

Bringing home the importance of Healthy Ageing

Health security is one of the crucial needs of older persons. This is recognized by national and international bodies. There is a growing demand for cure and care for the increasing range of health conditions which evade any particular system of medicine. There is an urgent need to include the special concerns of the elderly in the health policy and care system. Another important concern is to ensure healthy ageing and well-being in old age. To address these concerns, discussions took place across various states, some are mentioned here below.



DELHI: (from left): Mr. P.C. Sen, Governing Body Member, HelpAge, Mr. M.M. Sabharwal, President Emeritus, HelpAge, and Member of Review Committee of the National Policy on Older Persons, Ms. Sujaya Krishnan, Director - NPHCE & NPCB, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Hemalatha Murthy, Director - National Academy of Yoga and Naturopathy, Department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (Govt. of India) and Dr. A. Venkat Raman, Faculty of Management Studies - University of Delhi South Campus, discuss the issue of "Health and Well-being in Old Age" at the day long seminar organized by HelpAge in the capital. Prominent speakers spoke about the challenges faced in providing geriatric care, efforts of the Central Government and also the alternative approaches to health and well-being.

DEHRADUN: Another seminar titled "AYUSH Geriatric Health Care: Need & Relevance" was organized by HelpAge for senior citizens in Dehradun (Uttarakhand). AYUSH stands for Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy. It is an independent department in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (Govt. of India). On the occasion, the first Mobile Medicare Unit (MMU) in collaboration with the Govt. of Uttarakhand was also launched by Mr. Rajeev Gupta, Principal Secretary (AYUSH). The MMU will provide the health services to senior citizens at their doorsteps. This project is a first of its kind where the Department of AYUSH has taken the

initiative to run an AYUSH based MMU, where the medical consultant and medicines would be provided by the Department and all other operational responsibility would be taken care of by HelpAge. A survey report titled "Elderly Perceived Health Needs" was also released. The survey was conducted by HelpAge in Shimla (HP) and Dehradun (Uttarakhand) in which 1000 senior citizens took part. As per the responses, 42 percent of senior citizens preferred Ayurveda as their second line of treatment and stood first among other therapies.



TRIVANDRUM: Ms. Lida Jacob, Chairperson, Commission for Right to Education, speaks at the one day seminar to review the State Policy on Older Persons, with focus on intervention & action strategies in health in Trivandrum. She said that the health was a concern of not only the person involved, but also the family, society and the entire medical system, and stressed that it be given priority during implementation of the Policy.

Balmer Lawrie shows its sensitivity yet again

Mr. K. Gopinathan, Executive Director (Lubes & Chemicals) Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd hands over the keys of the new Mobile Medicare Unit to an elderly beneficiary in Manali (TN). This unit is sponsored by Balmer Lawrie, covering its capital and running cost for five years amounting to Rs. 1.11 crore (approx.). Looking on is Mr. P.R. Anbazhakan, Territory Head (TN & Karnataka), HelpAge.



Japan Govt. shows its generosity

Mr. Hajime Hayashi, Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy of Japan and Mr. Mathew Cherian, Chief Executive, HelpAge, shake hands after signing the formal agreement at the Japanese Embassy in Delhi, between HelpAge and the Govt of Japan which has extended its support to HelpAge with a Grant assistance of US\$ 79,724 (Rs. 35 lakh approx.) for the "Construction of a Day Care and Wellness Centre" at village Rongla in Patiala district (Punjab), to provide effective basic health care, physiotherapy and other support services for disadvantaged older people.



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EDITOR Speaks

The month of March or "Basant Season" in the North augurs well for senior citizens across the country. A time when we move from a colder season to a warmer season. The elderly will soon have a new National Policy for Senior Citizens. Some of you who are on the internet can see it on the HelpAge website www.helpageindia.org

It is becoming important for us to involve more and more Senior Citizens Associations across the country for raising their voice for elderly rights. My interactions with them have shown that the empowered elderly is a strong force for change. The recent campaign by 73 year old Annasaheb Hazare has shown the potential for leadership. We do have many more elderly involved in change for the society. The agenda for 2011 is going to be "more rights for the senior citizen". We want a campaign of "FIT India" to enable all of us lead active lives.

