

# Frontline

The newsletter for Merlin supporters January 2011



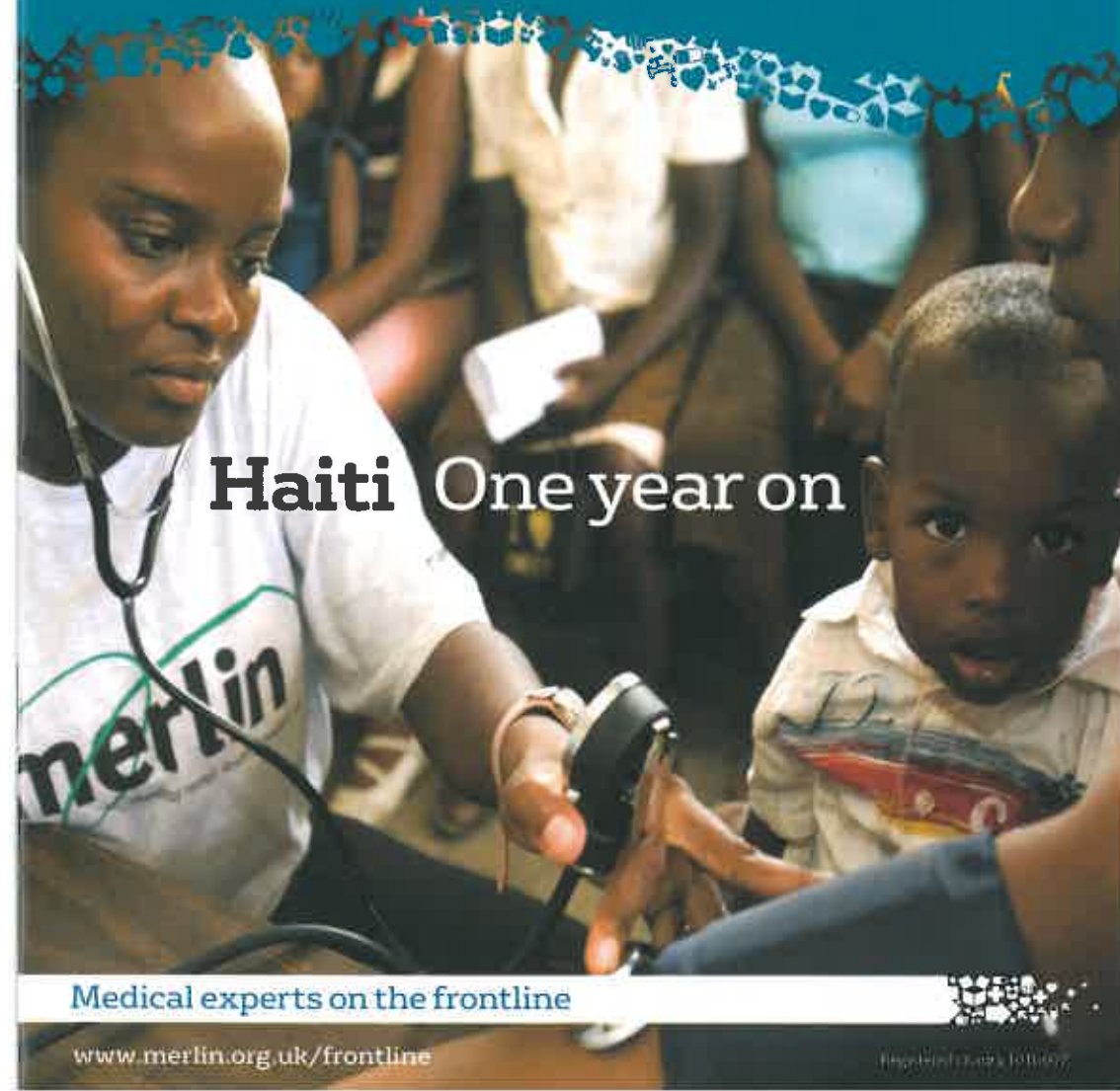
Page 4  
Thanks for  
putting your  
hand up



Page 8  
Liberia:  
From ruins  
to recovery



Page 10  
Pakistan  
floods  
update



## Haiti One year on

Medical experts on the frontline

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

Registered charity 1011697



## One year on Merlin in Haiti

**January 12 2010 will be a day forever remembered by Haitians. The devastating earthquake that claimed over 200,000 lives shocked and horrified the world. So many of you donated to our emergency appeal, which meant our team, led by consultant orthopaedic surgeon Richard Villar, could board a plane headed towards Haiti ready to save lives.**



Merlin will continue to focus on maternal and child health in 2011.

