Médecins Sans Frontières and Private Donors
A qualitative case study on dependence and efficiency in NGO – donor relationships

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Abstract
Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) play an increasingly important role in the world and receive a growing amount of outsourced development work. Funding enables them to do the work necessary to provide aid. NGO work is influenced by the dependence on their donors and many NGOs increasingly take donations from private donors as a way to try to mitigate donor dependence and maintain neutrality in their work. However there is little research analysing this shift and the potential positive and negative effects.

This study looks at dependence and efficiency in an NGO - private donor relationship. The objective is to contribute to the discussion about NGO dependency on donors by evaluating the positive and negative impacts of primarily private donorship on NGOs’ work efficiency. Little research has been done on the private donor relationship and this study is contributing to filling that gap.

The study is a qualitative case study, with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) due to their private donor base’s recent increase. The data were obtained through interviews with MSF Sweden staff, other MSF primary source documents and secondary sources written by scholars on the topic of NGO dependency on their donors.

The results of this study concluded that MSF works more efficiently with a primarily private donor base, due primarily to their increase in independence and control of their own operations. Since the shift from EU-funding, MSF can spend fewer resources on reporting and more on allocating the money to the field. A primarily private donor base has a positive impact on MSF and it is safe to say that other NGOs will likely follow suit. Further research should look into other NGOs to see whether a primarily private donor base benefits them too or if MSF is a one case exception.

Keywords: NGO, private donors, dependence, efficiency, Médecins Sans Frontières, Doctors Without Borders
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<td>MSF</td>
<td>Médecins Sans Frontières</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NPS</td>
<td>Net Promoter Score</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>SEK</td>
<td>Swedish Krona</td>
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<td>SIDA</td>
<td>The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>TM</td>
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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction, research problem and relevance

Civil society actors play an increasingly important role in the world when it comes to working for development (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006, p. 1). Within this sector, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) receive a growing amount of outsourced development work (World Bank, 2006, p. 2). They conduct development programs and activities in countries struggling to improve their development levels (Chimiak, 2014, p. 31). Funding is what keeps NGOs going and enables them to do the work necessary to mitigate suffering in the world. This funding can come from donors such as individuals, companies and even from states. NGO work is influenced by the dependence on their donors and scholars state that in order to mitigate donor dependence, and to maintain neutrality in their work, many NGOs take donations from private donors¹ (Poole, 2013, pp. 31-33.). These donors are individuals who are not connected to the state or an institution and who give from their own pocket. Without people willing to donate part of their own income to charity many NGOs could not operate.

According to Tortajada (2016, pp. 267-268), many NGOs prefer, and move towards a primarily private donor base, because of the less political and more emotional interest individuals have with their donations. This means the NGOs can stay more independent in their choices of projects and work strategies. Another argument for a primarily private donor base is the notion that state and company donors are imposing demands with their donations and suggestions on projects. Individuals on the other hand tend to not impose interests on the NGO and therefore hand over decision on projects to them, leaving the NGO in charge of its own operations (AbouAssi, 2014, p. 975.). The primarily private donor base, however, does not come with complete freedom for the NGOs since private donors together form a large group of individuals which can, if dissatisfied with the work of the NGO, abandon their donorship and if enough people do so the NGO’s source of funding is severely threatened (Poole, 2013, pp. 31-33). Therefore, NGOs are dependent on maintaining a good relationship with their private donors to establish a sustainable source of funding (Poole, 2013, pp. 31-33).

Since NGOs perform a growing role as international actors, there is an increasing interest on the management of these organisations. Private donations from individuals are on the rise and

¹ When talking about private donors in this thesis it stands for private individual donors and not donations from private institutions. Donations from private institutions will be referred to as private institution donations.
at the same time NGOs are desperately in need of this type of funding to stay neutral and to continue with their operations (Poole, 2013, pp. 31-33). Even though private donors play an increasingly important role, little research has been done on this donor group (Feenstra, 2017; Paffenholz, Kew, & Wanis-St. John, 2006; Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006; Simiti, 2017; World Bank, 2006). With their increased importance, NGOs’ relationship with private donors, and ways in which NGOs work to maintain this relationship, needs to be looked closer at to understand new ways in which NGOs have to facilitate their donors’ interests. Literature on civil society and NGOs present a discussion on their importance in global development work. Most literature on NGOs is concerned with their relationship with state donors and rarely mentions private donorship (AbouAssi, 2014; Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Poole, 2013; Reith, 2010; Tortajada, 2016). This is evidence of a gap in existing research when it comes to the impact private donors might have on NGO efficiency and how they can affect NGOs’ work. Therefore the research problem of this study is to look at this group’s impact to contribute to filling the gap.

This study is looking at one specific NGO, namely Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Sweden and their relationship to their private donors. Case study research looking into the new private donor community and its relationship to NGOs is of relevance to the research on NGOs and their growing participation in development work. This, since the accountability of NGOs is determined by the question whether the work of an NGO is made more efficient if the majority of donations come from private donors, or if the increased independence and freedom of action affects NGOs and civil society’s role in development work negatively. More in-depth case studies are needed to understand in more detail the relationship NGOs have with private donors since focus in previous research has been on the relationship with government funding or donations from companies, as mentioned above (AbouAssi, 2014; Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Poole, 2013; Reith, 2010; Tortajada, 2016). Therefore research about the private donors is needed to address all donor groups. Focus is on the perspective of the selected case instead of the donors’ perspective, as it could contribute to a better understanding about dependence NGOs have on the actors who fund them and the advantages or disadvantages with this relationship. The result from this study can also be of relevance for NGOs who struggle with keeping a positive donor relationship, maintaining a steady inflow of donations and who question their accountability. It can also be relevant for people who consider donating to humanitarian NGOs and want to get a deeper understanding of their own impact.
1.2. Objective and Research Questions
The objective of this study is to contribute to the discussion about civil society actor dependency on donors by evaluating the positive and negative impact of primarily private donorship on NGO work efficiency since there is a gap in that area. This will be done by examining and analysing MSF Sweden’s relationship with, and shift from, state to private donors, which occurred in 2016, and how this relationship affects their work. MSF was selected because they shifted from having both state and private donors to an almost entirely private donor base in recent years, and is therefore an NGO that currently works with a primarily private donor base (MSF International, 2017b, pp. 4-6).

To meet the objective the following research questions have been constructed:
● What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of working with a financial budget provided primarily by private donors?
● How does MSF Sweden’s work today differ from the period when they received part of their funding from EU member states?
● How does MSF Sweden work to stay independent?
● How does MSF Sweden work to maintain a positive relationship with their donors?

1.3. Theoretical frame
The theoretical framework chosen for this study is a multi-theory approach using the Resource dependency theory, the Social influence and power theory and the Stakeholder theory. This allows for a richer understanding of the research questions through relevant aspects of the different theories. The three theories discuss dependence versus interdependence. The study furthermore uses Wells’ four elements of efficiency to address efficiency versus inefficiency issues in relation to NGO work.

1.4. Methodological frame
The methodological framework chosen for this study is a qualitative and abductive approach. Data collection is done by semi-structured interviews, with MSF staff at the Stockholm office, and primary sources published by MSF as well as secondary sources on the discussion on civil society and NGOs’ roles in global development work.
1.5. Structure

The structure of the thesis will be following:

**Chapter 2** presents a literature debate on civil society and NGOs, explains the choice of theoretical framework as well as the analytical framework of the thesis. The theoretical framework will be a multi-theory approach through the Resource dependency theory, the Social influence and power theory and the Stakeholder theory. The analytical framework will be Well’s four elements of NGO efficiency. Chapter 2 also presents the study’s case, MSF Sweden.

**Chapter 3** presents the chosen method of a qualitative abductive field study.

**Chapter 4** is the findings chapter and the data collected from the interviews and the primary and secondary sources are presented.

**Chapter 5** presents an analysis of the findings through Wells’ four elements of efficiency and the three theories on dependence versus interdependence, with the aim to answer the research questions and reach the objective.

**Chapter 6** gives conclusions of the analysis.

**Chapter 7** presents the list of references.

**Chapter 8** contains the appendix of the thesis: the Interview guide.
2. Analytical Framework

2.1. Civil society and NGOs: the literature debate

To put this study in a context this section will describe the debate around civil society and NGO dependency on donor funding as well as review literature on the topic. Many studies have been done on NGO - donor relationships and they often use an analytical framework focused on influence that comes from donor states or private institutions (AbouAssi, 2014, p. 970; Edwards & Hulme, 1996, p. 9; Reith, 2010, p. 448). However, a research gap exists for the relationship between NGOs and private individual donors.

2.1.1. Civil society

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) (2007, p. 4) defines civil society as “an arena, separate from the state, the market and the individual household, in which people organise themselves and act together in their common interests”. Civil society is disconnected from the government and rather connected to civilians and their interests. Examples of civil society actors are NGOs, religious associations, trade unions and community-based organisations. Civil society will be used in this study to address a section of development work that is disconnected from government and business. It provides a broader scope for actors that work for development than solely using the concept of NGOs (Sida, 2007, p. 4).

Individuals play an important role in civil society (World Bank, 2006, p. 2-4). Civil society organisations (CSOs) are for civilians, by civilians and they are a way for civilians to take part in exercising power and distribute it more equally (Simiti, 2017, p. 358). Civil society’s domestic role in the state is important and they can also contribute to international development work. When it comes to rebuilding societies, both physical and psychological reconstructions and institutions, CSOs can provide expertise and a different perspective and approach than the state (Pouligny, 2005, p. 496). Since civil society often works within the state it is restricted or shaped by the state’s frameworks and a dependence relationship forms. Funding for civil society can also come from the state. The same goes for the state’s dependence on civil society when a state wants to connect to its citizens and civil society works as the link between these too. This leads to an interdependent relationship between the state and civil society (World Bank, 2006, p. 2-4). CSOs’ role in this is to sometimes jump in when institutions in a state are lacking or, in the case of MSF, when healthcare systems
cannot provide for its citizens (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006, pp. 9-13). What civil society actors need to do when stepping in and covering for failing state institutions is to work towards a way for the state to function properly again since replacing a state’s existing services becomes unsustainable in the long run (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006, p. 35).

