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HelpAge India

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

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MESSAGE FROM **THE PRESIDENT**

As we all know, India is undergoing a demographic transition, with a rapidly growing population of older persons. According to the United Nations, India surpassed China in 2023 to become the most populous country in the world, with 1.5 billion people. Of these, about 140 million (~10%) are aged 60 years and above, and this proportion is expected to increase to 19% by 2050. However, the majority of the elderly in India face multiple vulnerabilities, such as poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, chronic diseases, social isolation, and neglect.

One of the major challenges faced by the elderly in India is the lack of social security. According to a recent study by HelpAge India, 67% elders do not have any health insurance and only 13% of the elderly have access to any form of pension or social assistance, while the rest depend on their family or charity for survival. Moreover, the existing social security schemes are inadequate, fragmented, and exclusionary, leaving out many deserving beneficiaries. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exposed the gaps and weaknesses in the social protection system for the elderly, as they faced increased risks of infection, mortality, and loss of livelihood.

Another challenge faced by the elderly in India is the digital divide. In the era of information and communication technology, digital literacy is essential for accessing various services, opportunities, and information. However, many elderly people lack the skills, devices, and connectivity to use digital platforms. According to another survey by HelpAge India, 81% of the elderly respondents wanted to learn how to use smartphones, net banking, online payment, and other digital applications, but 60% felt that their children did not have time to help them. The digital divide has also worsened the social isolation and loneliness of the elderly, especially during the lockdown and social distancing measures.

In this context, HelpAge India has been working tirelessly to address the needs and rights of the elderly in India. Because of all of your support, we have been able to provide various services and programs, such as health care, livelihood support, digital education, skill development, legal aid, advocacy, and counselling, to the elderly in rural and urban areas in India. We have also been promoting intergenerational solidarity and respect for the elderly, by involving the youth and the community in our activities. We have been collaborating with the government, civil society, and corporate sector, to create an enabling environment for the elderly, where they can live with dignity, security, and happiness.

Although HelpAge India is celebrating 45 years of service in India, AFHI is just under three years old in the US. I am grateful to all the donors, partners, and volunteers, who have supported us in our journey. I am also thankful to the elderly beneficiaries, who have continuously inspired us with their resilience, wisdom, and spirit. I acknowledge that we have a long way to go, and we face many hurdles and uncertainties ahead. But I am confident that with your continued support and cooperation and led by its Executive Director, Swati Nigam, both AFHI & HelpAge India will be able to overcome them and make a positive difference in the lives of the elderly in India.

Thank you for being a part of our family.

Sincerely,

Pramod Bhasin

Board President

New York

December 2023

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



With HelpAge India's distinguished 45-year legacy in serving the elderly, AFHI, its US counterpart, has charted its course for just about three years. The opportunity to collaborate with our esteemed founding board members, Advisory Council, and champion eldercare initiatives in India from within the United States, is a profound honor. Approaching this transformative journey, I am keenly aware of the significant work that lies ahead.

Acknowledging the multifaceted challenges within the eldercare sector, it becomes imperative to recognize the ongoing demographic shift in India towards an aging population. Globally, the trend of an aging population is accelerating, with human life expectancy rising rapidly. India's senior population has seen a consistent rise since 1961, growing by over 27 million during 2001-11. Current projections estimate 138 million individuals above the age of 60, with 90% of this population needing to work to survive. By 2050, the elderly population is expected to grow to 319 million. Millions of elders have no pensions, social safety net, insurance, coverage etc; more than 20% cannot access or afford healthcare; almost 25% of the elders are abused by their own kin and many more such statistics highlight the importance and urgency of our work.

AFHI's commitment, via HelpAge India, remains steadfast, focusing on a holistic approach by catering to elder needs in healthcare, age care, livelihoods, emergency response, policy advocacy, knowledge, and research. Their community-based, evidence-driven interventions, such as the 'mobile healthcare units' network, senior citizen homes, and 'Elderline 14567' program, reach over 2 million elders, with 80% residing in rural areas and 60% being women. Our hope is to reach 20 million elders with your support.

