

# DELHI'S ELDERLY HOMELESS

## Reclaiming Lost Dignity



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# Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan

*Campaigning for the rights of the Homeless*

AAA Publication 2014

**DELHI'S ELDERLY HOMELESS-  
Reclaiming Lost Dignity**

Process Report

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# Delhi's Elderly Homeless

## *Reclaiming Lost Dignity*

***Dedicated to:***



***This report is a tribute to  
Late Shri Ramakant Shastri Ji,  
who worked tirelessly till his last breath  
for the rights of the Homeless from 2003 to 2012.***



Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan



## Acknowledgments

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## Preface

In a country like India, where generally the old saying of ‘Maatru Devo Bhava’ and ‘Pitru Devo Bhava’ is followed, parents are given the same reverence as is given to a deity. But for last four five decades a change especially in big cities has been noticed, that old parents specially single parent are seen roaming about on roads having no specific shelter to live in, no regular food to eat, no medical care and no social support to spend remaining days of their life with peace in mind and dignity.

The reason behind leaving home may be many like in some cases children’s rude and neglected behavior force them to leave and there may also be a situation where the generation gap plays its role negatively and due to this maladjustment within the family, parents choose to leave home rather than to compromise with the situation. After taking such a drastic decision of leaving the home to an uncertain place neither they do not go back nor does their age permit them to work to support themselves. Hence the only alternative remains open to them is to take refuge near religious places, pavements, shelters or other public places where there is possibility of availability of food. There have been umpteen numbers of cases where the adult working homeless end up being an elderly destitute on the street itself.

AAA’s ‘*Varishtha Nagrik Manch*’ initiative is a response to the disturbing trend of increasing numbers of elderly homeless. This booklet informs us about AAA’s experience working with elderly and evolution of ‘*Varishtha Nagrik Manch*’ (VNM) as need based self-help platform.



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## About this Document

This is an attempt to compile and encapsulate the work of Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan (AAA) with Delhi's elderly homeless people.

AAA defines Homeless people as those who live on the streets, under bridges, in parks or in any other place not meant for human habitation including people who live in shelters with no permanent abode. AAA considers the elderly to be those of usually 60 years or over. However, AAA also recognizes that for the elderly homeless population often they age quicker due to harsh living conditions and therefore there is no direct age limit in its work and this is considered person by person.

The majority of homeless people in Delhi are migrants from nearby states who are facing in their native places acute poverty, displacement, natural calamities, violence, unemployment etc. As a result they come to Delhi in search of livelihood and end up working largely as casual labourers, vendors, rickshaw pullers, construction workers, etc. Poverty and unemployment in rural India is the root cause of homelessness in Delhi.

Many of the homeless elderly population have been pushed out of their homes because of family problems, that is to say, being beaten, death in the family, mental or physical illness, psychological abuse or property dispute, etc. For others it is the direct result of being unable to break the vicious cycle of homelessness in urban areas and they have sadly grown old on the streets, being unable to secure a permanent abode.

The State's insensitivity to the issue makes the lives of these people more and more difficult. Rather than them receiving the support and security they need, instead homeless people are criminalized by various legislations. The Bombay Prevention of Begging Act 1959 is the most rampantly used legislation to 'round up' and prosecute the homeless in Delhi. Therefore, the elderly destitute or even mentally ill end up living in observation homes for beggars for many years. They are excluded from government social welfare plans and schemes (such as ration cards, pensions, voters ID, identity cards) due to lack of proof of citizenship or residence in the city. This system rather than ensuring that those in need have access to valuable services is in fact further marginalizing and isolating those who are already alienated. Sadly their only means of survival for the rest of their lives is the pavements, streets, parks,



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abandoned places, corners of busy markets or for the fortunate ones the open shelters .

AAA counted 52,765 homeless persons visibly sleeping on the streets of Delhi in the year 2001. (Capital's homeless, 2001). Delhi Human Development Report in 2013 reports the presence of 56,000 homeless in the city. However it is likely that the actual amount of homeless people in Delhi is significantly higher. AAA has adopted a **rights** based approach. This is based on the belief that homeless people, too, have the right to live with dignity, in peace and security. The homeless elderly have a right to be an integrated citizen of the country enjoying the same rights and freedoms as others.

AAA always focused on the most vulnerable the most invisible within the homeless population. The elderly being amongst the most vulnerable homeless people as they are not able to work, or have greater limitations regarding work due to agility and physical strength and are at the mercy of their children and/or society at large. They are also, as with, the general elderly population much more prone to physical and mental ill-health attached to the process of aging. As mentioned previously the homeless tend to age earlier due to poor and extreme living conditions of street life with higher level of ill health and lower life expectancy than the general population. Taking these factors into consideration AAA waives age limits in its internal programs and this is decided on a person by person basis.

Working with elderly homeless gained its prominence in AAA's programs with shelters management taken over by AAA in year 2003. Over the years AAA's work with this section of homeless has been both service oriented and rights based. As well as providing necessary practical services such as shelter, food, clothes and health care it also has a firm emphasis in attempting to facilitate collective action. AAA has a clear belief that a participatory and **rights** based approach can bring about change in the community. AAA's model is firmly rooted in a user-led service where in the beneficiaries of a service can become both the owners and driving force of a programs and thus regain lost identity and dignity. AAA wants the elderly homeless to be the innovators of their own service. Ultimately AAA strives for its services to be run, facilitated and controlled by the people who use the service.

AAA has deliberately kept this narrative brief and uncomplicated so that the process can be easily be replicated by others interesting in enabling the elderly.



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The population of India as per the provisional figures of the Census 2011 is 1210.19 million of which 623.7 million (51.54%) are males and 586.46 million (48.46%) are females. The population has increased by more than 181 million during the decade 2001-2011. Percentage growth in 2001-2011 is 17.64; males 17.19 and females 18.12.

According to the latest WHO data published in April 2011 life expectancy in India is: Male 63.8, female 67.3 and total life expectancy is 65.5 which give India a World Life Expectancy ranking of 133.(1)

During the last few decades, a significant increase in life expectancy has been noticed in India. Improved life expectancy combined with the high growth rate of the population has contributed to an increase in number of persons who are 60+. The Percentage of 60+ persons within the total population has also seen a steady rise from 5.1% 1901 to 6.8% in 1991 and it is expected to reach 8.9% in 2016. In 1991 5.7 million people were over 60 it is anticipated that this will rise to a 100 million during the next decade.

63% of the total elderly population is in the age group of 60-69 years, 26% in age group of 70-79 years and 11% in age group of 80 years and above. National figures also indicate that incidence of widowhood is much higher among females who are 60+ than amongst males in the same age group.

### Demographics at a State level

The Population of Delhi according to the 2011 census figures stands at about 16.78 million, out of which 53.53 per cent are males while 46.47 per cent are females.

