



Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on discrimination against persons affected by leprosy (Hansen's Disease)

United Nations

Subject: **Urgent Appeal for the Availability of Multidrug Therapy (MDT) for the Treatment of Leprosy in Nigeria**

January 20, 2025

Dear Dr. Beatriz Miranda-Galarza,

We write on behalf of the Brazilian Society of Hansenology (SBH), an entity dedicated to the study and combat of Hansen's Disease (HD, leprosy), to express deep concern and urgency regarding the severe crisis of multidrug therapy (MDT) shortage affecting patients in Nigeria, as demonstrated by recent reports.

SBH has been closely monitoring the leprosy situation in Brazil and worldwide, and although Brazil is not currently facing an MDT shortage crisis, we are aware of the significant challenges in controlling the disease in other countries. The history of SBH is intertwined with the struggle for improved treatment and quality of life for people affected by leprosy. Over the years, we have worked tirelessly to promote research, education, and patient care.

The reports accompanying this letter, from Nigeria, reveal an alarming situation. Thousands of patients, including more than 800 children, are at risk of developing irreversible sequelae due to the lack of MDT. The absence of treatment not only prevents cure but also perpetuates the transmission of the disease in the community.

MDT is essential for the treatment of leprosy, and its lack represents a catastrophe for patients and disease control efforts. The interruption of treatment can lead to the development of drug resistance, further complicating the fight against leprosy. Moreover, inadequate treatment can cause irreversible nerve damage, resulting in physical disabilities, severe psychological issues, and social stigma.

In light of this critical situation, SBH makes an urgent appeal to the health authorities in Nigeria, as well as the international community, to take the following actions

Immediate availability of MDT: Ensure a continuous and regular supply of MDT for all patients in need in Nigeria and other countries with leprosy patients requiring treatment.

Provision of therapeutic alternatives: Provide substitute medications for patients who cannot receive conventional MDT or who do not respond to treatment. Among the antibiotics that can be used in therapeutic regimens are ofloxacin, moxifloxacin, levofloxacin, minocycline, clarithromycin, and rifapentine, among others, all recognized as effective against *Mycobacterium leprae*.

Transparency in MDT management: Publicly disclose data on MDT production, distribution, and stock, as well as plans to ensure its continuous supply, in addition to the reasons for the non-provision of MDT to leprosy patients in Nigeria.

Investment in research: Support research to develop new drugs and strategies for leprosy treatment, including the prevention of drug resistance.

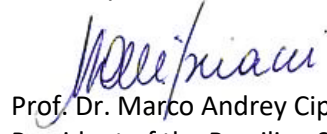
Strengthening health systems: Strengthen health systems to ensure universal access to leprosy diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.

International collaboration: Promote international collaboration to ensure the supply of drugs to all leprosy-affected countries, both conventional MDT and alternative regimens using the drugs mentioned above.

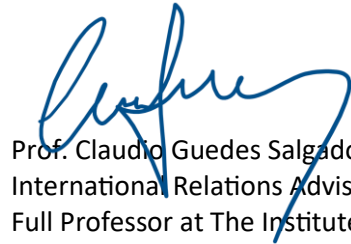
Leprosy is a curable disease, and the lack of MDT is an unacceptable barrier to its control. It is imperative that all efforts are made to ensure that all patients have access to appropriate treatment and that disease transmission is interrupted.

SBH reaffirms its commitment to the fight against leprosy and stands ready to collaborate with health authorities and the international community in seeking solutions to this serious problem.

Sincerely,



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Prof. Claudio Guedes Salgado
International Relations Advisor of SBH
Full Professor at The Institute of Biological Sciences, Federal University of Pará (UFPA)

News links:

<https://newsng.ng/idea-raises-an-alarm-that-non-supply-of-therapeutic-drug-may-cause-irreversible-progress-in-leprosy-elimination-in-nigeria/>

<https://earlyreportnews.com/idea-warns-drug-supply-delays-threaten-leprosy-elimination-in-nigeria/>

<https://www.theconclaveng.com/idea-raises-the-alarm-on-non-supply-of-therapeutic-drugs/>

<https://thesun.ng/leprosy-over-3000-patients-including-800-children-risk-life-long-paralysis-over-mdt-absence/>

<https://newsnowng.com.ng/idea-raises-alarm-over-non-supply-of-therapeutic-drug-leading-to-irreversible-progress-in-leprosy-elimination-in-nigeria/>

<https://www.extrafactmedia.com/post?sid=3-000-nigerians-including-800-children-at-risk-as-leprosy-treatment-remains-elusive>