



Leprosy Resurfaced

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The latest data from the **World Health Organization (WHO)** shows that **India hosts 66% of all leprosy patients in the world.**

- India **officially eliminated leprosy in 2005**, reducing its prevalence rate to 0.72 per 10,000 people at national level.
According to the WHO, 'elimination' implies a prevalence rate of less than one case per 10,000.
- In 2016-17, at least 1,35,485 cases of leprosy were detected in the country.
- As of March 2017, **about 53 districts** in 11 states and Union territories reported a **prevalence rate higher than 2/10,000 population.**
These states were Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, D&N Haveli, Lakshadweep and Delhi.

Reasons for Recurrence

- **New Detections:** Post 2005, **many new cases started getting reported.** New detections occurred due to major changes in the **National Leprosy Elimination Programme (NLEP)** and the Global Leprosy Programme.
Efforts made under these programmes led to the discovery of child leprosy, apart from other new cases.
- **Reduced Efforts:** The declaration of elimination diluted efforts of health workers, who were helping in identifying cases in rural areas. As a result, efforts to fight against the disease at different levels were also reduced to a great extent.

Way Forward

- **The strengthening of the public health system** at the ground level is necessary to handle this issue in areas where a large number of cases are being reported.
- India needs a clear strategy and implementation plan to address the problem and achieve eradication of leprosy.

Source: Mint