

## LEPROSY FOR POLICY MAKERS

### NLR INDIA

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*"Leprosy work is not merely medical relief; it is transforming frustration in life into joy of dedication, personal ambition into selfless service."*

**- Mahatma Gandhi**

*"I took up leprosy work, not to help anyone, but to overcome that fear in my life. That it worked out good for others was a by-product. But the fact is: I did it to overcome fear."*

**- Baba Amte**



- Humankind has been afflicted by leprosy for thousands of years as documented in our scriptures. This is the oldest known bacterial disease. The bacteria causing leprosy is called Mycobacterium leprae.
- We have the chance to realize Mahatma Gandhi Ji's vision of leprosy free India.
- India, home of 16% of world population, contributes over 58% of global new cases of leprosy. Among them, around 5% are children and 5% have disabilities.
- Skin and nerves are most commonly affected.
- Discolored or light-colored skin patches with loss of sensation are one of the early signs and symptoms of leprosy.
- Left untreated, the disease may cause permanent disabilities in hands, feet, eyes, and face.
- Transmission of infection is through droplets from the nose and mouth, during close and frequent contact with untreated cases.
- It does not spread by touch and is not hereditary.
- Anyone can have leprosy. Early treatment is important for prevention of disabilities.
- Leprosy is curable. Treatment is Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT). Treatment is available free of cost in Government health facilities.
- People with leprosy and their family suffer stigma, discrimination, social exclusion, isolation, loss of employment etc.
- Children of leprosy patients often miss an equal opportunity for education and livelihood.
- They face discrimination in finding a match for marriage and participation in social events.
- A Single Dose of Rifampicin (SDR) can reduce the risk of developing leprosy among contacts of cases by 57%.
- India has been the first country to launch SDR preventive therapy as a national intervention on 2nd October 2018 following a feasibility study done in Dadra & Nagar Haveli (DNH) by NLR India in collaboration with Government of India.
- With preventive therapy, DNH has seen a 78% decrease in new leprosy cases between 2015-22.
- It is essential to detect new cases at the earliest, their contacts traced, and those eligible administered SDR.
- India through its multiple innovations has made substantial progress and as per global reports of 2024, contributed to 58.45% % of annual new cases and but only 20.61% of cases with disabilities.
- The National Strategic Plan & Roadmap of Leprosy 2023-2027 aims to reduce the new cases by 50% compared to 2023.