Furthermore, transparency and accountability are key aspects in civil society. Especially large CSOs that work globally face the requirement to work transparently to be accountable for their operations. Representation can also be an issue for large CSOs since a majority of them have headquarters in the North while conducting projects in the South. Representation from the South through CSO work is lacking and therefore it becomes a way for the North to exercise power over the South (Feenstra, 2017, p. 340). This division could also create an imbalance in participation of the South which could result in beneficiaries being disempowered before the CSO actors from the North, becoming another portrayal of the North’s power over the South (Chandler, 2010, pp. 370-371). However, many international CSOs hire local staff at their project locations to raise representation. Likewise, it can raise accountability and transparency in the sense that the CSOs are taking the responsibility of providing local jobs as well as local staff may seem more transparent and trusted by local beneficiaries (Feenstra, 2017, p. 340).

Civil society contributes a lot to global development work but CSOs can, however, be “uncivil” as Paffenholz and Spurk (2006, pp. 34-35) mention. This means that certain CSOs practice or preach hate and violence, acting with opposite aim to CSOs focused on development work. Not all CSOs are neutral, such as political or religious CSOs, or efficient and between the organisations there can be conflicts and quarrelling. SIDA also mentions the two sides of civil society and states that it is “neither good nor bad” and that the society in which a CSO operates affects the values of civil society (2007, p. 5). Values and interests differ from society to society and civil society reflects these and is therefore never homogenous (Pouligny, 2005, p. 499). So civil society can be problematic actors when it comes to development, as well (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006, pp. 34-35).

2.1.2. NGOs
Edwards and Hulme (1992; 1996), two of the scholars that most influenced the debate on NGOs and most frequently referenced to in the secondary sources of this thesis, discuss NGO impact on development work in their texts. The relationship between the NGO and its donors was highly discussed in the 1990s and many agreed on that showing transparency in
reporting, but also progress in projects, was more important aspects for maintaining this relationship than the NGO participating in current debates and “dialogue on policy” (Edwards & Hulme, 1992, p. 83). Many donors are not of the activist type and therefore like to see results over lobbying. However, speaking out and lobbying are important aspects of an NGOs operations and it contributes to efficient participation in development work as well. Edwards and Hulme stress the need to enlighten the public of the importance on NGO lobbying (Edwards & Hulme, 1992, p. 84).

Accountability is the responsibility an NGO has towards the people they help and their financiers. Upward accountability is showing transparency in project progress reporting to donors and the states in which they operate. That is, reporting in an efficient way so the donors know where their money is going and how current projects are operating. Downward accountability for an NGO is showing responsibility to their staff, as well as staff from collaborating organisations, and beneficiaries, which includes assuring they will provide aid to the best of their ability. To “overaccount” refers to the need to account for the NGOs actions to many different actors who wants reporting. To “underaccount” means to be able to not report as much since different actors can assume other actors will do the controlling and therefore do not ask for as much reports (Edwards & Hulme, 1996, p. 16).

Furthermore, NGOs are run by civilians and with the increasing private donor groups, they are also funded by them. NGOs represent just one section out of many in civil society and together the different sections contribute with a diverse range of actors with different aims. The different sectors also have different amount of power and independence. Independence for an NGO refers to the NGO being able to independently assess people’s needs, work in areas without restrictions and be able to allocate money where they feel it is most needed without demands from others. It also refers to an NGO’s ability to be disconnected from religious or political affiliation (Simiti, 2017, p. 358). Due to unstable funding there is financial insecurity for many NGOs and this has lead to many NGOs taking on tasks that were not in their original aim, to try to attract more donors, since they vanish if funding dries out, showing the enormous dependence they have on their donors (Simiti, 2017, p. 364-365).

Feenstra (2017, p. 339) states that NGOs play an important role in civil society and to be considered a member the NGO has to follow the principle of nonviolence. With an increase in attacks against humanitarian field workers the question of security for NGOs comes up and whether complete non-violence is possible. For example, MSF and the International Red
Cross (ICRC) minimize the times armed escorts are used as security for their field staff. They only use them when absolutely necessary and when the patients cannot be reached due to security threats for the staff (MSF Sweden, N.D., p. 27; Brugger, 2009, p. 442). Being connected to non-violence is important for an NGOs image since being seen with armed guards can give people a view of the NGO as militarized (Feenstra, 2017, p. 339). If an NGO is neutral it can act as their security. Impartiality and working irrespective of religion and politics contributes to neutrality and not taking sides decreases the chance of having enemies (Krahenbuhl, 2011). This is where neutrality and independence can become protection and the importance of staying neutral for an NGO gives them the ability to work in areas with high risk of violence and conflict. Also contributing to neutrality is, as mentioned, to have a primarily private donor base (Feenstra, 2017, p. 339).

2.1.3. The case: Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Sweden
Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the case selected for this study, also known as Doctors Without Borders, is one of the biggest international NGOs in the world and one that highly relies on private donors for funding (MSF International, 2017b, pp. 4-6). MSF currently has tens of thousands of staff in the field and in the country specific offices and in 2017 they spent 1,614 million Euros with the majority going to the social mission (MSF International, 2017b, pp. 5-8). MSF is very firm about the ethical principles they base their actions on, especially neutrality and independence, and the question of dependence plays a big role in their work. Neutrality for MSF means that they can work without political, religious or other influence from their donors. This is a goal and cannot be 100 percent applicable but private donors mitigate this donor influence (MSF International, N.D.). Neutrality is, in the NGO sphere, connected to independence and a greater amount of non-political donors means greater chance for financial independence (Wells, 2001, p. 73). The concepts of neutrality and independence link to efficient NGO work and will in this study be used to describe an NGO that is able to make its own decisions not based completely on external actors influence.

Moreover, MSF has a policy that allows them to speak out publicly if they witness human rights violations and if they witness situations which hinders the medical work. They value independence in their choices on where and how to provide aid, and for whom, and to have a majority of donations come from private donors facilitate this interest (MSF International, N.D.a). They mention an objective to “rely on the generosity of individuals for the majority of our funding” (MSF International, 2017b, pp. 4-6). For this reason, MSF is a relevant case for
this study. Specifically MSF Sweden is the selected case for this study. This decision was based on multiple reasons why MSF is relevant as a case to reach the objective of the study.

Firstly, MSF’s, and thereby MSF Sweden as well, role in civil society has always been to provide emergency aid and be first responders to epidemic outbursts, occurrences of natural disasters or escalations of violent conflicts (MSF International, 2017a). However, MSF have projects that have been going on for years and whether a project is finished or needs to carry on is determined by experts at MSF who evaluate projects and their need for continuation (MSF Sweden, N.D.a, p. 12). MSF is a relevant case since they receive their funding from a primarily private donor base, which is where this study’s focus lies. They have seen an increase in percentage of private donors from almost 86 percent in 2006 to 95 percent in 2016 (MSF International, 2017b, pp. 31).

Secondly, MSF Sweden is an applicable case to study due to my previous work there and therefore accessibility to the Stockholm office (Bryman, 2012, p. 427). MSF is also one of the most trusted organisations in Sweden, which contributes to making individuals interested in donating to them. According to a study done in April 2018 MSF is the third most trusted humanitarian organisation in Sweden. Donating to charity has become a trend that Swedish people follow more and more (Välgörenhetsbarometern, 2018, pp. 4-8). Thus, it is highly applicable to look at this growing group of donors and study their impact on MSF as well as possible dependence relationship they have with the NGO (MSF International, 2017b, p. 29). This growing trend is interesting since individuals can feel like they are contributing, in their own way, to making the world a better place. So, for MSF this study is relevant to better understand this growing donor base and ways they can maintain a positive connection with them.

Finally, in 2016, MSF made the decision to stop accepting donations from EU-member states (MSF International, 2016). This decision was based on their principles of impartiality and neutrality (MSF International, N.D.a). They argue that they could no longer support the decisions by the EU on the refugee questions and the way the EU work against refugees who come to the European Mediterranean shores. The EU made a proposal to reward states that work to prevent migration to Europe and to put aid sanctions on states that do not. This prevention affects the people who MSF helps (MSF International, 2016). It is contradictory to receive money from those who prevent easy routes into Europe when one of MSF’s main tasks at this moment is to aid refugees coming across the Mediterranean (MSF International,
N.D.b). It can be argued that this decision is the opposite of neutrality since not accepting funding is a sort of political statement as well. MSF defends the decision with the argument that a majority of their funding comes from private donors that do not have political affiliation and therefore taking a distance from EU funding is possible (MSF International, 2016). The decision of not accepting EU funding anymore makes MSF an applicable case to this study since this is a major point for an NGO where their private donor base represent an even higher percentage of the total donations. The individuals became even more important for MSF with this decision being made.

2.1.4. Dependence and interdependence

Dependence versus interdependence and efficiency versus inefficiency are two ways to evaluate MSF’s funding shift. The focus of this thesis will be to see how these concepts present themselves in the NGO – private donor relationship and whether the impact is positive or negative. This study will use Emerson’s definition of dependence as “the dependence of actor A upon actor B is (1) directly proportional to A's motivational investment in goals mediated by B, and (2) inversely proportional to the availability of those goals to A outside of the A-B relation.” (Emerson, 1962, p. 32). According to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), interdependence plays an important role in an organisation’s work and an NGO works interdependently with donors to provide aid. Interdependence refers to a mutual dependence two or more actors have on each other (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, p. 41). This study will look closer at how interdependence can be applied to the NGO – donor relationship and what ways the NGOs depend on the donors and whether this dependence is mutual.

