Leprosy is curable.

Treatment is free.

Discrimination has no place.

Global Appeal
To end stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy

SINCE 2006
Background

Leprosy has been one of the world's most feared and misunderstood diseases. Today, thanks to modern chemotherapy, there is an effective cure. With early diagnosis and prompt treatment, it does not result in disability or disfigurement. A bacterial disease, leprosy is only mildly communicable. Some 16 million people have been treated and cured since the introduction of multidrug therapy (MDT) in the 1980s.

Many myths and misperceptions about leprosy persist, however. While drugs can cure the disease, they cannot erase the social stigma and prejudice that come from a lack of public understanding. Discrimination against people affected by leprosy remains severe in some parts of the world. Denied the same opportunities for education, employment and marriage as other members of society, people affected by the disease find themselves marginalized. Their access to social services is limited or non-existent and their perfectly healthy children may be refused admission to school.

Working to end this discrimination, Yohei Sasakawa, chairman of The Nippon Foundation, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination and Japanese Government Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy, leads an annual Global Appeal. Initiated in 2006, it is launched on or near World Leprosy Day—the last Sunday in January.

The Global Appeal initiative has inspired partners in different countries to make sure that its message reaches far and wide. On occasion, the appeal has been translated into Portuguese, Chinese, Bahasa Indonesia, Amharic, Nepali, Spanish, Swahili, French, German, Russian, Japanese, Hindi, Bengali and several other Indian languages, and organizations of persons affected by leprosy undertook the job of translating, designing and printing the local-language versions. They also delivered copies to health posts, hospitals and clinics for display to raise public awareness of discrimination.

Message from Yohei Sasakawa

For more than 40 years I have been involved in efforts to end leprosy and the discrimination it causes. As WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination, I have traveled throughout the world, listening to persons affected by leprosy and urging national leaders to address the issue of discrimination in their countries.

But one person can only do so much. That’s why I began this Global Appeal to invite globally influential leaders and organizations from different spheres to lend their voices and issue a powerful call to end discrimination against persons affected by leprosy.

Over the past 15 years, many individuals and groups have endorsed the Global Appeal. You will find here the text of every Appeal, each one issued shoulder to shoulder with persons affected by leprosy.

Leprosy is curable. Treatment is free. Social discrimination has no place. I will continue to work for a world without leprosy and the discrimination it causes, and see that these messages are heard.

History

2020
International Paralympic Committee
Tokyo, Japan

2019
International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)
New Delhi, India

2018
Disabled Peoples’ International
New Delhi, India

2017
Inter-Parliamentary Union
New Delhi, India

2016
Junior Chamber International
Tokyo, Japan

2015
International Council of Nurses
Tokyo, Japan

2014
National human rights organizations
Jakarta, Indonesia

2013
International Bar Association
London, UK

2012
World Medical Association
Sao Paulo, Brazil

2011
World leading universities
Beijing, China

2010
World business leaders
Mumbai, India

2009
World’s religious leaders
London, UK

2008
International human rights organizations
London, UK

2007
Representatives of people affected by leprosy around the world
Manila, Philippines

2006
World leaders and Nobel Peace Prize laureates
New Delhi, India
GLOBAL APPEAL TO END STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE AFFECTED BY LEPROSY

Leprosy is among the world’s oldest and most dreaded diseases. Without an effective remedy for much of its long history, it often resulted in terrible deformity. It was also thought to be extremely communicable. Patients were abandoned, forced to live in isolation and discriminated against as social outcasts.

In the early 1980s, an effective cure for leprosy became available. Multidrug therapy has successfully treated over 14 million people to date. Contrary to popular belief, leprosy is extremely difficult to contract. With prompt diagnosis and treatment, it can be medically cured within 6 to 12 months without risk of deformity.

Yet fear of leprosy remains deep-rooted. Misguided notions endure — that it is “highly contagious,” “incurable” and “hereditary.” Some even regard it as “a divine punishment.”

Ignorance and misunderstanding result in prejudice and discriminatory attitudes that remain firmly implanted as custom and tradition.

