

Frontline

The newsletter for Merlin supporters January 2013



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A decorative border at the top of the main image area, featuring a row of various icons including hands, hearts, and medical symbols.

**Thank you for
having faith
in us over 20
challenging
years**

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MEDICAL EXPERTS ON THE FRONTLINE

www.merlin.org.uk/frontline/January2013

Registered charity 1135111

South Sudan - an emergency update



How your support is helping us win our fight against deadly, infectious diseases

Merlin has been working in Sudan since 1997, working to improve the health of vulnerable people who have suffered for decades from war, famine and disease.

We have worked to improve maternity services and reduce the shockingly large number of mothers who die in childbirth. We have supported health centres and hospitals so that more people can have access to basic healthcare. We have also taken a leading role in fighting sleeping sickness, the killer disease that is spread by the tsetse fly.

But this year South Sudan has faced a different kind of health risk, as political violence has grown into a humanitarian crisis. Thousands of people have been forced to leave their homes and take refuge in makeshift camps. Healthcare is in short supply in South Sudan at the best of times, but in the camps it is all but non-existent.

One of the worst affected areas is Maban county. Here 105,000 refugees are living in just four refugee camps in terrible and rapidly deteriorating conditions. Malnutrition is rife

in the camps, and the people there are desperately vulnerable to cholera, malaria and diarrhoea-related diseases. As always in a health crisis like this, it is the young children who are the most vulnerable, and deaths among children under five at the camps are heartbreakingly common.

Concerted effort

In these terrible circumstances, Merlin has shown itself ready and willing to do what is needed. In 2012 we decided to make a concerted effort to help the people of Maban county survive this crisis, and particularly to save thousands of people from dying miserably and unnecessarily from malnutrition and disease.

Merlin is working in collaboration with a number of other non-government organisations that are active in South Sudan, particularly the charity GOAL, to deliver a comprehensive emergency health and nutrition programme.

We are training health workers so they can



↑ A child receives vaccinations at the Boma hospital, Southern Sudan.



The Republic of South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011. Merlin has worked in Sudan since 1997 where approx. 350,000 people access services across the regions.

←
 ■ Sudan
 ■ South Sudan



Photo: Trevor Roger Dean

Murle children at Labarap where Merlin has a primary health care unit.

With your support, we will help an estimated 8,000 women and children in the camps and over 59,000 people in the wider community.

help to run existing health facilities in Maban county; distributing medical supplies to the camps; and using our expertise in nutrition to help health workers and medical personnel to combat malnutrition. We are also working at Bunj county Hospital to help staff improve their referral processes, so that the patients who are in greatest danger receive the treatment they need immediately.

Working in partnership

We know very well that work of this kind can only be truly effective and lasting if it is done in partnership with local people. That is why we have been meeting community leaders to explain what we are trying to do and seek their active involvement.

With your support, Merlin will help an estimated 8,000 women and children in the camps who are in desperate need of healthcare. By supporting health facilities and hospitals we will be reaching over 59,000 people in the wider community.

However, this is just the beginning of the work we are hoping to do in Maban county. In the longer term, we are hoping to expand our support to health centres, as well as giving more support to the county Hospital.

Thank you for what you have already done to help us save lives in South Sudan. Please continue to support us so that we can give the people of this troubled country the healthcare they so desperately need.



Want to know more?

Please go to our website for more in-depth information on this situation:
www.merlin.org.uk



Thank you for having faith in us over 20 challenging years

It's amazing to think that it is only 20 years since Merlin started – the brainchild of three friends with high ambitions but very little money. Yet 2013 marks our 20th birthday.



Merlin has worked in over 50 countries over the past 20 years.

But what really makes us proud is not the length of time we have been here, but what we have achieved in that time. We have grown into one of the most effective humanitarian charities in the world – and the impact we make on people's lives is enormous.

This was recognised recently when Merlin received a rare accolade. We were awarded the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) certification, making us one of only 14 organisations in the world, including four in the UK, that have been given this distinction.

