

## Promoting Healthy Ageing

Progress towards the goal of “Health for All” implies increasing survival due to the reduction of crude birth rate and crude death rate, increasing life expectancy and improving quality of health care. This will cause gradual increase in elderly population, which will later impose one of the emerging issues of the third world. The developing countries are experiencing the effect of rapid urbanization and industrialization, interacting with the changing economy, social and cultural values. Explicit problems that are emerging in relation to aged population fall under the category of social, health and economic dependence of the aged on their families, community and government.

To overcome the health effect of growing elderly population, elderly health care project was initiated as one of the primary health care programme since 1992-93. It was expanded by four to six townships yearly and now, implemented in 82 project townships. In these townships, older people are taken care at health centres and hospitals on every Wednesday. Based on the concept of active ageing, the project mainly focuses on preventive and promotive aspect.

Doctors and Nurses from the Township hospitals as well as Basic Health Staff are trained for basic elderly health care and case management of elderly patients. They are trained to be able to detect minor as well as some major illnesses of the elderly. They are also trained to understand the underlying causes of the illnesses so they can identify determinants of healthy aging like psychological, physical, social, environmental and economic.

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. Taking regular physical exercise is very beneficial for daily living activity of older people, so that BHS are also trained on suitable physical exercise such as stretching exercise to be able to demonstrate older people. To explore the current situation of socioeconomic status, health status and environmental status of older people in expanded project townships, base line data collection is usually done before implementation of elderly health care services.



Furthermore, yearly refresher trainings are conducted at central level as well as township level. To assess the achievement of elderly health care program, annual evaluation is held at central level usually in October.

It is obvious that care of the elderly should be the joint responsibility shared by the family, the community and the state. Awareness raising on issue of older people among stakeholders is crucial. For this reason, advocacy meetings were held at 4 states/ divisions in 2009.

International Day for Elderly people is usually held all over the country on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October and on that day, the elderly people are given gifts and medical care including eye care and oral care assisted by the local NGOs and voluntary health workers. Collaboration and coordination with related departments like Social Welfare Department and the Sport and Physical Education Department are also contributing to the success of activities on healthy aging.