

# Focus Group Discussion Notes

## Village Aamdhana (Block: Shahpur, District: Betul)



Date	:	July 28, 2001
Venue	:	A centrally located house in the village
People present	:	28 villagers (16 men and 12 women), 3 male and 2 female interviewers from Vimarsh, Bhopal, 2 male DANLEP staff and 2 male NLEP staff

### 1. What is 'Disease' and why do we get ill?

Ans. Illnesses were attributed to an individual's constitution and immunity. Villagers felt that disease was also the influence of evil spirits, brought on because the individual had displeased the gods.

### 2. What are your views and experiences regarding the Govt. Health Service?

Ans. Government doctors are rude and uninterested in the problems of a poor patient. Nor are doctors available when required. They invariably remark on the poor state of hygiene of the villagers. Doctors only prescribe cheap and outdated medicines, which prolong the period of cure.

### 3. Where do you go for treatment?

Ans. In the case of fever, cough, cold, diarrhoea and malaria, they go to the local PHC for treatment. However, for all illnesses, they simultaneously also consult the *Parihar* or *Jaankar* to appease evil spirits who have caused the malady.

**4. What is Leprosy and what are its symptoms?**

Ans. No one present including the LAPs could specifically define leprosy. Nor could they identify it as one disease because its symptoms were varied. Most of them mistook the symptoms for the disease.

**5. At what stage does it become leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers said they had no idea because they have never seen a leprosy patient.. They did not recognize the term *Kushth*. They call leprosy *chatta*, *sheeba*, *galniya*, *thas nak* etc.

**6. What causes leprosy? Is it hereditary?**

Ans. They were ignorant of its causes. However, they thought it could be contagious, although they were definite that it was not a hereditary disease.

**7. Are there leprosy patients in your village? How many?**

Ans. Their immediate reaction was to say there were no LAPs in their village But when the symptoms were described to them, they said that Balia seemed to be similarly affected.

**8. What food and living habits should LAPs follow?**

Ans. Most said there was no need for restrictions However, some maintained that staying away from alcohol helps.

**9. Is leprosy curable?**

Ans. There was no awareness regarding the treatment for leprosy. When cases of successful treatment of LAPs was discussed, the villagers pointed out their continued loss of sensation and that function of the affected body parts had not returned.

**10. Is it terminal?**

Ans. The villagers were not aware that leprosy was not a terminal illness.



**11. What is the treatment?**

Ans. The villagers were unaware of any specific treatment (this is because they were not aware that either they or their co-villagers had leprosy) but said that a private doctor needed to be consulted for the same. A few said that medicines were available for this at the PHC, Shahpur, as the NMA had said so.

**12. What do you mean by leprosy being cured?**

Ans. To them cure means that the patient is able to work normally. Cured to them also means that the patches/boils disappear and sensation returns to the numb parts.

**13. What are the practices related to marriage and socialization (Beti and Roti)?**

Ans. There are no food restrictions. People eat together with the patients. Marriage prospects remain unaffected if there is no obvious disfigurement as a result of the disease. The illness does not affect the social status of the patient and he or she is invited to all social gatherings.

**14. Is ostracism prevalent, if yes in what way?**

Ans. There is no practice of isolating patients.

**15. Who suffers from leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers felt that it could happen to anyone and that it did not affect any one particular category.

**16. What precautions are to be taken to avoid leprosy?**

Ans. They were unaware regarding the above.



## Village Barbatpur (Block: Shahpur, District: Betul)

Date	:	4 July, 2001
Venue	:	A LAP's house
People present	:	17 people (10 men and 7 women) of Barbatpur, 2 female and one male interviewer from Vimarsh, one male NMA
No. of LAPs in FGD	:	Six

### 1. What is 'Disease' and why do we get ill?

Ans. Most considered disease as inability to work to the maximum capacity while some considered it as an effect of evil spirits. Illness was also attributed to lack of proper food intake.

### 2. What are your views and experiences regarding the Govt. Health Service?

Ans. The villagers said that they preferred private doctors (Non Registered Allopathic Practitioners) as they treated them with more dignity. According to them the government doctors are rude and do not give adequate time to patients. The private practitioner prescribed treatment after listening to their ailment in great detail and their clinics had facilities for drips and injectables unlike their government counterparts.