According to the Primary Census Abstract 2011, out of the overall 21.2 % growth of the population registered during the last 10 years, the female population grew by 24.9 % while the male population grew at a lower rate of 18.1% The Union territory of Delhi is the capital of the country of India and as a result is home to considerable amount of population.

The highest population district wise was registered in the North-West district, which was 21.78 % of the total population, while the lowest



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was recorded in the New Delhi district at 0.85 %. (density of ५H.L population.)

Delhi has a significantly large population of old persons. According to Census of India (1991), senior citizens (60 years old or above) constituted 4.7% of the total population.

According to National Family Health Survey (1999), approximately 6.5% of Delhi's population is projected to comprising of old persons. Out of this, 5.1% fall in age group of 60-69 years, 2% in age group of 70-79 years, and 0.6% in age group of 80 years and above.

As per available records with the Electoral Office, Delhi the total number of senior citizens on the 30 may 2003 is recorded as 6,93,524.

The recent estimates mention the elderly population to be around 12.5 lakh. Delhi Government claims to provide pensions to 3.88 lakh old persons under its Old Age Pension Scheme. The monthly pension for those aged between 60 to 69 years continues to be Rs 1,000 per month were as Rs 1,500 per month is given to beneficiaries of 70 years and over.

### **Implications:**

A major proportion of this group belongs to middle class, who are likely to be educated and probably retired. This is also indicative of a huge reservoir of human resources with skills, experience and time.

Large numbers of women in the elderly population along with high incidence of widowhood and their often economic dependence on other earning family members leaves them more vulnerable to marginalization within the family itself.

The elderly homeless are repetitively cut off from being able to access the welfare benefits they are entitled too due to no residential proof. They are not being treated as lawful citizens of the city.

On one hand the number of senior citizens in the total population is rising at an unprecedented rate and on the other hand urbanization and industrialization is changing lifestyles drastically especially in metropolitan cities like Delhi. Not only are lifestyles changing, there is also a drastic change in traditional values system.

There are emerging features of city life like small nuclear families, lack of free time to care for the aged, limited living space, high cost of living, long working hours, concepts like privacy, space, independence, materialism, focus on self-etc. All of these factors can impact on older generations and can lead to feeling of loneliness, feeling like a 'burden' and make them more



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vulnerable to being ignored and ill-treated. Chronic homelessness also leads to a growing population of elderly on the city streets.



## The Policy

The National Policy on Older Persons provides broad guidelines to State Governments for taking action for the welfare of older persons in a proactive manner by devising their own policies and plans of action.

In response The Department of Social Welfare and the Government of Delhi has formulated a State Policy in consonance with the National Policy for implementation in N.C.T. of Delhi.

The policy defines a 'senior citizen' as a person who is 60 years old or above. It strives to ensure well-being of senior citizens and improve the quality of their lives through providing specific facilities, concessions, relief, services etc. and helping them cope with problems associated with old age. It also proposes affirmative action on the part of Government Departments for ensuring that the existing public services for senior citizens are user friendly and sensitive to their

needs. The State Policy on Senior Citizens for N.C.T. of Delhi ensures a dignified life to the elderly ; provide and facilitate provision of adequate institutional care (both day care and residential) for old persons and more importantly focus on vulnerable groups like widows, disabled and infirm old persons and the destitute. A Special focus has been given to older females.

The Department of Social Welfare, the Government of N.C.T. of Delhi has already constituted a State Level Advisory Committee which comprises of representatives of departments/public agencies having interface with senior citizens, associations of senior citizens as well as N.G.O.s working within the area of old age welfare.

### STATE POLICY STATEMENTS

- 1. Dignified life for senior citizens:** The elderly would be recognized and treated not as a liability, but individuals worthy of respect and legitimate place in society. They would not be ignored, marginalized or remain unprotected and would be helped in living their life with peace and dignity.
- 2. Special focus on vulnerable groups:** Special attention and care would be extended to vulnerable groups like widows, disabled and infirm old persons and the destitute. Special consideration would also be given to older females so that they do not become victims of neglect and discrimination.
- 3. Providing shelter and strengthening family as 'care giver:** The State would make efforts to provide and facilitate provision of adequate institutional care (both day care and residential) for old persons. Role of family in providing support to the elderly would be recognized as vital element in care of the aged and efforts would be made for strengthening social support system and sensitizing caregivers so that capacity of families to take care of the elderly is strengthened and they can continue to live with their families.



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## The Elderly Homeless

### AAA's Interventions

AAA has been intervening to ensure that the human rights of the homeless are respected and protected by the State and to empower the homeless so that they can assert their own rights by themselves.

Initial interaction by AAA's team of mobilisers and organizers with the elderly on the streets is during 'night outs' and 'sharing sessions' This has built rapport with the yet unreached, hidden homeless.



AAA's close interaction and association with the Elderly Homeless began with the third monthly **panchayat** held in winter of the year 2003 wherein five elderly homeless persons would constitute the Panel/'Panch' members who would listen to and facilitate collective resolutions to the problems posed before them by the other fellow elderly homeless.

In the year 2003 there were 19 Night Shelters being managed by MCD, slum and J.J department, Delhi. As the name denotes, all the shelters used to open only during night time (7p.m. to 7 a.m.).

In July, 2003, Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan was given the responsibility of themanagement of two big erstwhile Night Shelters namely- Fatehpuri and Fountain Chowk by Delhi High Court. AAA was to set up these two shelters as model shelters. The remaining 17 shelters werestill being managed by MCD. Fountain Chowk shelter had the highest number of elderly users. The elderly homeless themselves stated this was due to the availability of round the clock free food and daily medical help from Gurudwara Sis Ganj.



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Without delay, a rapid assessment survey (RAS)was conducted among the shelter users in all seven regular sheltersbeing run by AAA, to understand the issues concerning/facing the homeless. Subsequently, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)were conducted in these shelters with

an exclusive group of elderly homeless to comprehend their specific issues/difficulties in accessing the shelters.



The major issues that emerged from the RAS and FGDs were:

1. All the shelter users comprise of an adult age group ranging from 18 years onwards. The elderly homeless felt they were oppressed and treated differently even within the homeless population itself. This was consistent in all the shelters.
2. There were no concessions for older people and they were expected to contribute and pay for the shelters the same as younger users.
3. They were often the victim of browbeating or bullying at the hands of younger homeless people whilst trying to enter the shelters. The shelters provide a dormitory where the beddings were put on floor by the shelter users themselves on first cum first basis. The elderly were pushed aside in this process especially in big shelters where there was a rush for space and entry. The elderly had no option except to compromise and leave the 'better place' for youngsters; who had already selected where to sleep. ('Better place' constitutes a place under the ceiling fan or near the window).
4. Incidences of snatching of belongings or money by dominant young adults was also reported at big shelters.
5. The elderly homeless on the street often did not have the money to pay the shelter charge. In such a situation, they were forced to sleep in the open and face adversities.
6. The elderly usually being physically weaker and less able to defend themselves were far more vulnerable to abuse on streets by local goons, caretakers of Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) or Delhi Development Authority's (DDA) parks, law enforcement agencies and others. Physical weakness, disability and ailments more prone to the elderly made it difficult to run away whilst On the street while being either chased by police,



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any security person of the open park, or the raid team of Department of Social welfare, popularly known as 'SevaKutir' among the homeless. As a consequence the elderly homeless would often end up in Lampur, observation Home for Beggars.

