

## AGEING AND WELL-BEING: INCLUSION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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### ABSTRACT

*The central concept of Sustainable Development is to "leave no one behind". It ensures that people of all age and of all segments of society can reach their potential and lead a life of dignity in fulfillment of their human rights; specially for poor and vulnerable. Society is developing progressively converting Indian traditional system to the modern setup. Modernization increases the importance of individual and eventually replaces the family or community as a fundamental unit of society. This results in leaving elderly behind. Agenda 2030 also known as Sustainable Development Goals with its set of 17 goals and 169 targets, working in field of stable economic growth, conservation of natural resources, environmental protection, social progress and equality. Due to advancement in science and technology we are successful in prolonging life of elderly people but extended life not only has boons but also face many challenges, such as health care, economic security, sometimes even social.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development Goals, Elderly, Society, Well-being, Health, Government.

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### Introduction

Ageing is a lifelong process, it is not only the result of biological and psychological factors but also socially constructed that means that existing social structure which an individual encounter in his life course, shapes the ways individual age.

Ageing is inevitable and it has become a global phenomenon in 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a consequence of low birth rate and low death rate results into long life, that is old age for most people born. According to **WHO** report, in Asia there were 549 million population was aged over 60 years in 2017, which was 57% of the global elder population, it is estimated to increase to 61% in 2050. The study of ageing is so important that a separate branch is set up, known as 'gerontology'.

Sustainable Development Goals have 5 basic values known as 5 P's:

- People: for society
- Prosperity: for economy
- Planet: for environment and ecosystem
- Peace: for justice and ethics
- Partnership: for collaboration and collective action

Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was the main guiding document for United Nation Decade of Healthy Ageing.

MIPAA focuses on 3 priorities:

- Older people and development
- Long health and well-being in old age
- Ensuring enabling and supportive environment.

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For healthy ageing we need healthy planet. For this the Sustainable Development Goals promise to “leave no one behind” and to reach the furthest behind every aged person, is included in development efforts. The SDGs for elderly are mentioned below:

#### **SDGs 1: End Poverty in Older Age and Ensure Social Protection for All**

In developing countries less than 20% of elderly people are provided pension to reduce poverty. To provide income security to all elderly people, government must adopt universal pension schemes of adequate level.

#### **SDGs 3: Enable Healthy Ageing, Well-being and Access to Health and Care Services**

With decline in age health-care and support needs become complex, therefore citizens require people centred services. To respond to the needs of an ageing population and to achieve universal health coverage government must increase spending on health and care services.

#### **SDGs 4: Promote Lifelong Learning**

To cope with changes elderly need opportunities to learn and improve their skills; so that they can fully participate in society and can lead a meaningful life. To end age discrimination government must ensure inclusive and equitable access to education for people of all ages.

#### **SDGs 5: Ensure Gender Equality**

Throughout the life course women experience gender inequality and in old age due to ageism all elderly women face gender inequality. Especially older women face multiple disadvantages. To combat this problem, government must empower women of all age. So that they can participate in decision making process, prevent violence and can address the rights of older women.

#### **SDGs 8: Promote Decent Work for People of all Ages**

Due to age discrimination and against attitudes in the work place elderly are deterred to continue to work after retirement ages. Government must adopt flexible retirement policies that enable older workers to continue working as long as they wish. Government should also stand against ageism and discrimination.

#### **SDGs 10: Reduce Inequalities and Discrimination in Later Life**

Throughout the life if a person face inequality and discrimination it effects negatively as they grow older, especially women. Government must empower older people to participate fully in society, including universal social protection and health care policies that reduce inequality and safe guard elderly people's rights.

#### **SDGs 11: Build Inclusive and Accessible Cities and Communities**

Urban planning must include older people in decision making and realize their rights. Government must invest in safe, affordable and accessible housing and public transport. Elderly people must also be included in disaster resilience and response planning and support, it will enhance interaction across generation.

### **Theoretical Perspective on Ageing**

#### **Functionalism**

(Crosnoe & Elder, 2002) It analyses how the part of society work together. How these parts form systematic whole and how do they keep society run smoothly. Elderly are also part of it and are considered vital part of it. People with better resources and who are active in different role can adopt old age more smoothly. In functional theory we can use three social theories which deals with later life experiences.

