

Man of Action

Dr Lee Jong-wook



Story of the late Dr Lee Jong-wook
The 6th Director-General of the WHO

CONTENTS

4	8	14
Journey of Dr. Lee	Dr. Lee's Works	Dr. Lee's Remarks
16	18	22
Tributes to Dr. Lee	Dr. Lee and KOFIH	Meeting Dr. Lee in Books

Dr. Lee Jong-wook was elected Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2003 and strived to improve health throughout the world until he had a stroke in 2006. He became the first South Korean to head an international organization.

He said in his inaugural address that "We must do the right things, in the right place, and in the right way." He kept his words throughout his career, advocating for global human health and patients with incurable diseases.

The Korea Foundation for International Healthcare (KOFIH) was established in 2006 as a public agency under the Ministry of Health and Welfare of the Republic of Korea. KOFIH seeks to promote global health cooperation, upholding the spirit of the late Dr. Lee.

Dr. Lee's life was a series of uncharted roads. Let us introduce Dr. Lee Jong-wook, "doctor for humanity", who devoted his entire life to helping the marginalized.



Journey of Dr. Lee

Apr. 12, 1945

Born in Bukahyeon-dong, Seoul city as a 4th child to a family with 4 sons and 2 daughters

Jun. 1950

After the outbreak of the Korean War, he fled to Daegu and became a refugee

Apr. 1960

Enrolled Kyungbock High School



Jan. 1970

Got accepted in College of Medicine, Seoul National University

Feb. 1976

Worked as a volunteer doctor to help patients with leprosy at "the St Lazarus Village" in Uiwang city, Gyeonggi-do province. There, he met Reiko Kaburaki who later became his wife

Aug. 1976

Worked as a doctor of emergency room at Gangwon Provincial Medical Center

Aug. 1979

Began his master's degree in public health at the University of Hawaii

Jun. 1981

Started his career as a clinician at the Lyndon B. Johnson Tropical Medicine Center in the American Samoa Islands

Jun. 1983

Advanced career as a leprosy consultant to WHO Representative Office in the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji



In August 1986, Dr. Lee saw patients with leprosy, while working with other health professionals at the health center in the South Pacific Solomon Islands. He carefully informed patients of various therapies and treatment storage methods.

Dec. 1986

Moved to the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office in Manila to serve as a regional adviser on chronic diseases

Jun. 1990

Became the Director for communicable diseases in the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific. He took the lead in eradicating poliomyelitis

May 1994

Selected to serve as head of Global Program on Vaccines and Immunizations and as executive secretary of the Children's Vaccine Initiative at the WHO HQ, Geneva, Switzerland

Dec. 2000

Became the Director of the Stop Tuberculosis (TB) Department at the WHO HQ

Jan. 2003

Elected as the 6th Director-General of the World Health Organization

May 2003

Announced to achieve "3 by 5" to ensure 3 million people with HIV/AIDS would have access to the medicines by the end of 2005



In September 2003, he paid first visit to Mpumalanga province in South Africa after taking office, dancing with native people to local music. (On his way to local health centers which take care of health of the residents in the nearest area)

Dec. 2004

Completed the construction of Strategic Health and Operation Center (SHOC) at the WHO



In December 2005, Dr. Lee visited Balakot in Pakistan, where earthquake flattened the town. Lee was listening to the people at site. He opened local offices and sent 140 people in the stricken areas to help the victims find hope as soon as possible.



Feb. 2005

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control came into force

In April 2006, Dr. Lee Jong-wook carried his baggage at the Zambia Airport in Africa to attend the "World Health Day" event. He traveled 150 days a year. The photo shows his frugal nature as he always insisted on having minimum attendants and economy class seats on a plane.



May 20, 2006

Had a stroke while preparing for the annual World Health Assembly

May 22, 2006

Died on the opening day of the annual World Health Assembly

Dr. Lee's Works

Leprosy “To keep it under 1 case per 10,000 people”



In 1983, when working at WHO Fiji Office, Dr. Lee traveled from one Pacific island to another to find leprosy cases and get the patients onto treatment. At that time, he contributed to spreading multidrug administration which combined dapsone and clofazimine. He continued to work hard to eliminate leprosy in Manila where WHO Western Pacific Regional Office is located.



