



Country Scene in India

SEAR REPORT

Leprosy Elimination Efforts in Southeast Asia

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Although the South-East Asian Region (SEAR) is the only WHO region yet to achieve the elimination of leprosy, it has made noteworthy progress and substantially contributed to the achievement of the leprosy elimination goal globally.

SEAR Achievements

- Over 90% of the approximately 12 million leprosy cases detected and cured globally are from SEAR, including 10.8 million cured cases in India.
- Seven of the eleven member countries of SEAR attained the elimination goal by the original target date of December 2000 and have maintained elimination levels. Myanmar attained the goal in January 2003.
- The three remaining countries — India, Nepal and Timor-Leste are making concerted efforts to reach the goal by December 2005.
- The prevalence of leprosy has declined by 92% over the 17-year period from 1985, when Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT)¹ was introduced in all countries of the Region.

India

In spite of the above achievements, it is a matter of concern that the region accounted for 74% of the globally registered cases and 80% of the new cases detected in 2002. India alone accounts for 90% of the regional and 66% of the global caseload. Therefore, WHO is giving the highest priority to India. I must, however, emphasize that the National Leprosy Elimination Program (NLEP) in India is on the right track and has made notable strides.

Indian Achievements

- Over 90% of the cases detected and cured in the region are from India.
- India has a good health infrastructure. Leprosy services and adequately trained human resources are now integrated into general health services, bringing MDT to the doorstep of the large majority of leprosy patients.
- Comprehensive advocacy and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities, as well as many focused activities like Leprosy Elimination Campaigns and Special Action Plans for Elimination of Leprosy are being conducted.
- There is a well-functioning collaboration between NLEP and partners like WHO, the World Bank, and DANIDA² as well as national and international NGOs.

WHO has provided a special package to India for the period 2002-2005. The package has three components.

- a) Strengthening management for improved planning and decision-making, involving the Indian Administrative Service. This includes project directors for the seven highly endemic states, nine state and six zonal coordinators, one national consultant and support staff at the Office of the Deputy Director General for Leprosy. In addition, computer facilities and data entry operators are being provided for thirty-six state leprosy societies.
- b) Capacity Building — the training of 360 district Chief Medical Officers;
- c) Monitoring and Surveillance — Leprosy

¹ MDT — two to three drugs (Clofazimine, Rifampicin and Dapsone), which are used in combination to prevent resistance.

² Danish International Development Assistance