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ESID/HLM-MIPAA/CR.16  
9 October 2007

ENGLISH ONLY

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

High-level Meeting on the Regional Review of the Madrid International Plan  
of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)

9-11 October 2007  
Macao, China

### Country Report

*Nepal\**

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# Elderly People in Nepal

## What happened after MIPPA, 2002?

*“Matri devo bhawah, pitri devo bhawah and guru devo bhawah”*

By Hon' member Indira Shrestha, National Planning Commission  
Bhola Pd Dahal, ex-chairperson of NEPAN

### 1.0 Introduction

Nepal is one of the world's poorest countries ranking 138 out of 177 in the human development index. Nepal is a naturally beautiful country of 147,181 sq km in the south Asia region having 885 km in east-west direction and with a mean north-south width of 193 km. Nepal is renowned for socio-cultural diversity having more than 101 ethnic groups, 92 language, ten religions and three geographical regions with a population of 23.1 million people living 157 persons per sq km which was just 40 in 1911<sup>1</sup>. The 2001 census showed that 57.5 % of the population belonged to a caste, 2/3 of them living in the hills and 1/3 in the Tarai. Dalits (untouchables) who make up 13.6% of the population are one of the most disadvantaged and backward groups<sup>2</sup>. It has five development regions: Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-western and Far-western with 14 zones, 75 districts, 58 municipalities and 3915 village development committees which are further divided into small political units called wards.

National standard living survey 2003/4 reports that poverty incidence decreased from 42% in 1995/6 to 31% in 2003/4, however rural urban disparity still exist (rural poverty-35% and urban poverty-10%)<sup>3</sup>. A significant increase in remittances, increase in wages, improved connectivity and access to markets, urbanization, and falling birth rates were behind this decline. Household receiving remittances went up to 32% in 2004 from 23% in 1996 (MoF, 2006)

Security budget has 18% in 2006 which was just 5% in 1999<sup>4</sup>. Life expectancy at birth is 61.4 years (female has lower) where as adult literacy rate is 48% (64.5 for male and 33.8% for female. 80% of economically active population live in agriculture where as agriculture has only 39.2% of GDP. 20% of rich people controls over 54.6% of resources where as 20% poor people has just 6% income<sup>5</sup>. Investment and progress so far shows that government is not in a position to achieve the MDG which has also resource gap of 7.6 billion dollars. In our country, age 60 and above are demarcated as elderly population.

Ageing is a natural phenomenon and an inevitable process in life. Every living being born, develops, grows old and dies. Ageing is a process of gradual change in physical appearance and mental situation that cause a person to grow old. We also recognize the problem that arises in the family due to age and generation gap goes up to national level. But, is it justified to discard the old parents who offered their entire life to empower their children? Can we forget the labor-pain of the mother and hard work of the father who worked day-in-and-day-out to bring up their children? For most of us, old people may be troublesome. Nevertheless, we should not forget our duty towards them. Ageing population means an increase in the share of the elderly in the total population. It is closely related with the dynamic process of demographic and socio-economic transformation. Whether a population is young or old, or getting older or getting younger, it depends on the proportion of people at different age groups. In general, a population

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<sup>1</sup> CBS 2001

<sup>2</sup> CBS population monograph, 2004

<sup>3</sup> Nepal standard living survey 2003/4

<sup>4</sup> “Nepal” magazine 2062 magh

<sup>5</sup> UN common country assessment 2008-10

with more than 35 percent under age of 15 years is considered young and population with more than 10 percent aged 65 years and above is considered old. The population of Nepal is considered young as 39 percent of its total population is under 15 years of age and only 4.20 percent are above 65 years of age. However the elderly population in Nepal is growing steadily @ 3.39% per year.

## 2.0 Population of elderly people and their social status

### 2.1 Increment of elderly population

In Nepal, the older population is increasing both in terms of absolute numbers and as a proportion of the total population; however, traditional family norms and values of supporting the elderly are eroding. Individuals over 60 years of age are considered elderly. There were 1.6 million elderly inhabitants which constitutes 7.46% of the total population in 2001 which will be double by 2017<sup>6</sup>. Fertility, mortality and life expectancy are all closely related. Control over unplanned pregnancies and early mortality has led to a greater likelihood that new lives will live longer and thrive. A continuous decrease in the infant mortality rate has led to an increase in the stated life expectancy. Consequently, life expectancy in Nepal has increased from approximately 27 years in 1951 to 60 years in 2001 which means a Nepalese baby born at the turn of 21st century has a life-expectancy of more than 30 years greater than one born 50 years earlier<sup>7</sup>.