Confident in our collaborative efforts alongside board members, supporters, and our dedicated staff in India, I am optimistic about systematically increasing awareness & discussions regarding the needs of the elderly. Envisioning AFHI's continued expansion, I see us fostering a community of like-minded, passionate individuals across the United States who share our commitment to ensuring that the elderly population in India has access to essential care and support for healthy, dignified, and fulfilling lives.

Being part of this organization is both humbling and inspiring. I eagerly anticipate working with each of you to make a substantial difference in the lives of the elderly in India.

Sincerely,

Swati Nigam

Executive Director

Austin, TX

December 2023

AFHI LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



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Anjali Kumar

Economist, World Bank, (retd)

HELPAge INDIA PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

HelpAge India supports more than 2 million elders across the country through its programmes and initiatives.

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF

HelpAge India



Restoration of Vision

Conducted 15,435 cataract surgeries this year, through tie-ups with reputed hospitals and medical centers and distributed 12,909 refraction error correction spectacles for elders with weak eyesight.



Mobile Healthcare

Running Asia's largest mobile healthcare network with 170 Mobile Healthcare Units across 2400 villages, in 26 states, bringing primary healthcare to over 8,00,000 disadvantaged elders, delivering 2 million treatments annually.



Elderline - 14567

A lifeline for lakhs of elders, the 'Elderline -14567' provides assistance in times of emergency, abandonment and need, along with providing information, guidance and response. A national initiative under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, HelpAge is one of its implementing partners in select states.



Livelihood Support

Empowered 1,00,000 rural elderly through the establishment of 8000 Elder-Self-Help-Groups (ESHGs). 70% are now functioning independently. 84 Common Service Centres have been institutionalized and linked to CSC e-Governance connecting elders to government schemes & services.



Digital Empowerment & Awareness

Conducts workshops for nearly 1,00,000 senior citizens each year on digital literacy & safety, legal & financial awareness and also on rights awareness about the Government's 'Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act.'



Old Age Homes

Runs 8 barrier-free homes for the aged in 5 states and supports more than 300 homes for disadvantaged elders across India. HelpAge also run 12 Agecare Centres in 5 States.



Mental Health Awareness

Conducts workshops under 'Saarthak' - a community-based initiative for Mental Wellbeing of Elderly' which aims to build the capacity of 10,000 community health workers, helping them in early identification of mental health issues among senior citizens.



Advocacy

Advocates for elder needs such as Universal pension, quality healthcare, food security, action against Elder Abuse etc. & advocates for elder friendly policies and their implementation thereof, with Central and State governments.



Geriatric Care

Provides Geriatric Care Assistance to elders through Elder Help Desks set up at hospitals, operational at AIIMS (Delhi, Rishikesh & Raipur), Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (Chennai) and Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (Lucknow).

MAJOR AFHI HIGHLIGHTS

PROJECT SAKSHAM: EMPOWERING RURAL ELDERLY



Taking another significant step towards the empowerment of rural elders, HelpAge launched 'Project Saksham', supported by AFHI-MetLife Foundation, across 4 project locations in Puducherry, Bihar & West Bengal. This project will enable HelpAge to provide practical and comprehensive digital and financial literacy awareness to more than 17,000 seniors (with 64 percent being older women) from 1392 Elder- Self-

Help-Groups. It will help them gain access to government benefit programmes and use digital financial services in a secure and confident manner. Under the project, elders will also receive comprehensive training and financial support to start or grow their own economic activities, as well as gain access to quality primary healthcare services. The project is a holistic model aimed at ensuring elder empowerment and dignity. Accordingly, 14 Cluster Level Digital Centres are now in place and elderly are being enrolled for the PMGDISHA course by the CSC e-Governance and are accessing online learning from National Council of Organic Farming and National Farming.