### 3. Where do you go for treatment?

Ans. The villagers reported that they usually go to the private doctors (Non Registered Allopathic Practitioners) at Shahpur. In more serious cases, they go to Dr. Pandu in Bhora or private hospitals

at Itarsi. In case of epileptic fits, they consult the *Parihar*. They also propitiate the shrine of Bada Mahadeo at Pachmarhi for better health of their kith and kin.

**4. What is leprosy and what are its symptoms?**

Ans. None present knew what leprosy was. However a few especially the LAPs and their relatives knew that it manifested in white patches which was treated by the NMA with medicines or could be treated at the mission hospital at Kothara.

**5. At what stage does it become leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers were unable to answer this and maintained that this was the area of the NMA or doctor.

**6. What causes leprosy? Is it hereditary?**

Ans. They were unaware of the causes. However they thought that it might be contagious as both Suresh and his father had the disease.

**7. Are there leprosy patients in your village? How many?**

Ans. The villagers knew that Suresh, his father, and Monu (Suresh's cousin), Monu's father and Bhangilal had the disease.

**8. What food and living habits are to be followed while suffering from leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers said that they would follow whatever instructions were issued either by the NMA or the doctor in this regard. However, a few maintained that abstinence from *mahua* (local liquor) would aid a speedier recovery.

**9. Is leprosy curable?**

Ans. They maintained that in case of patches it was curable. However despite the NMA having pronounced Bhangilal cured, they did not consider him to be so as his fingers/toes?? remain clawed.

**10. Is it terminal?**

Ans. They said that Bhangilal's still being alive despite being afflicted with the disease for the past 15 years proved that the disease is not fatal.

**11. What is the treatment?**

Ans. According to the villagers the NMA's statement that medicines for leprosy were available at the PHC was reiterated as an answer to the above.

**12. What do you mean by leprosy being cured?**

Ans. All present concurred to the statement that if, after being treated, a person attained the physical state he or she was in prior to the illness then he or she was considered cured.

**13. What are the practices related to marriage and socialization (Beti and Roti)?**

Ans. There are no food restrictions. People eat together with the patients. The instance of Bhangilal was given and the villagers stated that they purchase household items from Bhangilal's son's shop (which at times was also manned by Bhangilal) in the village and also said that he is invited to all social gatherings in the village.

**14. Is ostracism prevalent, if yes in what way?**

Ans. There is no practice of isolating patients.

**15. Who suffers from leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers felt that it could happen to anyone and that it did not affect any one particular category. Bhangilal's affliction was attributed to evil spirits while Suresh was stated to have been afflicted since he had been to the city.

**16. What precautions are to be taken to avoid leprosy?**

Ans. They were unaware regarding the above.

## Village Jhunkar (Block: Kesla, District: Hoshangabad)



Date	:	3 August, 2001
Venue	:	The house of a LAP, an opinion leader and a prominent member of the village community and an active member in the <i>Tawa Matsya Sangh</i> , a local fishery cooperative.
People present	:	24 people (18 men and 6 women) of Jhunkar village, one male and one female interviewer from Vimarsh and one male NMA
No. of LAPs in FGD	:	Four

### 1. What is 'Disease' and why do we get ill?

Ans. The question initiated an interesting debate in the group. The reactions were varied. While most considered disease as inability to work to the maximum capacity, some considered it as an effect of evil spirits. The evil spirit rationale was more common among women and the elderly. They also maintained that evil spells were cast more upon men than that on women. The reactions regarding the causes of illness was diffused, but most considered it as weakness in body, which leads to illness.

### 2. What are your views and experiences regarding the Govt. Health Service?

Ans. The villagers contended that government doctors were by and large condescending and always had rude things to say about tribals. They prescribe cheap and outdated medicines whose

potency is minimal and almost always save on injections and drips. They provide dosage for longer periods which gives no relief.

**3. Where do you go for treatment?**

Ans. The villagers reported that they usually go to the private doctors (Non Registered Allopathic Practitioners) at Sukhtawa/Kesla. In more serious cases, they go to Dr. Pandu in Bhora or private hospitals at Itarsi. If the cause of the ailment is attributed to black magic then the *Parihar* at Bajrang (in the village) is consulted.