7. They also reported about their helplessness in being able to access public health services for their health problems like weak eye sight, cataract, chronic arthritis, asthma.

Besides conducting daily sessions in shelters, monthly 'panchayats' – meetings and street contacting, AAA's Facilitating Collective Action (FCA) team began conducting monthly meetings with the elderly homeless in shelters.

## Striding Ahead

In September, 2003, the first steps were taken to have a separate queue at the entry gate in all the AAA managed shelters for the elderly homeless. They were given first priority for entry into the shelters so that they can take their space and the bedding easily without being bullied or 'pushed aside'.

AAA decided to waive shelter user charge for the 60+ age group people in all the shelters it managed. (*Footnote: for physically disabled shelter user fee was reduced to Rs.2/-; children and elderly free entry; infirm and sick/ patients; post hospitalization-recovering with health recovery, were given free entry.*) A portion of the shelter was reserved exclusively for the elderly homeless. The space was named as 'Varishth Nagrik Kaksh'- Senior Citizen's Area. (*pic. Showing the display plate*). With this step the young adult shelter users would themselves avoid that area and the elderly also not allow them to use this space.

This change was applauded by all including the youngsters. The change meant the elderly were saved from being stamped over in rush at big shelters and being bullied or teased by the younger homeless. With a separate cabin at two big shelters, the elderly were now able to sleep early and not get disturbed by the noise of the television as many of the younger users would watch a movie every night. The youngsters began giving respect to the elderly and there was a visible reduction in misbehavior.

AAA's next move was to link health issues of the elderly with AAA's Outreach service for the Homeless (HIGH), a collaborative unit of AAA with IHBAS, Sahara, in operation at Jama Masjid. This outreach service



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is functional at Jama Masjid on every Monday and Thursday evenings. The place and the timings of this outreach service was made so that it would be accessible and suitable for the homeless. The referred cases from HIGH were treated at the partner Hospitals e.g. Shroff' ENT Hospital free of charge. To date all the homeless patients with cataract referred from HIGH got operated upon at this hospital only. During the post hospitalization period, other needs like meals, medicines, attendant, were taken care of by AAA. This winter, 12 elderly patients' cataract surgeries are planned by AAA. From the begging AAA's shelters have been equipped with first aid boxes (basic generic medicines) and trained para-health workers who are capable of handling medical emergency on 24 X 7 basis.



Another problem facing the elderly was access to free food. Often unable to work due to ill health or old age they are unable to afford food. Thereafter, the infirm, old, sick began getting free food from 'Sanjha Chullah', a community kitchen run by AAA's collective.



The Year 2004 witnessed that as a consequence of the increased action in AAA shelters more elderly volunteers emerged wishing to participate and to get involved. They began sharing their problems and most significantly it was found that they wanted togetherness and the security of feeling safe whilst inside the shelters.

They began participating in festival celebrations. The Birthday of AAA's first senior citizen Sh. Hari Baba at Jhandewalan shelter was celebrated with joy and enthusiasm. (pics). He stayed at the shelter for more than a year before repatriation back to his family (sons) in Haryana. This event marked the first of many birthdays that have subsequently been celebrated at AAA shelters.

After a few months, the elderly volunteers who exhibited their commitment and zeal to work for their fellow beings expressed the need for a formal collective of the elderly on the concept of Self Help Group. After a lot of discussions in the monthly meeting, the name of the elderly group was decided 'Varishtha Nagrik Manch' (VNM) meaning Senior Citizens Collective.



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## About The Manch

The Manch was formed in the month of May 2004 under the initiative of the old age homeless persons residing in the Fatehpuri shelter home run by Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan. Although Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan provided the platform to the formation of the Manch the old age homeless persons themselves made a considerable effort to building up the organisation.



## Objectives of the Manch:

The objectives of the Manch were as follows:

- i. to bring all the elderly homeless persons together
- ii. to provide them a platform
- iii. to give them a voice of their own
- iv. to instill in them the spirit of motivation and enthusiasm
- iv. to provide them with a world of sharing of emotion of happiness and sorrow; and finally
- v. to bring a smile to their face.

**The Secretariat:** It was felt in due course that an elected body was required to strengthen the organization as well as to take on the voices of the old age homeless persons to other forums. The old age homeless persons conducted a small election and formed a secretariat consisting of the following six persons:

- i) President
- ii) Vice-President
- iii) General Secretary
- iv) Secretary
- v) Treasurer; and
- vi) Advisor



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The Advisor was nominated from AAA's core team. In addition to this a number of committees were also formed to look after the matters of the organization. These were:



### **The Subh Pravesh (Entrance) Committee:**

Apart from the secretariat, they also formed a committee consisting of 3-4 members. The main responsibility of this committee is to verify the age of the persons applying for the membership to the Manch. The approval of this committee is necessary for membership to the Manch.



### **The Health Committee:**

This committee's responsibility is to look after the health of the old persons in case of sickness. It consists of a health coordinator assisted by three-four other persons. The health coordinator takes care of the health of his fellow residents in the shelter home. He takes the sick person to the hospital, or if needed, for treatment. If he is admitted in the hospital, the health coordinator looks after his needs and care. The expenses thus incurred are looked after by Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan.

### **The Employment Committee:**

This committee would link the members with employment opportunities facilitated by AAA.

### **The Canteen Committee**

The members of the Manch also run a canteen at the Fatehpuri Shelter Home. This was seen as an income generation programme.

### **Membership:**

Any person who is a homeless and whose age is more than 60 is eligible for the membership of the Manch. Since there is often no documentary proof of the age of these persons, the approval is made on a case by case basis from the pravesh (entrance) committee.

Initially for every new elderly person who came to a shelter home, the first three stays were free. Within these three days he had to get his approval from the committee, on this recommendation he could stay



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for another one month. Within this month he had to submit his photographs so that the identity card can be made. Once the identity card was made, he became a member and could avail all the facilities of the Manch. While this system has since been altered with all entry to shelters being made free for the elderly, the issue of identifying the elderly has remained. In the monthly meeting all the applications received for 'Aashray Griha Niwasi Card' (AAA identity card) was discussed and finalized. It is then decided by the key members of the VNM forum and in consultation with other known persons who can verify and vouch the age mentioned by the applicant that a 'Aashray Griha Niwasi Card -VarishthaNagrik', (photo identity card) will be issued by AAA.. This process has led to a large VMN membership of several hundred members.

