

Keeping you in touch with MERLIN around the world

## 21st Century Europe



(With thanks to Associated Press)

### ALBANIA

When the first reports of terror and unrest in Kosovo appeared on our television screens, few realised that Europe was on the brink of a full-scale humanitarian disaster.

But by March 30th, when 120,000 ethnic Albanians had been driven out of Yugoslavia in less than a week, European aid agencies were forced to respond to needs in their own region.

As we go to press, 748,000 Kosovars have been forced from their homes. By the time you read this, hundreds, maybe thousands, more families will have grabbed a few belongings - clothes and treasured photos, a pot to cook with on the journey - and joined the convoy of neighbours and friends all

desperate to reach the safety of Albania and Macedonia.

These are 21st century refugees. Some carry computer disks storing vital work files. For doctors, teachers, farmers, business men and women - stripped of all forms of identification - smuggled computer disks are their only proof that, until weeks ago, they lived with all the trappings of European cafe society; cars, mobile phones, the world wide web... Now they are forced to queue for food rations, use overflowing pit latrines and sleep in refugee tents in scenes they recognise from television news bulletins. As they watched refugees on another continent, few would have believed they would suffer the same fate.

"It's beyond comprehension what these people have been

through in the past weeks," said MERLIN's Dr Nick Banatvala. He has just returned from Albania, which is now host to 404,200 refugees, mainly women, children, the disabled and elderly people.

"People fled Kosovo's towns and cities with little more than the clothes on their backs. Albanians have opened their doors to them and it's our job to help them to shoulder the burden. The danger now is disease. Pneumonia, measles, typhoid, cholera, hepatitis and dysentery are just some of the many potential killers which can spiral out of control when large groups of vulnerable people are crowded together."

"Providing shelter, clean water, good sanitation and a balanced diet in a non-threatening environment is our first priority. In many areas, the majority of refugees are living with Albanian families. In other places, Kosovars have taken refuge in collective centres set up in village halls, schools and sports centres. Some are staying in hastily erected tented cities in the middle of nowhere: scorching hot in summer and freezing cold in winter. MERLIN has flown out 30 tonnes of equipment including tents and plastic sheeting along with thousands of blankets and buckets to meet refugees' most basic health and hygiene needs."

MERLIN is working with Kosovar doctors in collective centres to maximise use of the skills available amongst the refugees until they can return to Kosovo. Albanian hospitals and health centres also need support to help cope with their increased patient load. MERLIN is supplying these health centres with essential drugs, health kits and cold storage equipment for vaccines to bolster their capacity. We are working with the World Health Organisation on monitoring outbreaks of disease, such as measles, cholera and typhoid, all threats for a country whose population has increased by over 10% in the last few weeks.

MERLIN will provide health care in a camp built by Nato called Shining Hope which will be a home to around 20,000 refugees relocated from camps in Macedonia and on the Albania-Kosovo border. Hillary Clinton plans to visit refugees in the camp to witness at first hand the effects of this latest Balkan tragedy.

They are the lucky ones. As Nato bombs Belgrade, there is little evidence of what is happening in the ghost towns of Kosovo.

"We are desperately concerned about what is happening within Kosovo," said Dr Banatvala. "We need a humanitarian corridor so we can reach people who haven't managed to escape to safety. The problems we're seeing in Albania must only be the tip of the iceberg."

## Sierra Leone: The Forgotten War

by Dr Monica Nolan

Former Medical Co-ordinator, Sierra Leone

With the media spotlight firmly fixed on the tragedy of Kosovo, it is easy to be lulled into a false understanding of world events. Unless, of course, this view is challenged by your own experience. I have just returned from eight months with MERLIN in Sierra Leone.

Despite the media blindspot, there is an ongoing humanitarian crisis in Sierra Leone. This requires a concerted national and international effort to prevent further suffering and loss of life. Like all humanitarian organisations, MERLIN has an ethical commitment to respond to emergencies where their intervention can decrease the suffering of civilian populations. Unfortunately, the media's decision to selectively report or ignore crises undermines aid agencies' ability to raise independent funds for those "forgotten" emergencies. The plight of Kosovar refugees rouses my sympathy and I am glad that MERLIN and other humanitarian relief agencies are doing all they can to respond, with support from the public. However, I fear that this conflict will continue for months and years, and other stories will not be told in the popular press. Can I ask you to be suspicious of the media silence and seek out the stories that should be told? Can I tell you one of these stories?

