

# Frontline

The newsletter for Merlin supporters August 2012



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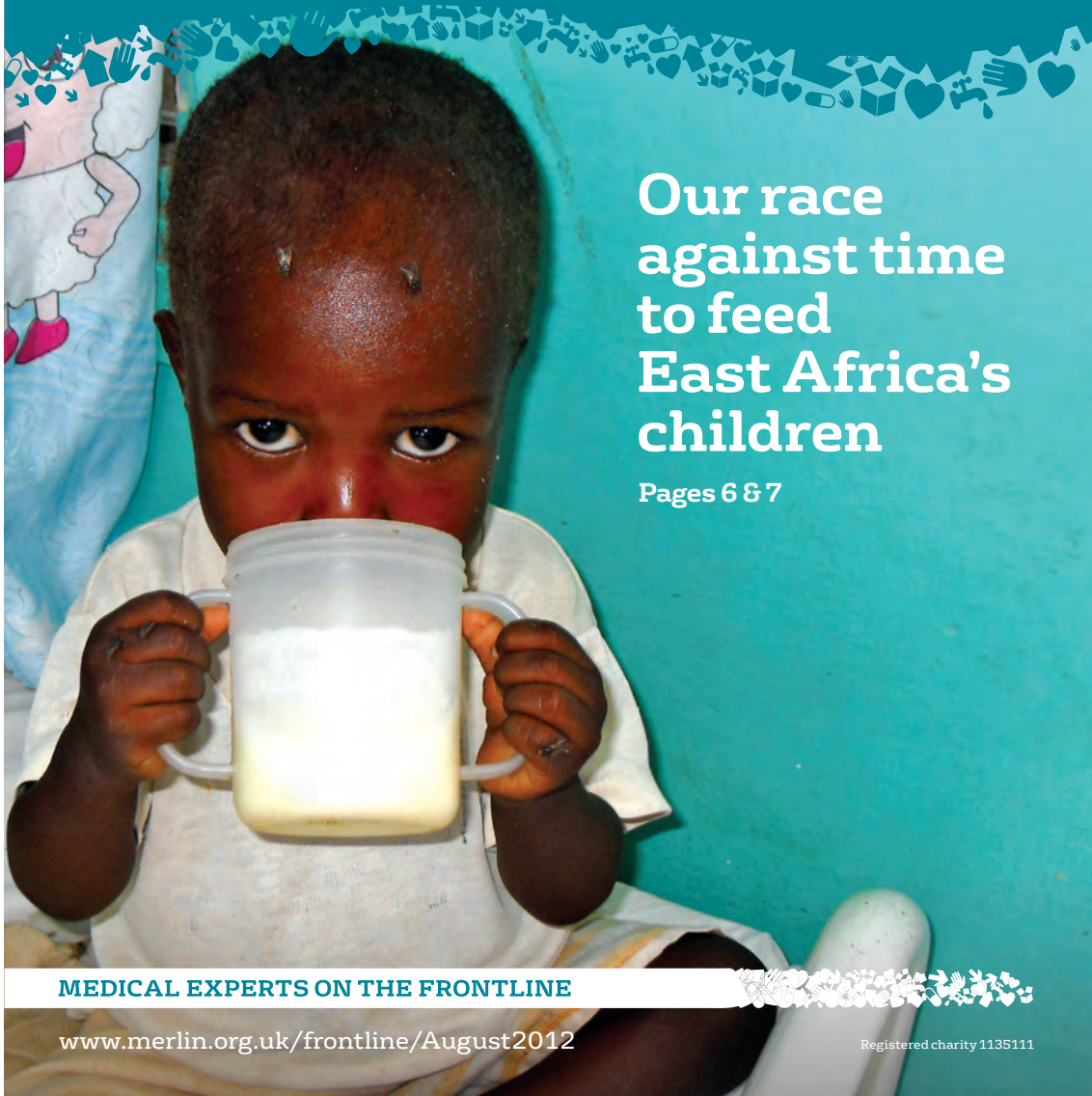


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**MEDICAL EXPERTS ON THE FRONTLINE**

[www.merlin.org.uk/frontline/August2012](http://www.merlin.org.uk/frontline/August2012)

Registered charity 1135111

# Distance no object!

## How we're taking healthcare to the people.

**How do you bring healthcare to people in remote areas where there is no motor transport, few decent roads and the nearest hospital may be many miles away? In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where Merlin has worked since 1997, we are finding new ways to bring good health to the people in their own communities.**

The key to this is the network of over 200 health centres that we support in the provinces of Maniema and North Kivu. Not only are we rebuilding and equipping run-down health centres, but we are training nurses, midwives and volunteer health workers so that they can look after their own communities.

