



**Amplifying the voices of
the under-represented**

Your leprosy and NTD briefing

1. Leprosy is a Neglected Tropical Disease. This group of 21 diseases affects **1.7bn people**
2. Globally, one person is diagnosed with leprosy **every two minutes**
3. Leprosy and NTDs are predominantly found in the **Global South**
4. There are around **4 million people** living with disability because of leprosy
5. There are more than **100 laws that explicitly discriminate** against persons affected by leprosy across more than 20 countries
6. One in five of the world's poorest people has a disability and the majority of this same population group are infected with or at risk from an NTD
7. **Almost all of the NTDs can cause disabilities** and there is a strong link between NTDs and mental health challenges
8. Persons affected by NTDs are often disproportionately affected by the climate crisis

We want to achieve rights for persons affected by leprosy under the CRPD.

We want to bridge the gap between NTDs and disability.

Representing a community of millions



The Leprosy Mission is the world's oldest and largest leprosy-focused NGO. We work to amplify the voices of the millions of people who have experienced leprosy.

Their voices belong within the global disability movement, but they are rarely heard. At The Leprosy Mission, we aim to connect our work and the work of Organisations of Persons Affected by Leprosy (OPLs) with the wider disability movement.

Our hope is that persons affected by leprosy can achieve their rights under the CRPD and can contribute their perspectives to the diversity of voices within the disability movement.

What is the link between disability and leprosy?

As well as around 4 million people living with disability because of impairments caused by leprosy, there are millions more who live with the impairing effects of stigmatisation and a significant mental health burden caused by leprosy.

This constituency of millions of people are failing to access their rights under the CRPD. They face discrimination from their communities and their governments. They are unable to participate in their societies. Their dignity is not respected.



"Persons affected by leprosy and many of their family members are entitled to the rights provided under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the basis of not only physical and psychosocial impairments, but also of the impairing effects of leprosy-related stigmatization."

– Alice Cruz, Former Special Rapporteur on discrimination against persons with leprosy

Leprosy, NTDs, and the CRPD

Leprosy is a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD). These NTDs are a group of 21 diseases that affect 1.7bn people across the world.

Why do NTDs need to be considered within the disability movement?

- Nearly 80% of the 1.3bn persons with disabilities worldwide live in low- and-middle-income countries, the same countries that are disproportionately affected by NTDs.
- There is a huge cross-over between the 1.7bn people affected by NTDs and the 1.3bn people with disabilities. Millions are persons with disability because of NTDs and millions of persons with disability are at risk of contracting an NTD.
- Persons with disability need to be considered within NTD programming as they risk attracting direct and indirect costs if they contract an NTD. The household income lost from out-of-pocket health expenditures and the wages lost due to NTDs is estimated to be at least \$33 billion (USD) per year.
- Investing in NTDs contributes to alleviating poverty, promoting quality education, improving gender equity, and reducing inequality.

NTDs are beatable. OPDs and development NGOs can raise awareness of NTDs, invest in cross-cutting programming, and support NTD organisations with advocacy to reduce the global burden of NTDs and the risk they pose to persons with disability.

Why should we connect?



To find a space for persons affected by leprosy to contribute to the disability sector

Organisations of Persons Affected by Leprosy represent a community of millions. They have extensive grassroots networks and are looking to contribute to the wider disability movement as well as grow their understanding of how to access their rights under the CRPD.

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To better connect the NTD and disability worlds

The crossover between NTDs and disability is massive. We have an opportunity to better connect the work between these two worlds by working in partnership. We want to find ways to raise awareness and share our NTD expertise.

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