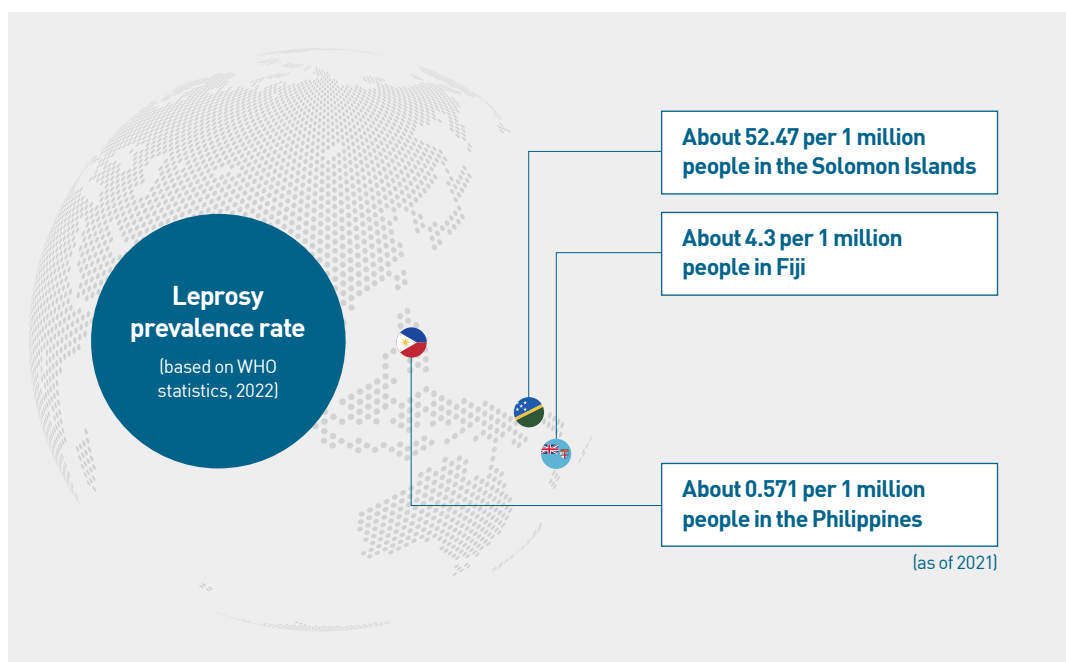
Hoping to end TB



TB seemed to disappear with the development of preventive vaccines and various treatments but re-emerged as a major public health threat in the 1990s with 8 million cases per year, 3 million of which were fatal. In 2000, Dr. Lee became the Director of the Stop Tuberculosis (TB) Department at the WHO. He enhanced accessibility to TB medicine in developing countries by building global drug procurement organization, and expanded Stop TB program.

He supplied 60,000 doses of tuberculosis treatment and promised to provide about 4 million dollars over 3 years by mobilizing Global Fund for North Korea when he visited there in 2001.

The progress was confirmed in 2007 when the Stop TB secretariat reported during the World Health Assembly that after a decade of rising incidence, TB rates had stopped rising and had begun to decline.



Near to declare “the end of polio”



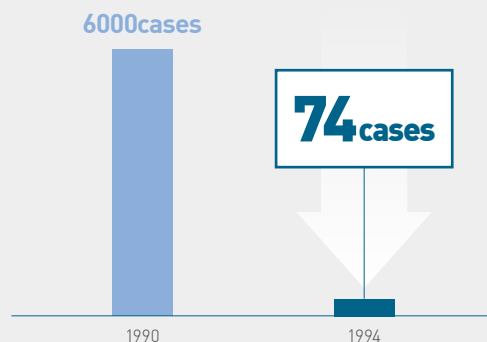
When serving as the Director for communicable diseases in the Western Pacific Region, Dr. Lee promoted a polio eradication program. By mobilizing external funds, he supplied polio vaccines to countries in the region. In 1994, he became the Director of Global Program for Vaccines and Immunizations at the WHO HQ stationed in Geneva, where he set out to eradicate polio worldwide. In 1995, the popular science magazine “Scientific American” dubbed him the “Vaccine Czar”.

