



The Leprosy  
Mission  
Australia

# Keeping in Touch Easter 2021



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## Thank you for not giving up. Your faithful prayers and support are crucial in PNG this Easter!

Thank you for giving hope during this COVID-19 pandemic! People affected by leprosy are even more vulnerable now than ever before! Many live in close living quarters crowded housing, in makeshift shelters within poor and dangerous settlements. Thank you for giving hope to people like Phisto [pictured left] and his younger brother Lawrence.

Fortunately, 11-year-old Lawrence, was diagnosed with leprosy at the same time as his brother Phisto. He's been able to complete his full course of Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT), and is now cured! (Praise God!) But for Phisto his journey with leprosy has been more complex...

The boys were finally diagnosed because Phisto, then 16, visited a local clinic due to a persistent headache. It was there that he described his other symptoms which hadn't gone away. For two years Phisto had noticed discoloured patches developing on his skin in various places. His eyes had also begun to go red. He had noticed his hands were not functioning like they should, and they felt numb (all early signs of leprosy).

After being referred to a dermatology clinic, they were both advised to start taking MDT. But Phisto took the news hard. As the oldest of six children, and the oldest male after his father left,

Phisto already had a lot to cope with and took to drinking and smoking. Discouraged too that the nearest clinic was over an hour away on foot.

**But thanks to the support of people like you, The Leprosy Mission staff in PNG have been able to encourage him to reprioritise his health, and he is grateful.**

Phisto is now feeling more hopeful. He really feels that things have changed for the better and he has even been trying to prioritise his health more. *"My family and The Leprosy Mission have been supportive and have encouraged me to take treatment regularly again..."*

Phisto has become more aware of the consequences of leprosy. He's not only thankful that he does not have any deformity, but he also feels compassion for those who do.

*"I want to gather people in my settlement together who have been affected by leprosy and other diseases so we can support one another more through self-care, especially those with disability,"* Phisto told us.

**Please continue to pray for those affected by leprosy in PNG who have lost hope. Pray they are cured, restored and encouraged this Easter. May they experience the hope of new life!**



Right: Jenny on the road to Bacau, Timor Leste in 2004.

## Celebrating and Supporting Christian Women in Leadership

Life member, Jenny Davis, was the first female Board Chair of The Leprosy Mission Australia (TLMA) just over 20 years ago. She combined microbiological skills with her desire to serve Christ in an organisation that stands with the marginalised people in our world. This month, we praise God and give thanks for Jenny and for all women who make an impact through leadership and governance in The Leprosy Mission Australia. This is Jenny's story...

In 1974, my husband and I were backpacking in Thailand and visited family friends, Trevor and Heather Smith, in Chiang Mai as missionaries with The Leprosy Mission (TLM). We were inspired, but I didn't at any point think that I'd get involved with TLM myself.

However, 1983 brought me to TLMA's Executive Committee (as it was known then). I was the only woman on the Committee for some years, but I learnt plenty about committee membership and about leprosy, as well as enjoying the new people and experiences.

As the Executive Committee became a Board in the 1990s and as community expectations for NGO boards were heightened, I was learning about governance, good practice and organisational policies.

It was challenging for me and I became convinced that if an organisation has a Board that works together and is effective, it can then have the capacity to do the front-line work really well.

The start of the new century brought new opportunities. I was elected as the TLMA Board Chair and then had the privilege of serving on The Leprosy Mission International Board. The TLMA Board and staff were great fellow-workers and once more, I was learning about leadership. Fellow Board members on the international body (all with different viewpoints!) opened my eyes to look at problems on a larger scale than just a narrow national focus.

After these roles, I continued work with the international Member Appointed Working Group (MAWG) on Policies and Standards. It was encouraging to work with TLM people across the globe, all with online meetings – and this was long before COVID-19 made ZOOM compulsory!

