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NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM ILEP INDIA COORDINATOR

Dear readers,

Welcome to the 14th edition of the ILEP India Newsletter! This edition provides a comprehensive overview of our activities, progress, and strategic initiatives for the January to March 2025 quarter.

Our commitment to achieving Zero Leprosy continues through strengthened coordination among ILEP Members and other Stakeholders. This edition provides an overview of the impactful initiatives undertaken by our member organizations, including research, training and workshops, community-focused programs, and inspiring field stories. Key highlights include observing Anti-Leprosy Day 2025, strengthening ILEP India's Knowledge sharing and collaborations through National Conferences and Webinars, inspiring journeys of resilience, and several other impactful activities. These efforts reaffirm our steadfast dedication to improving lives and accelerating the efforts to achieve Zero Leprosy.

I extend my sincere thanks to all ILEP members, NLEP consultants, and our partners for their unwavering commitment.



Dr. Srilekha Penna

Key activities and participation by ILEP India and Member Organizations

1 Anti-Leprosy Day 2025: Awareness, Action & Advocacy at India Gate, New Delhi :

- Anti-Leprosy Day 2025 at India Gate was observed on 30th January with the theme "**Unite, Act and Eliminate Leprosy**". The event brought together key stakeholders, including the Central Leprosy Division, ILEP India Partners, WHO India, and Government representatives, to promote awareness, break stigma, and encourage early diagnosis and treatment.
- Engaging initiatives by ILEP India members, including the Snake and Ladder Game and a Magic Show, educated the public on leprosy treatment, the importance of timely medication, and the risks of discontinuing treatment.



- An impactful Nukkad Natak addressed the stigma surrounding leprosy and promoted social inclusion, while another street play held on Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) Day raised awareness about diseases such as Kala Azar and Lymphatic Filariasis, emphasising the importance of prevention and early treatment.



2 ILEP India Good Practices Document to Strengthen Leprosy Efforts:

- ILEP India has published its **Good Practices Document**, now available on the ILEP India website. This initiative highlights replicable models from India that contribute to a sustainable impact in the fight against leprosy with effective strategies in early case detection, disability prevention, rehabilitation, and mental health support to drive sustainable impact towards achieving

Zero Leprosy. By documenting proven methodologies, the Good Practices Document aims to enhance visibility, foster partnerships, and influence policy while creating a lasting knowledge base for future interventions.

[Please visit this link for Good Practices Document](#)

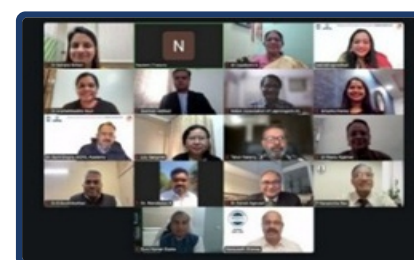


3 ILEP India strengthens collaboration with key stakeholders through National Conferences and Webinars:

- The **Indian Association of Leprologists (IAL) Mid-Term National Conference of Leprosy**, held on 11th & 12th January 2025, at Smt. NHL Municipal Medical College, Ahmedabad, brought together experts to discuss advancements in leprosy research, diagnosis, and policy updates. The conference showcased the active participation of ILEP India members through various poster and paper presentations.
- Key highlights include presentations from Dr. Ashok Agarwal (NLR India), and Mr. John Kurian George (Swiss Emmaus Leprosy Relief Work India), Dr. Srilekha Penna (GLRA India), and Mr. Subhojit Goswami (The Leprosy Mission Trust India) on various topics including Leprosy- prevention, migration, role of ILEP agencies and impact of climate change.



- On **World Leprosy Day, 26th January**, ILEP India actively contributed to a webinar organized by the **IADVL Academy** in collaboration with key leprosy stakeholders, including the Central Leprosy Division and the International Leprosy Association, and ILEP India members. Dr. Srilekha Penna, ILEP India Coordinator, presented on Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), sharing ILEP India's field experiences on PEP implementation. A panel discussion, including the participation of Dr. Ashok Agarwal (NLR India), reinforced the need for stronger collaboration between dermatologists, private practitioners, ILEP India, and the national program, emphasizing commitment to advancing leprosy prevention through partnership with key stakeholders.

