

सुरजीत डे

रजिस्ट्रार (विधि)

SURAJIT DEY

Registrar (Law)



राष्ट्रीय मानव अधिकार आयोग

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NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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DO No. R-17/11/2020-PRPP (RU-3)

5 October, 2020

Respected Sir/Madam,

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is mandated by the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 to promote and protect the human rights of all in the country. Towards fulfillment of its mandate, the Commission is deeply concerned about the rights of the vulnerable and marginalized sections of the society which have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdowns.

2. In order to assess the impact of the pandemic on realization of the rights of the people, especially the marginalised/vulnerable sections of the population, the Commission constituted a 'Committee of Experts on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Human Rights and Future Response' including the representatives from the civil society organizations, independent domain experts and the representatives from the concerned ministries/departments.

3. On the basis of impact assessment done by the Committee of Experts and recommendations made by it, the Commission hereby issues an advisory on "*Human Rights of Informal Workers during COVID-19*", as given in the annexure.

4. May I request you to kindly direct the concerned authorities in your Ministry(ies)/ State(s)/ Union Territory(ies) to implement the recommendations made in the advisory and to submit the action taken report for information of the Commission.

With regards,

Yours sincerely

(Surajit Dey)

Registrar (Law)

Encl: As above

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ADVISORY

Human Rights of Informal Workers during COVID-19

Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent containment measures such as lockdowns have disrupted societies and precipitated a public health and economic crisis of mammoth proportions. Millions of people across the world have lost their livelihoods and incomes, and people in the informal economy have been the worst hit.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the reduction of working hours by mid-2020 to be equivalent to nearly 300 million full-time jobs, impacting most heavily working people in the informal economies, women, and their dependents¹. In its “Policy Framework for Tackling the Economic and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis”², the ILO has also stated that special attention needs to be given to women, informal economy workers, young workers, older workers, refugees and migrant workers, micro-entrepreneurs and the self-employed.

In India, the informal sector forms 90 per cent of labour share in the country (Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18³). The pandemic and the huge economic shock have only made the fragile situation worse for the informal sector. Several workers were stranded without work and importantly wages when the lockdown was imposed. The situation has been particularly dire for migrant workers, who do not have any support system, savings or social security net and are unable to access welfare schemes in the ‘destination’ areas to which they migrate for work.

In a survey of more than 11,500 informal workers conducted by ActionAid Association⁴, more than 78 per cent of respondents reported loss of livelihood and there was a major reduction in the intensity of work. Before the lockdown, the vast majority worked above 40 hours a week; and after the lockdown, over two-thirds of the respondents reported working zero hours a week. Over 48 per cent of respondents did not receive any wages after the lockdown and 17 per cent received partial wages. Close to 55 per cent of these

¹ (2020, May 27). ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Fourth edition Updated estimates and analysis. Retrieved from

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745963.pdf

² *A policy framework for tackling the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis.* (2020). ILO. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745337.pdf

³ *Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) July 2017- June 2018.* (2019). Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. https://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Annual%20Report%2C%20PLFS%202017-18_31052019.pdf

⁴ *Workers in the time of COVID-19: Round I of the Study on Informal Workers.* (2020). ActionAid Association (India). https://www.actionaidindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Workers-in-the-time-of-Covid-19_ebook1.pdf



respondents already had outstanding debts before the lockdown that further increased during the lockdown.

While the impact of the pandemic in urban areas has been acute, it is often thought that the rural economy showed relative resilience as the lockdown in most rural areas was not as severe as urban areas and agricultural activities and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) work had been allowed with appropriate measures in place. However, the large-scale reverse migration from destination to 'source' districts, majorly in rural areas, is putting a lot of pressure on the availability of jobs and decent wages in villages in a race to the bottom. Furthermore, there are also concerns about the capacity of rural health infrastructure to cope.

