

ANNUAL REVIEW 2016-17

# DIGNITY for Elders



# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

## *Elders get Enterprising - Towards a life of dignity*

In a country of 104 million elders, 51 million live below the poverty line. By 2050 the number of senior citizens is estimated to rise to 324 million. With more than half the country's elderly living below the poverty line, survival is crucial. Where quality of life is concerned for these elderly, there is much left to be desired. Inadequate healthcare, minimal or no pension and a depleting source of income, often force the destitute rural elderly to continue working despite physical hardships.



In cities, the retired elderly face similar problems of dwindling incomes, failing health and an absence of alternative post retirement career options, making life extremely tough. To add to this, a growing sense of insecurity and dependence on others to sustain themselves, often leads to social isolation and depression.

The constant and rapid pace of change in technology makes it even more difficult for elders, as they are unable to keep up with the latest gadgets, mobile applications, new smart phones, tablets etc. This handicap excludes elders from the main stream social fabric. To tackle this, HelpAge started the 'Digital Literacy' program introducing elders to the online world. Partner institutions, organizations, volunteers and interns supported us in this endeavor by conducting basic tutorials for elders, using the HelpAge Handbook for senior citizens – How to use Smart Phones and Computers.

As times are changing, so is the ever-increasing generation gap between the young & the old, the toughest age group to sensitize is the young adolescent. To bring together the youth and the silver generation, this year we launched the 'When I'm 64' school competition aimed at sensitizing students from Class 8 to 10, encouraging them to think about the elderly and life after 60. The response we received was tremendous and many students said it brought them closer to their grandparents.

While we are working towards inculcating age care values in the younger generation, we are also simultaneously working towards providing our elders with a better quality of life by urging them to form Active Enterprise Groups so that they can earn their own living without being dependent on anyone. A steady source of income also brings with it respect within the family and community, besides sustenance. I am happy we have been able to help form many such Enterprise Groups.

None of these initiatives would have been possible without the generous support of our donors – whether corporates, institutions, individuals or our partners. I thank them all. It's been a long journey, yet there are miles to go.

I hope with their help and support, we continue working towards our endeavor to provide our elders with a life of independence & dignity.

**Mathew Cherian**

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS 2016 – 17

- Asia's largest Mobile Healthcare network for elders with 144 medical vans servicing 1920 community locations spread over 24 states, provided 23.25 lakh treatments.
- 3.55 lakh beneficiaries were treated at 993 health camps.
- 34,679 free cataract eye surgeries were conducted.
- 68,843 Geriatric physiotherapy treatments were provided across 23 locations in the country.
- 28,896 calls were received through the toll-free Elder Helplines across 20 state capitals.
- 857 abandoned elders were rescued.
- 20,000 elderly in 1400 Elder-Self-Help-Groups are being supported.
- 1145 Senior Citizens Associations, with more than 14 lakh members were partnered in 23 states.



# YEAR HIGHLIGHTS – 2016-17

## ADVOCATING THE ELDER CAUSE

Welfare activities for elders are not enough to change the lives of elders. For sustainable and widespread impact, the elder cause needs to be advocated – with the government, the police, the media, the general public, especially young adults, school children who are the future care-givers of elders and also elders themselves. HelpAge works with all these stakeholders.



### Sensitizing the Police

As part of HelpAge's advocacy efforts, a 'One Day Police Training program on elder issues' was held in the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Egmore in Chennai. for the city police. The Police personnel were briefed about the use of the HelpAge SOS App, along with information shared about the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents & Senior Citizens Act, 2007, legal issues of elderly mainly on crime against elderly, how to write Wills, property issues etc.

### Working with media partners to make roads safer for Elders

In keeping with our advocacy efforts to make cities safer for elders, HelpAge tied up with media house NDTV for a Road Safety campaign where elders raised their voice against societal attitude towards elders on the street, in Mumbai & Bengaluru. They held placards and marched down the streets demanding safer roads for seniors and children alike.



### Elders help spread the Pension message

Most elders are unaware of their Rights & Entitlements, especially those below the poverty line. HelpAge works to educate not just the underprivileged elders, but also co-opts the urban more privileged elders to spread awareness about old age pension schemes.