Photo: Jacqueline Koch



Merlin's emergency hospital treated over 7,000 patients and performed nearly 400 operations.

The team found a safe site for Merlin's tented hospital in the unlikely location of a disused tennis court which affectionately became known as 'Wimbledon'. By the time Wimbledon closed in March, your support meant our surgeons had performed nearly 400 operations, saving lives and limbs.

Since then, Merlin has been delivering medical aid to the many thousands of Haitians in great need of health care. With your support we have been running mobile clinics to reach isolated villages that otherwise have little or no access to basic health care.

Each clinic is seeing an average of 220 patients every day, including the memorable birth of baby Merline, born on a dried up riverbed and delivered by a Merlin mobile clinic which happened to be travelling through the area at just the right time. In a touching gesture, Merline's mother decided to name her new baby girl after us!

Photo: Merlin / A myr Beaumont



Merlin's mobile clinics are travelling some great distances over difficult terrain to deliver essential health care in Haiti.

### Reviving Haiti's health system

This year Merlin is looking at the long term health needs in Haiti. With your support we will continue to focus on training more health workers and improving maternal health care. Working with the Ministry of Health, we plan to turn our mobile clinics into static health centres. Merlin will support in the construction, equipping and staffing of these facilities to create a lasting legacy of health care for local people.

### A new crisis

In October a deadly epidemic of cholera broke out in Haiti, claiming the lives of over 3,000 people. Our teams launched an immediate emergency response and have been working non-stop in an attempt to contain the epidemic, and thanks to your help we have constructed, equipped and staffed seven cholera treatment units.

*After the emergency response Haiti moved towards the recovery phase, and your support meant we could begin running mobile clinics to reach isolated villages.*

Merlin has trained teams of local people to spread crucial health messages about cholera. Aqua tabs to purify water are being distributed as well as soap to improve hygiene levels inside camps near Port-au-Prince. We also have an ambulance on standby 24 hours a day seven days a week to refer more severe cases to hospital.

Merlin also dispatched an emergency assessment and response team to the north-eastern cities of Fort Liberté and Ouanaminthe after seeing a sharp increase in patients with cholera symptoms in the area. Islande Jean is a Haitian nurse who normally works with a Merlin mobile clinic, and is leaving her three year old daughter in the care of family whilst she is away with the emergency assessment. She told us: "Yes, I am worried about what we might find. But we have to go - this is Merlin's work, it's what we do."



## Bringing you closer to our medical experts on the frontline

You may have noticed the new look of your newsletter. After a year of unprecedented humanitarian response and with wide and extensive consultation with supporters, we realised that a new visual identity was essential.

We've done this so that we can boost fundraising and awareness, so our health workers can do what they do best - save lives. By raising more money we can go where we're needed, when we're needed - taking countries from emergency to recovery.

This is the first major work on Merlin's image in our 18-year history. Since our 1993 beginning, we've saved countless lives and

helped people to build their own lasting and effective health care in over 50 countries. Thanks to the generosity of all our supporters, Merlin now helps around 20 million people a year. Every minute, nine people are treated by a Merlin health worker.

### There are many aid agencies and then there is Merlin.

Our medical experts work on the frontline in some of the world's toughest places - Haiti, Afghanistan, Pakistan to name a few. We're sure you understand why we've done this, but if you have any questions please call our Supporter Care team on 020 7014 1712 who will be pleased to answer them.

### Campaign update

## Thank you for putting your hand up for health workers

**We'd like to say a massive thanks to all of you who supported our Hands Up for Health Workers campaign by sending in your messages of support for health workers across the world. An incredible 1,500 of you wrote heart warming and touching messages which we'll be sending to Merlin staff working tirelessly on the frontline.**

Some of your messages included:

*"The help and compassion you give brings hope and a future to people in their darkest hours. Your work is vital."*

*"You are needed more than ever, keep up the good work. My words can't describe our admiration."*

*"You are held constantly in my thoughts and prayers."*

In September, Safaa Gaafar Suliman, a Sudanese health worker handed our 12,000 strong petition to world leaders in New York. We're calling for greater investment and support for health workers who do such an amazing job in some of the toughest and harrowing conditions imaginable. Thank you to all those who put their hand up for the campaign, and thank you for helping us to train more heroic health workers.

