

UNPAI Health & Wellbeing Discussion Forum

Report of Proceedings | 5 April 2025

Organized by the United Nations Pensioners' Association, India (UNPAI)

1. Introduction: A Forum with Purpose

The Health & Wellbeing Discussion Forum, held on 5 April 2025 at the UN House in New Delhi, was a landmark initiative by the **United Nations Pensioners' Association, India (UNPAI)**. This **hybrid session** convened UN retirees, agency leaders, health experts, civil society actors, and private sector stakeholders to explore the evolving dimensions of holistic well-being in later life.

In his welcome address, Mr. Venkatasubramanian Srinivasan, President of UNPAI, emphasized that health is not merely the absence of illness, but the presence of vitality, purpose, and engagement. He framed the session around five core dimensions of senior health: physical, mental, social, nature-connected, and spiritual well-being. Highlighting the presence of the UN Resident Coordinator and UN agency heads, he noted their active commitment to the welfare of UN retirees, terming the event as “**a gathering of UN leaders for a shared purpose**”, saying that they are not merely attendees, but **co-creators of this dialogue**.

He acknowledged the strong support of fellow UN retiree associations—AFUNPI, WHO-AFSM, and UPGI—and highlighted the presence of Mrs. Malti Jaswal of Inspiring Seniors Foundation, as a champion of healthy longevity. The participation of IndusInd Bank was appreciated as a promising signal of strategic partnerships between the private sector and civil society.

2. Keynote Address by Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Vinod Kumar: Healthy Ageing as a Lifelong Pursuit

Prof. Dr. Vinod Kumar, an internationally respected geriatrician and former WHO advisor, delivered a deeply engaging keynote that set the tone for the day. His central premise was clear and compelling: Healthy ageing is not a privilege, but a right—and it must be pursued throughout life.

Key Takeaways from Dr. Vinod Kumar's Address:

- **Seniors as Assets:** Older adults are repositories of resilience, wisdom, and spirituality. They transmit legacy, nurture families, and often possess superior self-care skills.
- **Shift to Health span:** The focus must shift from extending lifespan to enhancing health span—years lived in good health and dignity.
- **Realities of Ageing:**
 - Physical: chronic illness, sensory decline.
 - Emotional: loneliness, bereavement, discrimination.
 - Socioeconomic: reduced income, generational disconnect.
- **Ten Commandments for Healthy Ageing** (reinforced through the "Ten S" Practices):
 1. **Diet, Water & No Addiction (Satvikta)** – Nutrient-rich food, hydration, and abstinence from processed foods, alcohol, and smoking.
 2. **Exercise & Physical Activity (Shramta)** – Aerobic, resistance, yoga, and balance-enhancing movement; avoid prolonged sitting.
 3. **Social Interaction (Samparkta)** – Group engagement, community participation, and intergenerational bonding.
 4. **Mental Activity (Sakriyata)** – Brain-challenging tasks: learning, puzzles, internet use, and creative hobbies.
 5. **Hygiene (Swachhta)** – Personal and environmental hygiene; awareness of toxins and pollutants.
 6. **Sleep Hygiene (Shyanpurta)** – Prioritize sleep routines and environments to support mental and physical health.
 7. **Spiritual Health (Sadhna & Adhyatmikata)** – Holistic well-being through meditation, nature, and ethical living.
 8. **Happiness & Contentment (Sanandta)** – Cultivate joy through connection, purpose, and positive lifestyle practices.
 9. **Positive Thinking (Sakaratomakta)** – Foster resilience through gratitude, optimism, and supportive social circles.

10. **Early Detection & Health Check-ups (Swasth Parikshanta)** – Celebrate birthdays with annual health reviews, vaccinations, and screenings.
- **Practical Tips:** Includes signs of early disease detection, breathing techniques (Anulom-Vilom, Bhramri, Box breathing), and use of technology tools such as CareAsha App for self-care and resource access.

Dr. Vinod Kumar's message blended ancient wisdom with modern science and digital tools, offering practical guidance and motivation for aging with dignity and vitality.

