

Promoting Healthy Ageing

With the transitions in epidemiology, demography and socio-economic conditions, age distribution is changing and increasing number of ageing population is one of the emerging issues in the developing countries including Myanmar. Ageing population with complex health care needs is a true challenge for health care delivery. Rapid urbanization with life style changes, unfriendly environment, and changing family structure is also affecting the older people, their families and the country.

To overcome the effect of growing elderly population on health aspect, elderly health care project was initiated as one of the primary health care programme since 1992-93 in six townships. It was expanded six townships yearly and now, implemented in 74 project townships. The elderly people were taken care at health centres and hospitals on every Wednesday. Based on the concept of active ageing, the project mainly focused on preventive and promotive aspect.

Doctors and Nurses from the Township hospitals as well as Basic Health Staff were trained for basic elderly health care and case management of elderly patients. They were trained to be able to detect minor as well as some major illnesses of the elderly. They are encouraged to take care of minor illnesses and to refer the serious and complicated cases to the nearest Township Hospital. They are also trained to understand the underlying causes of the illnesses and influencing factors for the physical, mental and social health problems that the aged are facing.

As health education/ counseling is an essential component of the elderly health care, it is also included in the training with special emphasis on communication skills for educating and counseling the elderly people as well as their care givers. Since the activity of daily living that is important not only for the elderly people but also for the care givers, the BHS were also trained on physical activities to be able to demonstrate the daily physical exercises for the elderly people. Conducting the base line survey is required for the identification of the common health problems among the elderly in the community and for the future planning, they were also trained for that activity.

International Day for Elderly people is usually held all over the country on the 1st of October and on that day, the elderly people are given gifts and medical care including eye care and oral care by health personnel assisted by the local NGOs and voluntary health workers. In Myanmar culture, the people usually give respect to older people and donate cash or kinds to elderly clinic in some townships. Local NGOs participate in elder health care activities like helping elderly



people to attend the clinic, health education, counseling and commemoration of international day for elderly people, etc. So, local NGOs and volunteers (Community Health Workers and Auxiliary Midwives) were also trained to be aware and understand the issue of elderly health problems and the important of their participation in elderly health care. Collaboration and coordination with related departments like Social Welfare Department and the Sport and Physical Department are also contributing to the success of activities.