

Quarterly Report October-November-December 2023

Introduction:

India is a young country with a rapidly growing population of urban poor. While women empowerment is part of the development agenda but however the benefits old population is missed out, whose numbers keep growing as life expectancy has increased. Dida Centre (formerly Kolkata Initiatives) is a program of the Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ) supports needy communities in greater Kolkata. It is running seven-day care centres at present in the slums of Kolkata and supports approximately 300 elderly by providing day care, physical, mental, and emotional support for elderly women.

Highlights:

- Total 856 women were present at 137 sessions.
- 8200 units food dry food packets delivered to the participants.

Program details briefly:

- **Service Delivery (Food):** We supported approximately 8200 unit of food packets during October to December 2023 and 45000 units of food packets for the past three consecutive years to the elderly women registered under the Dida Centre. The initiative is directly associated with the SDG 02 and SDG 03. The whole food distribution activities were managed by a centralised monitored system and need based assessment done on regular basis.
- **Service Delivery (Health Camp and Consultancy):** Although we have organised frequent health camps at the communities but due to the festival season, there were no physical health camps organised but there were health consultancies over telephone, the initiative is directly associated with the SDG 03, SDG05, SDG 11, SDG 16 and SDG 17. Some elderly women were referred to govt. health facilities by the doctors of the Health Camps organised by CHSJ during this time. In some cases, they were diagnosed as survivors of several deceases such as cancer, tuberculosis, hyperglycaemia, several nerve deceases, arthritis etc.
- **Emergency and Essential Support Service:** Keeping in mind the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda of the UN or the universal principal of **Leaving No One Behind – LNOB**, more than 100 women to link with government support service schemes as Elderly Pension, Window Pension etc. In the regular wellbeing sessions with the elderly women, facilitators and centre operators has facilitated them about the available government support services and schemes available and aimed at the welfare of the elderly population, including the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), the Annapurna Scheme, the National Programme for the Health Care of Elderly (NPHCE), the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana, the Integrated Programme for Older Persons (IPOP), Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana, and the Senior Citizen Savings Scheme (SCSS). These schemes provide monthly pensions, free food grains, healthcare facilities, assistive devices, financial assistance for old age homes, day care canters, and awareness programs. Also the National Helpline for elderly people (14567) was widely circulated.

Stories of Gender Diaspora: Long walk for life

*Go where you will – I shall remain on Bengal's shores,
Shall see the jackfruit leaves dropping in the dawn's breeze;
Shall see the brown wings of shalick chill in the evening,*

*Its yellow leg under the white gown goes on dancing.
In the grass, darkness – once, twice – and then suddenly.
The forest's oak beckons it to its heart's side,*

*Shall see sad feminine hands – white conch-bangles
Crying like conch-shells in the ash-grey wind,
Go where you will – I shall remain on Bengal's shores.....*

*Poet: Jibanananda Das, Book of Poems: Rupasi Bangla
(1932; First Edition, August 1957) [Poetry book published after the poet's death.]*

Everyone wish to spend a happy life in the motherland, where s/he was born. There may be unending seasons of fall, maybe there is a gap of feel-good memories but the charm of motherland, pleasant breeze of motherland remains in the heart forever, poet Jibanananda said so. But what about the women who has to relocate at the age of no age for marriage! Or what else if her relocation gives her a lifelong journey through social vulnerability and making her prisoner of conscience!

Here is the story of Mrs. X, an eighty-five-year-old lady residing at the Sahid Smriti Colony for last five decades. Mrs. X was migrated to Jadavpur Railway slums from Nalua village of Laxmikantapur, two hundred kilometres away from Kolkata after marriage at the age of seven.

At that point of time, she could not have any articulation of the meaning of marriage, it was only a simple word. Her husband was a fish seller. Soon Mrs. X became a mother at her very early age and immediately after it they had to shift to Kolkata due to economic circumstances. Kolkata was not familiar with them. They do not know anyone in this city of joy. They took rent for tiny concrete portion in Jadavpur Rail Colony. Soon Mrs. X was forced to work as a domestic help as her husband failed to arrange meals for 3 family members. After a few years of struggle, Mrs. X's luck had turned around, she got land from the government without money. Mrs. X gave birth to another 3 children. She raised her 3 sons and 1 daughter. After death of her husband she lived with her elder son but her life became ruined and she was abused by her daughter in law. She was beaten by her and her son did not protest. Our team members reached her after getting the information from a neighbour. We immediately informed the local police and participated in a joint session of counselling with her family stating and informing them about the illegal activities of atrocities on elderly women. Her son agreed to the police officials and declared that there will not be any incidents of violence with Mrs. X ever in near future.

Since then Mrs. X is associated with our Sahid Smriti Colony Dida Centre and she is happy to meet her friends there. She is getting medicine and psychosocial health support and she is recovering slowly. She is supported by regular foods packets and now staying with her son. Last

month it was her birthday and she was crying while cutting the birthday cake for the first time of her life.

A migration from shadow of dreams to the harsh realities of life – Mrs. X is still fighting to collect the warmth of the sunlight happily.