- **Disengagement Theory**

(Cumming & Henry, 1961) Withdrawing from society and social relationship can be seen as a natural process of growing old. Reasons of withdrawal are -

- Experience of physical and mental health decline.
- Elderly people receive less reinforcement by society to conform it to be social norms.
- Social withdrawal is gender based, men are associated with work and women with household and child care, thus it is experience differently by them.

Therefore they replace it with accustomed role that is compatible with disengaged state.

- **Active Theory**

(Leinen, Bengtson & Peterson, 1972) Activity level and social opportunity are not equally available to all. But engaging in activities like hobbies are the most effective in later life satisfaction.

- **Continuity Theory**

(Atchley 1971; Atchley 1989) As per this theory elderly people make certain choices to maintain consistency in family and social structures, to remain actively involved and engage throughout their old age. They try to maintain stability and equilibrium in personal and social life. But this theory can be criticized as it emphasis on “normal” aging, which marginalizes elderly with chronic diseases.

### **Conflict Perspective**

According to this perspective one group compete with another group to hold more power and resources. Applying it to ageing society; here elderly people struggle with younger member of society to retain certain share of power or resources, but this competition escalates into conflict.

Under conflict perspective there could be three theories of ageing:

- **Modernization Theory**

(Cowgill and Holmes 1972) Due to industrialization and modernization; status of elderly decreases and as a result they experience social exclusion. Prior to industrialization younger generation was bounded by norms to care for elderly people. But now nuclear family is replacing traditional joint family. People are becoming more individualistic and caring for an elderly relative is seen as a voluntary obligation that may be ignored without fear of social censure. In joint family, elders had place in society and clearly defined role. Due to fast change and modernity elderly people find it unable to work outside the home or have less to offer economically and seen as a burden. Thus, in old age people are abandoned or lose their family support as they become a non-productive economically.

- **Age Stratified Theory**

(Riley, Johnson, and Foner 1972) Members of society can be stratified on basis of age group. Age is also a basis of social control. Different age groups have different political, economic and social power. Norms about roles and appropriate behaviour, depicts what a group of certain age should do or act in their age. This theory emphasis on culturally based ideas.

- **Exchange Theory**

(Dowd 1975) There is increase in dependency on others as people age and submit to the will of others. Culturally relationships are based on mutual exchange, as elderly become less able to exchange resources, they feel their social circle shrinks. The only way to avoid rejection is to engage in social exchange system by taking care of children in family or by resource management, i.e., maintaining a large inheritance.

### **Symbolic Interactionism**

This theory focuses how society is shaped through day-to-day interaction of individuals, also the way how people view themselves and others on the basis of cultural symbols. If a person develops a sense of identity through his social interactions, it means his sense of “self” is dependent on those interactions.

- **Subculture of Ageing Theory**

(Rose's, 1962) This theory talks about the shared group created by the aged peoples when they are voluntarily or involuntarily excluded due to old age. Elderly disengages themselves from society and start interaction with people of same age and who share common interests and backgrounds. They find a strong sense of community with their new group.

- **Selective Optimization with Compensation Theory**

(Baltes & Baltes, 1990) Successful development throughout the life course are based on the elements of selection, optimization and compensation. This happens in all stage of life course. Our energy decline as we age, and we select personal goals to get optimum for the effort we put into activities, in this way making up for the less of a wider range of goals and activities. In this theory, the physical decline postulated by disengagement theory may result in more dependence, but that is not necessarily negative, as it allows ageing individuals to save their energy for the most meaningful activities.

- **Gerotranscendence Theory**

(Lars Tornstam, 2005) Throughout the ageing process, the elderly become less self-centred and feel more peaceful and connected to the natural world. Wisdom comes as the person age, but not to everyone. Some grow bitter, isolated, feel ignored, left out or grumpy and judgmental. With age elderly become more tolerant and try to avoid the conflict situation. They develop softer views of right and wrong. This theory believes that a person should try to overcome their weaknesses and should turn them into their strengths.

