



Leprosy-Info

No. 4

January 2025



CONTACT

Office of the Grand Hospitaller
MHOSLJ

WEBSITE:

www.st-lazarus.net/content/hospitaller-activity

EMAIL ADDRESS:

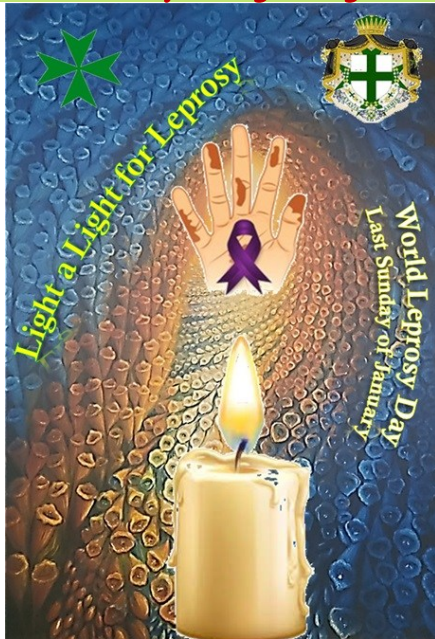
grandhospitaller.mhoslj@gmail.com

The last Sunday of January - 26th January 2025 - is designated as World Leprosy Day. This annual commemoration was originally established in 1954 by French journalist Raoul Follereau with the aim of raising awareness and promoting discussion about the infection with the scope of eliminating the misinformation and myths connected with it. It also serves to draw attention to those victims afflicted by the infection and thus encourage the world community to promote the provision of services for diagnosing and managing the condition. This day is celebrated with an alternate theme. The theme chosen for 2025 is '*Beat Leprosy, End Stigma, and Advocate for Mental Well-Being*'. As the Order of St Lazarus had originally been set up with the sole aim of caring and providing solace to the victims of this condition, World Leprosy Day should be an important item in our social and philanthropic calendar. The various jurisdictions should embrace the day and organize an activity aiming to support the battle aiming to eradicate the illness.

The first step in the fight is promoting AWARENESS - the members within any jurisdiction should be made aware of the importance of the day not only because of the historical importance of the Order but because in spite of treatment being available new cases are still being diagnosed.

Awareness should be followed by EDUCATION - the victims of the infection are still stigmatized because of the fear of contagion. They often become social outcasts even when they have received treatment and are cured. The members of the Order must be encouraged to educate and inform themselves about the condition.

World Leprosy Day – 26th January 2025



During World Leprosy Day, the members of the Order are encouraged to commemorate the day either as individuals or alternatively as a community. Over the last couple of years, the members of the Order have been encouraged to **Light a Light for Lepers** on the day while taking the time to contemplate on the spiritual dimension of the disease. What can we spiritually learn from the way that Jesus related to the victims of leprosy [see St. Mark 1:40-45].

- How should this influence our personal outlook as individual members of society and as members of the Order?

We are generally fortunate in that we live in well-developed countries where the incidence of leprosy is minimal. However, a significant number of new cases, including children, are being diagnosed each year presenting short and long-term medical and social

challenges to these individuals. They suffer from long-term stigmatization and are emarginated from their communities. We can expand on our contemplation on the day by looking around us and identifying the groups who, for whatever reason, suffer from stigmatization as that suffered by victims of leprosy where this is prevalent.

- What are we as members of a Hospitaller Order doing to fight the suffering resulting from such stigmatization?

WHY WORLD LEPROSY DAY IS IMPORTANT

A. To eliminate social discrimination of afflicted people

The social discrimination of those who are infected has to be weeded out to allow patients to live with dignity. It is crucial to spread awareness about Leprosy for this reason. World Leprosy Day provides a platform for creating an inclusive society that treats the afflicted with the respect they deserve.

B. To spread awareness about the treatment for Leprosy

Leprosy can be cured with antibiotic treatment. However, most patients come from impoverished backgrounds and do not have the means to access treatment. Also, the stigma attached to the condition dissuades people from seeking treatment for the disease. The day helps make people aware that Leprosy can be treated.

C. To bust the myths and misconceptions surrounding the disease

There are too many misconceptions harbored by society about Leprosy. Many people feel that the digits of a person affected by Leprosy just "fall off" one day. Others feel that the disease is transmitted by sitting next to or shaking hands with an infected person. These myths can be busted on World Leprosy Day so that people living with Leprosy receive an equal opportunity to shine in society.

