

A decorative graphic at the top of the page features a trail of small, light blue icons including hearts, hands, and pills, leading towards a larger, darker blue graphic on the right. This larger graphic contains the word "MERLIN" in white, bold, uppercase letters, surrounded by more icons of hands and hearts.

Newsletter

Issue 10, Winter 2013
From the Executive Director

Dear Friend,

Though one year has ended and another started Merlin's work has not finished. If anything, our commitment to improve health care for millions of vulnerable peoples around the world has only grown stronger.

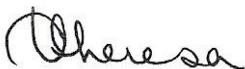
With the New Year, I want to highlight Merlin's efforts to build sustainable health care systems. With the help of the Izumi Foundation we are expanding our Mother and Child program in Kenya's Great Rift Valley; in Myanmar we have ensured nearly 900,000 people have access to essential health services; and our global vaccination and child nutrition programs not only save lives, but give the youngest and most vulnerable children an opportunity to grow up to be healthy adults.

While our donors and corporate partners recognize the importance of preventative treatment and early intervention, I am struck by the unflagging enthusiasm of hundreds of individuals like young fashion designer Oana Balan. Oana supports Merlin through her design business and donates 10% of the sales from her lovely Merlin scarf to support our ongoing programs. And across the country our volunteers organize fun-runs, bike tours, mountain treks and other small-scale events to raise money for Merlin.

Merlin remains committed to serve victims of natural disasters, wars, and famines. We have made a concentrated effort to relieve the ongoing famines in East and West Africa, and recently we expanded our work into Chad, one of the world's poorest countries. Merlin professionals continue to aid refugees caught up in the ongoing war in the Central African Republic; Merlin is hard at work fighting the global scourge of sexual violence; and Merlin continues to provide health care in the world's most dangerous and isolated areas.

The change in seasons and the start of a new year always inspires me to renew my commitment to helping others. We at Merlin appreciate the energy and contributions from all our volunteers and donors. Our organization depends on each and every one of you. If you have got a great idea for a Merlin event, or just want to discuss an area of our work, please be in touch to let me know how I can help.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theresa".

Theresa Pike Rhodes
Executive Director

MERLIN HIGHLIGHTS PREVENTION

Central to Merlin's mission is the belief that preventative care saves lives, and building community resilience to natural disasters or man-made conflict is more cost effective with better health outcomes than crisis response. Evidence shows that every dollar spent on prevention saves four dollars in emergency care. Below are just three examples of Merlin's long-term health care focus.

Safe Motherhood in Kenya

Merlin operates from the principle that a well-nourished child starts with a healthy and educated mother. Since 1998 Merlin has worked to improve the lives of vulnerable women and children in Kenya.

Starting in 2010, under Merlin's leadership, the Safe Motherhood Project in the country's Turkana region in the Rift Valley Province drew together international organizations, local government, community groups, businesses, the involvement of the United States and the European Union, and the recently announced support from the Izumi Foundation to address the need for quality maternal, child, and neonatal services in this isolated region. Our successes have included immunization programs, HIV testing, hygiene promotion, and health and nutrition education. Now, Merlin is building on these early gains to expand the Safe Motherhood Project to serve the needs of even more women and children.

In the Turkana, the average distance to a healthcare facility is over 30 miles and there is roughly one doctor for every 50,000 people. The nomadic pastoralists living in Turkana face a sustained

emergency from drought, conflict, and rising malnutrition rates in the community. Recurring epidemics of cholera, Rift Valley fever, malaria, and polio, combined with geographic isolation have all served to make their lives increasingly deadly.

Merlin has worked hard during the current famine crisis, but we understand that in the long run, the community's survival depends on establishing a health care system based on accessible treatment and prevention. Merlin's Safe Motherhood Project is a first step along this path.

In the latest phase of the project, Merlin will target three Kenyan districts and over 200,000 people. We will support at least seven facilities including a hospital, health centers, and dispensaries. Our outreach programs will offer nutritional care, health awareness, basic health care, and information sessions for local communities on childhood and maternal health. Additionally, we are developing a communication strategy to establish healthy behavior patterns through flyers, role-playing, and community theater.

