

LECTURE-6

PROBLEMS & ISSUES RELATED TO ELDERLY, DEVELOPMENTALLY CHALLENGED AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Women, Elderly and Specially Abled are often referred to as the vulnerable segments of Indian population. Vulnerable groups are the groups which face discrimination and are unable to provide an adequate income for the household for reasons of disability, illness, age or some other characteristic. Therefore, it is important to sensitize the society regarding the problems and issues related to elderly, developmentally challenged and gender mainstreaming, so that the rights, privileges and opportunities of these segments of population can be restored for their peaceful co-existence in the society.

ISSUES RELATED TO ELDERLY

The elderly population in India is the second largest in the world, next only to China. It has been reported that India is home to one out of 10 senior citizens in the world. India has around 100 million elderly at present and the number is expected to increase to 323 million, constituting 20 per cent of the total population, by 2050. The share of India's population ages 60 and older is projected to climb from 8 percent in 2010 to 19 percent in 2050. For most of the nations, regardless of their geographic location or developmental stage, the 60 and above age group is growing faster than any younger segment of the older. As a matter of fact, vulnerabilities towards the elderly arising out of poverty, rural living, income insecurity, illiteracy, dependency, decreasing support base, etc is increasing.

The UN member states in 1982 first recognized the importance of addressing and preventing abuse and neglect of older adults and has put it in the framework of the Universal Human Rights. World over 15th June is marked as '*World Elder Abuse Awareness Day*'.

Current status

The United Nations observes World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) on June 15 every year to create awareness on the need of taking care of elders. The theme of the 2018 World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) observed at the UN Headquarters was "Moving from Awareness to Action through a Human Rights based approach". Elder abuse is a global social issue which affects the health and human rights of millions of older persons around the world, and an issue which deserves the attention of the international community, says a UN report.

According to UN estimates, the global population of people aged 60 years and older is set to touch about 1.2 billion in 2025 and globally around 4 per cent to 6 per cent of elderly people have experienced some form of maltreatment at home.

On the eve of “World Elder Abuse Awareness Day”(June 15)“HelpAge India”, a charity working for the country’s elderly, revealed some startling facts through its nationwide report (2018) on “Elder Abuse in India” with a sharp focus on the Changing cultural ethos & impact of technology. Salient findings of the report are:

- 5014 elders were approached across 23 cities for interview.
- Nearly one-fourth (25%) elders have confirmed they have been a victim of Elder Abuse. There was almost no distinction between male and female elders.
- Elder Abuse was reported maximum in Mangalore, Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Amritsar, Delhi and Kanpur. It was least in Jammu, Mumbai, Vizag, Kochi, Guwahati.
- The most common form of abuse they experienced was Disrespect (56%), Verbal Abuse (49%) and Neglect (33%). They had been facing this since the past 5 years.
- The main abusers were Son (52%) and Daughter-in-law (34%).
- The median age of abuser is 42 years.
- 82% of those abused, did not report the matter.
- The key reasons for Not Reporting - were to “*maintain confidentiality (52%) of the family matter*” or “*did not know how to deal with problem (34%)*”.
- At the national level, 41% of the elderly are aware of at least one redressal mechanism.
- Around 35% of the elders were aware of police helpline, 11% were aware of MWPC act while 5% were aware of HelpAge helpline number.
- More than 60% elderly agreed that quality time spent by their adult children as well grandchildren with them has decreased with increase in usage of phones/computers.
- 65% elderly stated that extreme attention given to phones/ computers is disrespectful.
- At the national level, 69% of the elderly have a house in their own name, 7% have a house in the spouse’s name, 3% are living with others and 20% are living on rent.

- At the national level, 85% of the elderly are living with family, 8% are living with spouse only, 6% are living alone and 2% are living with relatives.