Many scholars agree that dependence in NGO - donor relationships is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid. In spite of this, an NGO can mitigate the dependency on its donors (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, p. 106). The relationship NGOs have with their donors is an important aspect and the management of this relationship is therefore necessary to put some focus on, to maintain a positive one (Wells, 2001, p. 73). Wells states that, “While it helps to be an effective organisation, this is not a precondition of independence”. Thus, an NGO can work efficiently even if it is dependent on donors and must sometimes consider their interests. Mitigation of this dependence by mostly relying on private donors is a growing trend among NGOs (Wells, 2001, p. 73).

Aid conditionality is donations coming in with conditions on where the money should be used and how. This creates a dependence relationship where the donors have controlling power
over the NGO. The NGO becomes a recipient and has to follow the guidelines and conditions
the donation came with as a way to “repay” the donor for giving. They are dependent on the
funding to operate and can therefore not return or reject donations so easily (Reith, 2010, p. 448).

Little has been written and discussed about private donors but existing research brings up the
altruistic, non-political side of private donations. Altruistic donations refer to donations made
because of emotional interests and concern for other’s well-being (Chimiak, 2014, p. 38).
NGOs know about the altruistic views of individuals and use it as a strategy in donor outreach. They play on the donors’ interest in seeing results and transparency from the NGO. Mitigation of donor dependence can occur when donations come in altruistically since the donors’ reason behind the giving is more based on emotional interests than political. A selfless donation to charity as a sign of concern for others’ well-being can be a donor’s primary aim of giving and if this is the case, less focus lies on where and how the money should be used. Therefore altruistic donations can mitigate NGOs dependence on the donor (Barman, 2007, pp. 1418-1422).

Additionally, emotional interests can be personal attachment to a certain area of the world through citizenship or vacations stayed there or solely the emotional will to give and contribute to a better world, as mentioned above. An example of emotional donations is after the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia and a huge increase of inflow of donations hit many NGOs (Telford & Cosgrave, 2007, p. 2). This could have been partly due to the emotional attachment many have to the area, and in particularly Thailand. Thailand is a popular travel destination for Swedes and an emotional attachment to an area that is hit by a natural disaster can boost donations to that area (Jefferys, 2017).

2.2. Theoretical framework
The theoretical framework for this study will help address the potential dependence or interdependence in the NGO - private donor relationship. The theories, together with the concepts of efficiency versus inefficiency, work as ways to evaluate the MSF funding shift and analyse its positive or negative impact. The efficiency versus inefficiency will be analysed through the analytical framework explained in section 2.3. The theoretical framework consists of three theories: The Resource dependency theory, the Social influence and power theory and the Stakeholder theory. The theories were selected due to their use of concepts such as dependence and interdependence as well as their analysis of the power
component in a relationship. The theories will be applied to the findings through a multi-
type study, which allows for relevant aspects of the different theories to be used to explain
the NGO – private donor relationship as well as to get different points of view. How they fit
together and complement each other will provide a richer understanding of the results and
create greater validity to them (Bryman, 2012, pp. 20-27). Dependence and interdependence
are two key concepts present in all theories and are what brings the three together.

2.2.1. The resource dependency theory
The resource dependency theory describes the external dependence organisations face.
Emerson’s (1962, p. 32) definition of dependence, mentioned above in section 2.1.4., was
written in the sixties but is still relevant for this study, since the definition means that the
NGO (A) is only dependent on the donors (B) if the donors’ opinion on the NGO is important
to the NGO. In this case it is important since the donations might decrease if donors start
disliking the NGO as an organisation. It is therefore in the NGO’s interest to invest in goals
that come from the donors and see to their interests as much as possible. Since the availability
of donors is not certain, the donors that are involved with the NGO are valuable to them and it
is more difficult to find new donors than to facilitate the interests of current ones (Emerson,
1962, p. 32).

In this case the external environment upon which an NGO is dependent are its donors. The
theory suggests that the actor in control of the resources holds certain power over the actor in
need of the resources (Lewis, 2001, p. 87). According to Lewis this power and dependence
can be mutual and the NGO “must continuously negotiate and exchange” to maintain a
positive relationship with the power holding donors. The donors are dependent on the NGO to
continue their role in civil society and provide aid to people in need, which is something
donors cannot necessarily do themselves due to lack of expertise. However, this raises the
question whether this mutual dependence or interdependence exists in the MSF - private
donor relationship or if the dependency only goes one way (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003, p. 41).

2.2.2. The social influence and power theory
The Social influence and power theory, by French and Raven (1959), discusses the
dependence actors have on each other and the influence that can be present with this
dependence. It is a fairly old theory but still addresses the bases of power and is relevant even
today. Just like the Resource dependency theory, the Social influence and power theory
presents the idea of interdependence. Here, the concept includes the idea that change in one actor in an interdependent relationship results in change in the other. French and Raven also address potential influence the power holder has (French & Raven, 1959). A power holder is someone with control over the resources that someone else wants or needs. In this case the power holder is the donor group who has control over the NGO funding (Lewis, 2001, p. 57). This study will use the concept of power defined by French and Raven (1959) since it is a definition that was created long ago but is still referenced to in studies surrounding power relations and types of power and therefore still has validity. They define power as the influence actor A has over actor B to make actor B do what actor A wants (French & Raven, 1959, p. 260). In this study actor A are the donors and actor B is the NGO.

The difference between influence and potential influence is that influence is the ability actor A has to affect what actor B does, while potential influence is the power actor A has over B that A potentially could use. However, maximum power will not always be used due to the reasoning that it is not necessary to go all the way if some influence is enough to affect actor B (French & Raven, 1959, p. 261). Donors rarely use their maximum power but the fact that they could stop donating at any point is serious enough for an NGO that they want to see to the donors’ interests as much as possible to mitigate the risk of them leaving (French & Raven, 1959, pp. 260-261). The theory suggests that the influence the power holder has over the NGO can also be passive. Some donors might not directly express their interest to where their donations should go but if some will then it is safe to suggest that others might have the same interests and therefore an NGOs changes on that topic have to be handled carefully (French & Raven, 1959, pp. 260-261).

2.2.3. The stakeholder theory
Further, these aforementioned theories interlink with the Stakeholder theory, which suggests that stakeholders with the role as financiers, in this case donors, have an interest in how the NGO they donate to uses their donations (Freeman & Phillips, 2002, p. 341). However, unlike the previous two theories the Stakeholder theory does not see reciprocity or interdependence in the organisation - financier relationship but rather states that the organisation is dependent on the financiers and not vice versa (Fassin, 2012, p. 86). It specifically focuses on “the interests and well-being of those who can assist or hinder the achievement of the organization's objectives” and in this case it is the well-being of the donors that is of interest

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2 To be applicable to this study the aspects taken from the stakeholder theory will primarily be the financiers of an organisation since this is what is relevant for an NGO.
since they can assist or hinder the NGO’s work (Phillips, Freeman, & Wicks, 2003, p. 481). They can do so by giving more or completely remove their donations and the latter can be catastrophic for an NGO (Phillips, Freeman, & Wicks, 2003, p. 481).

Reciprocity links to interdependence, referring to the mutual relationship actors have with each other. Therefore the two concepts go hand in hand. In this study the focus of the reciprocity is whether mutual dependence or interdependence exists in the NGO - donor relationship or if dependence only goes one way (Fassin, 2012, p. 89). Moral reciprocity between the organisation and its stakeholders is included in stakeholder theory and it addresses the fairness in the way the donors or stakeholders see the input and output of their donations. Moral reciprocity is the concept of actor B caring about the well-being of actor A since actor B is dependent on actor A for, in this case, funding. The well-being and morality goes the other way around as well since if the well-being of a donor is considered, the donor might not use its maximum power on the NGO (Phillips, Freeman, & Wicks, 2003, p. 481). The equivalence between the donors’ interests and what the money actually went to is something the NGO has to consider since an unequal relationship could affect the stakeholder’s feelings towards the NGO. This moral side to a NGO - donor relationship is included in the study to address the fact that private donors are individuals who needs to be handled in other ways than a state donor since private and emotional interests are relevant instead of political ones. Personal connections with the donors can prove more important to ensure their well-being (Fassin, 2012, p. 89).

The three theories are similar and coherent in many ways, such as their discussion on dependence and interdependence and power relationships between actors. However, the theories provide three slightly different approaches to the same topic and each theory contains diverse concepts on different aspects of the study that could add to a relevant and broader analysis. An example of this is the stakeholder theory’s different approach and view on interdependency in an organisation - financier relationship (Fassin, 2012, p. 86). Therefore, the multi-theory approach is used to pick out the concepts that can be applicable to an analysis. The theories will solely serve as a framework for analysis and the focus is not to validate them. They are relevant for this study since they present applicable concepts, which will be used to better understand the findings and anchor them to concepts in the analysis. Relevant concepts taken from the theories are the concepts of dependence versus interdependence, influence versus potential influence and moral reciprocity, among others.
These concepts are also discussed independently, and not connected to the theories, in many of the secondary sources chosen for this study.

2.3. Analytical framework
The theoretical framework will, as mentioned address the dependence or interdependence in the NGO - private donor relationship in the analysis. The objective is also to discuss the efficiency or inefficiency of a primarily private donor base and the ways they can work to evaluate the MSF funding shift. The analytical framework will act as a guideline for that part of the analysis. This study will use Wells’ (2001) four elements of NGO work efficiency as an analytical framework to understand and analyse the MSF - private donor relationship as well as the work efficiency of the NGO. This will be done to see whether a primarily private donor base is beneficial for an NGO and how the NGO must work with this type of donor. This framework will differ from the frameworks used in previous NGO - donor research since these works use an analytical framework based on state or institutional donors and very few discuss private funding. The objective of this study is to contribute to the discussion about civil society actor dependency on donors by evaluating the positive and negative impact of primarily private donorship on NGO work efficiency and therefore a definition of efficiency is needed. Wells (2001, p. 74) presents four key elements for an NGO to work efficiently. He suggests that independence in their work is what makes for an efficient organisation and successful implementations of the four elements enables an NGO to take a hit and recover from it as well as enables them to take risks. The four elements are therefore connected to independence (Wells, 2001, p. 74). Wells also mentions an NGO’s ability to raise resources as "a key part of building independence" (Wells, 2001, p. 77).

