

From isolation into acceptance

effect:hope offers new chance at life for those suffering from almost-forgotten disease

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effect:hope (The Leprosy Mission Canada)

Over a crackling loudspeaker, the call to the sunset prayer rings out over the rice paddies as the end of the day is marked in rural Bangladesh. The smell of cook-fires fill the air, while families reunite after work and school. In this part of the world, community and traditions are strong, and poverty and illness are wide spread. Leprosy, a disease associated with biblical times, touches many lives in northern Bangladesh.

This is where Molin, a man who once lived in extreme poverty and isolation because of leprosy, now finds hope and home in his community.

Molin's life changed when he participated in the Extreme Poverty Initiative Project (EPIP), a program of effect:hope and The Leprosy Mission Bangladesh, which enables economic empowerment for those living in poverty because of disability. EPIP is just one initiative of effect:hope (formerly The Leprosy Mission Canada) an international development organization that works with partners in Asia and Africa to achieve lasting, positive change among people living with leprosy and conditions related to leprosy.

Though Molin is at the centre of his community now, about a decade ago he faced discrimination,



Molin now finds hope and home in his community.

Photo courtesy of effect:hope

disability and poverty. He could not find work as labourer to earn even the equivalent of a dollar a day. Only his mother stood by him; together, they would beg for money or food. They lived in extreme poverty, a classification of poverty that is not measured by income, but caloric intake.

"[Our clients will] think they are valueless, alone or out of community," said Mizen, a social worker with EPIP. Today, empowered by a micro-loan and skills developed through EPIP, Molin works as a bicycle repairperson, is married and has children.

EPIP provides leprosy-affected people living below the extreme poverty line the tools for financial security and economic empowerment through vocational training and micro-financing groups. Social workers, such as Mizen, help to address ingrained beliefs about leprosy in communities that

fear it. After breaking down barriers of fear with facts and information, people such as Molin are able to find a welcoming home in their communities.

Leprosy continues to affect people in over 120 countries. The condition is treated with a combination of medicines, provided by the Novartis Foundation, in conjunction with therapies and surgery when necessary. Leprosy is classified as a neglected tropical disease, along with 16 other diseases that the world has mostly forgotten about.

Collectively, these ancient conditions affect a billion of the poorest people around the globe. Currently effect:hope works with partners in 13 countries to care for affected people, build stronger health systems, and support research that will make a positive, lasting change for millions.

For more information, visit www.effecthope.org.

SPOTS

- Three to four million people live with the effects of leprosy; each year another quarter million people are added to that number.

- effect:hope is a Christian development organization that works in 13 countries to achieve lasting, positive change among people living with the causes and consequences of leprosy and conditions related to leprosy.

- For over 125 years, Canadians have generously offered prayers and donations to help those with leprosy around the world through effect:hope, formerly known as the Leprosy Mission Canada.

- On January 25, 2015, Canadian churches and individuals will observe the annual World Leprosy Day by remembering and praying for those living with the effects of leprosy. Visit <http://effecthope.org/act/world-leprosy-day/> to learn more.

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