



National Community Engagement  
Academic Network  
सहयोग सहभाग



# Ageless Bonds

*Harnessing the Wisdom of Elders  
for Fostering Community Engagement*

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National Community Engagement Academic Network

Nurturing the Wellness of Society by Caring for the Aged



*As our population ages, the demand for specialized care and support systems grows louder than ever. Enter the world of gerontological and geriatric social work—two vital branches of social work that focus on improving the lives of older adults. Though often used interchangeably, these fields have unique approaches, each contributing to a more compassionate and age-friendly society.*

**Gerontological Social Work is Beyond Health and Illness:** Rooted in the interdisciplinary field of **gerontology**, the study of aging across biological, psychological, and social domains. It champions **holistic well-being**—supporting elders in maintaining independence, engaging in meaningful activities, accessing resources, and preserving dignity. Gerontological social workers operate in **diverse spaces**—from community centers and policy organizations to retirement communities and advocacy

groups. They **bridge gaps** in services, empower older adults, and educate families about aging-related changes, financial planning, and legal rights. An essential aspect of gerontological practice is **community rootedness**. These social workers advocate for **inclusive, age-friendly environments**. In culturally diverse countries like Bharat, where elders are revered but sometimes marginalized, this work is crucial. It ensures that traditions and support systems evolve alongside modern challenges.

**Geriatric Social Work** is more **clinically oriented**, focusing on older adults who face chronic illness, disability, or cognitive decline. These professionals often work alongside doctors, nurses, and therapists in **hospitals, rehabilitation centers, or hospices**.

**Complex Case Management:** Geriatric social workers specialize in **case management**, crisis intervention, and coordinating healthcare plans. They guide patients and families through **medical decisions, palliative care**, and transitions to assisted living or home care. Their role is critical in **navigating complex systems** and advocating for patient rights.

**Emotional and Family Support**  
Beyond logistics, they also address the **emotional toll of aging**—counseling older adults experiencing grief, depression, or anxiety, and supporting caregivers who often feel overwhelmed with **Empathy**.

### Ageing Population Boom

*With a sharp rise in life expectancy, India is expected to have **over 300 million people above 60 by 2050**. The demand for skilled professionals in elder care is increasing dramatically. Both gerontological and geriatric social work are not just relevant—they are **essential**.*



# World Social Work Day: Strengthening Intergenerational Solidarity for Enduring Wellbeing

Today's Youth for Yesteryear's Youth

## WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY

Youth Engagement for Strengthening Intergenerational Solidarity for Enduring Wellbeing

### Competition

**Caselets**  
by  
**Student Social Workers**  
on  
**Working with Elderly**

### Key Ideas

- Promote Intergenerational Bonding
- Highlight Role of Youth
- Best Practices and Innovative Strategies
- Create Awareness

### In India

- 10% population is elderly
- 71% elderly live in Rural Areas
- 76% elderly lack pensions
- 65% elderly need healthcare
- 20% elderly live alone or with spouse

### Important Issues

1. Chronic Health Conditions
2. Loneliness
3. Financial Instability
4. Housing Issues
5. Mobility Issues



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## Celebrating World Social Work Day 2025: NCEAN's Caselet Writing Competition: Intergenerational Solidarity.

March 18, 2025, marked the global celebration of **World Social Work Day**, an annual tribute to the transformative role of social workers in creating inclusive, compassionate, and just societies. This year's theme—**"Strengthening Intergenerational Solidarity for Enduring Wellbeing"**—resonates deeply in an age marked by generational divides and digital disconnect. It calls for building bridges between the young and old, between wisdom and innovation, between tradition and transformation.

In celebration of this timely theme, the **National Community Engagement Academic Network (NCEAN)** launched a **Caselet Writing Competition** to spotlight real-life stories of intergenerational care, understanding, and mutual empowerment. Students, interns, volunteers, and

studies, caselets are short, vivid, field-based narratives that capture the emotional, ethical, and practical dimensions of social work. Through this competition, NCEAN encouraged contributors to write about their experiences working with elderly citizens, caregivers, youth groups, and multigenerational families.