I thank our donors, school students, teachers, principals and companies for their support. We have reached out to remote parts of the North East by placing Mobile Medicare Units at Jorhat, Silchar and Agartala. We see peace dawning in these areas and wish to reach out and expand our services to unreachable areas for the elderly. I hope you enjoy reading the HelpAge News.

Mathew Cherian

Mathew Cherian
Chief Executive



A step forward: Draft recommendations of National Policy on Senior Citizens 2011 submitted to the Govt.

After years of hard work, the draft recommendations of "The National Policy on Senior Citizens 2011" was submitted to the Union Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment (Govt. of India), Mr. Mukul Wasnik, recently by Members of the Review Committee & HelpAge. In 2009, on October 1st, International Day of Older Persons, HelpAge took upon itself to take stock of the implementation of the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) formulated in 1999. It had been 10 years, but much was left to be done. Implementation had been adhoc and it was time to act. HelpAge invited Mr. Mukul

by governments and supported by civil society and Senior Citizens' Associations. Support promotion and establishment of senior citizens' associations, especially amongst women.

2. Promote the concept of 'Ageing in Place' or ageing in own home, housing, income security and homocare services, old age pension and access to healthcare insurance schemes and other programmes and services to facilitate and sustain dignity in old age. The thrust of the Policy would be preventive rather than curative.

3. The Policy will consider institutional care as the last resort. It recognizes that care of senior citizens has to remain vested in the family which would partner with the community, government and the private sector.

4. Being a signatory to the Madrid Plan of Action and Barrier Free Framework, it will work towards an inclusive, barrier-free and age-friendly society.

5. Recognize that senior citizens are a valuable resource for the country and create an environment that provides them with equal opportunities, protects their rights and enables their full participation in society. Towards achievement of this directive, the Policy visualizes that the states will extend their support for senior citizens living below the poverty line in urban and rural areas and ensure their social security, healthcare, shelter and welfare. It will protect them from abuse and exploitation so that the quality of their lives improves.

6. Long term saving instruments and credit activities will be promoted to reach both rural and urban areas. It will be necessary for the contributors to feel assured that the payments at the end of the stipulated period are attractive enough to take care of the likely erosion in purchasing power.

7. Employment in income generating activities after superannuation will be encouraged.

8. Support and assist organizations that provide counseling, career guidance and training services.

9. States will be advised to implement the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, and set up Tribunals so that elderly parents unable to maintain themselves are not abandoned and neglected.

10. States will set up homes with assisted living facilities for abandoned senior citizens in every district of the country and there will be adequate budgetary support.



Mr. Mukul Wasnik (centre), Union Minister, Social justice & Empowerment (Govt. of India) holds up the draft recommendations of The National Policy on Senior Citizens 2011. Looking on are (from left): Ms. Anupama Datta, Joint Director, Policy Research & Development (HelpAge), Dr. S.D. Gokhale, Special Invitee (to the NPOP Review Committee), Mr. M.M. Sabharwal, Member (NPOP Review Committee), Dr. Mohini Giri, Chairperson (NPOP Review Committee), Dr. K.R. Gangadharan, Member (NPOP Review Committee), Mr. Mathew Cherian, Member (Drafting Committee of NPOP Review Committee) & Chief Executive (HelpAge), Dr. Sheilu Sreenivasan, Member (NPOP Review Committee), Ms. Sangeeta Gairola, Additional Secretary, and Mr. K.M. Acharya, Secretary, both from the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (Govt. of India).

Wasnik as chief guest at the function, and therein the wheels were set in motion.

Recognizing the need and the urgency for the implementation of the Policy, the Minister took the first major step in this direction by setting up the 'Review Committee of the National Policy on Older Persons' spearheaded by Chairperson Dr. (Mrs.) Mohini Giri, well known Activist & Social worker, former Chairperson of National Commission for Women and currently Chairperson of Guild of Services and members Mr. M. M. Sabharwal, President Emeritus, HelpAge India, Mr. K.R. Gangadharan of Heritage Foundation and Dr. Sheilu Sreenivasan of Dignity Foundation.

