

# HIGHLIGHTS

## A Message from the Country Coordinator

As I complete my first quarter as Country Coordinator of ILEP India, I am encouraged by the strength of collaboration, commitment, and shared purpose reflected across these pages.

From advancing early detection and strengthening health systems to promoting dignity, inclusion, and community leadership, our member organisations continue to demonstrate the power of collective action in moving towards a Leprosy-Free India.

This quarter also reaffirmed that eliminating leprosy is not only a public health priority, but a commitment to equity, rights, and social justice. I am grateful to our partners, government colleagues, communities, and member organisations for their continued trust and collaboration in this journey.



**Nikita Sarah**  
Country Coordinator, ILEP India



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## Towards a Leprosy-Free India: ILEP India Marks Anti-Leprosy Day 2026

On 30th January 2026, Anti-Leprosy Day was observed with the theme “Ending Discrimination, Ensuring Dignity” at the lively setting of Dilli Haat. In collaboration with the Central Leprosy Division and the World Health Organisation, ILEP Secretariat transformed the space into a platform for awareness, dialogue, and meaningful community engagement.

The event brought together diverse audiences through interactive and creative approaches. An engaging IEC stall encouraged visitors to learn about early signs of leprosy using self-examination mirrors, simplifying awareness into an accessible and practical way. Various Nukkad Natak captured public attention, reinforcing the message that leprosy is completely curable and urging people to stand against stigma and discrimination. Adding to the momentum, students from the Delhi School of Social Work energised the environment with performances and on-ground digital engagement, spreading awareness.

One of the most impactful moments of the day was the cultural performances by students from The Leprosy Mission Trust India Urban Skill Centre. Their participation underscored the importance of inclusion, dignity, and social acceptance, reminding everyone that empowerment is central to the journey toward a leprosy-free society.



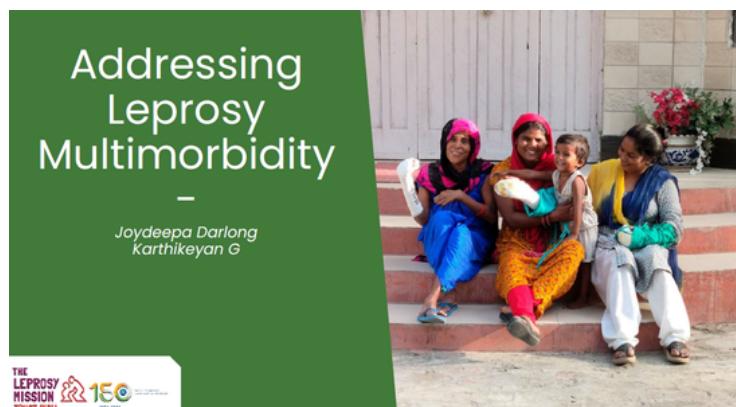
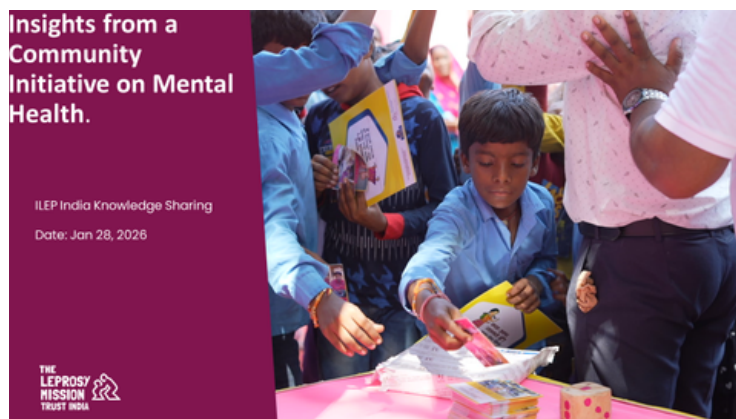
## Fostering Learning and Knowledge Exchange: ILEP India Knowledge Sharing Series

ILEP India conducted two Knowledge Sharing Sessions on 28th January and 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026, respectively.

A session on **“Insights from a Community Initiative on Mental Health”**, led by James George, Program Manager – Mental Health Project, TLMTI, highlighted community-based mental health initiatives among persons affected by leprosy, implemented by TLMTI. The project was conducted in selected high-burden leprosy settings with established community engagement, allowing exploration of participatory and co-produced approaches to mental health support.

Another session on **“Addressing Leprosy Multimorbidity”**, led by Dr Joydeepa Darlong, Head, Knowledge Management, TLMTI, drawing on findings from a study of over 10,000 persons affected by leprosy, the session highlighted that while the majority had leprosy alone, a significant proportion also experienced additional health conditions such as diabetes, cataracts, and poor mental well-being. A smaller subset was found to be living with multiple coexisting conditions (multimorbidity).

