

Rotary



lepra
We will beat
leprosy together

LEPROSYVIEW

A collaborative newsletter brought to you by Lepra and the Rotary Clubs of Delhi South, New Delhi, Delhi Southend, Regency Next and Stratford UK.

Our plan of action

- ▶ **Raise awareness** of leprosy and the importance of **screening** to the general public, health professionals, and decision makers.
- ▶ To provide treatment and support to people affected by leprosy.
- ▶ Engage with stakeholders to create a **call to action to make leprosy a disease of little consequence**, through an integrated communications approach.
- ▶ **Dispel myths and misconceptions** and build support for people affected by leprosy in various stages across India through effective storytelling.

Current status

India accounts for more than 60% of the global cases of leprosy. To tackle this issue, the Rotary Club of Delhi South and Lepra have partnered to form the *Leprosy Control Project*, with the aim of making leprosy a disease of little consequence. The project will be spread over 10 years, and is to cover the whole of India, with the first phase concentrating on Delhi. Our other partners are the Rotary Clubs of Delhi Southend and New Delhi.

A Global Grant application was raised in October 2020 by the Rotary Club of Delhi South, with the Rotary Club of Stratford London and Lepra as international partners. Our domestic partners are the Rotary Clubs of New Delhi, Delhi Southend and Delhi Regency Next. **The application was for phase 1 of the project, which has now been approved**, and full details can be found on page 2.

While we awaited approval, the project was kickstarted through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding from Assets Care & Reconstruction Enterprise Limited (ACRE) to Delhi South Rotary Service Foundation (DSRF). This significantly aided the healthcare needs of people affected by leprosy through food support, treatment, self-care kits, footwear, and solar panels for electricity.

#DidYouKnow

Multi drug therapy (MDT) is available free of charge in all endemic countries, and will cure a person of leprosy, but it cannot reverse existing nerve damage. This is why **active case finding** for early detection is so important. Leprosy is a curable disease, that should not end in disability.



Phase 1 funding of the Leprosy Control Project is approved by Rotary International

Rotary International has granted funding for the first phase of the Leprosy Control Project in India; Active Case Finding in Delhi. The Leprosy Control Project began with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in October 2019 between Lepra and the Rotary Clubs of Delhi South (lead club), Delhi Southend and New Delhi. The objective is to control the incidence and impact of leprosy across India, with a focus on awareness, prevention, detection, treatment, and rehabilitation.

This 10 year project will be carried out in three phases, as outlined below. After implementation of the pilot phase in Delhi, the model will become a simple 'lift and shift' for the rest of India.

Phase 1 (one year) will raise awareness of leprosy among the general public, health professionals and decision makers in Delhi. The training of medical practitioners, Rotarians, healthcare staff and volunteers will promote active case finding, referrals for treatment, and support services; building confidence for people affected by leprosy.

Phase 2 (1-5 years) will implement the project to other leprosy endemic regions of India such as Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Telangana, Bihar, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh.

Phase 3 (6-10 years) will implement the project across all of India to reduce the incidence and impact of leprosy.

“Leprosy is curable, but if it is not detected early, it can cause a number of complications including permanent disability. Over 200,000 cases of leprosy are diagnosed every year, but there are millions of people that are either not diagnosed at the right time or not reported. There is treatment available that can cure this disease and the prejudice and discrimination attached to it. India accounts for approximately 60% of all leprosy cases. This is why the Leprosy Control Project that we are initiating in India is very important. Once it gets going in Delhi, we hope to scale it up to all other endemic areas.”

- Himanshu Jain, Charter President and Foundation Chair of Rotary Club Stratford UK

Healthcare

Solar panels have been provided and installed free of charge by DSRF at Lajpat Nagar and R.K. Puram leprosy settlements in Delhi. We estimate a saving of Rs. 175,000 (£1700) for each settlement per month. Lunch support has also been provided at both settlements since August 2020.

Physiotherapy and awareness camps are being conducted across leprosy settlements, as well as the distribution of protective footwear and self-care kits.

A mobile ulcer clinic providing physiotherapy, physio training, shoe and self-aid kits has been commissioned, and will be put in to use now that COVID-19 restrictions are easing.

Awareness raising

DSRF has set in place a structured advocacy communications campaign launched across social, print media and radio reaching a far and wide audience.

DSRF social channels launched in February have reached more than **87,000** people on Facebook and garnered **9,200** impressions on Twitter. Media and PR reached **8.2 million** through print and radio campaigns.



