

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE CORE GROUP ON RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND ELDERLY PERSONS HELD ON 12th JANUARY, 2021 AT 11: 00 AM THROUGH GOOGLE MEET.

A virtual meeting of the Core Group on Disability and Elderly Persons was held on 12th January, 2021 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. under the chairmanship of Dr. D.M.Mulay, Hon'ble Member, NHRC. The meeting was attended by the Core Group Members, representatives from the Union Ministry and other government institutions, special invitees, domain experts, civil society organizations. This was the third meeting of the Core Group after its reconstitution in 2018. The list of participants is annexed (**Annexure-I**)

Shri R.K. Khandelwal, Joint Secretary (Admin & Research), NHRC, welcomed all the participants and gave a brief introduction of the prior meetings of the Core Group conducted on various issues.

Shri Bimbadhar Pradhan, Secretary General, NHRC, in his opening remarks shared some relevant data related to the status of Persons with Disabilities (PwD). He also explained some identified constraints/ issues that are considered as impediments in fulfilling the needs of the Persons with Disabilities viz,

1. Adequate budgetary allocation to cater to the needs of the Persons with Disabilities
2. Accessibility to all public institutions, buildings and spaces
3. Accessibility to all means of transportation
4. Access to special schools for children and persons with disabilities
5. Lack of employment and financial assistance for self employment, etc.

Dr. D.M.Mulay, Hon'ble Member, NHRC, greeted all the participants and recognized that as a country we have come a long way in order to protect and promote the rights of the vulnerable sections in terms of legislation and action taken but problems are still being faced, particularly by persons with disabilities and elderly persons. He further added that NHRC is fully committed and aims to make consistent efforts to achieve that goal.

Dr. M.D.S. Tyagi, Joint Director (Research), Introduced all the Core Group members, special invitees and representatives from the Government of India and moderated the meeting of the Core Group.

Major Points/Recommendations emanated out of the discussion are as follows:

Agenda I - Inclusive Public Spaces

1. In order to achieve the target to develop an accessible physical environment, transport, information and communication ecosystem, there is a need to conduct regular accessibility audit and assessment of the Public Infrastructure of all the States/UTs.
2. Periodical inspection of buildings as per the norms of Universal Design by making the buildings and institutions disabled friendly.

3. There is a general budgeting in each Ministry, each department to have a separate budget dedicated to cater the needs of Persons with Disabilities.
4. Adequate mechanism needs to be developed in context of providing disability certificates online.
5. Considering the unsatisfactory achievement of targets in the domain of transport accessibility a special attention is required to make the infrastructure of Airports, Railways and road transport more universal.
6. Progress should be made in training people for Sign language Interpretation.
7. Hospitals to fulfil the post of clinical psychologists in order to assess the nature of disability and differentiating between various kinds of disabilities and intellectual impairment.
8. Rehabilitation Council of India to take an initiative of training persons for providing services of a caregiver to Persons with Disabilities and Elderly Persons.
9. For awareness programs, an online module should be prepared and disseminated as it can do better as it reaches directly at the home of Person with Disabilities.
10. Use of simplified mechanisms while filling examination form, employment opportunities, necessary identity and official documents.
11. For already available services for Persons with Disabilities they have to run from pillar to pillar, this should be reduced.
12. All the public websites, especially official websites of government services should be updated and made accessible (if they are not).
13. Recommendation: Hon'ble Member put forth that the Commission should conduct Statewise auditing to see the level of implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Since the RPwD Act that all public buildings should be made accessible by 2022, States should be asked to submit status reports on accessibility and make sure that public spaces and buildings are made accessible.

Agenda 2- Repealing of the National Trust Act,1999

1. The National Trust Act,1999 has been a big support for the most vulnerable even amongst the disability sector, which are, persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Intellectual Disabilities and Multiple Disabilities.
2. As informed by Mr. U.K. Shukla, Programme Director, National Trust, as on 12th January, 2020, a strong letter of recommendation to the Hon'ble Prime Minister has been sent by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment with facts and figures to support the work of the National Trust and the budget of the Trust has been doubled this year. It may be noted that no further action on the merging or winding up of the National Trust Act has been taken

and the National Trust will continue to function in its entirety. Even if the Act is repealed, it will be modified to cater to the present requirements of the persons with disabilities.

