

January 2007

# RESPONSE

The newsletter for Merlin supporters



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## From the Chief Executive

People tell me that they admire Merlin because we continue working in places devastated by wars or natural disasters long after the cameras have gone. In many situations though, our teams are working in places that cameras can't even reach.

Throughout the three-year conflict that has raged in the Darfur region of Sudan, innocent civilians have borne the brunt of the hostilities. Not surprisingly, the world's media is usually unable to get to the places where this is happening. Merlin is providing medical help for some of the two million people in Darfur who have fled their homes in fear of their lives. In doing this, our staff are sometimes among the first to respond to the casualties of conflict.

In the worst of situations, our teams stand by people at their most vulnerable and in times of greatest need. And while solutions to conflicts like this can seem intractable, the presence of Merlin and other aid organisations can sometimes be the only thing that prevents violence from spiralling out of control.

In this newsletter you can read about what we are doing to help people in Darfur, as well as in other 'inaccessible' places like southern Ethiopia, where we reached people affected by floods that the rest of the world had all but ignored.

*Carolyn Miller* Carolyn Miller, Chief Executive

## The frontline fight for health

Jonathan Pearce follows Merlin's mobile teams reaching refugees in the Darfur region of Sudan.

At 9am sharp, our convoy pulls away from Merlin's base in Nyala, South Darfur. The landscape for hundreds of miles around is marked by burnt out villages and sprawling camps set up for people made homeless by the Darfur conflict.

Our destination lies several hours further on, in Shearia district. Since 2004 Merlin has been the sole source of medical help to about 50,000 people in this area. After half an hour we pass through a checkpoint. We're now in rebel-controlled territory. Here there are no hospitals and no organised medical services apart from those provided by Merlin.

There have been few security incidents in the past few days, but even so, the going is tough. The summer rains have come and our route takes us through swollen riverbeds. On several occasions we have to dig our vehicles out of the mud and it's noon before we reach Hijer camp.

About 12,000 people live in Hijer; the vast majority fled homes and villages in other parts of Darfur when they were attacked by the notorious Janjaweed militia. Their new homes are small straw structures covered with sheets of blue plastic.

The rains have delayed us and so the team waste no time getting to work. A year ago Merlin established a simple health post here. Around 100 women have been waiting all morning with their children under the shade of a tree. Within minutes, the clinic is full. In every room, doctors and nurses are checking the blood pressure

of pregnant women, recording the weight of young children or giving vaccinations against measles. Nurse Pascal Tshifende examines two-year-old Muscat. "She has malaria. It's the fifth case I've seen today," he says. "At least she's not dehydrated, so it's not at a critical stage. I can treat her with anti-malarial tablets."



Flooded rivers are one of many obstacles the team have to overcome.



Patients queuing to register at one of Merlin's mobile clinics.



One-year-old Yussef Barhet has his weight checked.

All the people I speak to at the clinic have a similar story to tell. "I came here from Omdjukan, near the border with Chad," explains Zahara. "One man was killed when our village was attacked, then we all left. It took us three days to get here by donkey."

Pascal looks concerned as he examines Zahara's two-year-old son Hassan. "This child is very sick," he explains. "He's severely malnourished and dehydrated. We must get him to the hospital in Nyala."

By 2pm, it's time to leave. We have to allow at least three hours to get back, and can't risk being on the road after 5pm. There hasn't been time to see all the patients, but the team will return within a week.

Hassan Mohammad (left) with his mother Zahara and his elder brother at Nyala hospital.



At the hospital, Hassan is admitted to a special recovery unit. I ask about a family I met the day before. Their youngest son was brought in from another mobile clinic. Without pausing from his duties, a doctor tells me they've left. "The child had pneumonia. He didn't make it."

The news hit me hard and made it clear just how finely balanced the lives of people in this region are. Nik Rilkooff, who heads up Merlin's project, explains the situation succinctly: "It's children who are the most at risk in this conflict. Once they are weakened by poor food, they become very vulnerable to illnesses such as malaria and diarrhoea."

Four days later, as I prepared to leave Darfur, I heard that Hassan had recovered enough to be able to return home. Without the presence of Merlin at Hijer, he could easily have become just another terrible statistic.