These insights underscore the need for a more holistic approach to leprosy care, one that goes beyond treatment of the disease to address co-morbid physical and mental health conditions. Integrating comprehensive care, along with appropriate health education to support the management of multiple conditions, is essential to improving overall well-being and enabling individuals to lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.



## ILEP Leadership Spotlight Series:

During Anti-Leprosy Week, ILEP India highlighted its collective leadership through the Leadership Spotlight Series, bringing forward voices from across the federation united by a shared vision of a leprosy-free India with zero stigma. Through this initiative, leaders reflected on their commitments, shared insights from the field, and reinforced the importance of dignity, inclusion, and equitable healthcare. The series underscored the strength of collaboration and the vital role of leadership in accelerating efforts to end stigma and ensure holistic care for all.

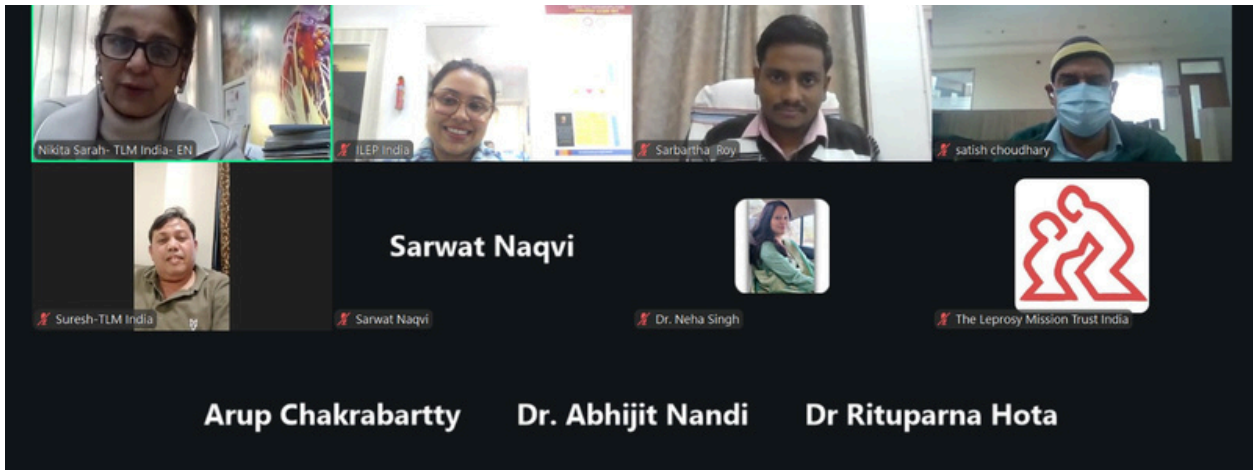


## Advancing Coordination and Action: ILEP NLEP Consultant Meeting

ILEP India convened a virtual meeting with ILEP–NLEP Consultants on 19 January 2026 to strengthen collaboration and accelerate collective efforts towards leprosy elimination.

The meeting served as a platform to introduce the newly appointed ILEP India Coordinator and to review the current status of state-level programmes. It also focused on identifying key implementation and operational challenges, while promoting knowledge exchange among participants.

Consultants shared valuable insights and practical recommendations to enhance coordination mechanisms, improve programme efficiency, and foster stronger collaboration for future action.



## ILEP India at LEPCON 2026: Moving Closer Towards Leprosy-Free India

ILEP India participated in the 33rd Biennial Indian Association of Leprologists National Conference of Leprosy (LEPCON 2026), themed “Leprosy Free India – Moving Closer.”

The conference served as an important platform for discussing recent epidemiological trends, advances in diagnostics, disability prevention, and innovations in surveillance under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme. The ILEP India Country Coordinator was invited as Faculty to chair a session, highlighting ILEP India’s continued contribution to the national dialogue on leprosy.

ILEP India actively engaged in technical discussions and knowledge exchange with clinicians, researchers, program managers, and State Leprosy Officers and District Leprosy Officers. The conference also provided an important opportunity to strengthen collaborations and reinforce ILEP India’s collective efforts toward advancing evidence-based program implementation in partnership with the government and member organisations.



## Developing A Communication Roadmap To Create Awareness About Leprosy In Chhattisgarh

Swiss Emmaus Leprosy Relief Work India conducted a Communication Needs Assessment in Raipur and Durg to address gaps in leprosy awareness, particularly among youth. The study revealed significant misconceptions around transmission and limited awareness of cure through multidrug therapy, contributing to delayed care-seeking and poor treatment adherence, further compounded by stigma, gender norms, and socio-economic barriers. Rural communities faced additional challenges, such as limited access to health services and reliance on informal care networks.

