



# राष्ट्रीय मानव अधिकार आयोग, भारत NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, INDIA



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## NHRC issues three more Advisories to the Centre, States and UT Administration calling for specific action within four weeks on the issues of mental health, bonded labourers and migrant informal sector workers in view of adverse impact of Covid-19 pandemic

New Delhi, 01/06/2021

The National Human Rights Commission, NHRC India, keeping in view the adverse effects of the pandemic on different sections of society, has issued three more Advisories to the Centre, States and Union Territory Administration as part of its 2.0 series of Covid-19 pandemic Advisories. These are: Right to Mental Health, Identifying Release and Rehabilitate Bonded Labourers and Safeguarding the Rights of Informal Workers during the pandemic.

The Commission, in a letter through its Secretary General, Mr. Bimbadhar Pradhan to the Secretaries of Union Ministries of Health and Family Welfare, Labour & Unemployment, Women & Child Welfare, Chief Secretaries of States and Administrators of Union Territories, has asked for the implementation of its recommendations in the Advisories and the action taken report within four weeks.



The Commission has observed that the issues that arose during the pandemic have led to adverse mental health outcomes, particularly among the vulnerable groups. Accordingly, the Advisory on right to mental health has

focused on the ten key areas of required action. These are: Access to Mental Health Care, Dissemination of Information, Awareness, Grievances redressal & Review Board, Extending outreach of mental health support, Support for special groups, Suicide prevention, Health Insurance, Media sensitivity in reporting, Promoting research.

For more details, please see the link to the Advisory: **[click here to view/download advisory](#)**

On the issue of rights violation of the bonded labourers during the pandemic, the Commission has observed that the second wave has deepened their existing problems, which makes them more vulnerable and easier target for human trafficking. Bonded labourers are prone to severe medical problems, which can add to the existing threat of the second wave of the Covid-19. Thus, it is important that governance at all levels must be prepared in ensuring that medical resources are provided to the bonded labour community in this existing pandemic that has already claimed so many lives.

In the Advisory on Identifying Release and Rehabilitate Bonded Labourers, the Commission, besides the specific recommendations divided into the five key categories of prevention, identification, rescue, rehabilitation & repatriation and legal aid to the district administration, has given eleven specific recommendations to the Centre and State Government and UT Administration, some of which are as under:

1. Principal Secretary, Labour Department, to appoint a State Nodal Officer not below the rank of Under Secretary to coordinate with the Ministry of Labour and Employment for status on submitted proposals and reimbursement of cash assistance under various components of Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourer, 2016.
2. The Ministry of Labour & Employment should consider immediate disbursement of fund if the procedures are duly followed by the state governments.
3. The district administration should ensure immediate cash and travel assistance to released bonded labourers, post rescue.
4. The State Labour Department shall create a helpline number connected with the labour officials in the district, to provide immediate help to labourers in distress at workplaces.
5. The State Government should arrange virtual trainings for the State/ District officials working on bonded labour issues at least twice in a calendar year;
6. State Government should maintain a database of bonded labour rescued and rehabilitation.



7. The Chief Secretary may issue directions to the concerned department to prepare a State Action Plan for preventing and rehabilitating victims of bonded labour and labour trafficking during the Covid-19 pandemic.

8. The Union Labour Ministry and State Labour Departments should update their websites regularly and ensure that data is properly managed with updated information.

9. The Chief Secretary of the State to issue letters to all DMs/DCs and get an updated list of the Functional Vigilance Committees at District/Sub-Divisional level.

10. Efforts should be made by the District Administration to work closely with the Education Department to encourage enrollment of children into schools, to minimize the number of children falling out of education system and into child labour.

For more details, please see the link to the Advisory: **[click here to view/download advisory](#)**

Further, expressing serious concern over the condition of informal workers, the NHRC has observed that with the closure of employment opportunities in urban areas due to lockdowns, most informal workers or unorganized sector workers, also migrants into towns and cities of India, are severely impacted. With huge reverse migration in the first wave and disruptions in the agricultural value chains over the year, COVID-19 has impacted the rural economy and the livelihoods of informal and agricultural workers in rural areas too.

It has further noted that all evidence points to a deep economic crisis of job loss, reduced wages, shrinking of economy and manufacturing sector. In the report titled 'State of Working India 2021: One year of COVID-19' (2021) twenty-three crore Indians have been pushed into poverty in past one year. These are families primarily in the informal sector.

Accordingly, the Commission's Advisory in safeguarding rights of informal workers is focused on two key areas of action. These are: Protecting migrant workers in transit and Enhancing employment and socio- economic security for informal workers.

For more details, please see the link to the Advisory: **[click here to view/ download advisory](#)**

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Last Updated: **01 Jun 2021**