**Merlin Darfur - 2006**

- Mobile medical teams: 5
- Permanent clinics: 6
- Number of staff: 260
- Major health concerns: malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea, malnutrition
- People treated: 150,000

## Eyewitness account: Ethiopia floods

Project Medical Co-ordinator Rachael Cummings sent us this report last month from the West Imey region of Ethiopia, where Merlin was responding to disease outbreaks following severe flooding:



In October, the West Imey region of Ethiopia was severely affected by flooding. Merlin was the only aid agency working in this remote and neglected area, running mobile clinics and supporting existing health facilities. With no access to clean water, people were drinking stagnant ground water after the floods. We soon received reports of an outbreak of acute watery diarrhoea.

Following rapid assessments of villages nearby, Merlin set up a treatment centre near West Imey town. A second clinic was established two weeks later in Souffe village where there had been another outbreak. In the first month alone, we treated more than 150 cases.

This afternoon at the West Imey clinic, I met Halin Abdi, who arrived last night with her one-year-old daughter Souda. The baby started having acute diarrhoea yesterday. On admission, Souda was found to be severely dehydrated, barely conscious and unable to drink. Our team gave her intravenous fluids and antibiotics immediately. When I met her, Souda was already responding well to treatment. Mrs Abdi was very relieved and thanked Merlin for saving her daughter's life.

Early detection and treatment of acute diarrhoea is crucial – dehydration is the killer and it kills very quickly. That's why Merlin has also been training health workers and community members in how to make rehydration solutions, and raising awareness of how to prevent diarrhoea by maintaining good hygiene. Our main battle is with the weather – our cars get stuck in mud almost every day. There has been no rain for the last three days. I just hope it stays that way so we can get to more remote places that have been affected.



Halin Abdi and her one-year-old daughter, Souda, who was treated for acute diarrhoea at Merlin's clinic in West Imey, Ethiopia.

## Survivors' Stories: Shahid



In October 2005, Shahid was evacuated by helicopter to a hospital in Islamabad for treatment after the Pakistan earthquake.

One year after the devastating earthquake which killed more than 70,000 people in Pakistan, five-year-old Shahid still bears visible scars on his head. When the disaster struck on October 8, 2005, the child's home in Panjkot collapsed, killing his mother. Miraculously, Shahid was pulled out alive from the rubble after being trapped for three days. He was barely conscious and had severe injuries to his head and left leg.

The local health clinic, like virtually every building in Panjkot, was destroyed by the quake. Shahid was unable to get proper medical treatment until Merlin's team arrived to set up a tented clinic two weeks later. By that time, the boy's wounds had started to become infected. A doctor immediately cleaned his wounds and gave him painkillers and antibiotics. Shahid also needed nine stitches on his head. Hours later, he was evacuated by helicopter to a hospital in Islamabad, accompanied by his father.

After one month in hospital, Shahid returned home and continued to visit Merlin's clinic for regular check-ups. Today, the boy lives with his father in a temporary shelter and has returned to school. "He has made a good recovery and is lucky to be alive," says Merlin doctor Ahreema Hashmi.

The Panjkot clinic is one of five temporary facilities established by Merlin in the remote Neelum Valley after the earthquake. Merlin's teams are still there today, providing vital health care for approximately 10,000 patients every month.



One year on from the earthquake, five-year-old Shahid has recovered well and is now back at school.

## Natasha Kaplinsky reports on Kenya drought

BBC newsreader and Merlin Patron Natasha Kaplinsky travelled to Kenya in July 2006 to see how Merlin was helping the drought-affected communities of Wajir:

Since I visited the Democratic Republic of Congo two years ago, I was keen to make another field trip to see Merlin's efforts first-hand. I chose Kenya – the backdrop of some of my happiest childhood memories. The Kenya I visited this time, however, was a very different one.

We headed for the north-eastern district of Wajir, on the border with Somalia. The region has been badly affected by recurrent drought. Wajir is home to pastoralist communities that rely entirely on their livestock. Now, with up to 80 per cent of their herds dead, livelihoods have been destroyed, and widespread malnutrition has resulted from chronic food and water shortages.



Natasha Kaplinsky meets a pastoralist community in Wajir. Photo: Justin Bower.

It was a short visit, and because we were also filming a report for BBC News 24, we had a lot to see and capture. As we drove for many miles along hot, dusty tracks, I wondered how anyone could live in such a harsh environment. But for the pastoralists of Wajir, this is home, and the drought has made their daily struggle even harder. In some areas, 30 per cent of the children are malnourished. Thankfully, Merlin is there offering vital medical care, while at the same time, providing training that will have a long-term impact.