**4. What is leprosy and what are its symptoms?**

Ans. Most of the people did not know of leprosy (*kushth*). They were aware of the word *korh* that is used for leprosy in many parts of the state. But when asked about *korh* it came to light that *korh* was the term for leucoderma.

But the LAPs and their families were aware that *Kushth* is like a skin disease where patches and boils appear on the skin. If untreated it leads to weakening of the extremities. Atrophy of fingers/toes was perceived as a more acute form of the disease.

**5. At what stage does it become leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers said that when lots of patches and boils occur and sensation is lost in that part, it is a sign of leprosy.

**6. What causes leprosy? Is it hereditary?**

Ans. They were unaware of the causes. However, they thought that it might be contagious but it was definitely not a hereditary disease.

**7. Are there leprosy patients in your village? How many?**

Ans. The villagers knew that Ratan Singh, some of his family members and some of Ratan Singh's neighbours, totalling eight in number have this disease.

**8. What food and living habits are to be followed while suffering from leprosy?**

Ans. There was no restriction of food and change in living habits prescribed as per their knowledge when suffering from leprosy. The villagers also do not have any food restrictions in case of other skin diseases.

**9. Is leprosy curable?**

Ans. Yes, *Kushth* is curable but *Korh* is not.

**10. Is it terminal?**

Ans. No

**11. What is the treatment?**

Ans. They (other than patients and their families) were unaware of the treatment for the disease. They said, “Doctors in the town must be knowing the treatment.”

**12. What do you mean by leprosy being cured?**

Ans. To them cure means that the patients is able to work normally. Cure to them also means that the patches/boils disappear and sensation returns to the numb parts.

**13. What are the practices related to marriage and socialization (Beti and Roti)?**

Ans. There are no food restrictions. People eat together with the patients. Women if cured do not face any problem in marriage but if not cured then the marriage prospects declines. This is true of all big illnesses for women. However if the person contracts leprosy after marriage he or she is taken for treatment depending on what the family can afford. The illness does not affect the social status of the patient beyond this as he or she is invited to all social gatherings.

**14. Is ostracism prevalent, if yes in what way?**

Ans. There is no practice of isolating patients.

**15. Who suffers from leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers felt that it could happen to anyone and that it did not affect any one particular category.

**16. What precautions are to be taken to avoid leprosy?**

Ans. They were unaware regarding the above.



## Village Kala Aakhar (Block: Kesla, District: Hoshangabad)



Date	:	30 June, 2001
Venue	:	The house of a Panch located in Purana Dhana.
People present	:	22 villagers (8 women and 14 men), 2 female and 2 male interviewers from Vimarsh and one man from TRC, BAIF, Bhopal
No. of LAPs in FGD	:	Zero (The hamlet had no patients)

### 1. What is 'Disease' and why do we get ill?

Ans. Most considered disease as inability to work to the maximum capacity, some considered it as an effect of evil spirits. The evil spirit rationale was more common among women and the elderly. The reactions regarding the causes of illness was diffused, but most considered it as weakness in body, which leads to illness.

### 2. What are your views and experiences regarding the Govt. Health Service?

Ans. The villagers felt that Government doctors should be the last resort in case of illness as they were negligent towards the patient and were never present in the PHC. They said that the doctors did not diagnose the illness properly as they never gave them drips or injections.

**3. Where do you go for treatment?**

Ans. The villagers reported that they usually go to the private doctors (Non Registered Allopathic Practitioners) at Sukhtawa/ Kesla. In more serious cases, they go to Dr. Pandu in Bhora or private hospitals at Itarsi. If the cause of the ailment is attributed to black magic then the *Parihar* at Bajrang (in the village) is consulted.

**4. What is leprosy and what are its symptoms?**

Ans. Most of the people did not know of leprosy (*Kushth*). They were aware of the word *korh* that is used for leprosy in many parts of the state but when asked about *korh* it came to light that *korh* was the term for leucoderma.

