

The Hidden Life of Ermelinda



“Ermelinda is a strong, independent woman, but this was not always the case...” Zeki from the Misaun Lepra Timor-Leste on the Hidden Lives podcast, Season 2, Episode 3.

Ermelinda began to see signs of leprosy on her body as early as 1993. It was not until seven years later that community health workers saw her and were able to properly diagnose and give her Multi-Drug Treatment (MDT). Leprosy reactions and a lack of options for surgery in Timor-Leste have left her with disabilities in her hands and feet.

Because of this Ermelinda often withdraws from social and community activities feeling shame at her situation. Fortunately, her family and neighbours have been accepting of her. Ermelinda lives with her family on a small income that does not fully support their daily needs.



Leprosy reactions damaged the nerves in Ermelinda's hands. Combined with a lack of options for surgery, she has been left with disabilities in her hands.

But through the Misaun Lepra Timor-Leste Ermelinda has been encouraged to join a local Self-Help Group (SHG). Here, Ermelinda and the other women in the group have been empowered to see and reach for their full potential. They have participated in training on important issues such as Gender-Based Violence, Universal Human Rights, Rights for People with Disabilities, Leadership, Women's Decision Making, and Micro Business.

The group, made up of women affected by leprosy and disabilities, as well as family members not affected, have initiated horticultural activities to obtain income for their livelihoods, including planting cabbage, beans, tomatoes, eggplants, pumpkins, okra, and bok choy. Additionally, the group also established a fund for saving and loaning money.

“Having the opportunity to be involved and participate in various activities in groups and communities such as socialization, training and learning, group discussions and sharing, and gardening together has built trust and eliminated feelings of shame in me.”

Find out more about the podcast, and how you can pray for Ermelinda and her community on the inside!!



In this 150th anniversary year we are using Psalm 150 as one of our key verses.

Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary;

praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise him for his acts of power;

praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,

praise him with the harp and lyre,

praise him with timbrel and dancing,

praise him with the strings and pipe,

praise him with the clash of cymbals,

praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

—Psalm 150



Continued from front cover



Hidden Lives Podcast

You can hear more about Ermelinda's story and the work of Misaun Lepra Timor-Leste on the Hidden Lives podcast (Season 2, Episode 3, A Little Investment Goes a Long Way) which you can find at <https://hiddenlives.buzzsprout.com/> or by scanning the QR code. There are more episodes, hosted by Eva from The Leprosy Mission Australia, and Zeki from Misaun Lepra Timor-Leste, on the website as well!



Join us to pray for Timor-Leste



Ermelinda's developed disability in her feet. She needs to learn how to manage her new condition.

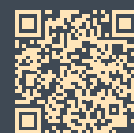
Pray for Ermelinda as she grows in her abilities to develop a sustainable livelihood to help support herself and her family.

Give thanks that her family and neighbours

were accepting of her and pray that this acceptance would become widespread in Timor-Leste and in other countries where stigma exists.

Give thanks for the staff and volunteers of Misaun Lepra Timor-Leste who work hard to provide support and opportunities for people affected by leprosy and disabilities. Pray that they will see the positive difference they are making in many people's lives and their communities.

You can support other women in Timor-Leste like Ermelinda through the Improved Leprosy Services project. <https://www.leprosymission.org.au/tlmaeventKIT5>





Leprosy Mission



Australia

HEROES

Above: Keith and Ruth Skillicorn

In the 150th year of The Leprosy Mission we are taking some time to remember some of the many people who have contributed to our goal of a world without leprosy.

We are thankful to God for inspiring people like Keith to provide love and healing to people affected by leprosy.

ERNEST KEITH SKILLICORN AM (1923 – 2018)

“One of the most tragic ways victims of leprosy suffer is to be outcast from society. Several of our patients begged me to kill them to put an end to their torment. Not a few told me that they could bear the loss of fingers, toes or even hands and feet, also eyes. What they could not tolerate is to be cut off from the human race. It was a great privilege for us to be instruments in helping restore a measure of dignity to some of

the world’s 12 million people afflicted by this horrible, yet curable disease.” – Keith and Ruth Skillicorn, *The Making of a Miracle*, 1982, p213.

After studying for four years in a theological seminary and serving as an electrical technician in the Royal Australian Air Force, Keith travelled to India with his wife Ruth in 1951 in order to serve as a missionary in community development, adult literacy, and leprosy control.

During the 31 years Keith served in India, he established the “Agricultural Community Development Project”, an indigenous NGO.

From 1976 to 1982 Keith and Ruth carried out deputation work for The Leprosy Mission Australia (TLMA) based out of Victoria, and in 1982 they were appointed to the position first of Administrator and then Project Director with the HEED program in Bangladesh, a project of The Leprosy Mission.

Since retirement in 1988, Keith continued to visit India annually, working for the people of India, doing his best to ensure that those in need are taken care of. All of Keith’s magnificent work led to both him and his late wife, Ruth receiving the

Award of Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1988 due to their Management of Leprosy and Agricultural Development in India and Bangladesh.

Keith carried on reaching out to people affected by leprosy – or those who thought they may have leprosy – via the Internet – that they may be expertly diagnosed by leprosy trained doctors in their part of the world.

In 2000 Keith and Ruth were appointed as Life Members of TLMA in recognition of 49 years of service both overseas and in Australia as volunteers for people affected by leprosy.

Give thanks and praise to God for the faithful dedication and compassionate love of Keith and Ruth for people affected by leprosy.

Pray for staff and volunteers working across the many countries that The Leprosy Mission work in. Pray for the wisdom and energy to achieve our goal of a world without leprosy.



THANK YOU FOR PRAYING WITH US



From The Leprosy Mission around the world.

This year is our fourth Global Day of Prayer. We are inviting you to join Christians across the world to pray for a world without leprosy on **Wednesday 08 May 2024**.

Together we will pray for the work of The Leprosy Mission worldwide, with a particular focus on the new Global Strategy, which will drive the work of The Leprosy Mission in the years to come, as we work for a world without leprosy. We will hear from teams across the world about their vision

for the future, as well as the challenges they will face and the innovations they are working on. We will bring all of this before the Lord and wait to hear His calling for our new strategy.

On the Day of Prayer we will:

- Acknowledge God as our provider.
- Bring the prayers and petitions of TLM Members to the wider Global Fellowship.
- Wait upon God and listen to what He is saying to the Global Fellowship.

- Be encouraged by hearing what God is doing across the Global Fellowship

Like the Day of Prayer in previous years, the day itself will include international prayer services that will be held over Zoom. Contact us by emailing engage@leprosymission.org.au for further details.

“**Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**”

—Lamentations 3:21-23