

“Innovation is about permanently challenging the status quo. It is about allowing the space to try something new. Go for it.”



Maya Shah  
Innovation Coordinator



Scalability is key.

### The story I want to share

The promotion of innovative medical practices and operational strategies is one of the cornerstones of MSF's humanitarian actions, as we are **constantly looking to improve the efficiency of our operations**. To do this, we need to be able to adapt medical technologies to bring the best quality of care to our patients.

Humanitarian medicine can be perceived as providing second-rate care to poor people. However, MSF has shown that **innovative treatments and strategies allow contemporary medical care to be provided** in contexts that require unconventional approaches.



In July 2011, Initiative for Medical Innovation was started as an institutional project. The organisational culture at the time did not allow for thinking out of the box or taking risks, and was ruled by normative, compliant and consensus-oriented decision-making. **The unit was envisaged to be the catalyst for a change in attitudes.**

A review conducted in 2016, five years after the initiative started, highlighted that there had been a notable change in risk aversion. The organisation is now in the next phase, where **innovation is being mainstreamed within the departments**. The departments still need some input from our **internal support unit**.



### Lessons learnt

Innovation must be done in partnership in order to work and be scalable. However, the roles and responsibilities of the partnership must be very clearly articulated right from the beginning, otherwise it will not be scalable.



### What is an ideation platform?

Our ideation platform, ThinkUp, is a tool that allows for collaborative working and for creating communities of practice. People come together and work on an idea / challenge, crosscutting departments, hierarchy and geographical as well as cultural diversity.