

Annual Review 2004-2005

GEORGINE'S FUTURE

11-year-old Georgine Aquiti waits to see the nurse at Tokolote clinic, one of the 138 health facilities supported by Merlin in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in 2004.

PHOTO: AUBREY WADE



Merlin is the only specialist UK charity which responds worldwide with vital health care and medical relief for vulnerable people caught up in natural disasters, conflict, disease and health system collapse.

56-64 Leonard Street London EC2A 4LT UK TEL: +44 (0)870 199 6308
FAX: +44 (0)20 7065 0801 EMAIL: hq@merlin.org.uk WEB: www.merlin.org.uk
Registered charity number: 1016607



Why does the world need Merlin?

If you had time, you could listen to millions of individual voices telling you why Merlin's work matters. You can read some of their stories in this review; they come from ordinary people caught up in extraordinary events.

Did you know that every year more than 250 million people are affected by natural disasters: earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, floods, tsunami?

Meanwhile, easily curable diseases such as measles, malaria and tuberculosis claim 3.5 million lives a year. And AIDS killed three million people in 2004 – a number set to increase rapidly.

Conflict also claims a huge toll of human suffering. In the past year, 30 wars have raged around the world. In Africa, where much of Merlin's work takes place, eight million people have been killed, injured or displaced in armed conflicts since the start of the millennium.

And in many of the world's most fragile states, political chaos, persistent conflict or economic ruin cause health services to collapse.

Irrespective of the cause, these catastrophic events leave millions of people with little or no health care at a time when they are most in need.

That's why the world needs Merlin.



DAN JONES

The Asian tsunami presented one of the biggest ever challenges to Merlin. Medical relief teams were deployed to Sri Lanka and Indonesia; their work is expected to continue for several years.



“Merlin’s voice is respected because of our professionalism and the fact that we can demonstrate results”

Within weeks of joining Merlin in January 2005, I was privileged to witness our teams in action responding to the devastating impact of the Asian tsunami.

This experience helped me understand how Merlin strives to save lives in times of crisis and stays on in the field to leave behind a legacy of improved health care. I saw our health workers in Sri Lanka, distributing hygiene kits and repairing damaged clinics after the tsunami struck. Those affected told me what a difference this had made, while local officials appreciated the way we worked so closely with them.

I also visited our project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where Merlin is helping so many people suffering from the ravages of a long-running conflict. It will take time to re-establish a decent health service there and hand it back to the local authorities, but, as we do everywhere, we will see the job through.

Looking at all the work Merlin has done in the past year, we can be proud to have helped more than 16 million people in 18 countries. But we cannot be complacent.

In today's volatile world Merlin's voice is respected because of our professionalism and the fact that we can demonstrate results. We have continued to work closely with other agencies worldwide. One example was our contribution to Extreme Emergencies, a ground-breaking book to help agencies deal with severe disasters including chemical and biological weapon attacks. We also persuaded some of the most important government donor agencies to improve the way they supply funds in crisis situations.

Merlin is the only UK charity which specialises in providing vital health care and medical relief worldwide. None of our achievements would have occurred without our supporters who have raised funds at special events, volunteered their skills and services, or made personal donations. Whatever your involvement with Merlin, I would like to thank you for doing all you have to make our work possible.

Carolyn Miller

Carolyn Miller, Chief Executive

NATURAL DISASTER

Almost overwhelming... but you have to **act**



PENNY TWEEDIE

Mosquito nets and medical essentials were provided for mothers at relief camps in Sri Lanka

26 December 2004: the world awoke to the horror of a rare, and devastating natural phenomenon: tsunami. As the number of dead escalated towards the hundreds of thousands, Merlin was already on the ground – saving lives and planning beyond the immediate devastation. Each year, Merlin responds to natural disasters across the globe. Our tsunami response is indicative of our approach to all emergencies.

“What impresses me most about Merlin is the appetite to respond swiftly and approach emergencies with a practical balance between procedures and action.” These are the words of Angus MacKinnon, Logistics Coordinator for Merlin in Sri Lanka. Rarely have the qualities Angus describes been so vital.

Merlin was in Sri Lanka within 48 hours of the news, and immediately met with staff from the Ministry of Health to ascertain the most urgent needs. Our focus was Batticaloa and Ampara, two of Sri Lanka’s worst affected districts where 13,000 people died and 160,000 were made homeless.

Soon the team were able to distribute hygiene kits containing essential items like soap, toothbrushes and towels. Special kits were supplied for mothers with babies and for midwives attending births.

