EFFORTS OF RISDT FOR THE ELIMINATION OF LEPROSY AND FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF PERSONS AFFECTED BY LEPROSY (PALs)

BRIEF HISTORY OF LEPROSY:
Leprosy was recognized in the ancient civilizations of China, Egypt and India. The first-known written mention of leprosy is dated 600 B.C. Throughout history, people afflicted have often been ostracized by their communities and families.

Dr. HANSEN’S DISCOVERY:
In 1873, Dr. Gerhard Henrik Armauer Hansen of Norway was the first person to identify the germ that caused leprosy, under a microscope. Hansen’s discovery of Mycobacterium leprae proved that leprosy was caused by a germ and was not hereditary, from a curse or from a sin.

WHO INITIATIVE:
In 1970s, the first successful Multi Drug Therapy (MDT) regimen for leprosy was developed through drug trials on the island of Malta. In 1981, the WHO began recommending MDT, a combination of three drugs: Dapsone, Rifampicin and Clofazimine. For total cure of leprosy, MDT should be administered from six months to one year or even more, depending on the extent of leprosy infection. Since 1995, MDT has been made available by WHO free of charge to all the persons affected by Leprosy (PALs) worldwide.

LEPROSY SITUATION IN INDIA:
- 58.85% new leprosy cases in the world are in India
- 0.127 million (127,000) new cases of leprosy were reported in India during 2013-2014. Of them 12,043 were children and 46,845 were women.
- Annual new case detection rate (ANCDR) was 9.98 per 100,000(0.1 million) population in 2013-2014.
- As on April 1st, 2014, there were 86,000 (0.086 million) cases on record, giving a Prevalence Rate (PR) of 0.68 per 10,000 population. WHO defines elimination of leprosy as a prevalence rate of less than 1 case per 10,000 persons.
- Some Indian areas still form pockets of high endemicity, like the districts of East Godavari and Guntur in the Indian State of Andhra Pradesh.

ROLE OF RISDT IN SERVING THE PERSONS AFFECTED BY LEPROSY (PALs)
With economic, technical and infrastructural support from Swiss Emmaus Leprosy Work-India, RISDT has been serving the PALs since 1983. It provides medical treatment to PALs and other normal persons from 150 villages of East Godavari spread across the hinterland extending over 10,807 square Kilometers. In addition PALs from neighboring districts avail RISDT services.

RISDT’S LEPROSY CONTROL UNIT
In this unit, PALs suffering from simple ulcer, complicated ulcer, septic ulcer and reaction receive treatment. In addition, they also receive treatment for general complaints like fever, diarrhea, etc. Dr. B. Raja Rao, a senior and dedicated Medical officer is in-charge of the Leprosy Control Unit. He was the erstwhile Consultant for WHO and retired Addl. Director, Health, Government of Andhra Pradesh.

RISDT ANTI-STIGMA DRIVE:
Over the past many years, leprosy has been considered a symbol of disgrace or a state of extreme dishonor. RISDT however welcomes PALs from anywhere and everywhere and cares for them with motherly affection and showers humanitarian compassion on them.

LEPROSY FREE WORLD:
Leprosy is one of the most ancient and dreadful diseases. The stigma associated with the disease is an important hurdle in self-reporting. A new environment free of stigma and fear needs to be created for early diagnosis and treatment of the remaining cases towards a leprosy free world.

- N. Slessor Babu
Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (September 5th, 1888 - April 17th, 1975) grew to become the most famous Indian teacher and philosopher of all times. He was the Vice President of India from 1952 to 1962. He was the President of India from 1962 to 1967. He was honoured with several high awards during his life time. He believed that “teacher should be the best minds in the country”.

The birthday of Dr. Radhakrishnan came to be celebrated as Teachers’ Day when one day in 1962 some of his students and friends requested him to allow them to celebrate his birthday. In reply, he said, “instead of celebrating my birthday separately, it would be my proud privilege if September 5th is observed as Teachers’ Day. “ In pursuance of his benign desire, his birthday is observed as Teachers’ Day all over India from the year 1962. On Teacher’s Day, the teachers in schools across India are honoured with mementos and awards towards their contribution in the field of education. This is a day when students express their feelings of respect towards their teachers. Teachers too, reciprocate their affection towards their students.

The Indian Teachers’ Day has been celebrated with great grandeur in our Referral English Medium School too.

WORKSHOP ON THE ANDROID TABLET SOFTWARE AT GRETNALTES, Morampudi, ANDHRA PRADESH – SEPTEMBER 16th, 2015

Mr. Praveen Das, Coordinator, RISDT and Data Entry Operator attended the workshop conducted by Mr. Anidrudh, Software Consultant, New Delhi on September 16th, 2015 on “Android based Software Tablet in Gretnales, Tenali. He explained and clarified several concepts related to the functioning of the Android Tablets being used by CDLCP Divisional Co-ordinators. Ms. Deepali (Fin.&Admn Manager) and Dr.Pankaj Thomas, National Program Manager also participated in the workshop.