Of course appreciation of the suffering experienced by the victims of stigmatization is not enough to help improve their lives. Having ourselves become aware of the problems faced by these individuals, we must strive to bring the issue to the fore within our communities in order that we educate the public. BUT, this is not enough. We must as Lazarites support the on-the-ground fight against the disease. We must find means of supporting those afflicted in our communities – they do exist even if long treated – and support the fight in communities where the disease is very much more prevalent than it is in our region. We can certainly do more. During 2023, jurisdictions of the Order overall targeted 11.6% of the total annual philanthropic contribution towards the fight against leprosy. However, only 14 jurisdictions made any form of contribution towards this figure.

- Can your jurisdiction do more to support the fight against the disease?

A spiritual meditation for World Leprosy Day is available from the Office of the Grand Hospitaller [send email request]

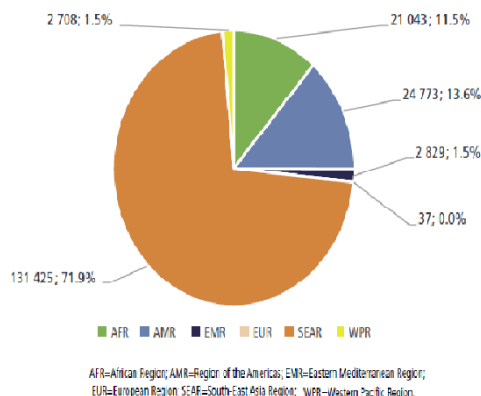
NEWS

World Incidence rates – 2023 : Since the members of the Order generally live in well-developed communities, it is easy to forget that Hansen’s Disease [Leprosy] still prevails in the less developed regions of the world. The following tables published by the World Health Organization helps put the disease into perspective. Of course, the data presented in the WHO report is based on the information provided by the respective countries and may not truly represent the extent of the problem. The figures simply present what is known and reported, but a significant number of cases do not come to the fore. The figures however speak for themselves!

Table 1 **New case detection (disaggregated for age, gender and disability), by WHO Region, 2023**
Tableau 1 **Détection de nouveaux cas (ventilée par âge, sexe et incapacité), par Région OMS, 2023**

WHO Region – Région OMS	Number of new cases detected – Nombre de nouveaux cas détectés	Number of new child cases detected – Nombre de nouveaux cas pédiatriques détectés	Number of leprosy cases among women – Nombre de cas de lèpre parmi les femmes	Number of new G2D cases detected – Nombre de nouveaux cas avec ID2 détectés
African – Afrique	21 043	1 633	8 138	3 026
Americas – Amériques	24 773	999	10 820	2 374
Eastern Mediterranean – Méditerranée orientale	2 829	127	1 187	223
European ^a – Europe ^a	37	1	11	10
South-East Asia – Asie du Sud-Est	131 425	7 310	51 806	3 899
Western Pacific – Pacifique occidental	2 708	252	883	197
World – Monde	182 815	10 322	72 845	9 729

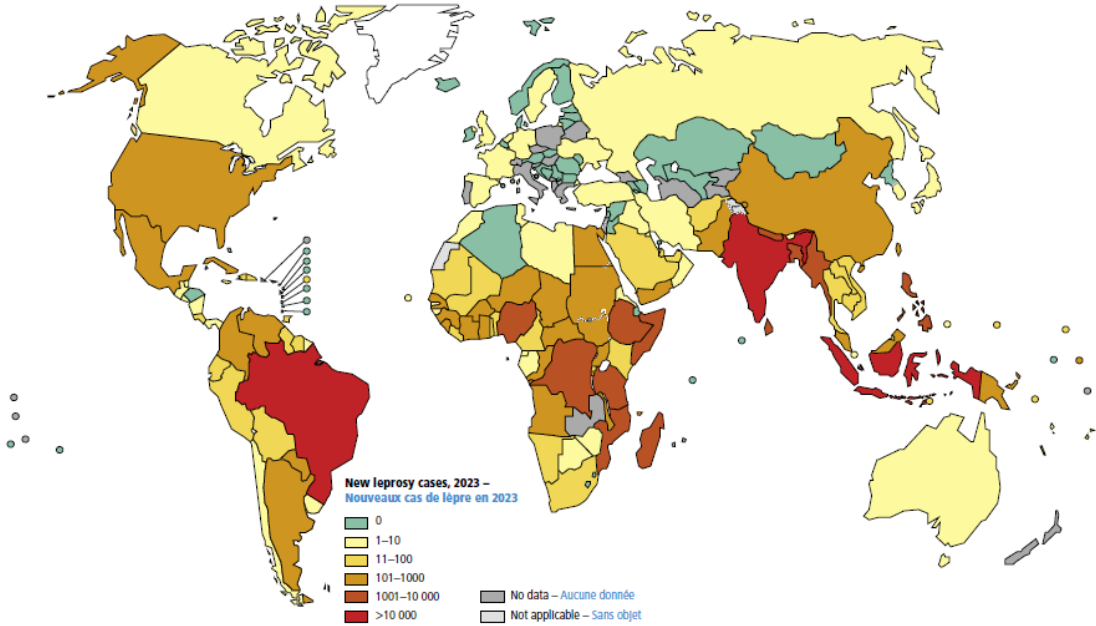
Figure 1 Detection of new leprosy cases, by WHO Region, 2023



