

Newsletter

Issue 9, Spring 2012

From the Executive Director

MERLIN

Dear Friend,

World Health Day took place in April and I find myself reflecting on all the work Merlin does around the world. With your help we bring medical supplies and treatment to literally millions of women, men, and children. We support local doctors and nurses by providing training and equipment, and in many countries Merlin works to build health care infrastructure where very little had previously existed.

As always, Merlin continues to provide desperately needed emergency care in countries experiencing crisis. In the past months Tropical Storm, Washi, has devastated areas of the Philippines. And in South Sudan, sectarian violence has left thousands of internal refugees living with the threat of waterborne diseases and suffering from exposure. Of course, we continue to bring relief services to Haiti and Pakistan, all while working to address the needs of famine victims in East Africa and now with West Africa too.



But Merlin is about much more than disaster relief. We are committed to building sustainable health care systems that meet real, long-term, local needs.

There are a number of highlights in our current newsletter: I'm excited to announce that the Packard Foundation has recognized our efforts with a grant to improve the health status of women and families by ensuring access to and availability of health services in Pakistan.

High-school student, Isabel Handanos, inspired by Merlin's work with women, worked to raise money in Maine for our midwife program in Liberia. Additionally, along with our strong donor support, Merlin continues to attract corporate sponsors for our programs. These businesses recognize Merlin's success as a model of efficiency and effectiveness. In fact, I am very proud to say that Global Journal has just ranked Merlin as one of the top 100 Non Governmental Organizations in the world.

Our successes, the commitment of our volunteers, the generosity of our donors, and the dedication of our hardworking staff continues to be an inspiration.

All the best,

Theresa Pike Rhodes
Executive Director

MERLIN—THE BASICS

- ➔ 99% of Merlin's 6,000 staff members work in the field in 16 countries.
- ➔ Each year over 10 million people have access to Merlin's services.
- ➔ Merlin spends 90 cents of every \$1 on our program work.
- ➔ Over the next five years, Merlin will focus on access to primary health care, reproductive and child health services, disease control, nutrition and health system strengthening.

IN THE NEWS

Merlin Recognized as One of the Best

The Global Journal has just ranked Merlin as one of the top 100 NGOs worldwide. Coming in at number 25, we are right up there with Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the World Wildlife Fund.

The Global Journal made its choices based on impact, innovation, transparency, accountability, and efficiency. It also noted how Merlin works directly with health ministries, local health care staff, and partners with other NGOs to build health care capacity that lasts.

Merlin has now worked in over 40 countries. We were on the ground after the earthquake in Haiti, the flooding in Pakistan, the genocide in Rwanda, and the famine in East Africa. We work hard to save lives, and as the Global Journal says, "Merlin can be distinguished for one simple reason - it stays to help re-build health infrastructures and it stays for as long as this takes."

NYSE Euronext hosts Merlin dinner by Sarah Kennedy

The New York Stock Exchange proved an appropriate venue for Merlin's dinner on March 14th. New contacts were made and information exchanged as our guests listened to a presentation by Maria Wangechi, Country Director for Central African Republic (CAR). Maria explained how the CAR Merlin team is working to improve health conditions in the most remote regions of this isolated country. With all but one border too dangerous to cross, getting supplies in and out of CAR is a precarious business. We saw photographs and heard stories about some of the people who have benefited from Merlin's work so far, a program that relies heavily on local engagement and assistance.



Maria Wangechi, Country Director for Central African Republic with George Cox, Chair Merlin USA

Merlin's directors, Sir George Cox, Jack Tai, Helen Mumford Sole and Jim Brooks hosted our dinner and we were glad to welcome Charles Nelson, Director of International Programs for Merlin, and Carolyn Miller, Chief Executive to New York. Our evening kicked off with some magnificent singing by Alison Harding (soprano) who lent a simple beauty to proceedings, reminding everyone present of the good fortune that comes with good health.

THE SOCIAL SCENE

Artists' Reflection of Strong Women

By Sarah Kennedy

Merlin Board Members, Helen and Peter Sole, opened their landmark Chelsea home in December 2011 for a Merlin evening devoted to 'Strong Women.' Artists of all nationalities performed poetry, songs, playlets, readings and even a touch of rap; all orchestrated with brilliance by actors Nicole Ansari and Eve Best.



King Aswad performing Kate Bush's 'Woman's Work'

The Sole's house once belonged to groundbreaking artist, Howard Wise, widely recognized as the father of video and kinetic art. A few of his pieces still remain in the house, and against this incredible backdrop, friends of Merlin gathered for a truly joyous and thought-provoking evening. Eve Best, British star of Showtimes' 'Nurse Jackie', stood as master of ceremonies, introducing several cast members from the series.

