

# FOR THE Elimination OF Leprosy

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



Two area residents who came to meet Yohei Sasakawa when he visited a district hospital in Moramanga, Madagascar, in May.

**MESSAGE**

**CONTENTS**

## Earning Trust and Respect

Last month I visited Madagascar to congratulate it on eliminating leprosy as a public health problem and to seek its ongoing commitment to tackling the disease. Over a year earlier, India and Angola also achieved elimination. That leaves just five countries that have yet to attain the WHO goal: Brazil, Nepal, Tanzania, Mozambique and the DR Congo.

India, Angola and Madagascar were all at one time countries for which elimination seemed an impossible dream. But thanks to the dedicated efforts of everyone from political leaders to health workers in the field, these countries were able to pass this milestone—and more quickly than anyone dared hope.

Today leprosy is a relatively small problem alongside the many public health challenges the world faces. But accomplishing elimination based on an internationally recognized numerical target after surmounting many difficulties is no small achievement. It attests to the character of a country and its people, and earns for them the trust and respect of the international community. This breeds confidence, which can serve as a galvanizing force

for tackling other issues.

Starting with the president, all the people I met in Madagascar on my visit expressed their joy and satisfaction. The speaker of Madagascar's Senate told me that it was the first time in the history of his nation that it had been internationally recognized for solving a problem and had someone come specially to congratulate it.

It is my impression that the five countries yet to achieve elimination are steadily moving in the right direction. In Mozambique, which I visited after Madagascar, eliminating leprosy is now a national goal designated by the president and by the Cabinet. I would like to urge all the remaining countries to treat this as a national goal.

But achieving leprosy elimination is not just about reaching a target; and it is not an end in itself. For countries that have achieved elimination, and those still striving for it, the tasks remain the same: to reach out to committed partners, work closely with them and ensure that progress is sustained.

— Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador

<b>Message</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Award</b> 2006 International Gandhi Award	<b>2</b>
<b>Meetings with Ministers</b> 'Good progress is being made'	<b>3</b>
<b>Column</b> Breaking down barriers	<b>4</b>
<b>Human Story</b> Baba Amte: Man with a mission	<b>5</b>
<b>Ambassador's Journal</b> India, Madagascar, Mozambique	<b>6</b>
<b>News</b> Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation	<b>8</b>
<b>From the Editors</b>	<b>8</b>