Due to urbanization and changes in demographic composition, family and household structures have been changed with an average family size of 4.1 in 2004 which was 5.6 in 1991. Persons of 60+ years are known as elderly people in Nepal, the index of ageing has increased from 11.7% in 1911 to 18.89% by 2001. For the aged 65+ years, the increment is from 6.28% in 1911 to 10.69% by 2001. The rate of increasing older people is rapid from 1971 to 2001<sup>8</sup>. During the period 1991–2001, the annual elderly population growth rate was 3.39%, which was higher than the annual population growth rate of 2.1% with the following share:

| Aged | 1911  | 1941  | 1971  | 2001  |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 60+  | 4.28% | 5.33% | 5.88% | 7.46% |
| 65+  | 2.43% | 3.17% | 3.17% | 4.21% |
| 75+  | 0.45% | 0.65% | 0.87% | 1.3%  |

The majority of the elderly people in Nepal are living in rural areas (85%+) depending upon their agricultural profession and living under the poverty due to lack of access to resources and income generation activities. They suffer from the cumulative effects of a lifetime of deprivation, lack of education, poor health and nutrition, low social status, discrimination and restriction on mobility, entering old age in a poor state of health and without saving or material assets. They lack means to fulfill their basic needs such as food, clothes, shelter, health care, love and safe drinking water. Gender inequality and discrimination against women continue from before birth to death (NEPAN, 2002).

### 2.2 Marital status of the elderly

<sup>6</sup> Aging of the population of Nepal by Prof. Dr. ML, Singh, 2003

<sup>7</sup> Nepal country report, 2002 Ministry of Health and Population

<sup>8</sup> As stated in 6 and 7

The marital status of the elderly is an important indicator of their places of residence, their support systems and, importantly, their individual well-being. The elderly that are still married tend to recover more rapidly from illness, have better mental health, utilize more health promoting services, socialize more and are generally more satisfied with their lives than those elderly without a partner.

In 1961, only 73.17% male and 32.13% females were married, which increased to 88.3% for male and 71.7% for females in 2001<sup>9</sup>. The lower proportion of married elderly women may be due to society's strict prohibition of widow remarriage. This prohibition is in addition to and exacerbated by the male tendency of marrying a younger woman. In Nepalese culture, widower remarriage is accepted. The proportion of never married elderly in Nepal is low, possibly due to the prevalent universal marriage system in that society. Many parents in that society believe they are responsible for the marriage of their offspring. Arranged marriages are common in Nepal.

### **2.3 Living arrangements of the elderly**

Cohabitation is the only guarantee that elderly parents will receive support from their adult children. However, several studies show that cohabitation may not provide sufficient support for all needs. In Nepal, one ethnographic study of elderly Sherpa suggests that more elderly individuals live alone as a consequences of recent changes in society. Younger generations moving far from their birthplace and parents for employment purposes are the principal change. However, there is evidence that older Nepalese individuals are dissatisfied when they live apart from their children. Many elderly Nepalese are lucky enough to continue living with their adult children

Social, economic and demographic developments have all caused changes at the individual, family and societal levels, all of which influence the lives of elderly people. The living arrangements of the elderly in Nepal are contingent on their level of support. In particular, the availability of care from a spouse or child may be essential to the well-being of the very old or frail elderly.

The elderly depend on their children, particularly sons, for support and security in their old age. One recent study by Chaudhary shows that more than 80% of elderly in Nepal are living with their children and more than 60% of the elderly are the heads of the household<sup>10</sup>. Generally, in the male-dominated Nepalese society, the eldest male member of the household is regarded as head of the household. The head of the household has the authority. The study further shows, unlike in the Western world where daughters, married or not, usually care for the elderly, only 2.7% of the elderly in Nepal are living with their daughters<sup>11</sup>. This may be due to cultural taboos that prevent parents from living with married daughters.

### **2.4 Literacy of elderly people**

The literacy rate (those who can read and write) for aged 65+ years is found as 27.0% for males and 4.07 % for females and 47.12% are found economically active with sex differential of 59.7% for males and 34.30% for females<sup>12</sup>. Among 65+ years aged person, 86.46% of males and

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<sup>9</sup> Same as 6

<sup>10</sup> HN Chalise and JD Brighthman, 2006, Japan Geriatrics Society

<sup>11</sup> Same as above 8

<sup>12</sup> As mentioned in 6

68.34% of females are currently married, 10.89% of males and 28.19% of females are widowers /widows; 1.43% of males and 1.22% of females are singles (CBS, 2003).

