



**World Health Organization
Organisation mondiale de la Santé**

FIFTY-FIRST WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

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Citation

Award of the World Health Organization Health-for-All Gold Medal to the Nippon Foundation

For more than a quarter of a century, the Nippon Foundation has made major contributions to promote global health-for-all activities. Its founder, the late Mr Ryoichi Sasakawa, did his utmost to support WHO's efforts to achieve this key social goal.

At a critical point in the global smallpox eradication programme, the Foundation made a substantial grant to WHO, thereby demonstrating its full confidence in the Organization's ability to complete this historic campaign successfully. The Foundation's financial support also helped in the establishment of WHO's Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases.

Since the inception of its activities, both in Japan and elsewhere, the Foundation has focused much of its attention on leprosy, which has all too often been accorded low priority among the world's many pressing health problems. The Foundation saw leprosy not only as a physical disease but as a challenge to humanity because of the stigma traditionally associated with it.

This led to the establishment in 1974, of the Sasakawa Memorial Health Foundation, to support work on public health, medical and scientific aspects of leprosy control. Together with the continued financial support of the Nippon Foundation to WHO, this enabled the leprosy programme to be strengthened both scientifically and in its field activities.

In 1994 the Nippon Foundation decided to contribute US\$ 50 million over a five-year period for the provision of the drugs needed for the multidrug therapy regimen being used in the global campaign to eliminate leprosy as a public health problem. This gave a major boost to the campaign. Today, coverage with multidrug therapy is 100% and more than 90% of patients receive the drugs free of charge through WHO programmes financed by the Foundation. Some 10.7 million people have been cured by these drugs. Although the fight against leprosy is not yet over, success is on the horizon.

The final drive towards elimination is now being undertaken by WHO, its Members States and a number of nongovernmental organizations. Their objective is to reach every person in the world who is still infected with leprosy, wherever he or she may be. The Foundation is well aware, however, that leprosy elimination is as much a matter of social justice as it is of medical treatment. Victory over this disease will not be complete until every patient is accorded the dignity and respect to which all human beings are entitled.

In 1985, the Nippon Foundation (which has granted more than US\$ 125 million to WHO's programmes as a whole) took another important initiative in establishing the Sasakawa Health Prize under the auspices of WHO to recognize and encourage grass-roots efforts to promote health for all. A total of 30 individuals and groups have been awarded the Prize over the years since then, in recognition of important contributions they have made in their respective communities and fields of expertise.

The World Health Organization is privileged to present the Health-for-All Gold Medal to the Nippon Foundation for its many years of distinguished service to international health, and its generous contributions to the efforts of WHO and its Member States to achieve health for all, including in particular their efforts to eliminate leprosy as a public health problem.

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