Sierra Leone is on the coast of West Africa, sandwiched between Guinea and Liberia. Home to the beautiful beaches and forests of the aptly named "Bounty" adverts, it is a fertile country, rich in minerals and other natural resources. Despite, or perhaps because of this wealth, there has been a complicated civil conflict since 1991. The country is now one of the poorest in the world.

MERLIN has been active in the Kenema region in the east of Sierra Leone since 1996.

At the end of last year, the armed forces supporting the democratically elected government suffered significant defeats to rebel groups. Large urban centres including Freetown, the capital, and Kenema, the country's third largest town, were attacked. There was widespread destruction and hundreds of thousands of people were forced to flee their homes. In early 1999, the media avidly reported the gruesome details of killings and mutilations in Freetown. However, the situation in the rest of the country remains unclear. Much of the country is now behind rebel lines and one can only guess the humanitarian needs of these communities. As the rainy season progresses and roads become impassable, the towns which remain in government control are virtually under siege. Supply routes are cut off, and people want for basic commodities like food and medicines.

As the rebels advanced on Kenema district, 50,000 people

moved from the countryside to seek protection in Kenema town. Some of these found some comfort in the crowded homes of relatives and friends but many huddled in derelict buildings and schools. When these were full to overflowing, people were forced to fend for themselves in the open. As humanitarian needs grew, so too did the threat to national and international staff. In late December, most of the international community were forced to evacuate. MERLIN's national staff continued to provide medical care throughout this terrifying time.

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Kenema feeding centre

(Courtesy of Yves Horent)



## New for 1999

Not content with the success of our training portfolio launched last year, MERLIN is announcing two new training courses to ensure the quality of relief work overseas keeps growing through the millennium.

Nutrition in Relief and Emergencies is a three-day residential course for doctors, nurses, nutritionists and other health workers who wish to learn how to respond to the nutritional needs of communities affected by war, natural disasters or even epidemic disease. July's course costs £220 - £250 and is run jointly by MERLIN and International Health Exchange.

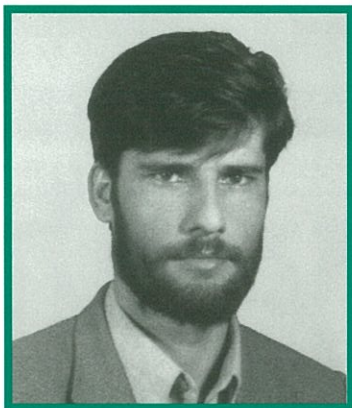
Introduction to Relief and Emergencies is a three-day foundation course for medics and support staff alike who want a taste of the challenges and trials of overseas aid work. The course will run in August and is open to members of the MERLIN register.

It's not only Western aid workers who benefit from the new focus on training. MERLIN staff Abdul Azim, from Afghanistan, and Kenyan Joseph Inganji visited the UK for the first time last month to take part in the Project Support Course.

Joseph is the programme coordinator for the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. An experienced aid worker, he still found the course invaluable. "No-one is perfect, no matter how many emergencies you have seen," he said. "There is very little time in an emergency to study new things, but here I learned a lot about water and sanitation. It's very important that everyone attends a course like this before they go on an assignment - you can pick up what happens in the field even before you get there. Now I'm back in Africa, I'm sharing what I've learned with my team so we can move forward together."

Please contact the Training Team on 0171 487 2505 for more information on these or the other MERLIN courses.

MERLIN thanks the National Lottery Charities Board for funding all these courses.



### AFGHANISTAN

I made an important decision in April 1997. I resigned from my lecturing post in an Afghanistan university's engineering faculty and joined the MERLIN team in Badghis, in the mountains of northern Afghanistan. It wasn't a mistake. Working with MERLIN was - and is - about saving lives. It's also a great experience, a lot of fun and pushes me to the limit.

MERLIN has been operating in Afghanistan since 1994. After two decades of continuous warfare and bloodshed - first against Russia, then the internal conflict which still goes on today - Afghanistan's healthcare system is in ruins. The social and economic structures here mean that ensuring women and girls receive basic health care is extremely difficult. UNICEF states that child mortality, and life expectancy for both sexes is worse in Afghanistan than in any country outside Africa. More women die in childbirth here than anywhere else in the world, except Sierra Leone.