HAP is a global self-regulatory body for humanitarian organisations, which seeks to promote excellence in this vital field of human endeavour. The accreditation is confirmation that our quality assurance systems, particularly our accountability to partners

and the local communities we work with, are among the best in the world.

Touching 20 million lives

The award has been made possible by the dedication of our staff. **But it is also because supporters like you have had faith in us, and have made our work possible through your generous donations.** Thanks to you, we touch the lives of over 20 million people a year, giving access to healthcare and vital medical assistance.

Thank you for helping us to care for so many people and to save so many lives. As the HAP award recognises, your generous support really is getting through and making a lasting difference to the people who need it most.

Photos: David Stewart-Smith



Training is the key to health

Merlin reveals a shocking lack of health workers in Nepal – and gets to work to train more.

In Nepal, chronic poverty and a long civil war have helped to create a severe shortage of health workers. Most of the local people have no access to healthcare and many die unnecessarily from treatable illnesses.

The scale of the problem is now being highlighted by Merlin and a local Nepalese organisation called the Society for Local Integrated Development (SOLID). In a recent report, they reveal that the country only has 3 public sector health workers per 10,000 people, which is far below the minimum figure of 23 per 10,000 recommended by the World Health Organisation.

The situation is worse in rural areas, which are hugely dependent on volunteer health workers. There are other problems too, such as poor quality training for health workers and a lack of medicines and equipment to help them do their job properly.

The result is an appalling health crisis. 170 mothers die in childbirth for every 100,000 live births (compared with 12 in the UK). Nearly half of all children under five are stunted by malnutrition.



Merlin worker in Nepal using a foetal stethoscope to record a baby's heartbeat.



Doctor's consultation with mother and baby at a mobile medical camp tent, Nepal.

"Having an adequate number of skilled health workers is the first step in providing quality healthcare."

Merlin in action

Merlin is determined to do all it can to help. We are working in Kathmandu to help train health workers and support volunteer health workers. As Linda Doull, Merlin's Director for Health and Policy, says: "Having an adequate number of skilled health workers is the first step in providing quality healthcare." We are also preparing hospitals and clinics to be ready for the devastating effects of an earthquake by educating schoolchildren, paramedics, nurses and doctors. In addition Merlin is protecting medicines, equipment and other supplies so we can be ready if there is another earthquake.

There is much more we need to do – and that is why your continuing support is so important, as we work to give the people of Nepal the healthcare they so desperately need.

Saving lives in Africa's forgotten country

The Central African Republic (CAR) is a desperately poor country, badly affected by political violence, that has been described as "Africa's forgotten crisis". But it is not forgotten by Merlin – nor by our supporters, who have given generously to help us support health centres, hospitals and assist refugees.



Recently, Greg McCardell visited the CAR. Here he writes about the life-saving work he saw at first hand.

From the capital Bangui, I first travelled 140km

along unpaved and severely pot-holed roads to the town of Batalimo. Since September 2010 Merlin has run and equipped a health centre for local people as well as serving the 7,000 mostly Congolese refugees.

Although still only 8am the temperature is rising and the health centre is getting busy. A group of 20 women with small children sit patiently on the veranda in the shade, waiting to be seen by Merlin health staff.

Every day our small team see between 50 and 80 people, mostly women and children. The children are usually suffering from malaria, acute diarrhoea, pneumonia or malnutrition – the four biggest killers of children in the CAR.

Safety in childbirth

I'm shown around by Leonard Simbaburanga, Merlin's project co-ordinator. He is suffering a bout of malaria, but such is his dedication, he

didn't want to miss the opportunity to tell me about the work his staff do. Sweating profusely from the fever, he explains that the refugees in Batalimo are very lucky to have the centre so close – unbelievably 76% of the CAR's population live more than 10km from their nearest health centre.

On our tour of the in-patient ward, we find a woman who gave birth to a healthy pair of twin girls the previous evening. She called them Nina and Marina after the midwife and assistant who delivered them.

Leonard explains that they only have one delivery room with one delivery table and it's not uncommon for two women to go into labour at the same time. But the delay in transporting a pregnant woman to another centre could be fatal to her or her child.