The elderly with Aashray Griha Niwasi Card- VarishthNagrik, are eligible for free entry in AAA's managed shelters, a separate sleeping space and a membership to the VNM forum. All the elderly are encouraged to make this ID card. Simultaneously they are linked with 'SanjhaChullah', a community kitchen run by AAA at Jhandewalan shelter-I providing free food. In their monthly meetings, it was decided that during the hospitalization of any elderly member, another healthy elderly person would volunteer to be the attendant as required by the hospital. The active, healthy elderly began serving the hospitalized elderly during periods of illness. Therefore meeting the need for hospital attendants from within the group itself and emphasizing the sense of community support and sprit amongst them.

AAA also focuses on other special needs of the elderly. In winters, they give out warm woolen inner wear, blankets socks and caps. This is ongoing work by AAA every winter.

A separate group/ collective of elderly homeless women took a shape. The homeless women on the streets would conduct their own meetings in mahilapanchayats and seek solutions to their own issues and problems collectively. In the meetings, the women members voiced their concerns over police brutality, SevaKutir and food needs. Many women volunteers emerged from the process and formed a cadre of attendants for female hospitalized cases and caretakers at shelters for women and children. An elderly woman from that area was selected as the **convener** of this collective.

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As mentioned above, the elderly homeless were given AAA's "Aashray Griha Niwasi Card" to make their entry to AAA's managed shelters (7) free of user fee. In MCD run shelters (10), still they were charged shelter



user fee. The elderly volunteers resolved in their meetings that this initiative should now be accessed to those unreached elderly on the streets and unable to avail shelter services. By that time, AAA was already providing its own photo Identity card to the homeless on the street. This card was named 'Abhiyan Saathi'. These photo Identity cards were provided to the homeless to attempt to regain their lost identity. Lack of any identity card was reported to be one of the major issues of the homeless; The 'Abhiyan Saathi' card has saved the homeless from harassment from police, helped defend them in the beggar court and has prevented their body from being cremated as an unidentified dead body (UIB).

The same 'Abhiyan Saathi' card formed the base for their identity and on that basis their names got enrolled in the Voter's List. May, 2004 was the turning point when for the first time, some of the homeless got their Voter Identity Card and were able to implement their right to vote first in the MCD elections and then for the 14<sup>th</sup> Parliament Election. (pic.)



The Year 2005 was special to the elderly, specifically in terms of economic empowerment. In the monthly meetings of the VNM, the elderly had been raising the issue of the need for some economic engagement to earn their living in a dignified manner. They wanted to prove that they are not liability but can be a productive citizen. During every winter, AAA would create additional shelters, under 'Save the Lives Campaign'. Obviously these temporary shelters require an additional team to look after them. In this year, the VNM, took the responsibility of managing 5 temporary shelters during the year 2005-06 winter. In these five shelters, all the managing staff was from the members of this VNM. The supervisor for these 5 shelters was the elected president of VNM. The Gali Ravi Das shelter got transferred into elderly shelter on its own. Majority of the shelter users are the senior citizens in this shelter.

One component of AAA's food programme, a community kitchen providing free meals to the sick, children and elderly; or highly subsidized meals, snacks to the general homeless population was handed over to Elderly group.

The group grew and expanded to more street contacts. Many more joined this collective from street contact points. The membership grew to 150 enrolled members.



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As the monthly meetings of VNM became a norm, sharing and expectations also rose. AAA's role from the beginning has been one of the facilitator. In such meetings, they expressed their wish to go for



an excursion tour to a pilgrimage site like Rishikesh. In Indian society and religion, it is usually a person's desire to have a dip in the sacred Ganges. Many of the elderly homeless have been either pushed out of their families and have never had an opportunity to visit such a site. In the first tour, twenty people went to Haridwar and Rishikesh. They were accompanied by two young AAA team members.

This year, VNM established a "Kalyan Kosh"— 'Welfare Fund Box' with voluntary contributions from the VNM members, to meet out the welfare expenses of the collective. The objective of this "Kalyan Kosh"— was to collect some voluntary contributions which would be used for welfare activities such as puja rituals after the death of some of its member. Such efforts on their own were observed to be helpful in instilling a feeling of togetherness and solidarity. The homeless population is a individualistic society is a heterogeneous community. It becomes very important to maintain communal harmony among them. AAA from its inception believed in secular approaches. Celebration of major festivals of all religions, national holidays helps in not only developing but maintaining spirit of communal harmony and solidarity in a heterogeneous community of homeless people. They celebrated festivals like Eid ,Deepawali, Holi, Lohri, Guru Nanak Dev 's Birthday, Christmas etc. along with other homeless.

By the year 2006 Monthly meetings were held on routine basis on second Friday of every month at 5p.m. The meeting would end with a prayer: *'Ei Malik Tere Bande Hum* \_\_\_\_\_.

It was noted that the nature of issues discussed changed in the meetings. Earlier issues used to about the atrocities facing the elderly on the streets, But by now, the problems were often related to the facilities within the shelters or the inter-personal dynamics. The meetings were like a small panchayat of the elderly in the shelters. They would seek solution to their problems in the meeting.

Issues like young people trying to sleep along with them in the elderly section and in turn harassing them, non-payment of their wages/labour



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by the employee were some of the issues at this stage being brought before the monthly meeting of VNM as well as concerns regarding health specific issues (such as dentistry/ dentures and sight problem) and food requirements.



Like the previous trip another was organised to Haridwar, on 18-2-06.

In 2006 in the VNM monthly meeting, once again a resolution was passed to ensure an assigned area for the elderly in shelters. It was decided were feasible no young person should sleep amidst the elderly to prevent harassment. By this time, a message has been spread across the shelters and a large majority of the young people were beginning to treat the elderly with respect. Were problems persisted AAA's team would attempt to sensitize younger shelter users in group sharing sessions or in individual counseling sessions.

These VMN meeting were also a useful and interesting platform for visitors to AAA (individuals from civil society, students from colleges, universities etc).

As the VNM collective grew in strength, its members began representing at various forums, workshops, rallies and demonstrations relating to human rights and before the media. The members' confidence level was increasing. VNM seem to be close to achieving its one objectives of empowering the elderly, *giving a voice to the voiceless.*



AAA's philosophy has been one of promoting a family environment within the shelters. The elderly were now beginning to be treated like the Head of the family (AAA family).

The VMN addressed gatherings of thousands in every year's annual **Mahapanchayat**. They always encouraged others to unite and to be strong enough to leave addictions, save their earnings, be conscience of personal hygiene etc. Their lost dignity seems to have returned.