A few of Merlin's concrete goals are to:

- ➔ Increase fully immunized infants from a rate currently at just over 50% to a target of rate of 90%.
- ➔ Increase by 30% the number of births attended by a skilled health worker.
- ➔ Increase by 50% community awareness about HIV prevention, hygiene promotion, and disease prevention.
- ➔ Ensure that 90% of facilities involved in the project provide essential obstetric services.
- ➔ Increase coordination between health partners and government to ensure sustainable funding and resources for ongoing initiatives.



(Above) Merlin food distribution registration during an outreach visit in Turkana, Kenya.

Merlin's programs will support local health care providers with the latest training in obstetrics and treatment of childhood illnesses. Merlin will encourage the participation of village health committees and women's groups to develop educational programming for local communities. To make sure the project reaches its targeted population, Merlin plans extensive surveys and data collection in an effort to guarantee the project's long-term effectiveness.



Merlin in Myanmar

Since 2004 Merlin has worked to provide basic health care to the people of Myanmar. We have responded to a tsunami and a series of cyclones that displaced thousands and overwhelmed existing health care systems. In partnership with donors and international agencies we have worked to build a community based health care program that will provide primary care to hundreds of thousands of men, women and children.

Merlin supports over 1400 Community Health Workers and Auxiliary Midwives



(Above) A Merlin supported midwife in Laputta, she travels out to surrounding communities providing ante natal and post natal care.

who fan out across the country treating common diseases and recognizing the danger signs of serious illnesses, including the priority diseases of TB, Malaria, and HIV. We are also working with the Ministry of Health to help implement the international community's Joint Initiative on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health to support women during and after pregnancy and children during their earliest, formative years.

Through our information campaigns, which include the benefits of clean water programs, sanitation and hygiene, Merlin promotes good health and puts information in the hands of the people who need it most. We have made every effort to set up clinics in remote and inaccessible areas where access to health care is severely limited, and given the success of our current prevention programs, we plan to expand our work into even more underserved areas of the country.

Merlin in Nepal



(Above) Merlin was invited by Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), Government of Nepal for a meeting organized to commit support for the celebration of 14th Annual Earthquake Safety Day, 2012.

Since 2007, Merlin has built a sustainable partnership with public officials in Nepal. The need for a healthcare system that works is great. After 10 years of civil war the country has less than three public health care providers for every 10,000 people and fewer than 30% of all births are attended by a qualified medical professional. Merlin has stepped in to fill the gap. We are rebuilding facilities,

bringing in equipment and vital medical supplies, plus we continue to provide training and support to community health workers.

Merlin has not stopped there. Earthquakes are always a risk in Nepal and the destruction can be deadly. According to 2010 estimates if a major earthquake hit the capital city of Katmandu:

- ➔ 100,000 people would die and 300,000 would be injured.
- ➔ 2 million people would be left homeless.
- ➔ 80% of the areas hospitals would not be able to function.

Merlin has anticipated the devastating impact of an earthquake, and launched initiatives to assess and refit hospitals and medical facilities, as well as critical systems like water and electrical supplies. Our preparations have helped to increase the readiness and response capabilities of

local government, while building a basic level of community involvement, ready to

ON THE GROUND UPDATES

Central African Republic

In Central and Eastern Africa, the Lord's Resistance Army is notorious for its brutal violence. For nearly three years, LRA attacks in the southeastern part of the country have forced thousands to flee and seek refuge in refugee camps far from their homes. In March of this year the only government doctor serving the entire region was killed by the LRA. Stopped by armed gunmen who seized his supply of money and drugs, they shot him and set him on fire in his car.

While there have been 10 LRA attacks in the Rafai area in 2012 alone, Merlin has established medical services for the nearly 26,000 people in the area. Many NGOs have pulled out since the LRA attacks, but Merlin has understood the growing need for health care services and has already established a hospital and a health outpost in Rafai.

The impact of Merlin's efforts has been immediate. We were there to treat a

respond to an unexpected disaster.

teenager kidnapped by the LRA and used for four months as a sex slave.