When MERLIN started its medical relief work in Badghis, there was only one Ministry of Health hospital, which was in bad repair and provided a very low standard of healthcare to a needy

# Rebuilding my country

by Abdul Azim

population totalling over 375,000. People travelled by donkey for days and days to reach the hospital. Many died before they managed to get treatment. Working with the Ministry of Health, MERLIN's first step was to rehabilitate the hospital by rebuilding wards, fixing water and sanitation systems, supplying drugs and equipment and training staff. In a short time, the hospital was providing a decent standard of care, with clean running water, a new emergency room, a well stocked pharmacy and operation theatre.

At the same time, we set up four Basic Health Centres in remote districts so more people could have access to the healthcare they need. These were provided with essential drugs and committed health workers, and were to be vital during outbreaks of disease such as cholera, when people were too weak or ill to travel to the main hospital.

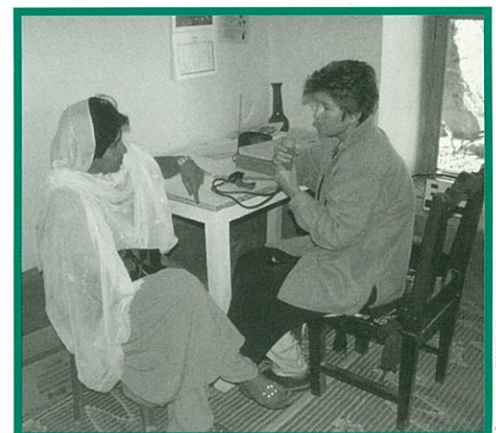
It was not easy work. But as we travelled through the region, we met many people of different tribes, religions and ethnic groups - all new to me although I am an Afghan. I learned about life in remote

areas of Afghanistan, which I had never thought of before. I realised how difficult some people's lives are - just to stay alive - which encouraged me to work harder. We never tired of our work. MERLIN was meeting a real need and we felt great joy that people were satisfied. When the hard day was finished we would go on a picnic to refresh us for the next working day.

**"MERLIN was meeting a real need and we felt great joy that people were satisfied"**

MERLIN has many training programmes for national staff working in their own countries. I was soon promoted to become the Logistician Administrator in Peshawar, Pakistan where MERLIN has a support office for its programmes throughout Afghanistan. Now I'm also involved with MERLIN's work in the southern deserts of Farah, where we support nine health clinics which provide basic health care to the whole community - women, men and children. We're particularly proud that the clinics which supply health care to women and children as part of UNICEF's Safe Motherhood initiative make up over 40% of the consultations in the Farah clinics. Back up north in Badghis, MERLIN continues to supply essential drugs and medical equipment to the hospital and clinics which have become a lifeline for so many women, men and children.

Last month I made my first visit to the UK to attend a residential course run by MERLIN and Red R, a disaster relief organisation for engineers. What a great opportunity for me! It gave me the chance to share ideas with other relief workers and to build my confidence. Most importantly, I learned how to build my country again. Working with MERLIN has changed the path of my life. I have learned how to live for myself and for others.



Dale Lightening at work in Afghanistan

## Around the clock, around the globe

**December** **SIERRA LEONE:** An escalation in the long-running civil war forces MERLIN expatriates to pull out of Sierra Leone, along with personnel from other international aid agencies. National staff continue to run emergency nutritional feeding programmes and provide drugs and medical equipment to health services in Kenema while expatriates monitor developments from the Ivory Coast.

**January** **SUDAN:** Looting by raiding horsemen forces MERLIN's team to evacuate their compound several times. Once tension eases, security clearance is given by Operation Lifeline Sudan and they return to continue nutritional feeding.

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO:** As reports come in of thousands of refugees pouring into DRC to escape civil war in Congo-Brazzaville, MERLIN flies out to Bas-Congo province in the West to assess medical needs amongst those people made homeless by fighting. Drugs and equipment have been looted from hospitals and health centres during the war in DRC. Urgent health needs of both local population and the new arrivals mean MERLIN prepares to restock health facilities with basic medical materials, despite the difficulties of transporting supplies through dense rainforest. Motorbikes and bicycles provide some solution, but the heavy rains make journeys long and tortuous.

