

## Executive Director's Message



Quarter 3 of 2025 marked a significant milestone for GPZL with our official registration as a non-profit association in Geneva, Switzerland.

This achievement strengthens our institutional foundation and enhances our capacity for resource mobilization, strategic partnerships, and long-term sustainability as we strive toward our shared goal of zero leprosy.

Our engagement at the ILC 2025 in Bali—through extensive abstract reviews, a vibrant exhibition booth, impactful plenary presentations, and leadership in chairing key sessions—positioned GPZL as a trusted technical partner on the ILC Steering Committee. We also advanced global knowledge sharing through the publication of two manuscripts in "Leprosy Review", developed as outcomes of the Bergen Zero Transmission Symposium.

The GPZL Members' Assembly, held immediately after the Congress, further demonstrated the strength of our global network and the collective energy driving our mission. The path to zero leprosy is being built every day through strong collaboration—this is the spirit of GPZL. Let us continue moving forward together, transforming our shared vision into meaningful action.

Warm regards,

**Dr. Ritu Ghosh**

**Executive Director**

**Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy**

## GPZL Showcases Global Leadership and Innovation at ILC 2025

At the International Leprosy Congress (ILC), the GPZL Exhibition Booth became a vibrant hub where delegates explored IEC materials, the Best Practice Toolkit, and newsletters, while an interactive selfie corner sparked connection and solidarity.

GPZL experts played a major role in driving the congress dialogue. Executive Director Dr. Ritu Ghosh chaired a Scientific Parallel Discussion on applying science to end leprosy and presented GPZL's strategic pathway anchored in collaboration, evidence, and community engagement.

In the plenary address, GPZL President Dr. Peter Steinmann underscored the impact of SDR-PEP in



interrupting transmission. Complementing this, Amar Bahadur Timalisina shared insights from the Assessment of the Patient's rights and responsibilities for leprosy care, highlighting lessons from 13 countries and opportunities for strengthening advocacy.

## Together for Dignity, Rights, and Inclusion: Global Forum Charts New Path for People's Organizations



**3rd Global Forum**  
of People's Organizations on Hansen's Disease

**July 4–6, 2025 / Bali, Indonesia**

Leaders of organizations of persons affected by leprosy came together in Bali for the 3rd Global Forum of People's Organizations on Hansen's Disease under the theme "Together for Dignity, Rights, and Inclusion." The forum provided a unified space for sharing experiences, confronting stigma, and strengthening collective leadership in the global zero-leprosy movement.

Discussions underscored that lasting progress requires full participation of persons affected by leprosy, not only medical interventions. Three major outcomes anchored the forum: the Letter of Commitment, the Letter of Recommendations to Stakeholders, and the Action Plan for Capacity-Building and Empowerment.

You can access the three outcome documents here:

<https://sasakawaleprosyinitiative.org/latest-updates/initiative-news/5886/>

## GPZL Members' Assembly: Vision to Action

The 2025 GPZL Members' Assembly convened in Bali immediately after the International Leprosy Congress and the Global Forum of People's Organizations, bringing together partners, scientists, donors and representatives of persons affected by leprosy. The meeting marked a pivotal shift from high-level dialogue to coordinated global implementation.

Over two focused days, members reviewed progress, identified emerging challenges, and aligned around priority actions for the next year of the zero-leprosy strategy.



By the close of the Assembly, partners had agreed on strategic directions for 2026. As Executive Director Dr. Ritu Ghosh noted, "We are not just addressing leprosy, but we are navigating a complex global landscape where innovation, inclusion, and integration must define every step toward zero leprosy."

## GPZL launches multi-country assessment of last mile delivery of Multi-drug Therapy (MDT) Supply chain

GPZL has launched a multi-country assessment of multi-drug therapy (MDT) supply chain challenges to strengthen the delivery of MDT treatment to every person who needs it.

While the introduction of free MDT in the 1980s led to a dramatic 95% reduction in global leprosy prevalence, many countries continue to face persistent supply chain challenges. Stockouts, delayed shipments, and last-mile delivery issues have disrupted treatment access, leaving patients vulnerable to delayed diagnoses, disability, and stigma.