G2D: grade-2 disability – ID2: incapacité de degré 2

^a The number of cases reported by the European Region includes reporting from Mayotte. – Le nombre de cas signalés par la Région européenne comprend ceux de Mayotte.

Map 1 Geographical distribution of new leprosy cases, 2023
 Carte 1 Répartition géographique des nouveaux cas de lépre en 2023



Source: Weekly *Epidemiological Record (WER)*, 13 September 2024, Vol. 99, No. 37, pp. 497–522 [Download](#)

Grand Bailiwick of Germany: Appeal for donations



The primary task of the Lazarus Order is to assist leprosy sufferers and to help them selflessly. Today, the sisters and brothers of the order focus on the early detection of leprosy sufferers in order to initiate successful treatment in good time and thus prevent subsequent complications - such as mutilation. The Lazarus Order successfully supports this with partners in India, China, Vietnam and also in Madagascar... The island state of Madagascar was devastated by the tropical cyclone "Gamane" in the spring of 2024. Around 87,000 people have been affected by the destruction, the National Authority for Civil Protection announced on Easter Monday. The leper village of Belfort in the north of this island - 5 km from Antalaha

- was the worst affected. Most of the houses of the disabled, former lepers were simply washed away by the raging waters. The villagers are left without accommodation with what little they were able to save. They were initially housed in existing school rooms until new accommodation was built for them elsewhere. The board of trustees of the German Dentist's Sponsorship for Leprosy and Distressed Areas (GDS) - consisting mainly of members of the Order - started an emergency aid program. 15,000 euros were immediately drawn from a fund for the destroyed leper village of Belfort.



Further financial aid – such as this appeal for donations – is intended to mitigate the damage to the entire infrastructure. To support them the Grand Bailiwick of Germany is selling a CD titled "*Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*". One of Germany's finest male choirs are performing sacred choral music from various eras and languages. The melodies touch the soul and carry a powerful

message: *where there is love, there is God*. For only 5 euros (plus shipping costs), one will not only receive a musical masterpiece, but also support the leper village. All proceeds will go completely to this project. Christmas is just a few months away – give your loved ones and the people of Belfort double the joy. With every tone, you'll know: your support is making a real difference.

The CD (with bulk discounts for orders of 10 or more) can be ordered from the Referendary of the Grand Bailiwick, Chev. Dr. Andreas Rademachers KCLJ (referendar@stlazarus.de). Shipping will be early December.

ABSTRACTS

Willis M, Fastenau A, Penna S, et al. Interventions to reduce leprosy related stigma: A systematic review. *Public Library of Science (PLOS) Global Public Health*, 2024; 4(8):1-13.

[Download PDF](#)

Abstract

Stigmatisation is a major issue faced by those affected by leprosy globally. Reducing stigmatisation encourages care seeking behaviour to occur earlier and can help reduce harm and spread of leprosy. This systematic literature review aimed to summarise what effective stigma reducing interventions exist for leprosy, and as a secondary question explore what evidence exists regarding their cost. A systematic literature review was conducted. Three databases—PubMed, Embase and Web of science—were searched using the search terms “leprosy”, “interven*”, “reduc*”, and “stigma*”. Seventeen publications were eligible for inclusion in the review. The current manuscript identified interventions under 6 main categories (i) Information, education, and communication (IEC) (ii) community led projects, (iii) Socioeconomic rehabilitation, (iv) mixed interventions, (v) integration of leprosy within the health system and (vi) Cosmetic or surgical care. Specific evidence regarding cost was only provided by one out of the seventeen papers. Multiple interventions were shown to successfully reduce leprosy related stigma, however, information on their cost is not readily available. The evidence uncovered by this review is restricted to three Asian countries; Nepal, India and Indonesia. To ensure the success of stigma reduction in leprosy interventions worldwide these interventions need to be tried in other leprosy endemic areas to test their effectiveness across contextual and cultural scenarios.

Bonkass A, Fastenau A, Stuetzle S, et al. Psychosocial interventions for persons affected by Leprosy: A systematic review. *Public Library of Science (PLOS) Global Public Health*, 2024; 1(3):1-50.