But the LAPs and their families were aware that *Kushth* is like a skin disease where patches and boils appear on the skin. If untreated it leads to weakening of the extremities. Atrophy of fingers/toes was perceived as a more acute form of the disease.

**5. At what stage does it become leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers said that when lots of patches and boils occur and sensation is lost in that part, it is a sign of leprosy.

**6. What causes leprosy? Is it hereditary?**

Ans. They were unaware of the causes. However, they thought that it might be contagious but it was definitely not a hereditary disease. Most felt that it had come to their village with the advent of the railways as outsiders who came to work brought the disease with them.

**7. Are there leprosy patients in your village? How many?**

Ans. The villagers identified one patient who was actually a patient of leucoderma.

**8. What food and living habits are to be followed while suffering from leprosy?**

Ans. Abstinence from alcohol, non-vegetarian food, brinjal and sour food items were stated as required in any skin ailment by them.



**9. Is leprosy curable?**

Ans. Yes, *Kushth* is curable but *Korh* is not.

**10. Is it terminal?**

Ans. No

**11. What is the treatment?**

Ans. They (other than patients and their families) were unaware of the treatment for the disease. Most present were of the opinion that both private and government doctors could provide treatment for the same if medicines were available with them.

**12. What do you mean by leprosy being cured?**

Ans. To them cure means that the patients is able to work normally. Cured to them also means that the patches/boils disappear and sensation returns to the numb parts.

**13. What are the practices related to marriage and socialization (*Beti and Roti*)?**

Ans. There are no social restrictions. People eat together with the patients. If perceived as ill, the marriage prospects of women are affected. The treatment of a person who contracts leprosy after marriage depends on what the family can afford.

**14. Is ostracism prevalent, if yes in what way?**

Ans. There is no practice of isolating patients.

**15. Who suffers from leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers felt that it could happen to anyone and that it did not affect any one particular category.

**16. What precautions are to be taken to avoid leprosy?**

Ans. They were unaware regarding the above.



## Village Kasda Khurd (Block: Kesla, District: Hoshangabad)

Date	:	10 July, 2001
Venue	:	The house of one of the villagers.
People present	:	17 villagers (12 men and 5 women), one female and one male interviewer from Vimarsh, one male NMA
No. of LAPs in FGD	:	Two

### 1. What is Disease and why do we get ill?

Ans. Disease according to them is something, which hampers a person's ability to work. It is usually accompanied by weakness or pain in the body. The cause of any ailment was attributed by most to both weakness in body as well as the machinations of evil spirits. A few maintained that diseases usually inflict those who do not practice good habits and are morally corrupt.

### 2. What are your views and experiences regarding the Govt. Health Service?

Ans. The entire group were united in their opinion of government doctors, "They are not available all the time and even if they are available they do not give adequate time to patients. They prescribe medicines without listening to the patients or testing the patients with stethoscope. They usually shy away from giving injections or drips."

### 3. Where do you go for treatment?

Ans. They were of the view that treatment varied depending on the type of illness. In case of Malaria, fever, cough etc. they go to



private doctors. For minor aches and pains they take concoctions of locally available herbs. If the patient is very seriously ill then he is taken to private doctors in Itarsi. In almost all ailments the Parihar for *Jhad Phoonk and Bhoot Utarna* was consulted as evil spirits were considered to be an inevitable causal factor of illness.

**4. What is leprosy and what are its symptoms?**

Ans. They were unaware of leprosy till the NMA informed them that RamBharose was suffering from leprosy. It is from the NMA that they learnt of the symptoms of the disease though at that point they could not recall any of it. They felt that if medicines were available it could be cured by the private doctors in Sukhtawa as well.

**5. At what stage does it become leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers were of the opinion that only NMAs and Doctors could know this.

**6. What causes leprosy, is it hereditary?**

Ans. The villagers felt that it could be hereditary in nature as many members of a single family in the village have leprosy. They felt that it was not contagious as no one else in the village had it. The example of Amar Singh was cited as proof for the above as they had all been to his house and dined there during a marriage ceremony but did not get infected with the disease.

**7. Are there leprosy patients in your village? How many?**

Ans. They said that Ram Bharose, his children and his brother had the disease.

