



ANCHOR

#ZeroLeprosy - Rooted in Partnership, Driven by Change



Executive Director's Message

“Forging Ahead, Together”



As we navigate through 2025, the spirit of collaboration and determination across our global community shines brighter than ever.

The first half of this year has been marked by meaningful progress, reflected in bold policy commitments, renewed programmatic energy, and the deepening of both global and local partnerships.

This edition of our newsletter highlights key milestones across initiatives and reinforces our collective resolve to leave no one behind. We are also pleased to feature a compelling interview with our President, Dr. Peter Steinmann, who shares thoughtful reflections on the vision and values that continue to shape our journey. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive future—one step closer to a world free from leprosy.

Warm regards,

Dr. Ritu Ghosh
Executive Director
Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy

THE INTERVIEW

Building the Road to Zero Leprosy: An Interview with Dr. Peter Steinmann on how GPZL is Changing the Leprosy Landscape



“We’re not perfect, but we adapt, we listen, and we move forward. That’s how we will reach zero.”

These words from **Dr. Peter Steinmann, President of the Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL)**, capture both the humility and quiet determination that define the organization’s current journey. In a world where global health is constantly shifting, where funding models evolve and priorities compete for attention, GPZL stands firm in its singular vision: a world without leprosy.

For the President, GPZL’s story is deeper. It is a story of transformation, trust, and tireless belief in the power of partnership.

When Dr. Steinmann took on his leadership role in 2024 GPZL was, in his words, “in a real

transition period. We were establishing our legal identity, hiring staff, and laying the foundation to become an independent, operational organization,” he says. “It was exciting, and intense.” That foundational work quickly took shape. GPZL became a legally registered association in Switzerland, hired a dedicated team, and revitalised its digital presence. “Our website had been dormant,” he notes. “We reactivated it, re-engaged on social media, and made ourselves visible and accessible again.”

Externally, the Zero Transmission Symposium marked a turning point. “It was a big one,” he reflects. “It brought the community together around our shared goal and showed that GPZL was stepping up to convene, coordinate, and lead.”

What sets GPZL apart, he says, is not just what it does, but how it does it. “We bring together a remarkable mix: persons affected by leprosy, country programmes, scientists, WHO, NGOs, donors, and industry,” he explains. “All of them feel represented. That diversity can look messy from the outside, but it’s where our power lies. We are building something bigger than any single group could do alone.”

This inclusive model isn’t just rhetoric, but it is lived practice. Particularly when it comes to ensuring the voices of persons affected by leprosy are heard and respected. “They’re not there to tick a box,” he emphasizes. “Their lived experience is critical. Sometimes they lead the conversation. Other times, they accompany it. But they are always equal partners.”

Dr. Steinmann is so passionate about national ownership. Through tools like the Zero Leprosy Roadmap, GPZL has shifted from centralized rollout to a model of open access. “Any country can download the tools, adapt them, and get going,” he says. “They don’t need our permission. They own the process, and we’re here if they need backup.” Indeed, as the world looks to the future, so does GPZL.

While its early focus was on promoting contact tracing and single-dose rifampicin, Dr. Steinmann sees vast potential in emerging tools, from diagnostics to more effective treatments. “GPZL must remain open to innovations,” he says.

“Because we are not dedicated to just one intervention or tool. We’re dedicated to achieving zero leprosy.”

To young professionals considering a role in this mission, he offers a message grounded in realism and hope. “Leprosy is not a place for quick wins,” he says. “But it’s meaningful. It’s a disease people know, even if they don’t understand it.”

There is a rich history, complexity, and real potential to make a meaningful difference. If you care about science, equity, health system strengthening or human rights, there’s a place for you here. And you become part of a dedicated global community.”

As GPZL continues to evolve, what remains unwavering is its conviction that leprosy can and will be eliminated through collective action, innovation, and inclusion. Under Dr. Steinmann’s leadership, the partnership is not only building systems and strategies, but it is also building trust, purpose, and hope.

Strengthening the Last Mile: MDT Supply Chain Challenges Assessment

A major step forward has been taken to address persistent supply chain challenges in the delivery of multidrug therapy (MDT) for leprosy. GPZL has kicked off a focused assessment in four carefully selected countries, representing diverse geographies and high-burden contexts.

Guided by a well-structured action plan, this initiative aims to uncover practical insights that can strengthen global MDT availability. To ensure expert guidance throughout, a dedicated supply chain consultant will be brought on board in the coming quarter to support each stage of the process and help translate findings into scalable, real-world solutions.

GPZL Develops a Resource Mobilization Strategy

In a major step towards sustaining and scaling the global fight against leprosy, the Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL) has developed a Resource Mobilization Strategy to guide its fundraising efforts.