These are the heart of gerontological and community social work, but also highlight the **creative, reciprocal relationships** that can flourish when empathy and curiosity

replace indifference. This would be creating a Culture of Listening and Learning. The Caselet Competition had several objectives:

• To **nurture a storytelling culture** among social work students, where writing becomes a tool for reflection and advocacy.

• To **document hidden wisdom** from communities, especially from elders whose lived experiences often remain undocumented.

• To **inspire cross-generational dialogue** on issues such as health, education,

field practitioners were invited to document their experiences and reflections from the ground—stories that reveal how connections across age groups are not just sentimental but essential to sustainable community development.

- To **nurture a storytelling culture** among social work students, where writing becomes a tool for reflection and advocacy.
- To **document hidden wisdom** from communities, especially from elders whose lived experiences often remain undocumented.
- To **inspire cross-generational dialogue** on issues such as health, education,

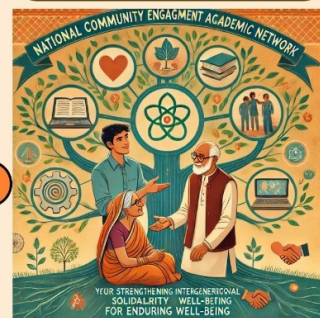
## Win in Prizes and Commendation Awards

5 First Prizes of Rs 2000 each  
5 Second Prizes of Rs 1000 each  
5 Third Prizes of Rs 1000 each



Write in 1500-2000 Words with

- Life story
- Challenges
- Responses
- Institutional Support



### Deadlines and Participation

- Submit caselet before 25th March
  - Include 2 candid photos
  - English or Hindi or Telugu
- Mail it to
- [convenorncean@gmail.com](mailto:convenorncean@gmail.com)
- Whatsapp: 9100703831

**National Community Engagement Academic Network**





A foundation established in her name continues this work, anchoring values of social responsibility, grassroots leadership, and aging with dignity. It has since been integrated into local educational institutions as a case study in community service and elder advocacy.

## Classroom Reflection Prompts

- How can social workers facilitate similar community-driven elder care initiatives?
- What policy linkages (e.g., with the National Social Assistance Programme or State Elder Care policies) could support women like Poshamma?
- Should informal care networks be formalized or funded? What are the risks and benefits?
- How can educational institutions include elderly wisdom and leadership in curriculum-based community engagement?

## Social Work Themes for Discussion

1. **Active Aging:** How does Poshamma's life embody principles of active, productive aging?
2. **Gender and Widowhood:** Examine the compounded social vulnerabilities faced by widowed elderly women in rural settings.
3. **Community Care Models:** What lessons can be drawn for community-based elder care and volunteer networks?
4. **Lifecourse Perspective:** How do early life experiences shape resilience and purpose in older age?
5. **Intergenerational Learning:** In what ways can youth learn civic engagement and empathy from elders like Poshamma?

**Case Overview:** **Client Name:** Poshamma, **Age:** 78, **Occupation:** Former Homemaker & Dairy Worker, **Living Situation:** Independent; community-supported, **Location:** Semi-urban village in South India, **Referral Source:** Community-based elderly welfare volunteer network **Presenting Situation:** Inquiry regarding community-based elderly care initiatives; subject of intergenerational study on aging and community engagement

### Case Background

Poshamma, a 78-year-old widow, is a respected elder in her community, known for her resilience, altruism, and grassroots social impact. Born into a resource-constrained family in a rural village, her early life was marked by limited access to formal education and socioeconomic opportunity. Despite systemic barriers, she imbibed values of perseverance and mutual support from her parents.

Her adult life was dedicated to homemaking and raising four children alongside her husband. Following his premature death, Poshamma assumed full caregiving and financial responsibility for her family. She secured employment at a local dairy farm, often integrating her caregiving duties with her work environment—a pattern observed in many informal women workers.

