

VRIDDHA MITRA

VOL. 3-NO. 3
OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2022



The greatest service we can extend to the older people of our country is to enable them to 'age in place', in their own homes and communities rather than relocating or moving them into an institutional setting.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Our experience and interactions with older people in the last few years in different geographies of India has told us one thing very clearly, the greatest challenge they face is all about their invisibility, they are not recognised, and it almost feels as if no one sees them.

This may sound like a very simple statement, but let us understand its implications. Despite the fact that the number and percentage of older people is increasing, when it comes to any policy or legal framework in our country, this age-group is not being considered. It is also important to understand that like any other age-group, the older people are not a homogenous group, there are those who live in difficult locations, like remote rural & tribal villages; those who live in difficult living conditions like slums; some live in bungalows and flats and some are also homeless. Further, many of them, especially those who have worked in the unorganized sector do not receive any kind of social security benefit, including pensions.

Considering the reality that our country is rapidly ageing, an effort to protect their rights by way of extending them varied services and support is required. A very unique effort has been initiated by Pune Municipal Corporation in collaboration with SCHOOL-Vriddha Mitra in drafting an 'elderly policy' for the older people residing in Pune city. This draft focuses on every support the elderlies require in terms of health care, livelihood, social security, disability specific benefits and also recreation.

With our continuous learning which we receive from our elderlies, one of the greatest is with regard to their need for social security. Accordingly a strategy that each elderly should have all the entitlements fulfilled and documents ready, so that she/ he receives pension and other government benefits is being stringently followed in all our project locations.

Dr. Benazir Patil, CEO, School



LAST MILE CONNECTIVITY

ISLAM ALI JILEDAR SHAIKH, AGED 63 YEARS, LIVES IN EKTA NAGAR, MUMBAI

Islam Ali grandpa lives with his elderly wife and 2 sons, one of whom is mentally challenged and is bedridden, requiring 24-hour care.

None of grandpa's children were able to look after him or support him financially; he was thus working at a roadside stall, making and selling delicious kebabs to earn a living.

He and his wife suffer from age-related issues, with grandpa also suffering from hypertension. Further, he also had a stroke in 2019. Though he made a miraculous recovery, it rendered the left side of his body weak, with his arm and leg causing persistent pain. Rajani, our Community Officer (CO) had enrolled Islam Ali grandpa and his wife in Vriddha Mitra program. Grandpa was initially taught exercises by the physiotherapist which could help in getting more flexibility in his limbs.

Grandpa had also developed the habit of chewing tobacco from a young age, because of which he had mouth ulcers and blisters. Knowing about this, CO Rajani regularly visited him at his home and counselled him to help him understand the hazards of this dangerous habit which could create serious health issues for him, and even cause oral Cancer. The constant counselling convinced grandpa and he decided to give up this habit completely, and gave Rajani a Gentleman's promise to this effect. It was not easy to give up a habit hed had been into for a lifetime, but Islam Ali grandpa showed unwavering willpower. Since January 2023, he has not eaten a single tobacco paan nor used any alternatives in its place. Everyone in the community is pleasantly surprised to see this positive change in Islam Ali grandpa. Kudos to this elderly who managed to leave a more than 50-year-old habit with the support of CO Rajani who very patiently guided him.



KHEMARAM JATAV, AGED 77, LIVES IN GOHINDA VILLAGE, GWALIOR



Khemaram Grandpa has been a widower for a long time and lives alone. He has no children. His nephew lives close by with his family and looks after him whenever possible. Grandpa has a Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration card and mostly survives on free rations received from the government. He gets a very small old age pension which is his only source of income. Besides having weakness, asthma and age-related aches and pains, Grandpa has partial hearing loss and is also unable to see properly.

