

# Without our care, Lourdu Mary may not have survived.



I am affected by leprosy from the age of 15. The whole world is my home. I was wanted by no one. I became mental and admitted in the mental hospital. Later, some good people brought me to Pope John Garden where I am accepted and loved. I do little work I can.

Sadly, Lourdu Mary's story is a common one of rejection and isolation. But, thanks to kind donations the Guild receives from people like you, she has been cared for at Pope John Garden in Chennai, India. This is a residential care home for leprosy patients, which also runs a clinic for new leprosy referrals. Without the help of the centre, it is very likely that Lourdu Mary would

have been homeless and forced to beg in order to survive. Since the Guild was established in 1895 we have been supporting people like Lourdu Mary, and, where possible, rehabilitating them back into society. Today, our key aim is to help people with leprosy before they develop disabilities so they can stay living with their families and lead independent and fulfilling lives.

## Leprosy patients' treatment is compromised by Covid-19

A report published by the Royal Society for Tropical Medicine & Hygiene has revealed the impact of the first wave of Covid-19 on people being treated for leprosy.

Travel restrictions meant that many patients were prevented from visiting leprosy centres for diagnosis or treatment. Clinical activities were also either suspended or reduced in order to keep people safe or because staff were drafted in to help with the pandemic response.

The study points to an 80% reduction in leprosy diagnostic services, with one centre closing them completely. Active Case-Finding projects were also reduced by up to 77%, leading to concerns that reductions in both these services could lead to more people suffering disabilities in the future.

Stocks of Multi-Drug Therapy were in short supply in 10% of centres although this may be, in part, because patients were given a larger supply of drugs while they were unable to visit leprosy centres regularly. The main concern is

whether all patients will have continued their medication regimen to ensure the efficacy of their treatment.

Those patients who have already developed disabilities were also disadvantaged by 87% of centres having to suspend reconstructive surgeries and the treatment of chronic complications. If left untreated, these could lead to loss of function.

**We must intensify our efforts to ensure that leprosy centres have the resources they need to restore their services for patients as quickly as they can. With your help today, we will strive to improve outcomes for patients who have had to cope with the double impact of leprosy and Covid-19.**





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# NEWS

 ST FRANCIS LEPROSY GUILD

## FROM THE FRONT LINE

AUTUMN 2021



# 125 years of progress

## SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY EDITION

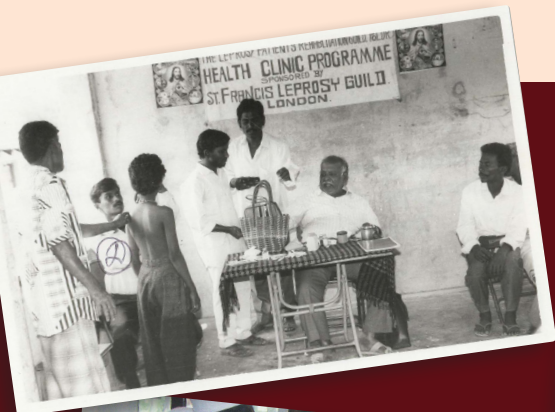


# Caring for the sick and the outcast since 1895

Before Kate Marsden founded St Francis Leprosy Guild in 1895, she had nursed people in Siberia who had been ostracised by their communities and abandoned in leper colonies. She was also instrumental in setting up a hospital to care for them.

In this, our 125th anniversary year, the Guild is proud to be celebrating Kate's legacy. In the spirit of St Francis, and inspired by her passion, the Guild supports a network of leprosy clinics, hospitals and care homes across the globe. Over many years, with the help of our supporters, these have looked after thousands of people whom the rest of society has seen as untouchable.

In the years before a cure for leprosy was found, the Guild's work was focussed on caring for those who had been disabled by the disease and rejected by their families as a result – people like Lourdu Mary (opposite). Through the provision of food, clothing, medical treatment, education and training, we have restored people's dignity, and provided for their physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.



## There is now a cure for leprosy

**It wasn't until the mid-1980s that a cure for leprosy was found. Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT) – a potent combination of anti-microbial drugs - has been a game changer. In most leprosy cases, 6-12 months' treatment effectively kills the pathogen that causes the disease. The patient is cured and no longer contagious.**

In 1995, the World Health Organization (WHO) made MDT available to countries free of charge where leprosy is still endemic and, since then, more than 16 million people have been cured of the disease and some countries have even declared themselves leprosy-free.

However, it is now felt by those working in the field, that while new cases of leprosy reported to WHO have been reduced to around 200,000 annually, this is far from an accurate picture. Leprosy tends to spread in poor and marginalised communities



that have little or no access to affordable healthcare, and we believe there could be as many as four million people who may have leprosy, but haven't been diagnosed yet.



Having spent over a century caring for those whose lives have been destroyed by leprosy, the Guild is determined to play its part in finding these 'missing millions' before they develop disabilities.

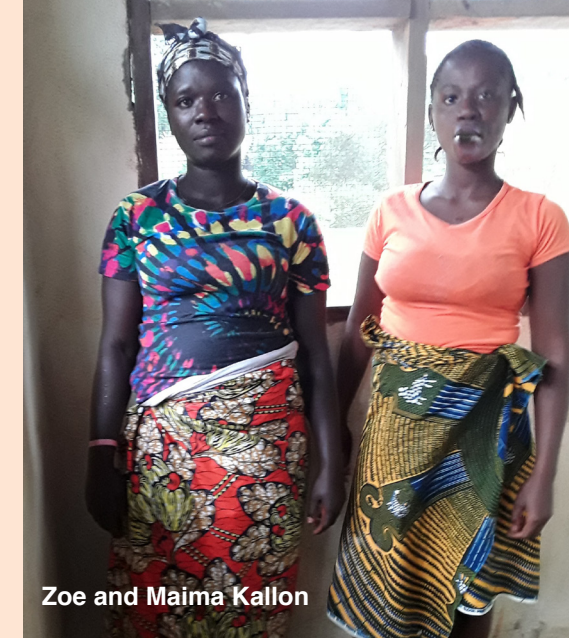
## Rooting out leprosy wherever it exists

**As well as continuing to care for people affected by leprosy, the Guild is aiming to end it once and for all by working closely with leprosy centres that are engaged in Active Case-Finding.**

With your support, we fund the training of healthcare workers and volunteers who visit people's communities to diagnose and treat new cases of leprosy as soon as they arise. They monitor people's contacts in order to halt transmission of the disease, and also run education campaigns in schools and villages so people can spot the early signs of leprosy themselves. That way, they can seek treatment long before disabilities occur and avoid being ostracised by others.

**For example, in Massatine, Liberia, a former leper settlement is working to eradicate leprosy as a public health issue through education and Active Case-Finding.**

Zoe and Maima Kallon have grown up in Massatine. Both their grandparents and mother contracted leprosy. They became physically disfigured by it and were cast out of society. Consequently, they have been under the care of the Centre we support for their whole lives.



Zoe and Maima Kallon

Zoe showed early signs of leprosy when she was 10 years old and Maima at 14. However, regular monitoring and early treatment means neither of the sisters has suffered any disabilities or complications. Now in their twenties, the young women have partners and children and lead independent lives in society. No one in their own families has shown any signs of leprosy.

In celebration of our 125 years of service, could you spare a gift to help us continue this vital work? Together, we can stop future generations from having to suffer the disabilities, isolation and indignities that leprosy can cause.