

## Your prayers can reach the ends of the earth with God's love...



### **...and bring hidden cases of leprosy into the light!**

Your Christ-like compassion is such a blessing. It reaches far and wide... stretches across oceans... transcends borders.

With your every kindness, you're bringing the love of God into the lives of those who suffer so much from the terrible effects of leprosy.

Take girls like Nila. At just 14, she's so ashamed of her leprosy that she hides from her family and friends.

"I felt ashamed to present myself in front of others. Because there are so many negative beliefs in the village regarding leprosy."

Yet Nila is bravely living with leprosy. Nila dreams of becoming a doctor - a specialist in lungs and pulmonary diseases - to care for the health of people like her sick father. Even though the disease is destroying her hope for the future.

Thanks to the prayers and support of people like you Nila's case of leprosy was brought into the light and diagnosed. Now she is receiving her treatment and cure.

Nila lives in Timor-Leste, a near neighbour. In fact, closer to Australia than Bali. You might recall in 2011, the island nation reached leprosy elimination.

That means less than one case of leprosy for every 10,000 people. But now confirmed leprosy cases in Timor-Leste are steadily climbing again... and severe disabilities and cases in children are on the rise...

Your prayers and your compassion are needed now for an urgent new mission. As a separate region of Timor-Leste, Oecusse is remote and isolated. Your prayers will help us venture into the unknown to find the most hidden cases of leprosy.

The Oecusse people live in rural villages, surrounded by wild and untamed terrain. They have poorer health services than the rest of the country. So many leprosy cases remain utterly hidden.

Through prayer you can help reach villages wracked by poverty where we've never set foot. You'll help reach the most hidden cases of leprosy and bring them into the light. Together we can take God's love to the ends of the earth!

This brand-new E-LETRA (Ending Leprosy Transmission in Oecusse-Ambeno) project is targeting the poorest and hardest to reach people in Oecusse.

**Read more about how you can make a difference to children like Nila inside...**



# Ends of the Earth

Your prayers can reach the Ends of the Earth — and help make sure children like Nila (pictured) can pursue their dreams, not hide away in shame.

Together we can find hidden cases of leprosy. Together we can stop lifelong disability and child leprosy cases through mass screenings. Together we can train new lab technicians so leprosy cases can be spotted quickly and brought into the light. Together we can send doctors to Anandaban Hospital for specialised training, who can then train local health workers.

Together we can make sure children like Nila can pursue their dreams, not hiding away in shame. Your prayerful heart can follow the call of Jesus in Acts 1:8b to go and reach people “to the ends of the earth.”

Give thanks for this amazing opportunity to be part of God’s plan to reach and cure people with leprosy, even to the ends of the earth.

**Pray for Nila as she continues treatment and begins to look forward to the rest of her life. Pray she will continue to dream of showing compassion to others in her family and community.**

**Pray that more people with leprosy will be found and given the treatment they need. Pray that the E-LETRA project will find hidden cases early so that permanent disabilities can be avoided.**

**Pray for the staff working in the E-LETRA project who travel long distances to Oecusse. Give thanks for their compassion and commitment to improving the lives of people like Nila.**



You can help bring God’s love to others like Nila in Oecusse and have your kindness multiplied with the 5:1 Matching Grant.

<https://www.leprosymission.org.au/hiddenlives/kit10>



Scan the QR code with your mobile phone



**Australian Aid**



**5:1 Matching Grant Approved**

**Australian Aid**

**YOUR GIFTS ARE WORTH 5 TIMES MORE!**

This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). Thanks to ANCP and supporters like you, this project is able to help improve the well-being of people affected by leprosy and disability.



# From facing stigma to finding strength

## Maya Ranavare: Wellesley Bailey Award Winner

### From The Leprosy Mission International.

Created in 1999 to celebrate the life and work of Mr Wellesley Bailey, founder of The Leprosy Mission, these unique awards honour those who have made extraordinary contributions to society through overcoming the social stigma and physical challenges of leprosy.

Maya Ranavare is one of four individuals to win the Wellesley Bailey Award in 2024. This is her story.

### A childhood marked by stigma & discrimination.

Maya's life began in the confines of a leprosy colony, born to a mother affected by leprosy. Diagnosed with leprosy at six, she faced severe stigma and discrimination from an early age. The visible white patches on her skin made her a target for prejudice, which left deep emotional scars and a lingering sense of inferiority. Economic constraints and indifference from school authorities denied her the basic right to education, further compounding her struggles.