The assessment recommends a blended communication approach, leveraging traditional methods like street plays (Nukkad natak) and folk media alongside digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp, to deliver culturally sensitive, localised messaging. Engaging community and religious leaders, along with using simple, pictorial IEC materials, can play a key role in reducing stigma and promoting timely diagnosis and treatment.



## TLM Open Circle podcast: Focus On Women With Disabilities

On International Women's Day, TLMTI launched a new episode of TLM Open Circle. The conversation with Nidhi Goyal, Founder & Executive Director, Rising Flame, steered around realities of women with disabilities, the societal perception, legal safeguards and other pertinent issues around meaningful and dignified funding within the disability sector and encouraging more women with disabilities to take up entrepreneurship. The conversation touched upon a range of issues that nudge us to reflect and respond.

Explore both parts of the episode here. [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)



## NIRMAYA III: Promoting Rights Of Persons With Disabilities

A disability certificate is crucial in ensuring inclusion and access to rights for persons affected by leprosy who experience disability. Under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, it enables eligible individuals to access government welfare schemes, livelihood opportunities, and reservation benefits in education and public employment under the Persons with Disabilities (PwD) category.

Implemented by GLRA India in Madhya Pradesh, NIRMAYA III strengthens access to disability certificates for eligible persons affected by leprosy under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP).

Five individuals in Burhanpur, along with one person each from Jhabua and Chhindwara, have recently received certification through coordinated district efforts. These initiatives continue to promote dignity, inclusion, and equal participation in society for persons affected by leprosy.



## Empowering Youth Affected by Leprosy Through New Skill Development Courses

TLMTI's Urban Skill Centre in Noida, which has been skilling and giving job placements to youth affected by leprosy and other disabilities for the past three years, opened another window of opportunity by introducing two new trades for the students.

Fashion Technology and Mobile Repairing are the two new trades that are expected to draw many students affected by leprosy, other disabilities and from marginalised communities. With 100% placement record, the skill centre makes another step towards securing a dignified livelihood for the youth, with the steadfast support of the Rotary Club of Delhi South.



## Leprosy Beyond The Walls: Implementation Of SPARSH Activities In Mathura Jail

A focused initiative under the SPARSH campaign was conducted in Mathura Jail to promote early detection and awareness of leprosy among inmates. The activity was implemented through close coordination with the Chief Medical Officer and jail authorities, followed by orientation sessions for prison health staff on early identification, screening, and referral.

A systematic screening drive was carried out within the facility, leading to the identification of three confirmed cases, all of whom were linked to treatment services under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme. The initiative highlights the importance of extending essential health services to closed settings, contributing to the broader goal of zero transmission and zero disability.



## Radio For Resilience: Advocacy And Social Transformation

Even today, radio remains one of the most accessible and powerful communication tools in rural settings, especially among tribal communities across India. It continues to serve as an effective medium for advocacy and social mobilization. Under Project NIRAMAYA, GLRA India, in collaboration with Radio Tantya Bhil 90.8 FM, a unique community radio station based in Jhabua, conducted leprosy awareness activities during the first week of February 2026 as part of SPARSHA Pakhwada.



## On the Ground: Advancing Leprosy Elimination

As a part of the Special Monitoring Framework for 121 high-priority districts under NLEP, Dr Vishal Dessai, State Coordinator, GLRA-India for Madhya Pradesh, conducted a field visit to Burhanpur & Indore.

The visits were conducted along with the team from the Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute (CLTRI), Chengalpattu, to provide expert guidance and support.

The supervision aimed to ensure that National Leprosy Eradication Program guidelines are followed consistently, enabling efficient delivery of comprehensive leprosy care and contributing toward the goal of a leprosy-free India.



## TLMTI Participates In The 33rd Biennial IAL National Leprosy Conference

The Leprosy Mission Trust India presented on diverse aspects of leprosy at the 33rd Biennial IAL National Conference of Leprosy. The research presentations touched on clinical dilemmas in treating leprosy complications, new frontiers in diagnosis and management, new technologies for disability prevention and management, and holistic healing for people affected by leprosy.

A defining highlight for TLMTI at the conference was the poster presentation by persons affected by leprosy, now leading as community champions, focusing on barriers to accessing social entitlements, which deeply resonated with the audience.



## Leprosy Orientation Programme For Private Health Care Providers In West Bengal, GLRA India

An orientation programme for **123 private healthcare providers** in Purba Medinipur and Purba Bardhaman was conducted in collaboration with the respective district health departments, including the CMOH offices and District Leprosy Officers, to address gaps in leprosy notification and coordination. The sessions focused on early identification of leprosy, treatment under the government programme, referral mechanisms, and mandatory reporting procedures. Through these efforts, engagement with the private sector was strengthened, roles and responsibilities in case notification were clarified, and collaboration between public and private healthcare systems was reinforced, contributing to improved reporting and progress toward leprosy elimination at the district level.



