

U.N. Sub-Commission Takes Up Leprosy

Working paper on discrimination to be presented at next year's session

This August, at its 56th session, the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights agreed to commission a working paper on "discrimination against leprosy victims and their families."

The Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights,

Recalling article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,

Recalling also article 2 of the Universal Declaration, which provides that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Recalling further article 5 of the Universal Declaration, which provides that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,

Concerned that millions of people suffer from discrimination resulting from physical and mental illness or handicap,

Concerned in particular that tens of millions of people suffer not only from leprosy as a disease, which is scientifically and medically



Scene from last year's Sub-Commission meeting

proven to be curable and manageable, but also from political, legal, economic or social discrimination and isolation as a result of misunderstanding and indifference, and lack of legislative or administrative measures to prohibit such discrimination and to protect and remedy the victims,

Requests Mr. Yozo Yokota to prepare, without financial implications, a preliminary working paper on discrimination against leprosy victims and their families, to be submitted to the fifty-seventh session of the Sub-Commission under the agenda item entitled "Prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities."

www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/eng/leprosy/img/2004666/resolution.pdf ■

FOR THE ELIMINATION OF LEPROSY

Publisher

Yohei Sasakawa

Executive Editor

Tatsuya Tanami

Editor

Jonathan Lloyd-Owen

Associate Editors

Akiko Nozawa,

James Huffman

Layout

Eiko Nishida

Photographer

Natsuko Tominaga

Editorial Office

5th Floor, Nippon

Foundation Building,

1-2-2 Akasaka, Minato-ku,

Tokyo 107-8404

Tel: +81-3-6229-5601

Fax: +81-3-6229-5602

smhf_an@tnfb.jp

With support from:

Sasakawa Memorial

Health Foundation,

The Nippon Foundation

www.nippon-foundation.or.jp

FROM THE EDITORS

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

As reported on this page, the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights has agreed to study the issue of leprosy and human rights. Should this lead eventually to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopting a resolution on the matter, then an historic landmark will have been achieved.

But even as progress is made on tackling the social aspects of leprosy, there is still much work to be done to eliminate the disease itself. Much of this newsletter is devoted to Brazil, where many challenges remain if the country is to achieve the goal of elimination by the end of 2005. But while Brazil has its own specific problems, as various articles point out, the lessons it offers other countries are there.

For a start, all endemic countries would do well to review their statistics and ask whether

they present an accurate picture of the leprosy situation. Effective elimination strategies and appropriate levels of funding depend on knowing the extent of the problem and what needs to be addressed.

Secondly, unequivocal commitment from the top is essential to provide the momentum necessary to move closer to elimination. President Inacio da Silva's expressed intention to tackle leprosy offers hope that Brazil will make up for lost time and get the job done after several years of government inertia.

And thirdly, the role of NGOs is very important in picking up the slack when government priorities waver, as the efforts of MORHAN have shown over two decades.

A year from now, we hope we can report more good news from Geneva and real progress from Brazil.