

FOR THE ELIMINATION OF LEPROSY

Leprosy is Curable.

Free Treatment is Available.

**Social Discrimination has
no Place.**

A MESSAGE FROM THE SPECIAL AMBASSADOR Africa's Political Commitment



Meeting with the president of Nigeria, H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo

Many countries in Africa have had to deal with debilitating problems, ranging from a heavy debt burden to poverty, hunger, epidemics and civil wars. Of the 54 countries in Africa, nine are leprosy endemic, with three (Madagascar, Mozambique and Angola) having a prevalence rate of more than three per 10,000 inhabitants. In my position as special ambassador for the elimination of leprosy, I visited these three countries during the past year to meet with the top leaders and discuss the leprosy situation there. I was also able to meet the leaders of six African countries while they were in Japan for the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD III), held in late September.

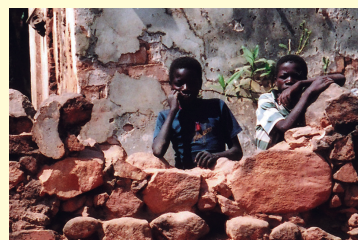
In the meetings I had with these leaders, I urged each of them to strengthen leprosy elimination measures in their countries, promoting educational and medical efforts. They pointed out the fear people have regarding the disease and the resulting discrimination. They reassured me of their commitment to further devote their efforts toward the removal of such stigma and the reintegration of those affected by leprosy into society. The role played by these political leaders is vital in generating social movement for the elimination of the disease and the stigma associated with it.

Yohei Sasakawa
WHO Special Ambassador
President, The Nippon Foundation

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