HIGHLIGHTS

A Message from the Country Coordinator

Dear Colleagues and Partners,

As we look back at the third quarter, I want to take a moment to acknowledge and applaud the incredible work being done by each of you across the country. Behind every field visit, training, meeting and community initiative are people who care deeply, go the extra mile and remain committed to making a difference. Thank you for your dedication, perseverance and the many lives you continue to touch.

As we enter the final quarter of the year, the responsibility before us is even greater. The last quarter is perhaps our most important opportunity to consolidate our efforts, accelerate action and translate our collective commitment into meaningful results.

With the Government calling for a year dedicated to the elimination of leprosy, let us rise to this moment with renewed energy and determination. Let us make every intervention count, finding cases early, ensuring complete treatment, preventing disability and challenging the stigma that continues to affect lives.

Every effort matters. Every partnership counts. And behind every number is a human life.

Thank you for being part of this shared mission.
Let us give our very best in this final stretch and move forward together towards a future free from leprosy.



Nikita Sarah
Country Coordinator, ILEP India

HIGHLIGHTS

ILEP India Participation in Moderate Burden States/UTs Review Meeting under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP)

The Review Meeting of Moderate Burden States/UTs under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) was held on 31 August–1 September 2026 in New Delhi, bringing together officials from **MoHFW, CLD, WHO, RLTRI, CLTRI, State/UT representatives, and ILEP India** to review programme progress, challenges, and priority interventions.

The two-day meeting featured technical sessions on active case detection, contact tracing, interruption of transmission, Nikusth portal, diagnosis and reaction management, and targeted strategies for hard-to-reach and urban areas.

Representatives from participating States and UTs presented their programme progress, experiences and implementation challenges, creating an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning and exchange of practical solutions. The State/UT presentations covered **Assam, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Goa, Jammu, Punjab, Rajasthan, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh.** These presentations helped bring field-level experiences into the national discussion and provided an opportunity to identify approaches that could be adapted across different programme contexts.

Ms Nikita Sarah, Country Coordinator, ILEP India, presented “Best Practices by Partners,” highlighting promising approaches and the contributions of ILEP India partners towards strengthening NLEP implementation.

The meeting reinforced the importance of early case detection, effective contact tracing, quality interventions, and improved case and reaction management to accelerate progress towards interruption of transmission and a leprosy-free India.

In the concluding remarks, **Dr Sunil V. Gitte, DDG, Leprosy, Central Leprosy Division,** said the goal is not simply to find more cases; it is to find them earlier, find them correctly, and ensure that they receive the right care. Let us work together with commitment, credibility and a shared sense of responsibility. If we work collectively and adopt smart, evidence-based approaches, I am confident we can make significant progress towards achieving SDG Target 3.3 and building a future with zero transmission and zero disability.





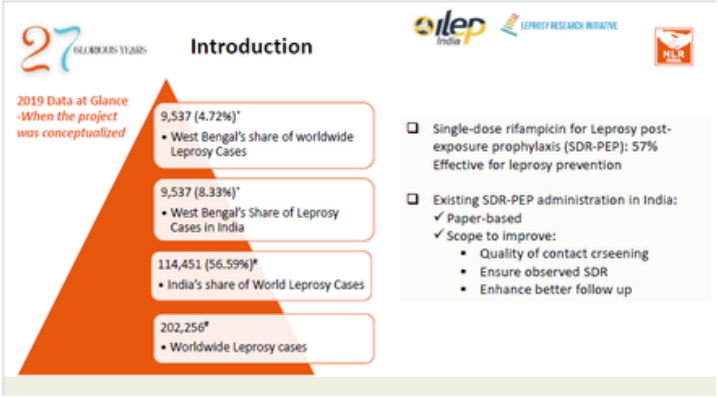
ILEP India Knowledge Sharing Series: Advancing Leprosy Elimination and Quality Care

ILEP India conducted two Knowledge Sharing Sessions on 23 July and 28 August 2026, respectively.

A session on the topic **"Testing an App-Supported System for Leprosy Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (SDR-PEP) Services,"** led by Dr Arup Chakrabartty, National Research Coordinator & State Program Lead (West Bengal), NLR India Foundation.

The session highlighted NLR India's study comparing mobile application-assisted and paper-based SDR-PEP delivery under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP). Conducted in West Bengal from October 2023 to October 2024, the cluster-randomised controlled trial **covered 320 index cases and over 11,000 contacts across 14 intervention and 13 control clusters**.

