

Five Day Training in Geriatric Care Giving For SAARC Countries,
July 21-25, 2008, Hotel Samrat, New Delhi

A Report

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Countries have adopted a SAARC Social Charter to implement the goals of the enhanced cooperation and exchange information on areas of common interests and best practices. One of the goals of the SAARC Social Charter is to intealia focus on training of Officers in the field of Geriatric Care Giving for the SAARC Member Countries.

With this in view, the National Institute of Social Defence, New Delhi organized a Five-Day Training on Geriatric Care Giving for the SAARC Member Countries in Kautilya Hall at Hotel Samrat, Kautilya Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110021 form July 21-25, 2008 (*Background Note is annexed*).

The major objectives of the training were:

- To have an overview of the ageing scenario in the SAARC Member Countries.
- To acquaint the participants about the basic issues related to elderly.
- To equip the participants with basic tools and techniques in care giving.
- To discuss the problems being faced by the elderly in other SAARC Regions.
- To disseminate the information about the best practices adopted in the field of geriatric care and related issues.
- To access Training Needs in the field of geriatric care.
- To explore the areas for Research and Documentation.
- To appraise the participants about the responds of Indian Government to meet the challenges.

Participants of this programme were representatives of SAARC Member Countries working in the field of Ageing, Senior Level Officers from Ministry and Allied Departments. (*List of Participants is annexed*). Their participation in the training acted as a catalyst for forging a partnership among SAARC Countries for addressing the problems of elderly in this region.

Inaugural Session:

The training programme was inaugurated by lighting of the lamp by the Dignitaries on the Dias. The Dignitaries present were Dr. Kheya Bhattacharya, Joint Secretary (SAARC), Ministry of External Affairs; Dr. Arbind Prasad, Joint Secretary (Social Defence), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment; Shri Satyendra Prakash, Director, NISD, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment; Shri Rakesh Malhotra, Under Secretary (SAARC), Ministry of External Affairs; Representatives of SAARC Member Countries and Senior Level Officers from Ministry and Allied Departments.



Dr. (Smt.)Keya. Bhattacharya, JS(SARRC), MEA Inaugurates the Programme by lightening the lamp

Shri Satyendra Prakash, Director, NISD, welcomed Dr. Kheya Bhattacharya, Joint Secretary, SAARC, Dr. Arbind Prasad, Joint Secretary, Social Defence, Shri Rakesh Malhotra, Under Secretary, SAARC, the delegates from Nepal, Pakistan and India and all the other guests present.

In his welcome address Shri Satyendra Prakash mentioned that ageing has emerged as a major challenge in almost all the countries. The most common feature earlier in the SAARC Countries was the traditional joint family system which was responsible for the care and respect of elderly. However, due to urbanization, modernization and migration the traditional family system is almost withering away in the present scenario. He further emphasized that in the present circumstances, the most challenging job is to meet the psychological, social and physical needs of the Elderly. The challenge has to be overcome together and not in isolation.

Dr. Khaya Bhattacharya, Joint Secretary (SAARC), MEA, in her address, informed the group that one of the most important subject recognized by the SAARC Social Charter is the 'elderly issue'. Social Charter started fifteen years ago and the problems of the aged, child, poverty etc. have been identified as important issues which need to be addressed. She also stressed on the need for generating awareness and holding further training programmes in other countries as geriatric care is not an issue of isolation.

She urged the group to arrive at a focused agenda to provide a road map for the Government in order to ensure a holistic approach in dealing with elderly related programmes. She also urged upon to develop concrete programme which can be taken up in the 15th SAARC Summit for consideration.

Dr. Arbind Prasad, Joint Secretary (SD); MSJ&E in his address welcomed the delegates on the behalf of the Ministry. He apprised the group that the issues identified by Social Charter in its IIInd meeting, held in 2007 considered elderly issues as main agenda. He further apprised the group about the concerns of the Government of India and initiatives taken. In this regard, he informed that MSJ&E, Government of India announced NPOP in 1999 which covers all main aspects of the elderly. The main thrust of the policy is on family care and institutional care has been given the last priority. He further informed that the Government of India has enacted the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizen Act in 2007, which has made it obligatory to take care of the parents by children and that of senior citizen by the State. He also felt that

the elderly require medical and social care. He further informed that the Ministry is supporting NGOs through its Integrated Scheme for Older Persons which encourages NGOs to promote innovative projects such as Volunteer's Bureau, Helpline Services, etc.



