

Building Community Association & Recreation Services for the Elderly People

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Introduction:

There has been a steady rise in the population of older persons in Bangladesh. Continuous increase in life expectancy means that more people are now living longer. General improvement in the health care facilities over the years is one of the main reasons for continuing increase in proportion of population of senior citizens. Ensuring that they not merely live longer, but lead a secure, dignified and productive life is a major challenge.

The Present Situation in Bangladesh:

The traditional norms and values of the Bangladeshi society laid stress on showing respect and providing care for the aged. However, in recent times, society is witnessing a gradual but definite withering of the joint family system, as a result of which a large number of parents are being neglected by their families exposing them to lack of emotional, physical and financial support. These older persons are facing a lot of problems in the absence of adequate social security.

The Elderly: National Figures:

According to the National census between 1974 and 2011 the growth of elderly people is gradually increasing. In 1974, the populations between 60-64 years were 1682629 and in 2011 the numbers were 3218974. Report shows that the trends of elderly population increase gradually.

The Programs of Government of Bangladesh:

Constitution of the Bangladesh mentioned the rights of elderly people. Old age allowance introduces in Bangladesh in the Fiscal Year (FY)'1997-1998 and the main objectives of this allowance is ensuring socio-economic development and social security for the elderly; Bangladesh has pension policies to ensure social security on old age for retired government employees only. Bangladesh introduced Program Implementation Plan for protecting old age health and ensures health care. Recently the Parent Care Act 2013 of Bangladesh tried to ensure that the children have to take necessary steps to look after their parents But it is not in fully functioning yet.

The PKSF Initiative: UPLIFTING THE LIVES OF ELDERLY: A Widen Window of Hope for Elder People:

As part of the multi-sectoral approach to serve the disadvantaged people of the country, PKSF has introduced a new programme called 'Uplifting the Lives of Elderly People' as a supplementary intervention of its multidimensional poverty alleviation programmes. PKSF is trying to help the elderly people to minimize their miseries in some selected Unions. Under the programme, elderly people are being helped out with some special assistance. Under the programme, the following activities are being implemented in the working areas: establishment of social centers for the elderly people, provision of old age allowance, special savings programme and pension fund, recognizing elderly persons' contribution to society, providing awards to the best children for serving their parents, appropriate credit and training facility for the poor elderly people, training up para-physiotherapist to provide geriatric nursing and creating special social facilities for the elderly people. (Source: PKSF Annual Report 2016). With the support of PKSF 51 partner NGOs have been successfully implementing the program in 77 union of Bangladesh. The main role and the most important contribution of the POs to the well-being of older people at home are to be a link to daily life in the society of today.

The Field Level Experience through the Program

Supporting social participation and integration in the community: POs are playing a key role in helping the older person to become integrated in social activities and in keeping contact with people of all ages in a meaningful way. Social participation and learning are important factors for healthy ageing. He/she might wish to learn about new technologies, for example, to keep up with the modern world. Through the Radio, Television and daily news paper they are able to update regarding different issues.

Provision of old age allowance: In combination of POs and PKSF contribution, old age allowance has been distributing monthly basis to the extreme poor and destitute elder people. The monthly 600/- taka old age allowance is the ladder for the extreme poor elder people for their minimum livelihoods improvement.

Empowerment & Skill Development in Old Age: Through the special training, savings and

credit program elderly persons are involved in income generating activities. This initiative is contributing social security for them.

Special award for elder person: "No elderly person should be like an "exile" in our families. The elderly are a treasure for our society." Considering this philosophy regularly and yearly basis special award for elder persons' ceremony observed by all POs. Through this ceremony, we conveyed our heartiest gratitude to the elder persons for their glorious contribution for the society.

Special Award for best son/ daughter: Due to weak social bondage and reduce the social values, day to day increase the negligence to the elder person. But still now some son and daughters obey and caring their parents with full fillings, passions, love and affection. They are the anchor of the society. We salute those son and daughter and awarded them for their real efforts.

Geriatric Nursing and Para physiotherapy

Healthcare: Through the Satellite Clinics, ESDO provides basic healthcare to the doorstep of the elderly. Special Health Care: i) Health check up camps for older persons – blood pressure, diabetes, eyes, etc. ii) Health material distribution like hearing aids, specs, walker, wheel chairs, general medicines, etc. iii) Awareness creation among older persons and their family members about causes of diseases in old age, iv) Eye Care: Every year ESDO conducts thousands of free cataract surgeries. It helps the elderly who couldn't afford to spend money for a simple eye operation. It helps them see their loved ones face again) Referral Services: ESDO have already established strong working relationship with mainstream health services like Community Clinics, Union Family Welfare Center, Upazilla Health Complex & District Hospital. If any emergency cases, ESDO referred the patients to the concern health center through ESDO Ambulance Service (if needed).