GURUKRIPA FOUNDATION PROJECT -



AFHI is grateful for the generous grant of support by the Guru Kripa Foundation towards the maintenance of Thamaraiikulam Elders Village (TEV) run by HelpAge India in Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu. Housing 75 vulnerable elder residents, TEV is India's first unique 'Elder's Village,' which was set-up post the Asian Tsunami in 2004, to provide shelter for those elders who lost their homes, livelihoods and families in the devastating flooding in the region. The village provides avenues for elders to be actively engaged with daily living activities, providing livelihood opportunities, physiotherapy & healthcare services etc, while taking care of all their essential needs. This gathering was a milestone for AFHI, allowing us to spotlight challenges faced by the elderly in India and showcase HelpAge India's impactful work in addressing these issues.

AFHI PARTICIPATION IN THE FIRST “INDIA GIVING DAY”



American Friends of HelpAge India (AFHI) spread its wings through various initiatives through the year. For the first time, AFHI participated in ‘India Giving Day’, a national day of philanthropy, dedicated to India’s development. Mr. Pramod Bhasin, Board President of AFHI and Governing Board member of HelpAge India, took the lead, by matching every donation received by AFHI, thereby doubling the impact made for the elder cause. One of the highlights of the campaign was the support given by young student volunteer Eisha Yadav, who not only contributed towards the cause, but also championed it across social media platforms. AFHI is now looking forward to engaging more such young champions, who will go on to become ambassadors for the elder cause and help improve the lives of disadvantaged elders in India.

AFHI’s registration has been approved again for the second Annual “India Giving Day” which will be held on March 1st, 2024.

AFHI PRESENTS AT THE NGO EVENT AT THE WORLD BANK



In a notable achievement for the fiscal year, AFHI's Executive Director, Swati Nigam, was invited as one of the speakers at the NGO Event hosted by the Community Connections Campaign (CCC) group of the World Bank. The event took place on November 30th, 2023, at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington DC. AFHI proudly stood as one of three India-based NGOs selected to present to approximately 1500 group members.

During the event, Swati Nigam articulated the diverse programs and extensive outreach of HelpAge India. Not only did she provide valuable insights into the organization's initiatives, but she also engaged with the audience by addressing questions related to elderly demographics, prevailing challenges, and the innovative solutions being developed to tackle these issues.

The event's keynote speaker, Dr. R Balasubramaniam, delivered a captivating address that delved into the evolution of NGOs in India. Dr. Balasubramaniam, a distinguished development scholar, author, public policy advocate, and leadership trainer with over three decades of pioneering work, shared his perspectives on the challenges faced by NGOs. His discourse included valuable insights on opportunities ahead, emphasizing the importance of embracing a spirit of partnership—collaborating with entities such as government and corporations. Additionally, he touched upon innovative financing strategies and the role of NGOs in a post-COVID scenario, particularly post the G20 Delhi Declaration.

This prominent gathering marked a significant milestone for AFHI, as we were honoured and humbled by the opportunity to shed light on the challenges faced by the elderly in India and bring to the forefront the impactful work being done by HelpAge India to address these challenges.



MAJOR PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

PREVENTIVE HEALTHCARE

AWARENESS ABOUT THE COVID-19 PRECAUTIONARY DOSE

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Taking forward our efforts towards preventive healthcare, a special campaign to promote the COVID-19 Precautionary Dose, was organised at all our project locations. Under the campaign, information, outreach and communication material was customised and translated into 11 regional languages and awareness sessions were held, covering nearly 1 lakh beneficiaries in more than 4500 locations across the country.

PANEL DISCUSSION ON STRENGTHENING HEALTH SYSTEMS

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HelpAge India held a review session on the learnings & reflections from the USAID supported momentum Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity project for enabling Covid 19 Vaccination for older persons, which was implemented by HelpAge India. This was followed by a panel discussion on ‘Strengthening the Health Response Systems for Older Persons’ where a special address was given by Mr. Rajiv Manjhi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. Mr. Manjhi is leading the momentum Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity project National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE), focusing on healthy ageing. He spoke about the need for infrastructural support for elder healthcare and the need to address the overall healthcare of elderly, both physical and emotional. Mr. Kiran Karnik, Chairperson, HelpAge India, also spoke about how COVID-19 was a learning experience that revealed the need to fine-tune our health systems and that in order to understand elder needs and challenges better, we need advancements in geriatric research.