As an adult, Maya faced continued rejection in the job market, pushing her into menial labour. Yet, her spirit remained unbroken.

### Living determined to fight against exclusion

Maya was aware of the ever-present stigma surrounding her community. Her determination to shield her children from the indignities she faced drove her to seek better opportunities for them. Maya arranged marriages for her daughters outside the colonies, ensuring they could live without the shadow of leprosy.

Her resolve to break the cycle of despair extended beyond her family, as she worked tirelessly to transform the future for all children in her community.

### Maya's life was transformed when encountering two social workers

The arrival of social workers in the leprosy colony where Maya lived marked the beginning of a profound transformation. They shared stories of resilience from within the leprosy community and spoke passionately about human rights and the work of organisations supporting persons affected by leprosy.

These social workers' words provided Maya with a sense of determination and hope. The inspiring stories of leprosy champions who had overcome adversity resonated deeply with her, shattering the despair that had held her captive. Encouraged by their guidance, Maya pledged to rise above her challenges and become an agent of change.

With their mentorship, she gained the tools, knowledge, and confidence to advocate for her rights and the rights of others.

Maya's story continues on the back page of your Keeping in Touch...



**This story begins on the inside of your Keeping in Touch! Read Page 3 first!**

Maya realised her journey could serve as a beacon of hope for others in her community. Their support was instrumental in her transformation, helping her navigate social work complexities and empowering her to drive impactful initiatives. This pivotal encounter set Maya on a path to eliminate prejudice and improve living conditions within leprosy colonies, solidifying her commitment to justice and community advocacy.

## **Leading change and empowering communities**

Maya's leadership and advocacy have been transformative. She has worked with a state-level organisation to secure maintenance allowances for over 3,000 individuals affected by leprosy. As a mentor for livelihood projects with Sasakawa India Leprosy Foundation and Bajaj Foundation, she has built strong relationships with local administrators and political leaders, advocating for essential civic amenities in leprosy colonies.

Her roles in various organisations, including Chairman of a training college and Treasurer of a national organisation of people affected by leprosy, underscore her leadership capability.

Maya's tireless efforts have significantly reduced stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy. Her advocacy has led to improved living conditions in leprosy colonies, including access to education, healthcare, and social protection services.

She has transformed the infrastructure of these colonies, creating liveable environments and enhancing the quality of life for residents. By engaging with government authorities, Maya has secured rights and social entitlements for her community, promoting dignity and respect.



## **Her influence is relentless**

Maya's impact extends beyond her local community. Her extensive awareness programmes in schools, colleges, and public rallies have dispelled myths about leprosy and fostered empathy. She has mobilised support from various sectors, providing livelihood opportunities and advocating for human rights.

Through social media, she has spread awareness and practical solutions, shifting public perceptions. Maya's participation in national and international conferences has contributed to global perceptions of leprosy, inspiring others and driving positive change.

Maya's journey from a childhood marked by prejudice to becoming a beacon of hope and empowerment exemplifies her extraordinary resilience and dedication. Her relentless advocacy for the rights and dignity of persons affected by leprosy, her transformative impact on her community, and her role in reducing stigma and discrimination make her a deserving winner of the Wellesley Bailey Award.

**Give thanks for Maya's strength, tested time and again as a child and into her adult years. Give thanks for the support she found to help her overcome the many challenges she faced. Pray for people still struggling with stigma and discrimination to find resilience within themselves and support from the community around them.**

**Give thanks for Maya's willingness to share her story and become a leader in the leprosy community. Pray that her experiences in creating change for people affected by leprosy will have a lasting impact on future generations. Pray that her encouragement will empower them to advocate for themselves and others to continue to reduce stigma and increase inclusion.**

**This month we commemorate World Mental Health Day. Pray for individuals, like Maya, who have lived with emotional scars, lingering feelings of inferiority, and despair. Pray for resources to be available to provide the support and inspiration needed to transform lives.**

**You can stand with Maya and show your love for people living with the stigma and other consequences of leprosy through the Cocreating Inclusive Development project. <https://www.leprosymission.org.au/projects/cid/kit10>**

