

# Providing long-term leprosy care



Selvaraj, Dindigul, India

**Selvaraj is 70 years old and lives in Dindigul, India. He shares a home with his son, Suresh, and still helps in the family butcher's shop.**

After Selvaraj began to experience leprosy symptoms in the late 1970s, it took around three years before he was officially diagnosed. Our partner, St Joseph Hospital in Dindigul, identified the disease when its missionary Sisters were conducting a village survey. Sadly, Selvaraj had already developed deformities in his right leg and has gone on to suffer repeatedly with foot ulcers.

He said, *"When I was diagnosed, I thought it would be the death of me. It was very frightening to see these things happening. I was working in a skin tanning factory and wore tight socks and shoes to protect my skin from the*

*chemicals. But my skin was becoming dry and delicate and started to rupture and bleed more often."*

For 17 years Selvaraj spent six months at home, then six months in hospital receiving treatment. Although he claims not to have been stigmatised, his wife wouldn't eat food he gave her and his neighbours wouldn't come too close.

Today, Selvaraj feels his leprosy is under control but still suffers from a lack of feeling in his right foot. He wears plastic shoes to protect it from injury at work and leather shoes provided by St Joseph Hospital the rest of the time.

**SFLG and its partners are committed to giving people with leprosy the lifetime care they might need. With your support, we will continue to do just that.**

## Researching better treatments

**Around one in five people affected by leprosy are at risk of developing ulcers. These wounds occur because the disease damages nerves and causes loss of feeling. Therefore, people with leprosy can suffer injuries or damage their skin without realising.**

Ulcers often become a recurring, life-long condition. They can limit people's mobility and therefore their ability to work, support their family and lead an independent life. The gifts you send to us help to minimise the impact of ulcers by funding hospital treatment, education in self-care and the provision of tailor-made leather shoes to help protect leprosy patients' feet from injury.

You are also enabling SFLG to support research into more effective treatments, such as the development of a fabric boot for use with leprosy patients who suffer with leg ulcers.

The boot, known as the Beckham Boot, is being tested by leprosy patients in West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, India.

Its effectiveness will be compared to the current practice of using plaster of Paris which can be uncomfortable and is less than ideal.

Funding important research to improve leprosy diagnosis and treatment is one of the five key strands of our TRACE strategy. Thank you for making it possible.



The Beckham Boot

St Francis Leprosy Guild, 73 St Charles Square, London W10 6EJ  
Registered Charity No.1188749

■ For donations and enquiries: 0300 770 2856 ■ For anything else: 07754 592240  
■ enquiries@stfrancisleprosy.org ■ www.stfrancisleprosy.org

**Donate at [stfrancisleprosy.enthuse.com/NTLR23](https://stfrancisleprosy.enthuse.com/NTLR23)**

† SFLG ST FRANCIS LEPROSY GUILD

Follow us on:



# NEWS

† SFLG ST FRANCIS LEPROSY GUILD

## FROM THE FRONT LINE

AUTUMN 2023

## Active Case-Finding succeeds in early detection

**SFLG is now supporting nine Active Case-Finding projects across five countries: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Uganda. These projects identify people with early symptoms of leprosy and provide immediate treatment so they can avoid the disabilities and stigma it causes.**

Since the first projects were launched in 2021, our partners have screened more than 350,000 people and identified 254 new cases of leprosy. Of those diagnosed, 6% already had Grade II disabilities, illustrating why it is so vital to spot symptoms as early as possible.

Prompt treatment with Multidrug Therapy offers people a cure for leprosy and prevents them from developing disabilities. Early detection also stops leprosy being passed on to countless others.

Active Case-Finding plays a major role in TRACE, our operating strategy. If we are to stamp out leprosy once and for all, we must actively seek out new

Village leprosy awareness training



cases in areas where the disease is still endemic. Your kind gifts helped us to launch six projects in 2021 and a further three at the end of 2022. We can't thank you enough for your generosity and for working with us towards a leprosy free world.

If you can make another gift today to help us continue this vital work, we would be extremely grateful. Please use the donation form attached to your letter, visit [stfrancisleprosy.enthuse.com/NTLR23](https://stfrancisleprosy.enthuse.com/NTLR23) or call us on **0300 770 2856** (Mon -Thurs, 9am -4.30pm.)

