

LEPROSY FOR POLICY MAKERS

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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.