## Social worker teaches preventive healthcare



*Mr. Pradip Kadam, social worker at the MHU in Patalganga (Maharashtra), educates elders and their community about the symptoms and preventive measures of water-borne diseases such as Cholera, Diarrhea, Typhoid, Malaria and Dengue, during an awareness session at Jambhivali site.*

## Elder cause receives support from the Judiciary



This February 2017, elders received a strong tool for self-defense with the Parents Maintenance Act getting a major boost. The Delhi High Court ruled that elders can now evict their children from their homes if they turn 'greedy' or 'abusive' by simply complaining to the Deputy Commissioner/ District Magistrate. The court specified that the house need not be self-acquired or owned by the parents. As long as the elders are in legal possession of the property, abusive sons and daughters can be evicted.

## Govt. supports health camp for elders



*An elderly man gets a thorough health check-up at the 'Preventive Health check-up camp for Senior Citizens' organized by HelpAge at Faridabad (Haryana), supported by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.*

## Panchayats work with HelpAge



*Dr. Edenjamyang Bhutia, HelpAge MHU Doctor, talks about various measures and precautions one can take during the Health Awareness program organized for elders in Rongay, Gangtok (Sikkim) at the Rongay Gram Panchayat office, in the presence of Ms. Munna Chettri, Panchayat Member.*

# STORIES FROM THE FIELD

This year we bring to you stories from Mumbai and its outskirts, from urban slum to the tribal belts of Palghar, which lies 100 kms from Mumbai city. Each story is one of hardship and need. HelpAge is fortunate to have been a part of helping empower these lives and give these elders and many more like them, a life of dignity.

The most striking element in these stories, is the strength of purpose and survival amongst these elders. To beat the odds and live life in their own terms. We at HelpAge salute their spirit!

## MOBILE HEALTHCARE PROGRAM A bus ride to Healthcare



*"When I don't have money, how could I go to a hospital? There is no earning member in my family, no one will give me money"- says a forlorn Kalabai Kedare, 65 years.*

Suffering from multiple health problems such as high blood pressure and cholesterol, diabetes and joint pains and with no one to support her, life was hard. Her husband was a cobbler, but she says his hands don't work anymore so she has to look after him and support the both of them.

With no children, a handicapped husband and no other support system, she had no choice but to work despite her aches and pains. She earns a meagre Rs.700 per month after toiling as a maid in 3 to 4 houses daily. It was a hard and painful life till she was introduced to the HelpAge Mobile Healthcare Unit (MHU) program.

Today, she takes a bus ride to the HelpAge Mobile Healthcare Unit site in Malvani from her home in Malad (West) in Mumbai, 4 times a week, to take her weekly dose of free medicine and check-up.

It is a different Kalabai one meets today. *"Coming to this MHU site has been hugely beneficial to me, my joint pain has decreased and my BP, cholesterol and diabetes is now under control."* – says Kalabai, beaming with a smile and surrounded with her new found friends at the site.

## RESTORATION OF VISION Sight for survival



Jani Shankar Phadwade, 67 years, eyes twinkle as she smiles her toothless smile. She insists she has only one tooth left and there wasn't any point in taking her picture. But the next moment she would break into laughter, invariably showing you that single tooth of hers.

But all was not perfect in Jani's life, she had cataract in her left eye. She had lost all hope of ever being able to see clearly again. Jani is from the tribal belt, from a village in Jawhar Taluka in Palghar district, which is about 100 kms from Mumbai city. She spends most of her days looking after her home. Earlier she used to do manual labour in the fields, but her failing vision started becoming a hindrance. It was a screening camp organized at Jawhar Taluka by HelpAge with the help of its project partner, Bhakti Vedanta Hospital at Mira Road, District Thane, that she discovered she had cataract in her left eye.

Unable to afford treatment for surgery, she became one of many beneficiaries who was taken under the wing of HelpAge's Restoration of Vision program for destitute elders and was operated for cataract, free of cost. A quick surgery was all that was needed to restore Jani's life and along with it, her dignity.

Today Jani smiles her endearing smile, ready to take on whatever challenge life throws at her.



