

## *PRAVAAS: Social Work with Elderly in Mumbai*

### **Context of the Project**

The Census of India 2001 enumerated 76.6 million persons aged 60 years and above, constituting about eight percent of the population of the country. As expected, female population aged 60 and above outnumbered the males by one million. According to projections, the population of 60 and above in 2026 is estimated to reach 173 million, which would constitute more than 12 percent of the total population. The old dependency ratio, which is the number of people aged 60 and above per 100 persons in the working ages (15-59), will be 19 percent in 2026, resulting in increase in median age from 22.5 years to 31.4 years between 2001 and 2026 (ORGI, 2006).

The emerging changes in the age and sex structure of the population, particularly at old and older ages further impacted through migration of youth and families, are expected to pose newer demographic and developmental challenges. The traditional norms and values of the Indian society laid stress on showing respect and providing care for the aged. However, in recent times, society is witnessing a gradual but definite decline of the joint family system, as a result of which a large number of parents are being neglected by their families exposing them to lack of emotional, physical and financial support. These older persons are facing a lot of problems in the absence of adequate social security.

Incidentally, the share of those over 60 in Maharashtra is high. In India, while those over the age of 60 constitute 8.6 per cent of the population, in Maharashtra, it is 9.9 per cent. The highest is in Kerala, where 12.6 per cent of the population is over 60. Also on rise is Maharashtra's age dependency ratio — ratio of older dependents (people older than 64) to the working age population (between 15 to 64). India's age old dependency ratio stands at 14.2 as against 15.7 for Maharashtra. Only two states, Kerala and Punjab, have a higher dependency ratio. Mumbai has around 1.5 million senior citizens. This clearly reveals that ageing has become a major social challenge and there is a need to provide for the economic and health needs of the elderly and to create a social milieu, which is conducive and sensitive to the emotional needs of the elderly.

The National Policy for the Elderly 1999 clearly articulates the different needs of the Elderly and proposes ways of addressing them. The policy focuses on three aspects, namely: Older persons and Development; Advancing Health and Well-Being into Old Age; and Ensuring Enabling and Supportive Environments, as recommended by the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (nodal agency for the Elderly) have worked on certain framework for intervention based on the policy.

In this context, Pravaas is set up a field action project of College of Social Work (Autonomous), Nirmala Niketan Institute, Mumbai. It provides social work intervention with Senior Citizens. Three slums, namely Bhagat Singh Nagar 1, 2, and 3, Chatrapati Vasahat, and Indira Nagar in Goregaon West were identified as the locales of the pilot phase of the project. The project sites will be expanded as per project funding and client needs.

## Strategy

At the basic level, senior citizens neighborhood groups [SCNGs] are formed. Each SCNGs can have up to 15 members. Eligibility for joining the group is 55 years. The SCNGs meets at least once a month for group processes followed by *adda* (space for chatting and catching up). Each SCNG is facilitated by a Para Social Worker/ Trained Volunteer. A group of 20 or more SCNGs form clusters; and all the clusters will be part of a federation at the Mumbai Metropolitan Region level.

## Project Goal-Outcomes and Activities

Goal	Outcomes	Activities
Enhancement in the quality of life of the Senior Citizens and assisting them to embrace healthy and active ageing	a) Improvement in the social and digital literacy	1. Digital literacy skills
		2. Numeracy, reading and writing skills
		3. Awareness sessions on abuse and rights
	b) Increase in awareness about health and wellbeing	4. Regular health checkup
		5. Nutrition guidance and food bank for needy
		6. Mindfulness and stress management exercises
	c) Facilitating supportive home and external environments to address social exclusion	7. Home visits and case interventions
		8. Linkages with government schemes
		9. Cluster level and federation level interventions/ advocacy on senior citizens issues to address social exclusion.

## Our Social Workers

- Form SCNGs / Facilitate the group work sessions as per the activities planned
- Conduct literacy and health sessions
- Provide counselling to clients and families encompassing loss and bereavement
- Carry out risk assessment with clients facing domestic violence, financial/ emotional abuse, neglect and self-neglect through home visits
- Participate in case conference and liaison meeting of workers involved and draw up plan of action
- Provide clients and families information on a range of topics including entitlements.
- Advocate on behalf of our clients with local authorities and social welfare services.
- Listen to clients and motivate them to be actively engaged in social life