

PRESS RELEASE; FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

25th May 2022

Lepra and Effect Hope, working together to Beat leprosy in Bangladesh

Lepra UK and Effect Hope, a Canadian global health organisation, have launched Phase 4 of the “Proyash” project, a functional and fully integrated response to leprosy management using a **Health System Strengthening (HSS)** approach. This will support the achievement of the Bangladesh government’s vision of a **leprosy-free country**.

The project will be aligned with the WHO Neglected Tropical Diseases Roadmap, the Global Leprosy Strategy, and the work of the National Leprosy Program (NLP) in Bangladesh. The project aims to improve the health of **163,875** people affected by leprosy through three primary means:

- Access to quality health care
- Active case finding
- Increasing the demand for services by people affected and at risk of leprosy

Phase One of the Proyash project commenced in 2013 and since its inception, has strengthened health systems at both a national and a local level. Phase 4 is scheduled to run until 31 March 2025 and will build upon the existing strong relationships, deepening the Government’s commitment to provide health, education, and social support through the creation of sustainable services. It will be delivered in 11 districts of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has been a long-standing priority area for Lepra’s work; it is one of the poorest and most densely populated countries in the world but has the fourth highest number of leprosy cases. There is a serious lack of access to essential health services; WHO estimates suggest there are only **3.05 doctors per 10,000 people**.

People affected with leprosy face daily discrimination and this, combined with a shortage of Government healthcare staff to find new cases means that for many, diagnosis is delayed. This delay results in **10% of people affected by leprosy developing a disability**; a disability that could have been avoided with early case detection.

The Proyash project will remove barriers to those people seeking care and encourage earlier diagnosis. Educational campaigns and training programmes will be delivered which will see leprosy care fully integrated into the Government healthcare system, increasing capacity through improved knowledge and skills, whilst creating sustainable services. The project will also bolster referral systems and supply chains for footwear, assistive devices, and medication, ensuring that people affected by leprosy can access the support they need. Additionally, a significant part of this programme is to advocate for the rights of people affected by leprosy; ensuring they can access services such as mental health support, rehabilitation, and government financial assistance.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About leprosy

Leprosy is a communicable disease, caused by bacterium, which affects the skin and peripheral nerves of people. If left undiagnosed or untreated it can cause severe disability. A diagnosis often results in severe prejudice and discrimination. Leprosy can incubate in a human anywhere from 6 months to 20 years; and as a result, it is often difficult to diagnose the disease until it has already caused significant damage.

Millions of people are affected, with numbers continuing to rise. For over 7 million people across the world, leprosy causes damage to their health, livelihoods, and futures. 600 people are diagnosed with leprosy every day and 50 of those are children.

About Effect Hope

Effect Hope is a Canadian global health organisation that partners with others to bring hope and restoration to people affected by neglected tropical diseases like leprosy. These diseases cause illness and disabilities, perpetuate poverty, invite discrimination, and eliminate hope. For over 130 years, Effect Hope has worked together with affected communities and people to find innovative solutions to ensure that those living with neglected tropical diseases can thrive. With partners and supporters, Effect Hope seeks to create a world where people overcome neglected tropical diseases like leprosy – A world full of hope.

About Lepra

Lepra is a UK-based charity working in India and Bangladesh to change the lives of people affected by leprosy. Established in 1924, the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association (BELRA) was inaugurated by H.R.H The Prince of Wales at Mansion House in the City of London. We've been known simply as Lepra since 2008. Working in India and Bangladesh, we find, diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate people affected with leprosy with specialists diagnosing leprosy by using skin test patch anaesthesia, skin smears and non-invasive sensory investigation. We also work tirelessly to fight the prejudice and discrimination they face in their daily lives.

To find out more about our work, look at our website www.lepra.org.uk or via our social media channels



<https://www.facebook.com/LepraUK/>



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<https://youtube.com/c/LepraOrgUk>

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