### **Saving mothers' lives**

It's amazing what local people can achieve, even with very limited resources. Recently Miriam Bord, a Merlin health officer who has been working in DRC, told us about one health centre she had visited. "Staff had just



Supplies arrive for Gomu Hospital, North Kivu.



Kambale Kambilo weighs Membere Mungelo, 7 months, at Luseke referral health centre, North Kivu.

performed a caesarian section in the middle of the night," wrote Miriam. "Without it, the woman would almost certainly have died".

Carrying out a caesarian in a place that has no electricity or running water is far from easy. It had also required an emergency blood transfusion. And yet when Miriam arrived, the new mother was propped up, with a nice clean wound and her husband and two of her children at her side.

### **Reaching remote communities**

Health centres like this are vital, especially to women giving birth. Yet wherever possible, Merlin is also extending its reach into communities that are too small and too remote even to have a health centre.

One good example is the village of Kintimbuka, which is over five kilometres from the nearest health centre down a bumpy, muddy, dirt track. Yet now healthcare has come to its doorstep, because it is home to one of Merlin's new community care points.



*“Staff had just performed a caesarian section in the middle of the night, without it, the woman would almost certainly have died”*

The community care point is managed by the village's own health workers, who use the training we gave them to identify key childhood illnesses, to provide basic treatment, and – crucially – to refer sick children to the health centre.

#### **Fighting malaria**

This model of healthcare is proving especially important in combatting malaria. This disease kills thousands of young children every year in DRC, but it can be treated if it is caught in time.

Children who have to travel a long way to the nearest health centre often don't get there until it's too late. But by bringing the first level of care right into the community, we can save their lives. Merlin's Health Director for DRC, Dr Ezekiel, explains: “We train the health workers so that if they see any child with a fever they give them basic medicines. This helps to stabilise their condition until they can get to the health centre.”

Looking back on what she has seen in DRC, Miriam Bord is astonished at how much Merlin is achieving in difficult conditions. She says: “It never ceases to amaze me what can be done in such remote settings. And the fact that people come for treatment in large numbers shows just how desperately the services are wanted as well as needed.”



Baby born in Kalima Hospital, North Kivu.



Community Health Workers and locals at the new community care point in Kintimbuka.

**Thank you for all you have done, through your donations, to help us reach out to the people in this part of Africa and save so many lives.**



# Look at what you've done! Thank you.



Post-natal check-up, Haiti mobile clinic.

**With Merlin's 20th birthday coming up next year, it's worth taking a look back at what we've achieved so far. And to give credit where it's due – not just to the Merlin staff who have worked so hard in so many difficult and dangerous places to save lives, but to supporters like you who have made it all possible.**

## **Look at these amazing facts:**

- Merlin was founded in 1993 by three young friends and yet in just 19 years we have grown into the UK's leading international health charity.
  - Since we began we have worked in more than 50 countries, including many of the poorest countries on earth.
  - In 2011 alone we treated 6.6 million people and helped to save many thousands of lives.
  - We are currently working in 16 countries and over 10 million people every year have access to our health services.
- All of this is a massive achievement – and yet it's not the scale of our work that makes such a difference, but the way we work.
  - We deliver medical aid and expertise in the world's toughest places – then stay on to help the local people build healthcare services. In doing so, we make a lasting difference – for example, midwives trained by Merlin don't just go on to deliver thousands of babies safely, but pass their skills on to others.
  - We are incredibly cost-effective. On average, 96p of every £1 Merlin spends goes to our field operations, and 99% of our staff are based out in the field.

