

Global Partnership for

**ZERO**  
leprosy



Photo credit: The Leprosy Mission Trust India

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

### What is the Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy?

The *Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy* is a coalition committed to realizing a world free of leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease.

The *Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy* was established by several leading leprosy organizations, including the Novartis Foundation, the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP), and the International Association for Integration, Dignity and Economic Advancement (IDEA), with representation from national leprosy programs, scientific organizations and the academic community, and with support from the World Health Organization (WHO). The secretariat for the Global Partnership is hosted by the Task Force for Global Health. For more information, visit [www.zeroleprosy.org](http://www.zeroleprosy.org).

### What will the partnership do?

Initially, the Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy will coordinate action in three key areas:

1. Accelerating research in new diagnostic and therapeutic tools, interventions, and strategies to interrupt leprosy transmission.
2. Working with national leprosy programs to scale up promising innovations.
3. Increasing advocacy and fundraising.

### Why is eliminating leprosy so important?

Every year, more than 200,000 people are newly diagnosed with leprosy, including 18,000 children. More than 2 million people are thought to be living with disabilities resulting from leprosy, and there are potentially millions more who are undiagnosed and untreated. If left untreated, the infection can cause progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs, and eyes, and can spread to others. In addition to physical disability, affected persons suffer from social exclusion. They can be forced out of marriage, excluded from school or jobs thereby losing their source of income, and be prevented from vital access to healthcare.

Eliminating leprosy will have major health, economic, and social benefits for persons affected by leprosy and their communities, as well as long-lasting impact for millions of persons at risk of leprosy.

### Where does leprosy occur?

In 2016, newly-diagnosed leprosy was found in 100 countries worldwide. The majority of new leprosy cases occurred in Brazil, India and Indonesia.

### What's new about this initiative? How is it different from "business as usual"?

Two things are new. First, scientific breakthroughs in diagnosis and prevention have sparked new hope that we can achieve the goal of zero new cases of leprosy. Second, the Global partnership will build on and strengthen existing collaborative networks to support leprosy programs as they adopt and scale up these promising new tools and approaches.

### How are you ensuring the voices of persons affected, who are often from under-developed regions and whose voices have often been marginalised, are heard in the partnership?

The partnership endorses the full participation of persons affected by leprosy, which includes representation on the Leadership Team and involvement in all working groups and committees.

### What is your time frame for achieving zero leprosy?

We have learned from other disease elimination programs that it is virtually impossible to accurately predict when "zero" will be achieved. We are joining forces to achieve our shared goal of zero leprosy as efficiently, thoroughly, and quickly as possible.

### What does "zero leprosy" mean?

Broadly speaking, "zero leprosy" refers to "zero transmission, zero disability, and zero discrimination." Zero transmission, an initial focus of the partnership, means no new cases of leprosy despite active efforts to find them.

### You said the Task Force for Global Health is hosting the secretariat for the partnership. Can you tell me more about them?

The Task Force for Global Health is a non-governmental organization based in Decatur, Georgia, USA. The Task Force works to improve health conditions for vulnerable populations around the world, especially people living in poverty. Task Force programs focus on controlling and eliminating debilitating diseases and building durable systems that protect and promote health. For more information, please go to [www.taskforce.org](http://www.taskforce.org).

### Are new members welcome? How can my organization join?

Yes! This partnership will continue to expand and engage members from national leprosy programs, the scientific and academic communities, organizations of persons affected by leprosy, and non-governmental organizations. If you are interested in joining the partnership, please contact Ms. Courtenay Dusenbury, Secretariat Director, at [cdusenbury@taskforce.org](mailto:cdusenbury@taskforce.org).