[Download](#)

Abstract

While multi-drug therapy revolutionised the treatment of physical symptoms for leprosy, a lack of psychosocial interventions, to combat the psychological burden of the disease, is noticeable. This is especially the case in a lower-middle-income country like India, where leprosy prevalence is highest, yet, it has one of the lowest rates of mental health services in place. This paper (i) conducts a systematic review to gather academic evidence on best practices of psychosocial care interventions of to leprosy patients from across the globe, and (ii) compiles good practices of mental wellbeing and quality of life to propose plausible actions for leprosy patients in India. Following the PRISMA protocol, keywords were searched in four databases, namely PubMed, PsycInfo, Web of Science and Infolep. After examining all 145 search results through inclusion and exclusion criteria, 17 peer reviewed research articles could qualify for final review exercise, whereby the data was systematically appraised. The systematic review reveals several successful psychosocial interventions implemented worldwide. These interventions were categorised into four sub-groups: educational, counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy, and technology-supported interventions. All the studies included in the analysis showcased effective psychosocial interventions that enhanced the quality of life and reduced depression, anxiety, and stress levels in individuals affected by leprosy. These findings highlighted several promising strategies that could be integrated into India's mental healthcare system. The studies underscored the significance of involving healthcare professionals, and adopting innovative approaches. Consequently, this research proposes a comprehensive blend of diverse psychosocial interventions to alleviate the burden faced by leprosy-affected individuals in India. It is crucial to take into account various confounding factors and local contexts to tailor these interventions to the specific population group. Additionally, enhancing awareness

and updating policies related to leprosy care are essential steps in reducing stigmatization against individuals with leprosy in India and other endemic regions.

Bolorino N, Gonçalves LC, de Freitas FMB, et al. Evaluation by community health agents of the attributes of Primary Health Care for fighting leprosy: a cross-sectional study. *Online Brazilian Journal of Nursing*. 2024. [Download](#)

Abstract

Objective: To evaluate whether the attributes of Primary Healthcare are present in leprosy control actions in Londrina from Community Health Workers' (CHW) perspectives. *Methods:* Observational and evaluative study. Data collection occurred between January and March 2020 in Londrina, Paraná, using the questionnaire "Primary Care Assessment Tool (PCATool) - Hansen's disease - CHW version" and a population-based census of 246 CHWs from 52 Primary Healthcare Units. The analyses used a cutoff point (≥ 6.6), central tendency, and dispersion measures. One-way ANOVA and Tukey's post hoc tests were used to analyze differences. *Results:* The general performance towards the primary healthcare attributes were evaluated as strong (mean = 6.95 / SD = 1.08) and the essential score (mean = 7.39 / SD = 1.0). On the other hand, the derived score was evaluated as poor (mean = 6.07 / sd = 1.06). Concerning the Access attribute, the rural zone had a lower score than the urban (mean = 4.47 / SD = 1.63). *Conclusion:* The study highlights issues that can be improved, such as first contact access, catalog of services offered to leprosy patients, information provided to the community, professional training, and differences in PHC performance between urban and rural regions.

van Brakel WH, Warne G, Cambau E, et al. Strategies for leprosy services in low-endemic areas and countries. *Leprosy Review. Lepra*. 2024; 95 (3) : 1-17. [Download](#)

Abstract

Most leprosy-endemic countries have a national leprosy programme working to achieve 'zero leprosy' guided by a zero leprosy roadmap, national leprosy strategy or similar document. In July 2023, WHO published new Technical Guidance on interruption of transmission and elimination of leprosy disease. The key tool is the Leprosy Elimination Framework that specifies 3 phases of elimination with indicators and cut-offs for when one phase transitions to the next. Now that interruption of transmission and elimination of leprosy are on the horizon for many countries or, indeed, have already been achieved, there is a need for detailed guidance on what strategies are appropriate for leprosy control under low-endemic circumstances (Phase 2 and 3 of the Leprosy Elimination Framework). It is important to realise that strategies for providing services to persons with leprosy-related disabilities, eliminating stigma and discrimination and implementing inclusion measures have a different horizon and will still be needed for decades to come. The International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) Technical Commission (ITC) organised a symposium and a workshop during which strategies for leprosy control were discussed under five headings that covered all operational aspects of a leprosy programme: Prevention, case detection and diagnostics; Treatment and case management; Disability prevention, management and rehabilitation (including mental health); Stigma reduction, inclusion and human rights; and Surveillance and data management. Strategies were recommended under each heading, with reference to the phase of elimination for which they are deemed appropriate.

