

Summary Report of Kenya Visit by Amar Bahadur Timalisina
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Visit Date : 2nd till 9th October 2025
Host : IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation, Kenya
Supported By : TLM Australia

Background:

The official visit to Kenya was undertaken from 2nd to 9th October 2025 as part of IDEA International's continued collaboration and solidarity with IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation. The visit was organized with the primary objective of strengthening the voices of persons affected by leprosy at both national and sub-national levels and to support IDEA



Valuing Teamwork & Collaboration with IDEA Kenya & Gov. Officials

Refaco Kenya Foundation in advancing its post-global forum leprosy advocacy initiatives. IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation, being one of the active country associations of persons affected by leprosy, has been working to promote inclusion, dignity and rights of its members. However, through a prior Needs Assessment Project, several organizational and operational gaps were identified, necessitating peer learning and capacity enhancement. The visit therefore aimed to share best practices and experiences from IDEA Global, foster collaboration with health authorities and promote sustainable rehabilitation, livelihood and advocacy strategies that can contribute to ending stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy in Kenya.

Major Findings:

During my stay, I held a series of high-level and various grassroots engagements. The first activity was an engagement with the board of IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation where our discussions centered on how they could improve on the various areas organizational weaknesses that they had identified during the Needs Assessment Project. I shared with them the experience of IDEA Global and how they could also strengthen their association by involving all grassroots voices in a democratic and transparent manner. I was happy to learn that the association was already encouraging the establishment of local branches registered as semi-independent self-help organizations which was very good.

On the third day I visited Korogocho slum in Nairobi, where I interacted with seven families affected by leprosy living as street beggars. We were also able to track one of the members of the association to his begging station on the street. There, asked one of the family members whether they have their lunch or not; and was shocked to know that they literally had nothing to eat, that touched my heart and with the help of IDEA Kenya I immediately handed over the support package so that they could have something to eat. This visit opened my eyes to the dire living conditions and social stigma these people

and families endure with their children not even able to get food leave alone education. Thankfully IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation has organised them into a self-help group and I encouraged them to develop sustainable rehabilitation and livelihood programs so that they could move from begging.

I later travelled to the coastal region of Kenya which is the most leprosy endemic and where the association has majority of their members. I visited Baraka Village in Msambweni, Kwale County, where I met long-settled families of persons affected by leprosy living in the old leprosy colony that had grown next to a leprosarium which the government has recently converted to



@ Advocacy Meeting with Dr. Emmaculate - Ministry of Health

medical training college. The community warmly welcomed me and shared their challenges on health, livelihood, housing and landownership. I emphasized to them the importance of self-organization and social inclusion, highlighting success stories from IDEA Nepal.

On the 4th day of my visit, I held a high-level advocacy meeting with the Minister of Health of Kwale and his entire county health team. The national leprosy program focal person and her colleague in charge of MDT logistics joined us in the meeting. The county shared with us their challenges in leprosy services which included lack of awareness at the grassroots levels about the disease and high stigma that made people not to come out for testing or treatment. I reminded them about the need for integration of leprosy rehabilitation in their county health and social protection plans. They agreed to partner with IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation to facilitate the inclusion of people affected by leprosy in the grassroots awareness and anti stigma campaigns.



@ Advocacy Meeting with Director of Health Services

Additionally, on the 5th day of my visit, I had another high-level advocacy meeting with the Director of health services of Kilifi County where he also shared with us their gaps and weaknesses in the leprosy services. The national leprosy program focal person Dr. Florence and her colleague again joined in this meeting. The county appreciated the advocacy efforts of IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation and pledged their support and partnership. Later in

Kilifi I visited a family in which the father, mother and two children were affected by leprosy and were being supported by IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation to complete their MDT treatments. While observing the young girl who has been suffered from ENL reaction, I went to nostalgia recalling my early days of diagnosed of Leprosy. I could relate her situation with me when I was in the same condition. I shared my examples and encouraged her with all the hopes and inspiration that she could get in the near future. They hardly manage to go to school, as it is 5 approximate km from home to school, the parents face big challenges to send their kids to school due to the fear of stigma, discrimination and exclusion.

The visit concluded on the 7th day with another high-level advocacy meeting with the director of the National Leprosy and Tuberculosis Control Program Division in the Ministry of Health in Nairobi, where discussions centred on the need to reawaken all stakeholders and local actors to counter the re-emergence of leprosy as a public health threat. The director agreed that



Expressing Gratitude & Empowering Local Leaders within Community

just one case of leprosy in any population was already too many and made a commitment to organise a national leprosy dialogue forum as soon as possible. The meeting also emphasized the inclusion of leprosy in national policies.

Finally, I met with the leadership of IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation to have a final reflection of my visit and how they could consolidate the gains made. I urged them to quickly develop a framework of collaboration with the national and county health and social services teams. I also requested them to strengthen their fundraising strategies as needed resources to improve the well-being of their members.

Recommendations:

1. IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation should establish a structured platform for regular dialogue with the National Leprosy Program and leaderships of the counties.
2. IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation should develop sustainable livelihood and skills training programs for families affected by leprosy. This should include providing support to all school going children from families and communities affected by leprosy.
3. Community Rehabilitation: Rehabilitate old leprosy colonies such as Baraka Village.
4. Capacity Building: Train local organizations in leadership, proposal writing, and advocacy to enhance their effectiveness at the grassroots levels.
5. Public Awareness Campaigns: Work with the national leprosy program and county government health teams to launch stigma reduction campaigns highlighting human stories of recovery and dignity.

Conclusion:

The one-week official visit to Kenya from 2nd to 9th October 2025 was highly productive and impactful in advancing the shared mission of strengthening the voices of persons affected by leprosy and enhancing post-global forum advocacy efforts. The visit successfully fostered strategic engagements at

both national and sub-national levels, including high-level advocacy meetings with the Ministry of Health, county health directors and the National Leprosy and Tuberculosis Control Program. These engagements led to concrete commitments toward integrating leprosy rehabilitation and inclusion in county and national health plans.



Sharing Happiness with affected family within countryside

At the grassroots level, interactions with affected families and self-help groups in Korogocho, Msambweni and Kilifi provided deep insights into the persistent social and economic challenges faced by these communities. Encouragingly, IDEA Refaco Kenya Foundation has already initiated community mobilization and self-help structures that can be strengthened further. Moving forward, key action plans include the establishment of structured collaboration frameworks with government bodies, development of sustainable livelihood and education support programs and implementation of robust public awareness and stigma-reduction campaigns. These efforts will collectively contribute to enhancing social inclusion, empowerment and dignity for persons affected by leprosy across Kenya.

Thank You TLM Australia for making this visit a Grand Success !!!

