A new vision for old age care

The UN World Population Ageing Report on India—

Data on—	2020	2050
Those > 60 yrs	8%	20%
Growth in % of elderly (Age > 80) by 2050	700 %	

- Thus making them the fastest-growing age group in India.

Elderly care in India—

- India is becoming urbanised at a rapid rate which has resulted in the breaking up of families into smaller units.

- As a result, many homes and institutions for the elderly have emerged.

- The care of the elderly is administered by a group of professionals or voluntary org. interested in this service.

- These organisations offer both paid &free services.

- Usually, these institutions are run by NGOs, religious or voluntary organisations with support from the govt, or by philanthropists.

- They provide accommodation, timely care, and a sense of security for the elderly.

The need for regulation

- Good intentions and a sense of charity are not enough.
- Many have vision impairment, but, nearly 90% of this could be resolved by ==simple, low-cost health interventions== like issuing better eyeglasses or cataract surgery.
- Impacts of vision impairment—>depression was predominant.
- Elderly have ==weak motor skills== , thus they are at a greater risk of hurting themselves.
- Instead of planning for accessible and elderly-friendly structures that allow them to operate safely, ==we reduce their mobility.==
- This ==reduces their sociability, sense of independence and well-being== leading to mental health issues and depression.
- The quality of service is often questioned as these institutions lack regulations.

- These institutions lack standard operating procedures, and their measures of healthcare are informal.

1. Formulating mechanisms for basic health screening at such homes and public health facilities.

- This includes blood sugar, BP, periodic vision and hearing screening, and mental health assessment.

2. Then build formal pathways to address the issues such screenings identify.
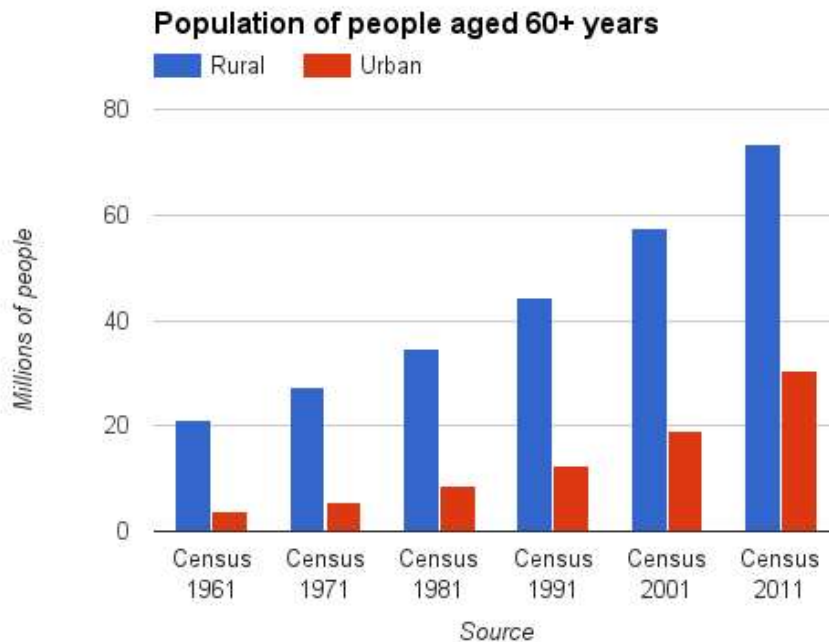
- Hospitals and other healthcare facilities could be utilised for this purpose.

3. Policy support

- Health institutions should offer holistic initiatives that are customised for the elderly.
- The homes for the elderly must be regulated by policy, to make their facilities, buildings and environment elderly- and disabled-friendly.

Anganwadi workers to go to court against ESMA imposition

The future of old times in India

Population of people aged 60+ years

Rural ▉   Urban ▉

Millions of people (y-axis: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80)

Census 1961 | Census 1971 | Census 1981 | Census 1991 | Census 2001 | Census 2011

Source

Overview

- Life expectancy in the country has increased by more than 02 times since Independence.
  - Life expectancy was around 32 years in the late 1940s and currently it is about 70 years.
- At the same time, fertility rate in the country has decreased to about 02 from 06 children per woman.
- But this has created a new challenge with respect to the ageing of the population.
  - Proportion of the elderly (individuals aged 60 years and above) in India was seen to be 9% of the total population in 2011.
  - As per the National Commission on Population, this proportion is expected to reach 18% by 2036.

Ways to address the challenges of the ageing population

1. Pensions:
   - Depression among the elderly, it is widely believed that depression is strongly correlated with poverty, poor health and loneliness.
   - Extending cash benefits through old-age pensions is expected to help individuals cope with various health issues.
   - It is expected to act as a first step towards ensuring a dignified life and safeguard the elderly from destitution and deprivations.
   - In India, there are a few essential schemes of non-contributory pensions for the elderly, widowed women and disabled persons,
   - Under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), Ministry of Rural Development.

2. Extending the beneficiary targets
   - "Targeting" social benefits schemes has always been a challenge in India as,
   - Restricting them to BPL families has not yielded results as there are several errors in the BPL lists.
   - Targeting is not the ideal way to deal with the ageing population as these individuals experience deprivations even in relatively well-off households.

- It involves complicated formalities like the periodical renewal of certificates, submission of BPL certificates among others for getting benefits.
- Adherence to these formalities is difficult for the elderly, especially those who come from remote areas with little education.
- Therefore extending benefits to all widows and elderly or disabled with simple and transparent "exclusion criteria" is said to be a better approach.
- Also, the eligibility can be self-declared, with the task of periodic verification being entrusted to the local administration or gram panchayat.

3. Widening the net and budget allocations
- Widening the beneficiary base would require increased allocation to the pension budgets as social assistance schemes in the country have low budgets.
- There is a need to increase these allocations as the social assistance schemes are worth expanding.

4. Revamping NSAP
- Southern States have performed better in terms of universal coverage of social benefits.
- However, some States are struggling to ensure near-universal social security pensions.

- Centre by revamping the NSAP can help the states to perform much better.
- Allocation for NSAP has been just ₹9,652 cr (less than 0.05% of India's GDP) which has more or less remained stagnant for about 10 years.

5. Other benefits
- Elderly population also requires support in terms of,
- Improving health care facilities, extending disability aids, assistance with daily tasks, recreation opportunities and a chance to have a good social life.