

## Creation and Support to the National Organization of People Affected by Leprosy for advocacy and awareness in the DRC.(OPALCO)



### Visit of Damien Organization to OPALCO at TLM DR Congo office

DRC is endemic for leprosy, first in Africa and 4<sup>th</sup> the world. Estimates range up to 10% of leprosy disability in the country.

People affected by leprosy often are diagnosed with delays for several reasons: poor the size of the country, poor health system and infrastructures, health professional's poor knowledge of leprosy, stigmatization of people affected linked to leprosy and disability, etc.

TLM DR Congo for decades has working toward inclusion of people affected by leprosy within their communities. It was observed that people affected by leprosy were excluded from their community and some were rejected even by their family members. Experience has revealed that livelihood activities were interesting tools to inclusion of people affected by leprosy within their communities.

Among those affected by leprosy in Kinshasa, the capital city of DRC, there were a group of young boys and girls who suffered from leprosy and wanted to be involved

in fighting the disease and its related stigma with their communities. Thus, TLM DR Congo with people affected by leprosy in Congo initiated a brainstorming meeting, which set up a National Organization of Leprosy Affected People in Congo, (OPALCO). OPALCO received its official documents in the month of April 2019. The signing of these documents was free, as people affected by leprosy did advocate toward local authorities.

OPALCO is the first in DR Congo and its members need empowerment organizational management. Therefore, retreats, prayers, sensitization sessions were organized to prepare them to organize and sensitize on the International Leprosy Day.

Member of OPALCO are feeling fulfilled as their dignity is restored. They can be heard; they can defend their rights and communicate between them using social networks.



Women and girls affected by leprosy with a visitor

More trainings are need to make sure that members can scale up this idea throughout the country

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