

Preserving Lo Sheng - A National Treasure

*This is not just for myself and the residents of Lo-Sheng.
It is for the heritage of the country.*

-- Lan Chai Yun, Resident of Lo Sheng



Lan Chai Yun, who was forced to relocate from her home so that it could be demolished.



Lu De Chang shows the fossils and plants he has rescued from the demolition site. *Photos by Henry Law*

We fervently hope that the government and people of Taiwan will recognize that the residents of Lo Sheng are themselves a national treasure. Through their lives and testimonies, they have the ability to teach present and future generations about issues fundamental to the promotion of peace and justice in the world. They have undergone separation from that which was most dear to them yet do not harbour revenge or hatred. They simply request that their history be remembered and that they be allowed to remain in their home.

--Douglas Soutar (United Kingdom), General Secretary, ILEP (International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations), Excerpt from Statement Submitted for the International Workshop

The Right to Home

Prior to the advent of a cure for leprosy, people throughout the world were forcibly separated from their families and isolated in hospitals far removed from society. This was done for the supposed protection of society at great cost to the lives of the individuals and their families. In fact, in some cases, whole family lines came to an end if an only child had leprosy.

Now that the land that many of these hospitals are located on has become valuable, plans are made for the use of the land that does not take into consideration the ethical and humanitarian issues surrounding the repeated displacement of people from the places that have become their homes.

Many countries throughout the world have recognized the historical significance of the leprosy communities where people have been isolated as well as the rights of individuals to live out their lives in the places that have become their homes. This has resulted in creative efforts to develop adapted

use facilities that work to benefit society in many ways and also provide for preserving the history and the lifestyle of individuals living in these places.

From March 3-7, 2009, IDEA Taiwan sponsored an International Workshop to formally discuss the rights of the older generation of individuals affected by leprosy/Hansen's disease. Participants included about 100 people from 7 countries (Norway, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Guam, the United States and Taiwan). Central themes of the Workshop included The Right to Home, The Right to Family, and The Right to be Part of History.

The situation facing the residents of the Lo Sheng community was at the center of the discussions, which took place at the same time that historical buildings at Lo Sheng were being demolished in order to make room for a Mass Rapid Transit System. Also of great concern was a similar situation facing the residents of Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement in Malaysia.



While destruction of portions of Lo Sheng proceeds, Huang Wen Chang and other residents work to bring new life back to their home. *Photos by Pam Parlapiano*



Forced Evictions – A Violation of the Right to Adequate Housing



Lu De Chang tries to block the destruction of Lo Sheng. *Photo Courtesy Lu De Chang*



All that remains of the Sasakawa Memorial Hall is rubble. In the background is the historic theater building, which is also being demolished.

The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) expresses solidarity with the Residents of Lo Sheng Sanatorium in their struggle to retain their residence and save the sanatorium from demolition. COHRE pursues the vision of a world in which everyone fully enjoys housing rights, and promotes practical legal and other solutions to problems of homelessness, inadequate housing and forced evictions . . .

As per international human rights law, forced evictions are a violation of the right to adequate housing. If Lo Sheng residents are forcibly evicted, the TCG [Taipei County Government] will be guilty of violating the human rights of some of the most marginalised sections of society . . .

-- Excerpt, COHRE Statement Submitted for the International Workshop, March 2009



(Left to right): Ms. Hsu, Chen Zai Tien, Tang Chiang Ming, Chang Yun Ming, Lin Zu Feng, and Lee Tien Pei say goodbye to international visitors with the demolition of Lo Sheng continuing in the background. *Photos by Henry Law*

Preserving Lo Sheng as a Leprosy Heritage Site

It's easy to destroy, but what is the plan for preservation?

-- Lee Tien Pei

Leprosy is not a health issue in Norway today, but Norwegian Society is still affected by leprosy through its historical experience. In Norway, we have preserved and protected the history of leprosy. A well-kept museum contributes to the understanding of this experience as valuable and important . . .

As a museum curator, it is really sad to see what is happening at your homes in Lo Sheng. It's really about the right to home and the right to history . . .

-- Sigurd Sandmo, Curator, The Leprosy Museum, Bergen, Norway



Sigurd Sandmo photographs historic buildings at Lo Sheng.



Mao Wang Zhi shows Sigurd Sandmo the artifacts he has collected for the museum at Lo Sheng. *Photos by Henry Law*

This place has been your home since long ago when you were forced to abandon your social life to comply with mistaken sanitary regulations that separated you from your families and communities. Now, we must look at the Lo Sheng Sanatorium not only as your home but also as an historical site for future generations to learn what happened in the past with regard to public health policies. Therefore, Lo Sheng Sanatorium must be preserved as an important historical shrine that recognizes your suffering and your resistance against isolation and discrimination.

