

An Unprecedented Resolve against Leprosy: A Tribute to Dr. Ruth Pfau

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Since the dawn of human civilization, leprosy remained a daunting challenge, a condition that emerges due to chronic infection of the skin and nerves. Approximately, 200,000 new leprosy cases are reported around the globe each year. Though leprosy is under control in Pakistan still 400 to 500 cases are reported every year and distribution varies based on geographical locations, particularly less developed areas are frequently affected. Sindh province has by far the largest numbers of reported cases in Pakistan. Hence in Pakistan, the battle against leprosy has not been won completely and August 2017 reminds us strongly, as we just lost the legend of this battle, Dr. Ruth Pfau who dedicated 56 years of her life in fighting against leprosy in Pakistan.

She was born in a German city Leipzig on 9th September 1929. She studied medicine at University of Mainz during 1950s and arrived in Karachi in the year 1960. She visited different parts of the city and travelled to Afghanistan, and met leprosy patients living a life of abandonment and isolation and quarantine. During her stay in Karachi, a visit to Lepers' Colony behind the McLeod Road became a moment of call for her. In that slum, she started medical care of leprosy patients in a hut. Eventually, due to her great efforts, Marie Adelaide Leprosy Centre was established in Karachi which later on coordinated tuberculosis and blindness prevention programs in Pakistan. Due to her exceptional work and dedication, she was appointed as the Federal Advisor on Leprosy to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare by the Government of

Pakistan. She travelled extensively within Pakistan and collected donations from Pakistan and Germany to help her patients. Remarkably, in 1996 World Health Organization declared Pakistan as a first Asian country able to control leprosy. Acknowledging her extraordinary commitment and unmatched services to the country, in the year 1988 Government of Pakistan awarded her citizenship in the year 1988. In recognition of her commendable work, Dr. Pfau received several national and international awards including Hilal-i-Pakistan (in the year 1989) and Nishan-i-Quaid-i-Azam (in the year 2010). Recently in the year 2015, she was awarded Stauer Medal, by the Prime Minister of German state of Baden-Württemberg.

Dr. Pfau one of the most compassionate individuals left us on morning 10th August 2017, she passed away at Agha Khan Hospital Karachi.

She was an exceptional human being who dedicated her entire life to the most vulnerable and deprived individuals. She left unprecedented inspiration for all of us and people of Pakistan are heavily indebted to Dr. Pfau. She is here to remain with us as a tower of light for long time to come, Thank You! Dr. Pfau,

As once she said, "Not all of us can prevent a war; but most of us can help ease sufferings of the body and the soul". - Ruth Pfau

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