There is dearth of adequate attention to care and support for elderly people from family, society and the country. There are apprehensions that the society has not played its role as far as the improvement in their situations is concerned. Though in rhetoric elderly people are respected for their knowledge and experience, there is no conducive environment for that on one hand due to health facilities and other reasons, their life expectancy (surviving age) is raising, on the other hand, the care, respect and love they deserve is dwindling. Statistics and studies show that elderly people contribute to the welfare of the family and the society in many tangible ways.

### **3.0 Government plans and policies on ageing issues**

Government should develop a two-prong strategy with the objective of easing the lives of elderly people and making them creative force. Firstly, it should work towards reviving the old values of family cohesiveness and create the environment to keep them in families where they can be comfortably placed. Secondly, there is a need to work out strategy for elderly who find living in family is a painful life due to neglect, discrimination and violence. A home based rehabilitation of these elderly people with local level protection mechanism may be needed.

The Ninth Plan aimed at developing family-based security system to enable elderly lead a creative and dignified life. There has not been much attempt on the part of government to help the elderly people. This section of the population has been overshadowed in all areas of policy-making level. For the last few years the government has initiated a programme of providing people above 75 years with a minimal old age allowance.

There is housing facility for excluded elderly people in Pashupati where 230 people are living at present which was established in 1976. This is the largest shelter for elderly people in the country and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare run this center. Apart from this, smaller shelters have been established in Birganj, Butawal, Devghat, Dhankuta, Rajbiran and Biratnagar. There are about 1,500 old peoples - who are living in the shelter homes - sharing their contented and gloomy moments with each other. Though the elderly people long for the love from their family members, these institutions are putting their best effort to ensure comfort to the old peoples and provide them with love and affection.

#### **3.1 Legal and social protection:**

***The Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2006*** in the right of equality (Art.13), for the senior citizens and others as stated above, there could be arrange separate law specially to protect the rights. It seeks to make equal where it is unequal. It means equal treatment between equal and unequal treatment between unequal. Article 35, section 17, says that the state shall pursue the policy of providing allowances to elder, weak women and unemployed in accordance to the legal provision.

Government of Nepal internalized the ageing issues by incorporating the social security schemes with a monthly allowance to senior citizen in 1994/5. This was a part of the ninth five year plan (1997-2002) and was also considered in the tenth five year plan (2002-2007) with an aim to guarantee capacity development, social security and a life of dignity for senior citizens. ***The three year interim plan (2007-2010)*** starting this year has adopted the following policies on elderly issues:

- Develop legal and institutional mechanism to ensure welfare and rights of senior citizens
- Expand old age homes, allowances and other economic social security programmes with reviewing the programmes and modalities followed by governmental and non-governmental agencies
- Provide special facilities to elderly people in hospitals and public transports
- Formulate policies to respect and utilize the knowledge, skills and experiences of senior citizen in nation development and social transformation
- Inspire and motivate local government, private sectors and civil society organizations to provide appropriate services and facilities to senior citizens

Following the Madrid plan of action, the government has formulated a ***National Plan of Action, 2062 for senior citizens***. It has been divided into different part like economic aspect, social security, health and nutrition, participation and involvement, education and entertainment aspect, legal condition and reform, and miscellaneous. Dividing this for the effective execution of the plan, different actions of the plan have prescribed to be implemented by ministries and authorities. In this connection it also included the NGOs for cooperation.

***Civil Code, 1963*** Sec11 of the chapter of court management has a provision that the litigation of elder people above than 75 years or the people physically retarded should put in third priority in the hearing. Here, the first priority has given to person under custody or the prisoner under trial and the second priority is to unclaimed children below than 16 years.

Sec.10B of the chapter of partition states that if the parents (mother/father) want to live with a particular son or daughter, it has to be clearly stated in the Bandapatra (the legal note on property distribution) and this son or daughter should take care of the parents. If the older parents cannot survive on their income and if the son/daughter with whom they are living have no son/daughter, the other son/daughter with whom they are not living should take care of, feed, and clothe them as per their earnings.

Under the heading of duties, rights and responsibilities of village development committee in the ***Local Self Governance Act, 1998***, there is a provision for the protection and development of orphan children, helpless women, elderly people and disabled. The guidelines of the Ministry of Local Development includes following points as the pre-requisite for being able to obtain old age, helpless and disabled allowance:

- Men/women above the age of 75 years will be eligible for monthly allowance of Rs.200.
- People above 60 years of age who have no income source, who are not taken care by their families, have no personal assets and/or properties or widows who do not get their husband's pension are eligible for monthly allowance of Rs.150.
- Disabled person above 16 years of age, blind on both eyes, either the armless or dysfunctional, either legless/dysfunctional are eligible for monthly allowance of Rs.150.

