



## 1. India's disease burden: India has embarked on a large-scale plan to screen all children for leprosy and tuberculosis

- Although India eliminated leprosy in 2005, why is it still a burden for India?
- What is the need for screening Leprosy and TB among 25 crore children below the age of 18 ?
- What is the role of National Health Mission in preventing disease and disability in children?

**GS paper 2 (Issues related to health, education and Human resources)**

**In this video, you can find detailed answers for all the above questions.**



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## What is the context about?



In India, screening for disease is usually associated with non-communicable rather than communicable diseases. However, since last month, India has embarked on a large-scale plan to screen all children for leprosy and tuberculosis.



An estimated 25 crore children below the age of 18 will be screened for the two infectious diseases, and if a person is suspected to have either of the two, s/he will be sent to a higher centre for confirmation.



The existing Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) infrastructure will be used for the screening.

# Although India eliminated leprosy in 2005, why is it still a burden for India?



India eliminated leprosy in 2005 — WHO defines elimination as an incidence rate of less than one case per 10,000 population.



All states except Chhattisgarh and the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli have eliminated leprosy. However, 1.15 lakh to 1.2 lakh new leprosy cases are still detected every year, Health Ministry officials said.



India also has more than a million “missing” cases every year that are not notified. Most remain either undiagnosed or unaccountably and inadequately diagnosed and treated in the private sector.



TB also kills an estimated 4,80,000 Indians every year — an average over 1,300 every day.



The problem is that many of these patients do not complete the full course of the antibiotic, thus exposing the bacterium to the medicine without fully killing it. This is trigger enough for the bacterium to evolve into a version of itself that is resistant to that particular drug.

# What is the need for screening Leprosy and TB among 25 crore children below the age of 18 ?



**Leprosy** is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*.

It usually affects the skin and peripheral nerves, but has a wide range of clinical manifestations.

The disease is characterised by a long incubation period that is generally 5-7 years. It is a leading cause of permanent physical disability. Timely diagnosis and treatment of cases, before nerve damage has occurred, is the most effective way of preventing disability due to leprosy.





**Tuberculosis** infection, caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis, is one of the most common communicable diseases in India, its transmission fuelled by unhygienic, crowded living conditions.

It is said that most Indians carry the bacterium and the infection flares up when their immunity levels are low.

Children tend to be more prone to catching infectious diseases from their peers because of long hours in confined spaces and more bodily contact than in adults. Addressing the problem early would ensure that the infection cycle is broken.



## What is the role of National Health Mission in preventing disease and disability in children?



Launched in 2013 under the National Health Mission, RBSK is focused on preventing disease and disability in children.



- ✓ “Child Health Screening and Early Intervention Services” basically refer to early detection and management of a set of 30 health conditions prevalent in children less than 18 years of age.
- ✓ These conditions are broadly defects at birth, diseases in children, deficiency conditions and developmental delays including disabilities, together described as 4Ds.



For tuberculosis, the global Sustainable Development Goal target is to end the disease by 2030. However, there is a new urgency in India’s TB control efforts to end TB by 2025.