Normative Input
For
14th session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

Focus Area
SOCIAL INCLUSION

One significant fact about the issue of older persons' social inclusion in India is the prevalence of ageism and discrimination against older individuals. According to a study around 50% of older persons in the country reported experiencing discrimination or disrespect based on their age. This discrimination manifests in various forms, including limited access to healthcare, employment opportunities, and social services. Additionally, older persons often face social isolation and loneliness due to societal attitudes that devalue their contributions and marginalize their voices. Addressing this issue requires concerted efforts to challenge ageist stereotypes, promote intergenerational understanding, and create age-friendly environments that recognize and respect the dignity and rights of older individuals, fostering their full participation and inclusion in society.

In India, the unorganized sector employs more than 90% of the nation's workforce, where most of the employees remain deprived of post-retirement benefits like monthly pensions and healthcare benefits. Elderly workers in the unorganized sector are highly vulnerable.

As the demographic size of the elderly is increasing rapidly, the current social security net is a cause of concern. The absence of financial security also appears to be a significant threat to the elderly, who do not have enough options and opportunities to earn money. Currently, approximately 25 lakh individuals (about 0.6 percent of the total estimated size of the informal sector) are covered by the national pension system under the unorganized sector category.

The primary reason for senior individuals to work under distress in the informal sector is the lack of money and savings to lead a retired life. This signals the need to provide an equitable and inclusive retirement and pension plan for senior citizens in the informal sector.

Status of Social Inclusion schemes for older persons

According to Agewell Foundation's study, more than half of respondents i.e. 55.5% were not satisfied with the existing social inclusion schemes/measures for older persons in India.

35.4% of elderly respondents, reportedly claimed that they were satisfied with social inclusion initiatives in India. Among these respondents, 29.5% of elderly respondents were included who said that they are satisfied to some extent only.

Among all, 8.87% of respondents admitted that they are fully satisfied with the existing social inclusion measures in the country.
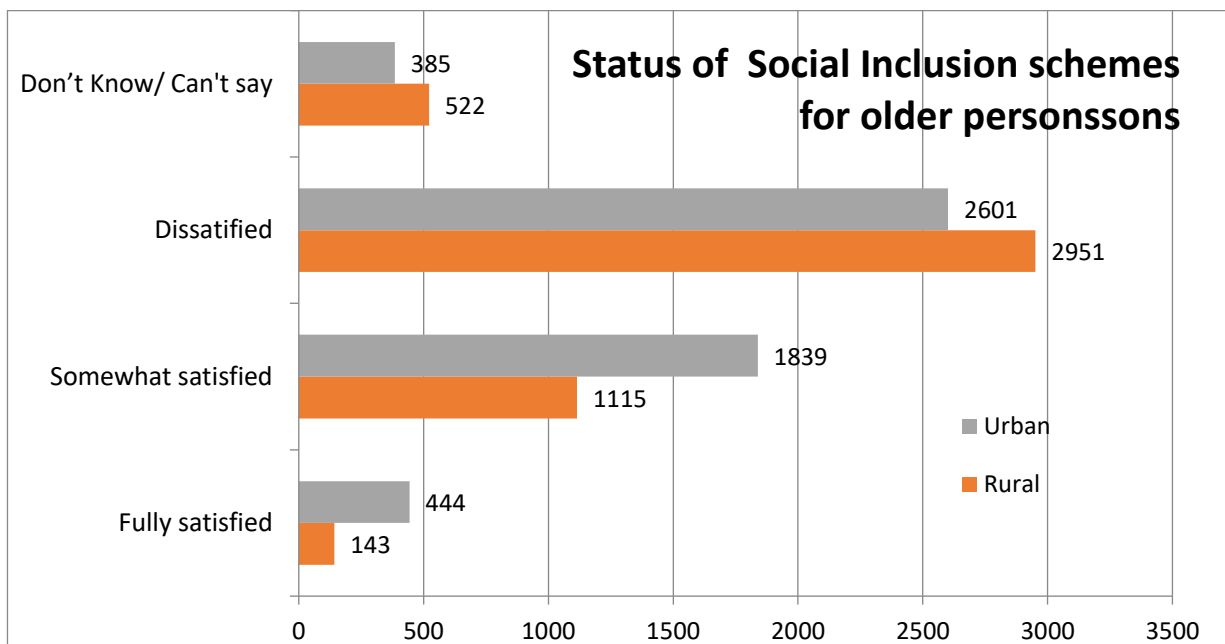
- The percentage of dissatisfied respondents in rural areas was quite high (62.4%) as compared to urban areas (49.4%). In rural areas, 26.6% of respondents agreed that the status of social inclusion is satisfactory in the country. In urban areas, approx. 35% of respondents reportedly found satisfaction with the social inclusion scenario to some extent,