PROJECT SUGAMYA:

HELPING ELDERS WITH MOBILITY

More than 40% of senior citizens face functional disability in the country. Most belong to the unorganised sector and are unable to afford basic mobility aids such as canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, etc. To tackle this challenge, HelpAge India launched 'Project Sugamya', a pan-India effort to provide mobility aids to disadvantaged elders and help improve their quality of life, increase livelihood opportunities and reduce dependence on family and caregivers, thereby enabling them to live with dignity and independence. More than 4100 mobility aids were distributed under the project.



PROJECT SURAKSHIT:

DIGITAL LEARNING & SAFETY

In a move to empower India's elders to tap into the convenience of digitally-accessible services whilst ensuring that they are protected against online frauds and scams, HelpAge India launched an online safety training programme for 50,000 elders across India, with grant support from Google.org. The workshops offer seniors essential digital safety training, equipping them with critical skills to navigate the internet safely and securely, and reap the benefits of online digital conveniences. Workshops are being organized in collaboration with Senior Citizens' Associations across the country, where a customised audio-visual curriculum covering various topics, was created for easy understanding of elders, providing information & advice on how to stay safe online while navigating the online world.

MARKING 'WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY'

LAUNCH OF 'BRIDGE THE GAP' REPORT

BRIDGE THE GAP Understanding Elder Needs

HelpAge India Fighting isolation, poverty, neglect.



A HelpAge India
2022 Report

Research Partner: Ipsos Research Pvt. Ltd.

HelpAge India Fighting isolation, poverty, neglect.

To have a deeper understanding of the overarching gaps in elder care, HelpAge India conducted a research study and released a report, titled '**Bridge the Gap: Understanding Elder Needs**' nationwide, marking 'World Elder Abuse Awareness Day' in June 2022. The aim was to understand the gaps in income and employment at old age, health and well-being, elder abuse and safety, as well as, social and digital exclusion of older persons, which prevent them from living, happy, healthy and productive lives. The report spanning 22 cities, focused not only on the core existential issues that older persons deal with on a day-to-day basis, but also took stock of the entirety of their experiences. In the national capital, the report was released by Chief Guest, Mr. R. Subrahmanyam, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India, followed by an in-depth panel discussion.

Thousands of senior citizens participated in various events across the country marking the day, from signature campaigns, to walkathons, seminars, pledge campaigns, cycle rallies, performances by school children and much more, raising awareness about the needs of older persons.



LAUNCH OF 'SAARTHAK' - INITIATIVE FOR THE MENTAL WELL-BEING OF THE ELDERLY

After a gap of two years post the pandemic, HelpAge India marked 'International Day of Older Persons' (October 1) with the launch of a first-of-its-kind mental health programme titled '*Saarthak*' - a community-based initiative for the mental well-being of the elderly, in collaboration with the national institute of mental health and Neuro

Sciences (NIMHANS). The project aims to strengthen community based mental health care support, by building the capacity of 10,000 non-specialist health workforce and community care givers on geriatric mental health across the country, over a period of a year with subsequent scale-up.

The project was jointly launched at Delhi's India International Centre, by Dr. Ritu Rana, Mission Head-Healthcare, HelpAge India, and Dr. P.T. Sivakumar, Professor and Head of Geriatric Psychiatry Unit, NIMHANS, in the presence of Dr. Vinod K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, Govt. of India, and Mr. Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Past President CII, VC, Bharti Enterprises and Ms. Rumjhum Chatterjee, Vice Chairperson, HelpAge India.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

It was a year of recognitions for the amazing work our teams on the ground and across our various offices have been doing. Here are some highlights:



CRISIL VO1A CERTIFICATION

HelpAge India was accorded with a Voluntary Organisation Grading Certificate from CRISIL with a VO1A rating, the highest given to any Voluntary Organisation. The VO1A grading was done after a thorough process of due diligence and an assessment on two main parameters – delivery capability and financial proficiency. The VO1A grading reaffirms the faith in the work done on-ground, the impact made and in the people who make it happen.