3 by 5 campaign



At the 2003 World Health Assembly, he announced that 3 million people living with HIV/AIDS would be on antiretroviral treatment by 2005, which was known thereafter as the “3 by 5” campaign. Although the goal was not achieved by 2005, 3 million people actually received the treatment by 2008. Thanks to the campaign, people with HIV/AIDS in developing countries had greater access to the antiretroviral treatment, which is recognized as “one of the greatest achievements in the history of public health”.

Polio cases in the
Western Pacific region



Current polio outbreak by type

Polio virus type 1

Polio outbreaks only in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Lack of vaccine supply and inoculation in the areas due to prolonged

Polio virus type 2

eradicated in 1999

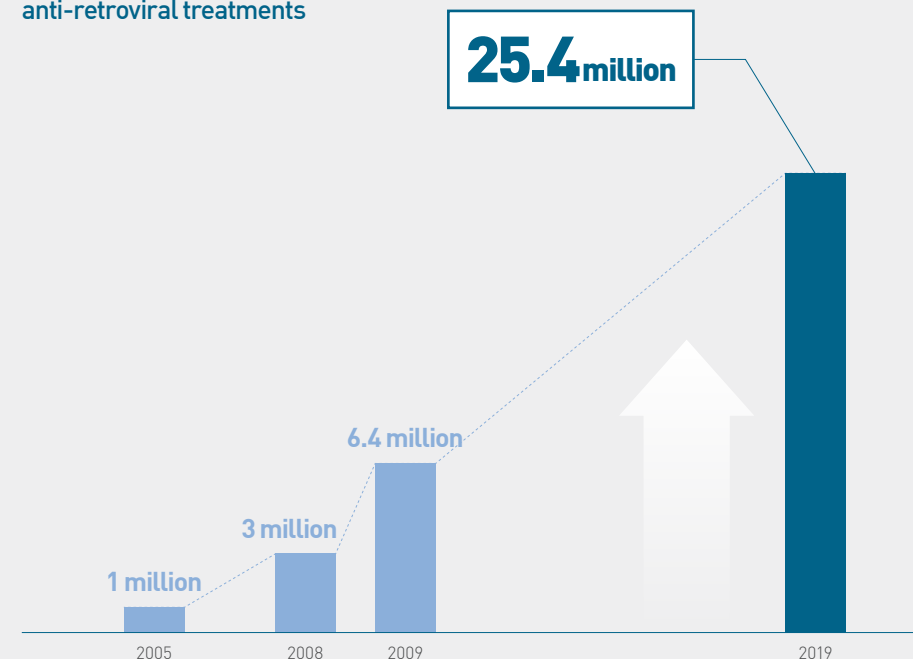
Polio virus type 3

eradicated in 2019

1999

2019

Number of provided
anti-retroviral treatments



The first and the most widely embraced treaty, “Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)”



The Convention entered into force in 2005 in response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic. The number of member states stands at 182, which makes it one of the most widely embraced treaties in UN history.



In response to the pandemic at the forefront, “Strategic Health Operations Centre (SHOC)” was established



Despite strong opposition inside the WHO, Strategic Health Operations Centre was established in 2004. The center is where all relevant information is shared in real time, related to infection, disease control, treatment, supply of vaccine, etc. across the world.

Since then, the center has been serving as an excellent control tower in emergent public health crises such as H1N1 pandemic, Ebola virus, MERS, COVID-19. In honor of value and spirit of the late Director-General Lee Jong-wook who built the center, it was later renamed “JW Lee Strategic Health Operations Centre (JW Lee SHOC)”.

Dr. Lee's Remarks

We must do the
right things,
in the right place,
in the right way.