### Merlin responds

## Cyclone Giri in Myanmar



Merlin has been working in Myanmar since 2004 and our team also responded to Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

### In October Cyclone Giri struck Rakhine state in Western Myanmar.

The category 4 storm caused extensive damage and destroyed 90% of homes within Myebon Township. Merlin deployed an experienced water and sanitation team to the area to meet people's health needs. The cyclone has affected up to 200,000 people, and many have been left with no shelter or possessions. Dr Paul Sender, Merlin Country Director told us: "The scale of destruction is immense. Merlin's teams on the ground have seen entire villages flattened."

In the immediate aftermath of the Cyclone, and thanks to your support our teams were able to distribute 1,400 shelter and 280 tool kits to help people build new homes. This was done whilst urgently assessing drinking water needs and identifying possible water sources. Now there is a risk of diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases, as well as dengue and

*"The scale of destruction is immense. Merlin's teams on the ground have seen entire villages flattened."*



Photo: Merlin

malaria. Urgent access to clean water, health care, food and shelter are essential.

Merlin will focus upon water and sanitation needs and use the expertise we have developed in Myanmar, especially in its response to water needs in the Delta area during the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in 2008. Merlin is now establishing field offices and recruiting additional staff, whilst planning to make safe drinking water available to 25,000.

Dr Andre Steele, Merlin's WASH Technical Advisor is concerned that "without essential access to safe drinking water, the communities of the Myebon Township will be forced to use unsafe sources, which were contaminated in the wake of Cyclone Giri, increasing the risk of widespread disease outbreak."

Photo: Merlin



Malnutrition accounts for many deaths in mothers and children in Afghanistan.



## Afghanistan 100 tonnes of food to fight malnutrition

In June you helped us to launch a nutrition programme in Afghanistan to help tackle the appallingly high number of mother and child deaths in the country.

Your support enabled us to deliver 100 tonnes of nutrient-rich food to malnourished women and children in Kunduz and Badakhshan provinces.

A third of under-fives suffer from malnutrition in

Afghanistan, so your gifts are helping to make a real difference.

Ben Mascall, Afghanistan Country Director, said: "Based on our experience of tackling malnutrition in other Asian countries, Merlin health staff are working hard to ensure the same success is repeated here and we can save the lives of as many children and mothers as possible."

Photo: Merlin



Melvin, pictured with his mother, after Merlin helped him to get the treatment he needed for his broken arm.



## Central African Republic Delivering vital health care to refugees

In October, with your help Merlin responded to meet the health needs of 7,500 Congolese refugees that entered Central African Republic.

The refugees, many of whom are children, had been driven from their homes by fighting in the Dongo region of the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Maria Wangechi Maina, Merlin's Country Director in

CAR, said: "Merlin is acting fast to meet these challenges for the short, medium and long term. The people's needs won't go away, and neither will we."

Your donations meant we were able to swing into action immediately by setting up mobile clinics and running nutrition and immunisation programmes, as well as training birth attendants in the refugee population.

# Merlin in 2010

What you have made possible this year...

Photo: Merlin



Jean-Christophe with his mother, the first baby delivered at Gulod clinic.



## Philippines New clinic opens for typhoon hit community

After Typhoon Ketsana devastated much of the Philippines in 2009, Merlin was thrilled to open the only health clinic on Talim Island, in the Laguna de Bay area of Manila.

Thanks to you the Gulod clinic opened in July and treated 76 patients on its first day, with eight babies delivered successfully in the following days.

Jan Taversham, Merlin's Country Director in the Philippines, told us: "We are overjoyed to be opening this clinic. This was one of the hardest hit areas following the typhoon in 2009, so the arrival of Gulod clinic has been much anticipated by local people. We'd like to thank everyone back in the UK who is supporting our work - none of this would have been possible without you."

Photo: Merlin



Up to 90,000 refugees are in need of essential health care in DR Congo.



