

COVER STORY: Project *Sugamya*: Helping Elders with Mobility

HelpAge

NEWS



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 **HelpAge India**

Fighting isolation,
poverty, neglect

EDITOR Speaks

Dear Reader,

Greetings! A new year brings with it the promise of new horizons, expansion and growth. For us at HelpAge India, it is a time to plan ahead on how we can continue to broaden and deepen our impact on the lives of India's disadvantaged elders and ensure that we continue to 'reach the unreachable'.

Keeping this very thought in mind, we 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. Over 5000 mobility aids such as canes, crutches, walkers and wheelchairs were distributed.

Advocating for the needs of elderly, we submitted our budgetary recommendations to the Hon'ble Finance Minister, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman with an ask to consider measures for immediate relief in areas of income, health security, caregiving and inclusion of older persons in existing government schemes with special focus on older women and the oldest old.

Increasing cases of elders succumbing to cybercrime and scams has heightened the need to secure our elders from such vulnerability. In order to tackle this raising concern, under Project *Surakshit*, we marked 'Safer Internet Day', with a marathon of Digital Safety workshops held across the country to simultaneously train over 1000 senior citizens.

Meanwhile, in Mumbai, defying stereotypes our elders came out in huge numbers to participate in the Tata Mumbai Marathon, proving that age is only a number.

In our constant efforts to advocate for elder rights, a huge need was felt to highlight and bring to the forefront the contribution of older women. We ran a focussed campaign titled '*Honsle Se Himmat*' to recognize the amazing contribution made by these invisible warriors who have helped shape our world, through stories of hope and empowerment.

We will continue in our efforts to create a better world for our disadvantaged elders, raise their concerns and service them through our various programmes, so they can live a life of dignity. For this, we will need your support and love so together we can make a difference.

Sonali Sharma
Head - Communications



PROJECT SUGAMYA

Helping Elders with Mobility



As per the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI), 44% of the elderly face functional disability in the country. Over 90% of elderly belonging to the unorganized 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.

The disabled elderly who required the mobility aids were identified through our Mobile Healthcare Units, partner old age homes and livelihood locations across India. Camps were then organised at all these locations to distributed the aids as well as provide initial training on their usage. Follow up camps were also conducted at these same locations after an interval of a few months to check for any defect in the devices and identify wear and tear, which was repaired free of cost.





HELPAge INDIA SHARED RECOMMENDATIONS ON ELDERCARE FOR BUDGET 2023

As the government envisions India of 2047 and plans for *Amrit Kaal*, building an age-friendly society is imperative. HelpAge India, submitted its budgetary recommendations to the Hon'ble Finance Minister, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman with an ask to set up a special Ministry for the elderly and consider measures for immediate relief in areas of income, health security, caregiving and inclusion of older persons in exiting government schemes with special focus on older women and the oldest old.

The following were some of HelpAge India's Budget 2023 recommendations:

- Allocate funds for a national enrolment drive for elderly under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (PMJAY) covering everyone above the age of 80.
- Universalise Old Age Pension in India to include older women and the oldest old (85+ years) and raise it to at least Rs. 3000/month.
- Include poor older persons under the MGNREGA and keep a reservation of at least 5% of jobs for them.
- Accelerate and prioritise implementation of the National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE) – the only geriatric care programme for elderly.
- Incentivise caregiving for elderly within the family with tax exemption of Rs. 3.5 lakh for tax payers taking care of parents/in-laws up to 80 years and an amount of Rs. 5.5 lakhs for taking care of those above 80 years.
- Create a new provision for special Care Allowance for women who take care of elderly parents and older women who care for the family.
- Raise income tax exemption limit for senior citizens up to Rs. 10 lakhs for those 60 plus and 5 Lakh for those above 80 years.
- Launch a digital empowerment initiative for elders under the Digital India/CSC/Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology.



SAFER INTERNET DAY – PROJECT SURAKSHIT

As part of its Project *Surakshit* with grant support from Google.org, HelpAge India marked Safer Internet Day, in a first-of-its-kind event with a marathon of Digital Safety workshops being held across the country to simultaneously train over 1000 senior citizens.

The workshops, organised in coordination with Senior Citizens Associations, offer seniors essential training on digital safety, equipping them with critical skills to navigate the internet safely and securely and seek the benefits of online digital conveniences. HelpAge India aims to drive more awareness among this vulnerable community so that elders are informed and prepared to identify and address common online scams.

Here are some glimpses of the workshops:



Senior Speak



“These training workshops are a necessity; we seniors need them in this day and age with the increasing number of online scams that are taking place. Especially for myself, I feel very scared to touch any link on my phone fearing my savings will go.” said 61-year-old Ms. Aruna Gupta, a Senior Citizens Association Member.

A SEASON OF CELEBRATIONS FOR OUR FAMILY OF ELDERERS ACROSS INDIA



REPUBLIC DAY



Republic Day was celebrated with great pride and patriotism at all our old age homes. The day started with the hoisting of the National Flag, followed by a programme of patriotic songs and dance. The day is always particularly poignant for many of our elders who have witnessed the making of our great nation and been a part of the Freedom Struggle.

LOHRI AND PONGAL



HelpAge India's family of elders and staff from Punjab and Jammu celebrated the harvest festival of Lohri, while our elders from our old age homes in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry as well our Elder-Self-Help-Groups celebrated the harvest festival of Pongal. There were beautiful scenes of bonding and togetherness as they made *kolams/rangoli* and decorations, performed rituals, sang, danced, played games and feasted!

VALENTINE'S DAY



At HelpAge India we believe that there is no love as special as the one between grandparents and grandchildren. So on Valentine's Day in Mumbai we celebrate this special intergenerational bond with a lot of fun and togetherness every year! This year we had some special friends join us as well - RJ Paree from Radio Nasha and Vinaya Deshpande from CNN-News 18 helped spread our message and spent quality time with our elders!

LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME – Elders Empowering Elders



Proving that the power of determination can overcome any odds, including the barriers of ageing, 70-year-old Tara Devi, from Kataiya village in the Supaul district of Bihar has become a local icon. Until a few years ago, Tara Devi's entire family were working as farm labourers and were struggling to make ends meet. Today, she is earning so well that she is 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 her workforce.

Despite no formal education, this senior citizen is now making headlines thanks to her flourishing agricultural business. Her fortune changed when she joined *Akshyavat Bujurg Mahasangh*, one of HelpAge India's Elder-Self-Help-Groups (ESHGs) under its Project 'Astitva'. With some seed money from the group, she started planting cauliflower, radish, and other vegetables. This year 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 between 1-1.25 lakhs 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 has become an inspiration for not just elders like herself but also for other youngsters, who are motivated by her entrepreneurial skills and drive. She is a role model of *atmanirbharta*, self-reliance, and proving that age is no barrier to contribute to nation-building.



DEFYING AGE STEREOTYPES AT THE TATA MUMBAI MARATHON



Defying stereotypes on age and pushing their limits, more than 1400 elders took to the roads of the Mumbai, as they participated in the Tata Mumbai Marathon 2023, for which HelpAge India was once again an Institution Partner. 'Active Ageing' was the mantra for the senior citizens who took part in this mega event, which was flagged off by Hon'ble Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Eknath Shinde and Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister

of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis. Some of the seniors had travelled from as far as Pune, Navi Mumbai, Thane and Palghar and were at the venue as early as 6 am. The eldest participant was 91 years old! The ever-young spirit of our elders proved that 'age is just a number'!



Training on Dementia Care and Management



HelpAge India's Regional Resource and Training Centre, Tamil Nadu in collaboration with Centre for Ageing, Madras School of Social Work organised a three-day Residential Training Programme on Dementia Care and Management at the Madras School of Social Work in Chennai, for over 40 NGO functionaries from old age homes across Tamil Nadu.

Awareness Programme on Holistic Health



HelpAge India and Regional Resource & Training Centre, Shimla organised an awareness programme on holistic health, including preventive health Yoga and physiotherapy at Manali. Sub Divisional Magistrate, Raman Sharma was Chief Guest & Anil Rana, Tehsildar, was Guest of Honour at the event.

'Honsle Se Himmat' campaign for International Women's Day

This International Women's Day, HelpAge India ran an online campaign titled 'Honsle Se Himmat' that reflected upon what independence means to the women of India, especially the old and often forgotten. How far have the women of India come? Are they empowered? Are they financially independent and secure? Are their specific health needs being met? What is their reality today? We also highlighted stories of inspiration from our various programmes that have empowered disadvantaged elder women and helped them live with dignity and independence.



There are over **6 crore** elderly women in India
Only **10%** of them are economically independent



Only **16.9%** of women above the age of 60 years are covered by health insurance



CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Providing basic healthcare to disadvantaged elders, is one of the main focus areas of HelpAge India. We are extremely grateful for the generosity and support of corporates, for supporting our healthcare initiatives, especially our Mobile Healthcare Units (MHU) programme. Here are some of the initiatives taken by our partners:

Somany Ceramics



We are grateful to Somany Ceramics Ltd for supporting a new Mobile Healthcare Unit in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, through which we will be able provide quality primary healthcare to disadvantaged elders, as well as conduct regular health awareness sessions.

South West Mining Limited



We are grateful to S W M L for supporting a Mobile Healthcare Unit in Barmer, Rajasthan, which will provide healthcare services & health awareness to poor and needy elders and their community in the

region. It was launched by Collector Shri Lok Bandhu IAS and ADM Shri Surendra Singh.

IDBI Trusteeship Services Limited



HelpAge India launched a Physiotherapy Unit with a diverse range of physiotherapy equipment to help elders with musculoskeletal diseases and mobility issues at Radhika Old Age Home in Mumbai, Maharashtra with the support of IDBI Trusteeship Services Limited.

DIGITAL LITERACY FOR RURAL ELDERLY



What does Digital Empowerment and Digital Safety mean for the rural elderly in India? At the 2nd CSR Summit organized by CSC Academy and Digital India in the

national capital, Sonali Sharma, Head - Communications, HelpAge India, shared insights from HelpAge India's pioneering project with CSC Academy under Project *Alambana* supported by the National Stock Exchange of India Limited Foundation.

Project Saksham: Empowering Rural Elders



As part of Project Saksham, funded by MetLife Foundation, HelpAge India and American Friends of HelpAge India collaborated with the Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) to conduct a camp for elderly people in Villianur Commune at Puducherry. Through primary healthcare interventions, under-served elders receive the care they need, reducing the burden on local health infrastructure and the financial stress on families.



TURNING **90** IS A PIECE OF CAKE



Our old age home in Ladakh celebrated the 90th birthday of one of its residents with much fun and festivity. Being healthy, active, happy and surrounded by loved ones is the key to longevity!

WORLD ORAL HEALTH DAY



On World Oral Health Day, HelpAge India conducted multiple oral health camps as a way of working towards ensuring that no poor elderly is left behind when it comes to their dental care needs.

ELDERS FOOD STALL AT SHIMLA FOOD CARNIVAL



Proving that senior citizens can be just as productive and industrious as youngsters, our Elder-Self-Help-Groups of Himachal Pradesh had an extremely popular stall at the Shimla Food Carnival, where they sold delicious items such as juices, jams, chutneys, pickles, etc. The elders handle the whole process from the organic farming of fruits and vegetables to the making of these delectables. The products are also on sale at 'HIMERA' the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh's showroom in Kufri.

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