Presentation to the Executive Board (to run for the 6th Director- General of the WHO)

January 27th, 2003 in Switzerland

Millions of people continue to suffer and die unnecessarily, and billions lack the basic health necessary to raise themselves from abject poverty. But this is not a reason to become disheartened. These noble goals we have set ourselves must not be abandoned. Setting apparently impossible goals drove us to eliminate smallpox and will soon rid the world of polio. These are the ideals which will drive the entire global health community to ever greater achievements.

Speech to the Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly

May 21st, 2003 in Switzerland

The Organization has an inclusive mission: to work for the highest attainable standard of health "for every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief or economic or social condition." Our Constitution commits us to solidarity. It warns that "unequal development in the promotion of health and control of disease" is a "common danger" for all peoples. These commitments are not naïve. They emerged from the most destructive war the world has ever seen.

Report by the Director-General to the Fifty-ninth World Health Assembly

May 22nd, 2006 in Switzerland

The Strategic Health Operations Centre continues to play a key role in coordinating action and providing information. This connectivity is a vital part of our relationship with you. We want WHO to be a source of reliable information, strategy and wisdom - you have to deal not only with wild viruses, but also with wild rumours. Only straight talking and good science will do.

...

To all countries that have yet to come under attack of disruptive virus, please think carefully. If you can afford some time to catch your breath, please make the best use of it. Preparation is an endless job. We need to accelerate vaccine development, build production capabilities, improve early warning systems, share protective measures in industries, and help other countries prepare.



Tributes to Dr. Lee

Former
Secretary
General of the UN
Kofi Annan



He a fighter against public health threats, ranging from AIDS to tuberculosis. We also mainly discussed what he paid special attention to such as HIV/AIDS and malaria eradication. He was a leader of WHO employees throughout the world, but also a really good colleague and friend to me.

Former French
President
Jacques Chirac



This great doctor helped others thanks to his vision and tolerance, and when he was the head, France established friendship and reliable relationship with WHO.

Former U.S.
President
Jimmy Carter



He was enthusiastic and bold, and made great strides. I was inspired by his humility, dignity, and his vision for a better world

Former
chairwoman of World
Health Assembly
Elena Salgado



He was an exceptional person and an exceptional Director-General. WHO became stronger and responded to global health issues effectively under his leadership. He will remain in our hearts forever.

Former President of
World Bank Group
Jim Yong Kim



He believed more than in internationalism and globalism. He was open to different cultures and people, and really devoted himself to what he thought necessary. He was a fantastic leader.

Technology
advisor at Microsoft
Bill Gates



He was a leader in the health community. He showed that efforts and determination make us overcome seemingly insurmountable and the most challenging global health problems. He changed millions of people's lives across the globe. His contribution will be an eternal legacy of mankind.

Dr. Lee and KOFIH

KOFIH upholds the value and spirit of the late
Director-General Lee Jong-wook



The Korea Foundation for International Healthcare (KOFIH) is a public agency affiliated with the Ministry of Health and Welfare of Korea. KOFIH was established to provide government-level healthcare assistance to partner countries, North Korea, overseas Koreans, migrant workers residing in Korea, and those affected by natural disasters. KOFIH also conducts commemorative projects for the late Dr. LEE Jong-wook, the 6th Director-General of WHO. On behalf of Korea, KOFIH provides global healthcare assistance. And KOFIH will continue to work in the right way until all people across the globe receive proper healthcare assistance.

