Promoting and advocating for age-friendly healthcare in the Thar Desert, India

Prakash Tyagi
1st World Congress on Healthy Ageing
Kuala Lumpur, March 2012
The contents…..

- India and the Thar Desert
- About GRAVIS
- GRAVIS work on ageing and health
- Our learning
- Our future
India and the Thar Desert

• The second largest country in the world, India has high number of people above 60 years of age. Over 80 million.
• Life Expectancy is touching 70 mark and rising.
• More elderly in rural areas and majority live below the poverty line.
• Feminization and ageing
• Double burden of disease.
The Thar Desert

- One of the Most underdeveloped parts of India and of the world.
- Is in the north-west of the country.
- Arid, dry and hot.
- Receives less than 200 mm of rain in a full year.
- Water and food insecurity.
- Major health issues
The Thar Desert

- Is home to over 23 million people, most dense desert globally
- Around 2 million elderly live in the area
- Older people have great difficulties due to drought and poverty.
- Malnutrition, diseases.
- Poor health facilities
- Very low health awareness
About GRAVIS

- GRAVIS is an NGO working for community development in Thar.
- The organization covers over 1,000 villages and a population of over 1 million people with its work.
- Strong focuses on water and food security, healthcare and drought mitigation.
- Ageing is an area of major attention.
About GRAVIS

• Partners with Help Age International
• Is in operation since last 29 years.
• Is located in the heart of the Thar Desert with 16 field offices.
• Has facilitated the formation of over 2,500 Community Based Groups including over 100 Older People’s association and Self Help Groups of older people.
GRAVIS’ work on ageing and health

• Runs a fully equipped rural hospital catering to over 40,000 older people in the region.
• Provides indoor and outdoor medical services.
• The hospital has all facilitated including a fully equipped eye care unit.
• In a year, we treat over 10,000 older people.
• Over 2,000 eye surgeries are conducted every year.
GRAVIS’ work on ageing and health

• GRAVIS has set up 4 satellite clinics to provide screening and basic treatment services
• The organization runs a community-based programme focusing on controlling TB, AIDS and Malaria.
• Outreach medical team organizes over 60 medical camps every year.
• Over 500 Village Health Workers have been trained on age-friendly healthcare.
GRAVIS’ work on ageing and health

- GRAVIS is very active on advocating for promotion of age-friendly healthcare.
- It has organized a number of advocacy seminars and workshop.
- The organization also has a deep interest on researching ageing and health.
- It actively communicated with government health departments and policy makers in the context of ageing and health.
GRAVIS’ work on ageing and health

- Has produced eight publications on Older People’s health.
- Is partnering in a regional project to research and promote Self Care
- Will be launching a research study on double burden of disease
- Has been training counselors to provide mental health support
Our learning

• The older people have a great potential of contributing in development programmes.

• Locally designed training manuals are very effective to raise health awareness.

• Good nutrition is the key, and hence there is a great need of nutrition education among elderly.

• Because of the double burden of disease, health education needs to focus on both infections and non-communicable diseases.
Our learning

• Water quality is another major challenge leading to waterborne diseases among elderly.
• Village Health Workers are well received in the communities.
• There is a greater need for geriatric training.
• Self care models need to be promoted further.
Our future

- VHWs – expand further
- Qualitative service delivery
- Research capacity – enhance
- Partner with the Government
- Village Health Funds
- Continued advocacy
THANKS

www.gravis.org.in