The Interim Parliament enacted "***Social Security and Protection of Senior Citizen Act, 2006***" which was pending since last six years. This is the first law of Nepal specially promulgated in regard to provide social security to the senior citizens. The Act has divided the senior citizens into 3 categories. Sec. 2 (a) defines the senior citizen as those people who are 60 years and above. It has also defined the term 'helpless senior citizen' that includes the people who have: a) no means of income or assets and any base for subsistence, b) no family member to take care and maintenance, and c) been banished from the family. It also categorizes weak senior citizens as those who are mentally or physically weak.

Sec. 3 of the act has provisions that there would be the duty of all citizens to respects to the senior citizens. If the elders cannot be maintained by their income or if the economic condition of the family members gets down with whom the elder lives, the other member of the family has to take care the elder people. The Act has provided right to sue to the senior citizens in the condition if the duty of maintaining not fulfilled by the member of the family. In such a situation, the elder person may sue upon the family member to the concerned Ward president of the VDC/Municipality.

The ward president is entitled to compromise them and issue also a written order in regard to take care of the senior citizens. When the concerned party dissatisfy from such proceeds, he/she may appeal to the VDC/Municipality. In this context the VDC/Municipality has entitled as the same authority like Ward President either compromise the concern parties or issue a written order in the name of opposite party to take care the senior citizens. If the family members or the concerned party ignored to abide the order, the Ward President as well as VDC/Municipality is entitled to deny of doing any recommendations on behalf of such person when he/she requires doing recommendation from such authority. This is the punishment for ignoring to abide the order.

Sec. 4 provides that there will be the duty of each of the family members to take care and maintain the senior citizen in accordance with their capacity of economic and reputation. Except the condition that elder citizen likes to live separate taking his/her partition, the family member should maintain the elders with whom he/she wants to live. No one should separate or compel to live separately to the senior citizens from the family against his/her will.

Sec. 9 of the Act has provisioned that the government, by publishing a public notice, may reserve at least two seats for senior citizens in the prescribed vehicles and also provides 50% discount in rent. The health centers have to provide health service by giving priority and those health centers, prescribed by the government, have to provide service in 50% discount. The services of drinking water and electricity are to be provided with giving priority to them.

The Act also have provisioned that the litigation in which a senior citizen is a party has to decide with giving priority. In such case, to defend the interest of the elder person the court has to decide the case only in the representation of lawyer on behalf of the elder. If the elder person has no capacity to appoint lawyer, the court itself has to arrange lawyer on behalf of them to defend their interest. With keeping the view of seriousness of crime, the court instead of sending jail to the elders who are weak or above than 75 years old has to send in care centers.

Similarly, the Act has provisioned the there should be established District Senior Citizens Welfare Committee (DSCWC), Senior Citizens Welfare Fund (SCWF), Care Centers and Day Service Centers for the senior citizens and also provisions to provide allowance. The law is regarded a significant in respect to provide social protection the senior citizens. However, there seems the dearth of implementation effectively. To make easier and comfortable to the last stage of human life the scheme of social protection needful. It helps to implement effectively the law and state policies so that root level elders can achieve the benefits timely.

### **3.2 Economic protection (Pensions and other allowances)**

For older adults, a pension means security. Pensions are safe income for the remainder of life after retirement. The Nepalese government provides pensions for government employees. It is provided to civil servants, military personnel, police officers and teachers. The retirement age is currently 58 for civil servants. However, in universities, the age of retirement for teachers and administrators is 63 and for the lower ranks of military and police officers, it is 46–48.

The highest number of pension recipients is former military personnel followed by police officers and civil servants. The elderly use such a pension for daily living, medical supplies and religious work. Only a few older adults (less than 7%) benefit from this pension system. The bulk of the population of Nepal receives no pension and must depend on familial support and personal savings, or they may continue to work.

In 1994/5, the government of Nepal led by UML party introduced a new scheme for people over 75 years of age in five districts with a monthly allowance of NRs.100. The scheme was immediately extended to all 75 districts in the fiscal year 1995/6. The amount was increased to NRs. 150 in 1999 and to NRs. 200 from 2005/6. The program also provides NRs. 150 per month for widows over 60 years of age and disabled individuals over 16 years of age. Small, regular payments to older people has contributed positively to improve their health and social standing, however there is no study to assess the impact and uses of this scheme. Although the amount paid to the elderly over 75 and to widows over 60 is small, it is popular among Nepalese elderly despite the fact that it does not cover the majority of the aged (1.2 million those between 60 and 74 years). In total, more than 323 000 elderly citizens should benefit from this scheme, however only 74% eligible elderly people are benefiting due to lack of valid document<sup>13</sup>.

