

Citation Miriam Kasztura

What clearly emerges from Miriam Kasztura's nomination is the fact that her thoughts and thus her actions are guided by the desire for justice. Indeed, as a child, Miriam Kasztura wanted to become a judge to stop injustice, or a journalist to give voice to people who suffer. Eventually Miriam became a nurse whose actions are guided by the wish for justice, equity and making vulnerable people heard. She did volunteer work in India while still studying for her nursing degree, collaborating in a community health project where she was responsible for a vaccination campaign and nutritional status assessment for 240 children. She was also involved in building up surgical camps in rural remote clinics and in teaching local staff and nursing students. Her second volunteer posting was in Mongolia, where Miriam worked for a shelter for street children in Ulaanbaatar. Later she went to Papua New Guinea.

Already during her nursing studies, Miriam Kasztura's interests lay with less privileged people in the societies in which she lived, concerning herself with drug users, homeless people, prostitutes, migrants, and prisoners. She was more interested in the social issues in nursing than with the medical ones. As a consequence, during her last year of nursing school, she completed a Certificate in Health and Humanitarian Assistance at the University of Aix-Marseille, France (2007). The first experiences as a registered nurse were in different wards in Switzerland, then moving to Australia, where she mainly worked in emergency departments, first in Adelaide, then in Townsville. She completed an emergency nursing practice education program, followed by a Master's degree in Public Health and Tropical Medicine at James Cook University, Townsville, Australia.

After these years of experience in Australia, Miriam went to work with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). Between 2011 and 2017 Miriam completed 15 assignments in complex humanitarian emergencies and active conflict settings in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, Chad and Syria. She was active in responses to displaced populations in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Tanzania and Syria, and worked in

outbreaks of Ebola, measles, malaria, cholera and meningitis. She engaged in hospital and health structure management of every possible kind, and also in a variety of mental health, health promotion and community involvement activities. She supervised vaccination programs and mortality surveys and implemented epidemiological surveillance. Her responsibilities were multiple, from representing the organisation, to media relations, access and project negotiations with representatives from governments and armed forces, to coordination of multicultural teams of over 400 national and expatriate staff, providing technical support, coaching and training.

In addition, Miriam Kasztura worked in the staff health departments of the United Nations Office in Geneva and was involved in developing briefing documents and reference documents for disaster response teams.

In 2016 Miriam began the MSc Nursing Program at Berne University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland, which she has just completed. Today, she continues to support and improve practice from within MSF, having been elected to the organization's Board of Directors. With this, she is also concerned with the enforcement of human rights in underserved populations in Switzerland whose healthcare needs are not met. In particular, Miriam is playing a leading role: a health promotion intervention project for unaccompanied minors who are seeking asylum; the case management for frequent users of emergency departments; and a nurse-led primary care consultation service which includes physical examination, basic diagnostics, psychosocial risk behaviour assessments and health promotion interventions for university students and employees.

The world needs nurses like Alice Leahy and Miriam Kasztura and it is fitting that they are to be honoured with the 2018 Nursing and Human Rights awards.



(Reto Albertalli/Phovea)