**8. What food and living habits are to be followed while suffering from leprosy?**

Ans. There was no restriction of food and change in living habits prescribed as per their knowledge when suffering from leprosy. They however said that they would follow whatever advise on the same was given by the NMA or a doctor in order to remain free of the disease. Some however, were of the opinion that abstinence from consumption of both alcohol and meat would help.

**9. Is leprosy curable?**

Ans. They felt that leprosy is curable since they have not seen any signs of atrophy of fingers/toes and other symptoms in both Bajji and Ram Bharose. This opinion, according to them had been reinforced when both Bajji and Ram Bharose beat a lot of younger men in the sports event during Pola, an annual festival.

**10. Is it terminal?**

Ans. None present considered the disease fatal.

**11. What is the treatment?**

Ans. Though the villagers expressed ignorance regarding treatment of leprosy and maintained that a doctor needed to be consulted for the same, they did feel that the services of a *Bhumka* should be solicited, to sacrifice a cock in propitiation of any evil spirits present, for protection of both the family of the patient as well as their village.

**12. What do you mean by leprosy being cured?**

Ans. They felt that if the patient becomes as strong as his contemporaries then it is a sure sign of being cured. Absence of both white patches as well as blisters was also considered as cured. Some maintained that cure was what the NMA had described – the death of all *keetanu* (bacteria), though they said that they had no way of verifying it.

**13. What are the practices related to marriage and socialization (Beti and Roti)?**

Ans. There are no restrictions on eating together with the patients and he or she is invited to all social gatherings. The marriage prospects of disfigured women are affected. A person who contracts leprosy after marriage is taken for treatment depending on what the family can afford.

**14. Is ostracism prevalent, if yes in what way?**

Ans. There is no practice of isolating patients. It is best described in the words of the villagers – “How can we isolate Bajji or his



family? They are a part of our village community. Bajji is also the best singer in our Ramsatta troupe.”

**15. Who suffers from leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers felt that it could happen to anyone and that it did not affect any one particular category. However some did feel that bad habits and low morality made a person susceptible to leprosy. But everyone agreed that it was all dependant on God’s will.

**16. What precautions are to be taken to avoid leprosy?**

Ans. They were unaware regarding the above.



## Village Palaspani (Block: Shahpur, District: Betul)

Date	:	28 July, 2001
Venue	:	The courtyard of a centrally located house in the Beech Dhana
People present	:	15 people (5 women and 10 men) of Palaspani village, two female and one male interviewer from Vimarsh, one male NMA
No. of LAPs in FGD	:	One

### 1. What is Disease and why do we get ill?

Ans. According to most of the people present, fever, body ache, cough and cold are diseases. The causes of most illnesses were attributed to weakness in body and inadequate nutrition. Malaria according to them was caused by mosquito bite but they were not very clear about other diseases and said that evil spirits caused these.

### 2. What are your views and experiences regarding the Govt. Health Service?

Ans. The villagers said that the government doctors were usually unavailable whenever required and they therefore preferred to go to private practitioners (Non Registered Allopathic Practitioners) or to the civil hospital at Betul.

### 3. Where do you go for treatment?

Ans. The villagers reported that they usually go to the private doctors (Non Registered Allopathic Practitioners) at Shahpur. In more serious cases, they go to Dr. Pandu in Bhora or private hospitals

at Itarsi. They maintained that the injections and drips given by the private doctors enabled them to go to work in a day or two whereas the medicines given by the PHC was not as effective. In case of epilepsy or mental ailments they prefer to consult the *Parihar* or *Jaankar* for cure.

**4. What is leprosy and what are its symptoms?**

Ans. None present were aware what the disease was except for one person, the only LAP in the group. However a few said that they believed that it caused white patches and blisters to appear on a person's skin and atrophy of fingers/toes as they have seen this in the case of Jagram.

**5. At what stage does it become leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers were unable to answer this question.

**6. What causes leprosy, is it hereditary?**

Ans. They thought that it might be contagious but it was definitely not a hereditary disease. Most of them maintained that people who went for *mughlai* (Hoshangabad plains) primarily were those who contacted the disease as it had never been seen earlier in their villages.

