

# Senior Citizens as Useful and Productive Citizens



Organized by  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK,  
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI  
&  
SANSAD, NEW DELHI

**One Day Discussion  
Workshop**

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# **Senior Citizens as Useful and Productive Citizens**

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**2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011**

## **BRIEF REPORT**

The Department of Social Work, University of Delhi and South Asian Network for Social & Agricultural Development (SANSAD), New Delhi, organized one-day workshop on **Senior Citizens as Useful and Productive Citizens** on **2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2011, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.** at the **International Guest House, University of Delhi**. This initiative was a part of the project on Research and Advocacy on the impact of the new economic policies on senior citizens undertaken by SANSAD with the help of Helpage India.

Senior citizens play crucial role in myriad of ways in building of a society and a nation and it is obligatory on our part to recognize and appreciate their contributions. Unfortunately, at times, their roles and contributions remain unnoticed and overlooked. However, research findings and awareness generation initiatives by government and civil society groups are trying to change the negative perception about senior citizens as spent-force and unproductive. Eminent gerontologists, social work educators and practitioners, members of Senior Citizen Associations, researchers and students participated in the discussion.

### **Proceedings**

Professor Sanjai Bhatt welcomed participants of this discussion group on behalf of the Department and SANSAD. He welcomed the Chairperson Professor Sushma Batra, Head, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi, Mr. Anil Singh, Secretary General, SANSAD, Mr. R.K. Gupta, President, Senior Citizens Association, New Delhi and other eminent participants. This was followed by a round of self-introduction by all the participants.

Prof. Bhatt highlighted the changing situation of the senior citizens in the context of the globalization, especially the new economic reform policies. He introduced panel and explained modus operandi of workshop. He invited Prof Batra for her opening remarks.

Prof. Sushma Batra, citing her experiences of working with elderly people, talked about the challenges elderly people face especially in the urban areas. She emphasized on loneliness and perceived and actual abuse as problems encountered by aged people. She informed the house that the Department has a long tradition to closely work with civil society sector in part and this workshop is an addition in that process and considered it as a welcome step. She also informed that researches in the field of elderly are one of the major areas of department and informed audience that she herself has completed her doctorate degree on retired persons from the Department. Dr Archana Kaushik was her student and she is also working in the same field. Prof Batra cited that it is irony that senior citizens are considered less productive but the fact is that are equally productive member of the society. Unfortunately, we do not have measurement scales to find out one's contribution in society. Our planners are still using economic indicators alone for measuring one's contribution. It is our failure that we do not have sufficient methodologies, tools and techniques in this regard.

Following this, Mr. Anil Singh of SANSAD, in his introductory address, talked about the interventions of SANSAD to ameliorate the vulnerabilities faced by aged people in the globalized world. He also discussed the ways and means to ensure well-being of the elderly individuals. He explained that this workshop is a part of a major project to understand situation of Senior Citizens in India especially after introduction of new economic policies known as Structural Adjustment Programme to promote the Advocacy with the Planning Commission and other resource agencies for this socially excluded group. The Planning Commission and other Governmental agencies will be engaged and involved for influencing them so that XII Plan process can take care of Senior Citizens and Governmental schemes can be made in favour of them. For knowing and understanding situation of Senior Citizens it is proposed to hire 5 Researchers to do small studies on various aspects mentioned below and based on these 5 studies, SANSAD will organize 10 workshops in and around Delhi in collaboration with SANSAD partners mentioned below. Two workshops one in Delhi and one around Delhi will be organized on each thematic area. Based on findings of 5 small researches papers and 10 workshops reports, a detailed Chartered of Demands will be

prepared. This Chartered of Demands will be used as Advocacy tool for advocacy with policy makers and governmental departments.

Dr. ArchanaKaushik, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, presented her key paper titled, "senior citizens as useful and productive citizens". She briefly gave the demographic scenario with regard to population ageing, thereby highlighting significance of gerontological concerns. Comparing the situation of past and present times, she talked about the emerging concerns of the elderly. She mentioned the International Action Programmes on Ageing in 2002, at Madrid and World Health Organization's framework of Active Ageing.

Against the backdrop of globalization and new economic reform policies of 1990s, Dr. Kaushik highlighted the critical issues that come in way of active and productive ageing. Broad points discussed in the paper are as follows:

- Bio-psychological factors like deterioration in health and strength, lowering of sensory abilities and development of many ailments that influence active ageing.
- Socio-cultural factors like family and community ties, social change and family responsiveness, roles and relations, cultural norms and values.
- Policy measures and role of various stakeholders that effect active ageing.
- Economic system and elderly such as retirement, unemployment and poverty.
- Social security measures.
- Cross cutting variables like gender and culture

She discussed about the social and economic potential of elderly people, rights based perspective and Rights of senior citizens and the United Nations principles of ushering an ageing society – independence, participation, dignity, care and self-fulfillment.

Sh JR Gupta, Chairperson of Senior Citizens Association congratulated department of Social work to organize the workshop. He also appreciated detailed power point presentation presented by Dr Archankaushik. He said that she has presented harsh

realities of elderly persons. Mr Gupta said that elderly persons do not only require mere concessions and relaxations are not sufficient, there should be integration of elderly persons in the productive systems.