Their complaints of the atrocities by police or other street goons declined and their minds got transformed to the demands for an annual exposure cum recreational tour preferably to a holy place. In 2006 they went for a group tour to Agra and Mathura.



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In 2007, the VNM celebrated the international day of the elderly. They also held a condolence meeting to observe the anniversary of their dear VNM member who passed away in the previous year. The Late Sh. Shahid Ali worked his entire life at a manual printing press. With the emergence of new technology and computerized printing, Sh. Shahid Ali was made redundant from his job. Unfortunately his deteriorating health and age meant learning new skills difficult and his savings were negligible. He was diagnosed with pulmonary Tuberculosis.



In year 2008, The VNM of the elderly moved on even further. AAA facilitated the elderly homeless to open zero balance savings accounts at a public sector bank. The 'Abhiyansathi Card- Varishth Nagrik' was used in the process of proving the identity of the homeless. The bank's agent would bring his micro ATM machine to the doorstep of the homeless in the evening, making the use of an

ATM machine accessible for the elderly. Many of whom had never used this type of device before. The opening of the bank accounts not only helped the elderly to save their money but also gave them a sense of identity and belonging. Previously any saved money would be given to the caretakers at night and given back in the morning. The bank account now offered security to the homeless.

The homeless often are victims of anti-poor laws like the **Bombay Prevention of Beggary Act, 1959**. Sh. Dashrath Prasad a VNM member had just returned from Observation Home at Lampur, where he had spent one year for being convicted of the charge of begging. He had been unable to establish his identity at Lampur due to a lack of an identity card. He was happy to return to the shelter and The VNM members hosted a tea party in his honor.

In 2008 the elected executive body of VNM had completed its three year's term. The VNM members proposed that an election was held to formulate a new body. A new executive body was formed with some new members.

The VNM was no longer an invisible group of people and other people from mainstream society began associating with this group. AAA team role was deliberately reduced in the day to day functioning of the VNM to enable a user-led and controlled group. Youngsters would celebrate their birthdays, families would come and share their moments of



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happiness with this group. There were many occasions when non-homeless families would come and have food together with VNM members at the shelters.



In summer 2009, The VNM went on their now annual excursion trip to Rishikesh. Mr. Ramdev Bhandari, on his visit and interaction with the members of this VNM, said, 'you are fortunate that at this age, you are given employment and are treated with dignity at the organization'.

The Late Nawab Pataudi, delegate of both national and international delegates was impressed with the unity and spirit of cooperation and support within this group.

AAA believes that shelter is not only a place to sleep but a place to belong and has made its shelters as 'shelter cum activity centers.' where a number of meaningful activities happen on regular basis. Recreational and religious tours, cultural programmes, festival celebrations and birthday celebrations are but a few. In 2010, AAA celebrated Gandhi Jayanti by organizing a 'Fashion Show of the Poor' in one of its shelters.

The Year 2011 was significant for the entire population of homeless people as they were counted in census conducted by the government in which AAA played an important role. AAA along with other NGO's and the census team of surveyors filled in the forms necessary to count the homeless. While the counted number of homeless gives us some indications of the figures of homeless people it is recognised that for numerous reasons many homeless in Delhi still went uncounted.



During the winter, the elderly were provided with Quilts instead of blankets. The quilts saved them from the cold of the harsh winter. The homeless were quite happy with this move. The quilts were supported by a donor referred by AAA's partner agency "Bani Jagtiani Trust".

The long standing issue shared by the VNM was the need to have some sort of monthly stipend or pension. For many homeless elderly there are a number of obstacles in the way to being able to avail the government pension scheme. First and foremost to be eligible for a government pension residential proof in Delhi is necessary as well as proof of age. AAA's partner "Bani Jagtiani Trust (BJT)" provided funds specifically for the



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elderly programme and proposed that the elderly should be provided with a monthly stipend. The proposal was discussed at the VNM meeting. The elderly group was divided into two categories : 60 + and 75+ The monthly stipend of Rs.50/- and Rs.250/- was given to the members of the VarishthNagrikManch, for the age group of 60 to 70 and 75 + respectively. The elderly suffering from chronic illness e.g. asthma, diabetes or infirm and yet not over 75 years of age were given a stipend of Rs250/- BJT played a crucial role in introducing AAA to other individuals who added to the stipend fund and gave more quilts for the coming winters. Unfortunately this pension project has not been sustainable, and further funding is required.



In the Year 2012, the Electoral office launched a drive to include the homeless in political participation. Special camps were organised at the biggest shelters in the city where by the elderly along with other homeless people were assisted by AAA and the election commission to fill in application forms to apply for **Voter card IDs**. This began the process of ensuring that the homeless are entitled to their full citizenship rights. However the journey is far from complete and still the elderly homeless are fighting to be able to avail the benefits of the welfare schemes meant for senior citizens, such as a pension.

The VNM and AAA suffered a major loss when its founding President Sh. R.K.Shastrisuddenly left for his heavenly abode. The elderly got their Voter Card from the hands of the lieutenant Governor at a special function organized by the Electoral Office, Delhi. (pic.) This year 2013 a special campaign was launched by the Chief Electoral Office to enroll all the homeless population in the voter list.

In year 2013, AAA and the VMN suffered another blow when Sh. SurinderKhamosh an active VNM's member and a Campaigner since2010 and poet, met with an untimely death.

It is clear that while changes are emerging slowly the elderly homeless remain outside the ambit of a social safety network. Living for decades on the edge of society without full citizenship rights and unable to avail many security system made available to other elderly citizens.



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## Change:



AAA believes that shelter is not a mere place to sleep but a place where a person can stay with dignity and security. The shelters have been transformed into multi-generational homes where all the residents live like a united Joint family. Within this Joint family environment the senior citizens have a special place, where they receive the full respect and dignity which they deserve. There has been a visible change in attitude of younger shelter users, who once may have intimidated older shelter users now show respect and understanding. In this changed culture the elderly now realized their own worth and feel empowered.

The VNM provides a forum where the elderly can share their problem and get solutions in a democratic manner. They do not need to go elsewhere to address their concerns. The forum not only provides solutions, but also community support, friends. Members have a sense of belonging, dignity and identity. Burdens are no longer the responsibility of the individual due to collective support. Over the years, the nature of the VNMs complaints or concerns has changed as solutions have been sort. This is evident from the fact that the nature of problems such as teasing, abuse or even snatching of their earnings by younger shelter users was re-focused to the facilities being provided in the shelters or the need for government pensions and civil rights.

