

A visit to cherish: Convergys group bridges gen gap



Young team members of Convergys share a light moment with an elderly resident of St. Mary's home for the Aged.

As the weekend approaches, most young adults get busy planning for two days of fun and a night-out with their friends. A small bunch of young people, however, decided to do it differently this time and thought of sharing some "Masti" with the elderly. On a blazing Saturday in June, 25 young employees of Convergys visited St. Mary's Home for the Aged in Delhi. "A day we will never forget", says Ms. Deepa Das, Operations Manager, in a first-hand account. "We reached St. Mary's home at 10:15 am. The 2 hour visit to the old age home changed our outlook towards life. We felt that we understand, but never realize that true happiness lies in the smallest things in our lives. We crave for more every day, but never realize that there are people who don't have the most basic thing that is needed to live, and that is the love of family. We are grateful that God gave us a family at home and people at work who love and care about us.

The interaction with the elderly women residents (Grannies) started off slowly but the within 15-20 minutes we were able to connect very well with the Grannies. Soon everyone was swinging to the tunes of "Rang de Basanti Chola" and the poetry of Ghalib, we took the liberty to distribute the goodies we had bought for them. The whole environment was filled with laughter and songs. There was lot of enthusiasm in their voices which emphasized their zeal to live and enjoy life.

It gave us a thrill to see the spark once again within those who have long been forgotten by society and maybe their families. Physically they might have gone past the age of excellent health, but mentally they are healthy as ever.

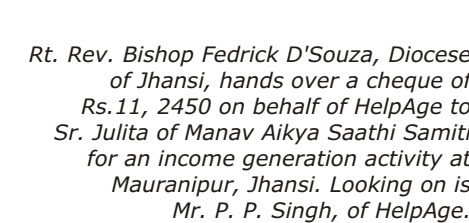
We organized a small session on Acu-Pressure for the residents. Some of them volunteered to learn the procedure so that they can help their friends who are too feeble to learn it themselves.

We left St. Mary's with a promise to ourselves to take this initiative beyond us and find likeminded people who are willing to bring some moments of happiness to people who have no one of their own and yet they wish to live life to the fullest with all its colors. They have immense wisdom to share. They made us understand that they are not the past but the foundation of the future."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Mrs. Indrani Rajadurai, Regional Director (South), HelpAge, presents a memento to Mr. Vetrivel, CEO of Acsys Software (India) Pvt. Ltd. Chennai. ACSYS has given Rs.1.5 lakh for 150 cataract surgeries for the elderly. Looking on are Mr. P. R Anbazhakan (second from right) Deputy Director, Resource Mobilization (South) and Mr. V. Mahalingam (left), Executive, from HelpAge.



Rt. Rev. Bishop Fedrick D'Souza, Diocese of Jhansi, hands over a cheque of Rs.11, 2450 on behalf of HelpAge to Sr. Julita of Manav Aikya Saathi Samiti for an income generation activity at Mauranipur, Jhansi. Looking on is Mr. P. P. Singh, of HelpAge.



Mr. Mathew Cherian, Chief Executive, HelpAge, hands over graduation mementos to toddlers of Ryan International School, (Sector 11) Rohini (Delhi) stepping into Class 1 from Montessori. The school has donated Rs.4.19 lakh towards the cause. A special mention must also be made of Ryan International School, Gr. Noida (UP) who have also contributed towards the cause.



Mr. Ajay Kumar Sharma, Principal, Delhi Public School, Bhopal, is surrounded by his students, who proudly hold up the memento & certificate given to them by Mr. Pramod Binani, of HelpAge. The students contributed Rs.93,646 towards the cause for the first time.



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EDITOR Speaks

Dear Readers,

The Chief Minister of Delhi, Mrs. Sheila Dikshit, the police commissioner of Chennai, senior police officials in Delhi and elsewhere, and prominent persons across the country joined HelpAge to mark Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15.

On the occasion, Mr. M. M. Sabharwal, President Emeritus of HelpAge, rightly pointed out: "Many elders are quietly suffering indignity at the hands of those who they taught to say their first words and take their first steps. It is shocking that the largest perpetrators of Elder Abuse are their own children."

Many elderly people present at the events recounted stories of ill-treatment, abuse and neglect. Many of them felt forsaken and disillusioned with their own children and families. In this context, our work with school children and young people becomes more significant. We laud the concern shown by young teams from Convergys and Barista, who visited old age homes in Delhi and other cities, to spend some time with forgotten elderly, and encourage more young people to do the same.