Consequently, patients, cured persons and their entire families suffer stigma and discrimination. This limits their opportunities for education, employment and marriage, and restricts their access to public services.

Fearful that by speaking out they will invite further discrimination, for long years people affected by leprosy, including their families, have been cowed into silence. Such silence reinforces the stigma that surrounds them.

The world has remained indifferent to their plight for too long.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and human rights.” This article, however, is meaningless to people affected by leprosy, who continue to suffer discrimination.

We appeal to the UN Commission on Human Rights to take up this matter as an item on its agenda, and request that it issue principles and guidelines for governments to follow in eliminating all discrimination against people affected by leprosy.

We further urge governments themselves to seriously consider this issue and act to improve the present situation with a sense of urgency.

Finally, we call on people all over the world to change their perception and foster an environment in which leprosy patients, cured persons and their families can lead normal lives free from stigma and discrimination.

January 29, 2006

Oscar Arias
Former President of Costa Rica
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Jimmy Carter
Former President of the United States of America
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

The Dalai Lama
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

El Hassan bin Talal
Prince of the Jordanian Hashemite Royal Dynasty

Václav Havel
Former President of the Czech Republic

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva
President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

Olusegun Obasanjo
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Mary Robinson
Former President of Ireland
Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Yohai Sasakiwa
Chairman, The Nippon Foundation

Desmond Tutu
Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

R. Venkataraman
Former President of India

Elie Wiesel
President, The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Contact The Nippon Foundation (http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp or tel 813-6229-5002) for more information

Global Appeal 2006
Global Appeal 2007

To End Stigma and Discrimination against People Affected by Leprosy

“Every person is born free and equal in dignity and human rights.”

Many people think that leprosy no longer exists. But it does — and also the stigma and discrimination it causes.

Discrimination against people affected by leprosy is one of the oldest and most pervasive examples of social injustice in the history of the human race.

Even today, millions of men, women and children continue to suffer social, economic and legal discrimination, simply because they or a family member have had leprosy.

Leprosy is a curable disease. Yet misguided notions about leprosy persist, with devastating consequences for those thus stigmatized.

Denying the inherent human rights of anyone on the basis of disease is indefensible. Discrimination can never be justified.

Silence on this issue is not acceptable.

We urge you to join us in the fight to end this social injustice.

Together, let us create a society in which every individual is free and equal in dignity and human rights.

January 29, 2007

Global Appeal 2007 is an initiative of Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for the Elimination of Leprosy, endorsed and co-signed by leaders of People Affected by Leprosy around the world.

Yohei Sasakawa
WHO Goodwill Ambassador for the Elimination of Leprosy Chairman, The Nippon Foundation

* From the First Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
GLOBAL APPEAL 2008
To End Stigma and Discrimination against People Affected by Leprosy

“To many of us, worse than the very disease is the prejudice that comes along with it.”

Leprosy is one of the world’s oldest diseases. For much of history, it was incurable. Countless millions suffered its disfiguring effects. Today, leprosy is easily treated with multidrug therapy. Since the 1980s, over 16 million people have been cured worldwide. Diagnosed early and treated promptly, leprosy leaves no trace. Far harder to remove is the age-old stigma. Based on ignorance and fear, society continues to discriminate against people affected by leprosy, even after they are cured. This has devastating consequences for them and their families. It limits their opportunities for education, employment and marriage, and it restricts their participation in community life. Defining a person by his or her disease is unacceptable. We appeal to society to understand the facts about leprosy. We call for actions to end the stigma and discrimination. We join people affected by leprosy in affirming the right of every human being to live with dignity.