On request of group members, Mr Gupta discussed their efforts to actively engage elderly people in their various endeavors. Other members also told their share of stories in ensuring a better and more meaningful life to many senior citizens. They told that every Saturday and Sunday, they hold talks on topics of relevance at Deer Park, South Delhi, where thousands of senior citizens gather and participate. They have laughter club, yoga club and hobby club in most of their areas.

Some members of Senior Citizen Association also showed the concerns with regard to vulnerabilities of elderly in poverty especially in the globalized economy. Prof. Bhatt highlighted the impact of New Economic Reform policies on the social security measures for senior citizens. Gender issues, particularly, elderly women in the context of active ageing were also discussed.

Mr. Mohd. Yusuf, Director, Haryali-Centre for Rural Development mentioned about the problems NGOs and civil society organisations face in getting relevant projects from the government meant for the betterment of elderly people. He shared his observations of elderly in Zakir Nagar. He also brought forth the findings of the UNDP sponsored research study on vulnerabilities of elderly women in the nine states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland) conducted by Haryali.

Summing up, Prof Bhatt has recaptured from the discussion that group agreed that senior citizens are socially useful and productive members of the society. We are lacking to measure their contribution in society. There is need to develop more useful ways in this regard. Mr Anil Singh has made a valuable point that there is need to respond on the social security measures for senior citizens particularly in the context of

elderly women. It was also emphatically came during discussion that there is need to develop vulnerability indexes, scales, areas, and there is need of mapping studies of elderly population in rural and urban areas.

The group felt that it is high time to consider that

- i) Senior citizens are socially useful and productive members of the society. We are lacking to measure their contribution in society. There is need to develop more useful ways in this regard.
- ii) Mere concessions and relaxations are not sufficient; there should be integration of elderly persons in the productive systems.
- iii) There is need to develop vulnerability indexes, scales, areas, and there is need of mapping studies.
- iv) There is need to respond on the social security measures for senior citizens particularly in the context of elderly women.
- v) The Department of Social work has agreed to develop linkages with senior citizen association and SANSAD in near future especially in its research and extension activities.

The meeting came to an end with vote of thanks by Prof. Sanjai Bhatt. This was followed by high tea and informal discussion.

## Annexure I

### Letter of Invitation with Background Note

Dear Sir,

Greetings from Department of Social Work, University of Delhi.

As you are aware that senior citizens play crucial role in myriad of ways in building of a society and a nation and it is obligatory on our part to recognize and appreciate their contributions. Unfortunately, at times, their roles and contributions remain unnoticed and overlooked. However, research findings and awareness generation initiatives by government and civil society groups are trying to change the negative perception about senior citizens as spent-force and unproductive.

In this backdrop, we, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi and South Asian Network for Social & Agricultural Development (SANSAD), New Delhi, are holding one-day workshop on **Senior Citizens as Productive Citizens** as a part of the Research and Advocacy on the impact of the new economic policies on senior citizens on **2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2011, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.** at the **Auditorium, Department of Social Work.**

The Programme Schedule and Discussion Paper are enclosed herewith for your kind perusal. Eminent gerontologists, social work educators and practitioners, members of Senior Citizen Associations and researchers would be participating in the discussion. Kindly make it convenient to participate. Your inputs would go a long way in identifying and strengthening action plan of recommendations that would be utilized by the State through Helpage India.

Looking forward to your participation,

Thanking you

Sincerely Yours

**Prof Sanjai Bhatt**

**Dr Archanakaushik**



Convener

Co Convener

## **Enclosure: Background Note**

Back Ground Note

# **Research and Advocacy on the Impact of the New Economic Policies on Senior Citizens**

by

## **South Asian Network for Social & Agricultural Development(SANSAD)**

Senior Citizens are generally dependent on their fixed income coming from their savings and after introduction of new economic policies; their income from savings has reduced substantially due to reduction of interest rates by all banks. Due to rapid growth of IT and service sector, children's of many Senior Citizens has moved out of their homes, leaving their parent alone which created loneliness and fear in their minds. We all have seen in recent times many murders of Senior Citizens leaving alone and most of the times dependent on their servants which created fears in the minds of all Senior Citizens. Many productive minds and skills which Senior Citizens have acquired during their long careers are unutilized today, which can be converted into productive to teach and trained youths who are looking for such support system to grow and make their career more productive. That way Senior Citizens also feel safe and their loneliness will also disappear. Privatization of health services make them more vulnerable as cost of health services has increases many fold. Some Social security schemes which Government of India has launched for Senior citizens will also be studies and discussed with Senior citizens to understand how beneficial these schemes are and what kind of changes are required in these schemes to suits the current realities. This project will try to give logical answer to all above mentioned aspects related with Senior citizens. Anil K Singh, CEO of SANSAD as a founder national Convener and present Steering Group member of Wada Na TodoAbhiyan which is currently involved in Consultations process for the Twelfth Five Year People's Plan process, this project also help in that direction and open up opportunity for advocacy with the Planning Commission and other related ministries and departments.