## DR Congo Merlin responds to mass displacement

August saw conflict flare up in the north-eastern Beni territory of DR Congo, forcing 90,000 people to flee their homes and livelihoods.

Kambale Kivasigha, Merlin's Emergency Medical Officer and a member of the Beni community himself, explained: "The living conditions of the displaced here are poor, with many living in the open air, in schools or in unfinished houses. And with little or no

access to clean water and sanitation facilities, they are exposed to potential illnesses and epidemics such as cholera, diarrhoea and fevers.

But your support means Merlin is working hard to avert further crisis by delivering emergency supplies of drugs and medical equipment to health centres in the area and cholera kits have been placed on standby in case of an outbreak.

# From ruins to recovery in Liberia

See how your support is helping Merlin to provide lasting health care in one of the world's toughest places.

Liberia



Before

Undaunted by the overwhelming challenge of a hospital in ruins, Merlin's team of medical experts started rehabilitating the hospital in 2004. The hospital is in Harper, Maryland County, which has a population of just over 17,000 people, many of whom suffered for years with little or no access to basic health care.



After

J.J. Dossen Hospital was officially reopened in 2006 and is now providing free health care for nearly a quarter of a million people in Harper and surrounding areas. Thanks to you Merlin is still there, supporting the hospital by providing equipment and medical supplies, as well as supervising and training health workers.



Five-month-old Sandra had been suffering from a high fever for days. Her mother, Jaytay, rushed Sandra to J.J. Dossen Hospital late at night when she started convulsing. Staff immediately spotted the symptoms of cerebral malaria, a severe and potentially fatal form of the disease. A test confirmed the diagnosis and Sandra was immediately given intravenous treatment. Within two days, her temperature had dropped but she was kept on the ward to ensure she made a full recovery. So far this year J.J. Dossen has helped 26,000 mothers just like Jaytay.



Merlin's Dr Alex Bolo is one of our medical experts who helped to train new health workers after the hospital reopened. "One of my most rewarding experiences was witnessing the remarkable recovery made by a teenage girl called Patricia. She arrived at the hospital after suffering from a painful and persistent cough. Tests confirmed my immediate suspicions that Patricia was suffering from tuberculosis (TB)," he told us. "After two months of TB treatment, Patricia improved and was discharged. She returned for regular follow-up visits to complete her course of medication. One day I noticed a smiling, healthy girl outside the hospital waving at me. I could hardly believe my eyes when I realised it was Patricia."

During the conflict many of Liberia's hospitals were looted for equipment and drugs. J.J. Dossen was no exception. Hospitals fell in to ruin and health workers, fearing their safety, deserted their posts and fled the country. At one point, only 12 doctors remained in Liberia, which has a population of 3.7 million. As a result, Liberia has some of the most shocking maternal death rates in the world.



The under-fives clinic is always popular at J.J. Dossen. The most common illnesses our doctors see are malaria, respiratory infections and diarrhoea. With access to skilled health workers, more children's lives can be saved.



← To combat malnutrition in children, Merlin is providing a calorie paste called Plumpy'nut to infants.

Photo: Jacqueline Koch

## Pakistan floods update

In July, we responded to the catastrophic floods in Pakistan. Merlin was already working in the area, providing medical relief in camps to internally displaced people. So within hours of the floods hitting, our medics were able to mobilise and treat those affected almost immediately.

Due to the sheer scale of the destruction, many villages in rural areas quickly became isolated after roads and bridges were swept away.

### Heroic health workers

Undaunted, and with backpacks bursting with medical supplies, Merlin health workers used whatever means necessary to reach people cut off to deliver emergency aid, sometimes walking miles on foot.

Your gifts are helping us to run 49 static health centres and 20 mobile clinics in the worst affected areas. Our teams are seeing 7,000 patients every day and we continue to train local people to become health workers to cope with the huge needs of those who require medical care.

As always, the response from our supporters was amazing, and we'd like to say a huge thank you to all of you who donated to our emergency appeal.



← Merlin doctors are providing treatment for outbreaks of acute watery diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases

Photo: Merlin

### Overcoming huge obstacles

#### Jacqueline Koch describes her time travelling with a mobile clinic.

Merlin's mobile health teams are reaching remote villages daily by foot, bringing medical care and 20kg of medicines which they've carried in their backpacks. Rain-drenched and a bit breathless, we finally reach a hillside village.