The multifaceted impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the working class demands creation of employment in both urban and rural areas, while ensuring dignified minimum wage, social security, protection of their human rights. Accordingly, the National Human Rights Commission of India had constituted a Committee of Experts on '*Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Human Rights and Future Response*' to prepare advisories for the Central and the State Governments on upholding human rights of all during the pandemic. The Committee of Experts consisted of domain experts from various thematic areas including the representatives from the civil society organizations, independent domain experts and the representatives from the concerned Ministries/Departments. After extensive deliberations and impact assessment, the draft advisory to uphold the human rights of informal workers during COVID-19 was prepared. Thereafter, two levels of consultations were organized to discuss, modify and finalize the draft. The first level of the consultation was with Members of the Committee of Experts, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, representatives from ILO and other domain experts. The second level of consultation was with the Principal Secretaries of the labour departments of the major migrant worker 'source' and 'destination' States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, and Karnataka. Based on the assessment and consultations with all stakeholders, the Commission makes following recommendations, in the form of advisory, to uphold the human rights of informal workers during a pandemic and until the situation normalizes.

Advisory 1

Providing support to workers, enhancing employment and upholding worker's rights

I. Generating employment and ensuring decent wages

- 1.1. The State Governments may set up Worker Facilitation Kendra/Centre at the district level and cities for- (i) registration of all workers in their districts; (ii) disseminating information on all government welfare and social security schemes and COVID-19 related schemes; (iii) conducting skill mapping and connecting workers to job



opportunities through the Employment Portal⁵; (iv) providing access to legal services and grievance redressal mechanisms; (v) providing information, training, and equipment to workers on protecting themselves from COVID-19; and (vi) serving as spaces to resolve complaints received at the Worker Helplines.

- 1.2. Provide individual jobs cards under MGNREGA to every migrant worker returning to their home districts without any discrimination based on gender, caste, religion, disability, migration status etc.
- 1.3. Expand the number of days of guaranteed employment to 200 days per individual worker per year⁶.
- 1.4. Provide an additional COVID-19 allowance of 10% to cover costs of sanitation, water and travel to the wage offered under MGNREGA, with approval of respective Government.
- 1.5. The Officer at the block level shall ensure safety at the worksite by providing face masks, hand gloves, sanitizer, hand wash facility, helmets (where needed) etc.
- 1.6. State Governments may also prepare rural employment generation plans down to the district level. These should focus on both farm and non-farm rural employment and provide dignified minimum wages.
- 1.7. As facilities at district hospitals and primary healthcare centres need to be upgraded urgently, in terms of setting up of isolation wards, providing personal protective equipment, the returnee migrant workers can be engaged in this work under MGNREGA or any other suitable scheme.
- 1.8. Enable and encourage migrant workers to return to cities/districts by: (i) registering and facilitating their travel back (including one-time travel support within limits); (ii) linking the workers with prospective employers based on skills mapped in the Facilitation Centres.
- 1.9. States may initiate '*(Informal) Worker Owned Enterprise Programme*' in rural and urban areas. The rural scheme may be called *Rural Workers Enterprise/Company/Cooperative Initiative* and be utilized to finance, mentor and nurture rural women and men workers for small rural industrialisation. Similarly, an *Urban Workers Company/Cooperative Initiative* may be utilized to support start-up, mentoring and linkages.
- 1.10. The moratorium on loans announced by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should be strictly implemented by issuing advisory in the public domain.
- 1.11. State Labour Departments shall strategize and simplify registration process of construction and brick kiln workers, especially women, under the Building and Other Construction Workers Act (BOCW), 1996, and not limit it to online registrations only.