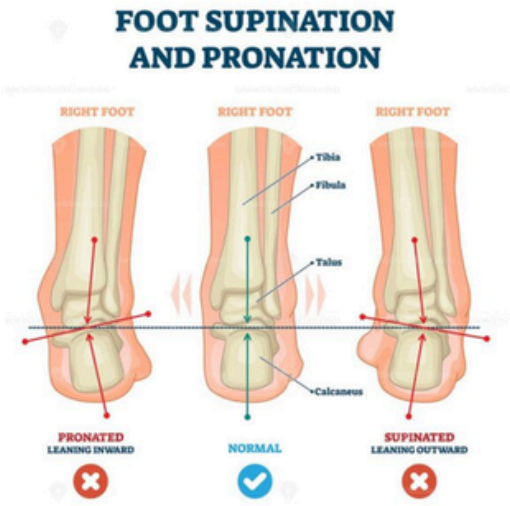
A key highlight was the demonstration of the Pratirodh LPEP App, which supports offline data collection, geolocation, contact screening, rifampicin dosage guidance, observed SDR documentation, follow-up, and digital reporting. The findings highlighted its potential to improve screening quality, protocol adherence, reporting efficiency, data security, and accountability. The initiative has since been scaled across study blocks, offering valuable insights into leveraging digital solutions to strengthen LPEP implementation and interrupt leprosy transmission.



Another session on the topic **"Blocking the Road to Amputation: Protecting the Insensitive Foot in Leprosy,"** led by Dr Jerry Joshua, Director, Schieffelin Institute of Health, Research Leprosy Centre, Karigiri, Vellore, Tamil Nadu.

The session highlighted how loss of sensation in the feet can lead to unnoticed injuries, recurrent ulcers, deformities and, in severe cases, amputation. Key messages emphasised early identification of high-risk feet, daily foot inspection, careful walking, customised protective footwear, and regular follow-up and rehabilitation. Every first ulcer prevented is a step towards preventing lifelong disability.

Healthcare providers must prioritise routine foot assessment, promote daily self-care, ensure access to appropriate protective footwear, and strengthen follow-up services for people affected by leprosy.



Strengthening the Voices of Persons Affected by Leprosy: APAL Member`s Meeting, Gujarat

Under the **NIRAMAYA-3 Project, GLRA India** facilitated an APAL Members Meeting – Gujarat Chapter on 28 July 2026 at Arogya Samiksha Kendra, Gandhinagar. The meeting was chaired by Dr Nilesh Shah, Deputy Director-Leprosy/State Leprosy Officer, Gujarat, and brought together representatives from the State Leprosy Programme, APAL members from Sahyog Kusth Yagna, Mr Subhash Thakkar, Managing Trustee, and the GLRA India NIRAMAYA-3 Gujarat Coordination Team.

The meeting provided a platform for five APAL members to share their experiences of diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and life after treatment, highlighting the physical, psychosocial, social, and economic challenges faced by persons affected by leprosy. Discussions underscored the need for continued community awareness to address misconceptions and promote early health-seeking behaviour.

The State Leprosy Officer interacted directly with members to understand their needs and access to rehabilitation support, including MCR footwear and government welfare schemes. Key discussions also emphasised treatment adherence, post-RFT follow-up, timely management of lepra reactions, counselling, and psychosocial support.

The meeting strengthened dialogue between APAL, the State Leprosy Programme, and GLRA India, reinforcing the importance of meaningful participation of persons affected by leprosy in programme planning and service improvement. The State Leprosy Officer appreciated their contributions and encouraged continued collaboration to strengthen inclusive, accessible, and patient-centred leprosy services in Gujarat.





Capacity Building of Government Healthcare Personnel on Leprosy during Leprosy Case Detection Campaign (LCDC)

The **Damien Foundation** team conducted leprosy training sessions **across 85 batches** during the Leprosy Case Detection Campaign (LCDC) in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka.
A total of **2524 government healthcare personnel**, including medical officers, medical students, physiotherapists, nurses, ANMs, and ASHA workers, were trained.





LEPRA DiMPLE Kind Care: AI-Powered Digital Foot Measurement for Customised Protective Footwear in Leprosy Care

Recognised with the **WHO South-East Asia Region Public Health Champion Award 2025**, LEPRA DiMPLE showcases how digital innovation can transform rehabilitation for people affected by leprosy.

Well-fitted protective footwear is essential to prevent foot injuries, preserve mobility and promote independence among people with loss of sensation. However, accessing footwear services can involve long journeys, waiting time and lost wages. DiMPLE - Digital Measurement of Paduka (Foot) for Leprosy Patients addresses these barriers by bringing digital foot measurement closer to communities and supporting access to customised protective footwear.

The technology is jointly developed by LEPRA Society and IIHMR University, Bengaluru, with support from KindCare. This AI-enabled application uses smartphones or tablets to capture standardised foot measurements without specialised hardware. Using deep-learning technology, it identifies foot landmarks and measures foot length, breadth, ball girth and instep girth. Instant reports, multilingual outputs and digital beneficiary records support footwear customisation, monitoring and follow-up, including the fabrication of customised Micro Cellular Rubber (MCR) footwear.

To date, **DiMPLE has digitally captured over 1,200 foot measurements. LEPRA has also trained 19 shoe technicians, 50 field staff and 30 government officials**, strengthening the capacity to deliver these services across programme and government systems.