A child's life in the balance

In the next room 6 year old Leticia lies attached to a drip. This is the third time she



Central African Republic (CAR)

Photo: Jenny Matthews



New born twins Marina and Nina Mboula Wassia born 16 November 2012.

"Although it's still only 8am, a group of 20 women with small children sit patiently on the veranda, waiting to be seen by Merlin health staff."

has been brought in with malaria. Unprompted, her father tells me how great he thinks Merlin is. "I couldn't afford the medicine for Leticia" he says. "If it wasn't for Merlin giving her the medicine for free she might have already died," he says.

Photo: Jenny Matthews



Leticia, aged 6, malaria patient

But Merlin's support for the refugees at Batalimo doesn't just stop with free consultations and medicines. Merlin has trained a team of 25 volunteer community health workers who encourage safe sex by giving talks and distributing condoms, as well as promoting handwashing and good hygiene practices to reduce the spread of preventable childhood illnesses.

They also run regular play sessions with children where they learn about the importance of washing their hands before eating. By teaching children while they are still young, they have reduced the number of cases of diarrhoea, hepatitis A and typhoid.

Through this combination of free healthcare, education and direct community participation, and thanks to the wonderful generosity of supporters like you, Merlin is making a huge difference to the lives of people in this forgotten country.

Want to know more?

Please go to our website for more in-depth information on this situation:

www.merlin.org.uk



"It's all about

Merlin co-founder Dr Chris Besse draws the lessons of our first 20 years.

Merlin was created out of a burning desire to help people who were suffering in the most desperate situations. To appreciate that, you only have to talk to Dr Chris Besse, one of three friends who co-founded Merlin twenty years ago.

His passion for medical relief work was triggered by sitting at home watching TV pictures of the fall of the Ceaucescu dictatorship in Romania in 1989. In the upheaval, children were being mown down by tanks in the street. Thousands of people were injured in the violence, and yet the hospitals didn't have the equipment or the drugs to treat them.

At that time, Chris had a successful medical practice in London whose patients included some of the best known people in the UK. And



Chris Besse, Bosnia 1993
Photo: David Stewart-Smith

20 years of Merlin

Merlin is born
the brain child of friends
Dr Chris Besse, Nicholas
Mellor and Mark Dalton



Sierra Leone civil war
devastated the country
leaving more than
50,000 people dead

Mozambique flood
800 people killed
and 20,000 head
of cattle lost

Liberian civil war
shelling of the city
resulted in the
displacement of
thousands of civilians

1993

1994

1995

1998

2000

2003

Bosnian war
Merlin sends a convoy
with £1million worth
of food and medicine

Rwandan genocide
mass slaughter of
nearly 800,000 people

Afghanistan earthquakes
two devastating
earthquakes struck
the country in
February and May

Darfur conflict
Merlin moved quickly to
evacuate casualties and
provide primary healthcare



: people"

yet he didn't feel fulfilled by what he was doing. "I was looking after the rich and famous and wondering what I was doing with my life," he remembers.

He and a friend, a manager for Smith Klein called Nicholas Mellor, decided they couldn't sit by and watch the unfolding disaster in Romania. So they packed a builder's van with drugs and medical equipment and drove across Europe to reach Bucharest. "Looking back it seems like a mad thing to do," he says now. "But there are times when you have to roll up your sleeves and get to work. I found that medical skills I'd learned that had simply seemed useful were suddenly saving lives."

"There are times when you have to roll up your sleeves and get to work."

Enemy fire

In the few years that followed the Romanian crisis, Chris continued to work in some of the most dangerous places on earth. After the first Gulf War, he found himself running two refugee camps for Kurdish refugees in Iran. "There was nothing that could prepare you for what you saw, and no rule book that could tell you what to do," he says. "I had 17,000 people with scabies and no equipment or drugs to treat them. You just had to improvise."

