Sansad TV - Perspective: Silver Economy

drishtiias.com/printpdf/sansad-tv-perspective-silver-economy

Watch Video At:

https://youtu.be/wugogQvQOJw

Why in News

India's **elderly population** is on the rise. As per surveys, the share of elders, as a percentage of the total population in the country, is expected to increase from around 8.6% in 2011 to almost 12.5% by 2036, and surpass 19.5% by 2050.

Given the predicted sharp rise in elderly population, there is an **urgent need to create a more robust eldercare ecosystem** in India, especially in the post-**Covid** phase.

Key Points

- **Elderly as a Resource:** The **National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP), 1999 s**ays that the elderly are the resource that should be a part of the economic development.
    - Silver economy shall be more about **integrating these people into the economy as active participants** rather than just as passive recipients.
- **Silver Economy**: It is the system of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services **aimed at using the purchasing potential of older and ageing people** and satisfying their consumption, living and health needs.
    - Initial estimations suggest that at present the **Silver Economy is worth approximately 73,082 crore rupees.**
- **Initiatives for Silver Economy:** The government is exploring various ways to promote the idea of a silver economy.
    - Based on the recommendations of the **Expert Group on Silver Economy,** the **SAGE initiative** has been launched to promote private enterprises that **bring out innovation in products** and processes for the **benefit of the elders.**
    - The **SACRED portal** was also recently launched by Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu **to connect the senior citizens with job providers** in the private sector.

Elderly in India

- **Constitutional Provision: Article 41** of the Constitution states that the State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, **old age,** sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.
- **Population Statistics:** In the 2011 census, the 60+ population accounted for 8.6% of India's population.
    - **Growing at around 3% annually,** the number of elderly people will rise to 319 million (~20% of total population) in 2050.
- **Elderly Women**: Elderly women in particular shall be specifically looked after in this aspect, as the **longevity for women is much longer** than men.
    - Inaccessibility of these opportunities to elderly women will make her dependent on others exposing her survival to several vulnerabilities.
- **Reforms in Recent Past**: In the recent past, more and more elderly people are living alone thus giving rise to the need for **senior-citizen housing** and **development of security gadgets** and health devices for them. All of these initiatives are coming from the startup sector.
    - However there is a large segment of the elderly population that lies in the poor category and is most likely left out of the ambit of these facilities.

- **Centre of Focus for Including Elderly in Economy:**
  - **Reskilling**: The generation that is getting older needs to be reskilled as what is learned in early ages needs to be recalled again in order to make them contribute up to their maximum potential in the silver era.
  - **Behavioural Change towards Working-Age Population**: In India, the age of 58 is considered old and appropriate for retiring and not working.
    - However, in western countries like the US, there is no maximum age for retirement.
    - Behavioural change needs to occur to ensure that the elderly are contributing towards the country as active participants.
- **Initiatives for Elderly in India:**
  - **SACRED Portal**
  - **SAGE (Seniorcare Aging Growth Engine)**
  - **Elder Line**
  - **Integrated Programme for Older Persons (IPOP)**
  - **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)**
  - **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)**
  - **The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana**
  - **Vayoshreshtha Samman**
  - **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPSC) Act, 2007**

Significance of Including Elderly in the Economy

- **Social and Professional Experience:** Elderly people carry immense experience of their personal and professional life. The society at large needs to channelise those experiences for a better tomorrow.
  - They can **provide a vital generational link for upcoming generations**. It provides support and stability to families and society at large.
- **Inculcate Moral Values:** Grandparents in joint families **provide a crucial link for transferring values and morals** to the younger generation in their initial years, thereby contributing towards the upbringing of better human beings and responsible citizens.
- **Unified Society**: Acknowledging seniors' contributions would help to make ours society a **more age-inclusive society** that does not pit one generation against the other.
- **Prepare India for Future:** India needs to prepare for the year 2050 onwards when the elderly population will be the largest segment of the Indian population.
  - Including elderly people as active contributors in the economy will prepare India for the future when a major portion of its population will be aged.

Challenges Associated

- **Elderly in Unorganised Areas Remain Left-outs:** The SAGE initiative talks about the organised economy and not at all about the unorganised sector which leaves a large number of elderly people out of the purview of the benefits.

  Those who are not connected to the market are not able to access the products, either due to **lack of money** or due to **lack of access to the technology**.
- **Issues against Reskilling**: Ensuring proper technology, facilities etc for **reskilling the elderly population at a large scale** is a challenge.
    - For instance, armies have an excellently systematised way to integrate the retired officers into the civilian setup.
    - However, reskilling as a part of the system is quite a large task and is possible only in a few areas.
- **Issues Against No-Retirement:** Removing the retirement age **creates a problem for an economy that is still dealing with the demographic dividend** like India.

  The question arises is will the elderly be skilled in the same job or in some job that they have never done before and need to be encouraged to opt for such a job.
- **Digital as the Only Medium of Access**: Providing each and every facility via digital medium that too as the only source of access is not a wise choice considering India's current scenario, alternate options shall also be available.

Way Forward

- **Community Based Approach:** Countries like in Europe have small communities where care for the elderly and related facilities are available in the community; the volunteers of the community are the helpers of the elderly.
    - India needs to build such a type of **youth army to help elderly in the far away areas.**
    - Also, It is more important for the elderly to have these **products and services made available within their communities** rather than just on digital platforms.
- **Integrating Elderly in Mainstream Population**: Creating a whole new ecosystem only for the elderly like new housing systems or communities is not a reliable solution. The **elderly should not be made to suffer any isolation complexes.**
    - The best way of taking the best economic and social advantage of the elderly is not to treat them separately from the rest of the population and rather **assimilate them into the mainstream population.**
    - **Following the path of US and European countries** and segregating the elderly from the population **might not be the best approach for a country like India** where grandparents play a significant role in imparting values in the children of the family.

- **Making Welfare Schemes Elderly-Inclusive:** Bringing the larger segment of the elderly within the ambit of the welfare schemes.
    - The perspective needs to be broader than just selling them products and services and **must include the ways of including them in the economy as the producers.**
    - While building an eledelry-favourable ecosystem, it should be made sure that the coverage is upto the last mile.