⁵Some States like UP and Odisha have set up in the name of Rojgar Sangam, GoSkill Portals etc

⁶Some States like Odisha have initiated



- 1.12. Ensure notification of rules under Street Vendors Act, 2014 and increase the outreach of registration and issuance of identity cards of vendors so that they can receive benefits under PM Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi).
- 1.13. Ensure full coverage of providing interest-free loans to street vendors and functionality of Town Vending Committees as the bodies of Vendors.
- 1.14. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) shall maintain cleanliness and hygiene in market spaces and set up/provide handwashing facility, hand sanitiser stations, and safe drinking water facilities in all market spaces.
- 1.15. Domestic workers are required to be provided relief and be linked to Public Distribution System (PDS) and other schemes by registering them through police verification forms, Resident Welfare Association (RWA) records, and domestic workers' collectives⁷.
- 1.16. Identify home-based workers and link them with relief schemes. Further, corporate brands and retailers may be directed by the Government to set up a *Supply Chain Relief Contribution Fund (SCRCF)* to provide relief to contract, sub-contracted and home-based workers.
- 1.17. Provide immediate relief, through direct cash transfer, to the taxi, auto, and e-rickshaw drivers⁸ and defer payment of loans taken to purchase vehicles by such drivers.
- 1.18. State Government may engage drivers to provide transport to essential workers and informal workers and for ration distribution in containment zones.
- 1.19. Consider the introduction of a *Shahari Rojgar Yojna -Urban Employment (Guarantee) Programme* which would help mitigate distress in urban areas⁹. The programme could entail the following works:
 - i. Public works: Building, maintenance and upgradation of civic infrastructure like roads, footpaths, cycling paths, bridges, public housing, monuments, laying of cables, and other construction work.
 - ii. Green jobs: Creation, restoration, and maintenance of urban commons, green spaces and parks, forested or woody areas, rejuvenation of degraded or wasteland, cleaning of water bodies (tanks, rivers, *mullahs*, lakes), and management of non-hazardous waste.
 - iii. Monitoring and surveying jobs: Gathering, classifying, and storage of information on environmental quality and other aspects of the quality of public goods.
 - iv. Care work: Assisting child-minding services in creches, providing assisted care for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

COVID-19 related public works could be included such as:

⁷Some states like Maharashtra have initiated relief packages through their existing Domestic Workers Boards

⁸States such as Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka have already made advances on this front (Andhra Pradesh for instance has offered a scheme of Rs 10,000/- per annum)

⁹A few states have initiated programmes on this line (e.g. Odisha)



- v. Ensuring the availability of water, soaps, and hand sanitizers in informal settlements.
- vi. Running community kitchens and providing door-to-door delivery of food and relief material to households with quarantined members or households with vulnerable people.
- vii. Collecting test samples from households so that people suspected of having the coronavirus do not have to visit hospitals or testing facilities unless they need to be admitted for treatment.
- viii. Producing 'essential commodities' such as protective equipment such as soaps, hand sanitizers, masks, and gowns through Self Help Groups (SHGs).

II. Ensuring safety, protection, and decent working conditions

- 1.20. The Central Government shall advise all State Governments against dilution of labour laws.
- 1.21. State Governments shall uphold their commitment to tripartite consultations and ensure trade unions and representatives of informal workers' collectives are included in all decision-making processes on policies and legislation which impact workers.
- 1.22. Ensure strict adherence of the Ministry of Labour and Employment's (MoLE) directions/advisories dated 19.3.2020¹⁰ on "*Preventive measures to be taken to contain the spread of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*".
- 1.23. Workers shall not be subjected to wage deductions and made to work below the prescribed wages. This shall be given wide publicity, and as some States like Maharashtra have done, call centres/worker helplines can help workers to redress such deductions.
- 1.24. Within a limit set, loans taken by migrant workers for travel and contingency purpose during this period from private agents or employer may be considered for a waiver through a Government directive applicable to all public and private employers¹¹.
- 1.25. Consider establishing a fund to support micro and small enterprises employers through a *Workers Pandemic Fund*, to help employers who are not in a position to pay and retain the workers in the event of an epidemic or pandemic affecting the regular activity of the industrial establishment. In case of non-payment of wages, the Government may devise a compensation mechanism for workers and put measures in place to ensure payment once work is resumed.
- 1.26. The Government may lay down the responsibilities and accountabilities of the government authorities, employers, contractors, placement agencies, owners of gig

¹⁰Preventive measures to be taken to contain the spread of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)- regarding. (19th March, 2020, Ministry of Labour & Employment Government of India.