In brief, the members of the VNM Manch can avail the following benefits:

- i. Free accommodation – they do not have to pay the fee of Rs. 6 per stay. (all other shelters used to charge 6/-)
- ii. Food at night – food is distributed to the members of Manch every night. Arrangements have been made with the Sis Ganj Gurudwara and canteen for homeless person who provide food to the shelter homes.
- iii. Health check-up – there is a provision for health check-up every week and medicines are also distributed free of cost. This health programme is organized in association with HIGH – Health Intervention Group for the Homeless, a joint programme of Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan, IHBAS, Sahara, St Stephens Hospital, and Shroff's Charitable Eye Hospital.
- iv. Health Emergency – on emergency occasions, the health committee takes care of the affected person.



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- v. The members of the Manch are allotted a separate and dignified space in the shelter home.
- vi. They have separate blankets and sheets, which they themselves take care of.
- vii. Last rites of homeless person and yearly Holy trip.

This VNM Manch has helped to fill the void that many homeless elderly were feeling at this later stage of their life. Prior to the setting up of the VNM, many homeless elderly had felt isolated believing no one cared, valued or bothered about them. They felt voiceless, powerless, and worthless. The VNM has ensured that the homeless elderly are now the legitimate Head of the Family in the organisational setup. The VNM has changed the attitudes of other shelter users who now see the elderly as valuable society members who deserve respect. Their fight has ensured some citizen rights such as voting rights. Some of the *Lost Dignity* seems to be restored to at least to those who have been able to reach.

The journey is long and still there are many miles to travel before the destination of full inclusion of the elderly homeless is reached.

## Selected Case Studies of Senior Citizens staying at Shelters

### 1. Shri Rattan Lal S/o Shri Kriparam

Rattan Lal used to live with his two brothers at Hoshiarpur in Punjab. After his mother and father died he had to take care of his younger brother. His brother betrayed him and stole all his property forcing him out of his house. He took shelter at various temples across the Punjab.

Rattan Lal who was a farmer back home came to Delhi in 1971. He initially earned his livelihood with the job of a Cart puller in Delhi. Unfortunately his health deteriorated and he had to shift to another softer job, of vending. For the last several years Rattan Lal has been selling socks and handkerchiefs and earns around Rs 50-60 per day. Despite working his low earnings making it very hard for him to even purchase one square meal a day. Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan assists him in availing medical services and provides him with clothes when required.



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Rattan Lal suffers from an orthopaedic problem in both legs and has constant joint pains. Since his profession includes a lot of walking it makes his life very difficult. Keeping this in mind Rattan Lal feels that

having a regular government pension would ease his situation and no longer would he have to face extraordinary pain to earn his livelihood.



## 2. Shri Rajender Singh S/o Shri Jairaj Singh

Rajender Singh was a farmer in his hometown in the Dehri Village of Gaya District in Bihar. His parents died when he was just 18 years old. The responsibility of his two young sisters and brother fell on his shoulder. He was a daily wage farmer and used to earn a very meager salary so he decided to come to Delhi in the hope of being able to better support his family.

Rajender Singh has been living in Delhi for last 35 years, earlier he used to work and live in rented accommodation but his financial condition didn't support a continuation of this. Hence he is living in Fatehpuri Shelter home for the last 8 years. In Delhi he has worked doing various laboring jobs as well as working at old Delhi Railway Station as a porter.

Rajender Singh who is now 70 works at the Maalgodown to earn a small amount to sustain his livelihood. However his depleting health conditions pose a serious threat to his livelihood, but the will to work and earn is still making him live a life of dignity. Rajender Singh himself knows that his health will not allow him to work indefinitely and he feels that if people like him were given a pension it would help them to sustain their lives in their later years with dignity.

- ❖ Age: 70 years
- ❖ Place of origin: Dehri village, Gaya in Bihar.
- ❖ Years of living in Delhi: 18 years.

## 3. Shri Madan Singh S/o Shri Nathu Singh

Madan Singh, is a 74 year old man from Udaipur in Rajasthan. Twenty five years ago following the death of his wife, he found that his family would no longer support him so he decided to leave Udaipur for Delhi. He still has a daughter, nephew and niece in Udaipur that he is estranged from. After de-boarding the train at Old Delhi Railway Station he came across the Night Shelter at the Fatehpuri, where he has been living for over 15 years.

Life in Delhi hasn't been easy for Madan Singh, originally a tailor in Rajasthan he has many different odd jobs in Delhi for a livelihood such as pushing trolleys to lifting weights at Old Delhi Railway Station. After a long struggle he learnt to cook and started working in a hotel.



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Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan has been supporting Madan Singh through its various interventions such as with shelter, clothes and health care.

While he can sometimes earn around Rs 2000-5000 during the peak season during the lean season he is often left with no other option but degradingly having to ask for money from others. Madan Singh has never been able to acquire any savings.

Madan Singh who is 74, is at the age in which most people retire and relax, however he is still working hard to earn his living. As his age increases so his health deteriorates making work more and more difficult. Madan Singh now hopes for assistance from the government so that he can sustain his life in the future when work becomes impossible. Madan Singh has been accessing the services from AAA for many years.

- ❖ Age: 74 years
- ❖ Place of origin: Udaipur, Rajasthan
- ❖ Reason for being homeless: Destitution (deprived of support from the family).
- ❖ Years of living in Delhi: 15 years.

#### 4. Shri Madan Mohan S/o Shri Kanshi Ram

Madan Mohan, is a 68 year old born and brought up in Delhi. He had three brothers, one of which has expired, difference in opinion and conflicting views with the other two led him to leave his laxmi Nagar house in Delhi. Madan Mohan studied to Higher Secondary and used to work with RC Press as a Proof Reader at DeenBandhuGuptaRoad in Delhi during 1970s. He also worked as a 'DesiVaid' in Nangloi where he used to live in a rented accommodation. Unfortunately he suffered a financial crisis which led him to vacate his rented accommodation and he took shelter at the Fatehpuri Night Shelter where he is now living for last 7 years.

Madan Mohan does not like to sit without work and even after coming to night shelter he did the job of Canvassing and he is currently a numberator in a local press earning around Rs 100-125 a day. Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan has helped to access medical care and other services which he required in order to have a healthy life.

Madan Mohan wants to have a peaceful life where he doesn't have to beg for money, this is the reason why he has always worked hard to earn his livelihood. He believes that a pension will support his meager



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earnings and open avenues for him to realize his dream of a peaceful old age.

- ❖ Age: 68 years
- ❖ Place of origin: Delhi
- ❖ Reason for homelessness: family dispute.

## 5. Shri Nanhe S/o Shri Narayan

Nanhe came to Delhi as a young man with his family in 1947; he is now 80 years old. Nanhe's father used to work as a coolie at the old Delhi Railway station; he inherited the same profession. Nanhe's family used to live in a rented accommodation in Delhi's Chandni Chowk area which was later converted into a market place forcing Nanhe to try and find another place to live.

