

revive

📍 Bolangir and Bargarh, Odisha State, India



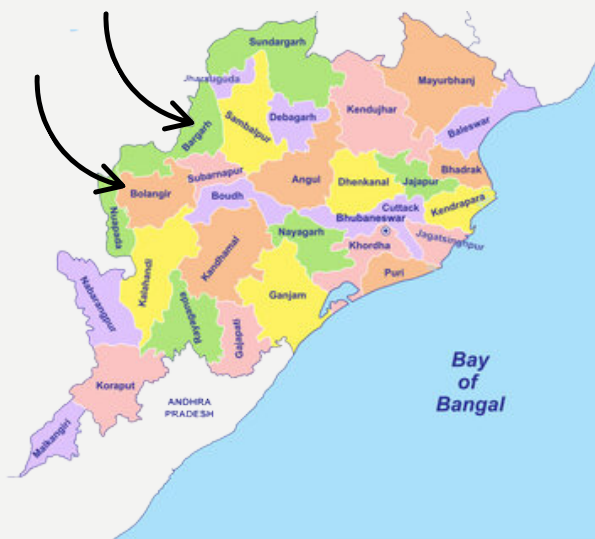


## People affected by leprosy in Odisha are living in desperate poverty

Odisha is located in Eastern India and is home to more than 41 million people. Many people here live below the poverty line, relying on subsistence farming. Poverty means a high rate of teenage marriage for girls, and a low literacy rate of just 63%.

Leprosy is a disease of poverty, so it is no surprise that cases in Odisha are double the national average. A lack of understanding about leprosy and poor healthcare provision mean people are not being found and cured quickly. Discrimination against people with the disease here is extreme.

Many are rejected by their families and communities and left to fend for themselves. Begging to survive, they earn less than £1 a day. They cannot meet basic needs and have no hope of breaking out of poverty. They are the true 'poorest of the poor', forgotten and unwanted by society.





## Urgent Needs

### **Leprosy case detection and treatment**

There is currently no case detection work happening in these regions, and very little awareness, even within leprosy colonies themselves. This is essential to stop the disease from spreading. Leprosy is easily cured using a combination of three antibiotics. But if it isn't treated quickly, the disease can cause blindness and loss of feeling in hands and feet. If you can't feel pain, daily tasks become fraught with danger. Hands get burned while cooking, and walking on sharp stones injures your feet. Injuries often ulcerate, which can then lead to amputation. Your fingers curl inwards and won't straighten, making it impossible to care for your children or hold a tool to work in the fields. All of this adds to your daily struggle with poverty.

### **Wound/ulcer care and protective footwear**

People with open wounds and foot injuries are currently wrapping them in dirty rags, increasing infection and ulcers. Regular sterilized dressings and teaching about the prevention of infection are desperately needed. Bespoke protective footwear is also needed to protect feet with no feeling from injury.

# Urgent Needs

## Housing and toilets

Houses across the colonies are on the verge of collapse. Rooves are either crumbling asbestos or torn sheets of plastic. During the monsoon season, flooding means residents end up living in a corner of what is already a very cramped space. There are no toilets, which means walking out into fields is the only option. "It's so dark here at night. I have a little torch, but I hate going into the jungle on my own. I struggle on the uneven ground."

"There are cobras. Big ones. I also find it hard to clean myself." Sunitra, age 65, told us. It's very hard in the daytime for women to find privacy to relieve themselves, particularly in larger colonies. The lack of toilets also increases infection and disease. In the rainy season, flooded fields and land means walking through sewage. This is a huge risk if you have open wounds.



## Clean water

Safe, clean water for drinking and washing is the first step in preventing disease. The communities in this project either have to collect water from a river, in which they also wash, or have broken borewells in their village.

They shared how hard it was to carry heavy jugs of water long distances with disabled hands. Many could only manage to walk to the river every three days, and were ashamed that they couldn't wash regularly. During the monsoon, vomiting and diarrhea are huge problems. This is exacerbated by a lack of toilets. Kidney infections are also common.

# Urgent Needs

## Livelihoods

The elderly colony residents who are disabled by leprosy rely on begging for food. They walk the 5-6 kilometers to town early each morning to avoid the heat of the day. There is never any breakfast, so they walk on empty stomachs and hope that someone will give them some rice. "It's very hot and sometimes I struggle to walk because my balance isn't very good. If I am very lucky, I can earn 100 rupees in a day. Sometimes, I may get a bag of rice from someone. They don't come near me. People throw a coin at me." Chahalla says. Across the communities, residents explained that they usually had one bowl of rice a day and could only buy vegetables once every 4-5 days. Meat was too expensive.