Arjun Gupta rapped a version of 'The quality of mercy is not strained' from the Merchant of Venice, cleverly weaving in Merlin facts such as '18 people per minute are seen by a Merlin health worker somewhere in the world' and that 'in 2010, Merlin treated 9.5 million people'. Nurse Jackie herself, Edie Falco, wowed guests with her version of Cabaret alongside

co-star 'Thor', Steve Wallem. A performance of Puccini's Vissi d'arte by opera star, Alison Harding, was a great treat, as was a delightful rendition of Je ne Regrette Rien by accordion player and singer, Mira Stroika. Brian Cox and Lynn Cohen performed a classic scene from Shakespeare's 'Taming of the Shrew'.

All of the performances from our entertainers and artists, including Yibin Li, Elizabeth Alexander, Janel Maloney, Nicole Ansari, Saidah Arrika Ekulona, Liz Brixius, King Aswad and Benjamin Healy were received with great applause. Actor, author and lecturer, Anna Deavere Smith's reading of 'Don't Leave Them in the Dark', an essay by Trudy Howell, Director of the Chance Orphanage in Johannesburg, brought Merlin's 'Strong Women' evening to a brilliant close.

PROFILE - Isabel Handanos Takes Action

Isabel Handanos, a high-school sophomore in Maine, learned of Merlin when she worked on a class project and competed for funding along with five others. (It's worth noting that four out of the six projects were concerned with health.)

Though she didn't win, Isabel was inspired by Merlin's work with midwives, and the stories of Liberian women who helped end that country's civil war. Isabel says, "Women are the backbone of society. Women are strong. I believe that saving lives starts with making changes at the very beginning, and improved maternal health helps reduce infant mortality and empowers women."

Isabel set out to support Merlin's efforts to improve maternal health. She raised a total of \$500 dollars from family and friends specifically for Merlin's Midwife program. She describes her efforts by saying, "It's been a life-changing event that taught me I can actually make a difference in this world." Together with Isabel and other committed members of the global community, Merlin will continue to work to better women's health.

MERLIN AND ITS PARTNERS

Packard Foundation and Merlin Provide Health Care to Women

The Packard Foundation has recognized Merlin's work with a grant to improve reproductive health care in Pakistan. The contribution, roughly 25% of the project's funding, will allow Merlin to expand services in 32 communities in Sindh Province, and will focus on developing reproductive health care systems and improving the health of women and families throughout the region.

Merlin has provided emergency relief in three Pakistani provinces where natural disasters and violent political conflict have impacted nearly nine million people. But in a country where roughly 25,000 women die every year from the complications of pregnancy and childbirth, Merlin has long recognized the need for expanded services so that women can receive skilled care and have a safe place to deliver their babies.

In Pakistan, roughly five million women become pregnant every year, and nearly twenty percent of them will experience related complications or life-threatening situations. During the 22 months from January 2011 to the end of 2013, Merlin will implement programs with over 300 of Pakistan's Lady Health Workers to provide an integrated health care model based on community programming.

In today's world there is no excuse for substandard health care for women and children. And with the Packard Foundation's help, Merlin remains dedicated to the fight against maternal mortality.

Merlin believes that an integrated approach to health care is essential for success. We hope that a sustainable model will transfer to other areas in the country. Merlin will:

- Develop the skills and capacity of local health care providers.
- Work with Ministries, local officials and other groups to create long lasting family planning projects.
- Re-vitalize the community-based network of Lady Health Workers and integrate them into a sustainable health system.
- Improved data collection, analysis and interpretation for future decision-making.



Screening a child for malnutrition in Badin, Pakistan

ON THE GROUND UPDATES

All Mothers Matter

Merlin's Midwife Program has had a dramatic impact on the many communities in Africa, Asia and the Americas challenged by extreme poverty, natural disaster, or war.

More women die during childbirth in Afghanistan than in any other place on the planet. In the province of Badakhshan, women once had to walk 20 days to see a midwife. Merlin knew it could do better. Over the last ten years we have established 25 mobile teams, accompanied by a birth attendant, who travel by foot or donkey into the rugged and remote landscape to provide essential health care. Additionally, Merlin has established two midwife schools, which have already trained 224 new midwives and there are now more applications to the training program than there are places in the school.

Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Merlin responded with emergency care for thousands of men, women, and children. Today, Merlin continues to treat 68,000 people and works to provide health care in difficult circumstances. In the Canaan refugee camp outside Port-au-Prince



Midwifery students at Zwedru training school, Liberia

(Haiti's largest camp for internally displaced persons), 50,000 refugees still live without government services. Fortunately, Merlin's mobile clinic is there to provide care. Corneille Jean Luny, a Merlin midwife, works out of the converted American school bus, and conducts between 50-70 consultations each day. She provides pre-natal consultations, breast-feeding advice, hygiene kits, nutritional supplements, family planning information, and comfort to pregnant women throughout the camp. Luny has seen firsthand how the education of women brings strength and equality to family households.

