

## World Leprosy Day

### Why in News?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has requested governments to prioritize leprosy elimination and ensure sustained funding for surveillance, treatment, care and support.

### World Leprosy Day

- It is observed annually on the **last Sunday** of January since 1954.
- It was established by Raoul Follereau in honor of **Mahatma Gandhi's** compassion for leprosy patients.
- **Aim** - To raise public awareness about leprosy.
- **World Leprosy Day, 2025 - Theme** - 'Unite, Act, and Eliminate Leprosy'.

### Leprosy

- It is a neglected tropical disease that primarily affects the nervous system.
- It is also known as Hansen's disease.
- It is an infectious disease caused by **Mycobacterium leprae** that causes severe, disfiguring skin sores and nerve damage in the arms, legs, and skin areas around the body.
- It's more common in people living in poverty.
- **Symptoms** - Most prominent in cooler parts of the body such as the hands, feet, and face.
- In some cases, body parts may lose their sense of touch and pain, increasing the likelihood of injuries such as cuts and burn.
- **Transmission** - Leprosy is not so contagious, repeated contact with nose and mouth droplets from someone with untreated leprosy can spread.
- **Treatment** - Leprosy is curable with antibiotics, Treatment usually lasts one to two years, and early treatment can prevent disability.
- **Global scenario** - In 2023, 1,82,815 new cases were reported from more than 100 countries, with 95% of those concentrated in 23 global-priority countries.
- Alarmingly, more than 5% of the new cases were reported with Grade 2 Disability (visible deformity), highlighting delays in detection.
- 5.6% of the new cases were among children, with some countries reporting child rates exceeding 30%, indicating ongoing transmission.
- **Jordan** became the 1<sup>st</sup> country to be verified and acknowledged by the WHO for elimination of leprosy, demonstrating what is possible with focused and concerted efforts
- Additionally, in 2023, 56 countries reported zero new case of leprosy.
- **Scenario in India** - India accounts for 53% of the global leprosy cases.
- As of recent statistics, India has successfully achieved the goal of eliminating leprosy as a public health problem, defined as having less than 1 case per 10,000 people.
- **Global Leprosy Strategy** - The Global Leprosy Strategy 2021-2030 has a vision of zero disease, zero disability and zero stigma and discrimination.

### Reference

[The Hindu | Leprosy Elimination](#)



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