### **Ageing**

Ageing is a lifelong process of growing up and growing old. Biologically ageing is defined as gradual and progressive change in a living being that leads to a mark-up the risk of disease, disability and death. Sociologically we can define ageing as a combined process of biological, psychological and social change that affect people as they grow old. Ageing is a multidimensional set of process. This process includes the elderly person as; a member of society, behaviour of older people as a group and relationship of ageing with society. All these three aspects are closely interconnected and interrelated, but all these aspects are also needed to be considered separately.

We know that ageing is a life course process and greatly affected by biological and psychological factors. Sociological perspective explains how social, economic and political forces/factors shape the ageing experience. Social ageing differs from individual to individual. Experience of ageing is shaped by existing social structure. If society views ageing positively and respectfully the experience of individual will be positive. If society views ageing negatively, the experience of individual will also be negative, e.g., perception of ageing in US. It increases high risk of depression. Untreated depression in older person with other diseases can negatively affect their well-being. Therefore, the process of ageing is profoundly influenced by the perception of ageing; that is part of a society's culture. It also changes person's roles and relationships, both within their networks of relative and friends and in formal organization such as the work place and houses of worship.

### **Social Problems of Ageing**

Social challenges are further worsened for elderly by economic constrains and labels. Sometimes elderly individual finds it difficult to tune with youthful culture, as a consequence people stigmatize elderly. Conflict theorists believes that as there is no effective power to streamline social institution, so that they can support the elderly people. People become biased against elderly and look down upon them. Some even think that elderly people are not worth doing good to society. The concept of nuclear family also contributed to these challenges; now elderly people are not given kinship support. Sometimes elderly people are victims of mental and physical abuse. According to **WHO** report; 1 out of 6 elderly people are subjected to elder abuse. It includes abuses like, physical, verbal, psychological, financial and sexual; neglect, abandonment, and serious loss of their dignity and respect. Elder abuse can lead not only to physical injuries, but also to serious and long-lasting psychological consequences including anxiety and depression. Approximately 15% of elderly people aged 60 and over suffers from mental disorder. Therefore a good mental health and well-being is important in old age as at any stage of life. Mental health has its impact on physical health and vice – versa. Apart from being neglected, elder individuals are susceptible to chronic illness, yet most of them are not in a position to cater for such expenses. Some families due to financial instability unable to look after elderly, as a consequence they end up being institutionalized and that also not good enough for them. According to **UN** report; from 1980 to 2017, population of elderly persons above 60 years in the world; increased from 382 million to 962 million. From 2017 and 2030, it is estimated to increase by 46 percent i.e., 1.4 billion, and by 2050, elderly population around the globe is estimated to be more than double its size in 2017, i.e., nearly 2.1 billion.

### **Sustainable Development Goals**

SDGs also known as Global Goal adopted by UNs in 2015. According to the UN, the SDGs are the world's shared plan to end severe poverty, reduce inequality and protect the planet by 2030. It is collection of 17 Global Goals designed by UN as a blueprint to achieve more and better sustainable future for all, as world is facing serious challenges regarding environment and natural resources. India **ranked 63rd** in the Global Sustainable Index and it is the **world's third largest** energy consumer and greenhouse gas emitter. More than 70% of the world population lives in cities. Cities already consume 80% of global material and energy supplies, and produce 75% of all emission.

Sustainable development is more than just economic growth. The quality of growth matters as well as the quantity. It promotes the development that minimize environmental problems. It believes in fulfilling the requirements of the existing generation without compromising with the quality of the environment for future generation.

Therefore sustainability means managing and protecting planet Earth and its natural resources with its current generation and future generation. So that they can live a healthy and decent life and millions of other species on planet Earth will also be benefited.

#### **Advantages of SDGs**

- Lower the impact on the environment by reducing air, water and soil pollution.
- It helps in achieving long term economic growth.
- It helps in ensuring a better life for present and future generation.