Meeting healthcare needs and supporting essential healthcare in partner countries



Primary Healthcare System Strengthening Project, Health System Strengthening Project Focused on Emergency Medical Service, Operation and Management Consulting for Health Facilities, Strengthening Management System of Medical Equipment, Strengthening Capacity of Communicable Disease Control System, Strengthening Non-communicable Disease (NCDs) Management, Health Insurance Policy Consulting Project, Rehabilitation System Strengthening Project for the Disable

Rebuilding the Healthcare Cooperation System for the Korean Peninsula and Inter- and Overseas Koreans



Healthcare support projects for North Korea, overseas Koreans, migrant workers in Korea, Overseas Emergency Relief Project (KDRT), Medical Resources Support Project

R&D and Evaluation



Systematically analyzing and evaluating the performance of healthcare support projects and establishing a performance-oriented project management system through feedback; research projects, feasibility studies, and evaluation projects

Strengthening training system for essential healthcare personnel (Dr LEE Jong-wook Fellowship Program)



It is a global training program that provides customized training, pre-training, and post-training to healthcare workforce by reflecting their needs based on mid- to long-term training strategies according to the characteristics of each country

Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Project



Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health has been jointly established by KOFIH and WHO and awarded since 2009. It aims to commemorate the achievements of the late Dr. Lee, the sixth Director-General of the WHO, who dedicated his life to improving global healthcare, and to inherit his will. KOFIH also upholds his legacy through commemorative projects for the public in Korea.

Public-Private Partnerships

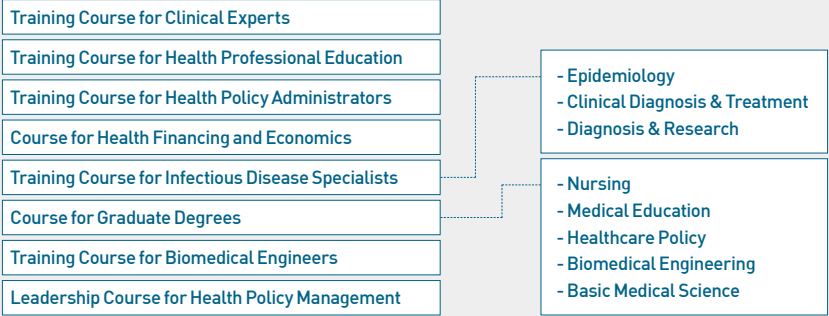


Since 2012, KOFIH has established partnerships with various organizations through Community Chest of Korea to promote healthcare cooperation projects and utilize human and material resources in the healthcare sector to strengthen the healthcare systems of partner countries and eliminate health inequalities.

Scan to access WHO Website
(Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial
Prize for Public Health)