Later he worked under enemy fire in Serbia, treating the victims of a cruel war. One of his worst memories is seeing a child's arm sticking out of the ruins of a building after a particularly heavy bombardment. It was a seven year old boy. "I had to pick the dead child out of the rubble and hand him over to his grieving mother," he recalls grimly. He also worked in war-torn Chechnya, where one night he and his team were pulled out of their tents

continues



Indian Ocean earthquake
230,000 dead in 3rd largest quake

Pakistan floods
affected 20 million people, death toll of 2,000

Bangladesh floods
left two thirds of the country under water

Libyan refugee crisis
20,000 Libyans stranded and in need of food and shelter at Tunisia border

Tropical Storm Washi, flash floods
leave at least 1,268 dead



West African food crisis
more than 18 million people struggle for food

2004

2008

2010

2011

2012

2013

Burma cyclone Nargis
38,000 killed. The worst natural disaster recorded in Burma



Haiti earthquake
affecting three million people, killing 316,000



East Africa Food crisis
a severe food crisis across Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. The worst in 60 years

Ivory Coast refugee crisis
over 1,000 people killed, hundreds of thousands of people flee their homes

"It's all about people" continued

and beaten up by thugs.

Nonetheless, Chris's experiences taught him lessons which later proved valuable to Merlin. "I saw the value of volunteers – people who were working in an emergency situation because they wanted to be there, rather than just because it was their job. People who were not afraid to get their hands dirty and were prepared to work day and night to get the job done."

Focus on healthcare

It was out of these experiences and others that Merlin was born. By this time Chris and Nicholas had recruited a third friend, a logistics specialist called Mark Dalton, to their enterprise. "Some other charities had medical divisions, but we decided that there was a role for a charity that was completely focused on providing healthcare," says Chris. Together they started work in a spare bedroom in a house in London.



Photo: Hannah Mornement

"Human beings are the reason for Merlin's work and always will be."

Dr Chris Besse and Tito Hill, 6 months with his mother Comfort Hill at Bokay Town Clinic, Liberia.

Since then Merlin has grown astonishingly, building a global reputation for our work in emergencies. In all, we have worked in over 50 countries – not just providing medical treatment in emergencies, but working over the longer term to build health services in countries where most people have little or no access to healthcare.

Empowering people

Recently Chris travelled to Liberia to see Merlin's work. "I was seriously impressed by



Dr Chris Besse, Macaulay B Kilinwolo and John Geedehat Buchanan Government Hospital.

the work Merlin is doing," he told us. "We are building extremely competent teams of people, in hospitals, clinics and in local communities."

Chris was particularly struck by two young anaesthetists he met, Mac and John. Merlin trained these young men, and now they are working in a Merlin hospital, providing vital support for the clinical team. "They are part of a generation who grew up in a terrible war," says Chris. "But we are empowering them to make a positive difference to their community. It's what Merlin does."

So what does Chris think has changed in the 20 years since Merlin began? "We have learned a great deal about logistics and organisation since the early days," he says. "But the fundamental reason for doing this work is still there. And so, I hope, are the values that drive us on."

This isn't about theories or grand ideas about development – it's about people. Human beings are the reason for Merlin's work and always will be."



Want to know more?

Please go to our website for more in-depth information on this situation:
www.merlin.org.uk



Mother care

Merlin's efforts to train midwives in Afghanistan means safer childbirth for thousands of women.

This group of newly qualified midwives, seen here receiving their uniforms, are in a vanguard of a quiet revolution that is taking place in Afghanistan – a revolution in healthcare.

Afghanistan has one of the highest death rates in the world for mothers in childbirth. The reason isn't difficult to find – the country desperately lacks trained midwives who can offer life saving care and prevent these needless deaths. At present the country only has around 400 trained midwives – far short of the 4,500 which would be needed to cover 90% of pregnancies.

However, Merlin is working hard to change this situation – and we are making heartening progress, thanks to your support.

400

The number of midwives at present

4,500

Needed to cover 90% of pregnancies

224

Trained by Merlin so far



Photos: Jenny Matthews

Maternity waiting home in Afghanistan's Fayzabad Hospital.