Nepalese parents are now realizing that smaller families equate to fewer children to depend on in their old age. Moreover, with the rise of modernization, urbanization, the influence of western culture, increased participation of women in outside work and growth of individualism, many young adults migrate far from their parents to bigger cities and greater opportunity. The elderly are thus one of the most neglected groups in Nepalese society. Promotion of elderly peoples association to the plight of older adults in Nepal motivates some of the younger generations to act, promote legislation, support and no longer neglect their elders that have given them so much.

#### **4.0 Government commitments for implementation of MIPPA**

There are many concerns and problems of elderly population. They are concerned for their health, diminished social status and insecurities about their importance among other people, difficulty in adjusting to their retirement and change of daily routine, insecurity brought about by feelings of inadequacy in meeting daily life situations, loss of ability to socialize and be of service to others in order to get self satisfaction and joy and strong desire to be useful to others in any way. The living standard of elderly people of our country needs enhancement.

Ageing is considered a problem in our society. Old people are even considered as burden for family. Ageing is not a problem if the caring of old people is developed as a social tradition. Caring of elderly people is a welfare scheme that provides meaningful support for the elderly people with a view to make their health physically and mentally sound and to continue the emotional aspects of their life. Family members must take proper care of the old people. Elderly people should be encouraged to do any activity like moving around house or garden that provides glee and light exercise. Old people need regular interval of rest throughout the day between varied activities, which prevents tiredness. Old people must be provided nutritious food and their cleanliness should be properly taken care of. There should be safe and adaptable environments for old people.

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<sup>13</sup> A paper shared by Mr. Hem Sharma, Under Secretary, MoLD, Nepal on 17<sup>th</sup> Int' elderly day organized by NEPAN



Old people need to live in dignity and pride with no exploitation, physical and mental torture and fair treatment. There are a few institutions run by the government and non-governmental sectors to take care of elderly people and providing them support and rehabilitation. As there still lacks social welfare system, no one is there to guarantee the security of old people. For the government employees, they receive a certain amount of pension but a large number of old people are without it. Key actions of the government of Nepal on ageing issues after the Madrid commitments are as follows<sup>14</sup>:

- Senior Citizen Act-2063 passed by the interim parliament in 2007 which is yet to be activated by issuing senior citizen rules (which is pending in the Ministry of Law)
- Senior citizen policy-2002 (2058) was issued by the Ministry making all 75 women development offices as focal point on ageing issues
- National plan of action for senior citizen -2062 was developed in 2005 in line with MIPPA. ID card for elderly people is being issued.
- Senior citizen allowances for 75+ years @ NRs 200 per month, Helpless widows allowances above 60 years 2 NRs. 150 per month and disability allowance for 16+ years have been provided through local government. However 26% of eligible people are deprived of this social security schemes due to complicated procedures and evidence.
- Free health services to 25 senior citizens a district up to NRs. 4000 a year in all 75 districts has been provisioned which is negligible in terms of coverage and usage.
- Three year interim plan under formulation following the concept/approach paper approved by the Development Council chaired by the Prime Minister, July 2007.

#### **4.1 Older persons and development**

Elderly people in Nepal are found usually active and productive in their advancing years. They are involved in child care, cattle herding, handicrafts and simple farming activities. Elderly females, in particular mostly share responsibilities in household chores. However their contribution and economic value have not been duly recognized (MoPE, 2002). There is no special representation of elderly people in any institution at local and national levels.

HDI was estimated at 0.461 in 2001 which has significant disparity within and across regions and districts. HDI in urban areas is at 0.581 and rural areas at 0.439<sup>15</sup>. HDI is lowest in mountains (0.382) followed by the Terai (0.457) and the hills (0.492) and human poverty in rural areas is 45.3% where as 25.3% in urban areas<sup>16</sup>. Human empowerment index is estimated at 0.459 with economic empowerment of 0.337, social empowerment of 0.395 and political empowerment of 0.646 (NPC, 2006).

The conflict was the key factor in the increase in urban population from 10% in 1991 to 16% in 2001 due to widespread migration of young people. 15% of working age men and 25% of working age women are to be underemployed (working less than 20 hours a week) and 6% unemployed amongst 16-24 year old. Underemployment and unemployment is growing as each year there are around 300,000 new entrants to the job market.

