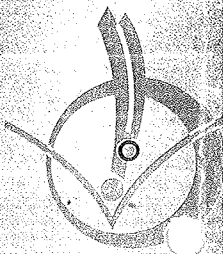




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# SOCIAL WELFARE



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# Healthy Ageing: Central Component of Development Agenda

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**A**geing is a natural process, in the words of Seneca 'old age is an incurable disease' but more recently Ross commented 'You do not heal old age, you protect it, you promote it, you extend it'. It is not a fact that growing old should be a time of dismay and withdrawal from everything around. In fact, for most people, growing old is a time to be enjoyed.

Ageing population has serious implications both at the macro and the household level, especially as the transition has been accompanied by changes in society and economy. The proportion of elderly persons in the country has risen from 5.6% in 1961 to 7.1% in 2001. In absolute terms, the year 1991 saw 55 million elderly persons in the country and touched 76 million in 2001 and is expected to be 177 million by 2025. Forty per cent of elderly live below the poverty line, 90% of them are from the unorganized sector, with no benefits at all. Fifty five per cent of all women over 60 are widows, many without any support, 80% of them are from rural areas and 73% of them are illiterates and have to depend on labour to sustain themselves.

As advances in medical technology have lengthened lifespans and cracks have developed in traditional support systems like the joint family and the village community, problems of the uncared elderly have been impinging on the welfare agenda of the state. Life expectancy in India today is 62 years, but there are great variations between states. These variations notwithstanding, the 60 years plus population in this country has been increasing at a faster rate (38 per cent) than the rest of the population (19 per cent). Population surveys indicate that 10-14 per cent of the elderly either are childless or do not have

children living with them for various reasons.

## Problems

Elderly persons, due to retirement from job and due to reduction in income have a feeling of loneliness, rejection and insecurity. This creates various problems in the elderly such as:

- ageing
- chronic diseases
- psycho-social problems
- feelings of tiredness and tension
- feelings of worthlessness
- loss of appetite
- trouble in sleeping
- dependency
- increased expenditure
- problems in concentration
- headaches and vague aches and pains all over the body

## Rights of the aged

- Be treated as a person
- Be treated as an adult
- Enjoy fair chances on own merits
- Right to a future
- Have fun and companionship
- Right to be romantic
- Right to be interested in public life
- Right to professional help if necessary

Therefore with changing demographic scenario that is likely in many states in first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is clear that for a developing country like India with so much heterogeneity and diversity across and within the states, it could be a real challenge to meet the needs of senior citizens.

## Essentials for good adjustment

- Living within physical limitations
- Adjusting to lower income level
- Achieving security in medical care without sacrificing economic security
- Expressing one's self creativity

- Extending family love to the brotherhood of man
- Retaining personal dignity in society
- Maintaining interests
- Passing on torch to next generation

Although family support and care, of elderly are unlikely to disappear in the near future family care of the elderly seems likely to decrease. The changing social structure, preponderance of individualistic, materialistic and negative values of the younger generation towards the elderly and compulsory retirement of the elderly contribute a great deal to the emergence of old age as a social problem in the country.

For a developing country like India, the rapid growth of older population's issues must be attended to if social and economic development is to proceed effectively. Therefore Government and Non-Governmental organizations have to play a valuable role.

Under these circumstances, in order to establish an affluent and vital society with a pervasive spirit of solidarity in which every citizen can feel happy and proud to have lived a long life, it is necessary to ensure sound development of the economy and society and stable improvement of people's living conditions. Measures are to be implemented to constantly revise the socio-economic system to ensure it's suitability for the coming aged society, support individual independence and familial roles and sustain a secure lifestyle through an appropriate combination of self, mutual and public support. To achieve this the National Policy of Older Persons was formulated in 1999, declared as the International Year of the Older Persons by the Government of India. The policy drafted intervention in the following areas:

#### **Provisions under National Policy of Older Persons**

##### **Financial Security**

- Cover 60 + persons below poverty line
- Rate of monthly pension to be revised
- Provision of tax relief
- Pre retirement counseling
- Income generating programmes

#### **Health care and Nutrition**

- Subsidised health care services
- Health insurance
- Geriatric wards in hospitals
- Mental health services
- Education about nutritional needs and health

#### **Education**

- Education on career development
- Creative use of leisure
- Access for libraries
- Outreach programmes to strengthen intergenerational bonds

#### **Shelter**

- Easy access to loans for the purchase of houses
- Group housing
- Specially constructed houses to meet safety needs

#### **Welfare**

- Institutional and non institutional services
- Creation of welfare fund
- Younger generation to be sensitized

#### **Protection of life and Property**

- Protection from domestic abuse and exploitation
- Machinery for speedy disposal of complaints

#### **Research**

- Set up centres for Gerontological studies
- Dissemination of information to public

#### **Media**

- Ageing issues for public awareness

The National Policy on Older Persons is a comprehensive document with far reaching possibilities. The National Policy recognizes the NGO sector as an important institutional mechanism that can provide user friendly affordable services to complement the endeavour of the state.

#### **National Council for Older Persons (NCOP)**

NCOP has been constituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to operate for the welfare of the Older Persons. Though the national coordinating bodies are doing social service, NGOs are doing laudable work in caring for the aged.

## Role of NGOs and Governmental Organizations For Empowerment of Aged

Individual development	Area development (in relation to the living environment)
Building hopes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of infrastructural facilities</li> </ul>
Skill development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Betterment of facilities</li> </ul>
Entrepreneurial development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of job opportunities</li> </ul>
Attitudinal change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help in self employment</li> </ul>
Behavioural change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help in self employment</li> </ul>
Intra-group development and harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring equitable distribution and utilization of facilities</li> </ul>
Inter-group development and harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability in the use of facilities created</li> </ul>
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of welfare measures</li> </ul>
Confidence building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full utilization of welfare measures</li> </ul>
Gender disparity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange short trips</li> <li>• Organise recreational activities</li> <li>• Conduct talent search competitions</li> </ul>
Multi services senior citizens has following strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobile resources</li> <li>• Integrated aged welfare and development on the pattern of integrated child development services to be organized</li> <li>• Provide consultancy and training to voluntary agencies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct services to senior citizens</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Net working</li> </ul> <p><b>* Direct Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobile health services</li> <li>• Health camps</li> <li>• Recreational services</li> <li>• Awareness campaigns</li> <li>• Celebration of important days - World Elders' Day</li> <li>• Counselling</li> <li>• Effort to remove elder abuse, neglect, family relations, stress, health</li> <li>• Therapeutic services- Eg. Yoga, Physiotherapy</li> <li>• Hobby, talent search</li> <li>• Outreach services - Old age pension, facilities for the elderly, home based care</li> <li>• Day care centre for the elderly</li> <li>• Income generating programme</li> <li>• Family related activities : Intergeneration activities</li> <li>• Raise funds</li> <li>• Legal aid</li> </ul>	<p><b>Research</b></p> <p>NGOs can collaborate with educational institutions and conduct research on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psycho social needs of the aged</li> <li>• Field practice to develop self help groups of senior citizens</li> <li>• Frequent demographic surveys to be done within the community</li> <li>• Networking of organizations working for the care of the elderly</li> <li>• National Seminar to develop Gerontological social work in India</li> <li>• Networking between NGOs, families and geriatric committees for upgrading the services of the elderly.</li> </ul> <p><b>Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for para professionals to work with older</li> <li>• Training for professionals to work for the</li> <li>• Training of volunteers to work in the filed of geriatric social work</li> </ul>

### Conclusion

A multidisciplinary team approach consisting of the geriatrician, the demographer, the gerontologists, the professional social worker, the clinical psychologist, the social work journalist, geriatric nurse in well organized geriatric centres

and their community outreach through people's participation is a good strategy for the future.

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