### **Description**

This project is to know and understand situation of Senior Citizens in India especially after introduction of new economic policies known as Structural Adjustment Programme to promote the Advocacy with the Planning Commission and other resource agencies for this socially excluded group. The Planning Commission and other Governmental agencies will be engaged and involved for influencing them so that XII Plan process can take care of Senior Citizens and Governmental schemes can be made in favour of them. For knowing and understanding situation of Senior Citizens it is proposed to hire 5 Researchers to do small studies on various aspects mentioned below and based on these 5 studies, SANSAD will organised 10 workshops in and around Delhi in collaboration with SANSAD partners mentioned below.

Two workshops one in Delhi and one around Delhi will be organised on each thematic area. Based on findings of 5 small researches papers and 10 workshops reports, a detailed Chartered of Demands will be prepared. This Chartered of Demands will be used as Advocacy tool for advocacy with policy makers and governmental departments.

The plan is to organise 10 workshops on 5 thematic topics mentioned below. Five workshops will be organised in Delhi and 5 outside Delhi but in the near by areas such as Rohtak in Haryana; Saharanpur and NOIDA in UP; Jaipur and Alwar in Rajasthan. Research papers which will be produced on each thematic area will be used as learning material in the workshops.

The 5 thematic topic areas will be as follows:

- 1. Impact on Income aspect of senior citizens:** Most of the retired senior citizens living in cities and those who are non working rural people who are managing their living on savings that are attracting very low interest rates now. Thus incomes are falling as savings are used up. SANSAD and its partners will try to find out what kind of economic hardships Senior citizens are facing now and what could be done to overcome such hardships. Participatory methods will be used for research and advocacy.
- 2. Impact on health situation of senior citizens:** With the move to health insurance and the privatisation of medical services the elderly are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain health services and cover at a reasonable cost. SANSAD and its partners will try to find out what kind of hardships Senior citizen are facing due to heavy privatization of health services and increase of cost of medical treatments and medicines so that based on these findings detailed chartered of demand can be prepared to do advocacy with policy makers for their remedial measures.
- 3. Social and physical security of senior citizens:** As mentioned above majority of senior citizens are leaving today on fear of life and looking for some or other kinds of support mechanism to overcome such fear. It is also a fact that Govt of India has launched many social security schemes for senior citizens but due to corruption and long procedures these schemes are not reaching to the persons to whom these schemes are made. SANSAD and its partners will try to find out what kind of support mechanism senior citizens are looking for and what benefits do elderly people enjoy and how many people can take advantage of these social security schemes?
- 4. Impact on Family norms:** There is a tendency for Indian families to move to the nuclear family model. What does this mean for senior citizens and what are the effects on senior citizens will be study by SANSAD and its partners from participatory methods. It will be also study that what could be the alternative system so that loneliness of these senior citizens can be reduced which is one of the biggest challenges today.
- 5. Senior citizens as useful productive citizens:** Senior citizens are a source of large and untapped resources, with huge amounts of knowledge and experience that can be assessed, shared and utilized effectively. As mentioned above that many productive minds and skills which Senior Citizens have acquired during their long career are unutilized today, which can be converted to teach and trained youths who are looking for such support system to grow and make their career more productive. That way Senior Citizens also feel safe and their loneliness will also disappear. This small participatory research helps us to know how this resource can be accessed so that, for instance, younger people such as students can make use of it.

## Annexure II

### Programme Schedule

#### **‘Senior Citizens as Useful and Productive Citizens’**

One Day Discussion Workshop

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& SANSAD, NEW DELHI

2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011

|                           |                        |  |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Welcome                   | 2 to 2.10 p.m.         | Prof. Sanjai Bhatt   |
| Introductory Address      | 2:10 to 2:45 p.m.      | Mr. Anil Singh, Secretary<br>General, SANSAD                                 |
| Presentation of Key Paper | 2:45 to 3 p.m.         | Dr. Archana Kaushik<br>Department of Social Work                             |
| Comments on Paper         | 3-3.10 p.m.            | Sh J R Gupta, President,<br>Senior Citizen Association,<br>Delhi             |
| Discussion                | 3 -4 p.m.              | Moderator: Prof. Sanjai Bhatt  |
| Chairperson's remarks     | 4 to 4:15 p.m.         | Prof. Sushma Batra, Head<br>Department of Social work<br>University of Delhi |
| Vote of Thanks            | 4:30 p.m. to 4:40 p.m. | Mr Narender Sindhi, STRC   |
| High tea 4:40 to 5 p.m.   |                        |  |



## Annexure III

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**  
**‘Senior Citizens as Useful and Productive Citizens’**  
**One Day Discussion Workshop**  
**Organized by**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI**  
**& SANSAD, NEW DELHI**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011**

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| MsMadhu               | JRE Institutions                                |               |  |
| Mskishori Devi        | Senior Citizen                                  |               |  |
| Mr Ram Prasad         | Retired employee                                |               |  |
|                       |   |               |  |