



August 2009
Leprosy Grant

Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*, an acid-fast, rod-shaped bacillus which attacks nerves in the hands, feet and face making them insensitive. Body parts do not 'fall off,' but due to the loss of feeling, people damage their hands and feet during basic day-to-day activities. Leprosy, if detected and treated in the early stages, is curable.

Since ancient times, leprosy has been regarded by the community as a contagious, mutilating and incurable disease. There are many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America with a significant number of leprosy cases. It is estimated that there are between one and two million people visibly and irreversibly disabled due to past and present leprosy who require to be cared for by the community in which they live.

During the 1965-67 Biennium, the LWML funded \$85,000 in mission projects for leprosy support, detection, and treatment in Africa, India and Australia/Oceania (Papua New Guinea).

Immanuel Medical Center at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was awarded \$15,000 to establish a specialized training program for staff at the All-Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Center (ALERT). Today, ALERT is still an active leader in leprosy and tuberculosis detection and treatment in Africa.

The Treatment Center at Bethesda Hospital in Ambur, India, was given \$40,000 for early detection screening and treatment of leprosy.

Immanuel Hospital in Mambisanda, Papua New Guinea, was awarded \$30,000 to construct a special Leprosy Ward, Physiotherapy Department and Living Quarters for the staff. Almost half (\$14,000) of the grant monies was used to train the Physiotherapist.

In 1991, the World Health Organization (WHO) and its member states committed themselves to eliminating leprosy as a public health problem by the year 2000. Elimination was defined as a prevalence of less than 1 case per 10,000 persons. There were 690,830 newly-detected patients in 2001.