BASIC ISSUES

In the traditional Indian system elderly were respected and they had a great decision making power in the family. Children felt duty bound to serve and respect the elderly and to contribute to the family resources. Children sought the advice of elders for making major decisions and placed family resources at the disposal of elders for sensible handling. During the last century this socio economic and value system has slowly eroded. More and more couples are working full time, families have become smaller and nuclear, migration and consumerism have become the order of the day. All these factors cause pressures on families resulting in abuse, neglect and abandonment of the elderly. While most elderly are well looked after, many suffer from poverty, loneliness, neglect, abuse and abandonment and find it difficult to organize resources for their most basic needs as their children are either unable or unwilling to maintain them. Problem of widows, widowers and the childless elderly is even more acute.

The major issues are:

1. Neglect, Abuse & Exploitation: Half of Indian elderly are dependents often due to widowhood, divorce or separation and a majority of the elderly are women (70%). Majority of elderly lead an isolated life, even if they are living with family, at home. The crime against elderly has increased by four times in past decade. Around 2/3rd of elderly live in villages and nearly half are of poor socio-economic status.

2. Economic dependence : Majority of the elderly especially those among the poor are working on full time basis, irrespective of their health status, mainly to earn a living. Many lead poor or very poor economic life and widows suffer the most. Many elderly provide economic help to their children. Ownership of land/property significantly affects the status of the elderly in family matters.

3. Poor health status: Use of appropriate aids, regular medical checkups and intake of medicines among the poor elderly is almost absent. Majority often suffer from chronic bronchitis, anaemia, blood pressure, chest pain, heart attack, kidney problems, digestive problems, change in vision, diabetes and depression. After a certain age, health problems begin to crop up leading to losing control over one's body, even not recognizing own family. Therefore, health education of the elderly should form an important aspect of the health care so that they could learn certain do's and don'ts related to the different diseases and inculcate these in their behavioral patterns through constant practice so as to prevent the occurrence of diseases or reduce the effects of illnesses. Hence, it is suggested that

- There is a necessity to train both indigenous and allopathic doctors to handle the specific illnesses associated with aging.
- It is necessary to set up subsidized health care for the elderly with special units in hospitals and with free or highly subsidized medicines. Subsidized health care would also represent an indirect transfer of resources to the family.
- Creation of special geriatric wards in major hospitals, setting up of special counters and geriatric out-patients units in existing hospitals will greatly help the elderly.
- Social gerontology needs to form a part of the syllabus for medical professionals and paraprofessionals so that they could integrate health education along with the health care provided to the elderly persons.
- A proper coordination between health care and welfare measures needs to be attempted for that would be most cost effective as well as more efficient.
- Majority of the elderly especially those among the poor are working on full time basis, irrespective of their health status, mainly to earn a living. There is a necessity to introduce community based income generating schemes for the benefit of the poor elderly.
- Among the poor strata of elderly, the non-availability of food may be a major factor responsible for reduced in-take and consequent poor health. In view of this, supplementary nutrition programmes targeting needy elderly in the poor localities may be considered on a priority basis, which ultimately helps them in improving their health status.
- Community members have to be sensitized about the problems of the elderly so that a greater commitment and involvement could be ensured in order to include "care for the elderly" within the purview of Primary Health Care.

4. Poor Legal Support:

All Indian citizens are entitled to fundamental rights guaranteed to them by the Indian Constitution. Senior citizens are no exception. They are also entitled to fundamental rights to life and personal liberty, freedom of speech and equality before law but these rights are often difficult for them to achieve for a variety of reasons.

Most personal laws including the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 recognise duty of the children to maintain their aged parents and the right of the parents to maintenance. Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 specifically provides for maintenance from children if parents are unable to maintain themselves but cases are rarely filed by parents due to love and affection, fear of stigma and time and money required for the legal proceedings. A need has been felt for long for a simpler and faster means and HelpAge India, as part of its work for the cause and care of the elderly, has been advocating

for provision of care and maintenance of the elderly amongst other measures.