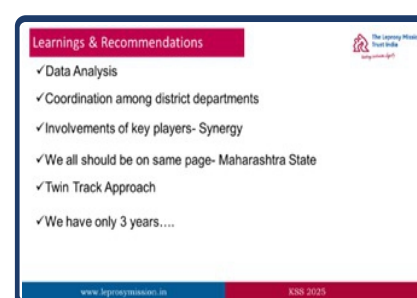
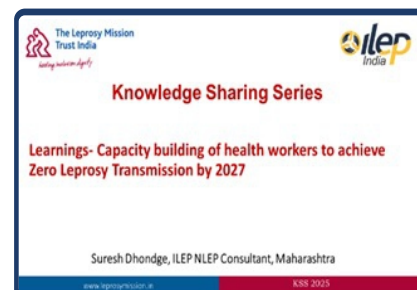


- The **14th National Conference of the Indian Association of Epidemiologists (IAE)** was held on 7th and 8th March 2025 at NCDC, Delhi, focusing on "Epidemiology in Public Health for Viksit Bharat by 2047." A special panel discussion on leprosy prevention, moderated by Dr. Anil Kumar, Principal Advisor, NCDC, featured Dr. Ashok Agarwal (CEO, NLR India) and Dr. Srilekha Penna (ILEP India Coordinator), emphasizing ILEP India's commitment to strengthening leprosy prevention efforts.



4 Enhancing Zero Leprosy Efforts: ILEP India Drives Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building for NSP 2027 Goals:

- ILEP India has conducted two Knowledge Sharing Sessions on 21st February and 17th March 2025, focusing on capacity building and stakeholder engagement in achieving NSP targets.
- A session on “**Capacity building of health workers to achieve Zero Leprosy Transmission by 2027**”, led by Mr. Suresh Dhondge (NLEP Consultant – Maharashtra), emphasized strategies to identify new cases among vulnerable communities with a focus on capacity building of frontline healthcare workers to enhance the program’s reach.
- Another session, led by Mr. Sarwat Naqvi (NLEP Consultant - Chhattisgarh) focused on “**Stakeholder Engagement for Leprosy Elimination in Diverse Endemic Settings, aligning with the NSP & 2027 Roadmap Targets**” provided valuable insights into the impact of strengthened leadership, collaborative approaches, on-ground interventions, and digital-based health solutions to achieve last-mile delivery for effective program implementation.



5 ILEP-NLEP Virtual Consultant Review Meeting: Enhancing Strategic Focus :

- ILEP India conducted a Virtual ILEP-NLEP Consultant Review Meeting on 27th February 2025 to address key challenges in program implementation while enhancing communication and reporting mechanisms, encouraging knowledge exchange, and enhancing collaborative efforts to strategize and drive future actions.
- Detailed discussions focused on the development and rollout of the State Strategic Plan (SSP), the importance of interstate coordination for leprosy and migration, and other challenges in reporting, focusing on improving accuracy, consistency, and data-driven storytelling.

- Field visit constraints and the need for internal support were raised, and solutions to enhance fieldwork efficiency were discussed. The meeting concluded with an open discussion, allowing consultants to share concerns, insights, and recommendations for strengthening the NLEP.



6 NLR India Foundation Observes World Leprosy Day and SLAC/SPARSH:

- NLR India Foundation actively participated in observing **World Leprosy Day and SLAC/SPARSH 2025** across four districts in West Bengal, including Paschim Bardhaman, Paschim Medinipur, Jhargram, and Uttar Dinajpur.
- Between 30th January to 13th February 2025, various awareness activities were conducted in leprosy colonies and schools, engaging a total of **776 participants**. This included 54 participants from Nabadiganta Leprosy Colony, 145 students from Bankura Hindu High School, 250 nursing students from DSMS Nursing College, 171 students and teachers from Nabadiganta High School, and 156 participants from Kalyanpur Leprosy Colony.
- This initiative, led by Dr. Arup Chakrabarty, ILEP NLEP Consultant, aimed to promote inclusivity, awareness, and support for people affected by leprosy while also fostering a sense of community and social acceptance.



