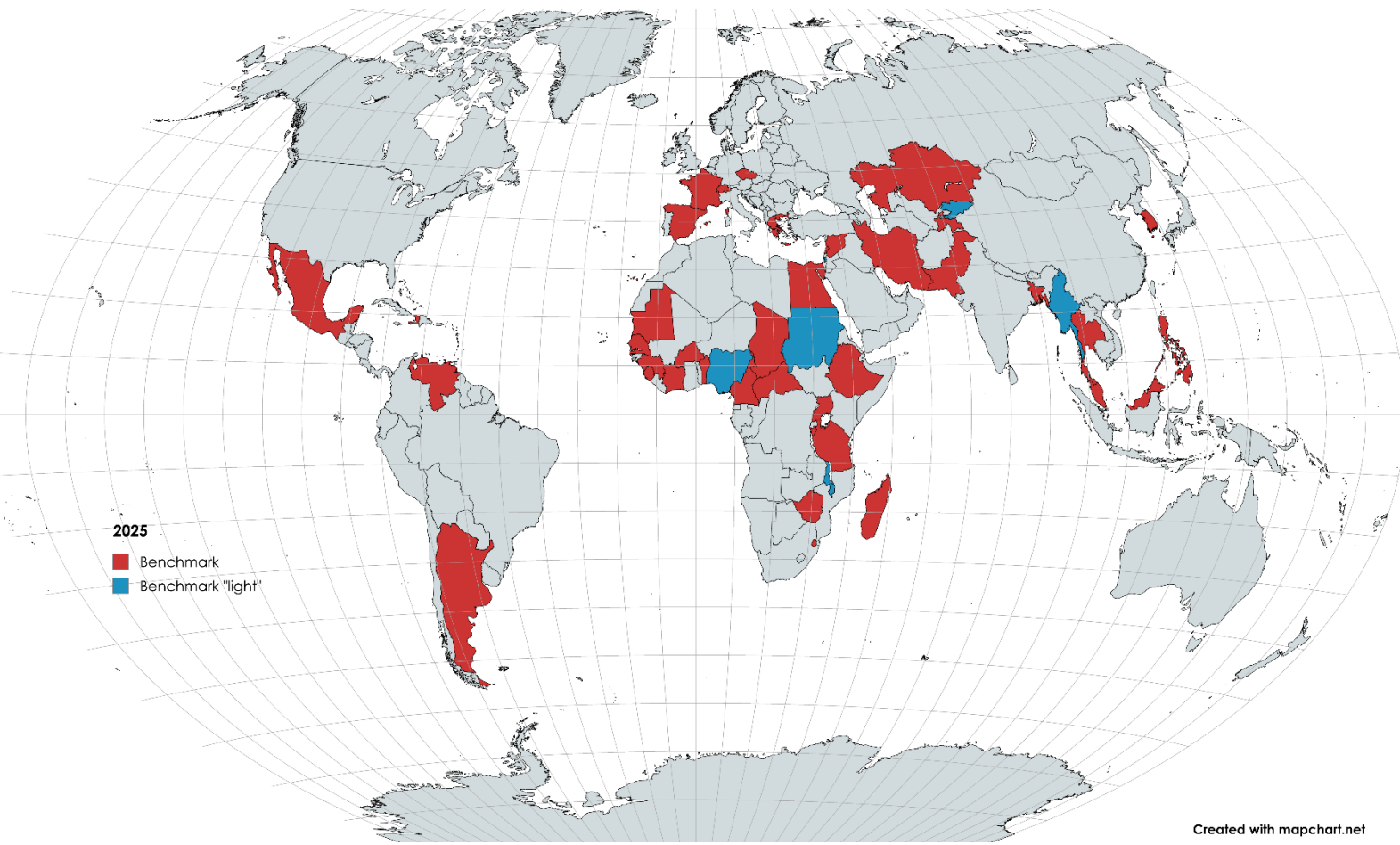
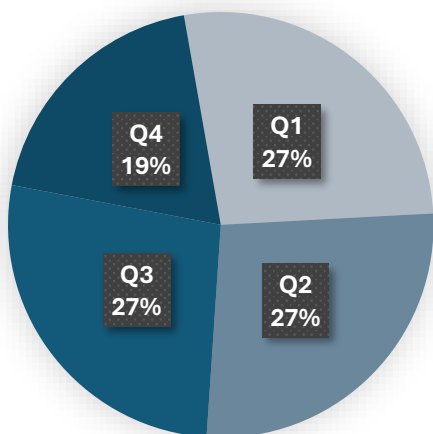


Figure 1 Programme Countries and Entities that requested a comprehensive or "light" benchmark from the Benchmarking Unit (BMU) in 2025.