We visited a 'stabilisation centre' supported by Merlin at Wajir District Hospital, which provides specialist treatment and constant monitoring for severely malnourished children. One patient who will always stay in my mind was a girl called Fahriya. She was eight years old but weighed just two stone. With Merlin's feeding programmes now established in several villages around Wajir, many children are identified and successfully treated in the early stages of malnutrition, so fewer cases arrive at hospital in such a fragile condition.

It was a privilege to see Merlin helping to save so many lives. It reinforced my commitment as a Patron, making me even more zealous in my desire to tell people what an enormous difference a small donation to Merlin can make.



Two-year-old Barkvaka has recovered well after being treated for severe malnutrition at Wajir District Hospital. Photo: Justin Bower.

## British Minister visits Merlin in Turkana

David Miliband, the UK Environment Secretary, recently visited Merlin's specialist treatment centre for malnourished children in Turkana, northern Kenya.

The British Minister, who was in Kenya to attend the United Nations conference on climate change in November 2006, saw how severe drought had led to widespread malnutrition among the region's pastoralist communities.

Merlin staff showed Mr Miliband how children are weighed and measured to assess their level of malnutrition, and explained how they are treated. Among the patients he met was a four-year-old boy who had severe malnutrition and tuberculosis. Thanks to the specialist care he was receiving, the child's condition was improving.



A boy eating Plumpy Nut, a fortified peanut paste given to malnourished children at Lodwar Hospital in Turkana. Photo: Andy Aitchison.

## HIV crisis in Kenya's fishing communities

Ringiti Island, an isolated settlement in western Kenya, is at the heart of Lake Victoria's lucrative fishing trade and a main export point for the highly prized Nile perch. The island's population has mushroomed to 6,400 in just one decade. It is also a vivid example of how public health can spiral out of control.

While fishermen here reap considerable wealth from the lake, poverty has forced many women to trade sex for fish to feed their families. The widespread practice, known as "jaboya", is often the only means women have to support themselves and their families.

In terms of health care and sanitation, the community is **desperately** impoverished. The lake is the only source for drinking water, but also the only means of waste disposal: for humans, animals and the fishing industry. Such poor sanitation conditions inevitably lead to severe health problems, and there is no permanent health centre on the island. The HIV epidemic has also taken a drastic toll. From April to October last year, more than 350 islanders were voluntarily tested and 42 per cent of them were found to be HIV positive.

"The local health authorities told us Ringiti was in great need of rapid intervention," says Emma Llewellyn, Merlin's project coordinator. In March 2006, Merlin launched a vigorous HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programme, together with mobile clinics, in eight fishing communities including Ringiti Island. Working with the Ministry of Health and other organisations, Merlin's mobile clinics see approximately 2,500 patients every month.

Merlin nurse Rose Igwora travels for five hours to reach Ringiti Island. After setting up the mobile clinic, she reviews a prescription for Grace Otieno, an HIV-positive patient on anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs).

"We supplement ARVs with other medicines, antibiotics and vitamins," Rose explains. Opportunistic infections are especially common for patients with a weakened immune system and can be life-threatening.

### HIV in Kenya

- ⊕ An estimated 1.2 million people in Kenya are living with HIV
- ⊕ More than 1.6 million Kenyan children have been orphaned as a result of AIDS
- ⊕ HIV prevalence in Nyanza Province where Merlin works is estimated at 15%
- ⊕ On Ringiti Island, 42% of people getting tested voluntarily were found to be HIV positive
- ⊕ Women aged 15 to 24 are twice as likely to test positive than men of the same age



Many fishermen on Ringiti Island are trading fish for sex with local women - a widespread practice known as "jaboya".

### "Now I have the strength to go back to work. Before, I was too tired."

Grace Otieno, 36, has been attending the mobile clinic since August, when she tested positive for HIV. "I come here every two weeks to get my medication and I've had my four children tested," she says. To her relief, all of Grace's children tested negative.

Grace, who works on a vegetable stall, says the health care she has received has made a dramatic difference. "Now I have the strength to go back to work. Before, I was too tired."

As well as supporting voluntary HIV counselling and testing services, Merlin links pregnant women to a programme to ensure that HIV-positive mothers do not pass the virus to their newborns. To help HIV patients who are too ill to leave their homes, Merlin has also trained 34 health workers in home-based care.