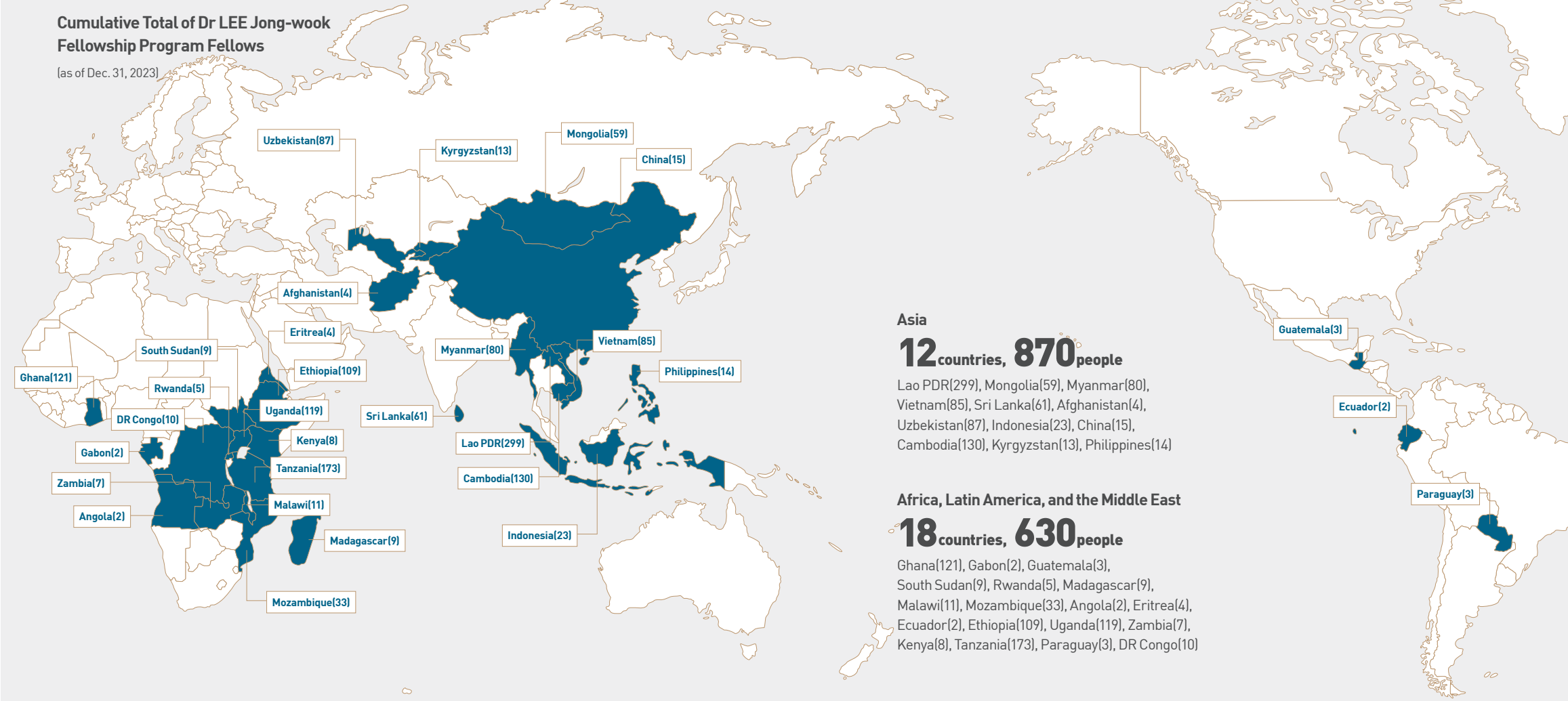


Dr LEE Jong-wook Fellowship Program



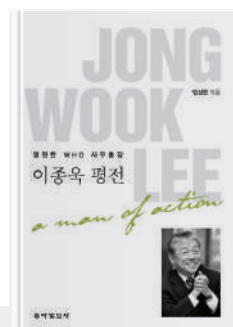
Dr LEE Jong-wook Fellowship Program is a global training program for health and medical professionals which fosters the next Dr. Lee Jong-wook around the globe. Systematic and practical healthcare education in the fellowship program enhances capacity of health workers and improves healthcare in partner countries in order to make healthier world.

Cumulative Total of Dr LEE Jong-wook Fellowship Program Fellows
(as of Dec. 31, 2023)



Meeting Dr. Lee in Books

Introducing books that explore the life of a man, Lee Jong-wook, who continued to face challenges throughout his entire life.



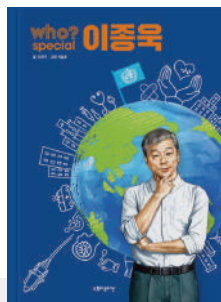
The Life of Lee Jong-wook : A Critical Biography

The life of "a great doctor" who was the first South Korean to head a U.N. agency, established disease control tower in the WHO, and devoted his life to helping the poor and marginalized.

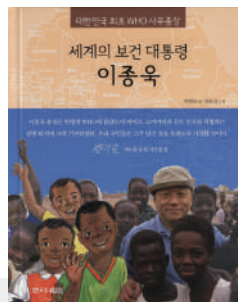
Forever WHO Director-General
Lee Jong-wook, a Critical Biography

Lee Jong-wook story for children

The late boomer and doctor, who advanced to the world and became a leader in global healthcare...
Showing children challenges and precious values to create a beautiful world.



Who? Special Lee
Jong-wook



President of global public
health, Lee Jong-wook



Lee Jong-wook, a doctor
who embraced the world

*Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education approved that health textbooks for 5th and 6th graders introduce Dr. Lee Jong-wook.

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We will move forward towards
the goal of Health for All. Together,
learning from the past, we can change
the future of global public health.

99



KOFIH upholds the will of the late Director-General Lee Jong-wook

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Ministry of Health
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