I've been inspired by many people within TLM, but I'll mention three women. Birke Nigatu Teka, determined advocate for people affected by leprosy in Ethiopia; Mary Ogebe, Board member and pioneering doctor from Nigeria; and Jannine Ebenso, practical and thoughtful International staff member, guiding our international policies. All have been a real



**Jenny (front row, middle) has attended many of The Leprosy Mission Australia's Annual Conferences.**

encouragement that we can make a difference in TLM.

In retirement, I am free to pursue my passion – science and history. This last year, I looked at leprosy and its history in my own country – Australia. I do not think I previously realised the effects of leprosy on our Indigenous Australians.

I am thankful that The Leprosy Mission Australia can focus on helping our 'nearest neighbours', like in Papua New Guinea (PNG). With close community ties to the Torres Strait and Northern Australian communities, early detection and treatment in PNG, and in other nations close by, is crucial to ending transmission in the region.

**Please continue to pray with me for the success of our leprosy detection and support program in PNG. Pray that leprosy will be defeated, and lives transformed, in our lifetime.**

If you would like to give hope to people affected by leprosy this Easter through The Leprosy Mission in PNG, please **DONATE TODAY** by contacting **FREECALL 1800 537 767** or go to: [www.leprosymission.org.au/PNG](http://www.leprosymission.org.au/PNG)



**INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S DAY**  
*MONDAY MARCH 8, 2021*

### **Stigma, Separation, Sorrow: Leprosy in Australia**

Jenny's article "Stigma, Separation and Sorrow: Leprosy in Australia" was published in Microbiology Australia by CSIRO Publishing. You can download the full article by visiting the website below.

<https://www.publish.csiro.au/ma/pdf/MA20051>

### **Live Transmission**

Jenny's broadcast (Live Transmission on community radio RRR 102.7FM) which first aired on 17th January focusses on leprosy in Australia and its effect on Indigenous Australians. You can listen to the recording by visiting the website below.

[https://www.rrr.org.au/explore/programs/  
live-transmission](https://www.rrr.org.au/explore/programs/live-transmission)



**INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S DAY**



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## Thank you for your kindness, generosity, and making me feel part of the family.

**By Preeti Maharjan**  
**Research Officer & Volunteer**

In Nepal, I used to be involved in providing comprehensive care for people affected by leprosy. So, I knew about The Leprosy Mission Australia (TLMA) and its continuous support to The Leprosy Mission in Nepal (TLMN). I knew I wanted to be involved with TLMA when I first arrived here to study in January 2019. The TLMA office in Melbourne linked me with the Adelaide volunteering team and there was no looking back...

It has been incredibly inspiring to personally meet people in Australia who regularly support people in need through donations and prayers. I have met many of you while participating in different activities such as talks at luncheons, churches and the Adelaide University Rotaract club. I also filmed videos and spoke on radio. I am so pleased that I could share my experiences of working at TLMN and how TLMN supports leprosy-affected people through the help of generous people in Australia like you. Especially during the challenges of COVID-19. (Nepal is still very much struggling with the effects of the pandemic, so your support is invaluable.)

**Thank you for all your support for people affected by leprosy in Nepal. We couldn't do it without you!**

I've had two different roles in two countries, but it was good to see that no matter which Leprosy Mission you work with, everyone works towards the same goal of providing comprehensive hospital care to people affected by leprosy and improving their quality of life through community rehabilitation programmes, self-help groups and microfinance.

This experience has been very fulfilling for me. I always want to help people in need, and in Australia I could do that through my volunteering and community engagement. I found people here very helping, caring, and giving. The TLMA volunteer team and staff I worked with were also really welcoming, loving, caring, and supported me throughout.

A big thank you particularly to The Leprosy Mission Australia South Australia state representatives David, Jenny, Joan, and board member Angeline for your support. And for introducing me to the Aussie culture, a variety of international cuisines, and taking me to so many beautiful places.

**The friendship and fellowship I share with Australian people is highly valuable and this experience will remain with me forever. Thank you and God bless you!**