With minimal institutional or familial support, she developed informal care networks, occasionally relying on neighbors

for childcare. Her lived experiences reflect intersections of gendered caregiving, elder widowhood, rural precarity, and informal labor. Her case illustrates the multidimensional vulnerabilities of aging women in post-caregiving phases of life, especially in contexts lacking formal social security mechanisms.

### Turning Point

An incident during her later working years became transformative. While returning home, Poshamma encountered a destitute elderly individual in visible distress. She offered her own meal to the stranger—an act that marked the beginning of her community advocacy. This instance catalyzed a shift from individual survival to collective service.

Driven by empathy and moral agency, she mobilized local volunteers—young adults, homemakers, and retired community members—to create a neighborhood support network. Their activities included meal distribution, basic healthcare referral, and companionship visits to isolated elders.

### Community Impact & Legacy

Over time, this informal network evolved into a structured volunteer initiative, now recognized as a model of elder-led community development. It operates with intergenerational participation, offering avenues for youth volunteering, especially students engaged in social work, gerontology, and community health programs.

# Gerontological Social Work Caselet: The Life and Legacy of Leela

- Susan

**Client Profile:** **Name:** Leela, **Age at Death:** Unknown (approx. 70s), **Demographics:** Rural, widowed female; low-income agricultural family, **Location:** Originally from Mancheri, Adilabad district, Telangana, **Languages:** Telugu, basic English (exposure via missionary school), **Primary Occupation (s):** Agricultural laborer, domestic worker, midwife **Family:** Two children (one deceased in childhood); one surviving son (Ramesh), **Referral Source:** Retrospective case study by family member for gerontological learning

## Case Background

Leela was born during pre-independence India in the agrarian community of Mancheri, located in the Adilabad district of present-day Telangana. The youngest of three siblings in a farming family, she shared daily responsibilities with her parents and elder siblings—engaging in brick-making, rice field labor, and animal care. Her childhood home was a modest mud-brick house with a thatched roof and no formal sanitation. Despite poverty, she attended a night school and completed third grade, which was uncommon for girls of her time. Her early schooling fostered a love for learning and planted seeds of resilience and independence.

At the age of ten, following early puberty, she was engaged to her close family friend, Eliah, and married soon after. They had two children—her son Ramesh and a daughter. However, tragedy struck early: she became a widow while still a young mother. Following her husband's accidental death, Leela faced the dual burden of widowhood and single motherhood without systemic support or formal safety nets.

## Turning Points in Caregiving and Resilience

Leela navigated multiple caregiving roles—mother, widow, laborer, midwife—without formal recognition. She engaged in diverse forms of labor: agricultural fieldwork, irrigation support, cattle and poultry rearing, and cleaning. Her economic activities were low-paying

and physically demanding but ensured her children's survival and access to education.

She later acquired informal midwifery training from a hospital in Dudgeon, Nizamabad. These skills enabled her to support other women in childbirth, further solidifying her role as a caregiver beyond the family. Despite enduring the death of her young daughter due to jaundice, she maintained an unwavering faith in God and a commitment to community care.



Her spiritual convictions and participation in local community life became a strong psychosocial support system. She modeled spiritual resilience and religious coping mechanisms—central tenets in gerontological social work for elders in faith-centered communities.

## Intergenerational Influence

Leela played a pivotal role in shaping her son Ramesh's future. Through domestic help jobs, relentless encouragement, and personal sacrifice, she ensured he received formal education. Ramesh attended Luxettipet High School and later pursued pharmacy at Medical College, Hyderabad. As he began working in government medical services, she continued to migrate periodically across towns—Hyderabad, Ramagundam, Chennai—staying close to him and supporting his growing family.

Even while aging, she used her midwifery experience to assist in childbirth for several community women. In effect, she became a grandmother not only to her biological grandchildren but to many families she served.