## SUPPORT A GRAN Ration for sustenance



Prabhadevi Vaman Kedekar is 76 years old but when she smiles it's the smile of a 16 year old. Her endearing smile hides a life of pain.

About 15 years ago, Prabhadevi's husband Vaman Ram Chandra Kedekar died in a brutal car accident. A brave woman, she filed a case against the driver who killed her husband, trying to get justice, but the Mumbai floods flushed away most of the much needed documents. Her case has been put on hold for the past 12 years now and much of her resource in the process have depleted. Her only son was affected by polio at an early age and her daughter-in-law earns by working in the small scale industry. But there is no money or support for Prabhadevi. Whenever she falls sick, she has to depend on the generosity and kindness of neighbors and friends, with whose help she manages to get little money for her medicines.

With dwindling finances and no support, she had no means to sustain herself, managing even two meals a day for herself was a challenge. But she didn't want to beg.

It is then she got enrolled in HelpAge India's Support a Gran program, with project partner Praytna, through which she got monthly rations. She comes to the Church in Orlem, in Malad (West), Mumbai, every month to diligently collect her ration. Today Prabhadevi lives life on her own terms.



*"I'm alone, I've been coming here to get ration for the past 15 years. Through this ration I've got respect from my family & community" – says a smiling Prabhadevi.*



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**OLD AGE HOMES** A home at last

71 year old Prabhavati Prabhakar Karekar, living in Anand Vriddha Ashram, is warm, welcoming and seems like without a care in the world. But behind that smiling face lies a horrific story of abuse and harassment. *"My life had taken such a turn that I was ready to commit suicide"* says Prabhavati. Originally from Goregaon, Mumbai, Prabhavati was married at the age of 23. Soon she suffered two miscarriages and her husband passed away, leaving her to fend for herself. She started doing social work for a well-known charity, hoping to spend the rest of her life helping others in need. *"I spent a large part of my life helping others, but I never thought I would reach this stage in life"* - she says. After her husband's death, she bought a small flat in Goregaon, to sustain herself took on a tenant. But the tenant cheated her of her property and Prabhavati was literally left on the road, thrown out of her own home.

*"I was found by a social worker and taken to an ashram where I was treated very badly. I was beaten, not given food, the in-charge would drink and hurl vile abuses at me. When it became unbearable I started looking for a rope to hang myself. One morning when I couldn't bear it anymore, I escaped and met a social worker on the road, who recognized me. I told him my story and he persuaded me not to commit suicide,"* says an emotional Prabhavati.

This social worker took her to Manisha Pradip Kotak, a kind lady who ran Anand Vriddha Ashram, in Palghar. In this home she found not only shelter and the means to sustain herself, but she also received medical aid through the HelpAge supported Physiotherapy centre and Mobile Healthcare Unit which makes regular trips there to treat the residents.

Today, Prabhavati is happy and secure in her newfound home away from home and says *"The family I never had, I've found it here. We all live here like brothers and sisters, I'm not in want of anything now."*

# USING TECHNOLOGY TO HELP ELDERERS

Today's constantly evolving digital technology and increasing movement towards a cashless economy leaves elders bewildered and isolated. Their day to day life, shopping, paying utility bills become difficult and it also alienates them from the younger generation who are digital savvy. With new models of smart phones flooding the markets every day, new mobile applications, usage of debit/credit cards and mobile wallets becoming the norm, elders can no longer afford to be digital illiterates. Also the way to communicate with the younger generation - WhatsApp, Facebook etc. need to be learnt.

## Digital literacy classes for Elders

HelpAge created an 'Easy Guide to Learn Smart Phones and Computers' which was used to conduct training workshops across the country to digitally empower elders. Young volunteers selflessly gave their time, corporates such as Oracle joined the campaign with their staff holding regular weekend classes in their neighborhood, schools like Ramjas, Delhi, threw open their computer labs for after school classes for elders.