7 NIRAMAYA III: Strengthening Leprosy Prevention, Awareness, and Care Across High-Endemic States :

- Project NIRAMAYA III, implemented by GLRA India, funded by DAHW Germany, builds upon the successes of NIRAMAYA I (2018-2020) and NIRAMAYA II (2021-2023) by strengthening early detection, disability prevention, and comprehensive care for those affected by Leprosy.
- This initiative operates across seven high-endemic states through direct initiatives and with the support of 6 NGO hospitals, actively supporting the National Leprosy Eradication Program (NLEP) through case detection, training & capacity building, medical rehabilitation, and stigma reduction. During this quarter, in collaboration with Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) and CINI, GLRA India organized an awareness session for 41 female teachers and supervisors from KMC-run SSK (Shishu Shiksha Kendra) schools to promote understanding, reduce stigma, and encourage support for people affected by leprosy.
- The project enhanced its impact in Madhya Pradesh through sensitization sessions for traditional healers in the Pati block, a disability prevention camp in Bokrata (Barwani district), and training programs, including the APAL State Leprosy Forum meeting and medical officers' training in Indore.
- In Tamil Nadu, two skin and disability camps were held in Salem, inaugurated by the Tourism Minister, along with leprosy training for frontline workers and medical students. In Maharashtra, Mumbai's BMC hospital conducted skin screening camps, identifying new cases, while a mini marathon in Mumbai engaged students in leprosy advocacy.



8 Introducing Hope Rises International: A Renewed Identity with Sustained Commitment :

- In the month of March, ILEP member American Leprosy Missions formally announced its long-anticipated transition to a new name, **Hope Rises International**. This change marks a step forward,



reflecting a broader global vision and an unwavering commitment to those affected by Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) like Leprosy. Since its founding in 1906, the organization's work has significantly evolved and expanded in scope and impact. The name **Hope Rises International** more fully embodies the essence of the organization's mission, which remains unchanged in its commitment to healing, dignity, and hope for vulnerable communities. The homepage of the new website features the updated branding, a message from President Bill Simmons outlining the reasons behind the name change, and a comprehensive set of frequently asked questions (FAQ's).

9 CapaBLE: Enhancing Leprosy Care through Capacity Building :

- **CapaBLE (Capacity Building in Leprosy)**, an international initiative, aims to evaluate the impact of modernized training modules for healthcare professionals working with leprosy-affected individuals in the **India (Janjgir-Champa district) and Nigeria** via a blended training approach, which includes both online (self-paced) and face-to-face training with focused research methodologies, including Knowledge testing (pre and post-training assessments), Interviews with trainees and trainers to evaluate their experiences, Field observations of trainees diagnosing and treating leprosy patients, and cost analysis of training programs.
- The study compares the effectiveness of single-disease training (India) versus an integrated multi-disease training approach (Nigeria) to generate evidence-based insights for improving training models, influencing policy decisions, and advocating for the adoption of successful methodologies in other regions.
- The study is being carried out by The Leprosy Mission Trust India (TLMTI), NLR India Foundation (NLRIF), and German Leprosy and TB Relief Association (GLRA), in collaboration with the State Health Department and Ministry of Health in India.
- So far, 9 Medical Officers (MOs) and 17 Healthcare professionals in the Janjgir-Champa district, India, have completed specialized leprosy management training under this initiative.



10 Capacity Building Initiative in Maharashtra under Project Interrupting Leprosy Transmission (ILT) :

- Over the past decade, Chandrapur district, Maharashtra, has had the highest prevalence rate (PR) of Leprosy in India, reporting between 1200 to 1800 new cases annually.
- Under the 'Interrupting Leprosy Transmission' project launched on 1st April 2024, The Leprosy Mission Trust India conducted an extensive door-to-door survey across six high-PR blocks of Chandrapur, reaching over 700,000 individuals through the efforts of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs).



- In March, the project team oriented 948 ASHAs in collaboration with Taluka Health Officers at Nagbhid, Bramhapuri, Mul, Sawali, Chimur, and Sindewahi blocks from Chandrapur District toward the project goals.

11 LEPRA Society celebrates 36th Foundation Day and Honors K.V. Desikan Memorial Awardees, 2025:

- On 22nd February, LEPRA Society marked its 36th Foundation Day, reaffirming its commitment to leprosy care and rehabilitation. The event featured esteemed guests, including Mrs. Sneha Ramchandran, who lauded LEPRA's impact on inclusive healthcare, and Chief Guest Dr. Shashikala Reddy Palkonda, who underscored the importance of early detection and rehabilitation.
- Renowned scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan highlighted the role of research and innovation in combating neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), emphasizing collaboration in disease surveillance and community-based interventions.
- The occasion also honored the legacy of Dr. K.V. Desikan, a founding member and pioneer in leprosy advocacy, with the **K.V. Desikan Memorial Awards 2025**, recognizing excellence in infectious disease control and rehabilitation. Dr. Pawan Agarwal was awarded for his pioneering reconstructive surgery work, while journalist and advocate Ms. Nandita Venkatesan was recognized for raising awareness on leprosy and disability rights.