NPSS 2 found that on average female headed households had only 0.5 hectares of farmland compared to 0.8 hectares for male-headed households. In terms of purchasing power parity women's earned incomes were only half of men's (US\$ 949 versus US\$ 1,868 PPP). More over females in less than 1% of households owned all three major assets: house, land and livestock

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<sup>14</sup> Upendra Adhikari, Under Secretary, MoWCSW presented on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2007 on 17<sup>th</sup> Int'l elderly day, Nepal

<sup>15</sup> An analytical analysis of basic social services, NPC and Unicef, 2006

<sup>16</sup> Same as 9

(UN Country Team Nepal, 2007, p.23). The number of female headed households increased from 9% to 14% and poverty dropped by 43% in female headed households almost double the drop in poverty in male headed households between 1995/6 to 2003/4.

Income security in old age becomes increasingly relevant in policy discussions related to development, poverty reduction and social protection. Aging population in Nepal is a big challenge for government with a variety of challenges in providing for increase proportions of older people. Social mobility, migration and urbanization throughout the region as well as demographic change have put elderly people in difficult situation. Government and financial institutions do not have special programme targeting to reduce poverty of elderly population.

Government of Nepal is yet to accommodate the awareness and training on ageing issue to general public through media and schooling. This has not been a part of socialization for younger children. Disaster management including relief and rehabilitation does not incorporate the needs and interests of elderly people in emergency response. Children and elderly people are the most vulnerable population for any disaster- both natural and manmade; even though there is no any provision for them in disaster relief act 1983. Senior citizen act, 2063 have made provisions of national and district level senior citizen welfare committee of 17 members (4 persons from elderly sector) and 7 members (2 persons from elderly sector) respectively. There are no local level committees where senior citizens are represented.

#### **4.2 Advancing health and well-being into old age**

Older persons, especially elderly women, are disproportionately represented amongst the poor, with important implications on their nutritional status, medical care and physical well-being. Public health care services in Nepal are usually overcrowded, unevenly distributed and overstrained due to shortage of funds for equipment, medicine and personnel, poor maintenance of existing facilities and inadequate space. Nepal has no health insurance coverage, either as a part of government social security programme or private insurance policies.

Poverty affected elderly people are provided free medicine and treatment up to NRs. 4000 at a time in a limited areas in all 75 districts (max budget is NRs. 100,000 a district) through a bureaucratic scrutiny. However these schemes have minimal coverage and government has no resources to provide support and care for elderly people who are in dire needs of assistance from the public sector. Geriatric ward in government hospital is to be set up at the national level to provide treatment for the elderly.

Nepal does not have the universal access to health care services to its citizen including elderly. Psychosocial health has not been recognized as a part of health services. There is only one mental hospital in capital city. There is no special training given to health professionals and service providers throughout the country to provide special care and support to elderly people. Older persons and disability issue is not in public debate and government programmes.

#### **4.3 Ensuring supportive and enabling environment**

The joint and extended family system is still extensive in Nepalese society. Given the social structure of Nepalese society, the elderly have generally been able to rely on the support of their children and extended family to look after them. There is not special social and legal protection of elderly people at home and community. Elderly people are hidden within the family who do not get love and care when they are inactive and immobile.

The government of Nepal runs one old age home for 235 family-ousted and homeless elderly people. There are other five old age homes run by NGOs with government support and 14 other homes run by welfare agencies (MoPE, 2002). A total of 1500 old aged persons have been benefited from such old age homes. More over there are also some day care centers for elderly persons, mostly in some urban areas of Nepal.

Recently senior citizen act protects elderly people from neglect, abuse and violence of the family members. However social protection as a whole under the government system is not provisioned. There are very few organizations of elderly people and most of them are in urban areas. Children and youth are not yet mobilized on ageing issues. School curriculum does not contain this issue as social issues and obligation of state and family members.

#### **4.4 Organizations working on elderly and peoples perception**

In addition to government agencies, there are about 50 day care centers, 20 old age homes and more than 100 elderly clubs run by different 50 organizations who are directly involved in elderly issues<sup>17</sup>. Few of them are Senior Citizen Network, Senior Citizen Service Center, Kabhre, Senior Citizen Honor Academy Jhapa, Vishranti Mandir, Dhankuta, Senior Citizen Care Society, Morang, Dev-ghat Samaj Kalyan Kendra, Devghat, Nepal Bhasa Women's Association, Senior Citizen's Welfare Association, Dillibazar, Pokhara Aged Shelter, Child and Women Development Center, Shankhamul, Buddhish Home for the Aged, Bheri Aged home, Senior Citizen's Society Nepal, Sankalpa Nepal etc. There are other 105 organizations who also targeting elderly people as their target groups. Individuals/family initiatives for distribution of cloths and fruits and bhojan to senior citizens in the elderly homes on special occasions are a common charity approach in Nepal.