She passed away on 22 June 1996 at the Fertilizers Corporation of India (FCI) campus in Ramagundam, where her son and daughter-in-law (both medical professionals) were employed.

## Social Work Themes for Analysis

### Feminization of Aging and Labor

- How did gender norms affect Leela's opportunities and burdens across the life course?

### Widowhood and Social Exclusion

- Discuss the vulnerabilities and survival strategies of widowed women in rural postcolonial India.

### Faith as a Coping Mechanism

- What role did religious belief and community institutions (Temples, schools/hospitals) play in her resilience?

### Intergenerational Solidarity and Elder Contributions

- How can social workers recognize and honor the invisible labor of elders in family upliftment and community caregiving?

### Informal Caregiving and Health Education

- How might informal midwifery and elder caregiving be documented, validated, or integrated into community health networks?

## Classroom Discussion Questions

1. In what ways does Leela's life reflect the concept of productive aging?
2. How do informal education and spiritual strength shape elder women's leadership in families and communities?
3. How can gerontological social workers advocate for financial and emotional support systems for aging caregivers in rural areas?
4. What lessons can we draw from her story for designing elder-inclusive development programs in semi-urban India?
5. If you were a social worker designing an intergenerational program based on Leela's legacy, what would it include?



*"Let your mother be a god to you. Let your father be a god to you ..."*

—Taittiriya Upanishad 1.II.2

Motivated by memories of her grandparents and the profound impact of their loss, Prabha decided to work with the elderly. This led her to Aasra Old Age Home, where she formed a group of eight elderly women residents, carrying their unique life stories and wisdom.

### Formation of the Group

The group was named after one of the members, Sundari. Among the group, one elderly woman introduced herself as "Bhoomi Amma," which piqued Prabha's curiosity. Despite several attempts, she couldn't uncover the woman's real name, and even her roommates were unaware. Eventually, as Prabha became more engaged with group activities, her curiosity diminished.

Establishing a rapport took time. The first three visits focused on ice-breakers and games. As the group sessions deepened, Prabha found it increasingly challenging to manage group dynamics. Some women were reserved, some preferred solitude, and others refrained from participating in discussions. Bhoomi Amma displayed similar traits—she never voiced any complaints and consistently replied with, "All is good, and I am okay."

Though not very participative verbally, Bhoomi Amma never missed a session. She silently observed the proceedings. Prabha realized that consistency, rather than grand gestures, would foster trust. She remained conscious of not making

the elderly feel like research subjects. With each visit and personal interaction, the bond strengthened.

### Intergenerational Group Engagement

To engage the elderly meaningfully, Prabha designed four core activities:

#### 1. Planting the Tulsi Vrindavana

All group members took part in painting the traditional Tulsi planter. The finished piece placed in front of the temple brought immense joy to the residents and became a source of spiritual pride.

#### 2. "Advice for the Youth" Video Project

Prabha invited the elderly to share advice for the younger generation, recording a heartfelt video. Some declined, feeling their insights might not resonate with the youth, while others were enthusiastically, voluntarily and pressure-free.

#### Diwali Celebration

For Diwali, the courtyard was cleaned with cow dung, rangolis were drawn, and Swastika symbols painted on the doors. Prabha spent the day with the residents, engaging in animated conversations and listening to their nostalgic stories of past celebrations.

#### 4. "Harvesting of Wisdom" Booklet

The final activity involved compiling a booklet featuring the residents' poems, life lessons, proverbs, and home remedies. Titled "Harvesting of Wisdom," it served as a legacy of their lived knowledge.

Of all the activities, painting the Tulsi Vrindavana proved most transformative. It became a catalyst for building trust and emotional closeness.

### The Story Behind Bhoomi Amma

On the last day of group work, Prabha once again asked the woman known as Bhoomi Amma about her real name. This time, she smiled and revealed her name was Devanathi. She shared her tragic backstory—a widow who lost her son in a road accident at the age of 21. Though her married daughter had invited her to live with her, Devanathi chose the old age home, not wanting to impose.