One mother, Lakshmi aged 24, received a kit, including a blanket, a sheet, underwear, and baby soap. “The things from Merlin will make a big difference,” said Lakshmi, “It’s very difficult living with a small baby in a hot tent.”

With so many people living in temporary shelters, preventing outbreaks of disease was an urgent priority. So the team provided mosquito nets as part of a wider programme that included spraying the rapidly growing camps to control flies and mosquitoes, as well as improving water supply and sanitation.

Hundreds of local volunteers helped Merlin distribute these essential supplies. Many also took part in a special training programme, which enabled them to lead sessions on hygiene education and prevent the outbreak of diseases in more camps.

In addition to meeting immediate needs after a disaster, Merlin always looks to the future to ensure it delivers lasting improvements. “In the longer term we will rebuild and equip clinics and hospitals to replace those that were destroyed by the tsunami,” explained Michelle Brown, Merlin’s Country Director in Sri Lanka. “We also aim to train more health workers and develop a disaster management system.”

This need was noted too by the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health which recognised Merlin as a key partner in the rebuilding of seven health facilities along the east coast.



IAN JONES



A NEW CLINIC, A NEW LIFE

The force of the tsunami swept away Kattankudy Hospital’s maternity ward. Merlin agreed with Dr Mohammed Rifaz, the district medical officer, that we would build and equip a new facility. Merlin provided all the equipment for the clinic, including a newborn resuscitation unit, suction machines, oxygen, a refrigerator and furniture.

May 17 marked a joyous day for the team, when Wahida, the first mother in the new ward gave birth to a healthy baby girl weighing just over 3 kilos.

“The birth of this little girl in the first new maternity ward built after the tsunami is a special event and shows that life goes on in Kattankudy,” said Dr Rifaz who attended the delivery.

“In a way, she represents a new beginning for the community. We would like to thank Merlin and all the people who support the organisation for constructing the ward.”



DAMIAN BIRD

Hundreds of thousands of people were left homeless when the tsunami struck



PENNY TWEEDIE

NATURAL DISASTER

Casting a lifeline



From amongst the rubble of the Bam earthquake Merlin restored nine health facilities.

Emergency water containers were distributed in Bam immediately after the earthquake.



Midwife Hera Watt was able to start work again at a clinic established by Merlin on the island of Pulo Aceh. The re-opening of the health post, in a region devastated by the tsunami, was an important step in enabling people to return to their villages.

In Indonesia, as in Sri Lanka, Merlin's priorities were to prevent disease and ensure people had access to basic health care. Looking to the longer term Merlin is striving to create a better health care system.

Amid the devastated landscape of Aceh province, the Merlin team identified more than 30 health facilities that were either destroyed or badly damaged. They gave a commitment to restore all of them to full working order.

In the first instance several temporary clinics were established, including two on the islands of Pulo Aceh. When Merlin nurse, Rachael Cummings, first reached these islands most of the residents had fled to camps set up in Banda Aceh: "We were part of a group of agencies that helped to rebuild the infrastructure and that meant people could leave the camps and return home. The Merlin clinic made it possible for people to get treatment in their village and I don't think that women with young children would have been willing to come back if this service hadn't been there.

"When I met up with Hera Watt, a midwife from one of the islands, I realised the impact Merlin has on individual health staff. The new clinic enabled her to start work again in a well-equipped facility. It will make a big difference to her and the women she looks after."

PLANNING FOR THE LONG-TERM

Following any crisis Merlin always seeks opportunities to help rebuild a system of health

care that is stronger than when we arrived. Our team expect to remain in Indonesia for up to three years in order to fully restore and improve on the services that were destroyed by the tsunami. It is a complex task, which requires working closely with government departments and agencies such as the World Health Organization. Already it has led to initiatives such as our programme to train 120 nurses to work in community health centres and in barracks for displaced people.

Of course, Merlin's work can only really succeed when we are able to earn the trust of local people. And so the final word on our tsunami relief work goes to Hera Watt, from Pulo Aceh: "What impresses me most about Merlin? They built us this temporary health centre. This week we had the medical equipment delivered and soon we will have our water supply sorted. They say they will do something and they do it."

UP AND RUNNING AGAIN IN IRAN

Exactly one year before the South Asia tsunami, the ancient city of Bam in south-eastern Iran was devastated by a massive earthquake. Thirty thousand people were killed and 90,000 were made homeless. Many health facilities were damaged or destroyed.