January 28, 2008

Irene Khan
Secretary General, Amnesty International

Barry Clarke
Chair, International Save the Children Alliance

Julio Wilfredo Guzman Jara
Chairperson, Disabled Peoples’ International

Bryan Dutton
Director General, Leonard Cheshire Disability

Richard Blewitt
Chief Executive, HelpAge International

Elly Pradervand
Executive Director, Women’s World Summit Foundation

Nicholas Howen
Secretary General, International Commission of Jurists

Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia
General Secretary, World Council of Churches

Eugen Brand
Director General, International Movement ATD Fourth World

Yohji Sasakawa
Chairman, The Nippon Foundation

Leprosy is a disease as old as human history. Its disfiguring effects struck fear in people’s hearts. Patients were ostracized for lack of an effective cure. Now a cure exists, and it’s available free of charge. Diagnosed early and treated promptly, leprosy leaves no trace. But mistaken beliefs about the disease persist. They perpetuate social and economic discrimination. This discrimination causes emotional and psychological pain. To conquer this age-old stigma, drugs alone are not enough. All of us must be part of the social healing process. People affected by leprosy and their families have a right to a normal life. Denying basic human rights to someone because he or she once had a disease is wrong. Let us all join hands to eliminate fear, discrimination, and social stigma wherever they exist. Let the healing begin today.
People affected by leprosy often say that dealing with society’s attitudes toward the disease is harder than dealing with the disease itself.

Leprosy is curable, yet the problems brought on by leprosy don’t end when the treatment is complete.

Many people with the disease remain marginalized because stigma and discrimination restrict opportunities for education, training and work.

We believe that people affected by leprosy have the same rights as everyone else, and deserve the same opportunities as everyone else.

We support the principle of social integration and economic empowerment of people affected by leprosy.
"Leprosy is a curable disease, yet it continues to stigmatize. The corollary of this stigma is discrimination, resulting in limited opportunities and social exclusion. The stigma associated with leprosy is rooted in myths and misconceptions that deserve no place in today's world.

With awareness and education, this stigma can be challenged. With education, people affected by leprosy can be empowered to overcome the social and economic barriers that society has placed in their way.

We call for an end to discrimination against people affected by leprosy and their families.

We support their right to live in dignity as full members of the community with equal access to opportunities and enjoying all their human rights."
Here are many myths and misconceptions about leprosy. As members of the medical profession, we have the first responsibility to set the record straight.

Leprosy is a mildly infectious disease. It is not spread by casual contact. It is curable with multidrug therapy that kills the bacteria and stops the disease from spreading. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment help prevent the onset of disability and deformity associated with leprosy. There are no medical grounds for isolating a person with the disease.

Yet people with leprosy continue to face social discrimination, even after they are cured. Whole families are marginalized, sometimes with devastating results.

Drugs can cure leprosy, but only greater public awareness can end the stigma it attracts.

Without the social stigma, more people would come forward for treatment. New cases would be detected sooner and be less likely to result in disability. The burden of leprosy in the world would be reduced.

We affirm the right of people affected by leprosy to receive treatment at any hospital. We call for an end to discrimination against them and their families. We support their right to live in dignity as full members of the community with equal access to opportunities and enjoying all their human rights.

Throughout its long history, leprosy has been one of the world's most misunderstood and stigmatizing diseases. Over the centuries, countless millions afflicted by leprosy have been shunned by their fellow human beings in the belief that they are cursed with a highly contagious, disabling, untreatable disease.

Thanks to modern chemotherapy, leprosy, or Hansen's disease, is now completely curable. With early diagnosis and treatment, it is not disabling. Nor is leprosy highly transmissible; there is no need to isolate anyone with the disease, exclude him or her from their place of work or ban them from public office.

But old images of leprosy die hard and continue to shape popular perceptions of the disease—perceptions reinforced by stigmatizing terminology. For those that are the object of such prejudice, the social, economic and psychological consequences can be devastating.

Helping to perpetuate these outdated stereotypes are various laws, customs and regulations that discriminate against people affected by leprosy in different parts of the world.

There are no medical grounds for segregating or otherwise singling out a person affected by leprosy. Therefore, any laws that sanction such practices are without foundation.

We call for the abolition of all laws that discriminate on the basis of leprosy, we condemn all acts of discrimination against people affected by leprosy and we support the right of people affected by leprosy to live in dignity enjoying all their basic human rights.
Leprosy is one of the world's oldest diseases. Caused by a bacillus, it is completely curable today with modern drug therapy. Contrary to widespread belief, leprosy is not hereditary, it is not untreatable, it is not highly infectious and it is not divine punishment.