She expressed that losing her son felt like losing everything, including her hometown. She longed to die where she had lived most of her life. The name "Bhoomi Amma," she explained, was

adopted to reflect her sorrow. She often referred to herself as "Dukhi," meaning sad.

In the later stages of the program, Devanathi formed a special bond with Prabha, affectionately calling her "Nooni," meaning little child. Her words, often filled with concern—"Did you eat?," "Spoke to your parents?," "When will you come again?"—left a lasting impression.

### Beyond the Internship

Even after the formal group work ended, Prabha continued her visits to Aasra. These visits shifted from academic to emotional in nature. The residents greeted her warmly and asked, "When will you come back again?"—a simple yet profound expression of longing and connection.

During Holi, Devanathi called to wish her and asked the same question. The gesture of love and attachment deeply moved Prabha.

### Reflections and Learnings in Gerontological Social Work

*A visit may be a brief event for the youth, it holds great significance for the elderly.*

Echoing the Chinese proverb, "If a family has an old person in it, it possesses a jewel," Prabha concluded that the experience had not only informed her academic journey but also enriched her personally. She affirmed that young individuals from all fields can contribute to the well-being of the elderly through empathy, time, and companionship.

#### Insights of the Social Worker

- Quality Time:** Being present and making them feel valued.
- Active Listening:** Empathetically hearing their stories.
- Collaborative Projects:** Designing meaningful activities that foster self-worth.
- Virtual Connections:** Helping them stay in touch with loved ones.
- Celebrating Festivals:** Bringing joy through shared cultural experiences.
- Tech Literacy:** Introducing them to basic digital tools.
- Respectful Research Practices:** Ensuring comfort and dignity during visits.

Joel, a young man from Kerala, had always aspired to move to the United Kingdom. His sister and her family had already settled there, and this deeply influenced his dreams since he was fifteen. After completing his Plus Two, Joel focused on preparing for the IELTS exam, successfully clearing it and initiating his visa process. While waiting for his visa approval, Joel decided not to idle away his time.

Instead, he volunteered at the geriatric unit of Pushpagiri Medical College. His role involved assisting elderly patients, engaging them in conversations, and offering companionship—especially to those with little or no family support. This experience would go on to shape his worldview in ways he hadn't anticipated.

## Meeting Mr. Ravindran Nair

During his volunteer work, Joel met Mr. Ravindran Nair, a man in his seventies with a keen intellect and a zest for storytelling. Joel found Mr. Nair engaging, articulate, and full of life. Each day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., they would talk about Nair's childhood, professional experiences, and the values he held dear. However, as Joel's shift ended each day, he noticed a stark transformation. Mr. Nair, once vibrant and animated, became subdued and melancholic.

The absence of his children, who lived abroad and visited only once a year, visibly affected him. Beneath the cheerful facade lay deep loneliness and emotional pain.

This contrast between Mr. Nair's daytime exuberance and evening solitude left a strong impression on Joel. It was his first direct encounter with the silent suffering of the elderly—those who appeared well-adjusted but were emotionally struggling due to familial neglect and lack of engagement.