Community Officer Kuldeep had registered Grandpa in the Vriddha Mitra program. After filling his Saving Life Checklist, Grandpa underwent a doctor's consultation through virtual OPD and was immediately started on a course of multivitamins and calcium and was given an asthma pump to help him breath with ease

He was taken to an ENT specialist in Gwalior where he had his ears examined and his hearing levels checked. He was given free hearing aids and presently is able to hear properly. Grandpa was also escorted to the local Community Health Clinic in Bhitwar for his eye checkup and was provided with free spectacles and eye drops. He was provided with escort and free transport for both his checkups.

Today Grandpa is able to see and hear properly due to which there has been much positive change in his physical and social conditions. It has given him confidence in this old age and reduced his dependability on others. He is grateful to CO Kuldeep who regularly visits him and took a personal interest in resolving his problems as much as possible.

IMPORTANT UPDATES OF THE QUARTER



Last Mile Connectivity in Pune

- Total 15337 home visits including follow up visits were made during the last quarter. Community Officers provided support to elderlies through: counselling on improving life style; mental well-being; psychological support; nutrition; medication; social security entitlements and schemes; and all referral services. Interactions were held with the family members to discuss about elderlies' health issues and the care required.
- 721 elderlies were provided with different assistive devices such as walking sticks, walkers, diapers, commode chairs, asthma pumps, spectacles, cervical belts, abdominal belts, knee caps, and many others were provided to improve the quality of life.
- Total 5865 elderlies were provided with medicines and nutritional supplements.
- Total 1240 elderlies were provided consultation and medication through the virtual OPDs held near their homes.
- Total 2316 elderlies were escorted for physiotherapy and other services like visits to higher hospitals for surgeries and treatment for cancer.
- Total 3165 elderlies referred for different services like bone screening, proctologist, eye check-up, mental health counselling, cancer care treatment, hypertension, diabetes, asthma treatment and vaccination.
- Total 2350 elderlies received physiotherapy treatment in the community and geriatric unit. (Community - 1681, Geriatric Unit - 669)
- 1926 elderlies received raw ration in the community.
- Total 40 elderlies required linkages for schemes and support related to disability, shelter and employment; Out of those 35 elderlies were linked to different departments and 11 elderlies received benefit from disability and employment related schemes.
- Total 624 entitlements documents were issued out of those 287 elderlies received income certificate, 7 elderlies started receiving monthly pension, elderlies received 161 E-Shram Card, 36 Aadhar Card, 24 Ration Card, 70 Ayushman Card, 4 Domicile certificate, 15 Voter ID card, and 20 PAN card.
- Total 258 Proposals submitted for Shehri Garib Yojana card. All 160 elderlies received SGY card. Vriddha Mitra sponsored 145 SGY cards. Out of these 90 elderlies availed free medicines and 25 elderlies received benefits in terms of concessions and subsidies in hospitalization to the tune of Rs. 18.71 Lakhs.

- Total 4785 home visits including follow-up visits (Gwalior-2565, Bhopal-2220) were conducted during the last quarter to provide support to elderlies.
- Total 52 elderlies were provided with assistive devices (Gwalior-13, Bhopal-52).
- Total 617 elderlies (Gwalior-412, Bhopal-205) were provided consultation through Virtual OPDs.
- Medicines, multi-vitamins and different supplements were extended to 2567 elderlies (Gwalior-1424, Bhopal-1143).
- Raw ration was distributed to 7 elderlies in Bhopal
- Total 1107 elderlies (Gwalior-371, Bhopal-736) were provided home health check-ups.
- 702 elderlies received physiotherapy in Bhopal, out of which 245 elderlies received in the community and 457 elderlies received at the geriatric unit.
- 48 elderlies (Gwalior-26, Bhopal-22) were assisted in getting their Ayushman (health insurance) Cards.
- 59 elderlies received eye check-ups (Gwalior-15, Bhopal-44), out of which 12 elderlies in Bhopal were supported for cataract surgery.
- Total 27 elderlies' proposal submitted for various pension schemes (Gwalior-10, Bhopal-17), out of which 11 elderlies received pension (Gwalior-6, Bhopal-5).
- 399 elderlies were referred for different services to Government, private and other organisations. (Gwalior - 78, Bhopal-321).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Celebration of International Day of Older Persons:** On 1st October 2022, International Day of Older Persons was celebrated in various communities in Pune, Bhopal, Gwalior and Giridih. The day was celebrated to spread awareness about the importance of older people in our society and to appreciate their contributions. Elderlies from communities, various dignitaries from different fields, representatives from various national and international and Vriddha Mitra Network organizations, and students participated in the event.

