

**A Statement  
for  
8th Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing  
on  
Neglect, violence and abuse in Old Age: Indian Perspective  
By  
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Evolution of human civilization, advancement in medical science and healthier lifestyle of people has obviously increased life span in Old Age. Ironically, socio-economic conditions have completely changed living conditions of older persons in India. In this new set up, old people face increased incidences of age discrimination, ageism, domestic violence, elder abuse and mistreatment of older community, which are strictly against the norm in any civilized society.

In India, where Old Age is a great Celebration in itself and older people are most revered lot in the family and society, the concept of Elder Abuse is difficult to comprehend. But unfortunately it has become an ugly fact of life even in Indian society.

Older persons are emotionally abused by intimidation through yelling or threats, humiliation and ridicule, habitual blaming, ignoring the elderly person, isolating an elder from friends or activities, terrorizing or menacing the elderly person, etc. Ignoring health conditions of elderly, financial exploitation of elderly, sexual abuse are found as other major forms of elder abuse. Major Consequences of elder abuse are frequent arguments or tension between the caregiver (mostly relatives) & the elderly person and also changes in personality or behavior of the elderly person.

Older persons are respected in society generally but within their individual families, majority of older persons feel isolated on many occasions. Property related issues, interference in family matters, interpersonal relations, and unemployment in old age, excessive medical expenses, dispute among siblings, greediness of younger generation, etc. are usually found to be the major reasons of disrespect or mistreatment of older persons.

Being mistreated, verbally abused, and denied proper food, proper medication and care by younger members of family, most older people are indeed in a very helpless situation. With eroding social values in India, cases of elder abuse and mistreatment in every neighborhood are a daily routine.

Younger generation may completely ignore or sidestep an elderly person in their own homes, either deliberately or unknowingly, due to various factors but would bend backwards to show respect to the elderly in the neighborhood. While respect for the elderly is engrained in our system, the vagaries of daily life and pressures make younger generations ignore it in a way that is blatant for the elderly. Majority of older persons face harassment within their own homes at the hands of their own family members.

In comparison to rural areas, cases of elder abuse are on the rise in urban areas. Popularity of small/nuclear family system, lack of intergenerational interaction, less social interaction of older people, age discrimination, non-existence of inclusive social security system in the country, etc. are among the most important reasons of miserable condition of older people in urban areas. Elderly women living in rural areas are less prone to elder abuse in comparison to urban areas due to their relatively poor financial status and comparatively higher social interaction in old age.

In India social security schemes for the elderly are not enough. The government is struggling to keep the economy alive and cannot offer special packages for the elderly. Voluntary contributions towards one's own retirement corpus are the best way forward for old age income security. The government pension schemes have not fared well primarily due to lack of awareness and accountability. Unlike developed countries living in old age home is generally not preferred by Indians, where basic human rights of old people can be protected and cases of elderly abuse, violence and neglect could be considerably less.

Sense of insecurity is prevalent among older people. There is a contradiction in the way people perceive older persons socially and at family level. Most of the older persons, especially women are exploited due to their sheer dependence on others for survival. A very miniscule number of elderly are encouraged to stand up for their rights and this is the scenario that needs to change.

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