The strategy lays the foundation for building a strong investment case for zero leprosy transmission and attracting long-term support from institutional and corporate donors.

The strategy framework is currently in draft form. It will be finalized and adopted by the GPZL Members' Assembly in the coming quarter. This move signals a clear shift toward more structured, strategic resource mobilization, positioning GPZL to better engage donors, unlock new partnerships, and secure the funding needed to accelerate progress toward a world without leprosy.

Advancing Patient-Centred Leprosy Care

Progress continues on multiple fronts to ensure leprosy care respects and upholds the rights and responsibilities of those affected. The Patients' Checklist on rights and responsibilities for leprosy care has been developed, and a baseline assessment is underway in 23 high-endemic countries, marking a significant step.

In parallel, GPZL has completed the global mapping of organizations—particularly those led by persons with lived experience of leprosy in association with IDEA International.

GPZL Launches Resource Mobilization Think Tank to Drive Strategic Growth

To expand and diversify its funding landscape, the Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL) has initiated the establishment of a Resource Mobilization Think Tank.

This important move underscores GPZL's commitment to long-term sustainability and strategic growth. The Think Tank will serve as a high-level advisory group, bringing together individuals with deep expertise, influence, and passion for GPZL's mission.

Through their collective experience and networks, they will help amplify GPZL's visibility and strengthen its value proposition to donors, philanthropic organizations, and multilateral institutions.

In addition to contributing to the development of proposals and donor communications, Think Tank members will champion GPZL on global platforms, at conferences, forums, and strategic gatherings, further expanding the organization's reach and recognition.

To infuse fresh ideas and broaden perspectives, GPZL also plans to include a few strategic contributors from outside its immediate ecosystem. This initiative marks a new chapter in GPZL's journey to mobilize greater resources for a world free of leprosy.

New Global Network for Government National Leprosy Program Managers Set up

What happens when the people leading national leprosy responses around the world are brought into one powerful space for collaboration? A new chapter begins!

The Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL) is laying the groundwork for exactly that, with the creation of the Network of Government National Leprosy Program Managers (NLPMs), a bold initiative to strengthen national programs through shared knowledge, technical exchange, and unified advocacy.

This emerging network will serve as a dedicated platform for program managers to connect, collaborate, and lead more effectively. The network is designed to promote continuous learning, amplify country-level successes, and tackle shared challenges in real time.

The network strongly believes the path to zero leprosy must be shaped by those implementing change on the ground. By offering space for experience-sharing, coordinated technical assistance, and joint problem-solving, the NLPMs Network will elevate the role of national leaders in driving global progress.

The initiative is open to all countries, with GPZL coordinating efforts alongside the WHO Global Leprosy Program and other partners. As the foundation of this network is being laid, it is clear that by coming together, National Leprosy Program Managers are poised to build something bigger than any one country alone, a stronger, smarter, and more connected global response to leprosy.

GPZL Welcomes Two New Representatives of National Leprosy Programmes to the Members' Assembly (Global Board)

The Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL) is proud to announce the election of two new Representatives of National Leprosy Programmes to its Members' Assembly (Global Board), Dr. Munirah Abdullahi Onimisi from Nigeria and Dr. Rabindra Baskota from Nepal. Their election reflects the GPZL's commitment to inclusive representation, ensuring both gender and geographic balance in advancing our global mission to end leprosy.



Dr. Munirah Abdullahi Onimisi
Head of the Leprosy Control Programme
Ministry of Health, Abuja, Nigeria

She currently serves as the Head of the Leprosy Control Programme within Nigeria's National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control Programme at the Ministry of Health in Abuja, Nigeria.

As a seasoned public health professional, she has been involved in national efforts to combat leprosy and tuberculosis for over a decade.

Appointed to lead the leprosy programme in 2024, Dr. Munirah has also engaged with GPZL through her participation in meetings related to Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). Her expertise and strong national perspective are valuable assets that will contribute meaningfully to the Members' Assembly's work.

Dr. Rabindra Baskota, from Nepal, brings extensive experience as a public health leader and trained dermatologist.



Dr. Rabindra Baskota
Head of the Leprosy Control and Disability
Management Section
Ministry of Health and Population, Kathmandu, Nepal

He heads the Leprosy Control and Disability Management Section in the Ministry of Health and Population in Kathmandu. A returning member of the GPZL Members' Assembly, Dr. Baskota is deeply familiar with GPZL's strategic priorities and operational approach. His continued leadership in advancing Nepal's national leprosy programme ensures his critical role in supporting GPZL's regional and global goals.

