

DESIGNING FOR DIGNITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The Design Village × NLR India Foundation | October 2025 - December 2025

A design research and communication project exploring how design can challenge stigma around leprosy by strengthening awareness, confidence, and social inclusion within affected communities.



ABOUT THE DESIGN VILLAGE: a design-led institution that partners with organisations, communities, and public systems to solve complex challenges through research, systems thinking, and innovation. Through immersive learning and real-world collaboration, TDV develops human-centred solutions for meaningful social impact.

THE CHALLENGE: In collaboration with NLR India, TDV explored how design can address the persistent social stigma surrounding leprosy. Despite medical advances, misinformation, fear, and discrimination continue to limit access to opportunities, reinforce exclusion, and affect the confidence and participation of individuals and families living in leprosy-affected communities.

THE APPROACH: Over fourteen weeks, multidisciplinary learner teams engaged with NLR staff, community members, and stakeholders through field visits, observation, interviews, participatory activities, and systems mapping. The research focused on understanding lived experiences, identifying barriers to inclusion, and uncovering opportunities for communication and community-centred design interventions.



01 Field Immersion

Community visits, stakeholder interactions, and contextual observation.

→ 02 Context Research

Understanding stigma, information gaps, behaviours, and existing support systems.

→ 03 Insight Synthesis

Translating research into opportunity areas through systems thinking and design insights.

→ 04 Design Strategies

Developing scalable communication, engagement, and identity-building interventions.

FROM INSIGHT TO INTERVENTION

The research revealed that stigma is driven not only by misinformation but also by limited opportunities for confidence, self-expression, and community participation. In response, learners developed three design interventions focused on awareness, youth empowerment, and positive identity-building.

THE VALUE OF DESIGN RESEARCH

The project demonstrates how participatory design research can move beyond awareness campaigns to create interventions that foster dignity, trust, and inclusion. By combining field immersion, systems thinking, and collaborative design, TDV translated lived experiences into actionable concepts that support NLR India's mission of building more inclusive communities.

[Final Strategies Link](#)