

Profiles of health-related organisations working in South Sudan

We continue with our series of profiles of Non Governmental Organisations (both international and local) and other organisations working in health related fields in Southern Sudan. We hope this will help to publicise the valuable work these are doing, and allow people to make closer links with each other. In this issue we present the profiles of **Medair** and **Merlin**. If you would like us to publish a similar profile of your organisation, please send it to Dr Wani Mena (wanimena@gmail.com) or Dr Eluzai Hakim (eluzai_hakim@yahoo.co.uk).

Medair

How long has Medair been working in South Sudan? Medair started operations here in 1992 and has had a permanent presence since 1995.

Where do you work? We work across all 10 states in Southern Sudan. We have bases in Juba and in Upper Nile.

How many staff and/or volunteers do you have? We currently have over 280 staff, both international and Sudanese. We also work with community volunteers, including health and hygiene promoters and village development committee members.

What are your main health-related activities?

- Response to health and nutrition related emergencies across all 10 states through our health Emergency Response Team (ERT).
- Support for Upper Nile State Ministry of Health to provide primary health care (PHC) services in Melut and Manyo Counties, including capacity building for county health departments, support of 3 primary health care centres, 8 primary health care units and a TB clinic, and community-level work including health and hygiene promotion.

What are your main achievements to date? In 2009 the PHC programme supported 59,175 out-patient contacts, 5,014 antenatal visits, and screening of 4,471 children for malnutrition. The health ERT reached 145,102 beneficiaries, carried out 18 assessments and 13 interventions responding to disease outbreaks such as meningitis, cholera and measles, and treated 1,593 children in response to nutrition emergencies.



Vaccinating a child (© Medair)

What are your main constraints and challenges? The national shortage of qualified health staff, particularly midwives and clinical officers; the lack of clarity over the role of county health departments, and their understaffing; and difficulties with access due to climate and insecurity.

What are your plans/vision for the future? Medair is committed to remaining in the region until emergency relief and rehabilitation services are no longer needed, or until needs are met by GoSS or other agencies.

As well as the MoH, do you work with other agencies?

We have seconded one staff member to the Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) (for co-ordination of health emergency responses and assessments)

and another to WHO to assist with health sector co-ordination. We work in partnership with Fashoda Youth Forum and the Malaria Consortium in Upper Nile State; and we are on the NGO Steering Committee as one of 12 organisations representing NGO interests in the South.

What message would you like to give to readers of SSMJ?

Medair's overall goal is to increase access to health care, safe water, and emergency relief services. We prioritise the most vulnerable, in areas where other agencies are not working.

Medair's ERT specialises in rapid response across Southern Sudan. We can mobilise a team in less than three days, initiate a full response within a week, and we have capacity to provide a multi-sectoral integrated response.

Medair's PHC programme supports the MoH to provide good quality primary health care, while building local capacity with the aim of sustaining services in the future.

How can readers get more information on Medair?

By going to our website at www.medair.org

Thanks to Stella Chetham for sending this information.



Medair staff at work (© Medair)

Merlin

Merlin specialises in health, saving lives in times of crisis and helping to rebuild shattered health services. Whether the crisis is from natural disasters, conflict, disease or health system collapse, we work within the existing health systems to realise everyone's right to accessible, appropriate, affordable health care.

How long have you been working in South Sudan? Since 1998 and we have had a continuous presence in the country since 2004.

Where do you work? Merlin currently supports hospitals in Nimule, Eastern Equatoria State and Boma, in Jonglei. We also support Primary Health Care facilities in Moli and Pageri (Magwi County), Hiyala, Imuruk, Kudo and Khormush (Torit County), Lafon and Imehejek (Lopa/Lafon) and Imatong (Ikotos).



Merlin Health Worker welcomes visitors to Imurok Primary Health Care Unit, Torit County, Eastern Equatoria State (credit Merlin)

How many staff do you employ? We currently employ 33 international and 260 Sudanese staff.

What are your main health-related activities? Merlin supports health facilities in the implementation of the Basic Package of Health Services, providing comprehensive training to staff, supplying drugs and ensuring quality of care is maintained.

What are your main achievements to date? In 2009, Merlin provided health care services to 189,000 direct beneficiaries. Nimule hospital is the only centre for antiretroviral therapy in Eastern Equatoria State and one of the only agencies in Southern Sudan still to operate a successful screening and treatment service for Sleeping Sickness patients.

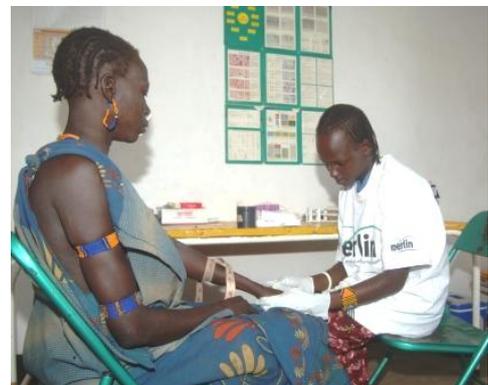
What are your main constraints and challenges? Despite willingness and commitment, there are gaps in capacity (particularly human resources) within the Ministry of Health (MoH). Logistics remains a key challenge, and there is lingering uncertainty surrounding potential security issues presented by the upcoming referendum.

What are your plans for the future? Merlin is introducing a Health Information System (HIS) to improve monitoring of routine health data in clinics and hospitals. We will increase technical support to State and County Ministries of Health, as handover of certain rehabilitated facilities begins.

What message would you like to give to readers of SSMJ? Serious engagement to build MoH capacity at national, state and county level requires long term timeframes. Working with and through the MoH is the best strategy to ensure a sustainable health system.

How can readers get more information about Merlin? For more information on Merlin's activities in Southern Sudan and the rest of the world, please visit www.merlin.org.uk or contact the Country Programme office by email at cd@merlin-southsudan.org.

Thanks to Anna Fraenzel for sending this information.



Merlin Health Worker takes blood for testing from a patient in Boma Hospital, Jonglei State (credit Merlin)