Skilling

The pandemic has compromised the ability to hold training programmes. However, training materials are finalised and printed. Four **physiotherapy and disability care camps** have taken place at R.K. Puram, Lajpat Nagar, Tahirpur and Gurgaon leprosy settlements, all located in Delhi. Here we taught self-care practice and physiotherapy sessions to **158 participants** in total.



Our **mobile care clinic van** has enabled us to quickly and easily reach people affected by leprosy across Delhi, providing self-care kits, Micro Cellular Rubber (MCR) footwear (as pictured above), physiotherapy services and training, information and education about the symptoms and treatment of leprosy, and self-care techniques for people who are affected.

Submitted Global Grant proposals

Lepra has partnered with the Rotary Clubs of Stratford UK, and Jubilee Hills Hyderabad, to submit two proposals to Rotary International's Global Grants Fund. Both are for 12-month projects to train up the next generation of specialist leprosy healthcare workers in India.

The first proposal is to develop a **comprehensive training programme on leprosy footwear production and podiatric care** which will include online theory materials, a written training manual, practical demonstrations and on-the-job experience at selected LEpra Society referral centres. The aim is to train a total of **30 new specialist leprosy technicians - 15 shoe technicians and 15 ulcer dressers**.

The second project is to develop a similar programme of training, but on **leprosy physiotherapy care**. If granted funding, **30 new physiotherapy care assistants** will be trained, all of whom will be women with either lived experience of leprosy themselves, or with a family member who has been affected by it. The focus on training women in this role is significant - leprosy is a very personal disease that requires full body examinations to identify anaesthetic patches on the skin. Women and girls are often deterred from coming forward for diagnosis because more often than not, doctors and other healthcare workers are male. Our hope is that by increasing the participation of women in leprosy healthcare settings, women and girls will be more confident in seeking treatment.

Both projects are calculated to cost around USD \$40,000 and we expect to hear within the next few months whether they will be awarded Global Grant funding.

Rotary Action Group for Leprosy

The Rotary Action Group for Leprosy (RAGL) is being initiated by Himanshu Jain, Charter President and Foundation Chair of Rotary Club Stratford UK. RAGL is calling for Rotary and non-Rotary members from across the globe, to join the group and take a stand in the fight against leprosy.

Through a calendar of events spanning across a 12 month time frame, consisting of regular webinars, newsletters, and meetings, the aim is to collectively raise awareness that leprosy still exists, and the prejudice and discrimination against those with leprosy is as prominent today, as it was centuries ago. The Group will follow the work of the Leprosy Control Programme, created by the existing Lepra-Rotary partnership to control leprosy in India.

For more information, or to join RAGL, please email Himanshu Jain hj@rotarystratford.london

What is a Rotary Action Group?

Rotary Action Groups provide assistance and support to clubs and districts in implementing large-scale community development and humanitarian service projects. They comprise Rotarians and any interested individual who have expertise in and a passion for a particular type of service.

For a list of current Rotary Action Groups, visit www.rotary.org/actiongroups. For questions, contact actiongroups@rotary.org

MYTHBUSTER SERIES

Myth

-  Leprosy no longer exists.
-  People affected by leprosy must be isolated away from society.
-  Leprosy only affects the elderly.
-  Leprosy is a curse and a punishment from God.

Fact

Leprosy is the world's oldest disease, **and it does still exist**. Over **200,000** cases globally are officially recorded each year, but that figure will be much higher in reality. Over **7 million** people are living with the affects of leprosy across the globe.

Leprosy is curable, and within the first few days of treatment, the person affected is no longer contagious. Separation from communities is unnecessary and strongly opposed by Lepra and Rotary.

Leprosy can affect all ages at any point in time. Due to an often long incubation period, it can sometimes be between 5-20 years before a person may notice the signs of leprosy.

Leprosy is a communicable disease, caused by bacterium, which affects the skin and peripheral nerves of people. If left untreated, it can cause severe disability and even blindness. It has nothing to do with punishments of sin.

STAY UP TO DATE

Stay up to date on our project work by signing up to our regular emails.

Email Rotary@Lepra.org.uk with your full name and email address, and we will add you to our distribution list.

VOLUNTEER WITH US

We are looking for volunteers in both the UK and India. Join our team and together we will beat leprosy.

Email Rotary@Lepra.org.uk to find out more.