45 comprehensive benchmarking studies completed

6 market monitoring surveys (Benchmark "light")

11 initially indicated benchmarks were either postponed to 2026 or cancelled*

** Cancellations happened mostly out of operations-related considerations, such as programme closure. Four were postponed without any stated reason*

Figure 2 Distribution of surveys over the year

Overview of all Benchmarking Surveys conducted in 2025											
Country	Benchmark Type	Requested by							Other MSF Entity	Host Section	When
		MSF OCA	MSF OCB	MSF OCBA	MSF OCG	MSF OCP	MSF WaCA				
Argentina	Comprehensive							MSF-Lat	MSF-Lat	Q2	
Bangladesh	Comprehensive	OCA	OCB			OCP			OCA	Q2	
Benin	Comprehensive		OCB						OCB	Q2	
Burkina Faso	Comprehensive			OCBA	OCG	OCP			OCBA	Q2	
Burundi	Comprehensive		OCB						OCB	Q2	
Cameroon	Comprehensive				OCG				OCG	Q3	
CAR	Comprehensive	OCA	OCB	OCBA		OCP			OCB	Q1	
Chad	Comprehensive	OCA	OCB	OCBA	OCG	OCP	WaCA		WaCA	Q3	
Czech Republic	Comprehensive							MSF-Czechia	MSF-CZ	Q1	
Egypt	Comprehensive		OCB						OCB	Q1	
eSwatini	Comprehensive				OCG				OCG	Q2	
Ethiopia	Comprehensive	OCA	OCB				WaCA		OCA	Q1	
France	Comprehensive					OCP		MSF-France	OCP	Q4	
Greece	Comprehensive		OCB		OCG			MSF-Greece	OCG	Q3	
Guinea Conakry	Comprehensive		OCB						OCB	Q2	
Haiti	Comprehensive	OCA	OCB			OCP			OCB	Q4	
Iran	Comprehensive				OCG	OCP			OCG	Q1	
Ivory Coast	Comprehensive		OCB				WaCA		WaCA	Q3	
Kazakhstan	Comprehensive				OCG				OCG	Q1	
Kiribati	Comprehensive				OCG				OCG	Q1	
Kyrgyzstan	“light”				OCG				OCG	Q4	
Lebanon	Comprehensive		OCB		OCG			MSF-Lebanon	MSF-Lebanon	Q3	
Madagascar	Comprehensive				OCG				OCG	Q1	
Malawi	“light”					OCP			OCP	Q2	
Malaysia	Comprehensive	OCA							OCA	Q2	
Mauritania	Comprehensive					OCP	WaCA		OCP	Q2	
Mexico	Comprehensive			OCBA	OCG			Camino	OCG	Q1	
Myanmar	“light”	OCA			OCG				OCA	Q2	
Nigeria	“light”	OCA	OCB	OCBA	OCG	OCP	WaCA		OCA	Q2	
OPT	“light”		OCB	OCBA		OCP			OCBA	Q1	
Pakistan	Comprehensive	OCA	OCB			OCP			OCB	Q3	
Philippines	Comprehensive					OCP			OCP	Q3	
Senegal	Comprehensive				OCG		WaCA		OCG	Q4	
Sierra Leone	Comprehensive	OCA	OCB						OCB	Q1	
South Korea	Comprehensive							MSF-Korea	MSF-Korea	Q3	
Spain	Comprehensive			OCBA				MSF-Spain	OCBA	Q2	
Sudan	“light”	OCA	OCB	OCBA	OCG	OCP			OCA	Q2	
Switzerland	Comprehensive				OCG			MSF-Switzerland	OCG	Q4	
Syria	Comprehensive	OCA	OCB	OCBA	OCG	OCP			OCP	Q4	
Tajikistan	Comprehensive	OCA	OCB						OCA	Q1	
Tanzania	Comprehensive				OCG				OCG	Q3	
Thailand	Comprehensive			OCBA					OCBA	Q4	
Uganda	Comprehensive				OCG	OCP		MSF-Epicentre	OCG	Q3	
Venezuela	Comprehensive		OCB						OCB	Q3	
Zimbabwe	Comprehensive		OCB						OCB	Q1	