Within 72 hours, Merlin's medical professionals and logisticians were on the ground to carry out health assessments and distribute medical supplies, hygiene packs, water containers and more.

Throughout 2004 we worked closely with the local health authorities to help bring basic health care to affected communities. When the project ended in March 2005, Merlin had repaired or



NEVIL MOUNTFORD

reconstructed nine health facilities and provided medical supplies, equipment and other essential items to nearly 50 more.

Patrick Parsons, Merlin's project co-ordinator in Bam, said: "I worked closely with local health authorities and communities, and I was touched by the gratitude and respect shown towards Merlin. You could see how much people valued our role in helping to get their health centres up and running again, and improving their skills through training."



PENNY TWEEDIE



DAMIAN BIRD

(ABOVE) A health post set up by Merlin on the island of Pulo Aceh, Indonesia

(ABOVE RIGHT) Hundreds of volunteers took part in Merlin's hygiene training courses in Sri Lanka



DAMIAN BIRD

CONFLICT

Taking action without taking sides

Mathias Awazi recovers from septicaemia at the Kindu Hospital.



BBC News presenter Natasha Kaplinsky visited Merlin's projects in Congo

(RIGHT, ABOVE AND BELOW) At the Merlin supported Kindu Hospital in Congo: Mpela Mumba and her new-born son recover after a long journey for treatment; Dr Mikko Alto and Dr Blaise Sabiheni in surgery

In times of war, many deaths are caused by disease and a lack of basic health care. And while armed conflict is horrific enough, in some countries our teams find rape being used a means of terror and intimidation. Yet even in the most volatile situations Merlin remains neutral and strives to help people on either side of a divide.

"I COULD NEVER HAVE PREPARED MYSELF"

The Democratic Republic of Congo was embroiled in a five year civil war. While sporadic fighting continued, Merlin provided essential health services to a population of more than a million people during 2004.

BBC News presenter Natasha Kaplinsky, witnessed our work first-hand. "My week in the Democratic Republic of Congo was both amazing and shocking," she wrote. "Amazing to see the dedicated work of Merlin's front-line staff, and shocking to see the horrors they had to deal with – often at great personal risk.

"Sexual violence is a weapon of war here. I could never have prepared myself to see hundreds of women and girls, aged from their 80s to just two years old, who had been routinely and brutally raped. It happens daily and as a matter of course. Opposing groups routinely assault women as they go to work in the fields and then again as they return.

"The injuries inflicted on the women are almost unimaginable. I met an eight-year-old girl who had suffered such horrific sexual trauma that she is incontinent and in constant pain. The doctor

treating her told me that injuries like hers are common. Girls violated in this way will never bear children unless surgeons repair their ravaged bodies. Merlin provides that surgery – and much else besides."

Medical and counselling services offered by Merlin help rape survivors in Congo to recover from their ordeals. As well as the possibility of infection with HIV, victims are often ostracised. Merlin worked within communities to reduce the stigma attached to rape. These activities formed part of Merlin's broad programme of health education and care in the region.

DISPOSSESSED AND DISPLACED

The conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan has displaced over two million people. With whole villages razed to the ground and thousands of people indiscriminately killed, the terror was almost beyond imagination.

In the Sheeria region of southern Darfur where thousands of people had been forced to flee their homes, Merlin was the first international health organisation to provide emergency medical help. When our team arrived in November people had no shelter, no safe water, and no emergency health care.

The team established a temporary health clinic in Marlah and repaired an existing health facility in the village of Sanyafundu. Seven further health posts were also set up in order to provide care in remote villages and at camps for displaced people. The posts are manned twice each week by mobile teams and provide a broad range of health services, including immunisations, antenatal and postnatal care, and nutritional screening.



A SURVIVOR'S STORY

Khadja fled her village in Darfur when it was attacked and destroyed. Her five cattle were taken and her home burnt down. She now lives with 11 of her children and grandchildren in a tiny shelter made of sticks and grass. She has received a piece of plastic sheeting but keeps it hidden from thieves until it rains. The village where she has settled houses many other displaced people and is served by a Merlin mobile clinic. She uses the clinic regularly and all her children have been vaccinated there. Lydia Poole, Merlin field worker, who met Khadja, explained, 'She is very happy with the help we've provided, but wishes she felt safe enough to return to her village.'

