

On the SPOT

NEWSLETTER
January 2007

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DR Congo/Uganda: First steps taken to contain the Meningitis epidemic rapidly

A Meningitis epidemic which first occurred in the south of Sudan by the turn of the year has now spread to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. Since 6 January, the number of cases has risen steadily in Uganda, with so far over 180 cases in West Nile, the region hardest hit. By 21 January, the first 18 cases were registered in the DR Congo. However, there are clear indications that not all persons with critical symptoms showed up in the hospitals up to now. Meningitis is mainly caused by bacteria and viral infections. Untreated, it leads to death in many cases.

Malteser International is now implementing a project which aims to prevent the further spread of the disease. From 24 January onwards, appropriate measurements are taken: the organisation not only provides the required medicines but also trains the local medical staff how to tackle the epidemic. Furthermore, the population has to be sensitised towards the topic, for example with the help of posters such as the one shown in the picture. The discovery of infected persons will be actively supported by so-called “village health teams”. In Uganda, a vaccination campaign will additionally assure long-term protection.



The project will be realised in cooperation with local partners, such as ‘Radio Koboko’ which is going to send spots on Meningitis regularly, and is financed by the Foreign Office Germany and Malteser International.

Further information:

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DR Congo II: ‘World Swim Against Malaria’

3,000 children are dying every day because of Malaria. Those figures are much higher than of any other disease. Also grown-ups suffer a lot from Malaria. It comes third after HIV and Tuberculosis in the death statistics. Up to now, 53 percent of the diagnosed Malaria victims die from it. Malaria can be detected with a quick-test and then be cured. But the most efficient countermeasure is to sleep under a mosquito net which costs four Euros.

Malteser International is already active in the region of South Kivu since 1996 by supporting the health system to give access to basic health care services of quality for a catchments population in 2007 of about 700,000 people. The ‘World Swim Against Malaria’

(WSM) foundation was created in 2004 to decrease the sufferings created through Malaria. It supplies mosquito nets in those regions all over the world which are highly affected by Malaria. WSM is now supporting Malteser International in their project with the supply of 10,000 mosquito nets for the region of South Kivu. The nets will be primarily distributed to pregnant women after their pre-natal examination in health centres supported by Malteser International. To motivate the women to give also birth in the centers (80% come to the pre-natal examination and only 60% come back to give birth) they will be given an additional mosquito net for free. Those nets are distributed also in the region through home visits to ensure the correct usage in the families.



Malteser International is now asking for donations to transport these live-saving nets to the people in Bukavu. This will cost approximately US\$ 11,000.

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Sudan: Insecurity hinders humanitarian aid in Darfur

Despite a partially signed Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) Malteser International is again and again forced to temporarily cut down its health care services in the Sudanese province of Darfur due to insecurity. Many times the team is not able to travel to the health facilities supported by Malteser International, mobile clinics and referral systems can not be established and comprehensive vaccination campaigns cannot be conducted due to an unstable security situation. However Malteser is still able to assure basic health care for about 120,000 people in the rural areas south of El Fasher. Predominantly, Malteser International is focusing on the provision of health services for pregnant women and children and on the implementation of a malaria prevention programme.



On 12 December 2006, the U.N. Human Rights Council met in Geneva to discuss the situation in Darfur. The Council agreed to dispatch a five-member high-level mission to the war-torn Sudanese region in order to assess the situation. Furthermore a discussion about engagement of UN troops in Sudan is ongoing. Since 2003, more than 200,000 people have been killed and more than 2.5

million have been displaced due to fighting between African Rebels on the one side, Government troops and Arab Militia on the other. 'We hope that the international efforts to establish peace will finally be successful. Otherwise, we fear that even more people will be cut off from basic health care services in the future,' Dr. Georg Nothelle, Head of Africa Desk of Malteser International, explains.

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Afghanistan: Winter relief in the highlands

Logar, a province in the highlands south of Kabul, is currently affected by a severe winter. Last year, the onset of winter came late but with extreme temperatures and lots of snow. Responding to the request of the provincial government, Malteser International distributes ovens, firewood, mattresses, blankets and Vaseline for skin protection to 1,000 families who are in acute need. Among them, there are many repatriates from Pakistan and Iran who are accommodated in emergency shelters and are affected by high poverty. 'The aid is extremely necessary,' Wiltrud Gutschmiedl, Desk Officer Afghanistan, explains: 'The people still could not re-establish their source of income and are especially dependent on help during the severe winter. The instable security situation makes life even harder.'