*A young volunteers teaches elder members from the Senior Citizen's Association in Dwarka, Delhi, how to - Google Search, Skype with loved ones, use Android/iOS phones and how to pay household utility bills online with ease.*

## Help is just a click away - HelpAge launches the SOS App



*Mr. Najeeb Jung, former Lt. Governor of Delhi, launches the HelpAge SOS App for elders at the national capital along with Mr. Mathew Cherian, CEO, HelpAge India. Looking on are Mr. J.R. Gupta, Chairperson, Confederation of Senior Citizens of Delhi and Ms. Manjira Khurana, Country Head, Advocacy & Communications, HelpAge India.*

In the midst of rising crime and abuse against India's elderly, a common refrain both from affected elders and sympathetic bystanders who may want to help is, "In a crisis we do not know who to call and what the call center number is."

To tackle this issue HelpAge designed a security App for elders, called HelpAge SOS. SOS stands for 'Save Our Seniors'. The App serves as a one-stop security measure for elders nationally, connecting them to the HelpAge local Elder Helpline across India.

This App was launched in the national capital by former Lt. Governor Najeeb Jung on June 14, 2016, to mark 'World Elder Abuse Awareness Day'.

### **Key features of the App:**

- A click on the SOS button of the App directly connects to the HelpAge helpline staff/counsellor. Its 24x7 functionality aims at helping elders in distress at any given time. In case of emergencies, it connects them with the local Police, hospital or old age homes if need be.
- It empowers elders with 'Information on Critical Issues' related to them, such as: How to make a Will, about The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, their Rights & Entitlements, Active Ageing tips, Financial Planning etc.
- It provides real time GPS enabled information on retail outlets that provide discounts to senior citizens who are members of the HelpAge AdvantAge Card program.

# ENCOURAGING ACTIVE AGEING

Studies across the world show that elders who lead a productive working life, enjoy better both physical and mental health. HelpAge has been working with Senior Citizens Associations to encourage individual seniors as well as senior groups to come together to practice Active Ageing.

These are a few cases of elder groups coming together to start an enterprise and earn a livelihood or even some pocket money, which goes a long way in restoring self-belief and dignity.

## Vermicomposting in Supaul, Bihar



In the interiors of Supaul District, elders of Paramanandpur & Arraha villages, who lost their livelihood during the floods, have now found a new source of livelihood, that of turning cow dung and vegetable waste into a lucrative business of Vermicomposting. The elders have constructed 82 vermicomposting units in the compounds of the Flood Relief Centre in Paramanandpur village. Out of these 82, HelpAge is supporting 60 units and the remaining 22 units were created by the Elder-Self-Help-Groups that HelpAge helped form. The average earnings vary from 8000 - 10,000 per month. The overall maintenance of this livelihood activity and the final produce is managed by the elders who have formed an independent company for business purposes called Aasara Elders Producers Company Ltd.

