

Investing in Victims of Leprosy

One hundred thousand dollars. That's a lot of money. What would a person do with all that money? How about investing it in a bus system so lepers can receive treatment in areas around Ifakara, Tanzania? I've been to Ifakara, Tanzania in Africa, and I have seen with my own eyes victims of this disease called leprosy. There are 1 to 2 million people worldwide who are permanently disabled because of leprosy (Schoenstadt, 2008). The symptoms are devastating and, sometimes, unrecognizable, and according to the World Health Organization, the treatments are free; however, very few people can get this treatment because there is no transportation and getting to a hospital can be a very long walk.

The disease infects a person as silent as a predator stalks its prey; so some people may not recognize the symptoms. *Mycobacterium leprae* is the bacteria that is responsible for leprosy. After the victim is infected, the symptoms don't generally appear until three or four years. However, in some cases, the symptoms can appear as short as a few months or as long as several decades. Symptoms include muscle spasms, skin stiffness, skin rash, and eye problems. Leprosy usually infects the skin and peripheral nerves (Schoenstadt, 2008). Victims can cut their fingers or toes accidentally and not know about it. The wound will then become infected and the finger or toe will fall off due to the infection. If an infection is serious, it may lead to amputation (Kugler, 2009). I have seen people in Tanzania without legs because of amputation.

The treatment for leprosy is free around the world. This treatment is called multidrug (MTD) therapy. The treatment consists of dapson, rifampicin, and clofazimine. This treatment kills the bacteria and prevents drug resistance. Leprosy can only be treated in its early stages (World Health Organization, 2005-2009).

Since people around Ifakara in rural areas can't get to a hospital when they recognize the symptoms, I want to buy a bus and have nurses or doctors from the hospital in Ifakara drive it to the rural areas with treatment for lepers. Then the hospital would pay me for using the bus and I would pay for the gas. This could help eliminate leprosy.

Although treatments are free, very few victims of leprosy can get that wanted treatment. The transportation would help many people in need in rural areas around Ifakara. Also, sometimes, victims may not recognize the symptoms. When the doctor comes around in the bus, he/she would notice the symptoms for them. With the transportation, leprosy would not be so much a problem.

References

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