2. **Vriddha Mitra for elderlies in residential societies:** There has been a great demand from elderlies residing in flats and residential societies in Pune city, wherein a Vriddha Mitra who makes home visits and addresses various challenges of the elderlies like the one in the communities, should also visit them and be their companion. This relationship-based care and support has been initiated in few clusters of Pune city and various elderlies are receiving this care. This is a newly introduced income generation activity in the organization.

3. **Vriddha Mitra Course:** Promoting care for elderly emerges as a promising, fulfilling career opportunity. The simple fact is that there are not enough trained care-givers to serve and support the elderly now, let alone in the coming decades. Public awareness efforts to highlight opportunities in this field can change perceptions. Positioning professional support as a financially rewarding livelihood will encourage people to opt for this career in the years to come. Accordingly, a 12 weeks course to create trained Vriddha Mitras has been started by



SCHOOL in September 2022. The first batch of 22 students got graduated in November 2022. And two new batches of Vriddha Mitra course were started in December 2022.

4. **South-East Asia Regional Report on situation of older people during COVID-19:** we undertook a regional assessment in collaboration with WHO-SEARO in five SEAR countries – India, Bhutan Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia, to assess the situation of older people during the pandemic. This report will be available in public domain very soon through WHO office. This study assessed the situation of older people during COVID-19 pandemic with specific focus on issues pertaining to gender, equity and human rights aspects of older people.

5. **Drafting of Elderly policy for older people in Pune city:** SCHOOL in collaboration with the Social Development department of Pune Municipal Corporation and various other key departments drafted a specific policy on issues related to older people, the benefits they should be extended, mechanisms to ensure social security entitlements and schemes, and various other challenges that require solutions. This policy is being reviewed by the senior officials of the Municipal Corporation.

6. **Celebration of International Disability Day:** International disability day was celebrated with elderlies in Bhopal in collaboration with the Healing Path organization. Various games and recreational activities were arranged for the participant elderlies.

7. **Plantation Program:** A program was organized with elderlies in Bhopal, in which elderlies planted varieties of plants at Nehru Nagar Geriatric Unit in Bhopal.

8. **Quality of Life Study:** The Quality of Life Study was completed successfully in the month of December 2022, and its results will soon be shared in the public domain.

NEW VENTURES, COLLABORATIONS, AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Along with Mumbai, Bhopal and Gwalior, there was a demand from the rural areas of Pune district. Vriddha Mitra Programme was thus launched in Kambre village of Bhor block, wherein 200 elderlies are being reached. This will soon be expanded to two more villages.
- A decision was taken by the Bhitwar Janpad Panchayat of Gwalior to provide free space for establishing geriatric unit in Bhitwar. Formal letter will be issued in the next month.
- MOU with Man Sarovar Physiotherapy College in Bhopal, through which students of the college will conduct physiotherapy during home visits in the community.
- MOU with Government Homoeopathy College, Bhopal, through which students from the college will conduct health and yoga camps in the community and the geriatric unit in Bhopal
- BKH Bachooali Eye Hospital has started providing support for eye check-ups and cataract surgeries in Mumbai

We recognize and acknowledge continuous support of various organizations in Pune, Mumbai, Bhopal, Gwalior, Giridih and Delhi who are part of our 'Vriddha Mitra' network, extending free services and care to our elderlies.



SCHOOL

Society Of
Community Health Oriented
Operational Links

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