## Active Ageing groups learn a craft

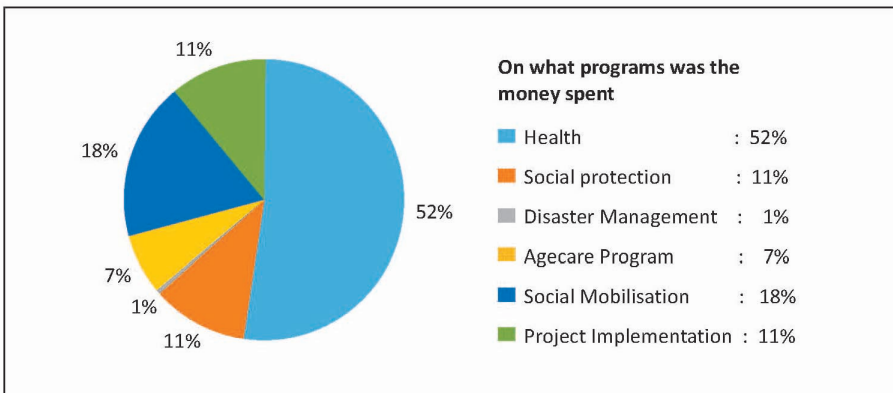
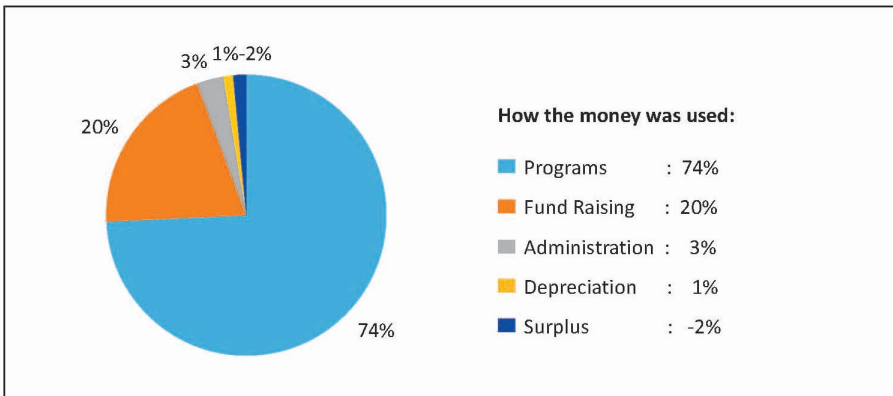
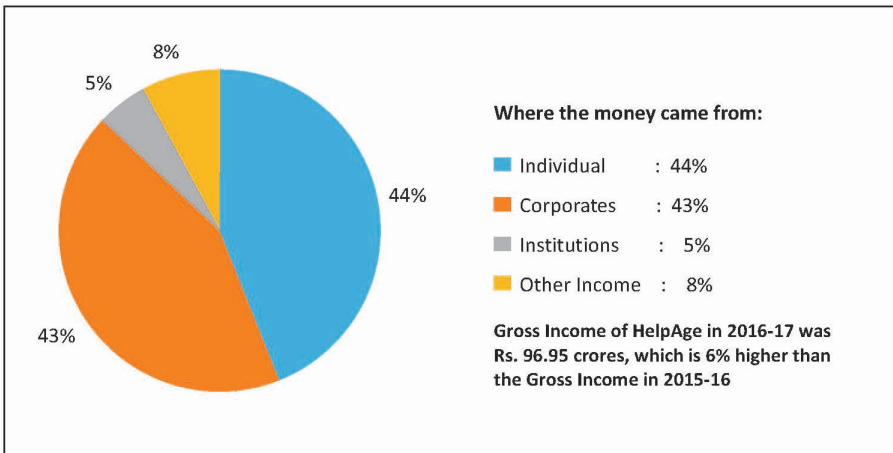


*A group of elder women in Cuddalore (Tamil Nadu), learn how to make woolen dresses. They have formed themselves into an 'Active Aging Enterprise Group' and now sell their products in the market. This unique activity has not only helped them use their time productively but also helped them gain independence.*



*Elderly women master the method of Fabric Painting during a 2-day training workshop organized for them at Vayajana Sevana Kendram at Chullிக்கal, Kochi (Kerala).*

# FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT 2016-17



**Note:** Please read our full Annual Report & Audited Accounts at [www.helpageindia.org](http://www.helpageindia.org)

# THANK YOU

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Each donation helps and when it helps us touch the lives of the disadvantaged, it is more than just money or material. For this and the succor that our million plus needy elder beneficiaries receive through your generous donations, two sincere words from us: Thank You.

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# WHEN I'M 64

## A HelpAge India contest for school students

While the HelpAge 'School Action for Value Education' (SAVE) program has been very successful in sensitizing young school children, it has always been a challenge to reach the students in senior classes. A first step in this direction was a launch of an unique pan India contest for school children from classes VIII, IX and X - titled 'When I am 64'.

The contest had three components Essay writing (in English or in Vernacular), Film making using mobile phones and conceptualizing a Science project for evolving elder care products and services. The contest received a tremendous response from both schools and students. Nearly 8000 school children participated and came up with innovative ideas. The most popular response was in essay writing and video films.

In an interesting feedback session in the capital, the students shared their experiences and said that partaking in the competition increased their interaction with their grandparents and brought them closer to them.



*Teacher & Students of Class VIII, Modern Public School, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi, receive the prize-winning Star School Trophy for Hindi Essay Writing, from Mr. Mathew Cherian, CEO, HelpAge India during the prize distribution ceremony at the capital.*



Pic. Credit: Dhananjay Shetgaonkar

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