Brasilia (left), Amazon river scene: After India, Brazil has the most registered cases of leprosy.

than six doses; and 3) inclusion of out-of-date records of cured/released patients.

The 2003 LEM exercise was based on a sample survey conducted in all 27 states covering 153 municipalities, 242 primary health care facilities and 2,189 family health care units. A total of 37,879 cases were examined, of which 11,765 that were newly detected in 2002.

The results show that the PR was 2.2 based on the LEM data from all 27 states.

TOP ENDEMIC COUNTRIES AT START OF 2004

Country	Registered cases (as of Jan. 1)	Rate/ 10,000
India	265,781	2.6
Brazil	79,908	4.6
Nepal	7,549	3.1
Tanzania*	7,063	2.1
Mozambique	6,810	3.4
Dem. Rep. of Congo	6,891	1.3
Madagascar	5,514	3.4
Angola	3,776	2.8
Central African Rep.	952	2.6

*2002 data   (*Mid-year Report for 2004,* WHO)

In August 2002, overall coverage of MDT services came to just 16%. (At the state level, coverage was less than 50% and in nine states it was less than 10%). While leprosy diagnosis and treatment were available in almost 80% of primary health care units visited, out of 2,189 family health care units, only 485 (22%) of them were capable of carrying out diagnosis and MDT treatment.

Addressing the problem of patient examinations, Dr. Castalia said that doctors were not present at every health unit, and traveled between them. Hence even when patients show up, there are often no doctors available. The problem was especially pronounced in the Amazon region, where doctors were reluctant to go.

But although many problems remain, leprosy elimination is now on the official government agenda. The Ministry of Health has developed a national media campaign and all states are involved in the national elimination plan.

After a long period of confusion and inactivity, it appears that Brazil's elimination campaign is getting back on track, offering genuine hope for the future assuming the new level of commitment is maintained. ■