3. Major Recommendation: Strengthening of the National Trust is of immediate necessity. Key posts in the National Trust have been vacant for a very long time. There is a need of National Trust to look into the matters pertaining to the issues of guardianship of Persons with disabilities and follow up needs to be done to look at the implementation of the legal and welfare schemes under the National Trust.

Agenda 3- Elderly Abuse during the time COVID-19 Pandemic

1. Senior Citizens Associations are in most parts of the country. Therefore, a linkage needs to be created among all Senior Citizens Associations of the country to strengthen support for the elderly and create a strong database.
2. One stop Centres for elderly to be created for immediate support especially for the elderly population living in rural areas.
3. Evaluation of preparedness of old age facilities should be made including minimum standards of care such as training of staff, mandatory registration of old age persons.
4. National Commission for helping and directly dealing with issues of senior citizens should be constituted which should function to review and assess implementation of provisions made for senior citizens.
5. State action plan to be prepared by each and every state to ensure rights of senior citizens.
6. 24X7 Helpline at the national level shall be created to provide immediate assistance to elderly persons to ask for help and necessary support.
7. State to create a portal to provide information to senior citizens regarding their rights and receive and forward complaints to the tribunal for further course of action.
8. NHRC to prepare a guideline which should include the involvement of various stakeholders, guidelines for mobilization of CSR fund, treatment and opportunities for senior citizens.
9. The pension paid to elderly persons retired from Non- Government organizations is 1000/- Rs. only which is insufficient for a person to fulfil his basic needs. Therefore, revision in the pension scheme for persons retired from non- government organization needs to be made.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NHRC Officials

1. Dr. D. M. Mulay, Hon'ble Member, NHRC-Chair
2. Shri Bimbadhar Pradhan, Secretary General
3. Shri Surajit Dey, Registrar (Law)
4. Shri Ram Krishna Khandelwal , Joint Secretary (A&R)
5. Smt. Anita Sinha, Joint Secretary (P&T)
6. Dr. M.D.S. Tyagi, Joint Director (Research)
7. Shri Arun Kumar Tewari, Section Officer (Research)
8. Ms. Prashansa Pandey, Junior Research Consultant
9. Ms. Smriti Pandey, Junior Research Consultant
10. Mr. Maninder Singh , Junior Research Consultant
11. Mr. Masroof Anwer, Junior Research Consultant

Core Group Members

1. Shri Rajive Raturi, Special Monitor, NHRC
2. Dr. Manjari Tripathi, Professor Neurology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences
3. Dr. K.R. Gangadharan, Director, Heritage Foundation
4. Dr. S. Siva Raju, Deputy Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad Campus
5. Shri Inder Mohan Bhalla, President, All India Senior Citizens' Confederation (AISCCON)
6. Dr. Abha Chaudhary, Chairperson, ANUGRAHA
7. Shri Kavindra Gill, Advocate
8. Shri V. Sundharesan, Advocate

Representative of Union Ministries/Government Bodies and Special Invitees

1. Mr. Bharat Lal Meena, Director, Senior Citizens, Dept. of Social Justice and Empowerment, MoSJ&E
2. Mr. U.K. Shukla, Programme Director, National Trust, Dept. of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities
3. Ms. Swati Sharma, Asst. Director, Disability, Dept. of Social Welfare, Govt. of NCT of Delhi
4. Ms. Mala Srivastava, Welfare Officer, Dept. of Social Welfare, Govt. of NCT of Delhi
5. Dr. H.C. Sridhara Channakeshava Ranga Reddy, Dy. Director (OACD), National Institute of Social Defence

Special Invitees

1. Mr. Anil Joshi, Former Board Member, National Trust
2. Mrs. Poonam Natrajan, Former Chairperson, National trust
3. Mr. Armaan Ali, Executive Director, National Center for Promotion of Employment for Disabled Persons
4. Mrs. Parul Kumtha, Member- Forum for Autism
5. Ms. Geeta Castelino, Educationalist/Consulting psychologist/CSR & Mgt Advisor
6. Mr. Sudhakar Pillai Pakkad, PARIVAAR-NCPO