The Role of Benchmarking in the MSF Movement

MSF's medical principles guide our commitment to providing quality care to patients wherever we work. In the same way, MSF's remuneration principles guide how we support and compensate the people who make this work possible. MSF employs people for a broad range of jobs and skill levels who all contribute to ensure that MSF can deliver quality health care to those in need. Our workers are our greatest asset as an organisation. We want to recruit the best, most committed professionals. We often work in locations that lack publicly accessible information on common market practice, cost of living and living wage. MSF wants to ensure that our mandate can be carried out under the highest quality standards while at the same time ensure that our employees are treated fairly, money and funds are used in a sustainable way and local norms are respected.

BENCHMARKING IDENTIFIES CURRENT JOB RATES IN A GIVEN PAY MARKET BY COMPARING JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND PAY RANGES WITH SIMILAR ROLES IN OTHER ORGANISATIONS, VIA STATISTICALLY ANONYMISED SURVEYS.

BENCHMARKING IS A KEY COMPONENT IN THE CREATION OF FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PAY SYSTEMS.

BENCHMARKING PROVIDES INSIGHTS IN CURRENT LOCAL LABOUR MARKET POLICIES AND PRACTICES AND IS A MANAGEMENT TOOL AIDING INFORMED DECISION-MAKING.

In many countries where MSF and other NGOs work, reliable information on the labour market and cost of living is scarce. This creates a challenge for the decision makers developing salary levels and benefits. The Benchmarking Unit collects, obtains and analyses information and data on local labour markets, including cost of living and household expenditure information.

There are numerous economic, social, and legal reasons why we consider benchmarking essential; that all our employees can provide for their families, and that the organisation can retain experienced staff, and reward the intrinsic motivation that we expect from our employees. As an employer in humanitarian contexts, we must ensure that we are not disruptive to the local labour market and comply with national and international labour regulations and norms.

During a benchmark survey the analyst works closely with the country programme team and thus tailors the study to the specific context and needs that are experienced in the field. The country management team, in particular HR, and the compensation & benefits referents at headquarters are the main stakeholders in any benchmarking.

Our analysis includes the competitiveness of salaries and benefits, as well as an estimate of the minimum household expenditure to assess the minimum income threshold that we, as a socially responsible employer, commit to meet. The studies also serve to confirm compliance in all programmes with internal and external minimum standards and policies.

Stories from 2025

Beyond the aggregated figures, 2025 was also defined by qualitative milestones: first-time benchmarks, new labour markets, and pilot implementations.

FRANCE First benchmarks in France for the MSF **FRANCE** programme and **OCP** headquarters with participation from 40 participants. After a tough start they were very engaged. Over 30 of them participated in a 2-hours session to discuss the results after the survey.

OCP (SWITZERLAND) was the 5th Operational Directorate of MSF, and one of the first to implement the new function grid, to request a survey of the local labour market. 37 organisations participated in this well-received study.

SOUTH KOREA Our first survey in Korea took place in an unfamiliar and unusual labour market environment. Results supported GGF implementation and contributed to connecting participating NGOs, creating a local network.



ETHIOPIA After years of economic turmoil and high-frequent monitoring, MSF decided to dollarize salaries in 2025 after a devaluation/floating decision by the government. Unlike general expectations, inflation has remained stable and even decreased to below 10% in December 2025 (from 17% in the previous year).

UGANDA and **SYRIA** Our test grounds for the new tools – their complexity and relevance to MSF made us cross fingers and hold our breath as things can always go wrong when new strategic software is introduced – but both passed successfully

KIRIBATI An unprecedented benchmark for MSF's 9 local staff in Kiribati, on request from OCG saw new types of challenges for the BMU due to its location, so far from our remote support team: communication across 10 time zones with our locally based data collector to save travel expenses and the environment. As well as difficulties identifying comparable organisations aligned with MSF Global Pay Policies.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH PROJECT FAIR – FAIRNESS IN NGO REMUNERATION

MSF's membership in the Project Fair in 2025 was strategically supported through participation in the Project Fair Steering Committee, authoring a contribution on Fair Global Pay and Cost of Living as well as conducting a Master Class webinar on benchmarking mobile staff remuneration.