Ironically, today thousands of older persons are forced to attend court cases for indefinite period of time due to lethargic legal process and other vested interest groups. Their human rights are always at stake. Indeed, older persons are the worst affected victims of our sluggish and insensitive system.

In 2010, the National Policy of Older Persons (NPOP) finished 10 years. To review it, Dr. V Mohini Giri committee was set up by the government to assess the present status of various issues concerning senior citizens and implementation of NPOP, 1999. The committee was also asked to draft a new National Policy on Older Persons, keeping in view the emerging trends in demographic, socio-economic, technological and other relevant fields.

However, the government of India has taken initiative to improve legal support to the elderly and the elderly can now swing their sticks to good effect. If they find themselves in distress, they can fall back on the '**Maintenance & Welfare of Parents & Senior Citizens Act, 2007**'. The Act mandates that all those children who have abandoned their parents or have made them the subject of neglect in their homes will have to face penal provisions and imprisonment of up to three months or a fine of Rs 5000 or both. Under the Act, the Delhi government is starting nine tribunals across the city to take up the cases of senior citizens and address reconciliation and maintenance issues.

ISSUES RELATED TO PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

What is a developmental delay?

Developmental Delay is there when the child does not reach developmental milestones at the expected time. It is an *ongoing major or minor delay in the process of development*. For example, if the normal age for learning to walk is between 9 and 15 months, and a 20-month-old child has still not begun walking, this would be considered a developmental delay. As a child grows and develops, he learns different skills, such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, or waving goodbye. These skills are known as developmental milestones. A child with a developmental delay (a milestone delay of more than 2 standard deviations below the norm) does not reach these milestones at the same time as other children the same age. Most often, at least initially, it is difficult or impossible to determine whether the delay is permanent (i.e., known as a disability) or whether the child will 'catch-up' and be 'normal' or nearly 'normal.' There are five main groups of skills that make up the developmental milestones. A child may have a developmental delay in one or more of these areas.

- **Gross motor:** using large groups of muscles to sit, stand, walk, run, etc., keeping balance, and changing positions.

- **Fine motor:** using hands and fingers to be able to eat, draw, dress, play, write, and do many other things.
- **Language:** speaking, using body language and gestures, communicating, and understanding what others say.
- **Cognitive:** Thinking skills including learning, understanding, problem-solving, reasoning, and remembering.
- **Social:** Interacting with others, having relationships with family, friends, and teachers, cooperating, and responding to the feelings of others.

Causes of developmental delay?

Developmental delay can have many different causes like Genetic causes (Down syndrome), complications of pregnancy and birth (prematurity or infections) and accidents and malnutrition.

Major prevailing developmental delays

1. Mental Retardation: Mental retardation means that a person's ability to learn new things is slower or retarded compared with the abilities of most people.

2. Cerebral Palsy: Cerebral palsy means that the messages from the brain to the legs or to the mouth or to the hands, etc. are not complete. It's hard for many people with cerebral palsy to talk, but its important to remember that their slow, difficult speech doesnot mean that they are retarded. Most people with cerebral palsy can do many things and most learn as quickly as anyone else.

3. Visual Impairment/Blindness: Some people are legally blind or totally blind. A person who is legally blind can still have some usable eyesight and may use large print books. Some people are almost totally blind. Some children are born blind or become blind as a result of an accident or illness. Many blind people can see some shadows and colors but they cannot see enough to read, to drive or to get around without help. Most blind people have training in walking and reading Braille. Many blind people work at interesting jobs, swim, ski and marry.

3. Hearing Impairment: A person who is hearing impaired can be either deaf or hard of hearing. There are two different kinds of hearing loss. One kind is called a decibel loss and that means that the person hears all sounds much more softly than a person with normal hearing does. Or, a person can have a frequency loss. Frequency means the pitch of a sound, so with a frequency loss, you would hear some

pitches better than others. Because our language is made up of high and low pitches sounds, a person with a frequency loss would hear all of some words, some parts of some words, and would miss some words altogether. A deaf person could inherit a hearing loss. Deafness can also be the result of accident or a disease. Some deaf children are taught only to use sign language, while others are taught only to lip read. Some combine signing, lip reading and their own voices.