**TAJIKISTAN:** The Tajik government invites MERLIN to join its official body for the control of malaria. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, health services in Tajikistan have crumbled and the old Soviet infectious disease hospitals have fallen into disrepair. MERLIN works with local people to rebuild laboratories and upgrade water and sewer systems, as well as training staff to treat diseases such as malaria and typhoid. Locating sources of quality building materials is complicated, but the rehabilitation work improves the care available for hospital patients.

**LONDON:** MERLIN's Medical Director Dr Bruce Laurence attends a landmark meeting at the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. The Princess Royal is present for the launch of a register of paediatricians interested in working overseas with children affected by war or poverty.



Around the clock... Honduras

**HONDURAS:** MERLIN continues its emergency programme of aid in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch. Working in partnership with a local charity, Enmuneh, MERLIN provides health care for a minority group of 14,000 Garifuna people. 5 isolated communities are visited by MERLIN's mobile clinics and 3 existing health clinics are restocked with drugs and equipment. MERLIN also runs a project to support health centres in La Mosquitia, north-east Honduras. The Caribbean coastline may look idyllic, but 5% of children in the region die before they reach the age of 5. Diseases such as cholera are a risk from contaminated water and the mosquitoes which give the area its name bring high levels of malaria. MERLIN tackles cholera by distributing water disinfectants and pumping drinking water to Puerto Lempira hospital. To fight malaria, MERLIN is encouraging communities to use impregnated mosquito nets and is draining swamps which act as breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

**February** **SUDAN:** MERLIN closes its feeding programme in Adet, south Sudan. Results of a survey show a marked improvement in children's nutritional health. International experts predict famine in the future. MERLIN's logistics base in Lokichokio, Kenya, is well-placed to support another famine relief operation with transport and warehouses if the need arises.

**SIERRA LEONE:** MERLIN teams scale up their activities in a country ravaged by the ongoing civil war. In Kenema, conflict has

affected over 30,000 people and forced over 80,000 to flee their homes. They cannot reach all the health centres still standing because travel is too dangerous, although disease and malnourishment threaten hundreds of vulnerable people. MERLIN re-establishes health centres in Kenema, vaccinates children against measles and provides therapeutic feeding to malnourished children in Kenema hospital. War has destroyed up to 90% of the east of the capital, Freetown. MERLIN's mobile teams take basic health care to its shattered citizens in parts where no clinics survive. The main children's hospital is sheltering 6,000 people so MERLIN sets up a tented health post instead to give children emergency treatment and nutritional feeding.

**March** **SIBERIA:** The European Community promises MERLIN £1.1 million in the fight against multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. MERLIN will work with the Public Health Research Institute of New York to introduce World Health Organisation protocols to control the disease through laboratory training, data collection and distribution of drugs.

**USA:** Medical Training Officer Sarah Hall advises Colombia University in New York on the curriculum of their Healthcare in Emergency Relief course. The university invited MERLIN to participate due to the charity's experience in setting up training courses for health care workers preparing to work in emergency contexts.

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO:** With increased military movement around the capital of Maniema province, Kindu, MERLIN's team in eastern DRC decides to withdraw to Goma. They implement a programme of drug distribution to clinics in Goma while closely following developments elsewhere in the region. The east has been badly affected by conflict, where people displaced by war in areas such as Maniema have limited access to basic health care and the vaccines they need to protect themselves from infectious disease.

**April** **ALBANIA:** Over half a million Albanian Kosovars are expelled from their homes, sparking a humanitarian crisis throughout neighbouring countries. As refugees pour over borders wearing only the clothes on their backs, MERLIN flies to Albania where refugees' health needs are already straining existing clinics. In the south-east, MERLIN undertakes emergency distribution of blankets, soap and water containers to protect families from exposure and disease.

RESPONSE is published quarterly by MERLIN, the British medical charity which provides emergency medical care in disasters worldwide.

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**Contact us on 0171 487 2505 TODAY!**



# Letter from the field

## Sierra Leone - The crisis continues

I could go on to talk of the thousands killed or mutilated, of the tens of thousands of homes destroyed, of epidemic disease, of the hundreds of thousands of people displaced and threatened with starvation. But, just as in Kosovo, how does one grapple with the enormity and anonymity of figures like these? The only way I can make sense of it is to remember that the big picture is a mosaic of people's lives. For me, the stories of MERLIN staff, our patients, their families and friends not only build that picture but their courage inspires me to believe in a future.

