International Efforts against Leprosy

The Beginning
Decision not to include leprosy

The Interim Commission informed the First World Health Assembly, held in Geneva in 1948, that the experience of the League of Nations’ health commission had shown that
diseases such as cancer and leprosy did not “lend themselves easily to international action.”

“nothing really useful can be done to fight these diseases at the present stage of medical knowledge, nor even to promote scientific research, which costs so much that the Organisation’s entire budget would be merely a drop in the ocean”
An Alliance of Interests

• The Indian Delegation to the Second World Health Assembly
• The International Leprosy Association
The 1st All India Workers Conference, Wardha

Convened by the Maharogi Seva Mandal, in Wardha, October 30-31, 1947
Leprosy Workers, medical and social; veteran leaders and associates of Gandhi: Thakka Bapa, Shri Jajuji, Shri Kaka Kalekar, Manohar Diwan; Westerners: Donald Miller, Robert Cochrane, John Lowe
Robert Cochrane and Jagadisan: Meeting with Gandhi in 1945
Gandhi’s response and support

If India was pulsating with new life, if we were all in earnest about winning independence in the quickest manner possible by truthful and non-violent means, there would not be anyone with leprosy or a beggar in India uncared for and unaccounted for. In this revised edition I am deliberately introducing the person with leprosy as a link in the chain of constructive effort. For, what they are in India, that we are, if we will, but look about us, for the modern civilized world. Examine the condition of our brethren across the ocean and the truth of my remark will be borne home to us.


“Don’t worry about the funds. Let us have workers who can properly utilise them. Tell your friends of this.”

Jagadisan, 119 and Leprosy in India (April 1951).

“We could not have chosen a more appropriate time for holding a leprosy conference. This is the time for us to ask ourselves, whether in our own normal civilised life, are we not guilty of habitual cruelties, cruelties about which we are but o mindful only because these sufferings have been too long with us.”
First All India Leprosy Workers’ Conference

Eighty delegates attended the First All India Leprosy Workers’ Conference convened by the Maharogi Seva Mandal at Wardha on October 30 and 31 and November 1, 1947. Medical men and women engaged in leprosy work, social workers connected with leprosy and other activities of Gandhiji’s Constructive Programme, some veteran leaders and associates of Gandhiji ...
Attendees

- M B Diwan,
- R V Wardekar,
- W Bailey,
- E Anderson,
- Dr Sushila Nayyar,
- R G Cochrane,
- Shrikrishnadas Jaju,
- Jivraj N Mehta,
- A D Miller,
- Dharmendra,
- I Santra,
- M S Kaka Kalekar,
- V N Das,
- Laury Baker,
- T N Jagadisan,
- David Molesworth
From India to the World Health Assembly

So soon after the “birth of our freedom” and in the midst of the “terrible upheavals in the country following the partition of India” that the first All-India Leprosy Workers Conference should have met. The Conference had led to “a new movement in the country for the relief and control of leprosy” and now “the question of anti-leprosy work figured prominently on India’s Health Programme.”

A second Conference had already been held in Calcutta and the participants “looked beyond cure to the departure from Bombay to the World Health Conference at Rome”, for “India was greatly concerned about the prevention of leprosy in the country and would like to urge the World Health Organisation to give its major attention to combat this disease.”

*Madras Information Fortnightly*, 3, no 14 (1949): 62-4. This article does not have an author, but it would not be surprising to discover that the author was T. N. Jagadisan.
The Leonard Wood Memorial Conference, Manila

The International Leprosy Association
The League of Nations

Resolution from Strasbourg Conference, in 1923: Leprosy Investigation (1931) constitute an international bureau of information and inquiry collect statistics of leprosy throughout the world
The International Leprosy Association

“The happy circumstances that an International Society was spontaneously formed, which aims at drawing together and coordinating the work of the various institutions concerned in leprosy” (Burnet, 1938)

• The Leonard Wood Memorial Conference, Manila, 1931
• The ILA Congress, Cairo, March 1938
• The ILA Congress, Havana, Cuba, April 1948
ILA Members
James Doull: Epidemiologist (1889-1963)

- John Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health in 1920,
- Study in 1933 centred on Cordova, on Mactan island, with José N Rodriguez and R S Guinto
- Professor of Hygiene and Public Health, at Western Reserve University, in Cleveland, he conducted surveys on public health in various parts of the world for the Surgeon General of the USPHS, Dr Thomas Parran (from 1930)
- US Delegation to the United Nations Conference on International Organisations, in San Francisco, in 1945, out of which was created the United Nations
- Chief of the Office of International Health Relations of the USPHS
- Participant in the Advisory Health Group: the task force that mapped out the plans, at the International Health Conference, for the new international health organisation, in 1946, that would become the WHO
- His obituary in *Leprosy Review* states that “he was deeply interested in the WHO which he continued to serve as a consultant and member of the leprosy panel.” and “He was at all times active in WHO relationships.”
José N Rodriguez

- born in San Marcelino, Zambales, the Philippines, in 1897,
- Masters in Public Health at Johns Hopkins in 1948
- Post graduate work in tropical medicine and leprology at the Calcutta School of Medicine
- Dermatology courses at Western Reserve University, Columbia University, and the Hospital St Louis, in Paris.
- Leprosy Control Project in Cebu
- Culion Leprosy Colony and the Eversley Childs Sanitarium, in Cebu.
- Chief of the Central Luzon Sanitarium
- First Director of the Bureau of Disease Control, in the Philippine Department of Health, in 1957.
- He would make a major contribution to the inclusion of leprosy in the international health programme.
Roland Chaussininand

- Director of the Leprosy Service, Pasteur Institute, in Saigon and in Paris (1931 to 1946; and from 1946)
- Member of the Consultative Commission to the Overseas French Ministry
- Member of the Permanent Commission on Hygiene (Leprosy Section) in the Ministry of Public Health and Population
- Secretary and Treasurer of the Western Section of the ILA
- Associate Editor of the *IJL*.
- He was to be a key figure in the liaisons between the ILA and WHO
- Consultant at WHO HQ
- Secretary for the First Expert Committee on Leprosy
The World Health Assembly

- Designed in 1945, post WWII, to heal
- Health – “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being”
- Focus on malaria, tuberculosis, and venereal disease
Rajkumari Amrit Kaur
(Feb. 02, 1889 – Oct. 02, 1964)
Health minister in the Indian Cabinet for ten years after India's independence (1947-1957)
Indian Delegation to the 2nd World Health Assembly

• June, 1949 - Emotive and Symbolic
• New chemotherapies
• Social and humanitarian value of work against leprosy
• Fuelled by the newly won independence of India
Medical Events

• Guy Faget began a trial of promin, at Carville, March 1941 (publications 1945-6)
• Robert Cochrane used DDS (dapsone), at the Lady Willingdon Leprosy Settlement, in Chingleput (1947), reported in Havana
The International Leprosy Association and the World Health Organisation

- Earliest nongovernmental organisation to enter into an affiliation with the WHO
- Succeeded in getting leprosy onto the programme
- Succeeded in getting WHO to appoint an expert panel and an expert committee
- Succeeded in establishing a Leprosy Unit
Rajkumari Ranjit Kaur

“I feel a special responsibility towards the cause of leprosy not only because I knew Bapu’s mind about it and would like to do something tangible for it, but also because I have brought it before WHO and my proposal received a most favourable reception in Rome last June. *Now if India does not redouble its efforts, it will be in the nature of a stigma on us.*”