4. Orthopedically handicapped: Orthopedic handicaps are conditions of the skeletal system that limit a person's abilities to move.

KEY ISSUES & PROBLEMS

In the fast developing world, lot of favourable things have happened and are still happening in a much faster pace. Aesthetics and Technology has come hand in hand, creating beautiful barriers in the environment around. The barriers in the society can be mainly classified into two: **the environmental & attitudinal barriers**. The major environmental barriers are of two types: Architectural and Communication. Lack of information is another major barrier faced by Disabled People. In addition to this is the disability insensitive attitude, which promotes the barriers first hand.

ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS

- **Architectural barriers** in buildings include lack of Ramps, Railings, Signage, Braille Print, Adequate Spacing, Slip Resistant Flooring, Accessible Toilets and Chairs, Switches, Shelves, Wash Basins, Taps & Telephone at an accessible height. This kind of infrastructure help disabled people to be at ease and do their routines with minimum or no support. Apart from becoming self-reliant, such an internal atmosphere boosts their self-confidence and avoids unnecessary delay.
- **Communication** is another area where there is not enough focus paid upon. People having communication barriers are the ones who face lot of hardships in socialization. At present, Communication is bound within language and speech. In reality, much more communication can happen in silence. There is an inappropriate school of thought stating that people with communication disabilities cannot communicate or don't know to communicate. The fact is reverse. Any one and every one communicates in a day-to-day living. But, the society that claims to be communicative or communicable doesn't bother to receive or understand what the disabled person is communicating.

Major communication barriers in the society include lack of Readers, Braille Material / Manuals / Magazines / Government Orders/ Gazette / News Papers and Scribe Facility for people with Visual Impairment, lack of Sign Language & Sign Language Interpreters for People with Hearing

Impairment, lack of Communication Aids and technical devices for people with severe disabilities and a lack of importance to research on Alternative & Augmentative Communication, which hinders a huge amount of human resource in contributing towards the development of the country. Apart from these, there is an immense need for disabled friendly curriculum and examination system, which involve a variety of options and adaptations.

The areas that get affected due to these barriers include Education and Information leading to intellectual disability, Employment leading to financial disability, Play, Leisure and Health leading to Health issues, all the above affecting the Rights and Contribution of disabled people leading to isolation from society, affecting their Self Esteem, (Sense of) Social Respect and Dignity of Life leading to an emotional disability; an all round life of disability.

ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS

The real issue behind these barriers is the **disability insensitive attitude** of the society. Even a stringent law can do very less unless there is a change in the mindset of people and a willingness to accept and respect (disabled) people. There is an attitude of relating a disabled person with his or her disability and not to his/her abilities. The society should be dynamic enough to **Accept all Differences**, as the world exists only because of its differences and the natural balance among them. It also becomes the duty of each member of the society to **Respect Individuality and Mutual Rights** of any (disabled) member of the society. The society should develop a natural tendency to provide **Equal Opportunities** to disabled people, where by they can enjoy their rights and as well contribute to the society. All citizens should have the attitude to **Value the Contribution** of disabled people as they do their own. For such an attitudinal shift to happen, the society should **Believe** in Disabled people and that they are like anybody else.

EDUCATION

By creating special schools and by creating special teachers in the country - in the world in fact - a big mistake has been committed. If there were no special schools, no special teachers, probably the society would have learnt over the years to cater to different disabilities. By segregating them, somewhere, the main stream schools have never felt it to be their responsibility to include all children.

It is a well known fact that enrolment in mainstream school alone is not the answer. It is important for the education system to respond to the needs of disabled people. Even the integrated education system is catering only to mildly disabled people. Whoever receives special education never gets standardized curriculum; and a very few reach up to college education or even 11th or 12th class.

