

## Editorial

Welcome to this special issue of *Leprosy Review* on leprosy elimination campaigns (LECs), which brings together a range of contributions from agencies and individuals in many parts of the world, all with direct experience of control programmes and the use of LECs in different situations. We are immensely grateful to all who have responded. Due to pressure on space in this issue, we have had to hold over some articles for publication in the March 2000 issue, and by that time we hope that readers will have received and read this considerable collection of information on a subject which is clearly a major step forward in the control of this disease.

The papers include contributions from the WHO Leprosy Elimination Team in Geneva (Communicable Diseases Eradication and Elimination), together with items from India, Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nigeria and the Philippines. Richard Croft has supplied a stimulating commentary ('Leprosy elimination—sprint or marathon?'), balancing the remarkable achievements of LEC to date against the need to plan a longer term 'marathon' of activities, including basic leprosy control and disability management, well into the next century. In his Summary article, Cairns Smith reviews the future scope and expectation of LECs, emphasizing sustainability, comprehensive and cost-effective leprosy control, the detection of suspect and hidden cases on a repeated basis and the improvement of all aspects of LECs through feedback, evaluation and exchange of ideas.

A strategy which started as recently as 1995 and which has already revealed more than half a million new cases clearly calls for serious attention and analysis. Furthermore, as many of our contributors note, it has increased public and professional awareness about leprosy and the availability of effective treatment to an extent not previously seen. Many observations in the following pages, however, underline the need constantly to review certain aspects of the operational strategy of LEC, so that weak points are addressed. It is our hope that the information presented in this (and the next) issue of the journal will represent a useful collection of information and opinion on a subject which is clearly of such great importance for the elimination of leprosy worldwide.

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