## From Cure To Confidence: Anshu's Journey Of Strength, Healing, And Hope

Anshu Mala Kumari is a young girl from Dehri-on-Sone. She lives with her family of six. Her elder brother has completed leprosy treatment, and her mother is still on treatment. Even though the family has faced illness, they have not faced discrimination from society. Their financial condition is modest, but they stand together with love, care, and strength. Her journey reminds us that leprosy is curable. With timely treatment, proper guidance, and compassionate support, lives can be transformed, and hope can shine again.

Over a period of time, Anshu started developing many numb patches on her body. At first, her parents did not understand the seriousness of the problem. Slowly, her condition progressively worsened, and she developed weakness in her left hand. Worried, her parents took her to the Government Hospital at the Public Health Centre in Dehri-on-Sone. Doctors diagnosed her as a Multibacillary (MB) case of leprosy and immediately started multidrug therapy (MDT).

Anshu bravely completed her full treatment. She was cured of leprosy. However, the weakness in her hand remained. The deformity made Anshu and her family very sad. When the Damien Foundation team met Anshu during a field visit, they encouraged her parents to consider Reconstructive Surgery (RCS). With new hope in their hearts, the family agreed. Anshu first underwent physiotherapy and later reconstructive surgery at MLCU Rudrapura Hospital. The surgery was successful, and she showed great improvement. Slowly, her confidence returned, and so did her beautiful smile. Anshu had also injured her right hand when she was just five years old. Due to a lack of exercise, her thumb became stiff and developed contracture. She was referred to Dhanbad for surgery, where doctors performed a thumb web contracture release and applied a thumb spica cast. She now regularly goes for follow-up visits and continues to improve.

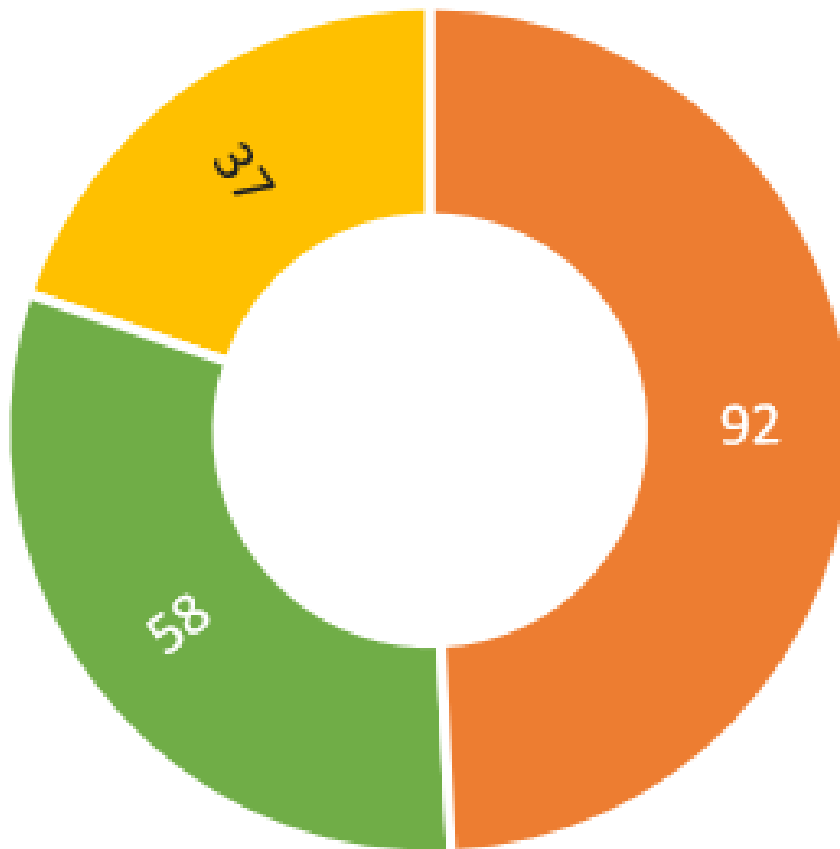
Today, Anshu is a happy and confident girl. She dreams of becoming a teacher one day.



## From January To March 2026

**13 ILEP NLEP** consultants supported the strengthening of the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) across 14 endemic states. During this quarter, they conducted **92 field visits** to health facilities and leprosy colonies, ensuring effective implementation and monitoring of NLEP activities. In addition, **58 meetings** were held to support advocacy and coordination at state and district levels, and **37 trainings** were conducted to build the capacity of health staff and frontline workers. These efforts contributed significantly to improving case detection, service delivery, and program outcomes.

■ Visits   ■ Trainings   ■ Meetings



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**58 Meetings**

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