Looking ahead, LEPRA aims to expand the initiative through wider training, community-level measurement services and improved footwear follow-up. By reducing access barriers and strengthening continuity of care, DiMPLE demonstrates how technology can make rehabilitation more accessible, efficient and responsive to the needs of people affected by leprosy.



Community Awareness and Behaviour-Change Communication under the Mission Transmission Free Project

The Leprosy Mission Trust India (TLMTI), through the Mission Transmission Free Project, is working to interrupt leprosy transmission through early case detection, timely treatment, contact screening, community awareness and collaboration with government health services.

Community awareness and behaviour-change communication are central to the Mission Transmission Free Project, helping improve understanding of leprosy, encourage early diagnosis and treatment, and address stigma and discrimination. To make learning more engaging and impactful, the project has introduced an innovative Snakes and Ladders game-based approach during school awareness programmes.

To date, these efforts have reached over **5,000 school students across 30 villages in six blocks: Wadsa, Armori, Gadchiroli, Chamorshi, Achalpur and Chandur Bazar.**

Through this interactive activity, students learn about the signs and symptoms of leprosy, prevention, early diagnosis and treatment in a fun and accessible way, which will further help build awareness among children, encourage positive attitudes towards people affected by leprosy, and promote early health-seeking behaviour.





SPARSHAN: Reaching Every Household, Leaving No One Behind

Swiss Emmaus India, in partnership with the Chhattisgarh Government and with support from ABIS Group, has launched SPARSHAN, a community-based leprosy intervention in Durg and Rajnandgaon districts, with a focus on strengthening early detection and interrupting disease transmission.

The project addresses the pressing need for early detection, particularly in Rajnandgaon, where the Grade-1 disability rate among newly detected leprosy cases stands at 25.54%, compared to the state average of 5.46%.

Covering a population of approximately 11 lakh, SPARSHAN adopts an intensive door-to-door screening approach, supported by four dedicated block coordinators reaching 30–35 households each day.

Its key interventions include active case detection, disability prevention and management, MDT follow-up, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and counselling for people affected by leprosy.

The project launch in Rajnandgaon brought together 43 participants, including representatives from the district health administration, RLTRI, Swiss Emmaus India and ABIS CSR. The CMHO and DLO emphasised the importance of sustained community engagement, focused attention and coordinated efforts to strengthen leprosy services.

SPARSHAN reflects a shared commitment to stronger health systems, empowered communities and a future free from leprosy transmission.



Strengthening Leprosy Care through CHO Training in Madhya Pradesh

Training Community Health Officers (CHOs) in leprosy is essential to improve early case detection, timely referral, and treatment adherence at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAMs).

Under Project NIRAMAYA, GLRA India conducted CHO training across five districts of Madhya Pradesh, equipping them with the knowledge and skills required for leprosy prevention, early detection, treatment support, regular surveillance, contact screening, and treatment adherence. The training included practical demonstrations and interactions with persons affected by leprosy to strengthen understanding of their needs and experiences.

A total of **769 CHOs were trained across five districts: Barwani (254), Dhar (13), Jhabua (229), Khandwa (138), and Khargone (135).**

This initiative aims to strengthen peripheral healthcare services and promote timely identification and management of leprosy in high-endemic areas.



Purnima's Journey: From Fear to Recovery and Renewed Confidence

Purnima Bar, a 30-year-old woman, lives with her family in a slum area of Ward No. 122 under the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. She works as a part-time domestic worker to support her family.

Initially, Purnima had been treating a few skin patches on her body with ointments prescribed by a local doctor. However, after a few months, the patches suddenly became red and swollen, making it difficult for her to continue working. When she visited M. R. Bangur Hospital, **GLRA Field Supervisor** Ms Shyamali Pal suspected a severe lepra reaction and supported her in accessing timely care through the Dermatology Department. Purnima was diagnosed with multibacillary (MB) leprosy and started on treatment, along with steroids to manage the reaction.

During a subsequent home visit for contact tracing, Ms Pal found that Purnima and her family were deeply distressed and initially reluctant to begin treatment, having lost hope that things would get better. Through repeated counselling, reassurance and continued emotional support, she gradually helped the family overcome their fears and encouraged Purnima to complete her treatment. Purnima completed her treatment and was declared Released from Treatment (RFT) on 21 August 2026.

Today, Purnima has recovered, regained her confidence and returned to work.

Her journey highlights that timely diagnosis and treatment, combined with consistent counselling, compassion and human support, can make a meaningful difference in the lives of people affected by leprosy, helping them overcome fear, regain confidence and move forward with dignity.

TREATMENT JOURNEY



BEFORE TREATMENT



BEFORE TREATMENT



AFTER TREATMENT

From July to September 2026

10 ILEP NLEP consultants supported the strengthening of the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) across 14 endemic states. During this quarter, they conducted **85 field visits** to health facilities and leprosy colonies, ensuring effective implementation and monitoring of NLEP activities. In addition, **45 meetings** were held to support advocacy and coordination at state and district levels, and **14 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.



63 Field visits	33 Meetings	43 Trainings

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