All efforts should be conveyed to convince the authorities that a workable solution must be found to preserve your undeniable rights of land, property and dignity and, if possible, adopt a revised plan for building the transportation system. However, the priority must be the guarantee of your rights and desires . . .

-- Dr. Marcus Virmond (Brazil), President, International Leprosy Association, Excerpt from Statement Submitted for the International Workshop

I Must Tell People My Story



Chang Wen Bin with Ayako Yaegashi, IDEA Japan. *IDEA Photo*



Mr. Chang, under the beams in the old hospital where some people hung themselves. *Photo by Henry Law*

From 1945 to 1960, control by the sanatorium was very strict. We didn't have any freedom. We were prohibited to go out. In that time we had to turn our lights off after 10 p.m. We had to wake up at 6 a.m. After World War II, we could have children, but the church would bring the child outside and someone else would raise it. About 60 children were born here.

I came here in 1950 and, every month, about two people hanged themselves. In 1954, it was the peak of the population here -- 1,118 people. I was working in the kitchen and I cooked the food. At that time there was not only suicide by hanging, but some people took too much DDS [one of the first medicines used to cure leprosy]. From the 1960's, the residents started to raise pigs, rabbits and take them outside to sell, so the economic situation became better and better and there were fewer suicides.

If this site is not preserved, the history will be forgotten, so it must be preserved. I want to tell this story to people in society because I am a survivor of this history. I must tell people my story.

-- Chang Wen Bin, Resident of Lo Sheng for almost 60 years

Lo Sheng – An Intergenerational Community



(Left to right): Chen Zai Tien, Chou Fu Zhi, Mao Wang Zhi and Lee Tien Pei perform as part of an intergenerational concert, held at Lo Sheng on March 7, 2009. *Photo by Henry Law*

Whereas, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes “the inherent dignity” and “the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” as the foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world;

Whereas, the residents of Lo Sheng are most valued members of the world community who are an inspiration to present and future generations;

Whereas, Lo Sheng is a living intergenerational community, and will continue to evolve and live on into the future through the efforts of the residents, family members, and devoted supporters;

Whereas, we as colleagues with international expertise in the preservation of the history of leprosy/Hansen’s Disease, recognize Lo Sheng as an internationally significant historic site;

Therefore, we declare: As part of global history, Lo Sheng has universal value, and therefore demands preservation for future generations. Governments in Norway, the United States, Japan, Korea, and other countries have already acknowledged this international responsibility to protect these communities and their histories, ensuring that their messages of hope and courage will inspire people from around the world for years to come. Lo Sheng deserves the same type of protection.

In Solidarity



Jung Sang Kwon (IDEA President) greets Mao Wang Zhi, with Valerie Monson (Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa) in the background.



Legislator Tien Chiu Jing, a strong supporter of the residents of Lo Sheng, with Taka Harada, a member of Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa, whose brother Paul was taken from their family and sent to the Kalaupapa peninsula (Hawaii) when he was 15.

In solidarity, we support without reservation all efforts by our brothers and sisters around the globe, who try to conserve leprosy/Hansen's Disease communities. We strongly urge all levels of governments to support these efforts. IDEA, the International Association for Integration, Dignity and Economic Advancement, will take the lead to build a strong international network to support the efforts of conserving leprosy/Hansen's Disease communities as historical heritage for all human beings.

Given the significance of the history of leprosy/Hansen's Disease to all people, we hereby announce that the Lo Sheng community is an internationally significant historical site. Thereby we strongly encourage the Taiwanese government to support all efforts to safeguard this site.

-- Excerpts, "Declaration for the Preservation of Lo Sheng," March 7, 2009



Mao Wang Zhi in the old hospital building at Lo Sheng. *Photos by Pam Parlapiano*

An Extended Family



Lee Tien Pei describes the history of the temple at Lo Sheng to workshop participants.



Chen Zai Tien with supporters. *IDEA Photos*

Lo Sheng is like an extended family . . . I appreciate being raised here, which allowed me to experience the interaction of caring, sympathy, justice and human rights instead of only looking for material success and monetary gain.

-- Hsu Lin Lin, who was born at Lo Sheng



The students who are an integral part of the community of Lo Sheng as they support the residents who have inspired them. *Photo by Henry Law*

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