



**57th World Leprosy Day
31st January 2010**

Message from René Stäheli,
President of the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations

On the occasion of the 57th World Leprosy Day, I am writing to you on behalf of the 14 Members of the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP). I would like to extend greetings to all those affected by leprosy and our thanks to all those individuals, organisations and governments actively working together for a world without leprosy.

Over the last 43 years, ILEP Members have helped cure many millions of people affected by leprosy and continue to support vital leprosy work in 82 countries. In addition to the treatment provided, ILEP Members have also helped to prevent disability, reduce stigma and discrimination, and restore dignity to those affected.

A significant development in the continuing fight against leprosy in 2009 was the finalisation in April 2009 in New Delhi, of WHO's *Enhanced Global Strategy for Further Reducing the Disease Burden due to Leprosy 2011-2015*. This builds on the current Global Strategy and in particular gives an additional focus to the reduction of the level of Grade 2 (i.e. visible) disability. ILEP and its Technical Commission have played a vital consultative role in this process.

The Enhanced Global Strategy agreed a new global target for leprosy *to reduce the rate of new cases with grade two disabilities per 100,000 population by at least 35 % by the end of 2015 compared to the baseline at the beginning of 2011*.

The reduction of the number of new cases with grade-two disability would indicate that leprosy is being detected early before nerve damage can develop. One of the topmost priorities in the fight against leprosy is the avoidance of nerve damage. Therefore this new global target brings a meaningful focus on this most important objective.

Another enhancement agreed at the meeting was *to examine all household contacts of newly detected cases*. The re-introduction of this focussed examination policy is regarded as a positive step that could have the potential to actively detect cases earlier and prevent disabilities.

In addition to these enhancements, the *Enhanced Global Strategy* is further boosted by:


- ⌘ Reinforcement of the humanitarian issues and rights of people affected by leprosy and absolute assurance of equity and social justice

- ⌘ Rigorous advocacy of the use of more dignifying terminology whenever talking about or referring to people affected by leprosy.
- ⌘ Stress on the particular needs for improved leprosy control in underserved areas including urban slums and migrant populations
- ⌘ Highlighting of opportunities to explore public-private partnerships
- ⌘ Assurance of quality clinical services
- ⌘ Training of peripheral health workers so they can refer people affected by leprosy to the appropriate services according to their personal needs
- ⌘ More holistic assessments of the needs of each person affected by leprosy and to provide appropriate support under community based rehabilitation.
- ⌘ Promoting further research in the area of chemoprophylaxis for future use as a control measure and in developing better treatment regimens with shorter duration of treatment.

Underpinning all of the above is the recommitment to the main principles of leprosy control outlined in the current strategy, namely - ***timely detection of new cases and their treatment with multi-drug therapy (MDT) and quality patient care that is equitably distributed, affordable and easily accessible.***

World Leprosy Day this year falls on 31st January and will be marked by many thousands of people around the world who will use this occasion, as I do here on behalf of the ILEP Federation, to recommit to the vision of a World Without Leprosy. ILEP remains convinced of the need to continue working tirelessly together with all its partners to ensure that effective leprosy activities are sustained wherever they are needed. This will require the continued integration of leprosy control activities with other health services. It will require the continued provision of training for all health workers. And since the close links between poverty, exclusion and leprosy are already well documented, ILEP support will continue to be channelled into preventing disability, and promoting socio-economic rehabilitation and community development in a spirit of partnership with leprosy affected persons.

On the occasion of World Leprosy Day we renew our commitment to ensuring that all persons affected by leprosy have access to the necessary treatment, rehabilitation and care, without prejudice and stigma, in a world where all human beings have the right to live their lives with dignity. “A world without leprosy” remains the vision of all partners. Working together, we are confident we can achieve the goal of further reducing the global burden of leprosy by 2015, in line with the target date of the global Millennium Development Goals (MDG-6).



René Stäheli
President of ILEP