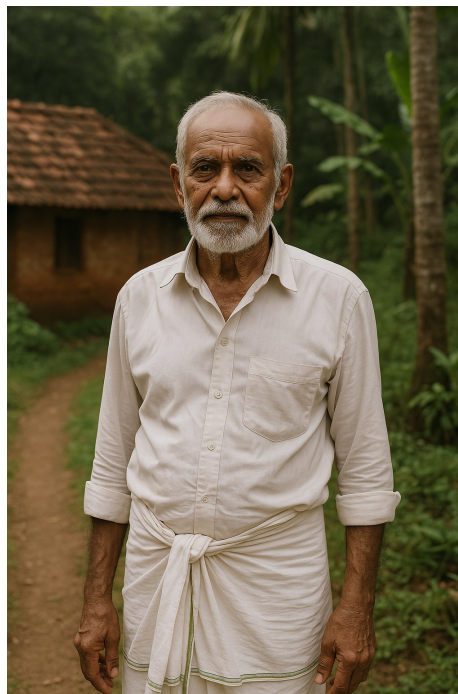
## A Shift in Perspective

Joel's time at Pushpagiri made him reflect deeply on life, relationships, and responsibilities. Though his ambition to move abroad remained, he carried forward a new understanding—that no matter where he lived, he would strive to ensure the elderly around him never felt abandoned.

His experience underscored that while dreams and aspirations are important, so are empathy and presence. He realised that many elderly people, like Mr. Nair, were not looking for grand solutions—just a bit of time, a listening ear, and genuine human connection.

Challenges Faced by Mr. Ravindran Nair

1. **Emotional Distress:** Due to the absence of his children and family.
2. **Loneliness:** Despite being in a populated environment, he lacked emotional companionship.
3. **Health Issues:** Age-related health concerns that required regular care.
4. **Lack of Social Engagement:** Limited opportunities to connect meaningfully.
5. **Family Disconnect:** Minimal contact with children living abroad.



## Responses to the Challenges

To address these challenges and support elderly individuals like Mr. Nair, the following interventions can be considered:

1. **Volunteering Initiatives:** Encourage youth to engage in elderly support through colleges, NGOs, and civic groups.
2. **Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct street plays, workshops, and sessions in schools and public spaces to promote the importance of intergenerational connections.

3. **Counselling and Psychosocial Support:** Reinforce the role of mental health professionals and support groups in old age homes and medical facilities.

4. **Elderly Welfare Services:** Ensure access to pension schemes, health and life insurance, legal aid, and elderly-friendly policies.

5. **Digital Literacy Programmes:** Train the elderly in basic technology to maintain virtual connections with distant family.

6. **Festival Celebrations and Cultural Events:** Organise community events that allow the elderly to relive cultural traditions and feel part of a community.

## Discussion Points

1. How can we sensitise youth to the emotional and social needs of the elderly?
2. What roles can educational institutions play in promoting gerontological social work?
3. What strategies can families adopt to maintain relationships with elderly members living apart?
4. How can public policy strengthen the support systems for the elderly population?
5. How can we measure the impact of youth-led volunteering on elderly well-being?

## Conclusion

Joel's brief yet meaningful interaction with Mr. Ravindran Nair revealed that companionship, not charity, was the most valuable gift one could offer the elderly. His volunteer work transformed his personal ambition into a socially conscious journey—making him not only a future migrant but also a future caregiver, wherever he may go.

Ravindran Nair's story serves as a poignant reminder for all of us to pause and consider the value of presence, empathy, and meaningful engagement with the elderly in our communities.

# Skill Building in Gerontological Group Work in Social Work

Gerontological group work in social work refers to structured interventions involving older adults within group settings. The aim is to enhance their psychosocial well-being, reduce isolation, and promote active ageing. Demographic Imperatives

India's demographic shift toward an ageing society necessitates urgent investment in gerontological care. The traditional joint family system is weakening, and nuclear families are often unable to provide emotional or physical support to the elderly. This transition has made community-based group work essential to counter loneliness, age-related depression, and marginalisation. Skillful facilitation of such groups can significantly enhance the quality of life for senior citizens, especially in urban and semi-urban contexts.

**Cultural Sensitivity Required:** Social workers must develop cultural sensitivity when working with India's diverse elderly population. In group settings, participants may come from various religious, linguistic, and caste backgrounds. A skilled group worker respects these differences while creating a shared space for communication, healing, and mutual support. Use of local languages, references to traditional customs, and incorporating spiritual elements like bhajans, kirtans, or folk storytelling can deepen group bonding and effectiveness.

