



**53rd World Leprosy Day  
29<sup>th</sup> January 2006**

Message from Dr. Sunil Deepak  
President of the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations

Today on the occasion of the 53rd World Leprosy Day, I am writing to you on behalf of the 15 Members of the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations, known as ILEP. I would like to extend greetings to all those affected by leprosy and our thanks to all those individuals, organisations and governments actively working together for a world without leprosy.

2006 also marks the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of ILEP and our Members are proud to look back on the achievements made over the last four decades. ILEP Members have helped cure many millions of leprosy affected persons and continue to support vital leprosy work in 82 countries. In addition to the treatment provided, ILEP Members have helped to prevent disability, reduce stigma and discrimination and restore dignity to those affected.

A significant step in the continuing fight against leprosy in 2005, has been the finalisation of the new global strategy for 2006-2010 by World Health Organisation. ILEP has contributed actively to this document. The new strategy takes note of the significant progress made in the fight against leprosy in the past five years and aims for further reducing the leprosy burden in the coming years. The new strategy notes, *"Even though the leprosy burden has been reduced substantially, new cases of leprosy will continue to appear for the foreseeable future in most of the currently endemic countries... Special expertise in leprosy and its control needs be maintained at national and subnational*

*levels... The key will be to integrate all the essential components of leprosy control activities into the available primary health care system."*

On behalf of the 15 Members of ILEP, I would like to assure all our partners that ILEP Associations remain fully committed to the ideal of a World Without Leprosy and we intend to continue the fight against leprosy as long as necessary. We are justly proud of the achievements of our Members in collaboration with national Governments and other partners over the last forty years but we remain convinced of the need to continue working tirelessly together with all our partners to ensure that effective leprosy activities are sustained wherever they are needed. This will require continued integration of leprosy control activities with other health services. It will require the continued provision of training of health workers. And since the close links between poverty, exclusion and leprosy are already well documented, our support will continue to be channelled to prevention of disability, socio- economic rehabilitation and community development in a spirit of partnership with leprosy affected persons.

And so, on this occasion of World Leprosy Day and ILEP's fortieth anniversary, let us all celebrate our successes but also renew our commitment to our fight to achieve a world where all persons affected with leprosy have access to necessary treatment, rehabilitation and care, without worrying about prejudice and stigma, a world where all human beings have the right to live their lives with dignity.