SAT PAUL MITTAL NATIONAL AWARD

HelpAge India was honoured to receive the 'Platinum Award 2022', as part of the Sat Paul Mittal Awards for its service to the cause of disadvantaged elders in India. The award was presented at an event in Ludhiana by the Governor of Punjab, Sh. Banwarilal Purohit and was received by Mr. Rohit Prasad, CEO, HelpAge India. The Sat Paul Mittal Awards for outstanding service to humanity were instituted in 1992 by Nehru Sidhant Kender Trust, Ludhiana, in the fond memory of its Founder President, Late Shri Sat Paul Mittal.



GUIDESTAR INDIA PLATINUM CERTIFICATION

HelpAge India received the GuideStar India Platinum Certification for 'Transparency & Public Accountability' in its work during the past year, serving the disadvantaged and poor elderly. GuideStar India is India's largest and most reliable NGO information repository.

The prestigious GuideStar India Champion Level-Platinum certification awarded underwent a rigorous due diligence process, and is an indication of a high level of accountability and good governance procedures adopted by the organisation.



LEH-LADAKH OLD AGE HOME RECEIVES RECOGNITION

HelpAge received a 'Letter of Appreciation' from the Hon'ble Chief Executive Councillor, Advocate Tashi Gyalsen, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Leh, for its pioneering old age home set-up in Shey, Leh-Ladakh - an integrated model facility for the care of destitute older persons, a first-of-its-kind.

STATISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- 1| ONLY 12%** of elders in India know about the Maintenance & Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPSA) Act? This legislation serves as a crucial support system for our seniors who find themselves alone or without family assistance, ensuring essential financial support, protection, and healthcare.
- 2|** As per the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the elderly population in India is **PROJECTED TO DOUBLE** in the next 20 years. The changing demographic poses several challenges, especially for our mothers and grandmothers.
- 3| 2 OUT OF 10 ELDERS** suffering from Mental health issues are not receiving any kind of support.
- 4| 10 MILLION PEOPLE IN INDIA** grapple with either visual impairment or blindness, and a staggering 90% of them are elders?
- 5|** Hypertension is prevalent in **48.6% OF OLDER WOMEN** in India. Unfortunately, this is just one of the many heart diseases that elder women are suffering from and often remain undiagnosed due to neglect or lack of health awareness.
- 6| 17% OF ELDERLY WOMEN** have faced discrimination due to gender & 60% of elderly women have faced social discrimination due to the marital status i.e. Widowed.

KEY LAUNCHES AND PARTNERSHIPS



LEH-LADAKH ELDERLINE INAUGURATION

The Ladakh national helpline for senior citizens 'Elderline (14567)' was inaugurated by Ms. Padma Angmo, Secretary, Department of Social and Tribal Welfare Ladakh. HelpAge India is the implementing partner of the Elderline in collaboration with the National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) and the Department of Social and Tribal Welfare Ladakh,

Mr. Amit Singh Chandel, Director, Social and Tribal Welfare Ladakh, Dr. Rajesh, State Head - Himachal Pradesh & Ladakh, HelpAge India, among other dignitaries who are a core part of the project, were present during the inauguration. The services offered by the Elderline to older persons include - information (e.g pension related, medical services, etc.), guidance, and emotional support. Besides this, field intervention related services such as the rescue of homeless elders, shelter, counselling, guidance on health-related issues and legal services are provided by the field officer at a block/district level.