<https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/Preventive%20measures%20against%20COVID-19%20outbreak.pdf>

¹¹This is in line and builds on the experience of earlier advisory of Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE) encouraging employers to pay onetime transportation to migrant workers.



platforms etc. towards workers during an epidemic or pandemic. Mechanisms such as annual reports and frequent inspections need to be in place to ensure that these responsibilities are being met.

- 1.27. In case workers contract the infection during their work, employers shall provide financial support for adequate health care to the extent possible/or a minimum level set. In case, any family members of the worker contract the infection, which requires the worker to take leave, work from home or work in shorter shifts, and employers should be forthcoming with flexible arrangements. If a worker contracts the infection due to the employer's negligence in the workplace, there should be penal or compensatory mechanisms in place.
- 1.28. Employers shall also ensure that the privacy of workers is protected, and their personal details are not shared in public domain. They shall also make sure that any health surveillance is not used for discriminatory purposes or in any other manner prejudicial to their interests.
- 1.29. The Government may create guidelines for different industries and sectors towards ensuring the safety and health of workers, along with mechanisms to implement them. For example, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued detailed guidelines for COVID-19 containment and safety at the workplace for factories.

III. Providing social security to all workers

- 1.30. Fast-track setting up of unorganised sector board (National Social Security Board and State Unorganised Workers Board) and release of funds at the Central and State level. The appropriate Government may outline the functions and accountabilities of these Boards, including clear financing mechanisms and standards.
- 1.31. There is a need to form expert committees or empowered advisory committees to review the performance of all welfare boards in the country and suggest processes to make them more efficient and effective. This review process shall be done in a tripartite manner.
- 1.32. Ensure portability of entitlements and social security benefits to migrant workers and simplify the processes of accessing these entitlements, especially in disaster situations where people often lose their documents or are in no position to go through long and tedious processes.
- 1.33. For ensuring monitoring of portability of entitlements, a unified registration process on a national portal may be set up for all inter and intra-state migrant workers.
- 1.34. Consider creating necessary and devoted provisions and segmentation in the Prime Ministers National Relief Fund (PMNRF) and the Chief Ministers Relief Fund (CMRF)



for national disasters such as epidemics or pandemics to facilitate direct cash transfers to people to help sustain and stabilize them or even to help them for other needs¹².

- 1.35. Specific campaign drives may be undertaken by the State Governments to enrol workers under all existing social security schemes like *Life and disability cover under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)* and *Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)*, *Pension under Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM)*, *Health insurance under Ayushman Bharat Yojana*. The Workers Facilitation Centres proposed for districts and cities can be the base for such campaigns.
- 1.36. A national database (portal) may be set up for all informal sector workers, including intra-state, inter-state and inter-country migrant workers to facilitate information for policy-making.
- 1.37. There is a need to re-imagine and redevelop protections, entitlements and rights of migrant workers and develop substantive legislation to cover inter-state, intra-state and inter-country migrant workers.

Advisory 2

Protection from violence and curbing of fundamental rights

- 2.1. Complaints and cases which have been registered against migrant workers under the Disaster Management Act, for violating lockdown guidelines, may be dropped by the State Governments. In case of any arrests, the workers must be released immediately and in case of any fines, the Government may set up a helpline for restitution.
- 2.2. Strict adherence and compliance of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's (MoHFW), Directorate General of Health Services (EMR Division) advisory against the spraying of disinfectant on people for COVID-19 management.
- 2.3. The Ministry of Home Affairs and the State Governments may issue directions to the Director General of Police and other Directors of Central and State reserved police, paramilitary forces, railway police force and police involved in highway patrol to uphold and protect human rights and adopt people-friendly measures in implementing COVID-19 related guidelines.
- 2.4. Ensure swift and strict action ensured against any officials and other perpetrators who abuse their powers and violate the human rights of migrant workers and other informal workers.