Helping rural communities

In 2006 we opened a midwife training school in Taloqan in northern Afghanistan to tackle the chronic shortage of midwives in the region. Thanks to you Merlin is still there today, selecting trainees from rural communities that lack trained midwives. Once they complete their 18 months of intensive training, they will return to their towns and villages to provide maternity care for local mothers.

The Merlin school has already trained 224 women, who between them will help many thousands of women to deliver their babies safely, as well as passing their skills and knowledge on to other women in their own communities.



← Baby Michael, the first baby to be born in the new Merlin built Maternity Centre.

→ Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).



For Obokote, a dream has come true

Merlin opens a brand new hospital in one of the poorest and remotest parts of Africa.

For years, the people of Obokote – a town in a remote part of the Democratic Republic of Congo – dreamed of having a modern hospital that could treat their illnesses and protect their children from disease. For many years all they had was a run-down clinic in a dangerously dilapidated building. But finally their dream has come true, now that a new hospital built by Merlin has opened its doors.

People in the town are overjoyed that the new building can deliver what the old clinic could not – safe, good quality healthcare. It's much needed in a country where thousands die from treatable diseases; and where the average life expectancy at birth is only 47 for men and 51 for women.

Training doctors and nurses

Generous support from people like you has funded the 61-bed hospital, complete with two wells, a water harvesting system, medical equipment and furniture. It has also meant that Merlin could organise a training programme to ensure that the hospital's doctors, nurses and support staff have the right skills to give the local community the care they need.

The hospital will be managed and operated by the Congolese authorities, but Merlin will continue to ensure that staff receive support and supervision in crucial areas such as maternal and child healthcare and hospital hygiene and sanitation.

As Joanna Reid, Merlin's project coordinator, said: "The opening of this hospital marks a great step forward for the healthcare people in Obokote and beyond."

This is the first hospital built by Merlin in the Democratic Republic of Congo – but with the continued help of supporters like you, we hope to build many more.



The former maternity centre, was a dilapidated, crumbling mud built structure.



The new maternity centre offers safe, quality healthcare.

Merlin's Winged Scalpel

Richard's inspiring story of life as a surgeon on the frontline of disaster

Ex-SAS surgeon Richard Villar has worked with Merlin for several years, responding to some of the worst disasters the world has seen. His first trip was to the Kashmir earthquake zone in 2005, but since then he has worked in Java, Haiti, Libya and Tunisia.

Now he's written a book vividly describing his experiences, which he has dedicated to "the brave men and women of Merlin."

Richard is modest about his own courage, but generous in his praise of Merlin. He writes: "Getting an emergency response up and running and setting up operating theatres in a hurry was never going to be easy... But the determination of Merlin staff meant we got over each and every obstacle."

He also talks movingly of his motivation for getting involved in crises like the Haiti earthquake.

He writes: "In January 2010, I had barely heard of Haiti. It was somewhere far away... By lunchtime it was clear that Haiti was a major problem. The body count had reached several thousand and I knew there would be more to come... Something clicked inside me as I watched. I had felt it so many times before. You have to move, you have to act, you cannot ignore it. Turning the other way is simply not an option. Within seconds I was at my computer and the email had gone. 'If you need a surgeon for Haiti, I can leave tomorrow'."



"The determination of Merlin staff meant we got over each and every obstacle."

Pakistan



Java



Haiti



Photo: Jacqueline Koch



Photos, from left to right: Richard attends to 5 year-old Imran Choudry during the Pakistan Earthquake (2006); a girl with a leg injury following the Java earthquake (2006); a woman in need of urgent medical care in Port-au-Prince, Haiti 2010.

To order this inspiring book at the exclusive price of £15.99 and read Richard's story visit www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/Winged-Scalpel/p/3701 or call Pen & Sword Books Ltd on 01226 734222

The 60km walk that saved Lokarach's life

Thanks to you Merlin was there for baby Lokarach when his father took the life saving steps to save his son.

Lokarach Amuria is just one year old and lives in the remote town of Kapus in Kenya. In the photograph he looks quite happy and even manages a hesitant little smile for the camera. But only recently his life hung in the balance. He wouldn't even be alive today if it wasn't for the determination of his father, the skills of Merlin health workers, and the generous support you give to our work.