SENIOR CITIZENS HELP DESK AT AIIMS RAIPUR

Senior citizens visiting AIIMS Raipur will now have a far less daunting hospital visit experience with the inauguration, of HelpAge India's 'Elder Help Desk'. Through this desk, various facilities like assistance for hospitalisation, discharge, online-offline appointments, drop-off and pick-up of senior citizens guiding them to various departments and collecting of reports, will be made available inside the AIIMS campus for senior citizens. The Elders Help Desk will be operated by HelpAge India in association with the Medical Social Welfare Unit of AIIMS.



CARE AND WELLNESS CENTRE FOR PALLIATIVE CARE PATIENTS

HelpAge India's Tamaraiikulam Elders' Village (TEV) in Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu, is now home to a Care and Wellness Centre for palliative care patients, thanks to the generous support of sensitive donors. The Centre will go a long way in ensuring that elders who are bedridden or immobile, are able to receive better care and support in their later years, and live in comfort with dignity.



ANDROID-BASED APPLICATION FOR HEALTHCARE DATA

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An Android-based Management Information System (MIS) application - M-Sparsh - was launched for capturing data through HelpAge's Mobile Healthcare Units and is being rolled out in phases across the country. The system will help track outreach to elder beneficiaries covered under HelpAge's healthcare services through its Mobile Healthcare Unit (MHU) programme and also keep track of diseases of individual patients. Currently 100 MHU locations have started using the application and more than 80,000 treatments along with diagnosis have been captured by the App.



RELEASE OF RESEARCH REPORT SUPPORTED BY UNFPA

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HelpAge India released a report titled 'Good Age Care Practices during the COVID-19 Pandemic' that delved into the role played by Voluntary Organisations in supporting State and Central government initiatives during the pandemic. The report, which was supported by UNFPA, was released in Delhi on 'International Volunteer Day' (December 5). The launch was followed by a multi-stakeholder panel discussion, attended by Ms. Andrea Wojnar, Representative UNFPA India and Country Director Bhutan, Mr. Amarjeet Sinha, Former Secretary, Department of Rural Development (Govt. of India), Prof. Santosh Kumar, National Institute of Disaster Management and Mr. Harsh Jaitli, CEO, VANI, who shared their learnings from the ground.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMME:

The ‘Green Warrior’

Proving that the power of determination can overcome any odds, including the barriers of ageing, 70-year-old Tara Devi, from Kataiya village in Supaul district (Bihar), has become an inspirational icon. Until a few years ago, Tara Devi’s entire family were working as farm labourers and struggling to make ends meet. Today, she is earning enough to support her family and is also able to provide employment to other women, helping empower them financially. She is able to ensure at least 100 days of employment every year to this workforce of older women.

Despite no formal education, Tara today has a flourishing agricultural business. Her fortune changed when she joined *Akshyavat Bujurg Mahasangh*, one of HelpAge India’s Elder-Self-Help-Groups (ESHGs) under ‘Project *Astitva*’. With some seed money from the group, she started planting cauliflower, radish, and other vegetables. This year alone, she has cultivated one acre of cauliflower.

She started the cultivation with an initial amount of Rs. 50,000 with a part of it coming from her own savings and the rest through a loan from the ESHG, where members create a corpus through monthly savings. She is expecting to earn more than 1 lakh from the cultivation.

The best part is she is also a ‘green warrior’ as she practices organic farming, with fertiliser and manure that is being made by her and other members of the *Akshyavat Bujurg Mahasangh*.

She is an inspiration for not just elders like herself, but also for youngsters, who are motivated by her entrepreneurial skills and drive. She is a role model of self-reliance & independence, and an active contributor to the community.



Weaving Independence

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91-year-old Lalmohan Paswan from Bihar, is no ordinary man. Wanting to contribute to India's 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrating 75 years of India's Independence, this self-professed Gandhian and admirer of Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, undertook an incredible feat of stitching 450 national flags in seven days.

Paswan's story is one of defeating the odds and breaking all barriers. He was one of nearly three million people, whose lives were turned upside down by the devastating Kosi floods of 2008, which killed hundreds of people. He lost his home and cattle during the floods, and was left with no means of survival.