# Together, we can provide the solution and help communities in Odisha to thrive.

We will work in 32 leprosy colonies and help approximately 3,346 people. With your help, the following project outcomes will be achieved in year 1:

- 30 leprosy champions will be trained to recognize the early signs of leprosy. They will join project staff in diagnosing people with leprosy and referring them for treatment. This will reduce the spread of leprosy and prevent disabilities caused by delayed diagnosis and treatment. They will also raise awareness about leprosy to combat stigma and ensure that people know when to come forward for treatment.
- 32 communities will learn how to care for hands and feet with no feeling. This will prevent ulcers worsening and protect against amputation. Communities will learn this through Prevention of Disability Camps and training delivered by project staff. There is also a volunteer trained in ulcer dressing who is eager to share his skills across the communities. We will also provide protective footwear and self-care kits for 750 people. These will protect them from injury and equip them to prevent infection.
- 30 houses and toilets will be built to improve living standards and basic sanitation.
- 12 community borewells will be repaired to ensure access to clean water.
- More than 930 families affected by leprosy will be enabled to develop livelihoods. This will be achieved by providing them with livestock, seeds, farming equipment and training in animal husbandry and crop cultivation. Young people who wish to learn a vocational trade will also be given a free place at The Leprosy Mission's vocational training center in Champa.





## Who will you be helping?

Anjali's grandfather was the head of her family. An imposing man who made the decisions and was in control. Sadly for Anjali, he was not a good man. The fear he instilled in her as a teenager was something no one should have to endure.

"I was only 11 when I first saw pale patches on my face and body. I ignored them for a while, but soon the patches started to spread. I was almost too scared to check myself when I washed in the river. With every week that passed, another patch appeared.

My mother asked my uncle to take me to hospital. It was such a long journey; I'd never travelled that far before. It seemed like an eternity waiting for the tests to come back. But finally, the doctor called us in. I had leprosy. I didn't really know what this meant, as no one in my family had ever had this disease before." Anjali should have been given the cure for leprosy, but she was sent home without any medicine. The disease was left to ravage her body.

When Anjali was 14, she was struggling to drain a pot of rice as she prepared dinner for her family. As her fingers lost their grip on one side of the pan, she winced as she prepared for the burn of the boiling water as it cascaded over her hand and up her arm. But there was no pain. Anjali didn't feel anything at all.

"It made no sense, and my mum was worried. We went from one traditional healer to another but nothing I took made any difference. While my mum was trying to help me, when no-one was listening, my grandfather started to say he was going to kill me. He said he'd make sure I died."

Anjali's eyes filled with tears as she struggled to share the painful memories. "I began to live in fear. He tried to poison my rice and made me really sick. When he took me out of the house my mum used to shout, "where are you taking my daughter?" She must have been scared too. Once, he took me to the railway and tried to push me in front of a train. I managed to run away from him." She was able to tell her mother what had happened, but her grandfather was very powerful in the family. No one could stand up to him.



One day, her grandfather told her mother that he was taking Anjali to hospital for treatment, and that he'd bring her back after. They travelled for two hours until they were far from town. Her grandfather had found a leprosy colony, where he left Anjali. Distraught, she shouted after him as he left. But he didn't look back.

An elderly couple took pity on this young girl and looked after her. Slowly, she rebuilt her life as best she could with disabled hands, no money and no prospects. She married an older man from another leprosy colony when she was 19, and together they have two sons aged 13 and 16. Anjali makes sure her boys go to the government school.

"We have nothing. No land and no money. My house is collapsing, there's water coming through the roof. It's really hard living in a wet, damp room. I want a better life for my sons."



# Budget


Description		Cost (\$)
Case-detection work and awareness-raising	Case-detection work and awareness-raising about leprosy, its complications and its management strategies	5,238
Prevention of Disability Camps	The running of 18 Prevention of Disability Camps	1,560
Protective footwear	750 pairs of protective footwear for people affected by leprosy	4,180
Self-care kits	750 self-care kits for people affected by leprosy	5,572
New houses and toilets	The construction of 30 new houses and toilets for people affected by leprosy in the leprosy colonies of Odisha	37,144
Repair of borewells	The repair of 12 borewells and their platforms	4,012
Livelihoods support	The provision of livestock, seeds, farming equipment and training in animal husbandry and crop cultivation	36,672
Training of project staff and leprosy champions	Training in leprosy, safeguarding and counselling for project delivery	3,468
Project Staff salaries	Salaries for staff involved in project delivery on the ground	35,974
Total		133,820





## Thank you for taking the time to consider helping people affected by leprosy in Odisha.

Anjali's story is far too common. Right now, many others like her face the devastating consequences of leprosy. From poverty to disabilities, their lives have been shattered by this dreadful disease. Without help, they have no hope.

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