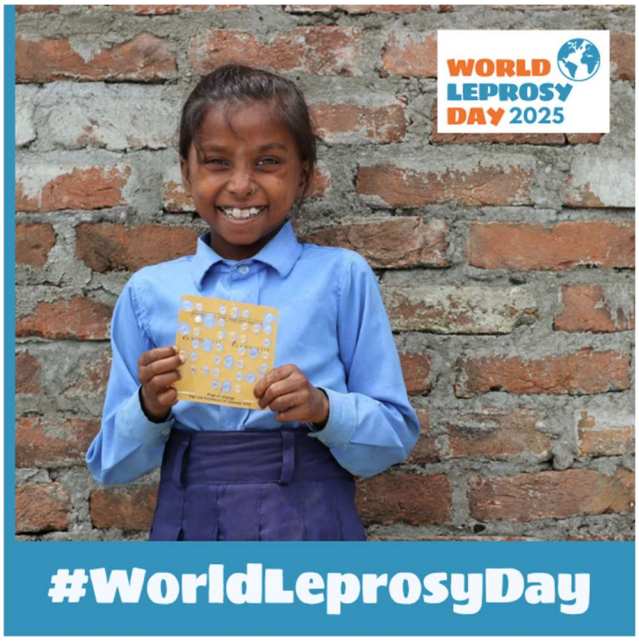
World Leprosy Day 2025: Life-Saving Drugs Held Hostage by Delays

26 January 2025



A little girl in a blue dress holding a packet of Multi Drug Therapy @tlmnepal

Geneva (26 January 2025) – Many people affected by leprosy (Hansen's disease) are being denied timely access to life-saving treatment due to logistical failures and funding shortfalls, the UN experts* warned today. Ahead of the World Leprosy Day, they issued the following statement:

"Multidrug therapy (MDT) is the cornerstone of leprosy treatment, offered free and capable of transforming lives. Yet, in many countries, access is blocked by bureaucratic inefficiencies, logistical barriers, and inconsistent funding. This isn't just a medical issue - it's a human rights crisis.

Leprosy is curable, but delays in MDT distribution continue to fuel preventable suffering. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment are critical to halting the disease's progression, preventing irreversible nerve damage, disability, and further transmission. Yet, untreated cases lead to visible impairments and physical deformities that perpetuate stigma, poverty, and exclusion from education, work, and society.

Delays in treatment violate the fundamental right to health, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The consequences extend far beyond the individual, creating a ripple effect of discrimination and systemic neglect.

We suggest four key actions to turn the tide:

1. Strengthen Drug Supply Chains: Governments and health organizations must address logistical bottlenecks, improve supplier coordination, and leverage technology to ensure uninterrupted access to MDT.
2. Secure Sustainable Funding: Consistent financing is critical to prevent treatment delays. Governments, donors, and international organizations must prioritize funding for leprosy programs.
3. Empower Local Communities: People affected by leprosy must have a seat at the table. Their lived experiences offer invaluable insights into breaking barriers to access and fostering inclusion.
4. Dismantle Discrimination: Stigma is a silent killer. Public education campaigns, legal protections, and inclusive policies are essential to eradicating prejudice and ensuring equality.

World Leprosy Day is a wake-up call. These delays in MDT distribution are not just logistical failures - they challenge human dignity and the basis of all human rights, including the rights to health and development of all persons. Let's unite, act, and eliminate leprosy as a barrier to living with dignity and equality. Together, we can end the wait."

ENDS

***Beatriz Miranda Galarza**, Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy (Hansen's disease) and their family members; **Tlaleng Mofokeng**, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; **Heba Hagrass**, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities.

*Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. **Special Procedures**, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their capacity.*

*For more information and **media requests**, please contact*: Younkyo Ahn (younkyo.ahn@un.org).

For **media enquiries** regarding other UN independent experts, please contact Maya Derouaz (maya.derouaz@un.org) or Dharisha Indraguptha (dharisha.indraguptha@un.org).

Follow news related to the UN's independent human rights experts on Twitter: @UN_SPExperts