

PETITION TO THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL TO CONSIDER THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PERSONS AFFECTED BY LEPROSY DURING THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF LEPROSY PRIORITY COUNTRIES

Excellencies,

The Leprosy Mission (TLM) is an International Christian non-governmental organisation with 145 years of history of working for and with persons affected by leprosy. We are a global network of members active in 32 countries across the world working closely with governments, local communities, UN agencies and many others to achieve our vision of 'leprosy defeated, lives transformed'.

The UN Special Rapporteur on elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy in her report to the Human Rights Council in 2018¹ has stated that there were 214,783 new cases reported to WHO by 145 countries in 2016 which means that on an average around 588 people were detected with leprosy each day. Global statistics according to WHO has shown that 96% of the news cases have been reported from 22 leprosy priority countries². There has been considerable decline in the interest of the national governments in these countries to support leprosy elimination programmes as a result of dramatic reduction that has been reported in terms of the global leprosy burden over the years. However there are still pockets of endemicity in some of the leprosy priority countries and indications of intense transmission of the disease resulting in incidences of disability. This has also resulted in practice of discrimination due to stigma against those affected by leprosy. It is also observed that some of the human rights of persons affected by leprosy such as right to attain highest standards of health, non-discrimination and equal recognition before law are often violated.

The WHO global leprosy strategy 2016-20 attempts to address these human rights of persons affected by emphasizing a wide range of activities that should lead to strengthening of the ownership including financial commitment, collaboration and partnership of the national governments in leprosy control, stopping leprosy and its complications and in ending discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members. Taking note of the existing stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their families, the UN Human Rights Council formulated Principles and Guidelines for elimination of the discrimination against persons affected by leprosy which clearly emphasizes the responsibility of the national governments in eliminating discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their families.

Despite adoption of the resolution on principles and guidelines by the Human Rights Council and its endorsement by the UN General Assembly in 2010, persons affected by leprosy continue to be discriminated in many ways. The International Federation of Anti-leprosy Associations (ILEP) estimates that there are 157 legislations in 29 countries that discriminate citizens on the grounds of leprosy. Women affected by leprosy face multiple discrimination in the communities and within the family. Persons affected by leprosy continue to live in excluded /segregated institutions and colonies in some countries. There are 850 leprosy colonies in India alone that stand as a testimony to the forced

¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members: Human Rights Council, Thirty-eighth session, 18 June-6 July 2018.

² http://www.searo.who.int/entity/global_leprosy_programme/topics/factsheet/en/

segregation practiced in the past³. Children affected by leprosy often find it difficult to seek admission in schools due to stigma. There are instances where persons affected by leprosy are denied admission to institutions providing vocational training, refused employment and denied health and life insurance. In many countries, due to physical deformities, leprosy affected citizens are unable to provide biometric verification leading to deprivation of benefits that government provides for vulnerable groups. Stigma associated with the disease has led to exclusion of affected persons in social and religious functions held in the communities. Lack of awareness about the rights of persons affected by leprosy is one of the causes of stigma leading to discrimination.

The Leprosy Mission therefore requests the members of the Human Rights Council to kindly consider the following human rights issues while reviewing the reports of the 22 leprosy priority countries (as shown in Annexure-1) under the Universal Periodic Review:

1. Political commitment of the national governments to allocate adequate resources for leprosy elimination programmes.
2. Steps taken by the national governments to ensure access to universal health coverage with particular focus on women, children and older persons, migrants and displaced people affected by leprosy.
3. Action taken by the governments to improve prevention and management of disabilities amongst those affected by leprosy.
4. Steps taken by the governments to end leprosy related disabilities amongst children affected by leprosy.
5. Progress made and measures taken by the national governments for effective implementation of the principles and guidelines for elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members

Lastly, the Sustainable Development goals are all about leaving no one behind. The Leprosy Mission through this petition humbly requests the members of the Human Rights Council to ensure that persons affected by leprosy are not left behind on account of the stigma and discrimination they face on a daily basis in their communities.

Petition attested by the following Country Leaders of the Leprosy Mission (Name/Country)

Sheldon Rankin

The Leprosy Mission Australia



The Leprosy Mission Bangladesh



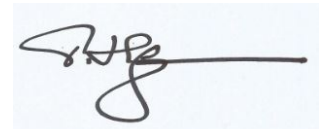
The Leprosy Mission Belgium



The Leprosy Mission Chad



The Leprosy Mission England and Wales



The Leprosy Mission Ethiopia

no us family



The Leprosy Mission Hungary

³ Law Commission of India Report 256, April 2015

The Leprosy Mission India

The Leprosy Mission
Mozambique

The Leprosy Mission Myanmar

The Leprosy Mission Nepal

The Leprosy Mission
Netherlands



The Leprosy Mission Niger

The Leprosy Mission Nigeria

The Leprosy Mission
Northern Ireland

The Leprosy Mission Papua New
Guinea

The Leprosy Mission Scotland

The Leprosy Mission
Sweden

The Leprosy Mission Switzerland

Annexure 1: List of 22 leprosy priority countries according to WHO ⁴

1. Angola
2. Bangladesh
3. Brazil
4. Comoros
5. Côte d'Ivoire
6. Democratic Republic of Congo
7. Egypt
8. Ethiopia
9. Federated States of Micronesia
10. India
11. Indonesia
12. Kiribati
13. Madagascar
14. Mozambique
15. Myanmar
16. Nepal
17. Nigeria
18. Philippines
19. South Sudan
20. Sri Lanka
21. Sudan
22. United Republic of Tanzania

⁴ WHO Global Leprosy Strategy 2016-20 -Operational Manual , 2016