

Newsletter

Winter 2025



pacific leprosy

www.leprosy.org.nz

Solomoni comes out of hiding

Solomoni is a 31-year-old man who is a single father to a 4-year-old son. Solomoni's mother had suffered for several years with strange swellings on her face and body before passing away a few years ago.

When Solomoni saw the same swellings appearing on his face, he left his job and moved to his subsistence farm with his son. He was embarrassed by his appearance and worried about what could be causing it.

Last year, he appealed on social media for help to find a herbal remedy which could cure him. The photo was shown to some of the medical staff at Twomey Hospital and attempts were made to find him, but he didn't respond to the messages sent to him.

This year, a new medical clinic opened near his home, and he went to consult with the staff about his problem. The doctor immediately

suspected that he was suffering from leprosy and telephoned Twomey hospital for help and advice. Solomoni has now been admitted to the hospital to be looked after during his first month of treatment and his son is staying with his mother in the meantime.

Solomoni is very happy that he can already see improvement in his condition, and relieved that he can be cured. His son will be examined regularly for the next few years to check for signs of leprosy, so that if he develops the disease he can be treated promptly, which will reduce the possibility of infecting other people and reducing the chance of suffering from any long term effects of leprosy.

Solomoni's living conditions are very poor but now that we know about him and his circumstances we will help improve his house and amenities.



Solomoni shared this picture on social media to ask for help with a herbal remedy.



Solomoni can already see an improvement in his appearance.



This is the house on Solomoni's subsistence farm.

Update from Samoa

Tony Lavea has been a recipient in the Foundation welfare programme in Samoa for several years. An infected plantar foot ulcer resulted in Tony having his left leg amputated several years ago. Until that time, Tony had hidden the fact that he had had leprosy from his extended family, however they found out that the amputation was a result of having had leprosy, and Tony and his family were made to move out of the main house to an old shack at the end of the village. He has been stigmatized by his extended family ever since.

A compassionate nurse in the Leprosy Clinic, RN Serafi Mulumulu, contacted the Foundation office in Apia and asked us to visit Tony. When Peter Bendinelli, our representative in Apia, first saw where Tony was living, he was shocked. Tony, his wife and 4 children were living in a termite-infested, dilapidated old fale with no power and no water. Thanks to your help, the Foundation was able to build a new fale for the family, including electricity and running water. Over the years, the Foundation has continued to make improvements to the shelter and land.

Most Samoans do not eat in their houses. They have a separate fale for eating. As Tony's "eating room" was nearly collapsing from rotten timber, he asked if we could help build a simple fale

where the family could share meals together. Of course, we agreed and the "eating room" was recently completed.

Even with his disabilities, Tony tries to work the land to raise food for his family. Your generosity has helped to keep his children in school, by covering their school expenses – fees, stationery and uniform – in addition to giving Tony a small monthly allowance to help with household bills.

Tony understands that what the Foundation has done for him was made possible by donations from caring people in New Zealand and he very much appreciates your help and always prays for you in his family's evening prayers.



Tony's old house and new fale, built some years ago.



Tony and his wife outside their new eating room.

Leprosy screening and prevention continues in Vanuatu

Last year, we told you about a visit to a remote area of Vanuatu in the Province of Malampa, to begin screening the population for signs of leprosy and giving all residents their first dose of Rifampicin to help to prevent them from developing the disease.

In April, it was time for the Vanuatu medical team to make another visit to extend the area of the project and increase awareness about leprosy in the local communities.

The project took place in Lamap – a village near the south of Malekula island which is best accessed by boat.

The first day was spent going through the medications to ensure that they had enough. Visiting the community had to wait for the next day, as a sign of respect, after a recent death.

The local health co-ordinator held a meeting for all the local village chiefs to explain to them what they were doing and why. He gave a presentation about leprosy, and what can be done to reduce the incidence of the disease.

All this information was very well received, resulting in all of the chiefs being examined for signs of leprosy and then being given their first dose of Rifampicin.

Well done to Kevin and the team for keeping on track towards zero leprosy in Vanuatu!



Lamap is best accessed by boat.



Checking the stocks of Rifampicin.



The team of medical and welfare workers.



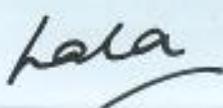
Taking the medication after being examined for signs of leprosy.