Highlights of the draft recommendations:

1. Mainstream senior citizens, especially older women, and bring their concerns into the national development

The story of Phyllis Rozaries



Byond those wrinkles and expressive eyes, it can be safely said that 67 year old Phyllis Rozaries must have been a beauty in her youth too. Phyllis's little abode lies in the backyard of a beautiful bungalow in Bengaluru's Davis Road, belonging to Late Mrs. Joseph Francis. Phyllis was hired to look after Mrs. Francis health, till she passed away about 7 years ago. Soon she became an integral part of the family and came under their wing.

With 3 daughters and a son who is a heavy drinker, when asked about her own family, Phyllis looks down quietly with her hands folded on her lap and says **“My son wants me to stay with him, but he is having his own problems with his children so I told him why take on additional burden and let me live here with the Francis family.”**

Virtually brought up by nuns, as her parents died when she was young, Phyllis never had things easy in life. Married at the tender age of 14, her husband an army man fought the Indo-Pak war, during which he was jailed in Pakistan till the Indira Gandhi's government brought him back home. He then started working in a factory in Tannery Road, Bengaluru, but soon started drinking a lot, thankfully the work required him to stay in the factory premises. Phyllis daily routine would be to carry his lunch everyday to the factory. It has been 10 years since her husband died, forcing her to move back into the Convent, till a kind friend told her about Mrs. Francis.

With no job and no one to lean on for her basic needs, HelpAge's Support-a-Gran programme (implemented through the Bazm-e-Niswan Charitable Trust) became a major anchor in her life, where she didn't have to beg or be dependent on anyone. She religiously hands over her packet of

ration which she gets through the programme, to the Francis family, and they cook her meals for her.

“My ration has everything from rice, dal, soap, blanket, clothes and even an umbrella” she adds with a smile. I can live peacefully now, I go each evening to meet my friends at 6 pm and my children visit me each month. It's been 10 years since I've been getting ration from HelpAge, I can't imagine what I would do without it” – she says.

Today, Phyllis has found a home, food and more than anything the dignity of living.

Palliative Care gets an Auto Drive



52 year old Billoo, leader of the Auto rickshaw Association in Lucknow (UP), is struggling hard to support his 85 year old ailing mother with a meager income of Rs. 150-200 he gets per day, for a 12 hour shift, with which he has to support his entire family. Billoo has a simple wish, that his mother live her last days with dignity and care.

The story is not of his alone, but of several rickshaw drivers and others like him. Billoo wants to make a difference and drive home the importance of Palliative Care. He therefore mobilized his peers of auto rickshaws drivers and with the help of HelpAge and Cancer Aid Society, he and his fellow Auto rickshaw drivers took on an awareness drive using the vein of Lucknow's transport system – The Auto rickshaws with nearly 2500 auto rickshaws, carrying stickers with the message **“ Freedom from Pain, say YES to Palliative Care.”**

Palliative Care is the care of patients and their families, by a team of trained professionals at a time when the patient's disease is no longer responsive to curative treatment and life expectancy is relatively short. It is an integral but often neglected part of healthcare. For people who already find it difficult to manage to support their families with a small income, chronic illness can cause great poverty. There aren't sufficient numbers of doctors, nurses or social workers trained in Palliative Care to provide them with the support network they so badly need.

Freedom from pain and support for their families when they are vulnerable is something that matters to all of them. According to Nicholas Mellor from the Palliative Care Partnership, **‘Working together with community leaders, civil society organizations and healthcare professionals can bring fresh ideas, and a broader sense of ownership, as we build on successful initiatives, and improve access to Palliative Care for all.’**

Palliative Care services can make all the difference to people when they are at their most vulnerable – giving them comfort, hope and dignity. Says Mr. Mathew Cherian, Chief Executive, HelpAge **“Thousands of elderly in many districts in India are dying with no one to take care of them. HelpAge India would like to provide Dignity in Death for these people who have contributed so much during their life time”.**

Mobilizing the YOUTH



250 NCC and 70 NSS students which include army, navy and air wing cadets from different parts of Puducherry participated in the 28 km cycle rally from Puducherry to Cuddalore to bring home the importance of elder healthcare, particularly Palliative Care among the public and community. More than 15 villages were covered and 5000 community members were sensitized. Similarly in Cuddalore, a Cancer Awareness Programme was conducted which covered 'Prevention, Palliation and Progression', where 800 students from 12 schools/colleges and 100 elders participated.