Words do no justice to the horrors this young woman faced. After she escaped, she arrived at a Merlin supported clinic where she was treated for septic wounds on her legs and feet (she escaped barefoot), and for severe lower abdominal pain from months of sexual abuse. Merlin treated her for both her physical wounds and made sure she received psychological and social support.



(Above) A Merlin treatment camp in Bouar, CAR.



West Africa and Chad

Searing heat and devastating drought continue to ravage the country of Chad and Western Africa. Throughout the region more than 10 million people are at nutritional risk and over one million children face severe malnutrition. In Chad, a country where the average life expectancy is only 46, where one woman

in a hundred will die in childbirth, where 20% of the children born will die before reaching their fifth birthday, and where millions have been left with little food to eat, the crisis has reached an acute and tragic stage.

Merlin's emergency response has been to focus on the worst affected areas and the most vulnerable groups, while working in areas of the country not covered by other international organizations.

The Merlin team in Chad has set up an emergency health and nutrition program



to serve people in the Hadjer Lamis area of West Chad. It is estimated that there are around 50,000 children and about 11,500 pregnant women in the region and most of them are suffering from malnutrition.

Merlin has mobilized staff, supplies and equipment to meet the crisis. And just as in our ongoing relief efforts throughout other West African countries, we are planning to increase access to vaccinations, basic health care and the treatment of common diseases in an effort to prevent cholera, malaria, and diarrheal diseases which are common in areas with extreme poverty and malnutrition.

(Left) Weighing a child at a Merlin supported outpatient therapeutic programs (OTPs) Massaguet District, Chad.



The Philippines

In 2009, Merlin arrived in the Philippines following back-to-back typhoons that affected nearly 8 million people. In 2011, Merlin leaped into action when flash flooding from a tropical storm displaced hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. This past August a severe monsoon hit the capital, Manila, and over 1.3 million people were suddenly in need of assistance. Merlin was there to help. Merlin professionals carried out medical missions to evacuation centers and affected communities. To fight the spread

of disease we provided essential medicine, equipment, and health education sessions. We are working hard to get health care, including desperately needed hygiene kits, to the nearly 300,000 people outside of the evacuation centers who still need assistance, particularly the thousands of young children who are most susceptible to malnutrition and disease.



(Right) Monsoon hit the capital of the Philippines, Manila, causing widespread flooding in the capital and remote surrounding areas. Around 78 people are thought to have died and over 1.3 million were displaced.

MERLIN'S FUTURE

In recent months Merlin has articulated a clear vision for the future. Between 2012 and 2015 our goal is to strengthen global healthcare systems and expand services for some of the world's most vulnerable peoples. With your help, Merlin will ensure that:

- At least 15 million people receive life-saving health care
- 12 million people have access to primary care services
- At least 6,000 birth attendants provide care for newborns and pregnant women
- 1,500,000 women have access to family planning services
- Nearly 2 million children under the age of five are protected from malnutrition and we reduce by 50% child deaths due to lack of food
- 1,800,000 children younger than age five are saved from malaria related deaths
- Over one million children receive appropriate vaccines to prevent treatable, but often deadly, diseases.



MERLIN IN THE NEWS

Merlin Earns International Seal of Approval

The Human Accountability Partnership, the humanitarian sector's premier self-regulatory body, has awarded Merlin its HAP certification. We are excited to receive the award and to have joined a select group of humanitarian organizations. HAP certification rigorously tests an organization's quality assurance standards with a particular focus on accountability to partners and local populations. Merlin is proud to join just 14 organizations worldwide to receive the coveted HAP certification.



MERLIN AND ITS PARTNERS

Izumi Foundation

Founded by Buddhist Order Shinnyo-en, the Foundation's mission is to provide assistance to the world's poorest people through the development and support of programs that improve health care in developing countries. The Japanese word *izumi* means a water source in a green valley, or a wellspring that can nurture life. *Izumi* can also be interpreted as a heart of compassion. This heart of compassion has been supporting programs in Africa since its creation in 1989 and Merlin appreciates its altruism to help those gain access to health care.

Merlin greatly appreciates volunteer David Curtis for his work in helping to produce this newsletter.

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Or visit us online at www.merlinusa.org

Merlin
1600 K St NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: 202-449-6398
www.merlinusa.org