Lala's Office

By the time you are reading this I will have recently returned from a very quick visit to Kiribati. Over the past few months I have been occupied with updating the way in which the leprosy databases are designed and stored to make them as easy as possible for the team to access and use. My visit is to introduce the new format to the staff of the skin clinic and show them how to use it, and it is also a good opportunity to check all their computers and make sure that they are working as well as possible.

I will also meet up with our in-country representative, Wayne Uan, to hear the latest news about the welfare of our many struggling patients and I look forward to being able to bring you news of them on my return.

Donor meetings are planned for later in the year. I will let you know more about those in our next newsletter.



YOUR HELP IS VITAL!

The Pacific Leprosy Foundation is not eligible for government assistance to carry out our work, as the government does not fund single disease projects. All the work which we do is funded by donations, bequests and income from our invested reserve funds. Our annual expenditure is approximately \$1 million and we have at least 30 years of work left to do. We really appreciate your generosity.

Thank you so much!

Information

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

We currently manage projects to assist those affected by leprosy in the following countries:

- Fiji
- Tonga
- Samoa
- Vanuatu
- Solomon Islands
- Kiribati
- New Zealand
- Tuvalu

Thank you so much to all of you who make this work possible through your interest and generosity.

DIRECT CREDIT

We are happy to receive donations by direct credit.

If you wish to use this option, please use your surname and donor number (six figures to the right of your name and address on our appeal coupon) as a reference, so that we know where to send the receipt.

The bank account number is: 02-0800-0037987-000
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60 Waterloo Quay, Pipitea, Wellington 6011 New Zealand



pacific leprosy

www.leprosy.org.nz

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23 May 2025

Dear

Welcome to our winter newsletter. I hope you enjoy reading the stories which give a sample of the various aspects of the work the Pacific Leprosy Foundation does throughout the Pacific.

The story of Solomoni in Fiji illustrates the ongoing need for the work we do. Stigma has a major impact on the lives of people with leprosy. Even though Solomoni knew something was wrong, he chose to hide away rather than show himself to friends, colleagues and family, until his leprosy progressed to a point where he could no longer ignore it. Interestingly he chose a very modern way of seeking help for an ancient disease - social media! Community awareness is vital in the fight against leprosy. We need people to know it still exists, that it is curable and early treatment will prevent disability. Hopefully, with good care, Solomoni will beat leprosy with no ongoing disability. We hope to keep you informed of his progress in future newsletter, as he completes the long treatment he needs and how, with your help, we can assist him and his son to have a more comfortable fulfilling life.

The support we are able to give people like Solomoni and his son, is totally funded by donations from individual New Zealanders like you. The assistance you give us in our work, in whatever way you can, is so much appreciated. Thank you

Yours sincerely

Jill Tomlinson
GENERAL MANAGER

Yes, I would like to make a gift to Pacific Leprosy

My Gift of: \$ is enclosed

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Please debit my: Bankcard/Mastercard Visa American Express Diners Club

Card Number

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Amount: \$ Expiry Date:

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- Please use your six figure donor number and surname as a reference.

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 - Making a regular monthly donation
- Founded in 1939 by PJ Twomey MBE
Leg of Hon. JP. Incorporated under the Charitable Trusts Act 1957
4 Anderson Street, Private Bag 4730,
Christchurch 8140, New Zealand
P: 03 343 3685
E: admin@leprosy.org.nz
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: CC2687

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Address:	

Bookmarks (magnetic bookmarks grip your page)

Bookmarks	Price/Pack	Quantity	Sub Total
Camellia Rose	\$2.00		
Hibiscus	\$2.00		
Petals	\$2.00		
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Notecards and Envelopes (5-pack – 5 cards of one design & 5 envelopes, 10-pack – 5 cards of each design and 10 envelopes)

Notecards and Envelopes	Price/Pack	Quantity	Sub Total
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5-pack New Hibiscus	\$6.00		
10-pack	\$10.00		

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Books	Price/Pack	Quantity	Sub Total
Leprosy and Stigma in the South Pacific (by Dorothy McMenamin)	\$36.00		
Makogai – image of Hope (by Sister Mary Stella smsm)	\$20.00		
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Walking in the Shadow (by Carmen Radtke)	\$22.00		
Last Writes	\$35.00		

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