Our volunteer programme is putting together more such initiatives, and if you're a company that wants to be involved, do give us a call or write to us at helpage@nde.vsnl.net.

Nidhi Raj Kapoor
Nidhi Raj Kapoor

HelpAge spearheads national campaign to fight elder abuse

HelpAge India observed "World Elder Abuse Awareness Day" nationwide on June 15, in collaboration with Civil Society organisations and advocacy groups like International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse.

In Delhi, an interactive forum, as well as a presentation to a 1000-strong audience of lady-cadets at the Police Training College, were held.

In Mumbai, HelpAge reached out to the youth through announcements on FM Radio. In Kolkata, chairperson of the Human Rights Commission and Ex-Governor of West Bengal, Justice Shyamal Kumar Sen, Inspector General of Police, Dr. Nazrul Islam, and other luminaries addressed the issue at a seminar.

In Chennai a hundred feet banner was erected at Marina Beach, which drew hundreds of concerned citizens, including students, decision-makers, tourists, and celebrities, who pledge their support.

A walkathon involving children, youth and the elderly was held in Lucknow. Events were also held in Chennai, Jaipur, Visakhapatnam, and elsewhere, hand-in-hand with local communities and mass media.

Reinforcing values

Since the inception of HelpAge India, schools and children have been an integral part of all its activities. This is a manifestation of our underlying philosophy that children are the inheritors of our glorious tradition of respect and affection for the elderly in the family and society. It would not be wrong to say that without the support of the schools and the children much of the work that HelpAge India has accomplished in the service of the elderly could not have been possible. The funds raised through this and many other initiatives of HelpAge India are ploughed into relief programmes for the disadvantaged elderly.

In the three decades of our work, the world around us has changed. The school children have remained steadfast in their support for the elderly. We appreciate the effort of the young students in collecting funds and organizing events on ageing. We appreciate that many, if not all are sensitive to the needs of older persons.

Over the years, HelpAge India has expressed gratitude to the school children and the faculty for their contribution to our cause. However, we believe that now the time has come to scale up the school education programme. This programme is designed to reinforce the enduring values of respect, kindness and compassion for older persons. It is a programme aimed to sensitize young students to look beyond self and see themselves contributing to society in a significant way. In other words, it tries to remind the importance caring human beings.

Now the time has come to scale up the school education programme

The first step in this direction would be to expand this initiative into a larger programme that will seek to create an on going platform for 'value' education. The participating schools will be our valuable partners. We intend to take this programme forward by doing a series of state level consultation workshops with participating schools, educationists, representative of Ministry of Human Resource Development and other NGOs working with children. This process will culminate with a national level workshop with selected representatives from states to discuss their recommendation with experts, policy makers and educationists.

At the level of the students, HelpAge India will encourage students to organize activities like youth parliament, debate and discussions, utilization of SUPW programme for working with older persons to initiate wider discussion among the youth on values that guide them through life with special reference to caring for the disadvantaged.

The school advocacy cum fund raising programme is now operational in almost 1750 schools all over the country. We would like to take it to all the schools in the country, not just the cities, but all the towns and villages as well; so that the message of social commitment and compassion amongst the children towards elderly in society and family in particular is conveyed to one and all.

Kapil Kaul
Country Head (Resource Mobilisation)

Delhi Chief Minister, Mrs. Sheila Dikshit, addresses the audience at the interactive forum in Delhi. Other panelists present are (from left), Mr. A.N. Sood, Delhi Federation of Associations for Senior Citizen, Dr. Mala Kapur Shankardass, representative of INPEA, Mr. M.M. Sabharwal, President Emeritus, HelpAge, and Mr. S. B.K. Singh, Addl. Commissioner of Police in Delhi.



Walkathon in Lucknow with NCC cadets.



Children sign on the 100-foot canvas in Chennai.

NEEDY ELDERLY REGAIN CONFIDENCE, DIGNITY

Under HelpAge's Sponsor-A-Grandparent programme, a project in Rohtak (Haryana) protects 44 destitute women like Shanti Devi. It not only fulfills their basic needs, but also allows them to live with dignity, and without fear.

Livid bruises on Shanti Devi's hand are reminders of the physical abuse she suffered for years while living with her daughter and son-in-law. The 75 year-old widow was completely dependent on them and therefore thought she had no choice but to bear it quietly.

