

Focus area 1: Contribution of older persons to sustainable development

Older persons are not only the target group of Sustainable development, they are also contributors and change makers. It is almost impossible to achieve the development goals without the active participation of ever increasing older persons particularly in the developing countries like Nepal where youth migration is high. In Nepal, according to the last census 2011, around 8.3% of people are 60 and above. The growth rate of this population is 3.12% annually where the total population is increasing at the rate of 1.3%.

National Legal and Policy Framework

1. There is nothing regarding the participation of older persons in any development works including sustainable development in the constitution of Nepal. However, some points are included about the public participation by promoting and mobilizing the creativity of local communities of different socio-economic backgrounds.
2. According to the National Plan of Action for Senior Citizens 2006, older persons should participate to mobilize their knowledge, skill and experience in development works.
3. Senior Citizens Regulation 2008 mentioned, "To operate and cause to be operated is a necessary function for the purpose of utilization of the knowledge, skill, capacity and experience of the senior citizens by obtaining cooperation also of the national and international organizations subject to the prevailing law.

These are the written policies regarding the participation/contribution in development works including achieving SDGs. But there is a lack of implementation mechanism. Due to the lack of awareness, older persons are taken for charity recipients and dependent members of society. They are considered as mentally and physically unable to take any initiatives. Consequently, they are often excluded from development plans and programmes. Lack of opportunity is one of the major challenges for older persons. Majority of older people in Nepal are illiterate and they cannot even write their name. Illiteracy and their inability to use technology are obstacles for their participation in this modern society.

In Nepal, very limited research has been conducted regarding several issues of older persons. Data gap has been proven as a bottleneck to formulate any evidence based policies and programmes. There is not any particular national data on participation/contribution of older persons in development works. But according to the

Nepal Ageing Survey Report (2016), overall 19% older persons were affiliated to one or more of the local social organisations including political parties.

Equality and non-discrimination

The government of Nepal has not formulated any such policies and programmes that provide opportunity to older to participate or contribute to sustainable development goals.

There is not any platform for older persons to be active and productive after their retirement. The poor and helpless older people particularly from rural Nepal are compelled to do hard work for their daily living whereas there is no opportunity for healthy older persons who are willing to live an active old age and want to contribute in societal development. Nepal government has not any plan and policies to manage these two different groups of older persons and their different sets of challenges.

Remedies and Redress

Older persons have to be empowered to raise their voice and pressurize the government not to take them as a homogenous group. Their Right to participate must be ensured. At the same time, the government should encourage and motivate the older persons to live an active life after their retirement to ensure their dignified old age.

Focus area 2: Economic security

In Nepal, the majority of older people are below the poverty line.

National legal and policy framework

1. In the Constitution of 2007 a range of economic, social and cultural rights as fundamental rights was enshrined. These rights include rights regarding the environment and health (Article 16), the right to education (Article 17), the right of communities to protect and promote their own language, script, culture, cultural civilization and heritage and to receive education in their own languages (Article 17), the right to employment as provided for in the law (Article 18), the right to social security for specified vulnerable groups (Article 18), the right to food sovereignty as provided for in the law (Article 18), the right to property (Article 19), the right to social justice for specified vulnerable groups (Article 21), the protection of the minors from use in the hazardous works and army, police, or conflict (Article 22), the rights of disabled children to special assistance (Article 22), rights against exploitation (Article 29), labour rights, including the right to proper work practices, and the right to form trade unions, organize, and engage in collective bargaining in accordance with law (Article 30).

2. Right relating to food

According to this right, every citizen shall have right relating to food and right to food sovereignty in accordance with law. However, 41% of people do not get 2144 calories (INSEC 2013).

There are some clauses regarding the land ownership. But, there are more than 569,400 families classified as 'landless'.

3. Right to housing

According to the right (1) Every citizen shall have the right to an appropriate housing. (2) No citizen shall be evicted from the residence owned by him or her nor shall his or her residence be infringed except in accordance with law. In Nepal 85.26% of the households reside in their own house whereas 12.81% in rented, 0.63% in institutional and 1.30% in other arrangements (2013).

A Nepali consuming less than 0.6 dollar a day is considered as a person below the poverty line in Nepal. This level is far less than that of the World Bank's 1.25 dollar a day measure, which the Bank terms as extreme poverty. In Nepal 25% people are living under poverty. But if we use the human development concept to measure poverty, the proportion of Nepali people living in poverty is around 31.1 percent in 2011 (National Planning Commission (NPC) [Government of Nepal] & United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2014).

There is no specific data on the number of older people living in poverty and the challenges they are facing. But we can assume that a large number of older people are deprived of basic needs. Majority of older people residing in rural areas are compelled to continue farming for their livelihood even in their 80's and 90's because of youth migration. Similarly, we can see homeless older people living street life and begging for food in urban areas.

There is no platform for older people who are healthy and willing to continue their work for earning. There is no system of retain, retrain and recruit to the person of 60 and above age group. People retire from their work after a certain age even if they are active and healthy. Neither government nor private sector like banks and corporations provide financial support to older people for self-employment. Social stigma and discrimination demotivate older persons to engage in any income generating activities. They have to rely only on family support. So, poverty risk is higher as people get older in Nepal.

However, there is not an adequate government support system for poor and vulnerable older people.

Progressive realization and the use of maximum available resources

There are not any specific policies and programmes to address economic insecurity and poverty in old age. The Constitution has guaranteed special protection and social security from the state as Fundamental Human Rights of Nepal. The fifteenth national plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 – 2023/24) aimed to ensure senior citizen's participation in policy making and access to resources to utilize their knowledge, skills, and experience and to increase the social security services for the safety and comfort of the senior citizens. But very limited programmes have been formulated for effective implementation of those policies and provisions.

Nepal government provides Nrs. 4000 monthly to all older people of 70 and above age group as Old Age Allowance. Similarly, according to the Guideline for implementation of geriatric health service 2077 (2021), hospitals should provide 50% discount to poor older persons of 60 and above age group in their health service. However, these provisions have not been implemented yet.

Equality and non-discrimination

There is not any specific programmes to eliminate ageism and discrimination based on age that prevent older persons to access economic and other productive resources, including financial services, land, adequate housing and the right to inheritance.

Remedies and redress

The government should ensure at least basic needs of older people. There must be opportunities for older people to participate in income generating activities for their economic security. Lifelong learning opportunities must be provided to enable them to participate in present society. Strict rules and regulations must be formulated against ageism.