

Policy Related to Senior Citizen in Nepal: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

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 various ethnic groups, language, religions and geographical regions. Ageing is a natural phenomenon and an inevitable process in life. Senior citizens are the assets of the society. The objective of this paper is to provide a brief introduction to policy of senior citizen management as it exists in Nepal through secondary data. This article specially examines the policy of Nepal government "senior citizen act 2006." This act will be taken as base to analyze the policy of senior citizen in Nepal. The major argument of this paper is there are so many policies to uplift the status of senior citizen but lacking part of the implementation with proper strategies are the major challenge in grass root level.

Introduction

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. W.H.O. defines senior citizens as people 60 years and above. The Senior Citizens Act 2006, Nepal also defines the senior citizens as "people who are 60years and above". The retirement age for military in Nepal is 45 to 48 years for lower class, for general government service 58 years, and for university teachers and the judiciary services 63 years (Khanal, 2009). UN, the world population ageing report, 2013 explain that the global share of older persons (aged 60 years or over) increased from 9.2 per cent in 1990 to 11.7 percent in 2013 and will continue to grow as a proportion of the world population, reaching 21.1 percent by 2050. The issue of aging in the SAARC region has been neglected in population research as well as in Nepal (Archarya, 2001; Parker and Pant, 2009; Singh 2003). The older population of Nepal is increasing both in terms of absolute numbers and as a proportion of the total population (Subedi, 1996).

Table: 1 ageing population of Nepal, 1952/54 - 2011 (in percent)

Census year	Male	Female
1952/54	4.5	5.4
1961	4.8	5.6
1971	5.3	5.9
1981	5.9	5.5
1991	5.9	5.7
2001	6.4	6.3
2011	6.8	7.1

Source: CBS, 2003, census preliminary report, 2011.

The table shows that the growth rate of older person in Nepal is increasing from 5.4 percent in 1952/54 to 7.1 in 2011 which needs special attention for their management and also urgently needs further more programs to respect them and to use their knowledge experience and skills in development of nation. Thus policy of senior citizen should be related on the basis of their human capital use not only for their management as problem. Older people in rural areas are, undoubtedly, one of the groups that have traditionally faced greater difficulties in accessing lifelong learning programmes.

International concern on senior citizen

The problems of senior citizens were discussed in the general assembly of the United Nations in 1979. The General Assembly submitted an action plan for the rights, welfare and interest of the senior citizens in 1992. International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in 1994, which recognized the economic and social impact of population ageing in all societies. The key actions for the further implementation of the program of action of the ICPD, adopted in 1999, reiterated the need for all societies to address the significant consequences of population ageing in the coming decades. Universal Declaration of Human Rights explains that the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his or her control.

The Madrid Plan of Action and the United Nations principles for senior citizens adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2002, the proclamation on ageing and the global targets on ageing for the year 2001 adopted by the General Assembly in 1992, the Shanghai Plan of Action 2002 and the Macau Outcome document 2007 adopted by UNESCAP form the basis for the global policy guidelines to encourage governments to design and implement their own policies from time to time. According to world population ageing report 2013, the United Nations Commission on Population and Development (CPD) dedicated its 40th session to the changing age structures of populations and their implications for development and adopted a resolution covering a range of policy issues related to ageing. The United Nations Commission on Social Development (CSD) undertook the first review and appraisal of progress made in implementing the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing in 2007 and 2008, and carried out a second cycle of review and appraisal of MIPAA during the 51st session of the CSD in 2013.

Different plan and policies on senior citizen in Nepal

Gautam, (2007) explains that one of the major problem of old couple is youth migration in urban area and overseas as well. The number of old couple living alone in the villages is increasing. These old couples are facing many new problems they did not have in the past. Major problems faced by the old couples are anxiety, helplessness, loneliness feeling, and increased social and cultural burdens including household ones. Their lives have become isolated. They, therefore, intended to go to better places having modern facilities. But they think it is better to live together with all family members rather than to move towards new places. Old people should be brought to the mainstream like the way women have been brought. Old people should be kept in mind before making any policy or any program. Aging should be brought to the main frame and that will bring changes in the society. Ghimire, et. al. (2012) argues that depression is more common among elders in old-age home than in community. Depression is more prevalent among elders with poor social support, low income, having no spouse, non pensioner, low educational status, Brahmin/ Chhetry caste. Also, it is more prevalent among elderly women than men. Addressing these issues may contribute to improve the quality of life for the elders and decrease burden on family, society, and the nation. For the management of the situation and to provide human right for senior citizen Nepal has been implementing different policies and program in various times.