(BELOW) A camp for displaced people at Marlah, Darfur, where Merlin established a health post



Facing up to the threat



Mosquito nets are treated with insecticide to prevent malaria infection

HIV/AIDS, malaria, cholera, tuberculosis: Merlin combats these and more diseases through emergency medical relief and with programmes to provide lasting health care. Such diseases are often exacerbated by natural disasters, conflict, or the collapse of state health systems.

In Kenya around 2.5 million people are HIV positive. In some areas more than 40 per cent of the population is infected and life expectancy has fallen to just 46 years. HIV and AIDS makes poor families even poorer as breadwinners become unable to work and they have to spend more money on drugs.

The statistics are bleak, but Merlin makes a difference to the lives of many people with innovative projects for those who are ill and imaginative preventative schemes. The Merlin project in Nyanza province established five voluntary testing and counselling centres and provided them with ongoing support and staff training.

For people living with HIV, tuberculosis (TB) is a common cause of death. Merlin piloted a system to help ensure that sufferers are referred to TB clinics, as getting early treatment for TB can make a real difference to the length and quality of their lives.

While no single initiative can halt the HIV pandemic, Merlin is finding innovative ways to

raise awareness. For example, in Kisumu, the main city of western Kenya, many people use matatus – cheap communal mini-buses. Merlin identified matatu crews along with sex workers and beach communities as particularly vulnerable groups. Matatu crews were also seen as an ideal means to convey information, so Merlin trained them to promote HIV prevention messages, and stocked their vehicles with demonstration condoms, posters and leaflets.

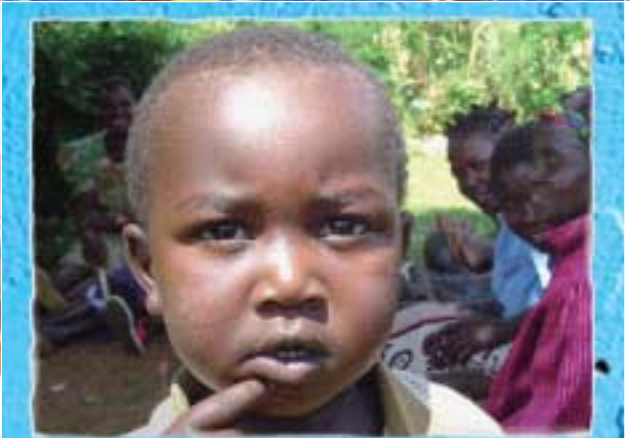
ACTION AGAINST MALARIA

Community health training is also key in combating malaria, which causes over a million deaths in Africa every year, the majority of them young children.

In two highland districts of Kenya, Kisii and Gucha, Merlin-supported services provided care for malaria sufferers and preventative treatment for pregnant women, for whom the illness is especially dangerous. During special malaria field days, Merlin helped to organise dances and songs to encourage people to utilise these services. People bring their mosquito nets to these events for re-treatment with insecticide, and new nets are also sold.

Malaria prevention, control and treatment feature in many of Merlin's programmes and our expertise in this field is widely recognised. In Somalia, in 2004, Merlin helped develop a new nationwide malaria control programme, supported by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM). Merlin is also an active partner in the global Roll Back Malaria (RBM) initiative.

Improved water supplies in Kenya help reduce the spread of disease



A CHILD IS SPARED

Two-year-old Eugene Kibaki from Kenya was conceived after his parents both discovered they were HIV positive. When his mother, Margaret Moraa, realised she was pregnant, she attended a voluntary counselling and testing centre to seek advice on how to protect her unborn child.

"The counsellor referred me to an antenatal clinic, where I was given anti-retroviral drugs to take during my pregnancy, and medicated syrup for my baby when he was born," she explained. "It's now two years since Eugene was born, and I am overjoyed that he is completely free of HIV!"

Margaret and her husband, Peter Onsongo, both publicly declared their HIV status and formed a support group for people living with HIV. This is one of several community-based organisations that Merlin supported, by training members in home-based care. "We now know how to take care of ourselves and those around us, and we actively encourage people to go for voluntary counselling and testing," added Margaret.

(ABOVE AND TOP RIGHT) Music, dance and theatre is used to raise awareness of HIV and malaria transmission

One of five new HIV counselling and testing centres in Kenya



Steering a course to recovery

Years of political instability, conflict or economic breakdown can leave regions with very few effective health services. In these situations Merlin strives to teach new skills and re-establish health facilities. Very often simple improvements can prevent the needless death of mothers during childbirth, or children dying from diarrhoea.