The results of a survey conducted in 320 odd universities and schools shows that only 0.1% of disabled students are in universities and 0.5% in mainstream schools. Clearly, a huge amount of neglect prevails in the society.

Least priority has been given to the education of disabled children, due to the following reasons:

- (1) **The attitude of the parents, family members and the community is that**, there is no use of a disabled child being educated and it is a wastage of time, money and other resources, as they think that a disabled child / adult is not productive in any way. The capitalist mentality of the society also prevents the disabled child from enjoying the Right to Education as conferred by the Constitution of India.
- (2) **When there are other siblings for a disabled child, the disabled child gets the least priority in education compared to his/her siblings, either due to poverty of parents or the attitudinal barriers in the society.** Poverty and Disability is a vicious circle. Due to poverty education is denied for children. Even if parents from the economically weaker sections of the society want to educate their children, the opportunity of a disabled child going to school is a rarity, as the cost involved in educating a disabled child is more when compared to a non- disabled child, due to the architectural barriers in the society.
- (3) **The prevalence of architectural and environmental barriers such as inaccessible built environment, school buildings, roads, transport and so on.** Many times parents will have to carry their disabled child due to the architectural and environmental barriers. They cannot use public transport and private transport is too expensive for them. Thus as the child grows older their environment is restricted to their home.
- (4) **The education system is also inaccessible for many disabled students**, as the teaching methods, learning aids, the curriculum itself and the evaluation system is not disabled friendly. (Braille books and materials, readers for students with visual impairment, sign language interpretation and teaching are not available in most schools). Even when alternative teaching methods are used, the same methods are not used for evaluation. For example if a child is taught using the Picture Communication System they are not evaluated using this system. This allows little opportunity for Disabled People to continue with their education. Augmentative and Alternative Communication Techniques are confined only to few special schools.

(5) **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA)** talks of Education for all. The fact remains that many disabled people are not enrolled under this scheme due to the severity of Disability. Also teachers are not trained in inclusive education.

(6) **The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995** does not speak of reservations in Higher Educational Institutions and only talks about open universities. Many Disabled People are denied entry into professional courses like MBA, Engineering and Medicine due to their disability.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The concept of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of society was clearly established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the Platform for Action adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing (China) in 1995. It highlighted the necessity to ensure that gender equality is a primary goal in all area(s) of social and economic development.

Mainstreaming involves *changes* in goals, strategies and actions to ensure that both women and men can influence, participate in and benefit from development processes. In India, Gender Mainstreaming is mostly done through policies for Women Empowerment which involve awareness raising, building self confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which strengthen and bring about gender discrimination and inequality. The ultimate goal of Gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

Mainstreaming includes gender-specific activities and positive action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit equally from development efforts. These are necessary temporary measures designed to fight the direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination.

Transformation by Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is not about adding a "woman's component" or even a "gender equality component" into an existing activity. It goes beyond increasing women's participation; it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear on the development agenda.

It may require identifying the need for changes in that agenda. It may require changes in goals, strategies, and actions so that both women and men can influence, participate in, and benefit from development processes. The goal of mainstreaming gender equality is thus the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women.

Basic Principles of Mainstreaming

Responsibility for implementing the mainstreaming strategy is system-wide, and rests at the highest levels within agencies, according to Carolyn Hannan, Director of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women. Other principles include:

- Adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress need to be established.
- The initial identification of issues and problems across all area(s) of activity should be such that gender differences and disparities can be diagnosed.
- Assumptions that issues or problems are neutral from a gender-equality perspective should never be made.
- Gender analysis should always be carried out.
- Clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including additional financial and human resources if necessary, are important for translation of the concept into practice.
- Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making.
- Mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes, and positive legislation; nor does it do away with the need for gender units or focal points.