Mail from abroad

Photos sent by our Remuneration Analysts via our Teams chat* from their assignments in 2025 show that benchmarking can be both, hard work and a lot of fun!



* Analysts often send real, old-school postcards to our office in Oslo from all corners of the world ❤️

Human Resources in Benchmarking

OUR ANALYSTS

The Benchmarking Unit’s Pool of selected and trained Remuneration Analysts continued to grow by 13% over the previous year. The main reasons for the recorded net growth are strong retention and limited exits. We were able to add another nationality group (Asian), thus still following our objective of diversification. However, European nationalities still take about three quarters of Analysts (76%), especially of those who complete multiple assignments as Remuneration Analysts.

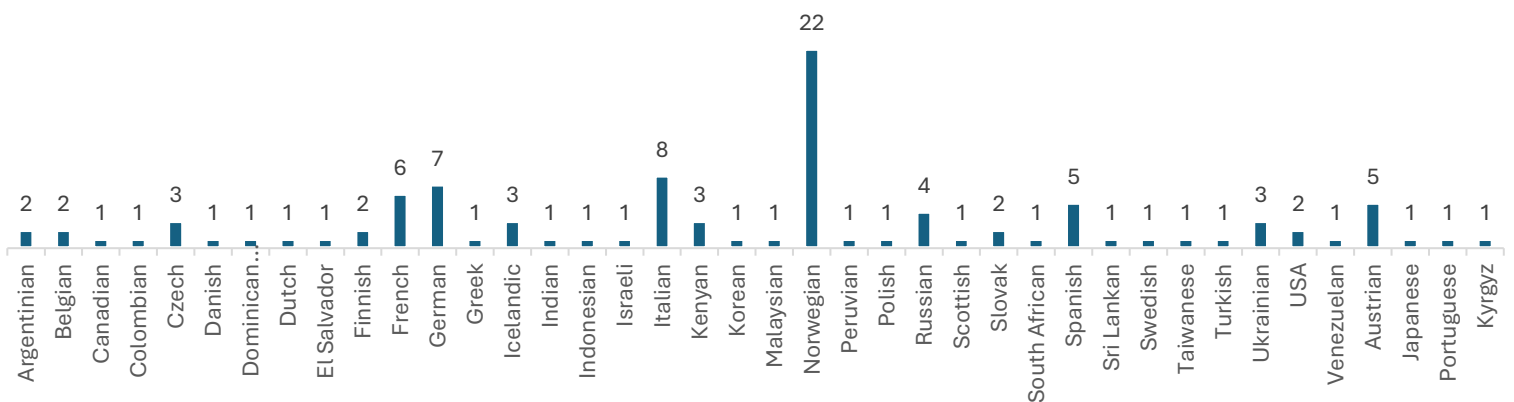
In terms of gender, there is still a predominance of female applicants that are successfully admitted to the specialist pool, with the ratio slightly declining compared with 2024. Female analysts also show a higher retention rate.

Increased efforts are undertaken to attract more suitable male applicants as well as broaden our cultural and linguistic base and regional representation.

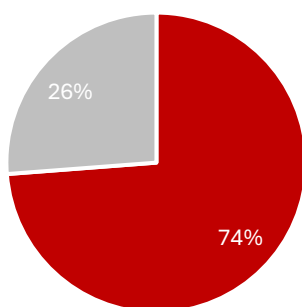
103 the number of analysts in our pool (**34** currently marked as “available”) [📍]

40 different nationalities [📍]

3.3 the average number of deployments of Remuneration Analyst in this role [📍]