Lokarach has suffered from many illnesses since he was born. But finally Kebo, his father, became so worried by his little boy's deteriorating health that he decided the little boy needed immediate medical care.



Kebo Amuria with his son Lokarach at Lodwar stabilisation centre.

Gruelling journey

There is no healthcare in Kebo's village. The nearest health facility is in the town of Lodwar, where Merlin runs a clinic. So Kebo braved the 60km walk to Lodwar carrying Lokarach. It was a gruelling journey, and they had to sleep on the road overnight, but against the odds father and son both made it there safely after three days.

Fortunately, that journey saved Lokarach's life. As soon as Merlin's medical staff examined him, they realised how desperately ill he was. They treated him immediately for malaria, dehydration and severe acute malnutrition – and thankfully the treatment worked. In just a few days, Lokarach was gaining weight. He is now recovering with the help of Merlin health workers – and looking quite different from the weak, helpless child he was when he first came to Lodwar.

42km
(26 miles approx)

Distance of
the London
Marathon

60km
(37 miles approx)

Kebo and Lokarach's
distance to the nearest
health clinic run by Merlin



Feeling inspired after the Olympics? Take a Merlin Challenge!



People do the most amazing things to raise money for Merlin. Our Challenge events are a great way to have fun and stay healthy – and we've listed below some of the events that you can take part in during 2013.

But you don't have to be a runner or climber to raise funds – you can 'do your own thing'. You could follow in the footsteps of our youngest fundraiser, four year old Charlie, shown below, who is saving all his spare pennies to help those less fortunate than him.



Our youngest fundraiser, 4 year old Charlie Warren.



Jadwiga Koprowska runs the BUPA 10k in May 2012.

Challenge events in 2013

→ The Brighton Marathon

It's the first time Merlin will be entering runners for this event, on [Sunday 14 April](#). The route takes in the city centre before heading east along the scenic coast road. This event has an achievable fundraising pledge of £500 and the registration fee is £40.

→ The Virgin London Marathon

All our charity places are now full, but if you have your own ballot place in this year's run we would love you to do it for Merlin. Please contact us to request a fundraising pack.

→ The Bupa London 10k

This flat and fast 10k run through the heart of London on [27 May](#) starts (and finishes) in The Mall, taking you past many famous sights. The registration fee is only £25 and fundraising pledge is £200.

→ The 40th Berlin Marathon

On [29 September](#), this flat, fast race takes you past famous landmarks and through the Brandenburg Gate to the finishing line. The registration fee is £40 and fundraising pledge is £1,000.

To register for an event or find out more, email challengingyou@merlin.org.uk or call 0207 014 1707. Or for ideas about other kinds of fundraising visit www.merlin.org.uk and click on 'Do your own thing'.

A gift in your will can give mothers like Kaka the chance to see their children grow up

Kaka Kelang and her family were driven from their home in South Sudan by political violence before settling in the town of Boma. In some ways she was lucky, because when Kaka became pregnant, she was able to go to Merlin's hospital in Boma to give birth.

The vast majority of mothers in South Sudan are not so fortunate. They have to give birth without proper health facilities and no trained midwife. That's why, shockingly, one woman in every seven dies in childbirth.

Merlin is passionately committed to changing this situation, which is why we are running hospitals and health centres and training midwives. But it's long-term work, and to go on doing it, we need your help in the years ahead.

One of the best ways you can help is to leave a gift to Merlin in your will. It is easy to do this, whether you are making a new will or



adding a gift to your existing will. It's up to you how much you give – but every gift will help to make sure that future generations of women like Kaka live to see their children grow up.

To find out how to leave a gift to Merlin, please complete the slip below to ask for a copy of the *Merlin True Friends Legacy Guide*, free and completely without obligation.

Thank you.



Please send me a copy of the *True Friends Legacy Guide*

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Tel: _____

Email: _____

Please complete this form and return it in the freepost envelope provided to:
Merlin, Freepost RLZE-EGYR-JAGH, 12th Floor, 207 Old Street, London, EC1V 9NR (No stamp required)