To, Dated:13th July’2020

Mr. Nagendra Nath Sinha,

Secretary,

Ministry of Rural Development( MoRD)

Govt. Of India

**Sub:** **Appeal for immediate notification of additional 50 days over and above the 100 days in NREGA, across the country, in view of the national disaster caused by Covid-19 pandemic**

Dear Mr. Sinha,

As you are aware, the countrywide lockdown has resulted in unprecedented economic distress. Migrant workers appear to have faced the maximum brunt of the lockdown. Millions have suffered due to non-payment of wages and loss of jobs. This in turn has meant that a large section of the unorganised labour force have been pushed to return to their villages.

In these circumstances, NREGA is a lifeline and a potent option to stave off acute economic crisis in the rural areas. We welcome the timely move of additional budgetary allocation for NREGA by the Government of India. While the supplementary budget will be useful to run the programme for a few months, it is important that workers get additional income opportunities through the programme to cope with their huge losses.

As per the official Management Information System( MIS) for NREGA, the number of households that demanded work in June 2020 was 70 percent more than it was the same month last year. The data also shows that about 1.4 Lakh Households have already exhausted their 100 days. Even though the employment generation under NREGA picked up pace since May, it is still falling short to meet the full demand for work. One in every five households that demanded employment in June 2020 did not get any work.

Section 4.2.3 of the NREGA Master Circular 2019-20 has enabled the Ministry Of Rural Development( MoRD) to notify 50 days of additional unskilled manual work, over and above the existing provision of 100 days, for all job card holding households residing in areas hit by drought or any other natural calamity.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a severe calamity and has caused massive disruptions in the lives of the poor. Considering the current pandemic situation as a national disaster, we seek your urgent attention. We urge you to take necessary steps in notifying additional 50 days of unskilled manual work for the rural households across the nation. This way each household would have the option of at-least 150 days of NREGA work this year.

We trust that you would appreciate the need for such a step at this juncture and hope that you would agree to this request.

Regards

Anuradha, Richa and Mukesh

(On Behalf of NREGA Sangharsh Morcha)