### Spotlight on Sheik Conteh - Programme Co-ordinator -

Sheik Conteh chooses to live and work in a war zone. He is from a small village not far from Kenema. A trained Community Health Officer, he has worked with MERLIN since 1996. In his role as Programme Co-ordinator he wears many hats: he can be supervisor, clinician, advocate, plumber, philosopher and so much more.

When MERLIN's expatriate staff were forced to leave Kenema on Christmas Eve, Sheik continued to organise and expand MERLIN's response on the ground with the rest of the local team. This involved continuation of the large regular programme, as well as emergency latrine and water work for newly displaced people. During this time, MERLIN staff from eight rural health centres fled into town as the rebels

approached Kenema.

ECOMOG, the West African security force, relocated 10,000 people from a displaced people's camp for fear of them being used as a human shield. Their new home, a small village called Blama, had no facilities for them and the risk of diarrhoea and other diseases was great. Sheik quickly reinforced the MERLIN health clinics there with new supplies and staff and started outreach nutritional screening. He also lobbied local authorities and other agencies for assistance in providing shelter, water and sanitation.

On February 7th, 8th and 9th Kenema town was attacked. MERLIN's therapeutic feeding centre was directly attacked, killing six mothers and 1 child. The staff fled along with the rest of Kenema's population down the road towards the nearest town, Bo. Sheik's wife, Kiya, ran into the hills with her two children on her back and clutching her heavily pregnant belly. She eventually joined the tens of thousands stranded on the road.

Sheik was in Bo liaising with other agencies when he heard of the attack. Immediately, he fought his way toward Kenema against the stream of human traffic and, in a lull in the fighting, went to the hospital and feeding centre. He witnessed the aftermath of the tragedy at the feeding centre, checked the deserted hospital and found his own house looted. He returned to Bo, through the hordes of displaced people, gathering news of MERLIN staff and patients as he went. In Bo, he regrouped the senior staff and gathered information about supplies, staff and rebel movements. He managed to find Kiya, who was

**"It seems unquestionable to Sheik that everyone should have access to health care and the basic essentials for life."**

- a baby was born every day in the emergency clinic in Blama
- over 1,300 malnourished people received supplementary food rations and nutritional monitoring
- there were 293 new admissions to the therapeutic feeding centre. 418 children have been successfully discharged since February
- 7,267 children and 791 mothers were treated in Kenema Hospital's under-fives and antenatal clinics



(Courtesy of Yes Here)

afraid for the baby in her stomach, and their traumatised children.

Sheik and his team reopened all the MERLIN health facilities within a week of the attack. The therapeutic feeding centre was cleaned, the dead bodies buried, the paediatric ward and under-fives clinic reopened and staff and supplies put in place. As Kenema was cut off from Freetown, medical supplies and fuel were running low and Sheik had to ration the scarce resources carefully.

Sheik had an enormous amount of work to do at this time. Ten rural health units were still

functioning and needed resupply. The paediatric ward and under-fives clinic were seeing an unprecedented number of patients. Lassa fever cases were identified in the camps in Kenema and outreach workers

immediately set about educating people on how to protect themselves against the deadly haemorrhagic disease. Then came the measles epidemic. For Sheik, that meant reinforcing all the MERLIN facilities with appropriate materials and training to keep the epidemic under control. He liaised with local authorities and UNICEF to start a mass measles campaign in accessible parts of the district. Thanks to these efforts, the death toll was low.

But for MERLIN and Sheik, there are many new challenges in Kenema right now.

The rainy season brings threats of cholera and other diseases to people forced to live without shelter or clean water. The agricultural and economic disruptions have increased the threat of malnutrition throughout the entire community. Access to rural communities remains precarious. Across rebel lines live thousands of families surviving without healthcare or life-saving vaccinations. The war

**MERLIN in FREETOWN:**  
Brutal fighting in Sierra Leone's capital left 90% of the east of Freetown devastated, and hundreds of thousands of families without homes or healthcare. Since February, MERLIN has worked with the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health to treat men, women and children from the worst affected areas, and rehabilitate Freetown's health services.