OBA BENCHMARKING VISIT BY FAIRMED Country Office Officials - New Delhi SEPTEMBER 17th TO 19th, 2015

Dr. Pankaj Thomas, National Program Manager and Ms. Deepali, Finance & Admin Manager accompanied by consultant Mr. Raghuram, visited RISDT, Kathipudi from September 17th to 19th 2015 for reappraisal of the benchmarking costs for the RISDT Project for the year 2015.

Dr. Pankaj Thomas interacted with (i) Mr. B. Markandeyulu, Addl. Joint Collector (ii) Dr. M. Pavan Kumar, Addl. DM&HO, Kakinada and (iii) Medical Officers and Medical Staff of Primary Health Centres at Biccavolu and Rayavaram villages. He verified the NLEP Records, Reports and Indicators. He had meetings with Dr. B. Raja Rao, RISDT Medical Superintendent and Mr. Slesser Babu, RISDT Chairman, on the development activities in the Project.

All the visitors interacted with the Chairman, Officers and Medical and Para Medical Staff of RISDT with encouraging words for the earnest and conscientious activities being accomplished in the Project.

QUALITY CIRCLE MEETING- SEPTEMBER 30th, 2015

The Quality Circle Meeting for the review of developments during the third quarter (July to September) of 2015 was held in Jalgaon, Maharashtra on September 30th, 2015. Mr. John Kurian George, CEO, FAIRMED-INDIA presided over the Meeting. He reviewed the developments in all the Projects during the third quarter. He advanced several innovative guidelines for effective implementation of the development activities. All the partners of the FAIRMED-INDIA attended the Meeting. Mr. G. Raja Gopala Rao, Secretary, RISDT Kathipudi presented a status report of the Project, on behalf of Mr. N. Slesser Babu, Chairman, RISDT.
A SPECIMEN SUCCESS STORY OF ARATA RAJU

Arata Raju was identified during RISDT’s Survey Education and Treatment (SET) in the year 1999 in Rowthulapudi village. He was 10 years old at that time. The RISDT health staff noticed a large anaesthetic patch on his right forehand. His right little and ring fingers suffered from clawing.

He hailed from a very poor family. They knew nothing about leprosy. His father, the bread winner of their family was a masonry labourer. He had one younger brother and one younger sister. His mother is a housewife. Unless his father toils hard every day, their family wouldn’t overcome starvation let alone other necessities of life. They lived in a thatched hut. Their plight was miserable.

While the things were so, the fact that he was afflicted with leprosy jolted their family. The parents were dismayed. The RISDT health staff counselled and reassured them about the recovery of him through the administration of Multi Drug Therapy (MDT) for one year. He was taken into the total care of RISDT. He was admitted into the RISDT’s Leprosy hospital. He received medical care, food and shelter here, under the auspices of RISDT.

After completion of the one year Multi Drug Treatment, he registered improvement in the condition of his health. He underwent Reconstructive surgery (RCS) in 2001 at the RISDT’s RCS centre, Kathipudi to set right his clawed right little and ring fingers. He regained his normal health. He was able to perform all his works by himself. This gave him an impetus. He recovered from his melancholic past and won back his confidence. The joy of his parents, brother and sister knew no bounds at his distinct attainment of normalcy. On one of his visits to RISDT, Kathipudi, Mr. Rene Staeheli, CEO-FAIRMED-Switzerland happened to notice overwhelming enthusiasm of Arata Raju at a cultural get-together. Mr. Rene was fascinated with him and to encourage him, Mr. Rene even danced with him for a little while.

Today, he is altogether a different person. With support from RISDT, he acquired masonry skills through a training course. He is thankful to Swiss Emmaus-India for providing rehabilitation through RISDT. He works as a skilled mason. With his earnings, he helped his sister to undergo training for tailoring job. He also helped his brother to become a skilled mason. Now their family is a happy family. All this wouldn’t have been possible, if Raju wasn’t identified by the RISDT health staff and imparted the loving care and treatment at RISDT.

Raju is presently 26 years old. His parents are in search of suitable bride for him. They are however haunted by the stigma of Leprosy. In the lives of many people, this stigma affects psychological, social & economic well-being. There is no easy answer to dispelling this damaging image of Leprosy. It is something that has to be done in partnership with communities and persons affected by Leprosy (PALs). Many people speak about shedding the stigma but few come forward with workable solutions. Raju and his parents are unable to receive a favourable proposal from prospective brides. At RISDT, we too are striving to find an acceptable “match” for him. We know that it is not an easy task. He and his parents seek your best wishes in this regard. All his well-wishers and parents are leaving no stone unturned to see him united in wedlock at the earliest. We wish that such an occasion isn’t far away. Please wish him GOOD LUCK. WE WILL LET YOU KNOW ABOUT HIS MARRIAGE SETTLEMENT AS SOON AS IT IS FINALIZED.

In several parts of India, in spite of impressive breakthroughs in the eradication of leprosy, there are still numerous persons affected by leprosy who look for a ray of hope and await their chance to overcome the deformities and disabilities that are the fallouts of leprosy. Earlier, Raju was one among them. But now he crossed over to a world of normalcy. The others too wait for a lift up. RISDT endeavours continuously to come to the rescue of such of these persons through its consistent efforts in this direction.