Nanhe was diagnosed with respiratory problem and he could no longer do the job of a coolie so he tried his hands at other professions such as a road side vendor and working in the vegetable market. The respiratory problem along with his age didn't allow him to work any longer and now he is solely dependent on the money which his nephew gives him daily.

At 80, he doesn't have any means to earn, Nanhe talks about the importance of a pension as a way of taking care of himself in the years to come. Nanhe has been using the facilities run by AAA for a number of years.

- ❖ **Age:** 80 years
- ❖ **Reason for homelessness:** The development of Chandni Chowk into a market place where their house has been demolished to make way for the new shops.
- ❖ **Years of living in Delhi:** since 1947 (65 years)
- ❖ **Health complications:** respiratory problem.

## 6. Shri Aditya Prasad S/o Shri Bhindeswari Prasad

Aditya Prasad is 60 years old and was a farmer in Uttar Pradesh. He has a family of eight who still reside in UP which includes 2 Daughters one of whom is married, 2 sons one of whom is now separated and his wife. His families are still dependent on him as there is no other source of income for his family.



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Aditya Prasad used to come to Delhi regularly during the off farming season to find seasonal jobs so as to sustain his family. For last Six years he has been a regular at the shelter, sending all his earning quarterly back to his family so that they can survive. Aditya Prasad has a part-time job in Delhi which earns him around Rs 150 -200 during the peak season. In the lean season he often has to sit empty with no earnings.

The Question facing him now is how he will take care of his family in the future as his ageing is slowly snatching away his livelihood. Moreover he is concerned about the marriage opportunities for his daughter. He feels that if he could get pension it would help him to have a fixed minimum income so that he could send more money back home and also save a little for the marriage of his daughter.

- ❖ **Age:** 60 years
- ❖ **Place of origin:** Uttar Pradesh

## 7. Shri Anand Singh S/o Shri Bhagwan Singh

Anand Singh lost both his parents when he was just 17 years old, he has a sister who got married late as she was committed to taking care of him. Anand Singh lives alone, he is originally from Dehradun. He came to Delhi in his 20s to find livelihood options due to poverty in Dehradun. Luckily Anand Singh found work in a hotel in Delhi where he used to wash utensils and later on learned to cook food and started working as a cook. He has supported himself through all sorts of odd jobs in his 83 years of life.

Now since Anand Singh's eyesight has deteriorated and he no longer has the physical strength to support his body, he has no other option but to sit without work. He has spent days without a meal and many times he has to go to the gurudwara and other similar place to eat food. Anand Singh has an adopted son who sometimes assists him with money; he too lives in the shelter.

Anand Singh no longer has his teeth and he feels that a pension would help him to meet his dietary needs as he is often unable to eat the foods donated to him such as roti's and fruits.

- ❖ **Age:** 83 years
- ❖ **Place of origin:** Dehradun
- ❖ **Reason for being homeless:** Destitution (his parents had passed away and his only sister got married. No one to take care of him)
- ❖ **Years of stay in Delhi:** more than five decades now



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## 8. Shri Anil Kumar S/o Shri Babu Manikchand



Anil Kumar, is in his 68th year of life. One can spot him near to Chandni chowk market in old Delhi where he sells Peanuts with a peanut bag in one hand and crutch in other hand as he cannot walk properly due to limb problems. Selling peanuts has been a consistent livelihood of Anil Kumar for many years.

Anil Kumar's father died when he was in his childhood years in Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh. He came to Delhi and started selling electronic items to earn money for the survival of himself and his younger brother who later disowned him. He has been living in Fatehpuri Shelter for last 20 years.

Anil Kumar's increasing health problems are consistent concerns for him and he is worried that soon he will have no other options but to beg. Anil Kumar believes a government pension would secure him some dignity in the end years of his life.

- ❖ Age: 68 years
- ❖ Place of origin: Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh
- ❖ Reason for homelessness: destitution (disowned by his brother)
- ❖ Years of stay in Delhi: more than 20 years

## 9. Shri Haran Chakraborty S/o Shri Makhan Lal

Haran Chakraborty family includes his wife and two sons. He is 73 years and is from Calcutta in West Bengal. His son who is now a fireman has disowned him hence he came to Delhi around 30 years ago 1985. He used to work as a cook in Calcutta, he came to Delhi on the pretext of better job that was offered to him. In Delhi he worked as a cook in a restaurant at paranthaWali Gali in Chandni Chowk until 2002. Unable to continue with the work due to health problems he began selling socks and handkerchiefs earning a meager Rs 80-90 a day, though there are days when he does not earn a single penny.

Haran studied till class eighth and also used to work as a fireman in an aluminum company in Calcutta, life brought him to Fatehpuri shelter in 2004 and he has been living in the shelter ever since. He still sends money to his family every two or three months or whenever he can.

Haran takes his morning meal at the gurudwara and the other meal for the day he buys from his earning. Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan takes care of his health need through their clinics and provides him with clothes. A Pension would help him to increase his savings so that he could send



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a little more to his family in Calcutta.

- ❖ Age: 73
- ❖ Place of origin: Calcutta, West Bengal
- ❖ Years of stay in Delhi: 30 years

## 10. Shri NathuLal s/o Shri Amar Lal

Nathulal, is 66 years old from Bhandara in Nagpur, Maharashtra. Nathulal has no other family other than a sister who lives in Maharashtra. He is all alone. In Maharashtra, NathuLal used to work in a school as a peon. He came to Delhi in search of better livelihood options to support him and his sister but has struggled to find any and hence has been living in the night shelter for over 10 years.

He now works as a *Kabadibut* but only earn Rs 50- 60 a day. He saves his earning to send money to his sister back home in Maharashtra. NathruLal has poor health and with a broken leg and weakening eyes his capacity for earning is not high.

NathuLal feels he is urgent need of pension as deteriorating health and no other source of income or relatives will make survival difficult as he gets older.

NathuLal has been using both the night shelters and health services run and organised by AAA.

- ❖ Age: 66 years
- ❖ Place of origin: Nagpur, Maharastra
- ❖ Reason for homelessness: No family and displacement due to poverty.
- ❖ Years of stay in Delhi: over 10 years.

## 11. Shri BabuLal S/o Shri Biharilal

BabuLal had a family, a wife, a brother and two sons; however his family disowned him as they were dissatisfied with his low earnings and he was made to leave home.

BabuLal is a Delhi resident since birth and has been living homeless since 1998. He has spent his life in Gurudwaras and on the foot path for months before finding the Fatehpuri Shelter to live in.

BabuLal used to work as a Rajmishtri but circumstance didn't allow him to continue working and he has been unemployed since 1995. He does seva at gurudwara to earn his food and to support the community.



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Earlier his daughter used to send him money for subsistence but later she ceased for reasons unknown.



BabuLal who studied till class eighth and is now 67 years old has no source of earning hence a pension would help his subsistence if provided.