A vigorous education campaign is at the heart of the programme. The local youth group has been trained to deliver life-saving messages through drama and songs, and always draws large audiences. Paul Awange, who performs with the group, says the sight of so many islanders turning up for HIV testing is a clear sign of success. He adds, "I don't just think that people are changing their behaviour, I know they are!"



HIV-positive patient Grace Otieno receives treatment at Merlin's mobile clinic every two weeks.

## TSUNAMI

### Two years on, the work goes on

The devastating tsunami on Boxing Day 2004 prompted Merlin to launch its largest ever emergency response. Two years on, Merlin is still at work rebuilding hospitals and clinics, and implementing a widespread programme of medical training.

"Our biggest challenge has been in Aceh in Indonesia, where the tsunami destroyed whole towns," explains Carolyn Miller, Merlin's Chief Executive. "In the past two years, we have rebuilt or restored 82 health facilities there. Although this is a tremendous achievement, we still have a great deal more to do. Over the coming year, we will be making sure these sites are fully equipped and that staff get the training they need to deliver the best possible health care."

In Sri Lanka, two new hospitals have recently been completed to replace buildings destroyed by the waves, and more than 1,400 medical staff have been trained. Merlin's achievements there have been made in the face of worsening conflict in the north and east of the country.

Other parts of Asia were not as badly hit by the disaster, but Merlin's supporters have helped to kick-start drastically needed health care improvements in two of the world's most neglected countries. In the impoverished Aye-Yar-Waddy region of Myanmar where some 2,000 people were displaced, Merlin has been restoring water supplies and improving rural clinics. In Somalia, where more than 150 people were killed, Merlin is helping to combat diseases such as malaria, measles and meningitis.



Nurse Siti Syadah has been trained in pharmacy management and is now working at a new health centre built by Merlin in Aceh Jaya, Indonesia.



A mother and her baby wait to be seen at Merlin's mobile clinic in Pho Na Ko, in the tsunami-affected region of Aye-Yar-Waddy in Myanmar.

## Saving mothers' lives



Fauzia, one of 21 midwives trained by Merlin in Afghanistan last year, now works at Farkhar Hospital.

Fauzia is among the first 21 women who have completed Merlin's midwifery training programme in Takhar Province, northern Afghanistan. She now works at the hospital in her home town of Farkhar. In a country where every woman faces a one in six chance of dying in pregnancy during her lifetime, Fauzia has brought life-saving skills to her community.

As a mother of three, Fauzia knows first-hand the difficulties that pregnant women face. One of the main problems, especially in rural areas, is the chronic shortage of midwives. Fauzia recalls the trauma she experienced during her first pregnancy when she was seriously ill with high blood pressure. At the time, there were no midwives at Farkhar Hospital, so Fauzia was forced to walk for two days to get treatment in another town.

When Merlin was recruiting its first students in 2004, Fauzia was eager to apply. "I wanted to become a midwife to help other women, so that they would not have to experience the same difficulties that I did," explains Fauzia. With the full support of her family, she underwent the intensive 18-month course at the new training centre established by Merlin in Taloqan.

Since May 2006, Fauzia has assisted more than 65 deliveries at Farkhar Hospital. She says that women are increasingly choosing to give birth at the hospital, rather than having a traditional home birth. "I am so happy to have qualified as a midwife, so that I can help to prevent women from dying unnecessarily," she adds.

Addie Koster, who manages Merlin's project and is now supervising a new batch of students, says midwives are crucial to reducing maternal death rates. She adds, "There is still a long way to go, but with the introduction of training programmes like this across Afghanistan, women's chances of survival are greatly improved."

# Lifeline

July 2006 - January 2007

Merlin's programmes are funded by a wide range of government agencies, UN departments, trusts and foundations, corporate partners and individual supporters. This overview describes Merlin's key ongoing activities and major new projects confirmed in 16 countries between July 2006 and January 2007.

## AFGHANISTAN

USAID continues to fund the Taloqan Community Midwifery School, which has begun its second training course for 22 student midwives. Merlin is also supervising the first students who graduated last year and are now working in clinics across Takhar province. USAID also continues to support health services for 321,000 people in three districts of Badakhshan province, where Merlin has recently established a maternal health care team and conducted an outreach vaccination campaign.

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

UNICEF is supporting a new vaccination campaign in Maniema and a project to supply clean water and sanitation facilities in North Kivu. An 18-month project providing free health care for a target population of 373,000 people in North Kivu has begun, funded by DFID.