Yet because of the myths and misconceptions that surround leprosy, discrimination is never far away. This discrimination can limit opportunities for education, employment and marriage. It can restrict access to public services. It can marginalize entire families.

In December 2010, recognizing the disease's devastating social, economic and psychological impact, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution on elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members.

The resolution is accompanied by principles and guidelines and reaffirms that people affected by leprosy and their family members should be treated as individuals with dignity and are entitled to all human rights and fundamental freedoms under customary international law, relevant conventions and national constitutions and laws.

As national human rights institutions, we applaud the U.N. resolution and condemn all leprosy-related human rights violations. We uphold the right of people affected by leprosy to live in dignity, free from discrimination. We pledge our support to help to bring down the remaining barriers of stigma and prejudice that stand in their way.
Leprosy is curable, yet myths and misconceptions about the disease persist. Because of the stigma, people affected by leprosy face social rejection—even after they are cured. Whole families are marginalized, sometimes with devastating results.

As the world’s largest group of health professionals, nurses are committed to alleviating physical and mental suffering and promoting the health of all people, without prejudice. We understand the importance of equitable access to health services and of educating the public about disease—especially a misunderstood disease such as leprosy.

Our message is clear: leprosy can be cured. Drugs kill the bacteria. Early diagnosis and treatment prevent disability. There is no reason to isolate anyone with the disease.

Nurses affirm the right of people affected by leprosy to receive treatment and care. We call for an end to the discrimination they and their families face.

We support the right of people affected by leprosy to live in dignity as full members of the community, enjoying equal access to all their human rights.
JCI (Junior Chamber International) is the leading global network of active young citizens, dedicated to creating sustainable impact in their communities by seeking targeted solutions to local challenges.

From ancient times, leprosy has been feared around the world as a disfiguring disease without a cure — a divine punishment, even. Through the ages, individuals with leprosy have suffered harsh discrimination and inequalities.

Thanks to the development of effective drug therapy, leprosy is now completely curable — and the cure is free. With early diagnosis and treatment, the disabling effects of the disease can be prevented.

However, the stigma and discrimination associated with leprosy remain deeply rooted. Individuals with the disease, those who have been cured and even their families find themselves treated unjustly, with their opportunities for education, employment, marriage and other forms of participation in society restricted.

Myths and misconceptions are what prompt this stigma. In order to remove these misperceptions about leprosy, and eliminate the stigma and discrimination, people need to be properly informed about the disease.

We will use our international reach to condemn and fight against the discrimination that individuals affected by leprosy experience.

We will support activities to ensure that the next generation is properly educated and informed to eliminate the discrimination.

We will aspire for a world in which individuals affected by leprosy and their families can live free from discrimination and enjoy the same rights and opportunities as everybody else in order to reach their greatest potential.
Leprosy, a disease once feared for its disfiguring effects, is completely curable today with modern drug therapy. Over 16 million people have been treated worldwide. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment help prevent physical impairment. Yet mistaken beliefs about the disease persist, perpetuating social and economic discrimination.

In different parts of the world, people affected by leprosy and their family members can find themselves:

- deprived of opportunities for education, employment, and marriage;
- marginalized or rejected by society;
- stigmatized by outdated laws and practices based on discredited assumptions.

We, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, firmly believe that solutions to the challenges facing persons affected by leprosy must be firmly embedded in human rights, as a key component of democracy and development.

We condemn all forms of discrimination on the grounds that a person has or once had leprosy.

We recognize and support the 2010 United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons Affected by Leprosy and Their Family Members, and are committed to contributing to the implementation of its accompanying principles and guidelines.

We urge all Parliaments to promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies to end stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy, and to ensure that:

- Persons affected by leprosy and their family members are treated at all times with dignity and respect;
- Persons affected by leprosy and their family members are fully represented and involved in political discussions and decisions which affect them, and that they benefit from the full enjoyment of their human rights;
- We help create a society in which every individual is free and equal in dignity and human rights.