¹²For example, it may be noted that some States have also used funds under the CM Relief Fund to transport migrant workers back to their own home states. Some other states initiated short term pension schemes for very vulnerable communities such as fisherwomen, single women, Dappu players, transgenders as a rapid response.



- 2.5. Ensure adequate compensation to family members of those workers who died while migrating to their respective states. Workers who have suffered serious injuries during their transit should also be adequately compensated within a period of one month.
- 2.6. Ensure strict implementation of key legislations which prevent discrimination, violence, and atrocities and protect human rights such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act etc. The committees formed under these Acts must be designated as “essential” and their functioning should not be disrupted in case of lockdowns.

Advisory 3

Countering discrimination and exclusion

- 3.1. Track misinformation being spread through social media or other forms of media and issue advisories and videos directly countering falsities, on priority to challenge discrimination induced by panic about the coronavirus.
- 3.2. Ensure strict action against people who are found to be spreading misinformation to perpetuate discrimination based on caste, religion, gender, or ethnicity or undertaking discriminatory practices. A Public Notice to this effect issued by Central Government may be considered and disseminated extensively.
- 3.3. Utilize television, radio, community radio, SMS, phone calls, helplines, posters, WhatsApp and other innovative mediums to increase awareness about how coronavirus transmits and initiate campaigns which advise people against discriminating against any community on any grounds.
- 3.4. Labour Department may consider issuing directives to all RWAs and employers on acceptable and unacceptable practices so that they do not discriminate workers on the basis of caste, religion, gender, or ethnicity.
- 3.5. Domestic workers must not be discriminated against or looked at as “high risk” individuals. RWAs must be strongly notified not to take any discriminatory measures in the name of protection. e.g., RWAs cannot stop the domestic workers from “taking lifts” and using common areas for waiting. Guards and facility managers must be trained in treating domestic workers with due respect. Proper training on physical distancing must be provided by the facility management or employers to the domestic workers, along with face masks, gloves, and hand sanitizers.
- 3.6. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) authorities in villages such as *Pradhans*, and Block officials should be directed to take adequate steps and ensure that the workers returning home do not face any kind of discrimination or ostracization at the community level.



Advisory 4

Ensuring rights and protection of (especially) Vulnerable Workers

I. Forest dependent tribal communities

- 4.1. The Government may include minor forest produce (MFP) and non-timber forest produce (NTFP) in their procurement mechanisms to help boost the incomes of scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
- 4.2. Forest officials may be directed to allow people from these communities to access and collect forest produce¹³.
- 4.3. Based on the Bihar Model, *Vikas Mitra* from the marginalised communities may be recruited to spread awareness about government programmes, help potential beneficiaries to obtain and submit application forms, photos and certificates, assisting them with opening bank accounts and other such processes to help them access rights and entitlements.

II. Women Workers

- 4.4. The Government may identify those sectors where women workers are most vulnerable due to the complete absence of any protective mechanisms and recognition as workers, such as home-based petty manufacturing and domestic work.
- 4.5. The Central Government may also initiate a National Campaign of Sharing Work (adequately titled), in collaboration with other stakeholders, targeted at reducing care burden and other household work responsibility of women.
- 4.6. Formulate a comprehensive economic recovery plan focused on women's employment which may entail a review of existing labour laws, their implementation and how they have responded to women workers, a survey of women's time-use and the factors which inhibit them from participating in the formal workspaces, an assessment of workplace best practices in ensuring women's safety and decent working conditions, mapping of women's skills and employment opportunities etc. The plan should be made in consultation with academics, women's rights activists and organisations, trade unions and worker's collectives.