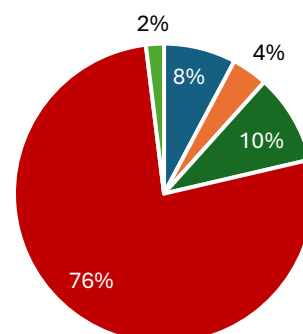


Gender of Remuneration Analysts



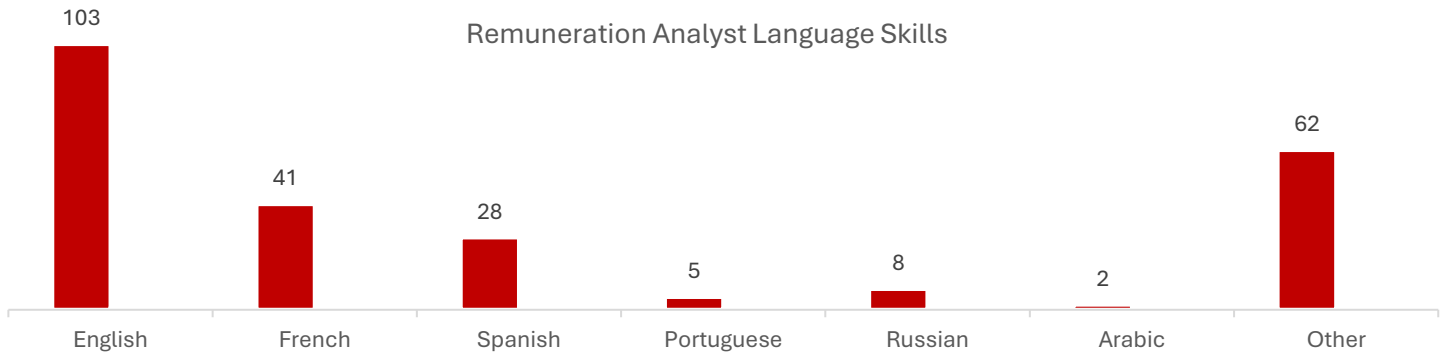
■ Female ■ Male

Remuneration Analyst Nationalities per Region



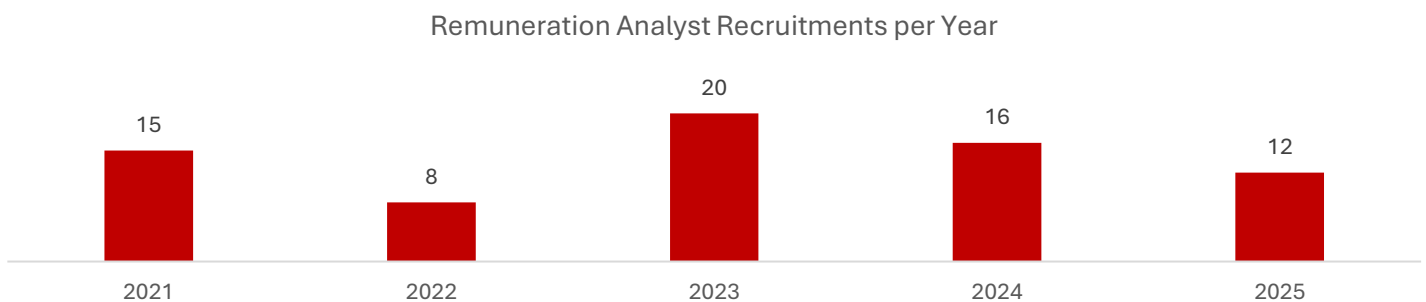
■ Asia & Oceania ■ Africa ■ Americas ■ Europe ■ MENA

English is the default language of MSF benchmarks, and all Remuneration Analysts are required to be proficient both orally as well as in writing. Deployments in francophone, Hispanic and lusophone countries furthermore often require solid working capacities in the respective local languages. Especially the number of available French and Spanish speaking analysts has improved and stabilized over the past years. Further efforts are needed to strengthen the Benchmarking Unit’s capacity to conduct benchmarks in other working languages, such as Portuguese, Arabic, and Russian in particular.



12 new analysts successfully passed recruitment in 2025 [📉]

The overall number of recruited Remuneration Analysts decreased by 25% in 2025 compared with the previous year. This was a sign of a stable pool of retained and deployable individuals rather than a lack of interest from new candidates. We received more than 115 applications over the course of 2025, of which 18 completed the second round of assessment. Stricter selection criteria could be applied to new applicants and eventually 12 candidates entered the analyst pool, including three non-European.



The combination of high retention, increased average deployments, and reduced recruitment volume points to a maturing analyst pool, with greater reliance on experienced profiles rather than expansion through new intake.



Training and skills development

A comprehensive and intensive training on benchmarking tools, processes and methodology is mandatory before a new Remuneration Analyst can start an assignment. **Two** group training sessions for first departures was conducted in January (**six** analysts) and July 2025 (**nine** participants). Individual trainings were organised for urgent new recruits for specific assignments. To keep our analysts up to date between assignments, our HR team organised an online training with focus on job matching for all analysts in the pool.