## ETHIOPIA

In December, Merlin completed two OFDA-funded projects which have established clean water supplies for 10,000 people in Bale Zone. In West Arsi Zone, OCHA is supporting Merlin's response to acute diarrhoea outbreaks.

## GEORGIA

In the Kakheti region, Merlin is renovating 36 primary health care clinics as part of an EU-funded programme. A tuberculosis management programme funded by JOA has been completed, helping the combined population of 724,000 people in Kakheti and Shida Kartli.

## INDONESIA

Daily Telegraph and DEC appeal funds have enabled Merlin to strengthen health services in the tsunami-devastated province of Aceh. By the end of 2006, Merlin had rebuilt or renovated 82 health facilities, trained 548 health workers and distributed more than 170,000 mosquito nets to help prevent malaria.

## IVORY COAST

The EU has granted Merlin a further 1.5 million Euros for the rehabilitation of pharmacies, health facilities and schools in the towns of Korhogo and Odienne in the northern rebel-held region of Ivory Coast.

## KENYA

Emergency nutrition programmes funded by DFID are ongoing in the drought-affected districts of Wajir and Turkana in northern

Kenya. In the western Nyanza Province, Merlin has completed a six-year malaria control programme, funded by the Finnish government. HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (TB) control activities funded by Constella Futures have also been completed. A report on this programme will be used to inform national policy on HIV/AIDS and TB.

## LIBERIA

In July 2006, Merlin started supporting the Martha Tubman Memorial Hospital in Zwedru, with funding from BIJZA, OFDA and Irish Aid continue to support clinics in Grand Gedeh and Grand Bassa counties respectively. Meanwhile, DFID and ECHO continue to support hospitals in Harper and Buchanan, serving a combined population of 746,000. A reproductive health programme funded by Stichting Vluchteling is ongoing.



## MYANMAR

DEC funding has enabled Merlin to train community workers in all 554 villages of the tsunami-affected Laputta Township. Through the diagnosis, treatment and referral services of these health workers, more than 350,000 people now have access to primary health care.

## NEPAL

Merlin has been working in the conflict-affected region of Pyuthan, focusing on maternal and child health care. With ECHO funding, Merlin has completed four mobile medical camps in remote villages, treating 9,800 patients in total. Merlin has also trained 50 public health workers, and has started constructing four rural health facilities. Equipment has been provided to improve care for newborn babies at Pyuthan District Hospital.

Continued

## PAKISTAN

Since July, Merlin has been providing health care to an estimated 30,000 earthquake survivors living in temporary camps in Muzaffarabad, with funding from ECHO and DFID. In response to an outbreak of acute diarrhoea, a specialist treatment centre was established for three months from July. In collaboration with other NGOs and the Ministry of Health, Merlin treated 494 cases and sprayed camps with chlorine to help prevent further outbreaks.

## PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Working with the Ministry of Health, two mobile medical teams funded by ECHO are providing specialist paediatric and gynaecology services to a population of more than 106,000 in Qalqilya and Salfit districts. The Clothworkers' Foundation supported Merlin's assessment of crucial health needs in Gaza in response to the worsening humanitarian situation in July 2006. Merlin is now providing equipment for hospitals in the Gaza Strip, and increasing the capacity of Gaza City's central blood bank, with ECHO funding.

## SOMALIA

Merlin is working on the second year of Global Fund-supported programmes which aim to reduce HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis rates in the Puntland region. A Global Fund malaria control project is ongoing.

## SRI LANKA

DEC and Daily Telegraph funds have helped Merlin to reconstruct and equip three Ministry of Health hospitals on the east coast, to replace facilities that were destroyed by the tsunami. Merlin has continued to support 140 schools with mobile dental clinics and provided health education for children. In addition, 2,400 patients received treatment in camps for displaced people in Katala during an emergency intervention by Merlin.



## SUDAN

In Darfur, ECHO, CHF and OFDA are continuing to support mobile clinics for people affected by the conflict. The DEC is funding improvements to permanent clinic buildings, and The Band Aid Trust has provided ambulances to help to transport seriously ill patients to the state hospital in South Darfur. In South Sudan, Merlin is now in its third year of support for Boma hospital and two clinics in Pibor county, funded by DFID. MDG Architects, a Merlin corporate supporter, donated money to the operating theatre at Boma hospital instead of sending Christmas cards to their clients. In January 2007, Merlin launched a new HIV/AIDS control programme in Magwi and Pibor counties, in partnership with IntraHealth International and CDC.

