

## A New Vision for Old Age Care

### What is the issue?

A formal approach to homes for the elderly is an important policy and planning issue for India.

### What is the status of old age population in India?

- The UN World Population Ageing Report notes that India's ageing population (those aged 60 and above) is projected to increase to nearly 20% by 2050 from about 8%.
- By 2050, the percentage of elderly people will increase by 326%, with those aged 80 years and above set to increase by 700%, making them the fastest-growing age group in India.
- A recent set of research papers from Hyderabad highlight the fact that good intentions and a sense of charity are often inadequate when it comes to addressing the basic health needs of their elderly residents.
- As people age, and their motor skills weaken, they are at a greater risk of falling down and hurting themselves.
- Instead of planning for accessible and elderly-friendly structures that allow them to operate safely, we reduce their mobility.
- It also reduces their sociability, their sense of independence and well-being leading up to mental health issues and depression.

### What is the need for public policy support to old age population?

- **Rising old age homes**-As India becomes increasingly urbanised and families break up into smaller units, homes for the elderly have risen.
- These homes are either paid for, or offer free or subsidised services which are run by NGOs, religious or voluntary organisations with support from the government, or by local philanthropists.
- **Lack of regulatory oversight**- They provide accommodation, timely care, and a sense of security for their residents but the quality of service varies as these homes lack regulatory oversight.
- **No proper SOP**- Many homes lack clearly established standard operating procedures (SOP), and their referral paths to health care are informal.
- **Impact on residents**- There is an urgent need to understand the quality of life at such institutions, including the impact of these homes on the mental health of their residents.

### What is the way forward?

- **Health screening**- Formal pathways can be built for basic health screening for blood sugar, blood pressure, periodic vision and hearing screening, and a simple questionnaire to assess mental health.
- Such interventions are inexpensive and could go a long way in identifying health issues and

offering support.

- **Addressing health issues-** The next step would be to build formal pathways to address any health issues that such screenings identify with the aid of hospitals NGO and private care.
- **Public policy support- There** is a need for robust public policy to support homes for the elderly.
- Health institutions will also need to offer a comprehensive set of packages that are tailored for the elderly.
- Homes for the elderly must be guided by policy, to make their facilities, buildings and social environment elderly and disabled-friendly.
- Design, architecture and civic facilities must be thought from the ground up and these innovations must be available for all residents.

## Reference

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/a-new-vision-for-old-age-care/article65209198.ece>

