Letter to the Editor

LEPROSY ELIMINATION CAMPAIGN (LEC) IN HODEIDAH PROVINCE, REPUBLIC OF YEMEN, 1997–1998: RESULTS AND TREATMENT OUTCOME

In the March 2004 issue of *Leprosy Review*¹ A.B. Al Dobai and colleagues described the results of a leprosy elimination campaign in Hodeidah Province in the Republic of Yemen.

The presentation clearly illustrates achievement of the ultimate objective of LECs i.e. detecting leprosy cases of consequence and curing them with MDT.

The finding of cases in excess of the estimated hidden cases of consequence favours the argument raised by Andreas Kalk on estimation of hidden prevalence in the same issue of *Leprosy Review*.² Basing the estimated hidden prevalence on the product of the proportion of disabled and the number of new cases ‘excludes mathematically’ any hidden prevalence larger than the annual number of newly detected cases.

Diagnosing and curing leprosy is but only one out of three elements of a leprosy elimination campaign. It would have been interesting to know about the results in terms of capacity building for the general health staff of the many health units found in this province as well as the involvement of the community. The decrease in annual new case detection is not necessarily a reflection of improvements in this area.

Mention of the characteristics of the cases of consequence detected during and after the LEC, particularly how they were detected, their disability status and proportion of children, broadens the evidence base in favour of the feeling that the LEC had resulted in clearing the backlog cases.

These details may be a great help to others that would like to emulate this success story.

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References