

June 2019

STUART PAVER VISITS VITAL SHOE-VAN IN BIHAR, INDIA

Stuart Paver, Managing Director of Pavers Shoes and ambassador at UK-based international charity Lepra has recently visited Bihar, India to see their shoe-van in action, after donating £33,673 through The Pavers Foundation to Lepra earlier this year. This donation was used to fund Lepra's second mobile shoe-van which delivers custom-made shoes to help those affected by leprosy and lymphatic filariasis (LF) in Telangana.

The shoe-van allows specialist shoemakers to travel to communities to design, make and fit the custom-made shoes. The van includes a sewing machine, a generator, a grinder for pressing soles and materials to make bespoke footwear. It also includes beds and cooling fans so the technician and driver can live in the van whilst covering the long distances between each stop.

Each year, Lepra provides over 26,000 people with custom-made shoes, which allow people to go about their daily lives with reduced pain and prejudice. Importantly, they enable individuals to continue their work and earn a living, and children to return to education – preventing them from falling further into poverty.

Speaking about his visit on BBC Look North, Stuart said:

“I met one lady who'd lived in a cart being pushed around for two years, she'd had two pairs of sandals, she was now walking, taking her children to school and going to the markets...it completely changed her life... It's amazing that you meet these people that have absolutely nothing and they're really happy to share everything with you... It's a humbling experience...”

In the last year, the shoes have evolved with different styles and colours available, meaning crucially, these now look like other shoes that can be purchased at a local market. This is priceless to people who are worried about being recognised by their shoes as leprosy or LF patients and reduces prejudice and discrimination.

Just £6 can pay for a pair of these life changing shoes, restoring independence, comfort and dignity to people with disabilities caused by 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/>