Dr. Majid, the team doctor, consults with over 200 patients over the course of the day. "We can treat patients as long as the medicines in our backpacks last," he says. At 27, the young doctor and his team will be covering considerable distances, across very demanding terrain, which is treacherous and contributing to the crisis.

"Yesterday a boy fell from a cliff. He was badly injured and once we gave him first aid, we had to get him to the hospital," says Dr. Majid. Backpacks empty, we head back to base. "We will start again tomorrow, fill the packs with as much as we can carry, and head to the villages."

# Merlin and the Royal Society of Medicine in Liberia

**Parveen Kumar, President of the Royal Society of Medicine recently visited Merlin's programme in Liberia. Here are some extracts from her fascinating blog.**

### Day One: And so to Liberia!

I met Carolyn Miller at Heathrow to catch a plane to Casablanca (no time to play it once, let alone again!). We caught our connection arriving around 2am local time.

We met the Minister of Health (a surgeon), the President – an amazing woman who has been President for four years or so and has made a huge difference to the country. We visited a Merlin Women and Child Health Clinic, run by committed Merlin charity workers. It was very depressing seeing an 11-year old girl having counselling for HIV and a pregnant girl who was only 13 years old. Much of it was rudimentary but making a significant difference.

### Day Two: We arrived safely in Buchanan

The hospital was very primitive and desperately needs help. There are only one or two doctors to provide care for 80 patients. The drug anaesthetic machine was provided by Merlin. We met with the Director of the county who told us that the area has the highest maternal mortality rate in Liberia.



Photo: Merlin

During her visit Parveen was shown Merlin's work at Buchanan Hospital.



### Day Three Farewell Liberia

We visited the Merlin clinic, but there were no patients as it was Sunday. They had a wonderful dedicated staff there. We interviewed the Merlin Country Director about malnutrition in children as they are all very small. I was surprised as the country is very fertile and lush, and there is enough rain. Apparently it is a lot about local superstitions and culture, for example: eggs are not given to children as they might become thieves.

We went to see the JF Kennedy training centre and hospital. Impressive – starting courses for radiography this time, and nursing, midwifery, physician's assistants.

It was an excellent, fascinating, packed three days – we managed to do a lot thanks to Merlin, who are regarded as saviours as they were here during the war. A very interesting insight into how a country is trying to get back on its feet after a really devastating, bloody civil war.

Best Wishes  
**Parveen**

To read the full version of Parveen's blog visit:  
<http://parveenkumar-rsmpresident.blogspot.com>

To find out more about the Royal Society of Medicine or to become an affiliate visit: [www.rsm.ac.uk](http://www.rsm.ac.uk)

Forging a better future

## Giving the gift of a lifetime

Every year Merlin helps people caught up in disaster zones and emergencies. Our teams respond immediately in the face of great danger to save lives during times of crisis. As you know we are also committed to staying for as long as it takes, and we never leave until our work is done.

Your support makes all this possible, but we also rely on the generous contributions people make to Merlin in their wills. By leaving a gift to Merlin you are leaving a lasting legacy of improved health to millions of people. It couldn't be simpler, whether you are making a new will or changing an existing one, our guide will help you along every step of the way.

A gift to Merlin could help us be ready whenever and wherever the next humanitarian emergency strikes. It could help us to train local people in Haiti to become health workers and serve their communities for generations to come. It could even help to rebuild a health centre in a remote village in DR Congo.

Please do think about including Merlin in your will and make the difference of a lifetime. If you would like some more information or a copy of our guide then just complete the form and send it to us in the freepost envelope provided.

**Thank you.**

Registered charity 1016607



Photo: Kate Holt

*By leaving a gift to Merlin you are leaving a lasting legacy of improved health to millions of people.*



Photo: Merlin

Please send me a copy of the *Merlin Legacy* guide

Name	_____
Address	_____
	_____
	Postcode _____
Tel	_____
Email	_____

Please complete this form and return in the freepost envelope provided or send to: Merlin, FREEPOST RL2E EGYW JAGH, 12th Floor, 207 Old Street, London, EC1V 9NR. (No stamp required).