The inclusion of Dr. Munirah and Dr. Baskota following a transparent and inclusive voting process significantly strengthens the Members' Assembly by deepening government engagement and bringing informed country-level perspectives into our shared efforts. Their appointment underscores the importance of collaboration and local leadership in the global movement toward zero leprosy.

New Team Members in GPZL

We are thrilled to announce two significant additions to the Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL) team in April 2025.



Jephiter Tsamwi
Manager - Communications & Digital Engagement

Jephiter Tsamwi has joined as our new Manager – Communications and Digital Engagement. He brings a wealth of experience in advocacy and strategic communication, having worked across various health and development sectors.

Additionally, Vickash Chetry has joined as our Officer – Finance, Administration, and Human Resources. Vickash comes with a strong background in finance and administration.



Vickash Chetry
Officer – Finance, Admin and HR

GPZL Champions Global Skin Health at WHO Meeting in Geneva

The Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL) participated in the Second WHO Global Meeting on Skin Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) from 24–26 March 2025 in Geneva, themed “Integration to Achieve 2030 Targets.” The gathering brought together over 1,000 stakeholders to advance integrated, people-centred approaches for skin NTDs.

GPZL was represented by a high-level delegation including Dr. Peter Steinmann, President of GPZL; Dr. Ritu Ghosh, Executive Director; Mr. Geoff Warne, CEO of ILEP; and Dr. Sunil Modali, Global Medical Affairs Director, Leprosy Program at Global Health and Sustainability, Novartis, signalling GPZL’s strong commitment to driving forward the global leprosy agenda within broader skin NTD efforts.



A major highlight was the adoption of a draft resolution recognizing skin diseases, including leprosy, as global public health priorities. Championed by countries like Nigeria and Togo, the resolution urges improved surveillance, health workforce training, and equitable access to care, with a Global Plan of Action set for 2027.

“This resolution is a turning point for the leprosy community and for the millions affected by skin diseases worldwide,” said Dr. Ritu Ghosh, GPZL Executive Director. “It opens the door for investment, attention, and dignity in areas where these have long been missing.”



GPZL Executive Director, Dr. Ritu Ghosh, with Mr. Geoff Warne, the CEO of ILEP (left) and Dr. Sunil Modali (right) the Global Medical Affairs Director, Novartis.

Skin diseases remain one of the top ten causes of disability globally, and disproportionately affect marginalized communities. The resolution emphasizes the importance of early detection, reducing stigma, and strengthening primary care systems to ensure no one is left behind.

Political Commitment Catalyses Leprosy Elimination Efforts in Nepal

Nepal is demonstrating bold political leadership in the fight against leprosy. Our Executive Director, Dr. Ritu Ghosh, attended the Nepal Leprosy Conference, a pivotal high-level event aimed at accelerating national efforts toward a leprosy-free Nepal. She participated as a panellist in the session titled “Role of Global and National Partnership for Leprosy Elimination in Nepal.”

The conference was honoured by the presence of His Excellency, The Prime Minister of Nepal, Honourable Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli, and Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination.

Leprosy Elimination.

Their address strongly reflected the national commitment to a leprosy-free Nepal and the broader vision of a healthy Nepal.

Hosted in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Population, this landmark two-day event reflected the Government of Nepal's unwavering political will to end leprosy. The agenda emphasized tackling stigma, ensuring early detection, and fostering cross-sectoral partnerships to drive meaningful progress.



***His Excellency, The Prime Minister of Nepal,
Honourable Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli***



***Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill
Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination***

High-Level Dialogue on Leprosy in India

In April 2025, GPZL's Executive Director, Dr. Ritu Ghosh, participated in a high-level panel discussion on the interruption of leprosy organized on the NLR India's 25th Foundation Day event in New Delhi.

The event brought together public health leaders, policymakers, and advocates to reflect on India's progress in tackling leprosy, while spotlighting the persistent challenges that hinder elimination efforts, including stigma, access to timely care, and sustainable program financing.



Dr. Ritu Ghosh shared insights on global coordination, the importance of inclusive strategies, and the need to centre the voices of persons affected by leprosy in national responses. She reaffirmed GPZL's support for India's efforts and emphasized the value of partnerships in accelerating progress toward Zero Leprosy.

The discussion was a powerful reminder that while progress has been made, collective and sustained action is still urgently needed to achieve a leprosy-free India.

Leprosy in India: Down but Not Out. What Are We Doing About It?"

In May 2025, NLR India hosted a compelling panel discussion titled "Leprosy in India: Down but Not Out. What Are We Doing About It?" at the India International Centre in New Delhi.

The event served as a timely call to action, bringing together leading voices committed to eliminating leprosy and addressing the continued challenges faced by affected individuals.