**7. Are there leprosy patients in your village? How many?**

Ans. The villagers knew that Jagram and two others were infected with the disease.

**8. What food and living habits are to be followed while suffering from leprosy?**

Ans. There was no restriction of food and change in living habits prescribed as per their knowledge when suffering from leprosy. They said that they would follow prescription for the same as per the doctor or NMA's instructions. Jagram said that abstinence from tea would help.

**9. Is leprosy curable?**

Ans. The opinion of the villagers on this was undivided. They felt that

despite the NMA stating that Jagram was now fully cured, his finger were still clawed and he was usually seen with one or two ulcers in the clawed fingers of either palm. Therefore they were not absolutely sure regarding the NMA's statement.

**10. Is it terminal?**

Ans. The villagers considered malaria as fatal and leprosy benign in comparison to malaria.

**11. What is the treatment?**

Ans. They (other than patients and their families) were unaware of the treatment for the disease. However, a few were aware that medicines for leprosy were available at PHC at Shahpur.

**12. What do you mean by leprosy being cured?**

Ans. To them cure means that the patient is able to work normally. Cured to them also means that the patches/boils disappear and sensation returns to the numb parts. All were unanimous in their opinion that the atrophied toes/fingers should come back to normal for the person's status to be considered as cured.

**13. What are the practices related to marriage and socialization (Beti and Roti)?**

Ans. There are no food restrictions. People eat together with the patients. The illness does not affect the social status of the patient as he or she is invited to all social gatherings.

**14. Is ostracism prevalent, if yes in what way?**

Ans. There is no practice of isolating patients.

**15. Who suffers from leprosy?**

Ans. The villagers felt that it could happen to anyone and that it did not affect any one particular category.

**16. What precautions are to be taken to avoid leprosy?**

Ans. They were unaware regarding the above but felt that it involved being more cautious wherever they went for *mughlai*.

## Village Jatasamer (Block: Junnardev, District: Chhindwara)



Date	:	21 July, 2001
Venue	:	In the courtyard, of a centrally located house of Sarpanch
People present	:	30 people (22 men + 8 women) of Jatasamer village, one female and one male interviewer from Vimarsh, 2 male NMS and 2 male NMAs

### 1 What's disease? and Why do we fall ill?

Ans. Disease is a state wherein our capacity to work gets affected fully or partially. We fall ill because we do not eat properly – we eat fewer vegetables. Some diseases like malaria are caused by mosquitoes (some vector) due to stagnant water. Diarrhoea happens due to intake of unhygienic water. Disease happens due to our weakness.

### 2 Where do you go after falling ill?

Ans. Different diseases are dealt with differently. For example, diarrhoea is dealt with at domestic (home/village) level itself or we go to *Parihar*. For itching etc. we apply some herbs. In case of diseases like malaria we go to consult PHC. For some diseases, like snakebite, we go to *Bhagat, Bhumka*.

### 3 Why do we become normal by taking medicines? How medicines work?

Ans. Medicines/tablets wipe away the reason for the disease e.g. *Kali Akul* is a kind of herb that is applied over skin while suffering

from itching. Injections work faster/better than tablets. Only, in case of malaria the tablets given by the malaria centre work most effectively.

**4 What's your experience of Govt. hospitals?**

Ans. We do not go to Govt. hospitals because their medicines do not work fast. Also, they do not give us the injections. They just crib about the lack of time at their end. Whenever we go there, they say now it's closing time, come tomorrow.

**5 What is leprosy and what are its symptoms?**

Ans. a. Numb patches on the body which get hurt but we do not come to know about b. Tingling sensation in limbs c. Blisters which sometimes ooze pus d. Deformities

**6 Where do they go when they suffer from leprosy?**

Ans. In our village some people go to *Bhagat/Bhumka*. Some people opt for *Bengali* doctor. All to no avail. However, when their problem worsens they go to the Govt. hospital. There, NMA's medicines really work. This is called as *Chatte Wala Rog*.

**7 What causes leprosy?**

Ans. No, we do not know for sure. But once it happens, then other family members also start suffering.

**8 How many patients are there in your village?**

Ans. Nine persons were taking medicines in our village out of which the treatment for 8 has been stopped by NMA.