The distribution is carried out in cooperation with a local partner organisation and the responsible authorities. The winter relief project started on 1 December 2006 and will continue up to 28 February 2007. The project has a total volume of EUR 199,279.

Malteser International has been working in Afghanistan since 2002. At the moment, the organisation supports the rehabilitation of the country in six provinces with a team of one international and 30 local employees.

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India/Indonesia/Sri Lanka/Thailand: Two years after the tsunami

Two years after the devastating seaquake on 26 December 2004, huge parts of the province of Aceh, Indonesia, which was so strongly affected by the tsunami, were flooded by the heaviest rainfalls since 25 years. More than 100 people died in the water and by landslides. According to official numbers, up to 170,000 people had to leave their homes. In cooperation with Cordaid, Malteser International supplied 1,500 so called family kits including articles of daily use as well as sanitary products and food aid.



'Apart from this major interruption, all projects in the coastal regions of India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand affected by the tsunami run smoothly; there are only repeating interruptions in the north-eastern region of Sri Lanka due to the arising civil war', Roland Hansen, Head of Asia Desk, declares. Since 26 December 2004, Malteser International has been supporting more than half a million tsunami victims. 'Our rehabilitation programs focus on health care and psycho-social care, water and sanitation, infrastructure and income generating measures. Partly, the projects could already be handed over to the population and local authorities', Hansen explains.

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Up to now, Malteser International carried out rehabilitation programs with a total volume of about EUR 17 million. Altogether, more than 1,000 houses have been built up or renovated. Moreover, more than 200 fishing boats have been distributed, 18 schools, five homes for children, five clinics, four community halls, one home for disabled people, one vocational training centre and a mosque have newly been built or renovated. By means of trainings and small loans the organisation has helped over 2,000 extremely disadvantaged families to establish a new income. Water supply has been secured for more than 1,000 people. A computer-based health information system has been set up for more than 80 health centres in Aceh, Indonesia. Malteser International has developed the system together with the 'Deutsche Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit' (GTZ) and the provincial government of Aceh. From now on, all data of patients will be recorded and saved in the local health centres.



Further programs with a volume of another EUR 13 million have already been started or are in preparation. For example, 2,300 rain water harvesting tanks will be built and several pilot projects for the construction of decentralized sewage plants will be carried out.

'For us, even more important than the extent of our help is the fact that the people plan their villages themselves and also take responsibility. Independent evaluators confirm that the cooperation with our partner organisations works very well', Hansen states.

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India: Settlement planning for Irula families in tsunami coastal

On 8 January 2007, men and women of the Irula tribe came together in the provisory community centre in Parangipettai village to plan the outline of the settlement that will be constructed for them within the upcoming six months.



The Irula are a scheduled tribe living scattered across Tamil Nadu in Southern India. Despite being one of the most vulnerable groups in the state, their nomadic culture prevented them from receiving any kind of governmental compensation after the tsunami had hit in 2004, destroying their thatched huts and washing away most of their belongings.

However, through the support of Bharathi Trust, a local NGO focusing on minority rights, things are slowly improving. With the support of Malteser International as funding partner, Bharathi Trust prepares the construction of permanent houses for 57 Irula families. More houses will follow in the second half of the year. Being originally landless, a plot of land was purchased and given to the beneficiaries, finally guaranteeing them a safe place to stay for good.

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Technical support in construction is given by Eklavya Foundation, a local humanitarian organisation focusing on housing projects in the relief context. Similar to Bharathi Trust, Eklavya Foundation is also promoting minority rights and has already successfully facilitated the reconstruction project of Malteser International in the aftermath of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake.

After agreeing on the outline of the settlement, six model houses will be constructed. Unlike many other pre-set tsunami colonies, the Irula will be able to see and choose the one type of house most suitable for their family. Construction will start in late January – also laying the foundation of a life in greater dignity of this destitute minority.

Further information:

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Indonesia/Java: Temporary health facilities taken over by local health office



The earthquake on Indonesia's main island Java in May 2006 destroyed the majority of the health facilities in the affected area around the city of Yogyakarta, especially in the district Bantul. Although there are plans and donors for the permanent reconstruction of these facilities, the full rehabilitation of all the buildings will take at least a year. Therefore, Malteser International decided to build up temporary health posts in the rural areas of Bantul to ensure the continuing

medical treatment of the population until the destroyed health centres will be rehabilitated.