The health system in Afghanistan was decimated by two decades of war. This has meant, for example, that women find it hard to get effective maternal health care. Death rates in pregnancy and childbirth are consequently among the world's worst. Merlin has supported services in northern Afghanistan for several years and was pleased to be able to expand its programme in 2004 to include a comprehensive training course for midwives. The priority was to recruit students from remote villages where women traditionally give birth at home without the support of a trained health worker.

Fatima Yormamad is among the first of 22 young women to benefit from Merlin's training. Like her fellow students, Fatima comes from a village where women have little access to maternal health care. Her motivation to study and to serve her community could hardly be greater, as she explains: "My sister had a breech delivery at home. It was so difficult. My sister and the baby died. I witnessed it. She was 24 and it was her first baby.

A traditional birth attendant was there, but she was not trained."

The shortage of trained midwives in Fatima's village of Bangi is echoed across the communities of all 22 students. Their training will take 18 months, and once qualified the midwives will serve a population of 150,000.

Prior to initiating the training programme, Merlin's team had to build the school for the trainee midwives, and a hostel for them to live in. This followed detailed consultation with community leaders, and work to raise awareness of the importance of maternal health issues. Among the many challenges was the need to identify the few young women who were literate in these remote villages, and persuade their families to let them leave home for 18 months.

Merlin's expertise and determination will mean healthier mothers and fewer infant deaths for years to come.

THE HOSPITAL OF HOPE

In Liberia, many health facilities were destroyed during 14 years of civil war. Clinics and hospitals were looted and damaged, and many health workers fled. There is now a huge shortage of trained medical staff and hardly any doctors in remote areas.

Merlin has sought to attract qualified health staff back to the rural areas by establishing a functioning system, and providing training and financial incentives. In 2004 we continued to support the Liberian Government Hospital in Buchanan, which serves more than a quarter of a million people.



Fatima Yormamad from Afghanistan is one of 22 students who began training as a midwife in 2004. The course is part of Merlin's strategy to combat high rates of mortality during pregnancy and childbirth.



A midwife training programme is working to cut maternal mortality rates



(ABOVE AND RIGHT) At the Merlin run clinic in Taloqan Afghanistan: a health education class; a child is tested for malnutrition.



(BELOW) The Buchanan Hospital in Liberia was refurbished by Merlin



Income and Expenditure

Medical relief, lasting health care

	2004	2003	2004	2003
	(£'000)	(restated) (£'000)	(£'000)	(restated) (£'000)
INCOME				
PROGRAMME INCOME	13,205	13,378		
OTHER INCOME	841	711		
TOTAL INCOME	14,046	14,089		
EXPENDITURE				
DIRECT PROJECT EXPENDITURE	13,122	13,072		
FUNDRAISING COST	258	207		
MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION	592	564		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	13,972	13,843		
SURPLUS/DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR	73	246		
RESERVES AT THE YEAR END	490	417		

In 2004, Merlin consolidated the significant growth which occurred in 2003. We were pleased to generate a small surplus in 2004; a result of a consistent income 'pipeline' and a good control of costs. This has provided a solid base from which to grow in 2005. The above information is extracted from the financial statements for 2004. Copies are available from the Merlin website or our office in London. The financial statements were audited by Kingston Smith, Chartered Accountants, whose report was unqualified.



Merlin was very grateful to be one of the beneficiaries of the Daily Telegraph Christmas appeal during 2004 and 2005. Due to readers' overwhelming generosity the appeal raised £6 million, the largest in the paper's history. The majority of this income will be reported in next year's accounts.

Please support Merlin's work with a donation by calling 0870 199 6308 or through our website www.merlin.org.uk



Natural disasters, conflict, disease, health system collapse: in the face of these threats Merlin teams have provided effective help for around 16 million people in 18 countries during the past year.

We completed our response to the earthquake devastated city of Bam and sent teams to tsunami stricken parts of the Indian Ocean. In Africa, we provided medical relief for victims of the conflict in Sudan and the on-going violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Elsewhere in Africa, Merlin made progress in combating the spread of HIV and Malaria. And in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, where professional health services had all but disappeared, our teams are rebuilding a healthier future for hundreds of thousands of people.

The projects described in this review show how Merlin is ready to provide medical relief in an emergency. They also reflect how our teams are working over the long term to build the foundations of lasting health care services.

“In the face of such enormous need we are thankful for the spirit and generosity of Merlin’s supporters”

SIR GEORGE COX, CHAIRMAN, MERLIN