Firstly, he presents the need to be up to date on current global needs and respond to ongoing issues (Wells, 2001, p. 74). The second element is the perception of an NGO and how important it is to have a good reputation. A well-known organisation will have more people who know about its aims and therefore attracting funding is easier. To reach a positive perception and becoming well-known requires “independent brand and positioning” (Wells, 2001, p. 74). Thirdly, “popular support” is key since this stands for the number of people backing the NGO with funding and loyalty. Receiving funding is vital for an organisation to survive but receiving additional support is also key to remain recognized and trusted (Wells, 2001, p. 74). Finally, Wells mentions the income sources of an NGO. He states that a mix of many different types of donors is vital to not risk recalls of donations and losing donors. It
acts as a security to not be dependent on one donor but rather on a large number of sources (Wells, 2001, p. 74).
3. Methodological Framework

3.1. Qualitative abductive study
Given the research objective the chosen method for this study is a qualitative and abductive case study. Abductive reasoning refers to looking at the perspectives of participants, in this case MSF Sweden, through theoretical understanding and making a prediction or account on the social world based on these perspectives (Bryman, 2012, p. 401). In this study the perspective of the case MSF Sweden, through analysing and understanding dependence and efficiency, can contribute to a prediction on how the social world looks for other NGOs. A qualitative study can get an extended understanding of the meanings and descriptions of a topic instead of numerical data. It answers questions such as how the NGO-private donor relationship works or why it works the way it does, compared to a quantitative study which instead would, for example, look at how many private donors the NGO has or how much funding comes from private donors. Therefore a qualitative approach is more fit for this study given the objective (Bryman, 2012, pp. 471-472). In this case the dependence relationship between MSF and private donors, and MSF work efficiency are of interest as well as how it differs from their relationship with other donor groups such as states and public institutions.

3.2 Case study
Case study as a method was chosen to get an in-depth understanding on one case to provide the basis for future research into the issue (Bryman, 2012, p. 66-71). The case of MSF is delimited to MSF Sweden and looks back at statistics from 2006 up until today. Most MSF reports containing relevant information for this study are only available from 2006 and onwards and that is the reason the year 2006 is used in comparisons.

3.3. Semi-structured interviews
The study will partly obtain data in the field and the methodological framework for this part is a semi-structured interview study with staff from the Swedish MSF office in Stockholm. The interviews will act as a supplementary data collection to information that cannot be obtained online on the MSF website or in MSF published reports, newspapers and documents. A semi-structured interview study has the advantage of questions being prepared ahead of time, which can be shaped to then answer the research questions. It allows for question guidelines but keeps the informality of a conversation, a middle way between a structured and unstructured interview. These guidelines will provide means to control what the “conversation” is about.
and steer the interviewees in the right direction that is beneficial for the study and to answer the research questions.

The interviewees were chosen to reflect the different departments of importance and to fill the criteria. The only criterion they need to fill is to have, or have had in recent years, a position at the Swedish MSF office as well as knowledge about how the NGO is run and aspects of their private donors. The interviewees were contacted through a personal connection at MSF as well as obtained through snowball sampling which means an interviewee can suggest a second interviewee for the study based on the knowledge they have on the other staff at the MSF Stockholm office (Bryman, 2012, p. 424). Gathering interviewees has proven to be rather difficult since many of the staff at the Swedish MSF office were busy due to many of their colleagues being on holiday or on maternity or paternity leave. That explains the relatively low number of interviewees. However, the number can be justified since a lot of the information of interest were obtained through other sources and the interviews worked as additional data sources for information not available elsewhere. The five interviews managed to answer the interview questions and therefore the number did not necessarily need to be higher to answer the research questions.

3.4. Information on the interviewees
All the five interviewees have worked or are currently working at MSF Sweden’s office in Stockholm. They are both male and females, are in their twenties and thirties and have worked in the office between one and three years. They work in the telemarketing (TM) and donor service departments and provided knowledge on different aspects of MSF Sweden and International’s work. They were able to provide information about other departments and their operations too due to the tight connection between the departments at MSF. Some have knowledge about who the donors are and what ways are proven most efficient when communicating with them, be it over the phone or through donor or public outreach. Others were more knowledgeable on MSF as an organisation and what they stand for and how decisions within the organisation are made. Furthermore, how donations come in and history of donation inflow were the topics for some of the interviewees.

3.5. Interview process
Around ten interview questions per research question were created to answer the four research questions. These together formed the interview guide for this study, which can be found in the appendix 8.1. The interview guide was used as a base or roadmap for the conversational
interviews conducted. The interview guide used in the interviews was translated to Swedish to represent the language used. The interviews were conducted over Skype or the telephone and in Swedish since this is the working language of the selected staff at the MSF Stockholm office. Skype and the telephone were used for the convenience of the interviewees and the collection of information worked in an efficient way with no disruptions in the audio or video. Since the data of interest were not personal opinions but rather facts about MSF, the need to see the interviewees’ facial expressions and body language was not as important and therefore the telephone interviews were possible. The informants were contacted on email and they were the one’s deciding the time and date of the interview, to facilitate the likelihood of their participation. Each interview was recorded on a dictaphone to simplify the transcription process. After each interview the recording was transcribed in order to gain easy access to the interviewees’ answers. Thereafter the transcriptions were taken from the findings and used in the analysis to reach the objective and answer the research questions. The interview answers with data from other sources together did this.

3.6. The sources
The primary sources of this study are the interviews of MSF Sweden’s Stockholm office staff. The reliability of these sources is based on a trust that the interviewees will provide information about MSF that is authentic and connected to facts and figures MSF has produced (Bryman, 2012, pp. 392-293). The interviews are relevant to conduct since they can provide data that is not accessible on the MSF website and therefore contribute to a more thorough analysis of the donor relationships. A limitation with using interviews is that the data obtained is limited to what the interviewees actually say. If they do not mention a certain aspect or do not answer all questions then that means lost data or data not obtained. Other primary sources are information drawn from MSF reports, advertisement, newspaper, social media, website and other documents they as an NGO have produced. MSF has an evaluation unit that evaluates projects and reports on MSF work. Reliability of this unit is based on their idea to “seek active transparency and accountability to improve the relevance, effectiveness and quality of its interventions” (MSF Evaluation Unit, N.D.). These sources are relevant since they come directly from MSF and they should be experts on their own work. A limitation to these sources is the fact that MSF can produce the data they want and could in theory exclude some data.

Secondary sources used in this study are various books, journals and reports used to get an understanding on the topic on NGO - donor relationships and dependency. A majority of them
are peer reviewed to ensure reliability (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). They are relevant since they together contribute with different perspectives on the topic as well as present previously done research that connects to the study. To increase relevance the secondary sources are as up to date as possible when such are available (Bryman, 2012, p. 312). Since existing research on private donors is limited some sources are older than five years. This could be a limitation with the secondary sources. A mitigation of these limitations can be that if an idea is good and fits the study, the year the idea was published does not necessarily make it a limitation. A good idea then, could still be relevant today. Especially the theories are taken from articles and texts that are older than ten years but there is still relevance to them in the sense that they present concepts applicable to this study. The secondary sources were discussed in the literature debate in section 2.1.

3.7. Limitations and Delimitations
Delimitations exist in the focus of the study on MSF’s relationship with their private donors, leaving out the other donor groups. This direction and focus is rooted in the fact that little research has been done on private donors and therefore a research gap exists. The study is delimited to one case study, MSF Sweden, since my previous work at the Swedish office provided easier access to interviewees as well as a certain understanding of the working environment. Although, it is important to have in mind that this could create a biased view on the topic but awareness of this issue existed throughout the writing process and bias will be excluded from the study to as large extent as possible. Similar interviews are much more difficult to conduct without accessibility to the NGO. What accessibility brings about is a familiarity between the interviewee and interviewer that can contribute to a more open conversation. However, it is important to note that any conclusions from a study with one case are not representative for all NGO-donor relationships (Bryman, 2012, pp. 69-70). Further research should be conducted with more cases in order to draw more general conclusions. What one case study can bring about, however, is a point of departure for understanding the relationship and an idea how to conduct future research. This study is also delimited to MSF in Sweden, which means a generalisation of the relationship between private donors and MSF international is not possible. On the other hand, the interviewees did possess knowledge and information about MSF outside the Swedish section so some information could be obtained on MSF International. Delimitation also lies with the number of interviews. Five interviews were conducted but they can be enough to provide empirical results sufficient for answering the research questions as mentioned in section 3.3. The
interviewees are delimited to people working at the MSF Stockholm office who have knowledge about the organisation and its work.

Limitations or practical considerations can be the fact that only one case is studied, which does not give an understanding about the donor relationship of other NGOs, but this can provide an in-depth understanding of one particular case. The end results from the study might have looked different if another NGO was the case. The relatively low age and work time of the interviewees can be a limitation since there might be lack of experience to answer some of the interview questions more in depth. Mitigation of this limit would have been possible with a larger number of interviewees, but considering the difficulties of obtaining participants due to their heavy workload, mitigation was not as easy. Further, it is in the interviewees’ interest to portray MSF as good as possible and this could lead to them holding back information that could impair MSF’s image or jeopardize their donors’ view of the organisation. To mitigate this limitation, the responses from the different interviewees were put against each other to find possible loopholes in the information. The familiarity between the interviewees and interviewer as well as the fact that they are first-hand sources and therefore can contribute with information not gained elsewhere can also mitigate these limits. Concerning the previous work at MSF Sweden the data was handled as objectively as possible to stay unbiased but this can become a limitation. Mitigation of this was in mind throughout the writing process.