The MDT Supply Chain Challenges Assessment, to be conducted across four target countries representing

Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Western Pacific, will map challenges, best practices and opportunities to strengthen last-mile delivery of MDT supply. Working closely with national leprosy programmes, and implementing partners, the assessment will:

- Identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies in forecasting, procurement, storage, and logistics.
- Analyze root causes of supply interruptions and systemic weaknesses.
- Develop strategic, evidence-based recommendations to ensure uninterrupted access to MDT.

Findings will inform global and national strategies to ensure uninterrupted access to MDT, improve forecasting and logistics, and build more resilient health systems that safeguard the rights and health of people affected by leprosy. This initiative directly supports GPZL's triple-zero vision—no disease, no disability, and no discrimination—and advances collective progress toward a leprosy-free world.

## Dr. Stanley Chindove joins GPZL as Consultant for the MDT Supply Chain Assessment



Dr. Stanley Chindove has joined GPZL as a Consultant for the MDT Supply Chain Challenges Assessment. Dr. Chindove brings a wealth of experience in public health supply chain management, health systems strengthening, and program implementation across Africa and Asia.

In this role, Dr. Chindove will lead the assessment of MDT supply chain systems in selected countries, collaborating closely with national leprosy programs, WHO, and GPZL partners. The goal is to identify bottlenecks, analyze root causes, and develop actionable recommendations to strengthen supply chain resilience and reliability.

## GPZL MDT Last-Mile Supply Chain Session at NNN Conference in Uganda

The Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL) made a presentation during the 16th Annual NNN Conference in Kampala, Uganda to introduce the multi-drug therapy (MDT) Last-Mile Supply Chain Challenges Assessment.

Dr Stanley Chindove (consultant) highlighted how stock-outs of MDT have deep consequences, including delayed diagnoses, extended infectious periods, and loss of trust in health systems.

The conference brought together practitioners, government officials, community leaders, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders from over 50 countries to deliberate on challenges and solutions for NTD elimination.

Participants collaborated during the session to identify key last-mile bottlenecks in getting MDT to patients, shared practical solutions and best practices, and pinpointed opportunities for improvement in last-mile delivery. This interactive session formed part of GPZL's ongoing MDT Last-Mile Supply Chain Challenges Assessment, aimed at

uncovering systemic gaps and developing actionable recommendations. The insights gathered at the conference will feed directly into the report of MDT Supply Chain.

## New Report Highlights Urgent Gaps in Zero Transmission IEC/BCC Materials

The Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL) has released a new report revealing major weaknesses in zero transmission IEC/BCC materials used across the leprosy community.

The review found that while many resources raise awareness and promote treatment, few clearly explain how transmission happens or how it can be prevented—leaving a major gap in efforts to achieve zero transmission.

You can read the full report here:

<https://zeroleprosy.org/gap-analysis-of-iec-bcc-materials-for-leprosy-elimination-report/>

## GPZL Publishes Two Manuscripts on Transmission Interruption

The Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy (GPZL) has published two manuscripts on

**(i) Interrupting transmission of *Mycobacterium leprae*: synthesis of new evidence and research recommendations**

**(ii) Operational approaches and recommendations to interrupt transmission of *Mycobacterium leprae***, marking a significant contribution to the global evidence base on early detection, prevention, and zero-transmission pathways.

The manuscripts, developed from the Zero Transmission Symposium held in Bergen Norway in 2024 provide fresh insights that strengthen shared learning across countries and technical partners.

You can access the manuscripts from the GPZL website's publications section here:

<https://zeroleprosy.org/category/resources/publications/>

## Rapid needs assessment to plan the sessions of Global Network of National Programme Managers

GPZL has taken a major step in strengthening country-level coordination by establishing the Global Network of Government National Leprosy Programme Managers (NLPMS). The initiative supports Strategy 2, which focuses on mapping leprosy and scaling the deployment of tools that interrupt transmission at national level.

To guide the work of the global network, GPZL carried out a short survey with Programme Managers. They were asked about their needs, priorities, and how they prefer to engage. Their responses will help shape the Network so that meetings are useful, practical, and aligned with what countries expect.