Other than health issues elderly people face economic, physical and mental challenges like – ageism, poverty or abuse. Globally, the population is ageing rapidly, it is estimated that from 2015 to 2050 the population over 60 years will be around double that is from 12% to 22%. According to WHO there is population of over 1 billion elderly people, mostly living in low and middle-income countries. Many of them have no access to even basic resources, necessary for meaningful life. On the other hands ageism, discrimination and stereotyping leads to misconceptions about their abilities.

Dr. Robert Butler coined the term ‘ageism’ in 1968. Ageism refers to stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination according to age towards others or ourselves. Brownwell noted that ageism exists in all culture. This kind of discriminatory prejudice reduce elderly person’s Quality of Life, and put them into inferior and limited position.

The 17 SDGs are integrated. The action in one area will affect outcomes in others. In 17 points of SDG’s 3<sup>rd</sup> point is Good-health and Well-being. Due to development of science and technology and great achievement in medical field, we are successful in increasing life expectancy in dramatic way. With the help of science and technology we have declined infant and maternal mortality. But the progress is uneven in health-related SDGs. According to UNDP there is 31 years gap between the shortest and longest life expectancy of the countries. There is health related gap between and within the countries. Different sector, based on rights and gender sensitive perspective is essential to address inequalities related to elderly and to prolong good health for everybody.

Around 400 million people are deprived of basic health care facilities and 40% lack social protection in world. Over 1.6 billion people are living in broken condition; because of poor condition of nation to provide basic health services. In every 2 seconds a person between 30 to 70 years dies prematurely from non-communicable diseases.

#### **Ageing and Well-being: SDGs**

The guide “Ageing and the SDGs – Six steps to older people’s inclusion” support *Help Age India* staff in using Agenda 2030 to advance aged people’s right and inclusion. It sets six steps for incorporate ageing and age inclusive policies from understanding existing sustainable development goals implementation.

The Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) endorsed by the WHA in August 2020; focus on four areas for action:

- Age – friendly environment
- Combatting ageism
- Integrated care
- Long term care

Decade’s four interconnected action areas are:

- Changing the way how we think, feel and act towards age and ageing.
- Educating communities so that they encourage and promote the abilities of aged people.
- Delivering person centred, combined care and primary health services for older people
- Providing older people access to long term care if they need it.

## Conclusion

According to World Health Organization healthy ageing can be defined as “a process of maintaining functional ability of body to enable well-being in older age”. Increases in life expectancy, medical advancement, good health and social care costs, and high expectations for older age, have led to international interest in how to promote a healthier old age and how to age “successfully.” By changing the patterns of illness in later age, by reducing mortality rate, disability and health risks in later life, helps in achieving the goal of successful ageing more realistically. The research related to ageing by Berlin and the US MacArthur shows that greater longevity results in few, not more, years of disability. But debate is still going on, whether disability has been delayed.

To achieve the goal of successful ageing government and private agencies can take some necessary steps like; government should structure pension and health care programs in a way that it encourages elderly people to live productive life. Mental health of elderly people can be improved through promoting ‘active and healthy’ ageing. It involves creating living conditions and environment that support well-being and allow people to lead a healthy life. To ensure security and freedom, adequate housing policy, social support should be arranged. Arrangement of, trained caretakers for elder people who lives alone or suffer from chronic or relapsing mental or physical illness. Government should also make programme to prevent elder abuse and deal with these kinds of crimes. Government and private agencies could also promote community development programme and education for all. Goals of friendly cities: by providing more chances to participate in day-to-day life and age in a healthy way, this can be done by - offering older people the opportunity to grow and develop as an individual while contributing to their community and live without fear of discrimination or poverty. This will allow older people to age with dignity and autonomy. Government should also promote healthy ageing through policies, services, environments and structures; like, Individual autonomy at home and choice in housing options, Functional independence, mobility and control over the physical environment. Independence is an important constituent of healthy ageing whereas leisure activities are important element for successful ageing process (Taiwan Social Change Survey). Special focus should be given on the rights of elderly people. focus should also be given on providing financial security, shelter and welfare facilities; protecting life and property of elderly people, providing health insurance and medical facilities. We can use this opportunity as a chance to create better life and environment not only for elder community but for all living beings by combining efforts of all the governments, civil societies, international agencies, professional academia, media and private agencies.

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