In collaboration with **TEMBO**, an online **self-learning course** for new and old analysts was developed in 2024. The course is internally available to interested parties since 2025.





Viktoriiia
(made new friends
in Pakistan)

Virginia
(celebrated her
birthday while
benchmarking)

Alla
(enjoyed the
beauty of
Kyrgyzstan)



Agustina
(travelled the cool
way - helicopter
style - in Haiti)



Data and Analytics

The BMU continued its role as a **strategic data partner** by providing ongoing analytical support to multiple working groups and stakeholders. The BMU data team supported the rewards workstreams financial modelling through on-going data collection and processing of salary reviews, including monitoring the **Attractiveness for Country Based Coordinators (ACBC)**, for follow-up of policy implementation.

The team also provided **ad hoc analyses** such as comparing Nurse functions at IRFFG and GGF levels across global markets, HR challenges and specific function requests to support discussions on individual pay and a detailed Global MHES Analysis for OCB.



Over the course of 2025, the Benchmarking Unit Data Team made significant progress in transforming the way data is collected, structured, and used across the MSF movement. The data collection framework was redesigned, paired with a fully restructured data architecture, including a new country-level database template with **increased quality controls, automated visuals, and the early development of a global SQL-based data warehouse.**

Together, these improvements strengthened data quality and reduced manual processing, helping ensure consistency and reliability. Global standards, clear questionnaires, and high-quality data is expected to make systematic participation more attractive for participants. A global repository for survey data will lay the groundwork for robust and scalable analytics.

The new tools were beta-tested in two complex survey environments, Uganda and Syria, where they received positive feedback from both analysts and participating organisations. The full rollout will take place in 2026. In parallel, the Monthly Household Expenditure Survey (MHES) database was further refined and is now fully implemented across surveys, with improved quality review processes.

DATA SUPPORT TO MSF

Building on the successful International Mobile Staff (IMS) benchmarking survey conducted in late 2024 and into 2025, the BMU delivered a comprehensive dataset to the International Office covering pay, employment conditions, and benefits across global markets.

In addition to the **report on the international mobile labour market**, the BMU supported the **development of the new Global Grid** through detailed modelling and scenario testing (including comparisons across different frameworks and market groupings). Additional analyses were provided for R&R and hardships allowances to inform final rewards decisions by the IDRH on the Mobile Salary Grid, alongside survey updates in response to the evolving global funding crisis.

Data from the IMS survey impacted other work as well, with length of assignment and mobile staff taxation data used to inform the International Mobility Income Tax (**IMIT**) project. IMIT is reviewing the current policy and practices regarding **mobile staff taxation** globally. Data on death and disability coverage is providing a baseline for the on-going review of MSF's global policy and insurance for mobile staff.

Collaborations

Survey Participants

Success in benchmarking relies on the willingness to share information and data. Pay and benefits data are strategic areas to employers. The Benchmarking Unit honours the trust that sharing such sensitive information implies. The growing number of INGOs that regularly participate in our surveys is a sign that we have earned trust within the community.

INTERSOS has been very satisfied by the collaboration established with MSF in the last couple of years about benchmarking for national and international colleagues, therefore we are eager to continue our collaboration in 2026 too to become regular contributor.

We're very grateful for the opportunity to participate in the survey, and I want to extend my thanks to you and your colleagues for the clear, detailed, and highly informative report. The insights - particularly around the labour market context, salary trends, and common allowances - are very valuable for us. (Mary's Meals)

Thank you for the report. The pleasure is ours, as always when we have the opportunity to cooperate with you. (People in Need)

Un grand merci pour l'envoi du rapport ainsi que pour tout le travail accompli – félicitations pour la qualité de l'étude !

Le document est clair, complet et très utile pour nous. On te remercie également d'avoir compté sur nous pour cette enquête, c'était un plaisir d'y participer.

Quality Assurance

As part of our quality assurance processes and in view of improving useability of our products for participating organisations we conduct customer satisfaction surveys. In 2025, 248 participating employers have submitted their evaluation of MSF salary and benefits surveys (over 1/3 of the total of 720 evaluations since 2021). **4.5 out of a total of 5 possible points** is the **overall satisfaction rate** awarded to us by the participating organisations in 2025. What our customers liked the most was the reliability and quality of the report, with a score of 4.6 each. The likelihood of their renewed participation in future surveys and recommending our surveys to peers also saw a slight increase to 4.6 out of 5, with 181 participants awarding the maximum 5 points.