3. Interactive Q&A: Voices, Concerns & Collective Wisdom

The interactive dialogue brought forward urgent and relatable concerns:

- **Spirituality as Therapy:** Healing through self-connection, environmental bonding, and transcendence.
 - **Mindfulness Tools:** Breathing techniques, visualization, and body scan practices to combat mental clutter.
 - **Cognitive Vitality:** Continuous learning, financial independence, and engaging with younger generations.
 - **Caregiver Challenges:** A growing need for trained, empathetic caregivers with emerging models like Goodfellows and Vardhamitra.
 - **Dementia Awareness:** Importance of early detection and the distinction between natural forgetfulness and disease.
 - **Sleep Disorders:** Use of natural aids and midday napping.
 - **Yoga vs. Gym:** Pranayama and mindful movement as safe and sustainable alternatives.
-

4. Address by UN Resident Coordinator: Global Context, Local Commitment

Mr. Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator in India, delivered a heartfelt and visionary address. Sharing personal anecdotes and reflecting on global

milestones such as UN@80 and the 10th anniversary of the SDGs, he emphasized the power of intergenerational collaboration and retirees' enduring relevance.

Mr. Sharp's key messages included:

- **India as a Global Beacon:** A source of scalable innovation and youth-powered solutions.
- **Retirees as UN Ambassadors:** Custodians of institutional memory, upholders of multilateralism.
- **"Pensioner Shakti":** A powerful concept promoting skill-mapping and knowledge-sharing.
- **Call for Inclusion:** Strong encouragement to integrate the retiree community into ongoing UN programmes and outreach efforts.

His statement, **"Aapka yahan, hamesha swaagat hai,"** was received with heartfelt applause.

5. Reflections from Mrs. Malti Jaswal: Dignity, Purpose, and Participation

Mrs. Jaswal advocated for **"healthy longevity"**—the idea of living better, not just longer. She presented real-life examples of seniors engaging in virtual wellness programs and educational volunteering, illustrating how purpose and productivity can thrive in later years.

6. Closing Reflections: From Dialogue to Action

Delivering the closing remarks, Mr. Venkatasubramanian Srinivasan reiterated that the forum marked the beginning of a wider movement.

His call to action was clear:

"Good health and well-being are not passive states—they are choices, habits, and commitments we make every day."

Core Reflections:

- Stay active—physically, mentally, and socially.

- Prioritize mental health—mindfulness, emotional resilience, and purpose.
- Strengthen social bonds and community involvement.
- Reconnect with nature as a healing force.
- Embrace spiritual and emotional strength as pillars of resilience.

He encouraged participants to take small, impactful steps—from reconnecting with community, to acquiring new skills or sharing knowledge.

7. The Way Forward: Collective Action for a Healthier Future

UNPAI envisions evolving this forum into a sustained platform for:

- Knowledge exchange on holistic health.
- Cross-generational collaboration and learning.
- Community-driven advocacy aligned with the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing and **UN@80**.

Participants are encouraged to:

- Share this report widely.
- Actively engage in upcoming sessions.
- Contribute insights and personal stories.
- Promote intergenerational mentorship and wellness practices.
- Explore recommended resources such as:
 - www.vriddhamitra.org
 - www.thegoodfellows.in
 - www.aginghealthforum.com
 - CareAsha App: [Google Play Link](#)

Appendix: Chief Guest, Panelists & Special Guests

Chief Guest: Prof. Dr. Vinod Kumar – Geriatrician; Public Health Leader; Former WHO Advisor

Panelists:

- Mr. Venkatasubramanian Srinivasan, President, UNPAI
- Dr. Sanjiv Kumar, Vice-President, UNPAI
- Mr. Shiv Kumar Varma, Member, UNPAI

Special Guests:

- Mr. Shombi Sharp – UN Resident Coordinator in India
- Mr. Darrin Farrant – Director, UNIC
- Dr. Sanjay Awasthi – Head of Office, IOM
- Ms. Parul Agarwala – Country Programme Manager, UN-HABITAT
- Mrs. Malti Jaswal – Founder, Inspiring Seniors Foundation
- Mr. Vivek Mahajan & Mr. Abhishek Ghosh – IndusInd Bank

Representatives of Retiree Associations:

- AFUNPI – Dr. Prem Sharma, Vice-President, Delhi-NCR
- WHO-AFSM-SEAR – Mr. M.R. Kanagarajan, President
- UPGI – Mr. Dharendra Asthana, President

Moderator: Mr. Ashok Mitra, Member, Executive Committee, UNPAI

YouTube link to the recording of the event:

<https://youtu.be/UyvOXxcH3T0>

Attachments:

1. Welcome Remarks – Mr. Venkatasubramanian Srinivasan, President, UNPAI
2. Presentation Slides shared by the Chief Guest, Dr. Vinod Kumar
3. Closing Reflections – Mr. Venkatasubramanian Srinivasan, President, UNPAI