It was so bad that she was hospitalized 5 times. They threatened her and even tried to usurp her property. One day Shanti Devi managed to summon up the courage to talk to a community lawyer, who took her to the then Deputy Commissioner of Haryana, who in turn requested HelpAge's

Sponsor-A-Grandparent project (SAGP) partner Ravi Prakash to intervene.

She was enrolled under the programme, which ensures that her basic needs are met. Prakash also made sure her home was restored to her. Although she lives alone now, her life is free of fear and abuse. The social workers are her family and the community her guardian.

She breaks down when she recounts her earlier agony. "My daughter is a nurse and should be soothing my pain. Instead, they gave me pain," she shudders. "If it weren't for this programme I would have been their prisoner still."



Elders groups stand up for their rights

In little-known Mohgaon in Mandla (Madhya Pradesh), a HelpAge drive enables an elders group to unite and fight pension blues. In Karra, Ranchi, a single-window system for the aged puts a stop to the "middleman" menace.

HelpAge's Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) program has been raising awareness among the rural elderly about their rights and encouraging them to fight for their rights.

In a recent success, in Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh, the CEO of Mohgaon Block, Mr. R.S. Kushwaha, has directed Sarpanchs to ensure that all eligible old age pension cases are brought to the notice of the Block office within 3 days. This will help curb elders' dependence on the Sarpanchs to obtain their pensions.

While working at the ground level it was realized that older persons find it difficult to even apply for various Government schemes. Many don't know how to fill out forms, where, who & how to approach, because of which middlemen known as *Bichauliyas* take advantage of them.

A new single window system developed in Karra block of Ranchi (Jharkhand) is helping tackle this problem. Known as the Vridh Sangh Information Centre, it covers 85 villages and provides information about various Government provisions and records of each elderly. It also functions as a court for the elderly where personal problems are solved. This is an initiative of the HelpAge PACS partner in the area, Karra Society for Rural Action (KSRA).



Mr. S. K. Verma (second from right), Director, Department of Social Welfare, Government of Uttar Pradesh, releases a guide book for the elderly at the Lucknow Workshop along with (from left) Ms. Risha Kushwaha, Advocacy Officer, PACS (UP), Dr. H. S. Bakshi, Regional Director (North), Mr. A. K. Singh, Joint Director (North), & Mr. Avijeet Kumar, Project Director (PACS) of HelpAge.

Strengthening the Community

Nearly 1200 elders from Elder Self Help Groups and Village Elders Care Committees participated in workshops on the "Rights & Entitlements of the Aged" organized under the HelpAge India Tsunami Project, along with partners in the project areas of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Elders were made aware of schemes available for them by representatives from insurance agencies, health, social welfare and police/ revenue departments. The seniors in turn, apprised them of access issues, especially the need to review the criterion that excludes aged with adult male children from old age pensions.

Representatives of Government and the Community Based Organizations were explained the concept of equity and multiple-vulnerability. Subsequently, elders groups and committees are conducting multiple-vulnerability analysis in each of the 50 project villages, in co-ordination with the elected representatives - Panchayat president & ward members. The list of the most vulnerable with recommendations for provision of social security would be given to the district administration.

'Safety' forum stresses need to identify most vulnerable elders



HelpAge president, Mr. Amal Ganguli (left) raises the issue of rising crime against the elderly in Delhi, as HelpAge President Emeritus Mr. M.M. Sabharwal, Addl. Commissioner of Delhi Police (Senior Citizen cell) Mr. S.B. K. Singh and HelpAge CEO Mr. Mathew Cherian look on at HelpAge's annual forum on safety and security of the elderly in Delhi.



A special visit
Mrs. Frenny Billimoria, member of the HelpAge board, visits "Home for the Aged", in Delhi's Fatehpur Beri village, to interact with residents and determine their needs.

A HelpAge tribute in India's 60th year of independence

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF INDIA'S OLDEST MAN

Rahim Khan of Jaipur, fondly called Habeeb Mian, recently celebrated his 138th birthday! On a recent visit to Jaipur, HelpAge's director for northern region, Dr. H. S. Bakshi, had the opportunity to spend some time with this ageless stalwart. Here's a first hand account:



It's almost as if Habeeb Mian has found the nectar of immortality. There's no birth certificate to prove it, but the events he recounts point to 1869 as his year of birth, putting his age at an astounding 138! The fact that he has been receiving Government pension for 69 years alone would make his official age 127.

