

*COVID-19: Key Government
Advisories and CSO Recommendations
for Vulnerable Populations*

*Compiled by Jagori
As on 11.04.2020, 8 pm*



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We have attempted to compile key announcements by Delhi Government and Central Government as well as some references highlighting the analysis of the issues faced by vulnerable populations, government measures and key recommendations by CSOs/ networks/campaigns/groups from different states in the form of letters, press releases and statements.

Key announcements made by the Delhi Government

1. Free ration, with more than 50 per cent increase in quantity, to be provided to over 7.2 million people (18 lakh families) across Delhi. <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020/03/21/delhi-govt-announces-free-increased-rations-for-poor-affected-by-covid-19-restrictions.html>
2. Pension to be doubled – the Old Age Assistance, Financial Assistance to Persons with Special Needs, and the Delhi Pension Scheme to Women in Distress (Widows, Divorced, Separated, Destitute, Abandoned Women). <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/free-ration-double-pension-in-delhi/article31132091.ece>
3. Rs. 5,000 in accounts of Public service drivers – auto and e-rickshaw drivers <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/delhi-govt-to-give-rs-5000-to-each-of-auto-taxi-and-e-rickshaw-drivers-kejriwal/articleshow/74951415.cms?from=mdr>
4. A package of Rs. 5000 for every construction worker https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/delhi-government-issues-guidelines-for-effective-functioning-during-statewide-lockdown/articleshow/74800421.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst
5. Rs. 1 crore to families of health workers who lose their lives <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/arvind-kejriwal-announces-rs-1-crore-for-families-of-health-personnel-if-they-lose-their-lives-while-2204204>
6. Will convert government schools into night shelters for migrants <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/delhi-government-converts-11-schools-into-night-shelters-for-migrant-workers-sisodia/articleshow/74901125.cms>
7. Launch of COVID-19 Whatsapp helpline: 91-88000 07722 by Health and Family Welfare Department of Govt. of NCT of Delhi <https://www.indiatoday.in/technology/news/story/delhi-government-launches-covid-19-helpline-on-whatsapp-to-provide-credible-information-to-citizens-1662749-2020-04-03>
8. For students: online classes, data packages, and regular daily activity SMSs to be sent to parents <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/delhi-govt-plans-for-students-covid-19-lockdown-online-classes-data-packages-1661461-2020-03-30>
9. Free food will be served to homeless people at all the 200-odd shelter homes along with other measures to help daily wagers and needy (to provide food to over 650,000 people) <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/after-kejriwal-s-announcement-free-food-for-delhi-s-homeless/story-AheNtSo0DjL7Heew8XmyRI.html>

10. 'Hunger helpline' set up for all districts of Delhi. <https://food.ndtv.com/news/delhi-government-begins-hunger-helpline-to-ensure-food-supply-during-lockdown-2201017>
11. Meals to be delivered to homes of children enrolled under the Anganwadi/ICDS <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020/03/23/covid-19-crisis-kejriwal-issues-stern-warning-to-lockdown-violators.html>

Advisories by the Government of India to protect the most Vulnerable

I) MoFHW document with advisory from MoRD to all SRLMs

With Regard to SHGs

- SRLMs to encourage adoption of practices recommended by MoHFW and create awareness on social distancing, use of masks, psycho-social issues of migrants, care of elderly people etc.
- SRLMs to enhance production of masks, sanitisers, protective gear etc. by SHGs.
- SRLMs to promote the use of the Aarogya Setu app and encourage all SHGs to do the same.
- SRLMs to universalise interventions such as community kitchens run by SHGs, VOs and CLFs.

This document also contains information about safety practices and how to create masks, the role of community institutions and the National Health Mission's Guide for Frontline Workers.

Link: <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/advisoryMORD.pdf>

II) Ministry of Panchayati Raj document on State/UT level Initiatives at the Panchayat Level

- Lists best practices of the states of Jharkhand, Bihar, Haryana, Maharashtra, Kerala, West Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshwadeep, Chhatisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim.
- Lists information on awareness measures, health practices, isolation centres, food distribution, old-age pension, local interventions, disaster management response, border checks etc.