UNFPA, UNIFEM, British Embassy, Help Age International are some of the international agencies supporting ageing movement in Nepal. NEPAN being the first organization working on elderly issue in Nepal has carried out the following so far<sup>18</sup>:

- First Participatory Action Research on Ageing in Nepal -2000 which captures the situation of elderly people in 15 districts. The report of the research was disseminated in four development regions in 2001 (*Elderly Voice-English/Budheuli Awaj-Nepali*)
- National preparation workshop for the second world assembly on Ageing- 2002. Publication of a book "Towards secure ageing: proceedings of the national preparation for the second world assembly on ageing, 2002 as a product of Pre & Post Madrid
- NGO need assessment of 42 NGOs-2002 followed by a ageing sensitization training for master trainers-2002 in collaboration with ageing resource centre, Bangladesh, Dhaka.
- Senior Citizen Special Issue of Sahabhagita Magazine-2002, No-21 and broadcasting Radio Programs on Radio Sagarmatha, a well known for policy debate and opinion building FM station.
- Celebration of International Days of senior citizen on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct since 1999 in collaboration with government of Nepal
- Involved in drafting senior citizen act and involving as a core member of the senior citizen rules drafting committee under the MoWCSW
- National workshop on ageing issues in 2006 for creating elderly friendly society in new Nepal and in 2007 for raising voices of elderly people with seven political parties

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<sup>17</sup> A paper shared by Bhola Pd Dahal in the 17<sup>th</sup> Int' day on elderly people, 30 Sept 2007, NEPAN

<sup>18</sup> A paper shared by Aswin Pudasaine in the national workshop on ageing, 14-15 Oct, 2006, NEPAN

including Maoist in cooperation with Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and Senior Citizen Network.

- Piloting a health and income generation project with elderly people in Gothatar VDC of Kathmandu and Bhanu and Satiswanra VDCs of Tanahu districts in partnership with HAI and Japan foundation since February 2007.

NEPAN aims to develop a national federation of elderly organizations within coming five years so that plans and programmes targeting to elderly people are properly monitored and managed by elderly peoples association in each district. NEPAN has contributed as follows to enhance the participatory process in the development field where people are empowered as owner or subject of the development intervention:

1. Improved capacity of stakeholders at local, district and national levels to institutionalise the participatory processes for the benefits of poor, disadvantaged/marginalized groups,
2. Improved capacity of many local and financially challenged NGOs/CBOs in participatory development process to address poor the issues and concerns of socially excluded disadvantaged and marginalized communities,
3. Conducted several empirical studies on different development themes at national level. Some of the recent studies are:
  - a. Participatory poverty assessment;
  - b. Participatory research on situation of elderly in Nepal; and
  - c. Documentation of best practices on participatory development processes.
  - d. A participatory governance assessment on “governance and citizenship from below: views of poor and excluded groups and their vision for a new Nepal” carried out cooperation with NPC and ODI
4. Involved in the process of establishing and strengthening networks at district, regional, national, and International levels on thematic issues such as institutionalisation of participatory process, social inclusion, ageing and peace and development, etc.
5. Organized several national level interactions, sharing, forums to disseminate and advocate the experiences, learning, good practices and research findings and lobbying participation issues for policy influence.
6. Produced magazines, manuals, books, proceedings etc on participatory approaches and its results/changes realized in the communities

#### **4.5 Findings of the participatory governance assessment**

The participatory governance assessment report (NPC, NEPAN & ODI, 2007) commissioned by DfID states that poor and excluded peoples’ priorities are: *i) livelihood security, ii) free and accessible services, iii) connectivity, iv) greater equality, respect and dignity. People are interacting with the state with concepts and practices of grassroots citizenship, blockages and improvements people would value. People’s visions for the New Nepal are: a) sustainable peace, b) limited knowledge but enthusiasm to participate and c) what people are not demanding. It was found the state should be pro-poor by:*

- Addressing deeply entrenched social hierarchies (caste, ethnicity, gender, class, and age) is an important priority for poor and excluded groups, as social exclusion is an important impediment to poverty alleviation and political representation.
- Community user groups constitute one avenue to increase the representation of poor and excluded groups’ voices in local policy processes, but there are also important limitations (especially representation in decision-making roles) and the danger of elite capture that need to be creatively addressed.
- Important impediments in poor and excluded groups accessing services include both demand and supply side factors. On the supply side, they are expected to pay for services that are supposed to be “free”, find limited presence of qualified service

providers in rural villages, and delayed service. Language presents another barrier for the illiterate and for those whose mother tongue is not Nepali. On the demand side, community disunity and a failure to understand that the new language of citizen's rights also entails citizen responsibilities are important obstacles to collective action approaches to poverty reduction.