III. ASHA Workers

- 4.7. Ensure their coverage under the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan (PMSYM).
- 4.8. Provide them with proper Personal Protective Equipments (PPE) kits comprising of masks, sanitizer, and hand gloves.

¹³ Odisha has already done basis the Union Governments advice.



- 4.9. ASHA workers who are above the age of 50 years with various ailments may be exempted from working in the frontline during the pandemic. They may be provided equal and timely honorariums as other ASHA workers.
- 4.10. Fast-track the insurance coverage of ASHA workers under the PM Gareeb Kalyan Yojana.
- 4.11. Ensure regular health check-ups, including antigen and other COVID-19 tests, for ASHA workers. The costs may be borne by the Government and free treatment may be ensured for ASHA workers and their families if they contract COVID-19.

IV. Migrant workers

- 4.12. The State Government shall ensure storing detailed records of all migrant labourers who have reached their native places as per the Supreme Court directions in WP (Civil) No. 6/2020¹⁴ on 9 June 2020.
- 4.13. Some migrant workers may not have Panchayat registration, Below Poverty Line (BPL) card, ration cards, or job cards under MGNREGA as they may have been living in cities for a long time. There should be a process of enrolment or portability of entitlements at the Panchayat level.
- 4.14. Pregnant and lactating women migrants who may not be registered with Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres in the 'source' States may be deprived of the maternal and child health benefits. The ASHA/ANMs may be directed to take note of such cases and seek additional allocations.
- 4.15. The District Administration may also connect migrant workers to financial services in their 'source' Districts so that they may access formal financial credit, and are not forced to borrow from moneylenders in cases where they may want to migrate again for employment.
- 4.16. The State Governments may review the performance of the registered establishments, principal employers and contractors under the Interstate Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act. On record of incidents of violation and abuse of its provisions, the Government should take stringent action as per procedures prescribed in the Act.

V. Waste Workers

- 4.17. The Government may issue guidelines for the local level administration (village administration, ULBs, and RWAs) to make arrangements to provide protective gears, sanitizers, water to waste pickers to reduce their health risks.

¹⁴ Supreme Court of India. (2020, June 9). Suo Motu Writ Petition (Civil) No(s).6/2020, Problems and Miseries of Migrant Labourers. Supreme Court of India.

https://main.sci.gov.in/supremecourt/2020/11706/11706_2020_34_1501_22499_Order_09-Jun-2020.pdf



- 4.18. Subsidize income of waste pickers through direct cash transfers.
- 4.19. Ensure their coverage PDS and other welfare schemes.
- 4.20. Consider their inclusion in health insurance scheme for frontline workers. In case they or their family members contract the disease, treatment should be provided to them for free.
- 4.21. All waste pickers may be considered eligible to receive the occupational identity card, irrespective of whether they are directly employed or sub-contracted at the municipality level.

VI. Sex Workers

- 4.22. Specific relief measures such as providing the community with free dry ration, financial assistance, transportation facilities for stranded people, masks and sanitizers, access to reproductive-health services, and counselling for mental health issues, be provided for sex workers.
- 4.23. All rights and entitlements available to workers of India may be extended to sex workers, through an explicit advisory to this extent. This will provide sex workers with the access to all relief and entitlements.
- 4.24. Consider developing a one-year support plan for sex workers who would be unable to work, even after the lockdown ends, on account of their own decision. Such a support plan could offer options for employment for them and their dependents, including children.
- 4.25. Focussed relief measures and social security may be provided through the National AIDS Control Organization's (NACO's) existing targeted-intervention programme, in addition to the State and District-level community-based organisations working with sex workers. This will ensure focussed, stigma-free and quick outreach to the most vulnerable sex workers.

VII. Single women (workers)

- 4.26. Extend widow pension to include other categories of single women including divorced women, separated women (all women who have been living without their partner for at least one year), and Half-Widows/ Tiger-Widows/ Women whose husbands are missing (women who have had no contact with their spouse for at least one year).
- 4.27. Provide them with free food grains under PDS regardless of whether they have a ration card or not to counter the widespread food insecurity being reported among single women.
- 4.28. Inclusion of single women in MGNREGA work and issuing separate jobs cards on priority basis.