Dr. Ritu Ghosh, Executive Director of the Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL), participated as a panelist, where she underscored GPZL's global leadership in advancing zero leprosy, with a particular emphasis on interrupting transmission and tackling the stigma that continues to undermine control efforts. Her remarks highlighted the critical importance of integrated strategies, inclusive partnerships, and placing affected communities at the center of national responses.



NEWS

Supreme Court of India Orders Repeal of Discriminatory Laws Against Persons Affected by Leprosy

In a landmark judgment delivered in May 2025, the Supreme Court of India directed the central and state governments to identify and repeal laws that discriminate against persons affected by leprosy.

The directive follows a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, which identified 119 outdated legal provisions across India that continue to stigmatize individuals despite leprosy being a fully curable disease. The Court emphasized that such laws violate fundamental constitutional rights, including equality, dignity, and personal liberty. It also condemned existing policies such as requirements for non-contagion certificates on public transport, as perpetuating stigma rooted in misinformation.

Beyond legal reform, the Court called for widespread awareness campaigns and the integration of leprosy services into general healthcare to combat social exclusion and promote dignity.

This ruling marks a significant step towards justice and inclusion for persons affected by leprosy in India, although challenges remain in ensuring state-level compliance and follow-through.

[Read the full story here](#)



Sasakawa Initiative Reaffirms Commitment to Centering Persons Affected by Leprosy

In a recent Viewpoint published by the Sasakawa Leprosy (Hansen's Disease) Initiative on 24 April 2025, Dr. Takahiro Nanri, President of the Sasakawa Health Foundation, reflected on the evolving journey of the Sasakawa Leprosy (Hansen's Disease) Initiative in empowering persons affected by leprosy. From promoting representation at international forums to nurturing the next generation of leaders, the Initiative continues to place affected persons at the heart of its mission.

[Read the full story here](#)



WHA Adopts Resolution to Prioritize Skin Diseases as a Global Public Health Priority

The Seventy-eighth World Health Assembly (WHA) made a significant commitment to global health by adopting a resolution that highlights skin diseases as a public health priority.

This decision underscores the urgent need to address the vast array of skin conditions affecting millions worldwide, particularly in developing countries.

Skin diseases encompass a wide range of conditions, from infectious and inflammatory disorders to chronic and rare diseases. Despite their prevalence, many remain undiagnosed and untreated, leading to considerable physical and emotional burdens on affected individuals.

The WHA's resolution aims to change this by prioritizing skin health within national health programs. Recognizing the impact of skin diseases on overall health, the resolution calls for enhanced surveillance and data collection to better understand the scope of these conditions. By promoting targeted interventions, the Assembly aims to improve early detection and treatment, ultimately reducing the burden of skin diseases.

[Read the full resolution here](#)



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Youth in Indonesia Filling the Gap in Leprosy Care: A Grassroots Success Story from South Sulawesi

In South Sulawesi, Indonesia, an inspiring partnership between PerMaTa South Sulawesi and YDTI (Yayasan Dedikasi Tjipta Indonesia) is transforming the lives of young people affected by leprosy by empowering them to lead the change in their communities. One of their key initiatives is the “Peer Support between Young Persons Affected by Leprosy” program. Started in 2022 and supported by the Sasakawa Health Foundation and Misereor Germany, the program focuses on forming district-level teams of young people affected by leprosy.



Peer support in Sidrap district, South Sulawesi (support SHF)

These empowered youth identify and support others, often still undergoing or having completed treatment, visiting them in their homes and providing tailored support.

These young leaders are not only fostering a sense of solidarity but also addressing urgent health and social challenges on the ground. From supporting individuals experiencing recurrent leprosy reactions or disabilities to reporting serious cases to local health authorities and offering self-care training, their peer-to-peer model is having an outsized impact. In cases of school discrimination, they’ve even stepped in to advocate for reinstatement.

“Only those affected by leprosy can truly change their circumstances. Their action also has the power to shift public perception and reduce stigma,” said Kerstin Beise, Chairperson of Yayasan Dedikasi Tjipta Indonesia.

In the current context in Indonesia of “elimination of leprosy as a public health problem,” where government attention to affected persons is declining, this program is filling up the gap. Since 2022, the program has reached over 1,281 individuals affected by leprosy. It stands as a leading example of the WHO’s “Strengthening Participation of People Affected by Leprosy in Leprosy Services” (SPP) model in action. By combining local knowledge, lived experience, and professional support, PerMaTa South Sulawesi–YDTI is demonstrating that empowering affected communities is not only effective but it is essential to achieving Zero leprosy.



Acknowledgment

United by a common vision, we thank our funders, partners, and members for their continued support and commitment to our shared mission.



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