

FOR THE Elimination OF Leprosy

- Leprosy is curable
- Free treatment is available
- Social discrimination has no place



Mrs. Laxmibai Surve, a newly appointed Lokdoot (special communicator) from Maharashtra, addresses a conference in Delhi in January. (see page 4)

A MESSAGE FROM THE GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

Overcoming Differences

A mere eight months remain to achieve our common goal of eliminating leprosy as a public health problem.

Regarding the efficacy of the WHO elimination target, I am aware that opinions differ. But because it is an achievable target, and because we are almost there, I believe we should go all out to succeed as it represents an important milestone along the road to our ultimate goal of a world without leprosy.

Those of us working for elimination should think of this common goal as our own, review our activities in this light and plan on walking the final mile together.

It would be unfortunate if at this critical point there were disagreements among the partners that prevented them from cooperating fully. In particular, I would like to see WHO and the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP), who both play a central role, collaborate closely together.

In the past, ILEP members were excluded from the Global Alliance for the Elimination of Leprosy.

At the recent African Leprosy Congress, however, I was delighted to see WHO approach ILEP about improving their relationship. I sincerely hope that both sides can now set aside past differences, build a better framework for cooperation and act as one.

We must not forget that those who stand to suffer most from discord among partners are people affected by leprosy.

Further, our efforts alone won't be enough. The active participation of recovered persons is essential. We also need the involvement of organizations, politicians, journalists, administrators, educators, businesspeople and NGOs in spreading awareness about the disease throughout society. This requires a social movement that makes leprosy everybody's issue, not just the specialists' and experts'.

If we can involve the rest of society, starting from a nucleus of committed partners, this will serve us in good stead for the challenges ahead and hasten the arrival of a world without leprosy.

— Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador

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