



(In **Special Consultative Status** with the **ECOSOC** at **United Nations** since 2011)
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Older People seek a fair share in the forthcoming budget **- Agewell Foundation appeals to the FM on behalf of Old People**

January 17th, 2022, New Delhi: With an ever-increasing population of older persons and a longer life span in old age, the profile of older people has changed remarkably. Old age-related varied needs and requirements are now emerging as new challenges. For most elderly in upper age groups, taking care of their health is becoming an increasingly difficult task. On the other hand, a huge population of older persons in lower age groups (60-70 years) is struggling to keep themselves active, engaged, and productive as well.

In view of the demanding lifestyle in old age, a large number of old people seek gainful engagement so that they can meet their growing needs and also participate in the mainstream economy. **On the basis of its latest survey among 5000 older persons across the country, Agewell Foundation found that the budgetary provisions can address the issues concerning older persons to a larger extent. According to the survey, 81% of elderly respondents were found to be optimistic about the forthcoming budget and believe that government will consider issues concerning older people.**

The survey was conducted through a nationwide volunteers' network during the month of January 2022. Several surveys conducted earlier by Agewell Foundation also suggest that older people are the worst affected section of society that has to suffer a lot due to the Covid-19 situation and they need special attention and support from the Government.

On the basis of ongoing interaction with a large number of older persons, their family members, and caregivers on daily basis, Agewell Foundation appeals to the Hon'ble Finance Minister and others concerned to make adequate elderly friendly provisions in the next budget. Following are some of the major recommendations/suggestions;

Provisions for Setting up of Skill Training & Retooling Centres for the Older People

For providing skill training and modern technological know-how to senior citizens in order to retool and empower them for income generation in old age

Proving GST Exemption on services and products, commonly used by elderly, such as-

- Audit diapers
- Medicines, primarily by older people
- Healthcare equipment like wheelchairs, walkers, walking sticks, commode chairs, etc.
- Hospitalization of elderly patients
- Medclaim policies of older persons
- Lifesaving products, i.e. pacemakers, dialysis, stents, used by older persons
- Medical Consultation fee
- Transportation /travel for medical treatment

Provision for providing Nutri Kits to elderly from BPL families

- On monthly basis for ensuring proper and nutritional food items for elderly with a poor health condition

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(Contributions to Agewell Foundation are tax exempted under 80-G of the Income Tax Act, 1961.)

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Dedicated Healthcare and online counseling services

- Dedicated healthcare facilities must be set up across the country at the local level and Door-step healthcare services should be provided for all the older persons
- Preference must be given to elderly patients/ bedridden elderly / older persons, unable to walk / move / living alone or facing acute health disorders.
- Online counseling for all kinds of psychological/medical/financial/legal issues being faced by older persons

Financial Security Measures

- Financial security provisions such as a higher rate of interest on savings/investments by older persons with financial institutions (banks/Post Offices/ etc.) to be ensured as the majority of them have no other source of income in old age.

Special Provisions For older persons In Government Schemes

- In all government schemes, the focus must also be on special provisions for the needs & rights of older persons while implementing the schemes/programs.
- Participation of older persons must be ensured in various processes of development / implementation / supervision/ monitoring / evaluation government schemes / programs.

Social Pension Schemes

- Under the social pension scheme, the monthly amount of Old Age Pension should be revised according to prevailing inflation. The current share of Central Government in the monthly old-age pension must be increased up to Rs. 3000/- per month for every old person. The state government should also be advised to modify its share accordingly.

Prime Minister's Self-Employment Scheme for the Retired and Senior Citizens

- The scheme should be initiated to tap the unexplored potential of older persons, who have experience, knowledge, wisdom, resources, time and above all zeal to work in old age to keep themselves engaged and connected with the mainstream.

On this occasion, **Himanshu Rath, Founder of Chairman of, Agewell Foundation** said, *"Today, older persons are facing different kinds of challenges. Making elderly-friendly budgetary provisions would certainly play an important role in ensuring the welfare and well-being of the ever-increasing population of older persons in the country. Older persons need opportunities and greater participation in the mainstream so that they can remain gainfully engaged as long as they can."* He further added that millions of older persons are hopeful about the forthcoming budget and expect more support and care from the government.

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