Data Security

We use different layers of security protocols and mechanisms to secure the data during storage, processing and transit. Data are handled through a role-based access model, by a just small team of independent analysts with utmost care and confidentiality. They are stored on EU-based servers for a limited period of time. We apply as well as the principle of least privilege. We communicate only anonymised, aggregated data (such as market median and percentiles) with liable parties within and outside MSF. These are HR Specialists in MSF entities and participating organisations. We do not in any way use the results commercially.

Synthesis

Taken together, 2025 marked the consolidation of benchmarking as a predictable, policy-anchored service across the MSF movement, while simultaneously expanding the Benchmarking Unit's strategic role in responding to economic volatility, living-wage risks, and global rewards reform.



Outlook 2026

In 2026 the full roll-out of the new Database and Tools continues, with an emphasize on collecting detailed feedback from users – analysts and participating organisations to iron out bugs and make the experience as user-friendly and beneficial as possible.

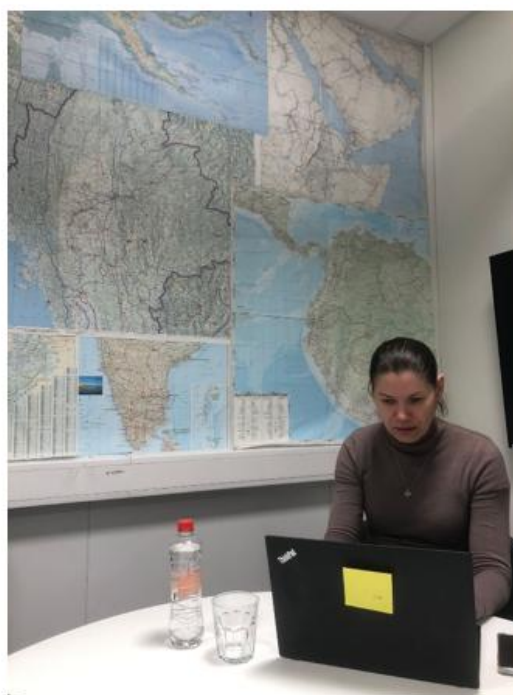
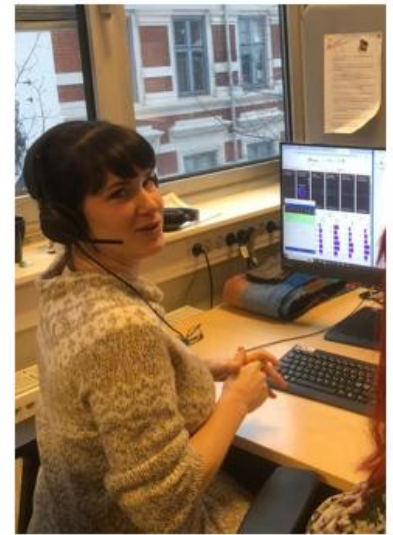
The Data Warehouse will be developed further under strictest GDPR and data security principles.

The new MSF Global Grading Framework will start to be implemented gradually. Until full worldwide adaptation throughout the MSF movement, this process is expected to last at least four years. This has an impact on the number of surveys requested and the services we provide to our internal stakeholders.

For our growing number of external stakeholders our focus will be on increasing transparency of our work and methodology, simplify ways of collaboration and strengthen the usefulness of our product.

The Benchmarking Unit will continue to be a strategic partner to MSF entities in the application of policies and practices.

The BMU Coordination Team



THE BENCHMARKING UNIT COORDINATION TEAM (ALPHABETICALLY)

- **Alyona Polovchenko Smith** (*Project Manager, anglo- and lusophone Africa, Europe, Asia*)
- **Anja Drame** (*Deputy Head Strategic Partnerships and Development*)
- **Finnbogi Rutur Finnbogason** (*Project Manager, francophone Africa, MENA, Asia*)
- **Frederic Penhard** (*Head of the Benchmarking Unit, quality and methodology*)
- **Hanne Hyttedalen** (*Data Engineer*)
- **Mark Doroski** (*Volunteer, quality assurance*)
- **Mikkel Carlsen** (*HR and Benchmarking Operations Manager, Latin America*)
- **Teresa Kiemnec** (*Data and Analytics Manager*)