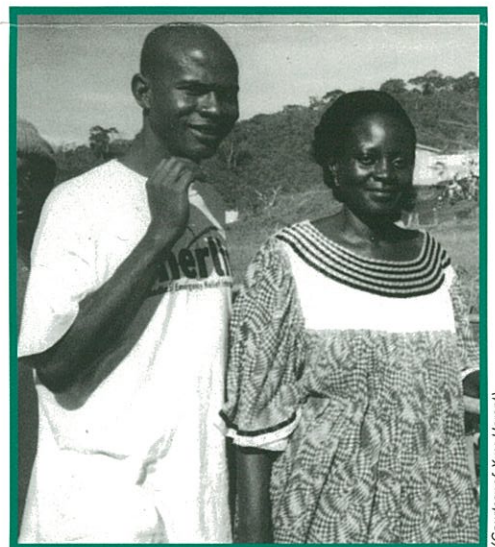
MERLIN supports Macauley Clinic in central Freetown, by providing medicines and medical equipment and training health staff. The clinic saw 7649 patients in March alone. MERLIN has also opened a 12-bed paediatric inpatient facility to bridge the gap until the Children's Hospital is fully functional.

MERLIN's four mobile clinics provide basic curative and preventative health care to areas in the devastated east of the city. In March the clinics gave over 13,000 consultations, seeing over 400 patients a day.

could result in mass casualties or grumble on.

Throughout this time, Sheik was often separated from his family and himself suffered bouts of malaria. But always he emanated a sense of purpose. He is one of the most courageous and humane people I have ever met. It seems unquestionable to him that everyone should have access to health care and the basic essentials for life.

Sheik and Kiya Conteh and the other MERLIN staff continue to work hard to prevent further suffering in Kenema. But more than that, they retain the vision of what sort of society they want to build and, at the same time as responding to emergency needs, are working toward long term goals. No matter if more health clinics are burnt down, the commitment and compassion of Sheik and other health professionals is irrepressible.



Sheik Conteh with Janet, a MERLIN midwife

(Courtesy of Yes Here)



Dr Monica Nolan

### MERLIN in KENEMA DISTRICT

In March alone:

- more than 5,500 children under five were immunised against measles, tetanus, whooping cough, polio and diphtheria
- the ten MERLIN-supported rural health clinics saw over 14,600 patients and vaccinated 2,374 children against measles
- the measles epidemic was brought under control through a mass vaccination campaign. During the epidemic, MERLIN treated 1,183 children with measles

## Rat Man in the bush

### LIBERIA

**The remote bush of Liberia in West Africa is a world away from comfortable GPs' surgeries and the reassurance of a regular system of vaccinations against childhood diseases. But here MERLIN has stepped up its programme of disease control to help bring the same level of protection to hundreds of thousands of people in Lofa and Nimba counties.**

Chris White is a parasitologist who trained at Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. In February, he swapped Liverpool for Liberia, where he is working as MERLIN's Disease Control Specialist. Diseases such as measles, malaria, Yellow fever and Lassa fever are major killers if not detected early and tackled quickly. Chris and a team of national and expatriate healthworkers are running a disease control programme which includes training, education, data collection and treatment. They are carrying

out mass campaigns to vaccinate children against measles, TB, whooping cough and other preventable - but deadly - diseases. Distributing bednets protects families against malaria. These systems stop disease spiralling to epidemic proportions and sweeping through communities.

Working in partnership with the Liberian Ministry of Health is vital in making MERLIN's work have long-term effects and leave a lasting benefit to the people. Another of MERLIN's partnerships is with Medecins sans Frontieres. In a few weeks time, a quarter of a million people will have been vaccinated against Yellow fever, thanks to this collaborative approach.

Vaccinations are not the only way to prevent disease. Chris is examining efficient ways of catching the rats which carry Lassa fever. MERLIN also spreads the word how Lassa fever is passed on to people through rats' urine and how they can protect themselves against disease. With the backing of the Ministry of Health and community support, Chris and the team are battling against the diseases which make life in Liberia a fight from the start.

## Record million to fight mutant TB

**MERLIN has been granted a record £1.1m to fight the mutant strain of tuberculosis currently flourishing in Russia. The World Health Organisation estimates that in less than a decade, over 50 million people worldwide will be infected with drug-resistant TB, which experts say is difficult to cure.**

The grant by the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) is the largest single sum ever granted to a British medical charity to treat the deadly airborne infection. TB is already the world's biggest killer of adults.

MERLIN's TB specialist Dr Nicholas Banatvala said: "With ECHO's support, we can start tackling the problem of drug-resistant TB head-on. Inadequate supplies of affordable drugs in the cash-starved Russian health system, leaving patients without a full course of treatment, has led to the new-style TB, which is incredibly difficult to cure. The number of people in Russian towns with drug-resistant TB has

doubled to 6% in 24 months, while the rate in prisons is a massive 40%. It is only a matter of time before this becomes a daily reality in other countries worldwide."