Agewell Foundation
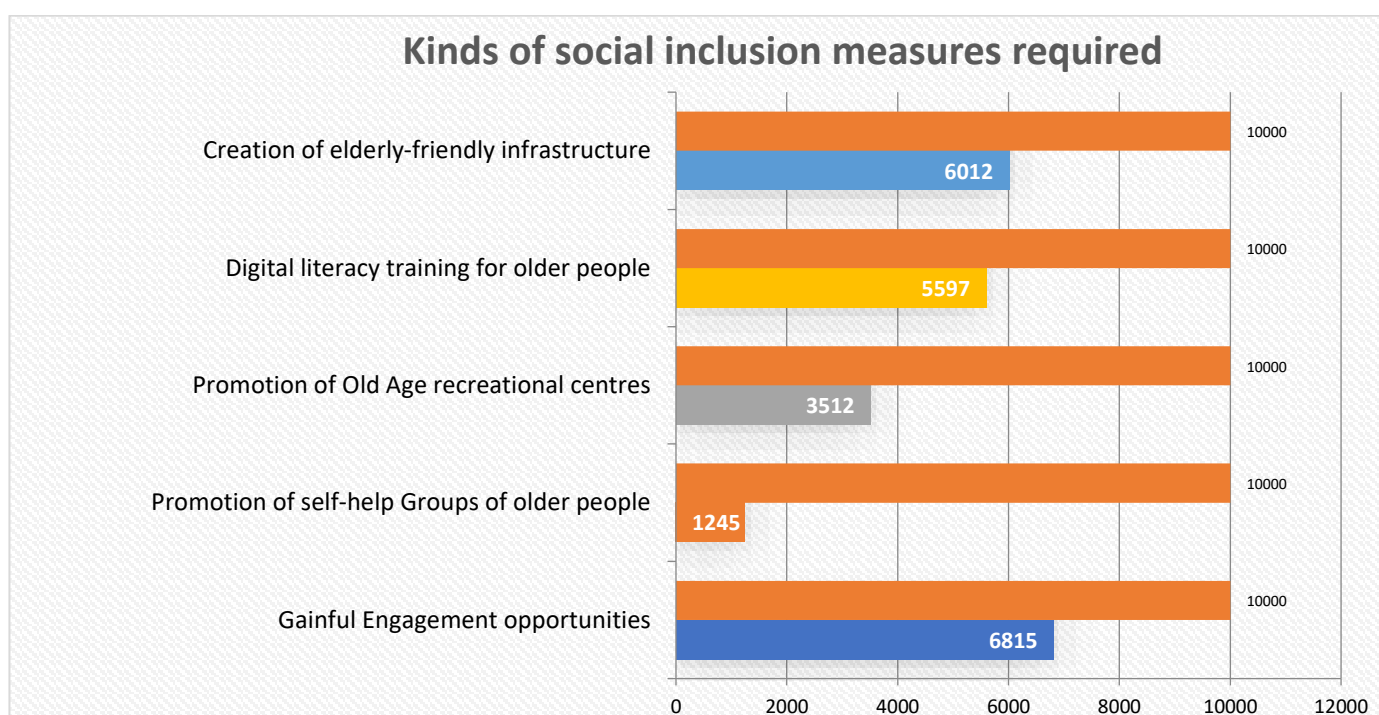*(In Special Consultative Status with the ECOSOC at United Nations since 2011)*
M-8A, Lajpat Nagar-II, New Delhi-110024, India
agewellfoundation@gmail.com www.agewellfoundation.org

Kinds of social inclusion measures required

- 68.2% of Indian elderly respondents were in favor of gainful engagement opportunities in old age. 60.1% of the respondents opined that the creation of elderly-friendly infrastructure is the need of the hour, to ensure the social inclusion of older persons. 56% of the respondents said that digital literacy training/soft skills and retooling are also one of the most sought social inclusion measures in their opinion.

Kinds of social inclusion measures required

Measure	Value	Reference
Creation of elderly-friendly infrastructure	6012	10000
Digital literacy training for older people	5597	10000
Promotion of Old Age recreational centres	3512	10000
Promotion of self-help Groups of older people	1245	10000
Gainful Engagement opportunities	6815	10000

To ensure the social inclusion of older people, certain innovative approaches need to be adopted at various levels. Older persons need to be given training in digital and other modern IT technology so that they can adjust themselves in a fast-changing work environment and remain in the mainstream.

Older people must be allowed to keep or take their place in society. Their citizen and social participation, be it volunteer or paid, contributes to the vitality of communities and needs to be encouraged and supported.

Agewell Foundation

(In Special Consultative Status with the ECOSOC at United Nations since 2011)
M-8A, Lajpat Nagar-II, New Delhi-110024, India
agewellfoundation@gmail.com www.agewellfoundation.org

To improve the existing status of social inclusion in old age, governments and concerned stakeholders should work together and focus on the following;

- Increase coverage of existing social inclusion initiatives and create innovative schemes for older people to ensure their social inclusion
- Retired and older people should be promoted to self-employment in old age
- Organize digital literacy classes/soft skills training/retooling of retired and older people
- Retired and older people should be promoted to self-employment in old age
- Retired/ older people should be encouraged to set up their self-help groups
- Retired/older people should be given opportunities to participate in the implementation of government schemes in their areas so that their experience, knowledge, wisdom, and time can be utilized
- Organize Social Inclusion / Social Empowerment Week or Day with a special focus on the social inclusion of older people

***