3.8. Ethical Considerations
Since this study is partly an interview study, ethical considerations are important to protect the interviewees. They are the first-hand sources and important for the data collection, thus the approach to these people needs to be handled with ethical considerations in mind. They represent MSF and not their personal beliefs but they contribute with empirical evidence to the study on their own time and therefore their rights and anonymity are important. Before the interviews the interviewees were informed about the purpose of the study and how and by whom their interview answers would be handled. This was, however, limited to information that would not jeopardize the participation of the interviewees. The interviewees were ensured anonymity and that the results would only be used in this study. Their participation would only happen through their consent and they could discontinue this participation whenever they wanted. The interviewees were able to read and approve of the final draft before it was handed in if they so wished (Bryman, 2012, pp. 135-144).
4. Findings
In this chapter the findings from the various sources are presented. Together they will help answer the research questions and reach the objective. The chapter is structured into three sections: Staying independent and gaining trust, Getting donors and Keeping donors, with respective sub sections.

4.1. Staying independent
Staying independent is part of MSF’s main principles. It is what enables them to be first responders and choose where they want to operate and how. When staying neutral in their work and funding they can gain access to countries and areas where other organisations might not be able to go due to political affiliation not wanted in the country (Interview 3). This section, 4.1. will help answer the research question: “How does MSF Sweden work to stay independent?”.

4.1.1. Aid conditionality
Aid conditionality or earmarked donations means donations that are connected to a specific project and this is something MSF wants to avoid to as large extent as possible to stay independent and neutral. As a monthly donor it is not possible to earmark one’s donations and this is a big reason why MSF prefers monthly donors. A monthly donor donates a chosen amount every month automatically via direct debit (Interview 3). According to interviewee 1, earmarked donations are most common when a natural disaster occurs. This was due to the extreme urgent need for resources as well as interest from the donors’ side to allocate funding there. When a big natural disaster occurs MSF makes a thorough plan for how much resources are needed and where (Interview 1). An example of a reason why earmarked donations is something MSF wants to avoid is the Boxing Day tsunami project in 2004 (Interview 1). MSF had an earmarked campaign when the disaster happened and received more donations than they could allocate. This lead to hours of calling each donor and asking if their donation could be moved to the un-earmarked general budget for other projects (Interview 1; Interview 3). This also lead to some donors recalling their donation since it could not be allocated to the tsunami projects and MSF having to pay them back (Interview 3).

In MSF reports the words “restricted” or “unrestricted” funds are used to describe earmarked versus un-earmarked donations (MSF International, 2017b, p. 9). Table 4.1 presents the ratios between unrestricted and restricted funds for private donors and public institutional donors for
the years 2006 and 2016. The table shows that the majority of private funds are unrestricted and the majority of public institutional funds are restricted.

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4.1.2. EU-member state donations

The 2016 decision surrounding no longer accepting donations from EU member states was made to ensure independence for MSF. The decision received both negative and positive comments from MSF donors (Interview 4). Many saw it as a “political act” and did not understand the reasoning behind not “wanting funding no matter the source” (Interview 2). “If you don’t want their donation you don’t want mine either” was a common way of reasoning (Interview 1). Some praised the decision and called MSF brave for standing up and speaking out against EU’s refugee politics. MSF hopes that there are hidden statistics for the positive comments and interviewee 1 thought that it is “more common to comment if one is unpleased with something than if one is happy about a decision” (Interview 1). The interviewees agree on that the decision was a risk but that it was worth it since MSF stands for addressing unjust occurrences and not staying silent (Interviews 1-5). The decision was in line with MSF ideology and principles and there is always a discussion on how MSF should develop and not making risky decisions could lead to slower development. Interviewee 2 stated that “people would have criticized MSF if they did not make the decision as well” (Interview 2).

When MSF received funding from EU members they applied for funding for a certain project with attached statistics on how many people they could help with the money. So the funding from the EU was earmarked but the EU was not the one coming with demands. They relied on MSF to document the progress of the project and report back after it was finished and use the money as planned and in the best way possible. Interviewee 1 commented, “as long as people do not tell us what to do with the money we can be independent” (Interview 1). MSF lost donors after the decision announcement but also gained a decent amount. Some people at
MSF consider the idea of having 100% of donations come from a private donor base and some disagree but nonetheless MSF overall agrees on that a large majority should come from individuals to remain neutral, independent and gain access to more crisis areas (Interview 3). To ensure independence MSF Sweden also do not accept donations from companies or organizations with political or religious affiliations as well as companies or organizations connected to the tobacco, alcohol, weapons, oil, gas, diamonds, gold or drugs industry (MSF Sweden, N.D.f).

4.1.3. Témoignage
MSF independence is portrayed in their ability to be able to speak out. “Témoignage”, which means testimony in French, is MSF’s name for their objective to speak out about unjust occurrences they witness in the field. If MSF does use “témoignage” they do so by arranging campaigns, publishing articles in media and their newspaper Direkt, and other types of influencing work. Field workers also often speak out about what they have experienced and encountered in the field. Deciding the best decision for each case requires thorough deliberations since the wrong decision could affect MSF’s reputation or ability to work in a certain area. The aim of the campaigns is to reach out to politicians about humanitarian principles that are not followed (MSF Sweden, N.D.a, p. 6).

One example of an event that gained MSF’s trust was in 1999 when MSF was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize (MSF USA, N.D.). MSF’s president at the time held an acceptance speech on behalf of the organisation where he addressed that neutrality for an NGO does not equal silence and as actors of civil society they are obliged to act if they witness wrongdoings. He added that independence helps to maintain this role and that “We are not sure that words can always save lives, but we know that silence can certainly kill.” (MSF International, 1999). Civil society’s job is not to replace services from the state but rather act in a humanitarian way and treat immediate needs. MSF’s role is primarily to treat patients and not “stop a genocide” or “ethnic cleansing” (MSF International, 1999). This differentiates the role of the state and of humanitarian civil society actors. Civil society is not supposed to come with a solution to an issue but rather identify existing problems and let the state solve them. Civil society does this to stay apolitical and remain independent and neutral (MSF International, 1999). These are principles MSF still work by today (MSF USA, N.D.).
4.2. Getting donors
Staying independent is facilitated by having a primarily private donor base and when working with private donors, donor outreach becomes very important to maintain positive relationship with current ones and to attract new donors. That is why MSF put so much time on getting new donors (Interview 5). Donor outreach refers to ways MSF works with donor communication, advertising, mailings, newspaper subscriptions, social media, and branding (Interview 2).

4.2.1. Mailings and public recruitment
MSF receives most of their new donors through face-to-face recruitment and through people giving one donation, receiving a phone call from MSF after a couple of months and then joining as a monthly donor (Interview 2). Face-to-face refers to staff from MSF being present on festivals, on plazas, subway stations and shopping malls, stopping passer-bys and telling them about MSF’s work and asking if they want to join as a donor, being able to register a donor on the spot (Interview 2). The Swedish office is located in Stockholm and MSF Sweden specifically works with donor outreach, recruiting field staff and collecting funding (MSF Sweden, N.D.a, p. 3). The reason MSF works with advertisement and donor outreach is to spread their brand and reach more people to support their work. The goal is to advertise as cheaply as possible and MSFs get back more money from the advertisement than they spend on it (MSF Sweden, N.D.a, p. 7). According to interviewee 5 many people recognize the MSF logo when they see it in advertisement of different kinds. The logo is also highly recognised by people in the countries in which MSF operates (Interview 5).

Warmmail and coldmail are names of the two types of mailings MSF Sweden sends out. Warmmails go out to people who have donated at least once to the NGO while coldmails go out to hundreds of thousands of people in Sweden who have never donated to MSF before. The warmmails present new or ongoing projects to the donor and the question whether they want to donate again or become a monthly donor. The coldmails include information about MSF, the currents needs in the world and the question whether the receiver wants to join as a donor. The response rate on the cold mails is around 2% but for every Swedish Krona (SEK) spent on the mailings MSF gets back twelve crowns and they consider it a reason for continuing with these mailings and spending time on them (Interview 3).
4.2.2. Direct dialogue

One task for the Swedish office is to work with donor communication over the phone. Donors are often contacted by the TM department and therefore the staff working there are MSF’s voices out to the public. The objective for this department is to increase the number of monthly donors since these donors are beneficial for MSF’s budget planning. It was not until recent years that MSF works with direct dialogue in-house and before they hired another company to work with this (Interview 4). Only people who are monthly donors or have donated sometime in the past are contacted this way (Interview 5). This section, 4.2.2. can help answer the research question: “How does MSF Sweden work to maintain a positive relationship with their donors?”.

Some donors are not fond of receiving phone calls since so many other organisations and companies use this method to reach out to people. However, many donors are flattered that MSF takes their time to do personal connections (Interview 1). The caller begins with thanking the donor for their contribution to MSF and adds a question why the person started donating. This adds to a chance of getting feedback on MSF and hearing reasons why the donor specifically chose to give to MSF (Interview 4). Then the MSF employee presents new projects that MSF is involved in and talks about the needs in the world at the moment. The phone call stays a two-way conversation with the donor getting the chance to respond to what they hear (Interview 5). Only after the reason behind the call and the work presentation is done is the question of their donation is raised. If the donor is not a monthly donor the TM staff will talk to them and explain the benefits of becoming one. These benefits are both for MSF and the donor since it lowers MSF administration costs and simplifies the donation process for the person. If the donor agrees to become a monthly donor or raise their current monthly amount the MSF staff sends them a letter of confirmation of the new donation amount. If the donor says no to the suggestion the MSF employee asks again and adds arguments why MSF prefers monthly donors. If the person still says no the call ends with another thanks (Interview 4).

