

FOR THE Elimination OF Leprosy

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



Nursing aid Valdeci de Lima (right) seen with his mother, Gilda Sabino de Lima, who once had leprosy, in Brazil's Amazonas State.

A MESSAGE FROM THE GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

CONTENTS

The Social Aspect of Leprosy

In July I visited Brazil, where the leprosy prevalence rate has dropped to 1.48 and the country expects to achieve elimination either this year or early in 2007. Under the leadership of President Lula, Brazil has set up a special committee to deal with both the medical and social aspects of leprosy. This committee includes representatives from the health ministry, justice ministry, education ministry and the special secretariat for human rights, as well as NGOs, and is working to resolve the outstanding social problems facing affected persons. I was encouraged to learn that in forming this committee the president had taken a cue from the recent Global Appeal.

The problem of discrimination is still deep-rooted in Brazil. Visiting an out-of-the-way location in the Amazon, I met people who had concealed the fact they had leprosy and went elsewhere for treatment to preserve their anonymity. I learned of many examples where leprosy has been an excuse for human rights violations in child custody battles or disputes over property inheritance.

It is my hope that the new UN Human Rights

Council will take up leprosy as a formal item on its agenda at an early date. I want to see it publish a set of effective guidelines for tackling the problem of leprosy-related stigma and discrimination. These should have the goal of dispelling misperceptions about leprosy, assisting people affected by the disease and their families to regain their dignity, and accelerating their reintegration into society.

As I mentioned in the previous issue, my mandate as WHO Goodwill Ambassador includes for the first time the elimination of stigma and discrimination. The significance of this lies in the fact that the WHO is thinking about leprosy not only in a medical context but in a social context, too. At this stage in the fight, it is essential that the two go hand in hand. To engage the Human Rights Council, and to involve society at large, the WHO, governments, NGOs and people affected by leprosy themselves must work together for this purpose. I hope I can count on your support in this critical endeavor.

— Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador

Message	1
Nepal Report Country faces dual challenges	2
Global Leprosy Forum Geneva gathering commits to further progress	4
Ambassador's Journal Brazil focused on elimination and beyond	6
News Meeting with Delhi's chief minister; HANDA's 10th anniversary	8
From the Editors	8