A beautiful land in west Africa, Liberia has suffered through two civil wars in the past 30 years. Extreme poverty continues to impact the health of Liberian women and children. Working at Merlin's midwife training school,

Zeena Abdalla Ramadhan passionately advocates for women's health. For most of her adult life, Mama Zeena has worked as a midwife throughout Africa. In refugee camps and local clinics she has seen how women benefit from effective health care. As she says, "If a mother has access to a trained midwife, a mother should not have to die, a woman should not lose her baby." Liberia's rate of maternal mortality remains one of the highest in the world. But together with dedicated professionals like Mama Zeena, Merlin is working to provide badly needed supplies and build health care infrastructure to support mothers and their young children.

Merlin remains committed to the health care needs of women. Around the world, maternal mortality remains high, but thanks to Merlin's efforts, more women and their children get the health care they need and the future they deserve.

South Sudan New Country, Old Challenges

As part of the negotiated peace to end Sudan's long-running civil war, South Sudan became an independent country in July 2011. The new country faces a challenging future.



Sleeping sickness screening in Nimule, South Sudan

Over 90% of the population lives in extreme poverty and tribal violence has exploded as its people fight over scarce resources

Merlin's medical professionals are hard at work in South Sudan. They are working to save the thousands of men, women and children who have sought refuge in the southern area of Jongle

state (eastern South Sudan). Lacking shelter and safe drinking water, the refugees face malaria, cholera, and a variety of other life-threatening diseases. In a country with few roads, even reaching peoples in need is a struggle. Roger Dean, Merlin's Regional Programs Coordinator, has reported on an overland expedition from Merlin's base to reach the nearby Labara clinic. The trip to the clinic lasted a day and a half through

rugged terrain and Merlin successfully treated over 60 people, including many children. Before leaving, Merlin health worker Colin Kyererezi, ran a health education program for the local community.

Merlin health care workers have been in what is now South Sudan since 1997, with a continuous presence since 2004. It is difficult and dangerous work, but Merlin continues to bring much needed health.



West African Food Crisis

Armed conflict, poor harvests, high food prices and low rainfall have combined to threaten the lives of nearly 10 million people across West Africa's Sahel region. Up to one million children face severe malnutrition, while malaria and cholera are pervasive and deadly, killing one out of every five children.

Merlin's Emergency Response Team has been in the most affected regions of Chad since early March. Anna Walton, who leads the team, reports that Merlin is, "ready to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable populations caught up in this crisis."

After assessing the needs of vulnerable populations, Merlin has committed to work in the Hadjer Lamis region of West Chad. The goal is to provide critical care to over 75,000 children under five, as well as the thousands of pregnant and nursing women. More than that, Merlin is working to bolster and support the health care infrastructure so that local communities can respond to the future health care needs of the population. Merlin is now also preparing to set up emergency health teams in Chad by the end of April, after successfully securing funds from the European Union.

Fierce Storms and Floods in the Philippines

The Philippines is one of the world's most populous countries and it is notoriously vulnerable to flooding from the fierce typhoons that batter its low-lying islands. In December 2011, the southern region of Mindanao was hit by the devastating tropical Storm Washi.

The subsequent flooding forced hundreds of thousands of people from their homes and destroyed key infrastructure. As the New York Times reported, flood victims faced the possibility of cholera, typhoid, and respiratory infections at overstretched evacuation centers.

David Elliot, Merlin's Regional Manager in the Philippines, assessed the situation, "A huge number of people, including tens of thousands of children, were at risk from diarrhea and other diseases associated with poor hygiene and limited access to clean water."

Merlin and its local partners immediately responded to the emergency. In our fight to save lives, we provided medical care, hygiene kits, and storage containers for food and water. The hygiene kits included toothpaste, soap, shampoo, and bath towels.



Distributing hygiene kits following Washi floods, Philippines

Merlin is also working in the capital of the Philippines, Manila, teaching them about reproductive health care. Merlin is focusing on a new project in the urban slums of the Philippines capital - Manila. With the third highest population growth in South East Asia, learning about and having access to, reproductive health care is vital.

This year, Merlin has established a new program in Manila to improve access to family planning methods. Targeting the poorest areas of Manila, Merlin's activities will promote and provide access to quality family planning services via three static health facilities and 18 outreach clinics,

conduct education sessions and community awareness events and advocate for a reproductive health policy framework for universal access. This new program will impact 796,000 people.

The contents of a hygiene kit:

- 2 adult toothbrushes
- 2 packs of sanitary napkins
- 3 bars of soap
- 2 child toothbrushes
- 1 pack of condoms
- 1 bottle of shampoo
- 3 tubes of toothpaste
- 2 bottles antiseptic
- 3 bars of laundry soap
- 1 pair of adult slippers
- 1 pair of child's slippers
- 1 comb
- 2 bath towels
- Underwear for family of 4

All contents are placed within a sealed plastic bucket.

FIND US ON:



www.facebook.com/USAMerlin



www.twitter.com/MerlinUSA



www.youtube.com/MerlinNewsVideos

Or visit us online at www.merlinusa.org



Merlin
1600 K St NW, Suite 450
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: 202-449-6398
www.merlinusa.org