When working with direct dialogue MSF has specific scripts that the communicator uses to connect with the donors. Maintaining a good relationship with the donors through carefully chosen words in donor conversations, showing transparency and gaining trust, is linked to donor outreach and the strategies behind that. Before a call is made information about the donor is presented to the caller. The conversation is always altered depending on the gender, age and speed of speech of the donor. If a donor is older and speaks slowly the caller adapts
his or her own speech to match the donor’s. Before ending the call, independent on the outcome, the caller always thanks the donor again and tells them the importance their role has in contributing to making MSF do their job more efficiently (Interview 4; MSF Sweden, scripts for direct dialogue). Interviewee 2 mentioned the importance of ending the call on a good note so that the donor leaves the conversation with positive feelings for MSF (Interview 2).

4.3. Keeping donors
Since the percentage of private donors is constantly increasing, putting effort into donor outreach becomes more and more important, especially for countries that have a large private donor base, such as Sweden. With an increasing majority of private funding comes increased investment in maintaining a positive relationship with the donating individuals (Interview 3). To maintain a positive relationship with its donors MSF international and MSF Sweden has different strategies to gain trust and show transparency to their donors. Gaining trust and showing transparency is done by making sure MSF is accountable for their actions and reporting on work results (Interview 5). Every year MSF Sweden sends out surveys, or Net Promoter Score (NPS), for their donors to fill out (Interview 1). These surveys include questions about donor loyalty and act as a way for MSF to get donor feedback on their view of the organisation and know how to develop. The feedback is mostly positive (Interview 3). The surveys were not available for me to look at. The section, 4.3. will help answer the research question: “How does MSF Sweden work to maintain a positive relationship with their donors?”.

4.3.1. The donor profile
MSF’s average private donor is an older female who donates sporadically (Interview 1). However, according to others interviewed many of the regular donors tend to be slightly younger since monthly donations are done via direct debit. Older people tend to not prefer direct debit since many of them are uncomfortable with money being drawn from one’s account automatically (Interviews 2-4). On an average the non-monthly donors give around 400 SEK per donation. These donations are either spontaneous ones, in someone’s memory or for someone’s birthday (Interview 1). Interviewee 1 mentioned the main disadvantage of private donations being the smaller amount of money per donor. The average monthly donation is 104 SEK but since they are monthly and stay five to six years on an average these donations generate large sums of money. MSF Sweden currently has around 116,000 monthly donors (over six million worldwide) but the total Swedish private donor base consists of
hundreds of thousands of individuals (Interview 3). The average monthly income for a Swedish household is almost 22,000 SEK (OECD, 2017).

Monthly donations also mean MSF can calculate how much funding they will receive each month. Knowing the amount MSF will receive the next month can determine if the running projects can continue and it eases the planning process (Interview 4). Having money saved before a natural disaster occurs contributes to MSF’s fast response since it takes time to reach out to the public about the needs, the public reacting to the needs, them donating and only then being able to head to the disaster area. After that time it might be too late for some of the victims (Interview 3). Another benefit of having monthly donors is the decreased administration costs for MSF. Non-monthly donations require some paperwork which adds to administration expenses while direct debit runs automatically after the first registration (Interview 5).

4.3.2. The newspaper and social media

“Direkt” is MSF Sweden’s newspaper that is sent out to their monthly donors four times a year. It contains information about MSF International’s work around the world as well as testimonies from patients and field staff (MSF Sweden, N.D.b). This is sent out as a reminder to the people who donate regularly what MSF does and where their monthly donations go as well as a way for the donor to get a little closer to the NGO (Interview 1; MSF Sweden, N.D.i). Direkt is part of the latter of MSF’s two main objectives: providing healthcare to people in need and speak out about injustice (MSF Sweden, N.D.i). All decisions and statements made by MSF are supposed to reflect their principles and brand (Interview 3).

MSF Sweden is active on various social media platforms and the follower amount is presented in Table 4.2. The content of these accounts are very similar with small differences such as shorter, more specific information on Twitter and “month in focus” videos reporting on current projects, on the Youtube account. Posts include project updates, interviews with patients, short videos from the field and testimonies from field staff (MSF Sweden, N.D.e; MSF Sweden, N.D.g). The MSF Sweden Instagram account posts a couple of times a week (MSF Sweden, N.D.c). The table 4.2 shows that the content of MSF Sweden’s Facebook page reaches out to a larger number of people than of the other accounts (MSF Sweden, N.D.d). Comments on Facebook and Instagram from followers are often positive and the comments are praising MSF’s work. However, interviewee 1 stated that if criticism of MSF work occurs
it has a more angry tone than that of criticism mentioned in direct donor dialogue (Interview 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Number of followers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youtube</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>9,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>390,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>12,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MSF Sweden, N.D.c; MSF Sweden, N.D.d; MSF Sweden, N.D.e; MSF Sweden, N.D.g.

4.3.3. Reports and documents
When it comes to the transparency of MSF they publish activity reports and financial reports on their international website, with links getting there on the Swedish website. In these reports MSF describes programs and activities performed during the different years and provides information for the readers on facts and figures of number of patients treated and country specific facts (MSF International, N.D.c). Table 4.3 below shows a comparison between MSF activities in 2016 versus 2006 and can help answer the research question: “How does MSF’s work today differ from the period when they received part of their funding from EU member states?”, when it comes to statistics. The table shows that the number of patients treated and percentage of private donors were larger in 2016 than in 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of private donors</td>
<td>95 %</td>
<td>85.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of outpatient consultations</td>
<td>9,792,200</td>
<td>9,665,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of inpatients</td>
<td>671,700</td>
<td>459,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of malaria cases treated</td>
<td>2,536,400</td>
<td>1,873,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of measles vaccinations</td>
<td>869,100</td>
<td>764,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of medical treatments for sexual violence</td>
<td>13,800</td>
<td>11,126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The financial reports present detailed statements on financial activities, changes in funds and cash flows and include information on where the funding comes from (MSF International, N.D.d). Reporting on how many percent of a donation reaches the project is also conveyed. In 2016 91.4% of total outflows went to the projects, 7% to fundraising and 1.6% to administration. Previous years the fundraising costs were higher (MSF Sweden, N.D.h). Table 4.4 shows the total income difference between 2016 and 2006, with 2016 having a significantly higher one. Interviewee 2 mentioned that back when MSF did not have as many private donors a lot more time was spent on reporting to the various other donor groups since they often asked for more thorough reporting (Interview 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total income in million Euros</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

On MSF Sweden’s website a document called “101 questions about MSF” is available for pdf download in Swedish. This is available to anyone who has questions on MSF work and wants easily accessible answers (MSF Sweden, N.D.a). The document provides information as well as assurance that the donations are always used where they are needed the most. Since MSF has their own staff in the field they assure the donors that the money will reach the field projects. They admit that some percent goes to administration costs but an explanation why, is provided. MSF needs administration costs to ensure the NGO is being run professionally (MSF Sweden, N.D.a, p. 19). To remain independent is to maintain the volunteer spirit within the organisation. This means that staff salaries are low even for field staff and secretary generals (MSF Sweden, N.D.a, p. 13; Interview 2).
5. Analysis

5.1. Dependence versus interdependence

5.1.1. A dependent relationship

This chapter will help address the research question of advantages and disadvantages of working with a financial budget provided primarily by private donors. The question whether the MSF - private donor relationship is dependence directed one way or that of an interdependent one can be answered with help from the theories. The Resource dependency theory suggests that the relationship is interdependent but that it is shifted towards one side, meaning the NGO is more dependent on the external environment, the donors, than the donors are dependent on the NGO. According to the theory, the donors are dependent on the NGO to contribute to global development work, due to their own lack of expertise. They possess the resources but not necessarily the knowledge on how to provide aid in practice. However, MSF’s donors are not dependent on MSF since they can leave their donorship at any time and start donating elsewhere, to a different NGO that does similar things. MSF cannot force them to stay but only work to mitigate the risk of them leaving.

The donors’ opinion of MSF is of importance and therefore MSF works to make sure this opinion is positive. However, they only have to do so if they feel donations cannot come from elsewhere, such as from states and institutions. MSF made, with the EU decision, the step towards having an almost entirely private donor base and therefore the resources they want is found in individuals. At this point, donations cannot come from elsewhere to the same extent they could before or MSF would not have a primarily private donor base. All strategies the interviewees mentioned suggested that MSF is determined to continue increasing the percentage of private donors. This is where the Stakeholder theory’s concept of stakeholder, or donor, well-being comes in.

Well-being of stakeholders, as presented in the Stakeholder theory, can be applied to MSF’s donor outreach and donor communication. Interviewees stated the importance of the donors feeling like their donation is contributing to the larger picture. Personal phone calls, mailings and thank you letters work as strategies to look after the donors and see to their well-being. If the donors feel like their donation is contributing to the larger picture it is more likely that they want to keep donating.
Furthermore, the Social influence and power theory suggests that change in one actor in an interdependent relationship results in change in the other. This is partly true with the MSF - private donor relationship. If the donors change behaviour such as leaving their donorship with MSF, MSF receives less funding and has to change their operations. If MSF changes it does not necessarily mean the donors will. One example of this is the EU-decision, which was a huge change in MSF’s sources of funding. This did result in donors changing their mind and leaving MSF but they also gained new ones, evening out the loss of donors. Donors changed but the impact was not a big enough of a change so this is not strong enough evidence of mutual dependence and therefore the relationship is not interdependent.