MERLIN will implement the programme to control drug-resistant TB in Tomsk, Siberia using World Health Organisation protocols and in conjunction with the New York Public Health Research Institute. The programme includes laboratory training, data collection and distribution of drugs. MERLIN has worked in Siberia since 1994.

### Goodbye, Farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, Adieu...

...to Sarah Hall, MERLIN stalwart, nurse, medical advisor for Asia and, most recently, training officer. Sarah joined MERLIN five years ago as a co-ordinator in Azerbaijan, and went on to work in Zaire and Afghanistan before joining the London office. Her commitment - and aerobic abilities - will be sorely missed.

**Contact us on 0171 487 2505 TODAY!**



# Get Informed

## GET TOGETHER

To find out how your colleagues can get together and have fun whilst raising money at work, please call the MERLIN Fundraising Team on: **0171 487 2505**

Employees at ED&F Man are organising a parachute jump on behalf of MERLIN whilst Flying Colours' employees held a collection around all their offices. From dress-down day to a summer gala, there are lots of fun ways you and your workmates can raise funds.

## GET GIVING

Regular giving provides a double bonus for MERLIN, firstly we can plan more effectively for the future and if you give through a covenant, we can also reclaim the tax.  
MERLIN is part of the Millennium Gift Aid scheme. We can reclaim up to one third extra in tax on all donations over £100, at no extra cost to you.

To find out more about making a donation, please call the MERLIN Fundraising Team on: **0171 487 2505**

## GET LOCAL

Richard Wiggins staged a display of MERLIN leaflets, posters, and information for a fortnight at his local library in Southend to help MERLIN raise its profile in the region. The Holy Trinity Church in Sloane Street, London held a series of special Lent lunches in aid of MERLIN. Bread and soup was served and people were asked to contribute the normal cost of a lunch to MERLIN. Well-known personalities including Martin Bell also spoke about their views on "Passion and Compassion for a World in Need".

If you want to organise a local event, please call the MERLIN Fundraising Team on: **0171 487 2505**

## GET INFORMED

Learn more about what's happening around the world with MERLIN's talks at the Royal Geographical Society. Last month, MERLIN hosted a talk with Bill Deedes and Alec Russell on "Africa after Mandela and Mobutu" to great success. Watch out for our next talks in September and October.



Lord Deedes lectures at the Royal Geographical Society.

If you want to inform yourself about the countries in which we work or find out more about our programmes, please call the MERLIN Fundraising Team on: **0171 487 2505**

## GET SPORTY

Supporters all over the country are taking part in sporting activities for MERLIN, from sponsored walks to feats of endurance such as the London Marathon and bike rides to Asia. Here are two stories from supporters...

If you want to get sporty for MERLIN, please call the MERLIN Fundraising Team on: **0171 487 2505**



David Coles, Managing Director, DHL International (UK) Ltd with Lucy Burn, MERLIN Head of Logistics

## GET CORPORATE

DHL have recently committed support to MERLIN and are helping us to transport emergency supplies to our programmes around the world. MERLIN is hosting a corporate walk along the 93 miles of the West Highland Way in October 1999. People who regularly do business together will be able to network and socialise in an unusual setting. Citibank and Cazenove have already signed up.

To find out how your business can benefit from our business, please call the MERLIN Fundraising Team on: **0171 487 2505**

### Taking a slow bike to China



Paul Handley and Jon Lees on their inspirational journey.

his saddle twice, as we descended 6,000ft in darkness.

In Peshawar, Afghanistan, we stayed in the MERLIN office and saw their operation in relief of the earthquake victims in remote areas.

Health-wise, Matt and I went on an extreme weight-loss course, thanks to a parasite known as Giardia. We lost 3 stone between us in about a week. Matt also caught dengue fever and the even more impressive falciparum malaria.

In eight and a half months we cycled around 6,000 miles and raised about £4,000 for MERLIN."

### Paul Handley and Jon Lees decided to cycle to China to raise money for MERLIN.

Paul writes, "Iran was an experience. Most of the news we hear tends to focus on Islamic extremists. How often do you hear what we found to be true – 'Today in Iran, lots of people were very hospitable'?"