## Voices from the Field

### Rising Above Stigma as Youth Lead Kenya's Fight Against Leprosy

When Gilford Otieno was a school boy in Kenya, a mysterious skin condition turned into a diagnosis that changed his life. Leprosy brought isolation, stigma, and separation from his community, but instead of breaking him, it set him on a path of purpose.



**Gilford Otieno, Idea Refaco Kenya**

Today, he serves as the National Youth Leader of the Idea Refaco Kenya Foundation, uplifting young people and persons affected by leprosy through advocacy, awareness, and peer support. When Gilford joined Idea Refaco in 2020, he noticed a critical gap: the national leprosy movement was dominated by older voices, with young people largely absent. Determined to shift this, he helped launch Zero Stigma Champions, a youth-led initiative mobilizing college and community volunteers to speak openly about leprosy and challenge harmful myths. "When I joined the organisation, I realised that most of the people involved were older. I knew young people could bring energy and fresh ideas," he says. "That's when I came up with the idea of mobilising youth as message carriers and stigma champions."

Through football tournaments, school discussions, and church dialogues, these young champions are transforming silence into conversation. Faith leaders, teachers, and local councils now work with the youth to promote early diagnosis and respectful treatment, creating safer spaces for people affected by leprosy. The initiative has also strengthened community links with Kenya's Ministry of Health, ensuring that people identified by youth volunteers receive free diagnosis and treatment.

A turning point in Gilford's journey came when he attended the International Leprosy Congress (ILC) in Bali in 2025. The experience broadened his understanding of global leprosy efforts and connected him with experts and advocates who shared their lived experiences.

"Going to Bali changed my life," he reflects. "Meeting doctors and people who had lived with leprosy gave me new strength and hope. I learned how communities everywhere can fight stigma together."

Today, Gilford mentors young people across Kenya, encouraging them to seek early care and to lead with courage, compassion, and collaboration. His story—rooted in resilience and guided by lived experience—demonstrates how youth leadership is breaking barriers, restoring dignity, and lighting the way toward a leprosy-free generation.



## In The News

### Ambassador Yohei Sasakawa Calls for Shared Global Momentum Toward Zero Leprosy



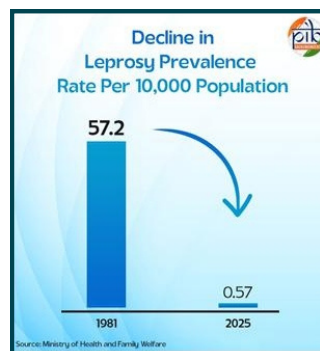
In his latest message published in Leprosy Bulletin No. 128 (August 2025), WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination Mr. Yohei Sasakawa called for renewed global determination to build on the momentum witnessed in Indonesia and extend it worldwide.

"Solutions are to be found in the same locations as the problems," he said. You can read the full Leprosy Bulletin No. 128 and the Ambassador's complete message here:

<https://www.shf.or.jp/wpcontent/uploads/2025/08/LB128.pdf>

### Leprosy in India: The Road to a Disease-Free Future

India has recorded remarkable progress in the fight against leprosy, sustaining its elimination status at the national level.



You can read the full press release on the Press Information Bureau website here:

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2174943&utm>

### Viet Nam Nears Zero Leprosy Thanks to "Last-Mile" Mobile Efforts

Viet Nam is making remarkable headway toward eliminating leprosy, bolstered by a mobile outreach strategy that brings health services directly to remote, high-risk communities.

The report notes that new cases in VietNam have fallen dramatically: from 748 cases in 2011 down to just 45 in 2024.

You can read the full article here:

<https://www.who.int/westernpacific/newsroom/feature-stories/item/viet-nam-nears-zero-leprosy--thanks-to-last-mile--mobile-efforts>

## Acknowledgment

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



9 route des Jeunes, 1227 Geneva, Switzerland

email: [admin@zeroleprosy.org](mailto:admin@zeroleprosy.org)

[Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy](#)

[www.zeroleprosy.org](http://www.zeroleprosy.org)

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