The Labor Act, 1992, fixes minimum wage and provides for social security of workers in the formal sector. The Civil Service Act, 1992, and Regulations, 1994, have provisions related to social protection of government employees. The Local Self-

Governance Act, 1999, provides for protection and development of orphan children, helpless women, the elderly, and people with disability. The Nepal Health Service Act, 1997, outlines various social security and health schemes for senior citizens. National human right commission NHRC (2011) state that respects for elders and protection for weaker are the two basic human values that all societies have been promoting since the beginning of human civilization. Khanal, (2012) discuss the social security and protection of Senior Citizen Act, 2006 was a landmark from a legal point of view, but its implementation is problematic. So, I want to dig out some points of that senior citizen act 2006 and its implementation part in Nepal in contemporary society

Senior Citizens Act, 2063 (2006)

This act was authenticated at 2063.8.8.6 (24 Nov. 2006) the aim of this act was expedient to make provisions immediately on the protection and social security of senior citizens and enhancement of trust, respect and good faith towards them by utilizing knowledge, skills, capability and experiences inherent in them which is itself a mile stone on the legal aspect of senior citizen. This act contents 32 points as rules and regulations of senior citizen. It deals that "Senior Citizen" means a citizen of Nepal having completed the age of Sixty years. It also categorized senior citizen in to two categories "Helpless Senior Citizen" and "Incapable Senior Citizen" for service providing purpose. There are no any categories on the base of age and ethnicity related. This act provides the provision of "Senior Citizen Club" a club established by senior citizens under the prevailing laws for the protection of their rights and interests but this vision is not implemented in community level.

On the point number eight it explains that no person shall cause a senior citizen to make begging, even though when we see the beggar in different religious places and street almost of them are older persons. On the concern of facilities and concessions, the concerned owners or operators of such types of public motor vehicles as may be specified by the Government of Nepal by publishing a public notice shall reserve at least two seats in such vehicles for the senior citizens and give them a concession of at least fifty percent on the passenger fare, which is not strictly implemented in public vehicles. Another concern on Power to rebate sentence of imprisonment: it explain as the sentence of imprisonment as follows may be rebated in view of his or her age and the nature of offense: (a) Not exceeding twenty five percent in the case of the senior citizen who has completed the age of Sixty Five years but not crossed the age of Seventy years, (b) Not exceeding Fifty percent in the case of the senior citizen who has completed the age of Seventy years but not crossed the age of Seventy Five years, (c) Not exceeding Seventy Five percent in the case of the senior citizen who has completed the age of Seventy Five years. This provision is not completed as itself definition, it only concerns with the people who are older than the age of 65 years.

On the one hand this act also suggest to establish senior citizen fund and explains - senior citizen welfare fund shall be established for the protection and social security of senior citizens which may provide allowance or facility and on the other hand it also categorize senior citizens as helpless senior citizens and incompetent senior citizens on be prescribed grounds and provide allowance or facility as prescribed which is quite functioning but there is no any provision to monitoring of this program, this act also deals about to provide identity card for senior citizen but it has no perfect mechanism to implement in community level and also there is no any clear instruction where and why to use this card by senior citizen.

Conclusion

The family has traditionally been the main source of support for the elderly in Asia, (Chan, 2012). Information on population Ageing is inadequate to provide a basis for the formulation of a sound policy to meet the needs of the emerging older population (Chaudhari, 2004). The traditional sense of duty and obligation of the younger generation towards their older generation is being eroded. The older generation is caught between the decline in traditional values on one hand and the absence of adequate social security system on the other (Gormal, 2003). Furthermore, based on the fact that people of 60 years and above, it is recommended that the Senior Citizens User Group in each VDC should be made eligible for 10 percent of the development grant given to the VDCs each year (Shrestha, 2014). There are so many policies to uplift the status of senior citizen but lacking part of the implementation with proper strategies is the major challenge in grass root level.

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