**X SESSION OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGEING**

I. **Education, training, life-long learning and capacity-building**

In India, lifelong education was formally recognized for the first time in 1966 by the Indian Education Commission (1964-66). It stated that "Education does not end with schooling, but is a lifelong process. The adult needs an understanding of the rapidly changing world and the growing complexities of society".

However, in India where 26% of population is still illiterate(as per Census 2011), the discourse on lifelong learning is dominated by the concept of adult literacy. ***The National Literacy Mission,*** 1988 projected eradication of illiteracy as an important national mission and spelt out the different facets of it. According to this policy, which emphasizes on functional literacy, the following components were included: achieving self reliance in numeracy, becoming aware of the causes of one’s deprivation and moving towards amelioration of conditions through organization and participation in the process of development and acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general well being and imbibing the values of national integration, conservation of environment, women’s equality, observance of small family norms.

The education system in India under the **National Policy on Education, (1992)** considers lifelong education as the “cherished goal" and focuses on provisions for universal literacy, opportunities for youth, housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue the education of their choice at a pace suited to them. The policy translated into practice when large scale literacy campaigns, projects and adult continuing education programs were implemented by governmental and non-governmental organizations and universities.

The subsequent policy initiative in India conceived learning as a continuum of basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education and envisaged its operation through the **Continuing Education (CE) Programme**. This programme was implemented through the Continuing Education Centers in different parts of the country since. Each CE Center was expected to cater to the diverse learning needs of a population of 2000-2500 with a view to sustain and further their skills acquired and also to create lifelong learning environment for the community. One important feature of the CE program was the integration of vocational skill training and quality of life improvement programme with post literacy activities. The scope of the CE program was further expanded in 2007 when they were designated as the Lifelong Education and Awareness Program Centers.

Another variant of National Literacy Mission, **Sakshar Bharat** launched in 2009 aimed at providing functional literacy to non-literates and facilitating skill development and opportunities for neo-literates. One of the several components of the programme is lifelong learning. In this programme, adult education centers are created with facilities like reading room, short term programmes, organization of literacy classes.

As part of the capacity building of the elderly persons,the ***Integrated Programme for Older Persons, 2011 (revised in 2016)*** includes an education component to provide training in old age care and self-care, and conduct sensitization programmes for school/college students and awareness projects for the community.

University Grants Commission (UGC) - the highest statutory body of higher education in the country and the Association of Indian Universities, during the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) formulated the **Guidelines on Lifelong Learning and Extension**. It accorded maximum priority to lifelong learning. It suggested that universities need to integrate formal and non-formal education by opening their doors to adult learners and making them adult learner friendly.

The current challenge faced in lifelong learning is that it is often used synonymously with adult literacy; but not conceived as an overarching framework of learning of elderly. The UGC guidelines are also not devoid of challenges. Only a few universities have been able to implement the policy, due to the limited funding support from the UGC and lack of clarity and understanding about lifelong learning among academics and administrators.

With respect to above context, the Sub Committee on Adult Education, since the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017), had emphasized the need for developing a comprehensive policy to guide the systematic promotion of adult and lifelong learning.

**II. Social Protection and Social Security**

The phenomenon of demographic ageing, in spite of the phase of demographic dividend, has started concerning India as the proportion of the elderly has been on a steady rise. With increase in life expectancy of the population increasing from 42 years to 67.9 years, the elderly constitute 8.6% of India's total population of 1.21 billion (Census 2011). A high percentage of population live below the poverty line, work in the informal sector, have inadequate earnings, leave giving little scope to save for a majority of households. As per the 2011 census, nearly 54% of the workforce is engaged in agriculture. With nearly 60% rural households not having bank accounts, a large majority of the elderly will continue to rely on their children and family members for old age security.

***National Policy on Older persons (NPOP), 1999 (revised in 2016*)** is the first major initiative taken by the Government of India for the welfare of the elderly which provides a broad framework for inter-sectoral collaboration within the government and between government and non-government agencies. The policy has resulted in schemes to promote the concept of healthy aging, setting up directorates of Old Persons in the state, training of medical and paramedical professionals in healthcare of the elderly. Further, in order to ensure effective participation of the elderly in the normative and political framework with regard to social protection and security, the ***National Council for Older Persons (NCOP), established in 1999,*** is the highest advisory body for the formulation and implementation of the programme for the elderly persons.

The Government of India enacted the ***Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007***, which provided the legal basis to enforce the ***National Policy on Older Persons*** adopted in 1999. It obliges children and relatives to look after the welfare of senior citizens. In cases of violation of the obligation, such as abandonment or negligence, the Act provides speedy procedure to claim monthly maintenance for parents and senior citizen and revocation of transfer of property rights by the senior citizen. The Act further mandates for creating adequate medical facility and security for senior citizen. It also makes imperative for each district to establish at least one old age home for indigent Senior Citizens. Under the Act, Tribunals are constituted to receive complaints from parents seeking maintenance from their children. The Tribunal has power of a civil court. Thus, the Tribunals are grievance redressal mechanism to protect the rights of the elderly.

The Government has also introduced three major schemes that were targeted specifically at the Below Poverty Line (BPL) elderly. These are important landmarks in the history of social security for the elderly in India. They provide directly income and food security to the elderly covered by the schemes. ***National Old Age Pension Scheme (renamed as Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)*** in 2007) is a big step towards fulfillment of Article 41 (provision for securing the right to public assistance) and 42 (raise levels of nutrition and standard of living) of the constitution. From April 2011, the eligibility age for this scheme was reduced from 65 to 60. Besides, ***Annapurna Scheme*** provides food security (35kg. food grains per month free of cost) to senior citizens not covered under IGNOAPS.

Adding to above, there are several other provisions such as senior citizen concession in railways, creation of separate counters for elderly in hospitals, ticket booking counter, and special seats for the elderly in metro and trains. **National Institute on Social Defence**, a training and research institute, has been established in Delhi to covers matters of senior citizen apart from other topics. The institute plays a role in providing inputs for better social protection and security to the elderly.

Further, the National Human Rights Commission has constituted a Core Group on Disability and Elderly persons to review the existing government policies and to examine the best practices in India and abroad. The Core Group has recommended that the old age pension being given to the elderly persons be revised on the basis of need based index. It also advocated for removal of cap on the number of beneficiaries covered under the old age pension scheme. It recommended that a Nodal Police Officer in every police station may be nominated for dealing with issues concerning the elderly persons.

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