

‘Leaving no-one behind’ – As coronavirus runs rampant in developing countries, what happens to those who already struggle accessing healthcare?

As COVID-19 continues to spread across the globe, enabling access to healthcare for everyone is more important than ever.

Today, international leprosy charity, Lepra, signed a contract with the UK’s Crown Agents who are implementing the Department for International Development’s (DFID) ASCEND project (Accelerating the Sustainable Control and Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases) to train health workers in advocacy communications and social mobilisation for lymphatic filariasis (LF) in Bangladesh.

Serious disability due to the painful swelling of limbs, scrota and breasts can often result from LF, which is sometimes called ‘elephantiasis.’ It is a parasitic disease caused by microscopic thread-like worms, which are transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. The offspring of the worms destroy the lymphatic system of the body.

Half the population of Bangladesh live at risk of LF, which is widespread in 19 districts of the country. With just three doctors and three nurses per 10,000 people, Bangladesh is ill - equipped to deal with these health issues; health system strengthening is key to providing the healthcare required.

With a budget of £650,000 and a timeframe of 7 months, Lepra aims to bolster Bangladesh’s health system by training up to 5,500 health workers in LF Morbidity Management & Disability Prevention (MMDP) care.

ASCEND and Lepra are committed to implementing a 'leave no-one behind' approach across all programme activities. This means putting those who are most at risk of falling behind first, and giving a voice to those affected by the disease.

Through community engagement, health worker training and facilitating access to disability management and prevention services, the project aims to improve the lives of those suffering from or at risk of LF, irrespective of race, religion, cast, gender, culture, ethnicity, disability, wealth, privilege or prejudice.

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Notes for Editors

About Lepra and lymphatic filariasis

Lepra is a UK-based international charity specialising in leprosy and lymphatic filariasis (LF). Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II became Patron of Lepra in 1952, shortly after the death of her father King George VI, who had been Lepra's Patron since the charity was founded in 1924.

Leprosy affects over 7 million of the most vulnerable people in the world, causing life-changing disabilities and attracting terrible prejudice and discrimination. **But there is a cure.**

LF affects an estimated 40 million people in the world, and an estimated 893 million are at risk of infection.

Lepra works in India, Bangladesh, Mozambique and Zimbabwe by finding, diagnosing and treating people affected by leprosy and LF. By raising awareness, pushing for early detection and supporting people living with disabilities, Lepra works towards a day when these diseases no longer destroy lives.

Last year, the charity reached 283,000 people through diagnosis, treatment and care. It reached a further 1.7 million people through health education and events to raise awareness of leprosy and LF.

Find out more about Lepra on its website and social media channels:

Website: www.lepra.org.uk

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LepraUK>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LEPRAUK/>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/LEPRAHinA>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/LepraUK/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/lepra/>