## **Our Promise.**

**On average, 96p of every £1 spent goes directly to our field operations.**

**This fantastic success story simply wouldn't be possible without supporters like you. You can be proud of what you have achieved so far. Please go on supporting us, so that Merlin can continue to be a worldwide beacon of hope.**

# Alive and well, against all the odds

**The fledgling nation of South Sudan has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world, according to the United Nations Population Fund, who estimated last year that more than 2,000 in every 100,000 women die during childbirth, compared with only 8 per 100,000 in the UK.**

The reason is simple: health services are few and far between – a situation that has been made worse by the bitter fighting in many areas. That is why Merlin is working to help the local people build up their own health services and to train health workers, nurses and midwives.

Kaka Kelang is one of many women who have benefited from Merlin's work. When the fighting reached her village, she was forced to flee and take refuge miles away at a centre for displaced people. There she had no proper shelter and very little food. And to make things even more difficult, she was expecting a baby.

## Life-saving treatment

Kaka could easily have been another dead mother to add to the statistics. Shortly before she was due to give birth she developed a high fever. But fortunately there was a Merlin-run hospital nearby. The staff admitted her and



Kaka Kelang and baby being cared for by Merlin staff.

treated her until she was out of danger. Then they helped her deliver a healthy baby. They also provided her with some nutritional supplements to take away after the birth, to help keep her and her baby healthy.

Kaka knows she and her baby might not be alive if Merlin hadn't been there. "Merlin staff helped me a lot," she says. "I am happy that I delivered my baby in the Merlin hospital."

**Thank you for helping to make stories like Kaka's happen every day.**

*"Merlin staff helped me a lot, I am happy that I delivered my baby in the Merlin hospital."*

Photo: Sabina Morley



Mother and baby at Nimule Hospital, Sudan.



## Our race against time to feed East Africa's children

A child who had been admitted to Lodwar district hospital stabilisation centre drinking milk formula.

**When a food shortage in East Africa turned into a crisis last year, ten million people were threatened by starvation. Merlin's supporters gave generously to help us bring emergency aid to the area – and now we would like to thank you and to tell you what your generosity achieved**

In a crisis like this, lives depend on getting help to the stricken area quickly. What allowed Merlin's response to be so quick was that we were already working in the area, supporting many health facilities and outreach sites. When the crisis struck, we were able to coordinate with the Ministry of Health and quickly expand the work we were doing. **That was only possible because of the surge of support we received from our supporters in response to our Food Crisis Appeal.**

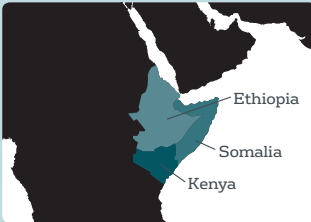
### **Reaching malnourished children**

The good news is that we have reached many thousands of people in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. Our priority groups have been children under five, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers.

Between April 2011 and March 2012, we ran hundreds of clinics and medical outreach posts across Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. We screened more than 130,000 children for malnutrition and gave over 29,000 children potentially life-saving nourishment. In addition we screened over 66,000 women for malnutrition and fed over 18,000.

What's more, this work is continuing. We are not just distributing food, but helping families to become self-sufficient in the long term. We are teaching them how to grow more nutritious foods, how to keep and breed livestock, and how to irrigate their land.

Thanks to supporters like you, we have seen the rate of child malnutrition drop dramatically in the areas where we have been working. Stephane Moissaing, Merlin's



←  
Merlin is currently working in Somalia. Kenya and Ethiopia and we will stay for as long as we are needed

Country Director for Ethiopia, says: "Thanks to Merlin's supporters, we have been able to increase our capacity and respond to an enormous crisis. Supporters' donations have helped us by saving more lives of the most vulnerable."

### **A life saved – Ilipete's story**

Merlin's team in Kenya told us the story of a nine-month-old girl called Ilipete, to illustrate how Merlin's work is saving lives in crisis-stricken areas. When Ilipete was brought to us by her mother Sarah, she weighed just 5.6 kg. She was very weak, her skin was loose, and she was suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea.

When we examined Ilipete, we found she had malaria and gastroenteritis as well as acute malnutrition. But after being given medication and high-protein food supplements, she started to recover, and after a month of treatment she was ready to go home.