**Communication Skills Matter:** Effective communication lies at the heart of successful gerontological group work. Many elderly individuals may have sensory impairments, such as reduced hearing or vision. Others may be hesitant to speak due to a lifetime of social invisibility. Social workers must hone active listening, empathy, and non-verbal communication skills. Using simple language, maintaining eye contact, and providing time for reflection encourages older adults to participate confidently.

**Building Trust Gradually:** Older adults often carry experiences of loss, neglect, or trauma. Thus, trust-building is a slow yet essential process. Group workers

must demonstrate consistency, confidentiality, and respect to establish rapport. The facilitator should avoid being patronizing and instead position the group as a democratic space where every member's voice is valued. Regular attendance, warm greetings, and remembering personal details can go a long way in building emotional connections.

**Facilitation and Flexibility:** Facilitating elderly groups requires flexibility and patience. The pace of discussion may be slower, and topics must be selected with sensitivity. Sessions can include reminiscence therapy, yoga, health awareness, storytelling, or even skill-sharing. Social workers must adapt to the energy levels and mood of the group while keeping the structure intact. They must also manage dominant voices tactfully and encourage quieter members to participate.

**Psycho-Social Skill Set:** A strong understanding of geriatric psychology is critical. Issues like grief, cognitive decline, elder abuse, and depression frequently surface in group discussions. Social workers must be trained in handling emotional distress, resolving group conflicts, and providing appropriate referrals. Skills in crisis intervention, motivational interviewing, and counselling can enhance the quality of care and impact. **Intergenerational Approaches** Integrating younger participants—such as students or youth volunteers—into elderly group settings creates opportunities for mutual learning. Skill-building here includes designing intergenerational activities, facilitating dialogue between age groups, and bridging value differences. These initiatives combat ageism, preserve oral traditions, and build community solidarity. Social workers must possess program planning and evaluation skills to ensure such models are meaningful and replicable.

**Use of Technology:** Digital inclusion is becoming essential, even in gerontological group work. Teaching basic smartphone use, facilitating virtual group meetings, or using tablets for sto-

rytelling and games can greatly enhance participation. Social workers must be digitally literate themselves and be trained to teach older adults with patience and encouragement. Simple user guides, peer learning, and tech ambassadors can make this process smoother.

**Policy Awareness and Advocacy:** To strengthen gerontological group work in India, social workers must be aware of national policies like the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act (2007), the National Policy on Older Persons (1999), and relevant pension and healthcare schemes. Building advocacy skills enables social workers to push for senior-friendly community spaces, accessible transportation, and inclusive digital infrastructure. They must also guide elders in accessing entitlements and filing grievances where necessary.

**Fieldwork and Training:** Indian social work curricula must place greater emphasis on field-based training in elder care. Practicum placements in old age homes, community centres, or palliative care units can provide hands-on exposure. Simulations, role plays, and storytelling circles during training help students internalize key group work competencies. Continuous capacity-building through workshops, certificate courses, and peer learning networks must be institutionalised.

**Community-Based Innovations:** Successful models of gerontological group work are already being implemented across India. Community libraries for elders in Kerala, dementia support groups in Tamil Nadu, and temple-based social activities in Odisha showcase how traditional and modern approaches can merge. Social workers should document these models and adapt them contextually, keeping sustainability and community ownership in focus.

The future of elder care in India depends not only on government schemes or medical advances but on the **human touch**—delivered with professional care, cultural wisdom, and social commitment.

**Community Organisation in gerontology refers to planned, collective action that empowers older adults to improve their well-being and social participation. In India, where ageing is becoming a significant demographic trend, gerontological community organisation work offers a framework to address challenges such as neglect, isolation, and lack of services for the elderly. Through participatory methods, social workers foster community resilience and inclusive development for seniors.**

### **Demographic Context of Ageing in India:**

India is witnessing a rapid increase in its elderly population. By 2050, the number of citizens over the age of 60 is projected to reach 319 million. With changing family structures and urban migration, traditional support systems are eroding. Community organisation becomes a crucial method for social workers to design grassroots interventions that promote active ageing and protect the rights of older adults.