In the mountains, we developed a technique of grabbing on to the back of slow moving trucks for free lifts. On reaching the top, the driver would usually stop and offer us tea! One particular day, we rode to the top of a mountain. It suddenly went dark and a huge thunderstorm rolled in. Jon managed to fly out of

### Seán Brickell, Neil Laughton, David Fox-Pitt and Paul Clarke recently climbed the 16,520 ft Cartensz Pyramid in Irian Jaya (Indonesia), raising several thousand pounds for MERLIN.

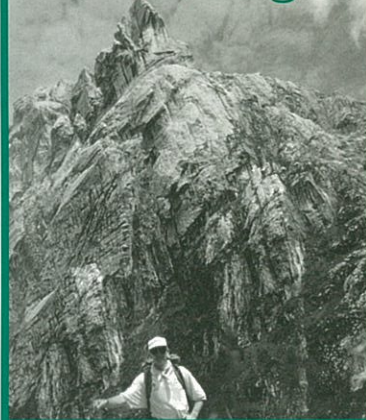
Seán writes, "Early on, I was almost killed by a man-sized boulder that grazed my shoulder. If I hadn't moved, I would have been killed, which would have been irritating because we hadn't yet reached the top."

Four days later, the team reached the summit. For Neil Laughton, this marked the completion of the Seven Summit Challenge, as he has now scaled the highest mountain on each continent.

The climbers also managed to meet up with the MERLIN team then working in the area.

**Editor's postscript:** In a future edition of RESPONSE, we will feature four girls currently raising money for MERLIN by following the Silk Road by horse, camel and pony. To date, all is progressing well.

### Supporters hit the heights



At the base of the Cartensz Pyramid

**VOLUNTEERS IN THE FIELD** (as at 13.5.99) **Afghanistan** Smruti Patel, Matthew Youngs, Jon Edwins, Dale Lightening **Albania** Rob Bennett, Vince Diamond, Heather Lomas, Shaun Bickley, Rod Slip, Maria Kirwan, Catherine Eldridge, Alistair Storey **Democratic Republic of Congo** Jonathan Campbell, Marguerite Koefman, Paul Lloyd, Jonathan Heffer, Joseph Inganji **Honduras** John Copley, Fuensanta Gual Lopez, Jose Benavente **Indonesia** Hanifa Rebbani **Kenya** Annette Alcock, Una MacAskill **Liberia** Jane Drapkin, Paul Foreman, Lisa Hardy, Sharon Bugg, Sara Nam, Brady Kershaw, Reg Kingston, Richard Blake, Stuart Shepherd, Lizzie Berryman, Paula Nawrocki, Chris White **Siberia** Annabel Baddeley **Sierra Leone** Glyn Taylor, Yves Horent, Jennifer Njunga, Susan Lillicrap, Isabelle Claes, Francoise Briant, Nzenge Mutota, John Cody, Frazer Murray **Tajikistan** Osman Osman, Tim O'Shea, Samantha Perkins, David Heed, Cormac Keane, Geraldine McWeeney, Nigel Youngs **RECENTLY RETURNED: Afghanistan:** Alistair Ward, Simon Richards **DRC:** Eva Jordung, Tim Lewin, Johanna McLeod, Ian Nicholson, Christiane Steinert **Honduras** Francois DeClerk, Nadine Ezard, Yvonne Westerman **Indonesia** Debra Hartley, Liselotte Hogberg, Michelle Ingham, Susan O'Grady, Simon Taylor **Kenya:** Pete Crawford **Liberia** Ella Truscott, Frances Bourne, Barry Holmes, Alex Swain **Siberia** Max Kammerling **Sierra Leone** Vicky Lack, Louise Moore, Monica Nolan **Sudan** Brian Jones, Alison Day, Marie McGrath, Miranda Odam, Annie Sewell **Tajikistan** Tessa Van Den Akker

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Prevents 3 children dying from measles

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Treats 100 children for malaria

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Prevents anaemia in 120 pregnant women

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Treats and isolates 5 cholera patients

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☐ I enclose a cheque to 'MERLIN'

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Card Number:

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## Get Committed

£100

Purifies a weeks water for 4,000 people

£171

Tests 1,000 people for TB

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Buys a trauma kit for 100 wounded civilians

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Please return this to: MERLIN, 14 David Mews, Porter Street, London W1M 1HW. E-mail: fundraising@merlin.org.uk  
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