We gave Sarah a supply of food supplements to take home with her, to help make sure Ilipete doesn't become malnourished again. What's more Sarah is protecting her health by taking our advice and following hygiene routines such as hand washing, boiling water and cleaning utensils.

Sarah is in no doubt that Merlin saved her daughter's life. Smiling and overjoyed she told us: "I thought my girl was dying but now she is healthy again."

**We haven't let up in our efforts to save lives in East Africa. With your continued support, we're determined to see the job through.**



Lokato Ilipete, now one year and eight months old.

There's still a huge amount to do. We are seeing an increase in cases of malnutrition, and all the indications are that there will be another drought this year. That's why we haven't let up in our efforts to save lives in East Africa. With your continued support, we're determined to see the job through.



# Getting to the heart of Africa's forgotten crisis

**The Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the poorest countries on earth – all the more so because it has suffered from decades of political unrest and violence. Yet at the heart of this struggling country, Merlin is working hard to bring healthcare to the people.**

Acute malnutrition among children is still common and less than 30% of under-fives are fully immunised against common childhood diseases. 17% of children die before reaching the age of five (compared with just 0.6% in the UK). CAR also has one of the worst maternal mortality rates on earth.

Yet Merlin is undaunted by the scale of the challenge. With your support, we have been in CAR since 2007, providing healthcare, training health workers, educating local people about nutrition and hygiene, and running health awareness campaigns. And the work goes on every day.

## **Fighting malnutrition through education**

The clinic in the village of Ndomete is one of

the health centres where we are working. Juvenal Ntakirutimana, a Merlin nutritionist who works there, says: "We see a high number of malnourished children. Food insecurity plays an important part in this and so do cultural practices and the lack of education. There is a lack of information for mothers about the importance of a varied diet – and often they don't have the means to provide wholesome food."

At Ndomete, one of the most important ways we are fighting malnutrition is through education. Ndomete has about a hundred volunteer health workers who have received training on issues such as good breastfeeding practices and how to detect malnutrition. They go out into the community to share this

Photo: Emily Dugan/Independent on Sunday



Jeanne Dagolia with her three-year-old son Patrane Faustin who is suffering from malaria.



Olga Yetikoua, Merlin nurse supervisor with Kaga Bandoro.

Photo: Frederic Courbet





Merlin has been in CAR since 2007. ↑

17% of children in CAR die before reaching the age of five. →



Photo: Frederic Courbet

*“There is a lack of information for mothers about the importance of a varied diet – and often don’t have the means to provide wholesome food.”*

knowledge with local families and to encourage them to visit the clinic.

23-year-old Patricia Kakuamba is one of the local mothers who has benefited from this work and is now visiting the clinic regularly with her two young children, Martine and Gus. Both suffer from malnutrition. “I had heard about malnutrition before taking the children to the clinic but I never thought it would happen to us,” explains Kakuamba. “Now I know that we are all at risk.”

At the clinic Gus and Martine are receiving essential vitamins and minerals and de-worming treatment and their growth progress is being monitored. Soon they will be healthy and Patricia will stop bringing them for regular check-ups.

### **Hope out of hopelessness**

The work we are doing at Ndomete is also making a real difference to the survival

chances of mothers and babies during childbirth. One good example is Monique Douona, aged 36 years old, who recently delivered her eighth child at the clinic.

The baby is doing fine, but Monique herself was thin, tired and gaunt after the birth. However, our close links with the local community will mean that we can make sure she receives the support she needs from her neighbours once she leaves the hospital.

There are many thousands of families like Patricia’s and Monique’s in CAR who need the support and life-saving medical care that only Merlin can give them. And one thing is certain: so long as you are prepared to support us, we will go on working for them.

“This is a forgotten crisis,” says Maria Wangechi, our Country Director in CAR. “People see it as hopeless, but we believe we can make a real difference to healthcare here.”

Photo: Miguel Samper



# “Without Merlin, we would die”

↑ Dr Renan Armstrong Charlot treats a baby at Merlin's mobile clinic in Canaan camp.