**Cultural and Social Sensitivity:** Social workers must be deeply aware of cultural norms, beliefs, and practices that shape ageing experiences in India. Elderly individuals may come from diverse castes, religions, and linguistic backgrounds. Involving elders in culturally resonant activities—like temple visits, storytelling sessions, or folk performances—strengthens their community identity. Skill building in this domain includes fostering inclusive dialogue and tailoring interventions to regional traditions.

### **Community Mapping and Needs Assessment:**

Effective community organisation begins with understanding the lived realities of the elderly. Social workers must learn how to conduct community mapping and needs assessments. These tools help identify local resources, service gaps, and potential areas for intervention. Engaging elders in these assessments not only validates their agency but also makes programs more relevant and sustainable.

**Mobilising Local Resources:** One of the key skills in community organisation work is mobilising both human and material

resources. This includes collaborating with self-help groups, panchayats, local NGOs, and religious institutions. Social workers must be adept in fundraising, networking, and public relations to build resource-rich environments that cater to senior citizens' needs.

**Facilitation and Leadership Building:** Social workers must facilitate the formation of senior citizens' forums, neighbourhood committees, and intergenerational groups. Training elderly individuals in leadership, communication, and rights awareness fosters empowerment. These platforms can then become advocacy bodies that liaise with local authorities to push for age-friendly infrastructure, healthcare access, and social security.

**Advocacy and Policy Literacy:** *Knowledge of government schemes and legal rights is crucial. Social workers must be equipped to educate older adults about the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, pension schemes, health insurance policies, and digital grievance redressal mechanisms. Community meetings, street plays, and information kiosks are practical tools to promote policy literacy.*

**Intergenerational Collaboration:** Promoting intergenerational solidarity is a vital aspect of gerontological community work. Involving youth in caregiving, documentation of oral histories, or joint community projects helps reduce age-based stereotypes. Skill building involves creating safe spaces for dialogue, identifying common goals, and designing participatory activities that bridge generational divides.

**Digital Inclusion and Tech Literacy:** With the rise of digital governance and communication, ensuring that older adults are not left behind is essential. Social workers must themselves be tech-savvy and skilled in teaching elderly-friendly technology use. Initiatives such as smartphone tutorials, online safety training, and help-lines for digital assistance can greatly

enhance independence and participation among seniors.

**Conflict Resolution and Emotional Support:** Community organisation work often brings hidden issues to the surface—such as elder abuse, neglect, or disputes over property. Social workers must be trained in mediation, trauma-informed care, and counselling. Creating safe circles or peer support groups within the community helps address emotional needs while reinforcing social cohesion.

### **Capacity Building and Training Models:**

There is a growing need for structured training modules in gerontological community organisation. Indian social work programs must integrate practicum placements in elder care settings, offer certificate courses in ageing, and encourage peer-to-peer learning among practitioners. Collaborations with institutions like NISD or NGOs working with the elderly can offer robust training pipelines.

**Grassroots Innovations and Best Practices:** Innovative practices across India—like age-friendly villages in Maharashtra, temple-based support systems in Odisha, or digital literacy clubs for seniors in Kerala—serve as models for community-led elder care. Social workers must document, replicate, and scale such innovations while keeping contextual differences in mind.

- **Skill Building in community organisation method with integration of experiential learning aspects is essential.**
- **Social workers field work training must focus on local culture, practical group dynamics, and awareness on policy implementation aspects.**
- **Intergenerational and grassroots collaborations improve programme impact.**
- **Structured training and field exposure are essential for professional readiness in gerontological practice.**

### **Editorial Team:**

Dr W G Prasanna Kumar, Dr W Sumalini, Sri D Sai Vishwas, Smt V Anasuya and Smt J Padma for National Community Engagement Academic Network (NCEAN) supported by Wundavalli Foundation Trust