

May 2019

LEPRA CELEBRATES NEW MENTAL MOTIVATORS PROJECT TO MARK MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK 2019

This Mental Health Awareness Week, international charity Lepra is calling for greater awareness about the high percentage of mental health issues, including anxiety and depression, which develop after people are diagnosed with leprosy or lymphatic filariasis (LF). To mark the week, Lepra is celebrating launching a brand new project, Mental Motivators, in Bangladesh. The project encourages people affected by disability due to leprosy and LF to help others within their community with mental health issues.

Lepra's research has found that 53% of newly diagnosed cases of leprosy and LF result in the individual developing anxiety or depression, however mental health services for the rural population in Bangladesh is scarce.

Risk factors for depression and anxiety in the context of these diseases include disability, discrimination, prejudice, displacement, marriage status and unemployment.

In Bangladesh, Lepra currently coordinates self-care groups, bringing together those with leprosy and LF to learn physical care that helps members manage their disability.

Mental Motivators will be individuals selected from these self-care groups and will provide peer support to people with a disability. They will be trained in basic counselling skills, such as empathy and listening, and also on disability rights. Mental Motivators will support people who have indicated they would like someone to talk to, alongside pro-actively looking out for group members who seem to be struggling more than others, or who may seem withdrawn or unhappy.

Mental Motivators will be key agents in improving mental health and will provide an innovative initiative focused on the holistic needs of people affected by a disease. Mental Motivators will also act as a 'signpost' for their group, linking group members to employment and social opportunities.

Having good mental health is critical to being able to take good care of your physical health, and to engage constructively with others in the community.

Geoff Prescott, Chief Executive at Lepra says, "Leprosy is a mental health disaster. For us, Mental Health Week is about highlighting that 1 in 2 people suffer from mental health issues caused by leprosy and LF diagnosis. We are delighted to be launching our new Mental Motivators project, providing both physical and mental health care to those suffering from leprosy or LF."

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Notes for Editors

About Lepra and leprosy

Lepra is a UK-based international specialist charity that has been working to beat leprosy since 1924. 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.**

Lepra works to beat leprosy in India, Bangladesh and Mozambique by finding, diagnosing and treating people affected by the disease. By raising awareness, pushing for early detection and supporting people living with disabilities caused by leprosy, Lepra works towards a day when this disease no longer destroys lives.

Last year, the charity reached 301,000 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 other neglected diseases.

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/>