12 A young girl's triumph over Leprosy:

- In 2020, a young girl, a class IV student from Bihar, began experiencing numbness in her left hand. As her condition worsened, her parents sought treatment from a local practitioner. However, the lack of proper diagnosis led to further complications, including persistent pain and partial paralysis.
- A subsequent visit to a government hospital confirmed that she had leprosy. While she completed the prescribed treatment, the nerve damage remained, affecting her daily life and prospects.
- Recognizing the urgency of her case, **Damien Foundation India Trust (DFIT)** facilitated a nerve decompression surgery, which was successfully performed on 11th August 2024 at Damien Foundation Hospital, Dehri-on-Sone, Bihar.
- Following post-surgical care and intensive physiotherapy, she gradually regained movement in her hand. Today, she has resumed her education in Class V with renewed confidence.

Before



After



13 An effort to restore hope and dignity to Nanki's life :

- Nanki, a daily wage laborer with three children, including two who were visually challenged, faced immense hardships after contracting Leprosy and filariasis in 2007. By 2021, his worsening condition left him disabled and isolated, as his ulcer, aggravated by filaria, emitted a foul odour that led people to shun him. Being forced to live in a hut near his family home left him struggling to survive.
- LEPRA Society's support extended beyond treatment and helped Nanki secure a **Bihar Shatabdi Kusht Kalyan Yojana certificate** for pension benefits and connected him to a self-help group. Through the **Jagruti project**, he received 25,000 to restart his shop, which now earns 600-700 daily.
- Nanki credits his remarkable transformation to LEPRA Society, diligently following self-care practices and embracing a new life with dignity and hope.



14 Call for Contributions: Help Build the Global Ocular Leprosy Photo Database :

ILEP invites ophthalmologists and experts to contribute high-quality ocular leprosy images and metadata to support a global database aimed at advancing training, research, and AI-based screening. We encourage readers to share this call with relevant peers and partners. Submission guidelines are provided in the accompanying document.

Your efforts can save sight!

ILEP Ocular Leprosy Photo Database



Why this matters

Ocular leprosy complications can cause irreversible disability and lead to blindness. They are often unrecognized and unreported.

Currently, there are significant gaps in understanding the burden of leprosy related blindness. As leprosy becomes rarer, early detection and intervention will be crucial to preventing blindness.

The ILEP ocular leprosy photo database was developed to address these challenges, by leveraging the potential of digital technology.

The database will be launched in July 2025 and hosted on Infolep.

Be part of the solution

- **We are inviting ophthalmologists, field workers and health workers** to submit high-quality, ocular leprosy photographs and metadata to help build this vital database.
- **Your contributions will be instrumental** to populating the database, and advancing integrated service delivery, training, research, and AI-based screening tools for ocular leprosy.

Key information

- All images will be de-identified to maintain patient confidentiality.
- Scan the QR code below for upload instructions.



leprosy information services



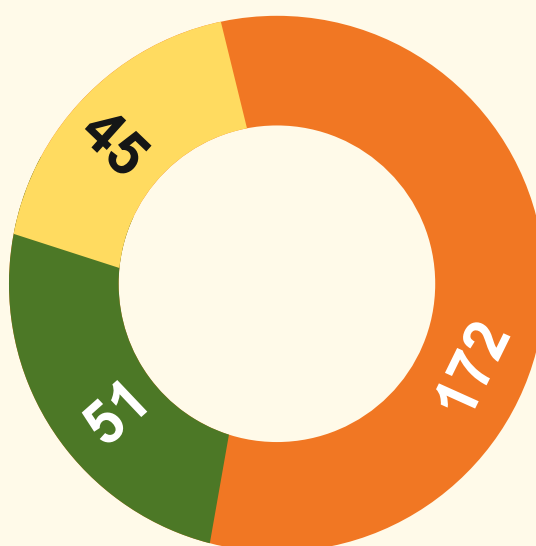
officer@ilepfederation.org

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From January to March 2025

■ Visits
 ■ Trainings
 ■ Meetings



The NLEP consultants routinely visit the health care facilities, organize self-care camps, assist district and state leprosy officers, train the self-help groups, monitor the drug availability in the districts, and assist in active case detection activities. During this period, the state and district-level program was supported through **51 advocacy and program implementation meetings**, **45 trainings**, and **172 visits** to the districts, different health facilities, and leprosy colonies.

51

Advocacy and program
implementation meetings

45

Trainings

172

Visits to the districts, different health
facilities, and leprosy colonies