In November 2006, eight temporary health facilities were finished earlier than planned and could already be handed over to the local health office. The local medical staff now working in the facilities is very happy about the structures they received and expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the work done by Malteser International.

Further information:

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Pakistan: German Ambassador visits opening ceremony of winter relief distribution

On the occasion of the first winter relief distribution in the district of Muzaffarabad, the German Ambassador in Islamabad, Dr. Gunter Mulack, explicitly acclaimed the commitment of Malteser International by saying: 'Here, the cooperation between a Christian and a Muslim relief organisation perfectly works!' Ten thousands of victims of the devastating earthquake in Pakistan of October 2005 are still in need of support. This year, Malteser International again helps 2,600 people in need – especially widows, orphans, elderly

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people as well as those suffering from a disability - to survive the severe winter by supplying drinking water tanks, blankets, pillows and kitchen sets. 'I very much appreciate the dedication of Malteser International in this project area, which is so difficult to access', the Ambassador continues.

In the valleys of Muzaffarabad, the temperature very often drops below - 15 °C at night. Together with its Turkish partner organisation 'International Blue Crescent' Malteser International has been supporting the earthquake victims since the emergency phase in October 2005.

Over 73,000 people died in the earthquake of 8 October 2005. Another 3.5 million became homeless. The aid of Malteser International in the different regions is financed amongst others by the German Foreign Office and will also be continued in 2007.

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Sri Lanka: Inauguration of community hall in tsunami affected area

On 3 December 2006, the multi-purpose community hall in Rathgama in the south of Sri Lanka was inaugurated. Malteser International and the German fundraising initiative 'Osthessen Hilft Südasien e.V.' have supported the 'Asian Volunteers', a Sri Lankan organisation, in rebuilding the hall. Malteser International also supported the purchasing of furniture, office equipment, musical instruments and computers for trainings so that the community can resume its activities.

The original building which was part of a 250 year old Buddhist temple complex and only 150 metres away from the sea was totally destroyed by the tsunami of 2004. People from surrounding villages took refuge in tents erected on the site staying for almost one year. The 900 families in the village of Rathgama, close to Galle on the southern coast, were severely affected by the floods. Many were resettled to the hilly hinterland six kilometres away from the coast. This caused big problems especially for the families formerly living from fishing.

'The temple brings together the people of this scattered community,' Reverend Thanamalvila Sudeera Thero, the monk in charge of the temple complex, explains. In reconstructing the multi-purpose hall, Malteser International and the Asia Volunteers facilitate educational and cultural activities which are vital to the community. The hall is going to house the meetings of various community groups. 'For example a club of young people engaging in environmental issues meets here', the monk tells. Furthermore, meditation



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classes, traditional dancing courses and vocational trainings will be held here. Finally, it can also be used as an accommodation for pilgrims.

Rev. Thanamalvila Sudeera Thero and representatives of the Asia Volunteers also took part in trainings organised by Malteser International dealing with issues such as community mobilisation, solid waste management as well as alcohol and drug prevention. ‘We can now start tackling social problems in the community’, the monk summarizes.

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Thailand: Second tour of orthopaedic clinic bus

From 17 to 21 December 2006, the orthopaedic clinic bus sponsored by Malteser International toured for the second time. This time, the mobile clinic offered a variety of services for disabled people around the Phang Nga Province. The team consisted not only of orthopaedic medical experts but also of dentists and specialists for eyes and ears. Apart from the provision of prosthesis, the team provided hearing aids and optical devices and supported the patients in receiving the official recognition as disabled persons. Only with this official document they are able to request special public benefits.

The tour was officially opened on 18 December 2006. During the opening ceremony various important persons from the Ministry of Health as well as from the Phang Nga Province Office presented speeches. The ceremony was attended by several reporters and journalists from the mass media including TV stations.



On peak days, up to 850 people came to the clinic bus for treatment and medical advice. Currently, Malteser International staff is preparing two case studies about people from the target villages who received help by the mobile clinic. Furthermore, pictures and information on the tour will be released by the Sirindhorn National Medical Rehabilitation Foundation.

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Africa:

On 1 January, **Mr Jean Rakotontrabe** from Madagascar left for **Ariwara, DR Congo**, to work as Health Manager.

Asia:

Mr Christoph U. Andert started as Nutrition Manager in **Maungdaw, Myanmar**, on 1 January.