In addition, this theory suggests the potential or passive influence donors have which connects to the stakeholder idea of donors’ well-being. The private donors have the potential ability to influence MSF in their work but choose to not do so other than commenting suggestions on social media or during phone calls. This can be due to multiple factors but most likely it has to do with their trust in MSF. MSF sees to their well-being and shows transparency and accountability and therefore the donors are content on just donating and not doing so with conditions. This can also be due to the small impact a donation has on a donor’s life considering an average Swedish household’s monthly income is almost 22,000 SEK and an average monthly donation to MSF is 104 SEK. The small impact can contribute to the donors caring less what is done with their money. MSF is very independent because of the fact that their private donors donate without conditions. However, the private donors could potentially influence MSF if they came together as a large group presenting demands and that is why the influence is potential.

The Stakeholder theory contradicts the other two theories in the sense that it does not consider the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders being interdependent. The theory rather suggests moral reciprocity between the two actors. For MSF and their private donors this means that if MSF proves transparency and accountability towards the donors as well as sees to their well-being the donors’ trust in MSF might increase. This is evident with the EU-decision since many donors stayed with MSF even when the risky decision was made, not necessarily because they agreed with the decision or completely understood it, but rather because they had faith in MSF and that they made the decision they thought was right. Without this trust, an NGO making a risky decision might result in more donors leaving.
However, the shift from accepting funding from EU-member states to a donor base that consists of an even higher percentage of private donors occurred not too long ago and therefore the difference in MSF’s work has not portrayed itself as very distinct yet. Although, back when the private donor base was smaller, MSF had a lower number of treated patients per year. This can be an evidence of benefit coming with a larger private donor base. The increase in treated patients can also be due to other factors such as MSF growing as an NGO every year due to spreading of their brand or conditions improving in the project countries mitigating operational struggles, but these factors are the discussion of another study. The focus after the shift is on recruiting more individuals as donors to compensate for the, however voluntary, loss of EU funding. The interviewees mentioned the need to overaccount to their donors back when MSF had a lot higher percentage of public institutional donors. Now, less focus is on reporting to large donors, and thereby cutting down on overaccounting, administration costs, and more on brand outreach. This answers the research question on differences between the periods before and after the EU-decision.

5.2. Efficiency
The conclusion that can be drawn from the previous section is that a primarily private donor base decreases an NGO’s dependence on their financiers. This section, 5.2. will explore the possible impact on efficiency a primarily private donor base has, through Wells’ four elements of efficiency. Before the shift from EU-funding MSF had fewer private donors, treated less patients per year, spent more money on fundraising and administration, due to more time spent on reporting and planning in order to convince the EU of funding, and received a smaller total income per year, compared to now. So something has contributed to an increase in their work efficiency. However, it has not been many years since the shift and more differences between the two periods might emerge in the future.

An NGO’s efficiency is partly determined by the funding they are able to collect and what they manage to achieve with the budget given. Wells’ four elements of efficiency are interlinked in the sense that being an up-to-date NGO and responding to current needs creates their own brand and popular reputation, which leads to an increased number of supporters which contributes to a mix of sources of funding. Each element will work as a sub-section in this part of the analysis. Showing success in the four elements needs to be presented to the donors for them to remain trustful of the NGO’s capacity to represent civil society in global development work. If an NGO seems successful in each of the four elements it contributes to the NGO’s independence. Independence in turn contributes to access to countries and areas
where other organisations might not be able to go due to political affiliation not wanted in the country. Therefore this section on efficiency will help answer the research question: “How does MSF Sweden work to stay independent?”

5.2.1. Being up to date
The first element for an efficient and independent NGO that Wells mentions is an NGO’s ability to be up to date on where and what the needs are. Independence comes in here in the sense that if an NGO is up to date they do not need others to tell them what to do or where to go. Efficiency in knowing crises and when escalations occur or reacting quickly when there is an outbreak of a disease, contribute to more lives saved and easier prioritizing projects and fund allocation. Here, MSF’s private donors come in since their donations rarely come with conditions on where MSF should work or how they should operate. Private donors provide MSF with the ability to decide about their operations themselves and act on the ongoing needs they trace.

Showing their private donors that they are in fact up to date is necessary to ensure the donors’ belief in MSF’s capacity to allocate money where it is most needed. MSF’s role is to be the one up to date on the needs and the donors’ role is to provide funding so the needs can be seen to. MSF does this in multiple ways. The newspaper Direkt and social media are ways for MSF to introduce new crises to the donors and enlighten them on current projects the donors themselves might not be up to date on. A post on social media that a natural disaster has just occurred and describing how to best donate and contribute to MSF’s mission can reach many individuals very quickly. People reacting fast to a crisis and donating what they can is crucial for MSF to be able to be first responders. The EU decision was also a way for MSF to show that they are up to date on what is going on in the world, in not just medical issues but also political ones. Staying up to date on global events as well as ways to operate contributes to an NGO staying relevant. NGOs compete for private funding and staying relevant is highly important to win the funding. Also important in the competition are an NGO’s reputation and brand.

5.2.2. Reputation and brand
The second element of efficiency is an NGO’s reputation and brand. Independence comes in here in the sense that having an independent brand makes an NGO stand out and stay relevant. The perception donors and other people have of the NGO can determine its success in collecting funding and allocating the funding to the field. MSF’s work would not be
deemed as efficient if they, as first responders, arrived too late. Their reputation is based on their ability to act quickly and monthly donations from private donors facilitate this. Maintaining a good reputation is done by having a primarily private donor base, which shows that MSF can remain neutral and claim independence in their decision-making. Being affiliated with a political party or religion might make people who do not relate to those certain ideologies choose another NGO to donate to. MSF disagrees with certain industries that cause people harm in various ways, and therefore do not accept funding from this type of companies, also mitigating the risk of people disagreeing with them.

Recruiters are the faces out to the public and might be the only contact some people have had with MSF. They have to constantly make sure MSF is presented in a positive way. The whole TM department, and their strategies behind the donor communication, is there to be a positive voice out to the public. Losing one donor does not sound too serious when having a primarily private donor base but if this donor spreads negative information about MSF it can affect other people’s view on the NGO. However, if a donor has inaccurate information about MSF, the donor communicators have the ability to correct them, to certain extent, to ensure the MSF brand is portrayed in an accurate way. Strategies for correcting donors have to be chosen carefully to keep a positive tone and not talk them down.

Furthermore, transparency and accountability contribute to a positive reputation for an NGO. The many financial and activity reports, together with Questions and Answers documents published by MSF is a way for MSF to show transparency and a way for donors and others to inspect how MSF operates. Also, having a logo that is recognized by people all over the world ads to MSF’s popular support and recognition as an NGO. The Nobel Peace Prize in 1999 can also have contributed tremendously to MSF’s reputation. The award was also a way to spread the MSF brand and was a chance to show the world what MSF stands for and present their ability to use témoignage. To speak out is possible due to private donors and it minimises the risk of backlash. The win put MSF on the map and displayed their role in civil society. MSF’s reputation of being first responders is facilitated by private monthly donors and the long-term planning they enable.

5.2.3. Popular support
The third element of efficiency is an NGO’s popular support. This section, 5.2.3. addresses the relationship between MSF and their private donors and how they work to maintain a positive one and mitigate the dependency. A high number of people in the public who has
trust for a specific NGO contribute to popular support and more individuals willing to become donors. Therefore this section on popular support can help answer the research question: 

“How does MSF Sweden work to maintain a positive relationship with their donors?”

MSF can be seen as successful when it comes to popular support due to its well-known brand globally, being one of the largest NGOs in the world. Also, each private donor provides a small percentage of the funding but together they form 95% of all income for MSF International. The interviewees mentioned many strategies to maintain this private donor relationship and keep their percentage increasing. The surveys act as a way for MSF to find out the perception the donors have of them but also work in favour of this perception. By sending out a survey, the donors might get the perception that MSF cares about their well-being, thereby strengthening the relationship. Same goes for the direct dialogue phone calls which work as a way to get feedback but also as a way for the donor to feel appreciated by the organisation and that their individual role matters.

Knowing who, on average, the private donor is can contribute to specific approach to donor communication. The gender and age of a donor changes the approach the communicators should have since the need of the donor differs from person to person. The constant dialogue in the TM and fundraising departments on what strategies for donor outreach works and how responses have been from the donors is necessary to maintain a positive relationship with the donors. The departments working with this are therefore important in MSF’s overall operations even if they are not directly linked to the actual medical work being carried out in the field. The recruiters are the first step in the aid chain and act as the foundation for MSF provided aid to be possible.

MSF reaches out to their hundreds of thousands supporters through social media, calling, mailings, Direkt, public recruitment, ads and reports. Being active on social media helps to connect with the donors and also to show their position in civil society. The donors comment and MSF answers and the bond is strengthened. Many donors might also be content with viewing an NGO’s social media posts and do not feel the need to read up on their reports. This could contribute to the NGO not having to put as much time and effort into upward accountability thereby being able to underaccount. Seeing that the result of the mailings contributes with more money than what was spent on them is a valid reason to continue with them. Sending out hundreds of thousands of mailings is an efficient way to reach many people, quickly and for little cost.
The newspaper Direkt acts as the donors’ “reward” for being monthly donors as well as a way for MSF to report back to them how their operations are going. A newspaper might appeal more to people than long reports filled with statistics. Photographs and testimonies from the field play on the emotional reasons why many individuals donate and might bring donors closer to the cause. Receiving a reward for donating could contribute to monthly donors staying longer and act as a confirmation that the person donating is contributing to making the world a better place. Other contributing factors to donors’ trust and positive perception of MSF is their low salaries, many volunteers working at the office, the Nobel Peace Prize award win and various reports MSF publishes.

5.2.4. Mixed income sources
The fourth element of efficiency is an NGO’s ability to spread out the risk of losing donors by having multiple sources of funding. Independence comes in here in the sense that not accepting certain donations facilitates independence and the ability to not having to deal with aid conditionality.