Launched in Delhi, India, on January 30, 2017, Global Appeal is an initiative of Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination, Japanese Government Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy and Chairman of The Nippon Foundation.
Global Appeal 2018
To End Stigma and Discrimination Against Persons Affected by Leprosy

Disabled Peoples’ International (DPI) is an organization open to persons with disabilities of any kind. Our goal is an inclusive society in which everyone has rights and can participate in society. Both DPI and The Nippon Foundation are committed to this goal.

“Nothing about us without us” is the guiding principle of our activities to realize an inclusive society.

DPI pledges to work together with the leprosy community to raise awareness of the disease to encourage a proper understanding of leprosy and respect for the human rights of the individuals and families it affects.

We will work together with persons affected by leprosy to speak out and advocate for greater social participation. In working towards our common goal of an inclusive society, we will share knowledge and experience with persons affected by leprosy.

Together with persons affected by leprosy, we call on society for the protection of our rights and for equal opportunity.
GLOBAL APPEAL 2019

Each year, thousands of people are newly diagnosed with leprosy. Depending on their circumstances, they will join other persons affected by the disease who face multiple forms of discrimination and barriers to their participation in society.

In order to combat this discrimination, it is necessary to demystify leprosy by promoting accurate information—namely that leprosy is curable, that treatment is free and that there is no reason to marginalize anyone with the disease.

Success on this front also requires working to build a more inclusive society.

As the world business organization, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) works to create solutions for sustainable economic growth for the benefit of all through a commitment to international trade, responsible business conduct and a global approach to regulation.

By drawing on our global network of 45 million companies in over 100 countries, we develop and advocate inclusive approaches to important challenges, with the objective of making business work for everyone, every day, everywhere.

That includes those affected by leprosy because everyone deserves a chance to fulfil his or her potential, and the barriers of stigma and discrimination should not be allowed to limit their opportunities.

Together with The Nippon Foundation and other stakeholders, the ICC is committed to a truly inclusive society in which the rights of each individual are respected and every person can live with dignity.
Global Appeal 2020
To End Stigma and Discrimination against Persons Affected by Leprosy

Leprosy is a curable disease. But it is not just a simple health issue. Many people affected by the disease are marginalized because of stigma and discrimination. Their opportunities in life are restricted, even after being cured. Society’s prejudice has a negative impact on their families, too. The International Paralympic Committee aspires to a more inclusive society for people through Para sport.

It aims to challenge stereotypes and transform attitudes, breaking down social barriers toward people with a disability. Diversity and inclusion are core to what the IPC stands for.

We are committed to the creation of a just and equitable society.

In this Paralympic year 2020, we stand with persons affected by leprosy in calling for an end to stigma and discrimination.

Together we seek to realize a society that respects the human dignity and fundamental freedoms of all its members.

About Global Appeal
The Global Appeal is an annual message to raise awareness of leprosy and to call for an end to the discrimination against persons affected by leprosy. First launched in 2006 by Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination and chairman of The Nippon Foundation, it is issued every January to coincide with World Leprosy Day, and endorsed each year by world leaders and organizations in different fields, including religion, business, education, medicine, and law. Launched in Tokyo, Japan on January 27, 2020, Global Appeal in its 15th year is endorsed by the International Paralympic Committee.
Global Appeal Gallery

Images from some of the fifteen Global Appeal launch ceremonies and related events that have been held between 2006 and 2020 in countries around the world.

Launching the first Global Appeal (New Delhi, 2006)

Faith leaders call for the healing to begin (London, 2008)

Drugs can cure leprosy, but only awareness can end stigma (Sao Paulo, 2012)

Photo exhibition tells a story of everyday lives (Jakarta, 2014)

Pledges against discrimination (New Delhi, 2017)

Ramvarai Sah (center), a person affected by leprosy from India, fosters mutual understanding at a side event (Tokyo, 2016)

Left: Javed Abidi promotes an inclusive society (New Delhi, 2018)

Right: Violinist and Paralympian Minami Ito (Tokyo, 2020)

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