Dr. H.S. Bakshi (left), National Director (Advocacy) along with Mr. Mathew Cherian (centre), Chief Executive, HelpAge and Mr. Dave Mather, Regional Representative, South Asia HelpAge International, bring forth the salient points in effective value education for the young school going children at the Seminar on 'Value Education on Age Care' in the presence of school principals, at the International Youth Centre, Delhi.

HelpAge Agecare spreads its wings

HelpAge Agecare services are spreading its wings far and wide. In Bhopal (MP), HelpAge has started a Physiotherapy centre in its office premises supported by Narmada Hydroelectric Development Corporation Limited. In Chennai (TN), a HelpAge managed Fitness and Wellness Centre was inaugurated as part of the Urban Agecare project. In Vijayawada (AP) supported by the Municipal Corporation, the Agecare Centre has services such Elder Helpline, Ayurvedic Physiotherapy, a Medical Clinic, a Recreation (day care) Centre, a library and computer facility. It also sets an example of active ageing with elders from the Krishna District Senior Citizens Association helping to facilitate elders with ID Cards, Pensions and other Corporation related works.

Entering fresh ground, HelpAge initiated its first project in the Andamans with the inauguration of a Physiotherapy Centre at Chinmaya Mission run by the Chinmaya Vanparastha Sangasthan, an active Senior Citizens Association in Port Blair. The Physiotherapy unit will provide services 6 days a week and will give out free treatment to elders falling under the BPL category.

A voice for Dementia Care



His Excellency Mr. M. K. Narayanan, Governor of West Bengal, felicitates Ms. Shama Rahman, renowned Rabindra Sangeet singer from Bangladesh, as Mr. Mathew Cherian (left), Chief Executive, HelpAge, looks on.

Dementia is a serious loss of cognitive ability in a previously unimpaired person, beyond what might be expected from normal aging. It affects memory, thinking, language, judgement, and behavior. It may be static, the result of a unique global brain injury, or progressive, resulting in long-term decline due to damage or disease in the body. It is far more common in the geriatric population and can be extremely debilitating. In order to support those elderly suffering from Dementia, HelpAge is building it's first Dementia Day Care Centre in Kolkata (WB). To raise proceeds for this project, it organized a concert titled **“Mangalabarota”** where renowned singer from Bangladesh, Ms. Shama Rahman performed, also marking the 150th birth year of the legendary Rabindranath Tagore at Kala Mandir Auditorium in Kolkata.

Straight from the field – Volunteering from the heart



Dr. Mairaj Muzaffar, Consultant Physiotherapist, HelpAge Age Care Team (Jammu) pastes a sticker for seating of senior citizens in a bus.

During our visit to an old age home by bus in Jammu, one line written on the dashboard of the bus drew my attention. I kept gazing at the line for few minutes to understand its exact meaning, it said, **“1-12 seats reserved for Ladies and Handicapped.”** I assumed it was for 'Ladies and Handicapped', and then a thought struck me, why wasn't there a reservation for senior citizens. The result was probably ignorance for the cause of elderly. More awareness had to be generated.

Being a member of HelpAge, I along with my colleague Mr. Nikhil Kumar, Counselor - HelpAge (Jammu) decided to take action. We decided to launch a small campaign for awareness, regarding the rights and welfare of the senior citizens, starting with the reservation of seats in public buses.

With the little budget that we had, we got 1000 stickers printed from a local printer and then pasted them on more than 250 buses. Conductors, motor mechanics and Dhabawalas voluntarily participated in this initiative. The issue was brought into focus and much appreciated by the transport authorities, drivers, conductors, etc.

After a day's of hard work we came back home in the evening with a satisfied heart for doing our little bit for the elderly.

-Dr. Mairaj Muzaffar
Consultant Physiotherapist, HelpAge Age Care Team (Jammu)

