

## **WHO global strategy 2011-2015 to focus on reduction of new leprosy cases**

New Delhi 2 Jun 2009: The World Health Organization is urging Member States to focus on reducing the rate of new leprosy cases with grade 2 disabilities per 100 000 population by at least 35% of the 2010 level by the end of 2015. This reduction would indicate that leprosy is being detected early before nerve damage can develop. This was decided at the Global Leprosy Programme Managers' meeting held at the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office in New Delhi on 20-22 April 2009.

"As the disease burden declines further, additional technical and managerial challenges are likely to emerge. The most important challenge is to maintain the gains achieved so far. To do this, we must reaffirm global and national commitment, and not allow complacency to set in" said Dr. Samlee Plianbangchang, Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia.

Another enhancement agreed at the meeting was to examine all household contacts of newly detected cases. Although much has still to be discovered about infection and transmission of leprosy, the re-introduction of this examination policy is regarded as a positive step that could have the potential to detect cases earlier and prevent disabilities.

The current strategy focuses on 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.

A great deal of serious thought, time and effort has been dedicated to finalising this global leprosy strategy.

The delegates at the WHO meeting included over 40 National Leprosy Programme Managers from around the world as well as members of the WHO Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for Leprosy, and experts from both international NGOs and organizations of people affected by leprosy. In addition, there were officials from the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP), Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development and The Nippon Foundation (co-sponsors of the meeting).

"A world without leprosy" remains the vision of all partners. WHO is also working together to further reduce the global burden of leprosy by 2015, in line with the target date for the related Millennium Development Goal.

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