## Supporting medical students to learn about leprosy

James Alden, a final year medical student at Green Templeton College, Oxford, has been awarded a health care elective grant from SFLG. James is passionate about improving health outcomes through patient education and with our support will be working with our partner, Green Pastures Hospital in Pokhara, Nepal.

### James says:

"At Green Pastures Hospital (GPH) I will be joining the chronic and palliative care team. I shall be helping them with their clinics as well as their educational campaigns. Outreach education is an essential component of de-stigmatising conditions such as leprosy and helping to erode societal barriers to accessing adequate healthcare. I look forward to learning from the educators in the team."



James Alden, a final year medical student at Green Templeton College



"As one of the major leprosy centres in Western Nepal, GPH offers me a fantastic opportunity to learn about a condition that I recognise as a blind spot in my knowledge. I will be assisting the team in identifying local community factors that contribute to the continued spread of leprosy in Pokhara, through my discussion with patients and healthcare workers."

"I look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the local community in a meaningful way, supporting greater self-advocacy and resulting in better health outcomes for individuals."

**Awarding grants for medical students like James is just one example of SFLG's support for leprosy education and training. We believe our medical electives not only enable a vital exchange of knowledge and ideas, but we also hope to encourage young health care professionals to become future leaders in leprosy care, so they can help beat the disease once and for all.**

## Sr Bawani speaks at Vatican International Symposium

Sr Mary Bawani Chelliah, of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Sri Lanka, was invited to this year's International Symposium in the Vatican to speak about their work with people affected by leprosy during the Covid-19 pandemic. The theme of this year's symposium was 'Leave No One Behind'.



Sr Bawani, Vatican City, Rome

**Sr Bawani served for 20 years at Manthivu leprosy hospital in Sri Lanka. She visited people with leprosy, especially those in remote communities, taking them provisions, medication and providing practical support and friendship.**

### Sr Bawani says:

"During the pandemic, our mission was challenged by many obstacles. But travel restrictions imposed by the government did not stop our visits even though the number was reduced. Some of the people we visited were

given mobile phones to stay in touch. For others, money was paid directly into their bank accounts. Some were helped through the local parish priest and when possible, supported by neighbours. So the Sisters did not keep quiet, even though the virus was spreading and taking many lives every day, especially during the second wave of the pandemic. Covid-19 pushed leprosy communities to the back of the queue and out of mind during lockdown. The Sisters made sure that they were not forgotten and had what they needed to survive."



Delivering much needed supplies

SFLG works in partnership with the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Sri Lanka to care for people with leprosy. Thanks to the dedication and compassion of the Sisters - and your kind support for our work - help was at hand when it was needed most. We are delighted that Sr Bawani was given the opportunity to share their story at the Symposium in January this year.



## Fundraising towards a leprosy free world

We are enormously grateful for the generous donations our supporters send to us. Without you, we could never have come so far in our fight against leprosy. Nevertheless, there is still so much more work to do so we were pleased to welcome Eileen Murray, our new Community Fundraiser, to our team.



**Eileen has been giving talks about our work in schools, churches and to other groups, inspiring them to raise funds that will help stop leprosy in its tracks. She is full of ideas for fun activities, from sponsored spellings and singing, to cake sales and car washing. So, if you are part of a group that would like to fundraise for us, Eileen would love to hear from you.**

You can email her at [eileen.murray@stfrancisleprosy.org](mailto:eileen.murray@stfrancisleprosy.org) or call her on 07842 426156.

Even if you don't belong to a group but you'd like to hold a coffee morning, a bake sale or even take part in a charity run or walk on our behalf, we'd be delighted!

Sr Premila FFM from the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary challenged Eileen to a sponsored 5K ParkRun on Wimbledon Common in March this year. Together, they raised nearly £900!

**Whatever you love to do, why not turn it into an opportunity to fundraise for SFLG and help us get even closer to a leprosy free world.**

Thank you!



Karuppayaa, affected by leprosy, Tamil Nadu, India.