- Age specific concerns merit greater policy attention. On the one hand, there is a serious lack of employment opportunities, especially for youth in rural Nepal, thus accounting for high rates of international labour migration, including among the poorest communities. On the other hand, in poor and excluded communities, the elderly are often especially vulnerable, and thus value access to senior citizen and widow pensions.
- Regional inequalities and geographical isolation heighten poor and excluded groups' experiences of poverty, and were intensified during the conflict as less developed areas became more insecure. This is especially the case in the Far West, mountainous regions, and rural or urban communities suggesting that geography constitutes a critical part of many people's experience of poverty.

### **Elderly vulnerability (NPC, NEPAN & ODI, 2007, p.31)**

*The vulnerability of elderly people emerged as a concern both among the elderly themselves and among the younger generation. In communities where livelihood concerns were paramount and precarious (especially among Dalits), elderly people perceived their inability to contribute to productive work activities as burdensome on the family. Indeed, in one focus group discussion involving a number of elderly men in the Kapilbatsu Chamar community, a community home for the elderly was proposed as a priority development issue in order to reduce their dependence on their sons and daughters and to receive more regular care. Other elderly people complained of their isolation as their relatives increasingly migrated abroad for work, and even sons who participated in the focus group discussions but migrate seasonally expressed their concern that they are unable to care for their parents in the way they feel they should.*

*In this vein the importance of the senior citizen and widow pensions was articulated in a number of focus group discussions. Those who were receiving a pension emphasised their importance in reducing their dependency but also argued that the amount should be increased as it was insufficient to be self-sufficient. There were also a significant number of complaints from elderly and children with elderly parents that they were not receiving a pension even though they believed they were eligible. Key problems identified were: elite capture, insufficient funding at the local level, and problems with age certification etc.*

- *In Jumla women who met the criteria for widow or senior citizen pensions had been told that only a certain number of pensions could be funded and that would have to wait for a year or more.*
- *In Kapilbatsu elderly men complained about the citizenship card process whereby officials had not taken the time to assist illiterate applicants to calculate their correct birth date and had apparently assigned them arbitrary ages. Accordingly elderly people who meet the age criteria of 75 years are sometimes officially recorded as being a decade or more younger and thus have little hope of receiving state support.*
- *In Aacham daughters-in-law pointed out that although at least 10 women in their village should be eligible for a widow's pension no one had ever received one, nor had the elderly been given their senior citizen pension. VDC officials had collected people's names but had never delivered.*

## **5.0 Conclusions and suggestions:**

Poverty, inequality and exclusion are the key factors of deprivation in Nepal including elderly people. The production of conflict, migration and unemployment has left elderly people alone at home in most rural part of Nepal. Population growth rate is 2.3% where as economic growth rate is 2.1%. Gender inequality leading to economic and social exclusion of women has

continued. The economic and social exclusion of disadvantaged ethnic and caste groups has fueled for ethnic conflict. Costly and inefficient service delivery mechanism has symbolized the misuse of limited public resources. Disproportionate resource allocation to the capital city and its surrounding areas in comparison to remote and rural areas expands the gaps between urban and rural and rich and poor due to unequal services and opportunities. Government services for elderly people are still guided by welfare approach and are not simplified with public knowledge to poor and marginalized rural communities. The conclusions of the national aging workshop 2007 were summarized as follows as directives for future<sup>19</sup>:

- Incorporate elderly issues in research and studies (data collection and analysis) (Demographic health survey, NLSS and other studies do not include elderly people, it is just up to 59 years)
- Increase access of elderly people to information about their rights at home and in the society including their rights to government service provisions
- Increase access of elderly persons to basic rights and facilities (food, shelter, clothes, education and health) at home and in the society
- Improve quality of services with simple procedures for elderly people with an effective implementation of government plan and policies which is to be monitored by elderly peoples association
- Develop mechanism for collaboration, linkages/referral services among agencies to be coordinated by women development office in all 75 districts and by MoWCSW at national level
- Pilot aging education in schools to minimize generational gaps- mainstream aging issues as children and youth could play instrumental roles to respect elderly people as grandparents and think-tank of the society
- Ensure inclusion and representation of elderly people in policy dialogue and in resource allocation from local to national levels and in institutions
- Advocate with government for resource allocation with a priority and educate donors on aging issues

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<sup>19</sup> Summary note circulated by Bhola Pd Dahal on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2007 as conclusion of the workshop

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