His struggle to keep his family alive continued, till fate intervened and he was discovered by HelpAge India in 2014 when the organisation was in the process of setting up Elder-Self-Help-Groups (ESHGs) to help flood affected elders regain their independence and dignity through its sustainable income-generation model. He became a member of the *Bajrang Vriddh Self-Help-Group* and was given a loan to purchase a sewing machine. A role model of active ageing, today he not only is able to support his own family, but also contributes to the nation.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

VISION RESTORATION:

Regaining Life's Radiance

65-year-old Ningavva Kunnur, belongs to a remote village in the Dharwad district of Karnataka. She married at a young age and had a simple dream of having a happy family with children, who would bring joy in the couple's life and support them once they got older. However, it was not meant to be. She had multiple miscarriages and due to financial constraints, the couple could not seek any medical solutions for their situation and eventually gave up on having children. 15 years ago, Ningavva lost her only source of support and companionship, with the death of her husband. Since then, Ningavva has been staying all alone in a tiny house with bare minimum facilities and surviving on a meagre pension.

In recent years, Ningavva started struggling with the gradual loss of vision, which made it difficult for her to carry on with her day-to-day activities. Getting an eye check-up required money, which she was hard pressed for. Fortunately, she heard from her neighbours that there was a free eye check-up camp being organised in a neighbouring village by HelpAge India. Ningavva decided go along with her neighbours.

The check-up revealed that she had cataract in both her eyes. She was told that since she could not afford the surgery, it would be free of cost for her and that she need not worry about any extra expenditures either. Ningavva was relieved and immediately agreed. She was then taken to HelpAge India's partner hospital in Hubli where she underwent surgery for both eyes and got intraocular lens implants. For Ningavva, having her eyesight restored was like regaining her last remaining companion to support her through her challenging life.

Today, Ningavva can move around easily, independently manage her daily needs and her eyes light up with a smile, when you meet her.



RESTORING FUNCTIONAL MOBILITY

Retrieving Freedom

96-year-old, Gour Chandra Mondal lives in Patharchur village in West Bengal with his son, who works as a labourer, and is the sole breadwinner of the family.

Despite becoming physically fragile with age, Mondal is mentally strong and often says he would like to live for another 10 to 15 years. Unfortunately, he lost strength in his legs which severely curtailed his mobility and he was unable to move about independently. Our Mobile Healthcare Unit (MHU) team made a home visit and were moved by Mondal's zest for life.

Mondal shared his desire of wanting to be more mobile and be able to visit his daughter, who lives at a distance from him. The HelpAge team provided him with a wheelchair through 'Project Sugamya'. The wheelchair has transformed his life and has tremendously helped his functional mobility, resulting in overall improved health, reducing his stress levels and stabilizing his blood pressure. There is also a significant improvement in his posture and reduction of strain on his upper body. Mondal is now able to come to our MHU site on his own to get his health check-ups and has even visited his daughter's house several times. Mondal is finally living the independent life he was praying for, and has become a source of motivation to all those around him.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

MOBILE HEALTHCARE:

A Vital Lifeline

80-year-old Nani Gopal Das, resident of Belghoria, West Bengal, has been visiting our Mobile Healthcare Unit (MHU) for over 20 years. He suffers from hypertension and osteoarthritis. He lives with his wife who has become almost completely blind due to diabetic retinopathy. Their only son has virtually abandoned them. Earlier, when his wife's vision was better, she would visit the MHU along with her husband, but now she has become completely homebound.

Nani is a devoted husband and has taken on the role of being his wife's sole caregiver. Over the years, his greatest fear has been, that if he ever falls sick, there will be no one to look after her. Therefore, he ensures that through HelpAge's MHU, his primary healthcare needs are taken care of. Not only has the health support enabled him to effectively tackle his own health issues, but the treatment received by his wife through frequent home visits of the MHU team, has also helped stabilise her condition.

For Nani and his wife, the MHU has been a lifeline that they desperately needed.