- ❖ Age: 67 years
- ❖ Place of origin: Delhi

## 12. Shri Srikrishna Murthy S/o Shri Satya Narayan

Sri Krishna Murthy was involved in furniture work back home in Puri in the district of Orissa. His family includes his wife and two sons who are also carpenters. Narayan Murthy is now 68 years old.

Narayan Murthy came to Delhi 5 years back for what he calls as DevDarshan. He now doesn't feel like going back home. He does cleaning work at a Dargah in Delhi where he also gets food to eat, clothes in donation and money too. Narayan Murthy now wants to go on a spiritual journey to Himanchal for Mansa Devi Yatra.

Narayan Murthy feels that through a pension he could get a little more money which he would be able to save to utilise for Mansa Devi Yatra.

- ❖ Age: 68
- ❖ Place of origin: Puri district of Orissa
- ❖ Years of stay in Delhi: 5 years

## 13. Shri Rajiv Kumar s/o Shri Prem Prakash Saxena

Rajiv Kumar is 62 years old who is from Kashganj, Uttar Pradesh. He has a wife, a daughter and a son who still lives in Kashganj. He studied till class 10th. He owns no land in the village and could not find any livelihood options hence he came to the big city to search for a better livelihood to sustain his family. His wife also works and earns money so as to take care of his family back in UP.

Rajiv Kumar has been in Delhi for the last eight years and is selling mobile and remote covers which earn him Rs 100-150 per day. He saves his earnings to send home.

A Pension would complement his income and hence he would not need to neglect his own stomach so as to ensure money for his children.

- ❖ Age: 62 years
- ❖ Place of origin: Kashganj, Uttar Pradesh



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## 14. Shri Jagdish Prasad s/o Shri Jamuna Prasad

Jagdish Prasad is 74 years old and has been in Delhi for the last 10 years. He is from Ahmedabad in Gujrat. He came to Delhi due to a family dispute and conflict.

Jagdish Prasad is a road side vendor and is surviving on his meager income. Age is a hindrance in earning his livelihood and at 74 his body is starting to give up. He believes soon he will have to depend on others to survive.

A Pension would provide Rajiv Kumar with a predictable income which could help him to met his expenses once he can no longer work.

- ☞ Age: 74 years
- ☞ Place of origin: Ahmedabad, Gujarat
- ☞ Years of stay in Delhi: 10 years.

Annexure-1					
Sl. No.	Name of the person	Age	Place of origin	Years of stay in Delhi	Election Voter I.D Card
1	Madan Singh	74	Udaipur, Rajasthan	15	yes
2	Madan Mohan	68	Delhi	–	yes
3	Nanhe	80	–	Since 1947	
4	Rajneder Singh	70	Dehri village, Gaya in Bihar	18	
5	RatanLal	–	Hoshiarpur in Punjab	Since 1971	yes
6	Aditya Prasad	60	UP		
7	Anand Singh	83	Dehradun	More than five decades	yes
8	Anil Kumar	68	Sultanpur, U.P.	More than 18 years	yes
9	Haran Chakraborty	73	Calcutta, West Bengal	30 years approx	
10	NathuLal	66	Nagpur, Maharastra	More than 10 years	yes
11	BabuLal	67	Delhi		
12	Srikrishna Murthy	68	Puri district of Bihar	5 years	yes
13	Rajiv Kumar	62	Kashganj, U.P.		
14	Jagdish Prasad	74	Ahmedabad, Gujarat	10 years	



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## Conclusions



We have been facing this trend with concern for several years, acknowledging that the State do not necessarily have the appropriate program capacity, required staff expertise or suitable facilities for this population. Due to the complex health issues and other factors that are common among older people, shelters are far from ideal settings for them. It is important to create supportive environments that enable people in this growing population group to age with dignity. Key components of the programme could be around building in food security, promote wellness and active living, provide care onsite and enhance the ability of shelter and outreach services to serve this population.



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## Annexure-1: THE POLICY

In view of the demographic changes, consequent socio-economic implications and increasing need for intervention in the area of old age welfare, Ministry of Social Justice and empowerment, Government of India adopted 'National Policy on Older Persons' in January 1999. The policy provides broad guidelines to State Governments for taking action for welfare of older persons in a proactive manner by devising their own policies and plans of action.

In response, Department of Social Welfare, Government of Delhi has formulated a State Policy in consonance with the National Policy for implementation in N.C.T. of Delhi. The policy defines 'senior citizen' as a person who is 60 years old or above. It strives to ensure well-being of senior citizens and improve quality of their lives through providing specific facilities, concessions, relief, services etc. and helping them cope with problems associated with old age. It also proposes affirmative action on part of Government Departments for ensuring that the existing public services for senior citizens are user friendly and sensitive to their needs. The State Policy on Senior Citizens for N.C.T. of Delhi is enumerated as under: -

### STATE POLICY STATEMENTS

#### 1. Dignified life for senior citizens :

The elderly would be recognized and treated not as a liability, but individuals worthy of respect and legitimate place in society. They would not be ignored, marginalized or remain unprotected and would be helped in living their life with peace and dignity.

#### 2. Special focus on vulnerable groups :

Special attention and care would be extended to vulnerable groups like widows, disabled and infirm old persons and the destitute. Special consideration would also be given to older females so that they do not become victims of neglect and discrimination.

#### 3. Providing shelter and strengthening family as 'care giver' :

The State would make efforts to provide and facilitate provision of adequate institutional care (both day care and residential) for old persons. Role of family in providing support to the elderly would be recognized as vital element in care of the aged and efforts would be made for strengthening social support system and sensitizing caregivers so that capacity of families to take care of the elderly is strengthened and they can continue to live with their families.



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#### **4. Expansion of services and making them user friendly :**

The Government would support initiation of new and expansion of existing services / programs for older persons and try to make them accessible, client oriented and user friendly, particularly in the field of transport where senior citizens feel most handicapped as also in field of health and shelter which become primary concerns in old age.

#### **5. Encouraging voluntary action :**

NGOs, voluntary organizations and senior citizens' groups would be encouraged and assisted through appropriate financial and non-financial measures to come forward with innovative ideas, pilot projects, new schemes and programs for addressing concerns of older persons and providing welfare service to them.

#### **6. Tapping skills and experience of senior citizens :**

Support services would be provided for utilizing experience and skills of older persons so that they are able to live as productive members of society. Efforts would also be made for organizing older persons into coherent self-help groups capable of articulating their rights and interests and providing support to each other.

#### **7. Proactive role of the State :**

The state would play a positive interventionist and leadership role in implementation of the State Policy on older persons and Plan Of Action.

#### **8. Participation of senior citizens in decision making :**

Senior citizens would be involved in making decisions affecting their lives by way of suitable institutionalized mechanisms like State Council for Older Persons and State Level Association of Older Persons.



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