Dr. Arbind Prasad, JS(SD) delivering welcome address to the delegates

He also said that the two National Institutes on Ageing are proposed with main focus on medical issues including separate Geriatric Units in Hospitals. The setting up of National Institute on Ageing to address social issues was also in pipeline. He urged the group to deliberate on concrete ideas as this is an opportunity to share experiences with each other.

Shri Rakesh Malhotra, Under Secretary (SAARC) proposed vote of thanks.

The afternoon session started with the brief presentation of the respective Country by the representatives of SAARC Member Countries.

The main highlights of the training programme were: major issues of concern such as situational analysis, issues on elderly, Institutional and Non-institutional care and rehabilitation of elderly, stress and crisis management among elderly and challenges for caregivers, geriatric counselling, productive ageing, International obligations on ageing and the Indian response to the challenges and networking and partnership for the elderly, There was also a film show on Home for destitute elderly at Nepal which depicts the caregiving mechanisms for elderly.



Dr. Malakapoor Shankardass, Chairperson, DWARF delivering a session on Situational Analysis-An overview of Ageing Scenario in SAARC Region

The Resource Persons were academicians, professionals, field experts, senior Officials, and others with eminence in the field, sharing of successful models: A case approach by Vridh Nagrik Kesari Club, working for the welfare of Senior Citizens.



Shri Mathew Cherian, CEO, Helpage India delivering in a session on Productive Ageing

There was also a film shown featuring on Home for destitute elderly at Nepal which depicts the care-giving mechanisms for elderly. The Resource Persons were academicians, professionals, field experts, Senior Officials, and others with eminence in the field. (*List of Resource Persons is attached*)

For wide exposure, participants visited Respect Age International, Agra on July 24, 2008. In a Power Point presentation the Institute informed the group about their initiatives and achievements in the field of welfare for elderly. It was an enlightening experience for the participants.

The deliberations concluded with the following Recommendations from the Member Countries.

Policy Issues:

- SAARC should focus on implementation of Policies related to Ageing.
- Legal provisions and its implementation may be shared between the Member Countries.

Services:

- There is a need to formulate more activities on different aspects/issue-based activities for the Senior Citizens.
- Better Institutional facilities for elderly may be ensured.
- Resource Persons from Member Countries may meet periodically for sharing and dissemination of knowledge.
- Awareness related to Health problems may be created among the Elderly and other sections of the society.

Research & Data Base:

- Funding on cultural specific Research must be considered by SAARC. WHO may cover Pakistan under its area of Research.
- SAARC must open its own university and provision may be made for a Chairperson for Research.

- SAARC may be impressed to create Database for the issues related to Elderly which should be available on the Website for sharing among the SAARC Countries.
- Proper Network and Website may be created for the awareness and information of the issues related to Elderly.

Training:

- Training should be provided in Nepal in Geriatric related issues.
- Training may be provided to Senior Citizens to cope with the stress of Bereavement and Death.
- Member from all SAARC Countries must participate in various training programme.

Logistics:

- SAARC may bear all the funds of boarding and lodging of the trainers.
- Funding for their travel to International Countries to attend Seminars/ Conferences/Workshops may be looked into.

Concluding Session:

The group unanimously recommended that SAARC Countries may develop concerted Action Plan on Ageing Issues.



Participant being received Certificate

Dr. Arbind Prasad, Joint Secretary (Social Defence), MSJ&E, in his valedictory address remarked that though the SAARC Countries share same economic and social background, people from different strata are facing different problems which needs to be addressed.



He further emphasised that needs of Elderly are not limited to BPL Elderly. Both Government of India and SAARC Social Charter are trying to make the masses aware of the issues related to Elderly and conducting training programmes in various regions. The Concept of Reverse Mortgage and Volunteer Bureau are being popularized among the elderly who live in isolation can benefit maximum from these and be a part of it. The concept 'Welfare of older persons by older persons' should be promoted. JS also informed that computer training is being provided to elderly so that while sitting in home they can exchange their views through e-mails, surf net, buy tickets, etc. He further recommended that University of Older Persons may be opened so that they can share their knowledge and learn about various issues.

Shri Satyendra Prakash, Director, NISD proposed vote of thanks.