ELDER HELPLINE:

Reviving Life

75-year-old Dr. Rima*, was a health practitioner, who used to run her own clinic, but deteriorating health, forced her to discontinue her practice. She used to live alone. One day, a social worker from her neighbourhood, noticed the decline in her physical and mental faculties, and tried to convince her to move into an old age home, where she could be looked after. Dr. Rima, who had always been independent and able her whole life, was reluctant, fearing she will become dependent on others for her survival, plus the love for her home, where she has spent her whole life and the comfort of familiarity of her own surroundings, added to her hesitancy.

Things soon became worse as her mental health kept deteriorating, forcing the social worker to reach out to Government supported 'Elderline-14567' being run by HelpAge India. Our Field Response Officer immediately came to see Dr. Rima and gently persuaded her to get some help to regain her strength and peace of mind, and that she needed to move into a place where she could be cared for. The Police, who the Elder Helpline team work with closely, assured Dr. Rima that in her absence, they would ensure her house would remain secure.

With all her doubts and fears allayed, Dr. Rima finally agreed to move into an old age home. After a few months, our Helpline officer visited her and found a whole new person in Dr. Rima, she was a lady now full of life, new energy and positivity. She shared, that being in a place with many like-minded elders like herself, gave her immense joy and today they have become her 'new' family.

**Name changed for protection of privacy.*



PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Transforming Elder Lives

- Supports more than 2 million elders across the country through its programmes and initiatives.
- Operates one of Asia's largest mobile healthcare networks for elders & their community with 170 Mobile Healthcare Units operating across 2400 villages in 26 states & Union Territories.
- Delivers primary healthcare and health awareness to over 8 lakh disadvantaged elders, providing over 20 lakh treatments every year.
- Conducted 15,435 cataract surgeries through tie-ups with reputed hospitals and medical centres and distributed 12,909 refraction error correction spectacles to elders with weak eyesight.
- Conducted 5 workshops under 'Saarthak' - a community-based initiative for mental well being of elderly which aims to build the capacity of 10,000 community health workers, informal and institutional caregivers, helping them in early identification of mental health issues among senior citizens.
- Supports lakhs of elders with information, guidance and response, through the 'Elderline-14567' service under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, of which HelpAge India is the implementing partner in select states.
- Run 8 barrier free homes for the aged in 5 states and supports more than 300 homes for disadvantaged elders across India. Also runs 12 Agecare Centres in 5 States.
- Provides Geriatric Care Assistance to elders through HelpAge 'Elder Help Desks' set up at hospitals, currently operational at AIIMS (Delhi), AIIMS (Rishikesh), AIIMS (Raipur), Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (Chennai) and Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (Lucknow).
- Provides 90,000 physiotherapy treatments every year to older persons with musculoskeletal diseases such as back pain, arthritis and other age-related mobility challenges.
- Over 1 lakh elderly have been provided financial security through its pioneering Elder-Self-Help-Group (ESHG) programme, with the establishment of more than 8000 ESHGs, 70% of which are now functioning independently. 10,573 elderly from Elder-Self-Help-Groups were provided vegetable seed kits & vermicomposting packets, to tide over their livelihood challenges, using environmentally friendly products, and also helping them build up their nutritional status.
- 84 Common Service Centres have been institutionalised and linked to CSC e-Governance to connect poor disadvantaged elders to government schemes & services. 1067 rural elderly have been trained under the PMGDISHA Curriculum.
- HelpAge has been designated as the National Support Organization for the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). MOUs for strategic support have been signed with State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) of West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, to further elder inclusion in NRLM.
- Reached out to nearly 1 lakh senior citizens from Senior Citizens Associations by conducting approximately 10,000 workshops on digital literacy & safety, legal & financial awareness and on the 'Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act'.
- HelpAge advocates with the Government for age-friendly policies and laws on old age pension, Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act and the National Policy on Senior Citizens.



“The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others”

- Mahatma Gandhi

★ AMERICAN FRIENDS OF ★

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