

Mental Health and leprosy: how one charity is responding to the mental health crisis in Bangladesh for people affected by leprosy.

Over 50% of people affected by leprosy suffer from depression or anxiety.

Lepra's Mental Motivator project ensures that these people have the support they need and can access the services they require, ultimately helping them regain their independence.

Baillie Gifford's continued support of the project, first launched in 2019, ensures that those under Lepra's care receive the social and psychological support they need especially during these difficult times.

During the COVID-19 crisis, mental health has become a serious public health concern, with more people than ever requiring intervention and access to services.

People affected by leprosy are already subject to unfair prejudice and misunderstanding across the world. They are often excluded from communities and forced apart from their families and friends.

Taslima, a Mental Motivator from Bangladesh, works with other Lepra staff to ensure that people affected by leprosy have access to the necessary support services for their mental health.

She says, "It is very tough work, because people in Bangladesh have limited knowledge of mental health but life is worthless without good mental health."

Mental Motivators are trained to improve the knowledge surrounding mental health and help support the mental health needs of people affected by leprosy. This has become even more important during the pandemic, where isolation is rife across all communities.

Lepra's research shows that more men affected by leprosy than women suffer from depression and anxiety and that people in the 40-60 age category are generally more susceptible.

The training Mental Motivators receive includes stress management, listening skills and management of depression and anxiety. These are skills that we aim to bring to all 495 Self Help Groups of people affected by leprosy, LF and other disabling diseases that Lepra has helped establish in Bangladesh.

Lepra will continue to grow the Mental Motivator project, by increasing the amount of people trained in key districts across Bangladesh, and increase awareness of leprosy and the importance of good mental health for people affected.

Lepra is striving towards a day when leprosy is no longer a disease of consequence, a day where being diagnosed with leprosy does not impact your ability to live a fulfilling, independent life.

Initiatives like the Mental Motivator Project makes this a real possibility for the future and restores the self-respect, independence and confidence of people affected by leprosy.

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For more information, please contact Lepra:

Eleanor Brennan – Communications and Marketing Lead

EleanorB@lepra.org.uk

+44 7419 749698

Notes for Editors

About Lepra and leprosy

Our Vision - A world free from prejudice and disability due to leprosy

We are secular, open to all religions, races, classes, gender. A positive decision to favour no one and everyone. We support those who are subject to the most neglect from existing services, as well as continuing to work with those who are not specifically marginalised or ignored.

Since 1924, we prioritised being evidence-led. Being evidence-led culminated in the adoption of Dapsone after it was observed being used by veterinarians. Thus Lepra working with the Indian Government, became the first to find and use a cure for leprosy. Being evidence-led in the contemporary context, means remaining committed to doing what is best for people affected by leprosy.

Lepra works internationally across the leprosy spectrum including transmission, disability prevention and medical rehabilitation (DPMR) and advocacy. Active case finding is critical, a fact which people now recognise as the COVID-19 pandemic rages.

Lepra works to beat leprosy in India, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Zimbabwe 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 260,893 people through diagnosis, treatment and care. It reached a further 995,659 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/>