

## Leprosy Case Detection Campaign (Aswamedham 6.0)

Jan 30 to Feb 12, 2025

Leprosy dates back to prehistory. It inflicted crores of humanity into a high level of dehumanisation and death. The stamps of discrimination and stigma in social psyche continues to haunt humanity even today. But with the roll out of Muti Drug Therapy, complete cure is only a few months of compliance away. However Leprosy continues to be a problem eluding elimination for decades in India. But Kerala has been successful in bringing the cases down to 1 per lakh population (on the verge of elimination). The Sustainable Development Goals have put target 2030 for eradication of Mico Bacterium Leprae.

Leprosy Case Detection Campaign is an intensive 2 week campaign to detect the a sizeable number of cases by screening all households in the State and bringing them to treatment. It starts on January 30 and ends on February 12, 2025. During the campaign phase, a trained female (ASHA) and a male volunteer visit the houses in their operational area and screen all the household members for symptoms of leprosy.

This is the 6th leg of the annual campaign that started in 2017. Aswamedham 6.0 is the name of the current leg of the campaign. The name Aswamedham has been taken from the name of a Malayalam movie that discussed the stigma and discrimination meted out to the leprosy patients in 1970s.

Even in Kerala case detection happens at a later stage after multiple patches and nerve involvement. And majority of the diagnosis is done at Medical Colleges (tertiary care setting) rather than in an FHC or HWC. Campaign should also alert the players in the system also to suspect cases more often.

'Paadukal Nokkaam.. aroogyam kaakkam.. (Lets examine the patches, so as to protect our health) is the slogan for the campaign. The campaign places **Patches** at the centre stage of the campaign in order to remove the notion of **disfigurement** from the social psyche. It requires time to repair the social psyche, but once we are able to do it, the stigma removed, then public will be more amenable for screening and cases can be detected at an early stage.

The Health Department along with NHM has completed all preparation by training all the doctors, health workers and volunteers. All volunteers will carry a Flash Card that shows atypical symptoms, a referral slip to refer the suspected cases found in the screening and a tally sheet to record the findings.

Intensive IEC campaign by branding with a black horse in a deep blue background, poster, banner, promo videos by star celebrities, FAQ, social media clippings, messages for school assemblies, Volunteer badges, flash Card, demo house visit video, promo videos, curtain raiser reel etc. are part of State level campaign creatives. The Districts have also chipped in with equally good campaign tools like intense advocacy and social mobilisation with other departments, organisations, interactive radio programmes, TV scrolls, local celebrity bytes, cartoons etc are few to mention. All districts have been asked to streamline the Inter personal communication process that results in effective screening at houses.