The pension, which started out as a mere sum of Rs.1.86, today amounts to Rs.2000. According to his grandson, he worked for PWD of Jaipur Royal Estate.

Mian lives surrounded by children, grandchildren and great grand children. In fact, a family of 70, comprising 6 generations, keeps him going. His son is 90, and his 2 grandchildren are both senior citizens, the elder being 65 & the younger 60.

Habeeb Mian lost his vision nearly 60 years back, but despite his blindness, manages his daily activities without any support. Recently he suffered a hip fracture, but is fighting back for recovery. "Keep away from addictions," is Mian's mantra for longevity.

Finding their feet



In the coastal district of Tamil Nadu a rising number in elderly are suffering from Osteoarthritis, severely curbing mobility and making them dependent. HelpAge organized a special camp at the district of Nagapattinam for such elderly, providing them with "knee braces". Nearly 200 beneficiaries benefited from the camp and now look forward to this new lease of life.

60 plus & raring to go



Me too! : A scene from "Boomerang", a comic play scripted, directed and enacted by senior citizens of varying ages from 65 to 90, as part of HelpAge's Proud2B60 campaign in India's 60th year of Independence. The campaign tagline "Who are you calling old?" seeks to bust age-related myths, and portray the aged in modern-day India as active, healthy and contributing to society.

Mobile health care covers more ground

In an attempt to reach out to more and more elderly who have no source of medical care and do not have the means to afford it either, HelpAge launched two more Mobile Medicare Units (MMUs) recently in Raipur and Coimbatore. It also received renewed support for its Patancheru MMU.



Mr. ESL Narasimhan (second from left), Governor of Chhattisgarh, and Mrs. Vimla Narasimhan (left), Chief Guest and Guest of Honor, respectively, launch the Raipur MMU at Raj Bhawan. Looking on are Mr. Avenash Datta (right), Country Head Programmes, HelpAge, Mr. J.P. Aggarwal, Chairman, HIRA Group, and Mr. B.L. Aggarwal (IAS), Secretary, Health & Family Welfare.



Mr. Mathew Cherian (centre), Chief Executive, HelpAge, along with Dr. Oommen George, Head of Medical Services, and Mrs. Indrani Rajadurai, Regional Director (South), inaugurate the Coimbatore MMU. The MMU is supported by the Japanese Consulate, which also extended support to the Elders Helpline in Chennai.



Mr. N.S.Chadha, Manager, Asian Paints, inaugurates MMU Patancheru. Asian Paints has renewed its support to this health care facility for 3 more years.

We thank the following for their support

- Punjab National Bank, Patna (for donation worth Rs.40,000 by employee Mr. Sharad Chandra Sinha and support of Mr. B. C. Nigam, Zonal Manager).
- Radio City.
- Xerox India Ltd. Jaipur.
- Airport Authority, Bangalore.
- The Irish Embassy (New Delhi) for a grant of Rs.1.5 lakh for providing walking sticks, hearing aids & spectacles to elderly beneficiaries of Coimbatore.
- The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany (New Delhi) for the donation of Rs.4.39 lakh (approx.) towards an income generation project for the elderly in Delhi.
- Guru Nanak Foundation Public School, Patiala (Pb) raised an amount of Rs.1.05 lakh.
- Kendriya Vidyalaya No.II, Madurai, which contributed Rs.55,485.
- Goodlay Public School, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi, which has contributed Rs.2.40 lakh.
- Bhavan Vidyalaya (Sector 15), Panchkula (Hry) which contributed Rs.88,276.
- Sommerville School, Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi, which contributed Rs.3.24 lakh.
- Various branches of Kendriya Vidyalaya schools of Gujarat, which have contributed Rs.3.32 lakh (approx.) towards the cause. They are Kendriya Vidyalaya: ISRO Ahmedabad, Silvasa, V.V. Nagar, Surat, EME Baroda, Ankleshwar, Khambhat, Herni Baroda & Rajkot.

A trustworthy initiative

R. S. Dayal Trust, New Delhi, who have committed Rs. 7 lakh (approx.) for conducting 700 cataract surgeries for the disadvantaged elderly of Uttaranchal & UP.

Making a Difference

We thank Mr. Anil Kumar N. Devekar and Mr. Faizan Lalljee of Pune for their generosity and sensitivity towards the cause. They donated Rs.5 lakh & Rs.3 lakh respectively towards the cause, making them two of the highest donors in the last 5 years.