

Leprosy on the rise at alarming rates – Lepra attends International Leprosy Congress in Manila with concerns over the increasing numbers of leprosy cases

This year will mark the 20th International Leprosy Congress and the first time the Philippines has hosted the event.

Lepra, a UK based international leprosy charity, has been invited to the congress to continue the global conversation on leprosy and to accelerate the world towards a zero transmission rate of the disease.

Lepra is concerned about the rising numbers of leprosy cases, and has commissioned active case finding activities to better understand the rising transmission rates.

Since the introduction of multi drug therapy (MDT) almost thirty years ago, the prevalence of leprosy has reduced significantly.

However, there has been evidence of an increase in leprosy cases throughout the world despite the World Health Organisation's declaration of elimination in 2000.

Geoff Prescott, Chief Executive of Lepra, has said that this conference will help tackle the challenges faced by those affected by leprosy.

“We continue to be concerned by the rising numbers of leprosy cases. Over the past number of years, we have commissioned active case finding activities throughout India and have been shocked by the high numbers of leprosy going undetected.

“These new cases are a worrying development and, with our findings, have brought India's prevalence rate above WHO's initial elimination level.

“In a world where leprosy is curable, it remains a tragedy that so many people are living with undiagnosed Leprosy, afraid to get help.”

Around 60% of the world's leprosy burden rests with India and hundreds of thousands of people are living with the disease.

Lepra work with people in India, Bangladesh and Mozambique to find, diagnose and rehabilitate people affected by leprosy.

The 20th International Leprosy Congress provides a platform for international researchers, health staff, partners and individuals affected by Leprosy to share their experience and knowledge. It aims to foster a global partnership to stop the transmission of leprosy.

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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/>

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