Current Status of Gender Equality in India

- Under the Gender Inequality Index, India is 0.617, placing it in **129th** place out of total of 146 countries. The country's score under the Global Gender Gap Index for 2011 is 0.6190; **113th** out of 135 countries.
- In the rural areas, women are mainly involved as cultivators and agricultural labourers – 73% of all women workers are employed in the agricultural sector.
- In the urban areas, almost 80% of the women workers are working in the unorganised sectors such as household industries, petty trades and services, buildings and construction sector.
- Son preference is rampant and sex ratio at birth (i.e., the higher number of boys born relative to girls) continues to increase in many areas in the country dowry is still widely practiced and child marriage (although illegal) still takes place.
- Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Tests Act (to reduce sex-selective abortion) and the Child Marriage Restraint Act continue to be ignored with relative impunity.
- A key challenge for women's economic empowerment is the gender gap in employment outcomes.

KEY ISSUES & PROBLEMS

1. Social Barriers:- Indian society is changing in favour of working women but at a very slow pace. At family level, they do not get much support from in-laws after marriage. Rather family members have double standards for their sons and daughter-in-laws.

2. Women are discriminated for type of employment given to them also. Women are seen less favourably in terms of knowledge, competence, skill, aptitude, interests and temperament demanded in managerial jobs. These myths concerning competence and commitment to work continues to influence employment decisions and adversely affect their chances of promotion also. It is said that women are not aggressive by nature that's why not suitable for managerial jobs.

3. Less acceptability of Women Bosses:- The males who are from conservative society, **hardly accept a woman as boss**, who can give them instructions or orders. A woman boss by using her authority will certainly hurt their male ego.

4. Negative attitude of people:- The people who have a negative attitude towards working women, attribute their success to good luck and easy jobs.

5. Negative Motivation:- Many times, women are motivated to avoid success. They are discouraged on the grounds that if you accept a responsible position after promotion, it will create tension for them. They also feel that its result may be social isolation and will create doubts about their normality. e.g. Headship in University or senior post in a company, people around a female generally discourage her to accept such responsible positions.

6. Non-Traditional Careers:- Women who choose non-traditional career, fail to receive support from their family members as well as from society. But those who are strong and clear about their goals & missions in life and who have self confidence tend to break all the myths. e.g. The careers like workings of women on petrol pumps or as drivers, conductors etc.

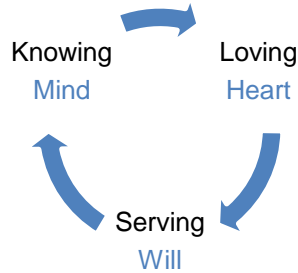
ROLE OF HUMAN VALUES: following three values play most important role in developing helping attitude towards any vulnerable group

1. Sympathy means acknowledging a person's emotional hardships and providing comfort and assurance

2. Empathy means understanding what someone else is feeling because you have experienced it yourself or can put yourself in their shoes.

3. Altruism means voluntary behavior that is motivated by concern for another or by internal values and goals, not by the expectation of external rewards or punishment.

Humans should have blend of values of mind, heart and will to develop prosocial behaviour.



Values of the mind: knowing

1. Evaluating one's own strengths and weaknesses without involving ego.
2. Learning from systematic reflection upon action within a consistent framework.
3. Perceiving and interpreting the significance of current events and trends in light of an appropriate historical perspective.
4. Thinking systematically and strategically in search for solutions.

Values of the heart: loving

1. Imbuing one's actions and thoughts with love.
2. Encouraging others and bringing happiness in their hearts.
3. Cultivating and creating a sense of beauty in every endeavor.
4. Building unity in diversity.

Values of the will: serving

1. Transcending one's lower passions by focusing on higher purposes and capabilities.
2. Managing one's affairs and responsibilities with rectitude of conduct based on moral and ethical principles.
3. Taking initiative in a creative and a disciplined way.
4. Sustaining effort, persevering and overcoming obstacles.