



Healthy Ageing

Adding Life to Years

# Vridhdha Mitra

VOL 1 - NO. 1  
OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2020



## About 'Healthy Ageing'

SCHOOL's flagship initiative 'Healthy Ageing' focuses on building an age friendly ecosystem for the elderly population (aged 60 years and above) in India. We aim at reaching out to every elderly person in India, with a special focus on the most vulnerable and the needy.

The project activities pertain to:

- **Generating dialogue:** one on one counselling; discussion with family members; creating enabling environment within the family.
- **Creating enthusiasm to be active:** weekly group sessions; picnics, games; lunch meetings & recreation
- **Promoting independence:** assistive devices; physiotherapy; income generating activities
- **Ensuring physical, mental & emotional well-being:** home health check-ups; weekly health check-ups at the center; multivitamins; diapers, backrest and joy-rides; distribution of raw ration and responding to any other basic need
- **Garnering support for the most vulnerable and needy:** creating volunteers and peers in the neighbourhood; and sensitizing the community
- **Linkages:** with all government schemes and programmes for pensions, livelihood and health-care.

# From the Editor's Desk

## The journey so far...

It was in April 2018 when SCHOOL decided to work with the elderly people. While we were clear about our mission, we were still unclear about the ways of working. A review of different projects and efforts for the elderly gave us an insight that every single initiative is focusing on support for the elderly through institutions, largely 'old age homes'. We preferred to chalk out a pathway that will help us in having a larger reach and this led to designing of a comprehensive community based program for the vulnerable older people residing in the slums of growing cities of India. Pune city was selected as the first site for this program.

I recall the very first day of our work in Kasturba Vasahat slum in Aundh, Pune. As we went along meeting the elderly in their homes, they questioned us, what for are we keen to meet them, and they shared, "We know of the organizations and social workers that come to our homes with the concerns related to health and education of our children, the pregnant mothers, job opportunities for the youths, and so on, but no one has ever enquired about our concerns or wellness, this is for the first time someone is asking about us!"

This made us realize the need for sensitizing the families of the elderly and also working with the community as a whole.

Our community based program thus began in April 2019 in the two slums of Aundh in Pune city.

It was in April 2020, during the lockdown, we collaborated with the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) for expansion of our work in more slums. The technical guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO) helped in creating a micro-plan for 40 vulnerable slums of Pune. Further, training sessions from WHO equipped us to deal with the COVID-19 specific challenges faced by the elderly people residing in the slums. Our expansion led to the addition of 10 more slums. SCHOOL, at this juncture, collaborated with Sevadham Trust, Deep Griha Society and Vanchit Vikas for field activities so as to enable the implementation instantly. Today we reach out to a population of 62216 in 12 slums of Pune city, and are serving 5200 elderlies along with 20600 family members of the elderlies.



**Dr. Benazir Patil, CEO, SCHOOL**

# Vriddha Mitra in the field



# Last Mile Connectivity for Ganesh Puli

Puli Kaka is aged 62 years and lives in Lohiya Nagar, Bhavani Peth, Pune. His family includes his wife, 2 sons and 2 daughters-in-law. His wife works as a cleaner.

Back in March 2020, Puli Kaka was diagnosed with prostate cancer and was advised chemotherapy and surgery at Indrayani hospital, Pune.

When we met him for the first time, through our Community Officer Chhaya, he looked depressed both because of his illness and the overall situation of the family, specifically about his son being an alcoholic. After speaking with Puli Kaka, we spoke to him about cancer as well as the possibility of working with his family members. For the recovery from his illness, it was of utmost importance that he received emotional support from the family members.

In subsequent visits we found out that Kaka was in need of financial aid for his chemotherapy and further treatment. We communicated this situation to Cipla Foundation and requested for support. We also reached out to Indrayani Hospital and appealed for free surgery. We also extended raw ration and multi-vitamins to him, however what worked the most was the mental and moral support he received from the project team. He has been receiving regular medication from Cipla Foundation and has improved health. Currently, he has been advised a PET and CT scan for which Chhaya is facilitating all the required support.



## Empowering Elderly

### Dattatrey Khedekar

Khedekar Kaka is aged 65 years and he lives in Taljai Vasti with 5 other family members including his wife, son, daughter-in-law, and his grandchildren. The family is under financial stress since his wife is the only one with a regular job as a house help. He suffers from diabetes and hypertension and is being served by our Community Officer Chaitrali.

Once Chaitrali confirmed his eligibility for getting the benefit of Shahri Gareeb Yojana (Urban Poor Health Insurance Scheme of PMC) she worked with the family on the required documentation for applying for the scheme. Soon the papers were submitted by the project staff and Khedekar Kaka was issued a Shahri Gareeb card. Due to this enrollment, Kaka has been receiving free medication and other services. Chaitrali regularly visits Kaka and conducts home health check-up, specifically to ensure his blood pressure and blood sugar levels are under control.

## Radha Mahadev Kamble

Radha Aiji is 74 years old and lives all alone. Initially, she was very hesitant to tell us all about herself. While Aiji's husband had parted from her and got remarried, Aiji continued to live in depression and later even raised the young children of the second wife when their mother passed away.

During her illness recently, when she became bed-ridden, because of her bond and friendship with the young Community Officers whom she treated like her own grand-children, she talked about her step-daughter and her unwillingness to look after her step-mother. The project team reached out to her step-daughter, and explained Radha Aiji's condition, she visited our office and soon agreed to look after Radha Aiji. Now she is not only looking after Radha Aiji but also comes and meets us regularly, and participates in various activities. Recently, we got a wheel-chair and walker for Radha Aiji, she tries to stand and walk with the help of the walker as well as goes for joy-rides in the community.



## Kannan Raman Swamy

Swamy Kaka is 65 years old, and he lives with his wife and his elder son in Kasturba Vasahat, Aundh. He has 2 more children who live elsewhere. Swamy Kaka is paralyzed on his right side. His wife, son and daughter-in-law work as house-help. Swamy Kaka also has 2 grandchildren who go to school.

He suffered from paralysis 3 years ago, after which he was rushed to AIIMS where he was kept in the ICU for 16 days. Kaka has been bedridden since then. Gradually, the family incurred debt and Swamy kaka suffered from mental trauma and severe depression. The project team got to know this situation and the immediate support in the form of diapers, regular home health check-ups and multivitamins began. Further he was also provided with a wheelchair, so that he is taken for wheel-chair rides around the community. Additionally, an individual physiotherapist was called in to provide home-based physiotherapy. The family was also supported with raw ration. Apart from this, we also conduct virtual OPD for him and our in-house doctor who regularly provides inputs on Swamy Kaka's wellbeing.



# Our Reach

Our reach as of 31st December 2020:

- 5200 older people in 12 slums
- 3328 Females and 1872 Males
- 381 elderlies living alone
- 572 elderlies living alone (with spouse)

## Referral Linkages

PMC - UPHCs and hospitals  
Senior Citizen's Cell, Police Commissioner Office, Pune  
Indutai Tilak College of physiotherapy  
Smile Foundation  
Family Planning Association of India  
Rotary Club  
Pariwartan trust  
Prayas  
Matruseva hospital  
Cipla Foundation  
Bapu trust  
H.V. Desai hospital  
ASHA  
Prashanti cancer care clinic



## Recent Updates

- Specialized OPDs for elderly people to be started in 2021 in the Urban Primary Health Centers of PMC
- Efforts and plans for starting Geriatric Units in each zone
- Participation of SCHOOL team in the launch of National Report on 'Longitudinal Ageing Study in India'
- Support from Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiative
- Launch of Mission Elderly by Give India