However, a private donor base could act as different sources of funding, thereby interpreting the fourth element a little differently. Having funding come from a variety of sources is beneficial but each private donor is an individual with its own perception of MSF. Just because one donor leaves does not mean all other private donors will. In this fourth element donors being spread out is key and therefore having a large number of private donors is to prefer compared to a smaller number of large donors. Losing one large donor, due to them prioritizing elsewhere, for example, equals losing more funding than if a private donor leaves. Although EU funding can come in quickly and provides large amounts of funding, many individuals’ small donations can be enough. An example of this is the natural disasters the interviewees mentioned and the ability their private donors had to provide even more funding than MSF could allocate. MSF has seen that people are willing to donate in times of crises and therefore the decision to not accept EU-funding was possible. The decision was not possible if MSF had a lot less private donors to compensate for the voluntary loss of EU funding.

Another argument for a large private donor base instead of having mixed donation sources is the reduced aid conditionality. Un-earmarked monthly donations create a higher certainty of the amount of money the NGO will receive each month and knowing what their budget is six
months from now is beneficial for their projects in the field since planning for future aspects of a project can be done ahead of time. As people get more comfortable with that way of donating it is legitimate to assume that MSF’s monthly donations will increase leading to less aid conditionality and thereby increased independence.

A private donor base contributes to MSF successfully achieving the fourth element of efficiency, however in a slightly different manner than suggested by Wells. The EU-decision was a risk worth taking since having large donors poses a risk to témoignage and decreases the number of times MSF is able to speak out about unjust events. MSF’s independence grew with the decision even though the “mix” of sources became less “mixed”. Many small donors works in favour for MSF and therefore having mixed income sources is not necessarily the way to go for them. For smaller NGOs reaching a primarily private donor base to have independence is not as easy, due to limited resources for fundraising or non-world wide reputation, and therefore Wells’ suggestion of having mixed income sources is perhaps to prefer for them.

5.3. Summary of MSF independence and efficiency

Working with primarily individuals as donors poses certain struggles for the NGO since there are two sides of the independence aspect of an NGO. One is the actual independence and ability to avoid aid conditionality and the other is the donors’ perception of the independence. Even if not all funding from states, companies and institutions come with conditions, the fact that some individuals might think it does can pose a threat to an NGO’s reputation as being independent. According to the Resource dependency theory, in the end, the perception of an NGO is what is important with respect to funding, and is what makes people provide resources to them or not. If people believe receiving resources from states, companies and institutions equals aid conditionality, and thereby making the NGO less independent in their mind, they might not want to donate to that NGO. The easiest way to mitigate that misperception is to reduce resources from non-private donors as much as possible and move towards a primarily private donor base. Having private donors acts as a more direct insurance for people that the NGO can do whatever they see is most needed with the donations and not conform to others’ conditions, mitigating the resource dependency.

The donors are not dependent on MSF since MSF does not put demands on them and being a donor is completely voluntary. They can leave their donorship at any time they want without MSF being able to force them to stay. There is no strong enough evidence of donors’
dependence on MSF and therefore the relationship is not interdependent. On the other hand, the interviewees all agreed that MSF is completely and entirely dependent on their private donors since they are crucial for their survival as an NGO to the current extent. However, MSF is dependent on the donors for funding but that is as far as the dependence goes. Section 5.2. presented ways in which MSF are independent in their work and that their independence and efficiency are high due to their private donors. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that even if MSF is dependent on their primarily private donor base for resources, that same donor base provides MSF with the independence they need to have the reputation in global civil society they do. This neutrality and independence can also act as their security in the sense that they do not need military escorts to the same extent, which mitigates the risk of a reputation as militarized.

Furthermore, MSF living up to the four elements of NGO efficiency is partly facilitated by their primarily private donor base. It increases their independence on choosing where they want to operate, adds to the popular support, enables them to mitigate the risk of losing funding as well as contributes to their brand of being neutral. By receiving less earmarked donations, as provided by private donors, MSF can be first responders to crises. This task has become their brand in civil society and their role in global humanitarian aid and development work. Thus, the shift towards a primarily private donor base is positive, since being less dependent and more efficient is proven profitable for MSF.
6. Conclusions

In light of the evidence, dependence is portrayed in the MSF - private donor relationship to the extent that MSF is dependent on what the donors think of them as an NGO and they are willing to have whole departments working full time on communicating with donors to make sure their perception stays positive and to continue receiving funding. However, this dependence only goes one way. The EU-decision made some donors leave MSF and they could do that the second they decided to do so. The individuals can quit their donorship and prioritize other NGOs before MSF freely and independent on what MSF thinks. Therefore the donors are not dependent on MSF and therefore the relationship is not interdependent.

The efficiency for MSF increased after the EU-decision and this is partly due to their primarily private donor base. If an NGO uses Wells’ four elements of efficiency as a guideline for increased independence and work efficiency they will most likely find that they are easier to achieve with a primarily private donor base. Not all NGOs have the ability to have a primarily private donor base but a step in that direction is to find strategies to maintain a positive relationship with current private donors since this NGO - donor relationship means the least dependency of the NGO on its financers.

The evidence of this study makes it understandable that MSF chose to make the decision and shift towards an almost entirely private donor base, since the independence and efficiency increased, creating a positive impact. Based on the positive impacts they have for MSF it makes sense to assume that other NGOs will do the same and trends show that more and more NGOs are moving towards a primarily private donor base. By having important roles in civil society and global development work NGOs should aim to work as efficiently as possible to reach out to more people.

What this shift towards primarily private donors will mean for the future is an important question to ask and more studies like this one can contribute towards answering it. Right now there is a lack of studies on the topic of a primarily private donor base and future research on other NGOs can contribute to a better understanding of the impact. Is there a risk that the NGOs will be too free to roam without the overaccounting to their donors and without the donors inspecting where the money goes? Is there such a thing as too much freedom of action? This study concludes that the shift is positive for the NGO but the bigger debate is
whether this shift is only positive for the NGOs, or if it benefits the world as a whole, in the long run.
7. References

7.1. Interviews
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8. Appendices

8.1. Interview Guide

A Swedish version of the interview guide was used in the interviews since the interviewees speak Swedish. The research question “What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of working with a financial budget provided primarily by private donors?” is not part of the interview guide since it acts as a summarizing question for the thesis.

Background questions

1. What is your role at MSF?
2. How long have you worked for MSF Sweden?
3. Who are the private donors?
   a. Gender, age?
4. How much do private versus other donors give on an average?
5. Are sporadic or continuous donations more common?

How does MSF Sweden work to maintain a positive relationship with their donors?

   a. Does MSF have specific target groups?
   b. Face-to-face or on their own initiative?
2. What are ways MSF have to satisfy donors so they keep on funding?
3. What are ways MSF let donors participate in other ways than funding?
4. How has the response been from the donors on MSF’s work?
   a. Do people send emails, call or visit the office with responses?
5. What does MSF give back to the donors in addition to results?
6. How much is spent on donor outreach compared to how much MSF gets back?
7. Does MSF have any campaigns going on at the moment?
   a. Who is the target donor group?
   b. What are previous campaigns and who were the targets?
8. Does MSF have ads in newspapers/on TV/online?
   a. If yes, are they beneficial?
   b. If not, why?
9. How is MSF present on social media?
a. What sites and reasoning behind the choices of sites?
b. What does private donor response on this platform look like?
   i. Does it differ from other types of donor response?

10. Does MSF check if donors visit the website and published reports?

11. How much of the working time is spent on donors?

**How does MSF Sweden work to stay independent?**

1. Can you give examples of occurrences where MSF’s work was limited by state donorship?

2. Why was the decision made to move to a primarily private donor base?

3. Is MSF happy with the decision overall?

4. What shaped the decision?
   a. Was there something MSF wanted to emulate or avoid?

5. How much influence do donors have on MSF work? Give examples.
   a. How does it differ between individual donors and state donors?

6. What arguments does MSF have pro and against private donors?

7. How is the process of deciding new projects?
   a. Do donors ever come with suggestions?

8. Do state donations or large company donations come with instructions?

9. Can you give an example of a demand donors can have of what the donation should be used for?

10. How is it to run an NGO that receives the majority of the funding from individuals? (If the interviewee’s role is not linked to the donors) How do you perceive it is to work with private donors?

11. How does MSF work to increase number of monthly donors?

12. What are MSF’s views on earmarked donations?

13. How many earmarked donations come in and what do you do to take away these earmarks if necessary?

**How does MSF’s work today differ from the period when they received part of their funding from EU member states?**

1. Why was the decision made to stop accepting funding from EU member states?
   a. What arguments were pro and against the decision?

2. How much money came from EU member states?
3. What was the reaction from donors when MSF decided not to accept EU funding anymore?
   a. Did others’ reactions ever influence MSF to change their mind on the decision?
4. How did private donation inflows change after the decision?
5. What has been more beneficial since not accepting EU funding and what are some drawbacks?
   a. How many donors have MSF lost since the decision?
   b. How many donors have MSF gained since the decision?
6. Has MSF’s activities and work style changed since fewer donations come from states?
7. Has MSF been freer to decide their projects after the decision?
8. What aspects would be different if MSF would not have a primarily private donor base?
9. How significant a role does the decision play in defining what MSF is?
10. Would you say the decision was a risk?
    a. If yes, was it worth the risk?
11. Did pressure come to change MSF’s mind on the decision?
    a. If yes, from whom?
    b. How did MSF respond?
12. Does MSF have any regrets about the decision?
    a. Is there any concern for later regret?
13. What role do other NGOs play in the decision?
14. Who has been most supportive of the decision?

**Final questions**

1. How dependent is MSF on their donors?
2. How does MSF feel about this potential dependency?
3. Is there a survey on donor’s view on MSF that I can look at?
4. Is there anything else you would like to add about MSF and your private donors?