**9 Is leprosy curable? If yes, what is its treatment?**

Ans. Yes, NMA's medicines do work. Yet, these medicines are to be taken regularly for the prescribed time.

**10 When do they assume that leprosy has been cured?**

Ans. After testing/examining NMA tells for how much time we have to take medicines. After taking the medicines given by NMA for the prescribed time, we assume that we have been cured (But we



found/observed that the term ‘cured’ is a suspect category from their perception, especially in cases of deformities. For example, due to numbness – which continues, does not subside – they get easily hurt and they take these wounds as the wounds of the disease itself.)

**11 What changes do they incorporate in their food habits after getting afflicted by leprosy?**

Ans. Nothing special. But when NMA suggested for less consumption of *mahua* and meat they started refraining from consuming these things. (NMA, on being asked told that these two things lower the immunity. Leprosy occurs when immunity goes down.)

**12 Who suffer from leprosy?**

Ans. Anyone can get affected. But chances of getting infected are more when we indulge in social/group smoking *beedi* or *Mahua* sharing.

**13 Do they get prejudiced by the society if the people at large know that they are suffering from leprosy.**

Ans. No, they never suffered any kind of discrimination nor did they were kept isolated/ostracised.

**14 What ways/measures need to be followed if one intends to keep oneself safe from leprosy?**

Ans. We do not know how the first patient will protect himself from getting infected from leprosy. But if one person has contracted leprosy then others can protect themselves by refraining from sharing *mahua* and *beedi*.



## Village Kanhargaon (Block: Bichhua, District: Chhindwara)

Date	:	23 July, 2001
Venue	:	In the courtyard, of a centrally located house of a female patient
People present	:	30 people of Kanhargaon village, one female and one interviewer from Vimarsh, 2 male NMS and one male NMA.
No. of LAPs in FGD	:	

### 1 What is a disease?

Ans. Whatever gives us trouble is a disease. Diseases are of many types. Some make you weak whereas some do not. Malaria, TB, diarrhoea render you fragile. On the other hand, diseases like itching make you not weak but they do make us feel uncomfortable.

### 2 Why do we fall sick?

Ans. Because we work a lot and do not eat proper food like vegetables etc. Most of us are not literate so we do not know the exact reason behind falling ill. In case of itching though we know that wearing each other's clothing make us prone to it.

### 3 Where do you go for treatment?

Ans. It depends. On the type of disease. In case of itching/VD we go to the chemist at Khamarpani. For malaria straight to PHC. When we do not get relief, we even go to Chhindwara and Nagpur too.

**4 What's your opinion regarding Govt. Health Services?**

Ans. It's good only for some diseases. But they do not behave nicely. They even charge money. They do not have all equipment. They do not give injection, which is very effective. Many a times when we go to PHC, it's either closed or else doctor is not available.

**5 What is leprosy and its symptoms?**

Ans. It's a skin disease. We get blisters in face, our limbs go numb, fingers claw, we become useless.

**6 Where do you go for treatment of leprosy?**

Ans. People here used to go to Wardha. But nowadays doctor (NMA) himself comes here. Now we know that it's a skin disease for which the chemist can give only a tube, whereas medicines (of NMA) are the only remedy.

**7 What causes leprosy?**

Ans. Leprosy is like any other disease. So whatever causes other disease causes leprosy too.

**8 How many patients of leprosy in your village?**

Ans. 3-4 out of which 2 were cured.

**9 Do you change your food habits?**

Ans. We eat whatever we get. No abstention. But when the disease is in an advanced stage one does not feel like eating.

**10 Is it curable? What is its treatment?**

Ans. Yes, it's curable. Cure is MDT. A person suffering from leprosy went to Khamarpani and then Chhindwara too. First he tried Homeopathy then he took MDT. But he left the cure in between.

**11 What is cure?**

Ans. What makes us feel good, what makes us work efficiently is a cure. In case of leprosy, NMA does some sort of testing and he declares one cured. Whatever stage (of leprosy) you start medicines you remain at that stage only. For example, if one

suffers from numbness it remains. Dry skin remains dry even after cure. And deformity also continues.

**12 Who suffers from leprosy?**

Ans. Anyone can.

