

India's NTD partners organise awareness workshop

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India's NTD partners are committed to leverage this opportunity to shine a light on NTDs as an urgent public health issue



On January 30, the world observed the first-ever World NTD Day. The date is also recognized as Anti-Leprosy Day in India in memory of Mahatma Gandhi's Martyrdom Day.

In line with the commitment to highlight the burden of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) and raise public discourse on the issue, NTD partners in India - Global Health Strategies (GHS), The Leprosy Mission Trust India (TLMTI) and National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) organised an awareness workshop at the Constitution Club, New Delhi designed around 'Future Forward 2020: Building A Momentum for Inclusion And Elimination'.

All partners committed to adopt an integrated approach to support each other and galvanize visibility on the issue.

At the workshop, Dr Neeraj Dhingra, Director, NVBDCP and DDG (Leprosy), re-iterated India's focus and commitment towards accelerating the pace of eliminating NTDs in the country to protect the most vulnerable communities. He further added that with increasing understanding against all these diseases and improvements in technology, healthcare systems over the past few years, India will continue to focus on integrating efforts to address NTDs. India will always be vigilant and strengthen its surveillance to ensure that progress made so far is maintained and that the community at large is aware of the importance of adopting preventive services provided by the Government.

Dr. Dhruv Pandey, National Professional Officer, Visceral Leishmaniasis, World Health Organization (WHO) shared insights on World Health Organization's new NTD road map which will guide endemic countries like India to progress from 2020 until 2030 to end the epidemic of NTDs.

In the ensuing panel discussion, partners and representatives from Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, and NCPEDP touched upon the role of legislation and strategic litigation in advancing equality to the need for unifying efforts and reaching the last mile to protect the rights of the most vulnerable.

Dr. Mary Verghese, Executive Director of TLMTI said, "In my work with people affected by leprosy, I meet numerous people every day, who by sheer grit and courage have overcome the challenges of leprosy and live dignified lives in their communities. Their stories reiterate the fact that leprosy is not a limiting factor for realising dreams."

January 30 was a critical landmark as it was on this day that the London Declaration on Neglected Tropical Diseases, a collaborative disease eradication programme was launched in London.

India's NTD partners are committed to leverage this opportunity to shine a light on NTDs as an urgent public health issue in the country and call on all stakeholders to address persistent challenges associated with NTD elimination programmes in the country.