

FOR THE Elimination OF Leprosy

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



Oda Seleman, 66, and his wife Fatuma Hassan, 60, both recovered persons, outside their home in Morogoro region, Tanzania, in April.

A MESSAGE FROM THE GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

CONTENTS

We Mustn't Give Up

While the elimination strategy has made great strides in recent years, we must be prepared to accept that some countries will not achieve the target by the end of 2005. With hurdles such as poverty, armed conflict and social stigma to surmount, the path to eliminating leprosy as a public health problem has not been easy.

But while I am naturally disappointed at the delay, I am not discouraged. This is only a temporary setback. I take heart from the fact that endemic countries are working to keep leprosy high on the public health agenda, despite the burden posed by other diseases such as TB, malaria and HIV/AIDS. In recent meetings with health ministers in Geneva, I was assured of their commitment; in visits to their countries, I have seen the efforts that are being made.

The countries that have yet to achieve elimination are determined to build on the progress they have made. We must help them maintain the momentum so that they will eventually pass this important milestone.

During the first half of this year, I have traveled once to Brazil, twice to Africa and three times to

India to stand shoulder to shoulder with those working for elimination. India, which has the largest number of leprosy patients in the world, is likely to succeed in realizing what was once a far-off dream. For this, India's central and state governments, the WHO, the media and NGOs deserve much praise for the part they have played.

Other countries, too, have made remarkable advances. Given the situation even five years ago, we have come a long way.

Achieving elimination requires a lot of hard work, but as the countries that have already achieved it have shown, sustained efforts bring results. Today I am more committed than ever to working with the remaining endemic countries — their governments, their media, their frontline health workers — to keep them moving forward.

The WHO elimination strategy has focused attention on tackling leprosy as never before. But it is only an interim goal, which is all the more reason why the remaining countries need to achieve it as soon as they can.

— Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador

Message	1
DR Congo Report The role of community agents	2
Meetings with Ministers 'Our goal is elimination'	3
Ambassador's Journal Travels in Africa and India	4
Column The enemy is stigma	7
News WHO's global strategy for 2006-2010	8
From the Editors	8