



National Dalit Watch

National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights

An Appeal by Dalits and Adivasis to the Central Government in the view of Covid-19

To
Hon. Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister, Govt of India
E Block, E Block, Central Secretariat
New Delhi, Delhi 110011

23 March 2020

Subject: An Appeal by Dalits and Adivasis to the Central government in view of Covid-19

Dear Shri. Narendra Modi ji,

Greetings!

In the wake of lockdown across 75 districts of India announced today in view of the increasing cases of Covid-19, today, the 22nd March 2020,

Acknowledge and commend the timely efforts of the Central government to contain the spread of coronavirus;

Recognising that a disaster and the Covid-19 doesn't recognise caste, class, gender, age differences, but a majority of informal sector workers are casual, self-employed, and migrant population, most of whom hail from Dalit, Adivasi, Pasmada and Bahujan communities; and the transgender communities, sharing congested spaces and live in slums and ghettos with severely restricted means of sanitation and hygiene makes home quarantine an almost impractical measure to contain the virus;

Knowing that these communities are not well provisioned and have limited capacity to stock essential commodities in case the situation becomes graver in the coming days, owing to uncertainty of livelihood;

Recognising and upholding the humanitarian principles of Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality and Independence, and invoking the Constitutional principles and international human rights commitments, the SDGs, the Core Humanitarian Standards and Sphere Standards;

We the Dalits, Adivasis and members from other marginalised communities and concerned citizens appeal to the Central Government to:

1. Ensure that all preventive measures and actions are equitable, inclusive, non-discriminatory, and dignified.
2. Institute inclusive relief measures through relief packages (food stocks etc), and social security measures (pensions), unemployment allowances – till the pandemic passes for marginalised/informal sector/ self-employed/ casual workers.
3. Enhance the number of testing centres and its capacity to ensure that samples are taken from all such settlements which typically accommodate marginalised communities so that the scale

of infections are detected by the States early enough to make arrangements for quarantine and care/treatment.

4. Introduce livelihood support compensation packages and undertake a systematic process of enumerating informal/migrant sector workers, together with immediate relief compensation in the form of direct cash assistance as a well-established practice during the times of natural disasters in India and internationally, to enable them to sustain in the absence of (regular) wage work, to prevent them from distress induced indebtedness and exploitation.
5. Enhance financial assistance for the informal sector workers, those mentioned above and beyond, and create and extend provisions as per the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act of 2008 and the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 to ensure they have access to state entitlements and legal assistance to meet their cumulative needs after having lost or at the brink of losing /restricted livelihoods.
6. Additionally, integrate the losses of informal/migrant sector workers as recognised and described by the corresponding laws, into the State /National Disaster Response Fund Norms.
7. Institute alternative means, in coordination with local authorities and civil society organisations to continue the provision of mid-day-meal, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)/anganwadi services to children where schools and ECCE centres have been indefinitely halted.
8. Introduce innovative digital means of making up for the loss of school days in a safe and confidential manner.
9. Ensure that the designated public fair price/distribution shops are functioning with adequate stocks of provisions as per schedule and enhance the entitlement till the uncertainty over Covid-19 passes.
10. Institute and equip community-based healthcare systems to support and complement regular public healthcare systems to prevent, test and treat the Covid-19 issues in localities that have reported positive cases and fatalities from Covid-19.
11. Ensure the supply and provision of safety kits for sanitation workers in the Government, private sector undertaking at no cost across government and private health institutions.
12. Ensure provision of basic amenities like water supply and hygiene kits, soaps, sanitisers, masks and other essential commodities to every Dalit, Adivasi, homeless, floating population, inmates in various homeless shelters, night shelters/relief camps and slum dwelling population across India.
13. Create greater awareness in local languages about testing labs, free testing and treatment of Covid-19 to avoid private practitioners from exploiting and deceiving the poorest sections by charging money.
14. Put in place accessible and people friendly complaints and grievance registration and redress mechanisms under the designated local authorities to provide and ensure justice along with humanitarian relief.

We, the Dalit, Adivasis and members of other marginalised communities, together with the concerned civil society organisations and individuals from India and the Asia region, seek your attention to some of the concerns and situation of marginalised communities, in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, and appeal proactive measures to ensure their dignified survival is enabled and addressed through Government relief and social protection measures. Towards this, we will be willing to collaborate with your esteemed office and concerned officials to complement the public efforts thus far for the marginalised communities.

Thanking you,

Signatories:

1. Dalit Arthik Adhikar Adnolan
2. All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch

3. National Dalit Movement for Justice
4. Bezwada Wilson, Safai Karmchari Abhiyan
5. RIGHTS- Kerala
6. Ambedkar Lohia Vichar Manch- Odisha
7. Social Awareness Society For Youth (SASY)- Tamil Nadu
8. National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW)
9. Prayas Gramin Vikas Manch- Bihar
10. Bundelkhand Dalit Adhikar Manch- Uttar Pradesh
11. Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD)
12. National Adivasi Solidarity Council (NASC)
13. Odisha Development Action Forum
14. All India Union of Forest Working People (AIUFWP)
15. Centre for Dalit Rights, Rajasthan
16. National Youth Equity Forum (NYEF)
17. Ravi Duggal, Independent Public Health Research Researcher and Activist, Mumbai
18. Ajaya Kumar Singh, Social Workers, Odisha
19. D. Leslie Martin – Dalit Human Rights Activist, Hyderabad
20. Subrat Das, Centre for Budget Governance and Accountability
21. Prof. N. Sukumar, Delhi University
22. Prof. Y.S. Alone, School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU, New Delhi
23. R. Venkat Reddy, M.V. Foundation
24. Nazdeek
25. Pradeep Baisakh, Foundation For Sustainable Development and Climate Action
26. Asia Dalit Rights Forum, India

And counting..

CC:

Hon. Shri. Amit Shah, Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs
Hon. Dr Harsh Vardhan, Minister, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Hon. Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister, Ministry of Finance
Hon. Shri Thawar Chand Gehlot, Minister, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Hon. Shri. Arjun Munda, Minister, Ministry of Tribal Affairs
Hon. Shri. G.V. Sarma, I.A.S, Member Secretary, National Disaster Management Authority

About Us:

NCDHR: The NCDHR, founded in 1998, it is a coalition of Dalit human rights activists and academics with the aim of putting an end to caste-based discrimination by spreading awareness about the rights and issues and converging with people's movements and civil society organisations and the diaspora communities across the world where similar forms of discrimination are prevalent.

National Dalit Watch: The National Dalit Watch (NDW) is an effort spearheaded by the NCDHR, formally instituted in 2010, to respond in an organized and systematic manner to the scenario of exclusion of Dalit communities during disasters. NDW strives to identify, highlight and eliminate such form of discrimination by informing, dialoguing and engaging with the communities, Government and Humanitarian stakeholders, to set in place a just and inclusive system of disaster response, recovery and rehabilitation.

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