Special Services for Elderly People: Special assistance provided for extreme poor families for funeral program of elderly people after passing away. Financial assistance provides to extreme poor elder people on the form of warm cloth, umbrella, wheel chair etc.

Counseling services: Social issues, Family relationship issues, Residential issues

Building community Association & Recreation services for the Elderly People: Field level Experience

Voice from Grassroots

- *I never saw such types of initiatives within my whole life. It's really amazing and I am always waiting for joining Probeen Samajik Kendra. I pray to God for organizers for creating this opportunity. (Madhab Chondra(80), Matigara Village of Auliapur Union, Thakurgaon)*
- *Kendra is our life line. I feel respected and wanted, In earlier my son in law neglected me but through the Kendra and committees advocacy my son in law now caring me . (Nittanandao Roy (73), Kachubari Village of Auliapur Union, Thakurgaon)*
- *I feel very much happy but at the same time I miss my late husband. He had not taken the great opportunity (Faguni Rani (71), Dangapara Village of Auliapur Union, Thakurgaon)*
- *I feel this is my home. I am really feeling more comfort in Kendra compare to my home. I pray to Allah for organizers for providing this opportunity (Jamir Uddin (72), Shasla Pyala Village of Auliapur Union, Thakurgaon)*
- *I lost my husband more than 08 years ago. I always miss him. In earlier I was lonely and frustrated but through the Kendra all of old people get together. Now I feel better. Kendra is little bit far distance from my house, if possible please establish more Kendra (Mazeda Bewa (68), Dhonipara Village of Auliapur Union, Thakurgaon)*

Probeen Committee: The center for Building Community Association

The main objective of the Committee is to create an enlightened society in which the younger Generation care for the elders and that the senior citizens feel safe and secure, age productively and lead a life of dignity.

The Probeen Committee have already formed and activated at 12 village levels, 09 ward levels and 01 union level under ESDO working area. The committees consist of 9-21 members. Out of 22 Committees 210 senior citizens have directly involved and act on different community based issues like monitoring the government and other assistance for elder people, access to services from service providers, arrange special assistance for senior citizens, address the social problems like drug addiction, eve teasing, dowry, early marriage, day observance, operating probeen samajik kendra, engaged with local level social institutions and as a result a strong and vibrant participation have already ensured. Each and

every month committee members are seating together and address the said issues. The Probeen Committees has been significantly contributing on local level community development and community organization.

Probeen Samajik Kendra: A Symbol of recreation, recognition and dignity for Senior Citizens

The centre is data-driven; outcome oriented and designed to promote growth and resilience in senior citizens. At 9.00 a.m. the Centre opens for the day and shuts at 5pm. In fact, participants queue up from 9.30 a.m. onwards to rush in. Female members come after completed their house work. ESDO provides a platform to share experiences and exchange information among members on various subjects like healthcare, rights and responsibilities of senior citizens, social issues, entertainment, current affairs and many more. The senior citizens enjoy their time through different games like carom, ludo, chess etc. The young peoples are joining with them. Through this way a reunion and festival mood open and as a result the senior citizens passing their days with joy and hope.

Through the Probeen Committee & Probeen Samajik Kendra the following Information Disseminate on the systematic way) Proactive information dissemination ii) Empower older persons to get proper low-cost or free of cost treatment, medicines, medical accessories for their diseases iii) Senior citizens' rights information iv) Old allowance and related information v) Local area doctors, hospitals & nursing homes information vi) Local area lawyers' information

Most Significant Changes through the initiative:

i)Reduce vulnerability ii)Increase social norms and values iii)Reduce early marriage, eve teasing and violence iv)Senior citizens directly involved with local level planning Reduce psychosocial problem of senior citizens v)Improve health status of senior citizens vi)A significant portion of senior citizens involved with income generating activities vii)Strong linkage and collaboration established and as a result access to services for senior citizens has significantly increased viii)level of confidence and hope of senior citizens increased ix)The overall community more responsible for senior citizens.

Recommendations:

i)Strengthen core home and community-based supports and services in terms of a) Elderly Primary Care b) Long Term Care c) Nutrition d) Assisted Devices e) Counseling f) Social Security and Pension g) Community training for elderly care at home and h) Referral care for those who need it i) Training for Care-givers and family members of older persons ii)Building and enhancing partnerships at the widen levels iii)Continued efforts to strengthen aging and disability network collaboration iv)Incorporate Insurance services v)Expand the geographical coverage