- 4.29. Employ single women under various works which are part of the PM *Gareeb Kalyan Rozgar Yojana*.
- 4.30. Single women should be prioritised for skill mapping and skill training under the *Rozgar Yojana*.
- 4.31. Single women engaged in farming, fishery, animal husbandry and forest-based livelihoods should be provided with input support, credit support, technical support, and market access as part of the schemes under PM *Gareeb Kalyan Yojana* and *Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan*. Similarly, single women who are working as farmers should be included in the PM *KISAN* scheme and provided support in the form of front-loaded payments.
- 4.32. Prioritize single women while enrolling farmers who are not part of the *Kisan Credit Scheme*, including women who work as farmers but do not own land, fish workers, and livestock farmers.
- 4.33. Consider loan waiver for all single women engaged as farmers and the widows of farmers who are now liable to pay the loans.
- 4.34. The Government has promoted for collateral free availability of loans for women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and also established new SHGs, especially for the urban poor. Ensure inclusion of single women in these SHGs on a priority basis.
- 4.35. Single women constituted and farmer-led cooperatives may be given priority-based loans and hand-holding support under schemes for agricultural cooperatives in rural areas.
- 4.36. The Government announced that small businesses who have taken loans under MUDRA- *Shishu* scheme would get 2% interest subvention. This facility should be extended to single women, who are keen to set up their business or are already running a small business.

VIII. Workers with disabilities

- 4.37. All the guidelines, advisories, and orders related to COVID-19 prevention and management may be made available in suitable forms such as braille, audio messages, and videos with sign language etc. for people with disabilities to be able to access them.
- 4.38. Ensure financial support in the form of direct cash transfers to people with disabilities who have lost their livelihood since the outbreak of the pandemic.
- 4.39. There is a risk that when businesses and other private workspaces resume, they may lay off or retrench persons with disabilities on their staff rolls. The Government may issue an advisory against any such discriminatory action.
- 4.40. Establish funds to provide financial support to employers to retain their workers especially employees with disabilities, women workers, and older persons, as people



from these categories are more likely to get discriminated against in case of any downsizing.

- 4.41. The Government may also assess job losses among people with disabilities, along with their skill mapping. It should collaborate with industries and businesses to reconstruct employment opportunities for workers with disabilities through this process of skill mapping by creating a database. An online portal which is accessible to persons with disabilities could be created to match workers to job opportunities.
- 4.42. The skill mapping can be also used as a tool to analyze the present skill gaps and organising training for workers with disabilities to enhance the level of skills which will magnify their employment opportunity. This would need to be done in a manner accessible and appropriate for persons with disabilities.

IX. Workers rescued from bondage and forced labour

- 4.43. The District Vigilance Committee should work closely with CSOs, activists, police and other stakeholders to identify, rescue, release, and rehabilitate bonded labour. The procedure of obtaining Release Certificate should be closely monitored by the Committee.
- 4.44. Strengthen mechanisms to ensure the rehabilitation of bonded labour as many workers are forced back into conditions of bondage without adequate support.
- 4.45. The mechanism to redress issues of Bonded labour needs to be functional as an essential service, there is a need to institute a mechanism for redressing denials, complaints and issues of persons in forced work, and of those who have been trafficked and survivors of trafficking.

X. Workers engaged in cremation and burial services

- 4.46. Protect workers at the cremation and burial grounds and their families from the risk of contracting COVID-19 and discrimination.
- 4.47. Consider providing full family health insurance to meet the additional COVID-19 risk.
- 4.48. District Magistrates and Municipal Authorities may issue clear orders to ensure that PPE kits are provided to all workers associated with cremation and burial services, free of cost and regularly.

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