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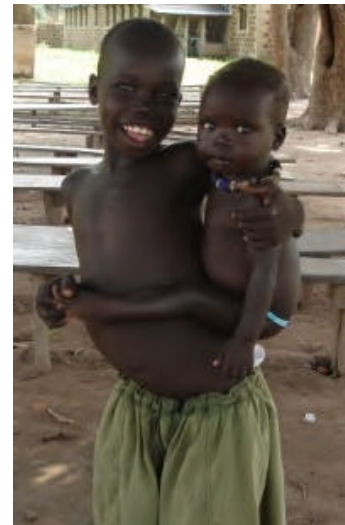
Mr Henry O. Mugassa from Tanzania started to work as WatSan (Water and Sanitation) Engineer in **Galle, Sri Lanka**, on 1 January.

Also on 1 January, **Mr Cesar Russo** from Italy started his work as Regional Logistic Advisor in **Yangon, Myanmar**.

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VENRO: Your voice against poverty

In the first half of 2007, the German government leads the EU as well as the G8. Thus, Chancellor Angela Merkel is in an influential position. With the campaign 'Your voice against poverty', VENRO, an association of German non-governmental organisations, aims to remind the German government to use its influence in order to realise the Millennium Development Goals. Germany is one of the 190 countries that signed the Millennium Declaration of the UN in 2000, thereby committing itself to fight poverty and half it by 2015.



VENRO - in cooperation with the German singer Herbert Grönemeyer, photographers, PR specialists and journalists - invites people from all over the world to take part in a signature campaign. Therefore, the campaign is set up in five languages – German, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. To participate, or to obtain more background information about activities, events and possibilities to support the campaign, simply follow the link <http://www.deine-stimme-gegen-armut.de/>. The result, the total amount of the collected signatures, will be handed over to Angela Merkel on the G8 summit in June 2007.

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Annual conference of the Order of Malta: 'From the World For the World'

On 5 December 2006, the Order of Malta's annual conference was held in Rome focusing on the Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Eastern Europe as examples for the Order's international medical and humanitarian activities.

After the opening address by H. Exc. Grand-Chancellor Jean-Pierre Mazery, the President of the Lebanese Association, Marwan Sehnaoui, gave a presentation on 'Facing a Humanitarian Disaster in the Lebanese War Zones.' Due to the wars and violence in the country, the Order's Lebanese Association was forced to look after, feed and house over 500,000 refugees in the ten health centres run by the Order practically in 'front-line' conditions.

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The conference then concentrated on the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country devastated by civil war. Geoffroy de Liedekerke, Ambassador of the Order of Malta to the DR Congo, pointed out how the Order's embassy and various organizations treat a vast array of diseases, even including new outbreaks of the plague.

Afterwards, Jiri Lobkowicz, President of the Order's Ambulance Corps in the Czech Republic, talked about the expansion of the Order's social and humanitarian activities in Central and Eastern Europe. The Order is active in 13 countries with projects ranging from emergency interventions during the recent floods to social services for the disadvantaged as well as permanent projects such as the pioneering centre for disabled children inaugurated in Poland.



At the end of the meeting, Grand Hospitaller Albrecht von Boeselager gave a comprehensive update on Malteser International's latest humanitarian initiatives.

The conference was attended by the diplomatic corps accredited to the Order of Malta, high-ranking personalities from the Holy See, representatives of Italian institutions as well as members of the Order's government and many of its ambassadors.

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Wuerzburg: Herbert Kiesel honoured with Malteser International Award

On 12 December 2006, Herbert Kiesel, director of Malteser Germany in the diocese of Wuerzburg, was honoured with the Malteser International Award in silver. The decoration was handed over by Ingo Radtke, Secretary General of Malteser International, and Hans-Georg von Mallinckrodt, head of Malteser Germany in the diocese of Wuerzburg. They



expressed their gratitude for Kiesel's longtime commitment in St. Petersburg, Russia, and his support with regard to the development of a communication squad for ECOM, the predecessor of Malteser International. Furthermore, his support of various relief projects in Eastern Europe and the fact that he encouraged many volunteers to participate in the work abroad were reasons for the special tribute to him. Kiesel was deeply moved and expressed his gratitude to all those who had accompanied and supported him in his work. Up to now, the medal was only awarded two times in Germany.

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Ingo Radtke

Petra Ipp

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