## TAJIKISTAN

ECHO and the Japanese Embassy continue to fund an infectious disease control programme in Khatlon and Rasht Valley Provinces, while JOA is funding the rehabilitation of an infectious disease hospital in Khatlon. Supported by UNFAO, Merlin is helping the local authorities and farmers to control brucellosis – a disease that is spread to humans from infected animals.

On behalf of the beneficiaries of all our programmes, we would like to thank all those who have supported our work. Unfortunately, due to limited space, not all of our donors can be listed.

The Band Aid Trust  
 BUZA (Buitenlandse Zaken - Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs)  
 CDC (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)  
 CHF  
 The Clothworkers' Foundation  
 Constella Futures  
 Daily Telegraph Appeal  
 DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee)  
 DFID (UK's Department for International Development)  
 ECHO (European Commission's Humanitarian Office)  
 EU (European Union)  
 Global Fund  
 IntraHealth International  
 Irish Aid  
 Japanese Embassy in Tajikistan  
 JOA (Jersey Overseas Aid)  
 MDG Architects  
 OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)  
 OFDA (The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance)  
 Stichting Vluchteling (Netherlands Refugee Foundation)  
 UNFAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation)  
 UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund)  
 USAID (United States Agency for International Development)

OO RESPONSE JANUARY '07

## Bicycles in Beijing



Liz Hickson, a private equity marketing manager, describes why she took part in a cycling challenge to raise funds for Merlin:

My relationship with Merlin began in 2004 after a trip to Rwanda, where I had been distressed by stories of genocide. On the flight home, I picked up a magazine which contained

an article about Merlin. I was so impressed by the story that I vowed to donate to Merlin in the future.

Eager to see a new part of the world, I decided to join a cycling tour of China in September 2006, and to raise funds for Merlin through sponsorship.

The challenge involved cycling 250 miles in five days throughout Beijing Province. I was with 18 other like-minded individuals – people who were all interested in raising money for a good cause, seeing a new part of the world, while doing something that we all enjoyed.

As a keen cyclist, I did not need to spend much time on training. By setting up a personal page on [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com), I managed to raise £1,000 with help from my employer, friends and family.

Cycle challenges are an excellent way to raise awareness and money for Merlin, and I would definitely do it again!

## Team Merlin

'Team Merlin', a new corporate fundraising initiative, was launched in October 2006.

As part of Team Merlin, companies make a commitment to support Merlin with a gift of at least £25,000 per year for a minimum of three years.

The initiative was promoted by Merlin's Ambassadors, who invited about 300 of their colleagues and friends to a sponsored reception at the Art London fair to hear more about Merlin's work.

Merlin was chosen as the charity partner for Art London, thanks to photographer Carlos Ortiz-Patiño, who generously donated £5,000 from the sales of his prints to Merlin.

If you know a company that may be interested in joining Team Merlin, please contact Charley Stone on 020 7014 1706 or [charley.stone@merlin.org.uk](mailto:charley.stone@merlin.org.uk).

Carlos Ortiz-Patiño's exhibition at Art London raised £5,000 for Merlin. Photo: Jeff Twiss



### Cover image:

A young boy has the circumference of his arm measured by Merlin's medical team in Wajir, northern Kenya, as part of the malnutrition screening procedure. In 2006, Merlin treated more than 1,800 malnourished children in Wajir district. Photo: Justin Bower.

Designed by Wheelhousecreative.co.uk

## Turning crumbs into funds

Since last summer, Elizabeth Walker has been spreading the word and raising funds for Merlin in the south of England. Here, she explains how she does it:



As Chairman of the Inner Wheel, District 11 Overseas Service, I have to select a charity each year for our clubs in Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire, and the Channel Islands. I chose Merlin as I was impressed by its very 'hands on' approach immediately after the tsunami disaster. Since then I have seen and heard various reports about their work in the media. Not many of my members knew about Merlin and I was keen to raise its profile.

We hold an Overseas Rally in Bournemouth every November, when a speaker from the chosen charity addresses some 300 ladies and fires them with enthusiasm to do what they can to raise funds in their own Clubs. I've already spoken about Merlin at a Coffee Morning which raised over £200 with a cake stall, book stall and raffle. Other Clubs have held lunches or teas with speakers on a variety of subjects. We'll continue running events until July 2007, during which time I hope our grand total will keep steadily rising.



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.

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