

FOR THE Elimination OF Leprosy

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



Helping a young patient with his dose of MDT at Uppal Public Health Center in Andhra Pradesh, India

A MESSAGE FROM THE GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

Let's Pass This Milestone Together

It falls to us to win the fight against leprosy, a disease that has caused human suffering for thousands of years. This year, 2005, is the final year to meet the World Health Organization target of bringing the prevalence rate below 1 case per 10,000 people in every country. Whether or not 2005 will be regarded as a milestone in history depends on how effectively we make use of the remaining months, and how we choose to traverse the final mile of our journey.

Over the past two years, I have used this newsletter to raise a variety of issues. These include integrating treatment of leprosy within the general health services, seeing that MDT reaches everyone who needs it, reexamining statistics, taking up discrimination against people affected by leprosy as a human rights issue, and encouraging recovered persons to become involved in social movements. I have been heartened by the numerous positive responses I have received from you.

I am also gratified that the three messages — leprosy is curable; treatment is free; social discrimination has no place — are being spread

far and wide, again with your help.

However, these messages must be universally acknowledged if we are to cure society of the disease of discrimination even as we eliminate the scourge of leprosy. For that to happen, still greater efforts will be necessary.

Should this year end on a successful note, I pledge to continue my fight against leprosy. Achieving the elimination goal brings with it new challenges to sustain what we have achieved and ensure the dignified reintegration of patients, recovered persons and their families into society.

But unless we first pass the elimination milestone, our activities have no future. It is essential to succeed if we are to move toward the new goals that are forming.

So it is down to us whether or not 2005 will be a year to remember. Please, everyone: let's renew our determination to eliminate leprosy as a public health problem, join together and pass this milestone to the future.

— Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador

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