Kinasih SE, Devy SR, Koesbardiati T, et al. Human migration, infectious diseases, plague, global health crisis - historical evidence. *Cogent Arts & Humanities. Informa UK Limited*. 2024; 11 (1) : 1-29. [Download](#)

This study examines the transmission of infectious diseases through historical studies, focusing on colonialization, slave trade, religion spread, and transcontinental and island trade. Emerging diseases like leprosy, Black Death, syphilis, malaria, Spanish flu, and COVID-19 have become significant contributors to global health crises. The study uses four stages: heuristics, critique, interpretation, and historiography. It focuses on migration, pandemics, and global health crises, using relevant literature. The findings suggest that many diseases have reached pandemic proportions due to their rapid dissemination and the influence of migration caused by historical factors such as ancient travel culture, colonialism, and modern

times. The evolution of contemporary language also facilitates international mobility. The research examines the issue of disease distribution resulting from the long-standing global migration process, focusing on how migration has played a significant role in the occurrence of pandemics, outbreaks, and global health crises throughout history. The migration of Homo Sapiens from East Africa to regions outside Africa led to the development of language, culture, and disease transmission. The domestication of animals resulted in the emergence and transmission of disease mutations, leading to the worldwide dissemination of infectious diseases like leprosy, Black Death, syphilis, malaria, and COVID-19.

Patron Saint for Lepers

I was recently approached by a member of the Order enquiring about a reliquary associated with Saint Lazarus he had purchased off the internet. This led to a discussion of potential personalities this relic [a bone fragment] belonged to and how Saint Lazarus was designated the Patron Saint of lepers, and hence of our Order.

- ➔ In the New Testament, the name Lazarus ('El'azár), literally meaning "God has helped", appears twice. *Luke 16:19-31* recounts the Parable of the Rich man and the poor leprous Lazarus. This was obviously a story with a profound meaning, namely that the poor leper should not be stigmatized and isolated but that we have the duty to care for him. This Parable was taken up by the Cappadocian Early Fathers of the Church who advocated for the provision of institutions to care for the leprous sick, in contrast to expulsion from the community. These institutions or leprosaria were therefore associated with Lazarus of the Parable and were termed *Lazar houses*. [*Feast day 21st June*]



Westphalian master, Healing of Lazarus, 1400. Courtesy of Barnes Foundation. Lazarus shown holding the leper's rattle.

- ➔ The New Testament, one of the 'friends' of Jesus, Lazarus of Bethany, is resurrected from the dead by Jesus a few days before Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Because Lazarus served as living proof of Jesus' power over death, he became a *persona non grata* with the Jewish establishment. Orthodox tradition holds that Lazarus



and his family emigrated to Cyprus where he served the Christian community there as bishop in Larnaca. His skeletal remains were subsequently discovered in the Church dedicated to him in that city and the majority were transferred to Constantinople in 898

A.D. Emperor Leo VI Sophos transfers some of the remains to Constantinople. These were eventually lost, some being dispersed to various European countries. With increasing devotion towards Lazarus of Bethany in the Latin world, he was adopted as the patron saint of lepers replacing the Cappadocian link to the parable's Lazarus. The early Seedorf statutes of the order leave absolutely no doubt that the patron saint of the Order in the 13-14th century was Lazarus of Bethany. *[Feast day 17th December]*

→ Other personages named Lazarus were admitted to the communion of saints during the early centuries of Christianity. These include:

- In the crypt of Saint-Victor at Marseilles an epitaph of the fifth century has been discovered informing us that a bishop named Lazarus was buried there. This led to the Western tradition belief that Lazarus and his family emigrated to France rather than Cyprus. In fact, the epitaph refers to Lazarus, Bishop of Aix, who was consecrated at Marseilles ~407 A.D. His relics are today kept in the Cathédrale Sainte-Marie-Majeure.
- A near contemporary Lazarus served as Archbishop of Milan in ~439 A.D. serving during a time when invading Ostrogoths controlled the area. He died on the 14th March 450 and was canonized in the pre-Congregation period. Feast day was moved to 11th February to avoid clashes with Lent.



Skull of Lazarus, Bishop of Aix



Relics of Lazarus Archbishop of Milan

- Another Venerable Lazarus (of Muron) born in Constantinople around 1286 became a monk at a monastery under the Elder Athanasios Diskotes. In 1343, he was sent Saint Lazarus as a noted iconographer together with monks and gifts to Saint Basil, Archbishop of Novgorod. Directed to go to Murom Island in Lake Onega, Lazarus settled and lived there in spite of the persecution at the hands of Lopari and Chud natives living on the island.