**13 Do you face any problem for either getting work or getting your daughter married?**

Ans. Why are you segregating this disease from other ones. It's like any other disease. We don't have any taboos about this (disease).

**14 How one can save himself from getting afflicted with the disease?**

Ans. Don't know.

**15 How does a medicine work? And how does it differ from injection**

Ans. Medicine goes to stomach first and then it starts working. Whereas injection does go to the afflicted area right away. That's how we get instant relief with an injection. In weakness (saline) bottle is the best solution.



## Village Badosa (Block: Bichhua, District: Chhindwara)



Date	:	24 July, 2001
Venue	:	In the courtyard of a centrally located house of the village
People present	:	36 people of Badosa village (25 men + 9 women), one female and one male interviewer from Vimarsh, 2 male NMS, one male NMA.
No. of LAPs in FGD	:	

### 1 What's disease?

Ans. When you have to go either to *Bhagat/Bhumka* or to *Bengali* doctor or to PHC it must be a disease. TB, Malaria, Diarrhoea, gout these are all diseases.

### 2 Why do we fall ill?

Ans. Many reasons. Excessive consumption of *Mahua*. No proper food. Mosquitoes. Contaminated water. Not eating vegetables. Infection/Contagion. Change of weather. Every weather brings its own diseases. Still there are some diseases whose cause we know not. Like one person has got brain cancer, a child of our village is having polio.

### 3 Where do you go for treatment?

Ans. For treatment, *Bengali* doctor is the best. He has all the medicines and injections with him. You get immediate relief. Ayurvedic hospital is also there in our village, but we don't go there. There you don't get cured so fast. Some limited amount of

*Mahua* also makes you feel good. For minor diseases, doctors here are good enough, but for the major ones we have to go to Saunsar, Ramakona or Nagpur.

**4 What's your opinion regarding Govt. Health Services?**

Ans. Govt. people talk very badly. They do not give proper medicines. They don't even listen to you. They are always in a hurry. Therefore, even though the Bengali doctor does charge money, we prefer him. He makes us start working within a day or two. He works according to our wishes. Moreover, he is available all the time unlike govt. health services people.

**5 What is leprosy and its symptoms?**

Ans. Leprosy is *Kushth*. Face starts glowing with *tambia* shine and swollen. You can even die of the disease. You can lose your limbs too. It's horrifying.

**6 Where do you go for treatment of leprosy?**

Ans. The NMA who visits our village, its treatment lies with him only. Many people of our village died of this disease when this medicine (MDT) was not around. Now every month NMA comes with the blister pack of medicine, which is quite effective.

**7 What causes leprosy?**

Ans. We do not know that. However, we know that when our fingers/toes start falling others can also get infected. If a woman suffering from an advanced stage of leprosy breastfeeds her infant, (s)he may also get infected. At that stage, they (such women) should stop making food, serving food to others and sleeping with others.

**8 How many patients are there in your village?**

Ans. Six-Seven.

**9 Any change in food habits because of disease?**

Ans. You should refrain from having sour things like pickles etc.



**10 Is it curable? What is its treatment?**

Ans. Yes, these blister packs (MDT) are very effective.

**11 What is the difference between leprosy and leucoderma?**

Ans. *Korh* is *Maharog* whereas leprosy is *Kushth*, which is curable.  
(There was confusion regarding the difference between leprosy and leucoderma.)

**12 What is a cure?**

Ans. When we are like all other normal people – capable of performing normal functions, we are cured. But in leprosy, things are different. NMA says that even if you continue to have patches, deformity and numbness, if you take these medicines regularly you will be cured. It's confusing.

**13 Who gets leprosy?**

Ans. Who stays with an LAP. Whoever is weak. Whoever consumes liquor.

**14 How one can prevent oneself from getting afflicted?**

Ans. By keeping a distance from patients. By being strong.

**15 As an LAP what problems you face in getting your daughter married or in finding work?**

Ans. In initial stages all villagers live together without any hang-ups. But once the fingers/toes start falling then the patients are segregated. Patients also do not feel bad (about being segregated) as they also do not like the idea that their loved ones suffer from the same disease.

## The Team

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