## Our continuing mission to save lives in Haiti

**In Port-au-Prince, the capital city of Haiti, people's lives are still dominated by what they call the “goodoo goodoo” the terrifying earthquake that hit a large part of the country in January 2010.**

Nearly half a million people continue to live in camps, where they are highly vulnerable to outbreaks of cholera. That's just one of the reasons why Merlin is still at work in Haiti.

When cholera hit Haiti in October 2010, Merlin played a vital role in bringing the epidemic under control. We set up two cholera treatment centres which, at the height of the epidemic were treating around 50 new patients every day. Philippe, one of our

volunteers, remembers that people kept saying the same thing to him: “Sans Merlin, on mourra” – “Without Merlin, we would die.”

### Enthusiasm and commitment

Today that vital life-saving work is far from over. One of our priorities is to provide medical care for the 60,000 people who are living in Canaan, one of the biggest camps. We are also helping the government to rebuild and reopen the Basboen Hospital, which had previously been abandoned. And we are expanding our operations throughout the north of Haiti, preparing the local health services for future cholera outbreaks.

All of this means that, with your support, we will be working in Haiti for years to come. Merlin staff member Gabrielle Hickey, recently visited Haiti to see the work we are doing and came back inspired by what she saw. She wrote: “Merlin's team are an impressive lot – enthusiastic, highly competent, passionate and dedicated. And as for the people of Port-au-Prince, they are proud, decent, patient and still in need of help.”

Photo: Miguel Samper



People waiting at the Mobile Clinic in Canaan.

# News from West Africa

**Thanks to your support Merlin has opened a feeding clinic in Zafaya Health Centre, in the Massaguet District of Chad. Poor rainfall, failed crops and spiralling food prices have left over a quarter of the population here without access to food.**

Your support meant that, on the first day of opening, over 100 severely malnourished children were enrolled onto our feeding programmes. The need is here and now and, because of you, so is Merlin.

There is still a tremendous amount of work to be done though. Of the 3.6 million hungry people across the country, around 500,000 are severely malnourished – putting them at even greater risk of serious health problems. It is thanks to your generous donations that Merlin was able to act fast and start distributing food and vital healthcare across the region.

Merlin's Head of Emergency Response, Nigel Young said: "Ever since early warning signs suggested that West Africa was on the brink of food crisis several months ago, Merlin's team has been on the ground, working hard to set up the feeding programmes necessary to deal with this kind of situation. It's incredibly pleasing to see health centres like the one at Zafaya, so we can get on with the urgent business of saving lives."

On behalf of the people of Chad, thank you so much for your support. Because without you, none of our life-saving work here would be possible.



On the 13 June more than 30 new severe cases of malnourished children were enrolled in our new clinic in Zafaya, Chad.



A child is treated at Zafaya Health Centre.



Mother and child at one of the Merlin supported outpatient therapeutic programmes in Chad.

***"Merlin's team has been on the ground, working hard to set up the feeding programmes necessary to deal with this kind of situation."***

## Advent of Advent

# Make sweet music with Merlin!

On Wednesday 28 November we'll bring the sound of music to our fundraising at an 'Advent of Advent' Celebration Concert. It will be held at St Bartholomew the Great Church in Smithfields – one of London's oldest churches, which has appeared in films such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Shakespeare in Love*.

This hour-long concert is a great opportunity for people to come and celebrate the start of the festive season. There will be celebrity readings and the chance to meet one of Merlin's founders. The concert will also feature celebratory music performed by the renowned church choir and a chance to sing a carol or two.

**Every penny raised from the concert will be spent on Merlin's life-saving work around the world.**



**Tickets cost £25 each, which includes a glass of wine and a mince pie.**

**They will go on sale on Monday 3 September. To reserve tickets in advance please contact Sarah Brett on 020 7014 1707, email her at [sarah.brett@merlin.org.uk](mailto:sarah.brett@merlin.org.uk) or fill out the coupon below. For more details visit [www.merlin.org.uk/carolconcert](http://www.merlin.org.uk/carolconcert)**

Registered charity 1135111

## Ticket reservation form

Complete your details and we will contact you to take your payment.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

No. of tickets: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: Sarah Brett, Merlin, 12th Floor, 207 Old Street, London, EC1V 9NR.