Link: <https://panchayat.gov.in/documents/20126/0/COVID-State+initiatives+at+the+GP+Level+03042020.pdf/12505a82-3c8f-c75a-fdae-5cbddd0ae58c?t=1585975029688>

III) National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Government of India: Advisory regarding care and protection of children moving with migrant families; children living on streets/Child Care Institutions

- Childline to be operational 24*7
- Measures to protect street children: such as identification, shelter, health check-up, provision of food, water, clothing etc. Immediate relief and support to girl children suspected of being trafficked.
- Provisions and arrangements for children of families involved in seasonal labour.
- Guidelines for protection and rehabilitation of any children found in need of care.
- Measures for children of migrant labourers moving back to villages on foot.
- Measures to protect children in conflict with the law.
- Guidelines for safety of children already placed in Child Care Institutions.

Link: <https://www.ncpcr.gov.in/showfile.php?lang=1&level=1&sublinkid=1983&lid=1904>

Other Links to articles/ videos on government measures

- Measures to fight Corona: <https://www.mygov.in/covid-19/>

- Measures for home-education during COVID-19 announced by CM, Delhi: <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/delhi-govt-plans-for-students-covid-19-lockdown-online-classes-data-packages-1661461-2020-03-30>
- Webinar on Safety and Wellbeing of Women- Interaction with OSCs, WHLs and Women's Homes: <https://youtu.be/VB8kGCjYD8Y>
- <https://www.dvara.com/research/resources/notes/interventions-of-states-in-response-to-covid-19-outbreak/>
- <https://www.thehinducentre.com/resources/article31149551.ece>
- https://www.india.gov.in/news_lists?a616658272
- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/pmreleases.aspx?mincode=31>
- <https://www.investindia.gov.in/team-india-blogs/key-announcements-made-indias-finance-minister-covid-19-relief>
- http://health.delhigovt.nic.in/wps/wcm/connect/doit_health/Health/Home/Covid19/
- <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/21-day-coronavirus-lockdown-key-takeaways-for-delhi-story-QmKdtIgODA062CNh67Q91L.html>
- <https://delhi.gov.in/>
- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061292>
- <https://www.dailyo.in/variety/coronavirus-delhi-government-delhi-under-lockdown-covid-19-story/1/32609.html>

Analysis/Newspaper articles/Opinion pieces/Research reports

- The lockdown has had a massive impact on India's informal sector workers and this timely commentary by **Gautam Bhan** – “**Why the issue of migrant security should be a top priority in India's Covid response**”, explores four possible approaches, focusing on food, income and shelter, for immediate relief and near-term recovery over the next six months. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/view-why-the-issue-of-migrant-security-should-be-a-top-priority-in-indias-covid-response/articleshow/75054748.cms>
- The report by **Jan Sahas** titled “**Voices of the Invisible Citizens – A rapid assessment on the impact of COIV-19 lockdown on Internal Migrant Workers – Recommendations for the State, Industry and Philanthropies**”. By combining an analysis of government schemes, the Jan Sahas database of 60,000 migrant workers in the construction sector, **a rapid assessment survey of 3,196 migrant construction workers in North and Central India**, and brief interviews with five migrant worker families, this report by Jan Sahas looks into what the ground reality for these workers is like, and makes recommendations accordingly.

Key findings:

- Over 60 per cent of migrant workers did not know of the emergency relief measures provided by the Centre and state governments.
- 33 % of the respondents said they were stuck in cities due to the lockdown with little or no access to food, water and money.
- 92.5 percent of the labourers surveyed had already lost anywhere between one to three weeks of work. Based on their average day rate, this translates into an estimated income loss between INR 4,000-10,000 per worker.

- 17 percent of surveyed labourers did not have bank accounts at all. This is in addition to the vast number of bank accounts that are inactive.
- While 55 per cent of the workers in the study said they earned between Rs 200 to Rs 400 daily and had an average family of four to support, 42% percent of surveyed labourers said they had no ration left for the day, let alone for the duration of the lockdown. If the lockdown continues beyond 21 days, a staggering 66 % mentioned that they would not be able to manage their household beyond a week, while 22 percent said they would be able to manage for up to a month.
- 31 % (984 respondents) of those surveyed mentioned having loans, of which more than 79 % believed that they would not be able to pay off their debts in the recent future.

Recommendations for the Central Government:

- Create flexibility in options available to receive economic relief
- Increase the financial assistance provided
- Waive debt
- Make the most of MGNREGA
- Ensure companies maintain jobs and pay full wages

Recommendations for State Governments:

- Decentralise planning and implementation
- Take unregistered workers into account
- Increase the duration of rations
- Collaborate with civil society and the private sector

Use a gender lens

- o At a system level, measures need to be put in place to ensure that women labourers do not lose the assistance they are entitled to, due to a gender bias in counting and the assumption that the male family member is the sole bread winner.
- o Frontline workers need to be engaged to identify and provide emergency support to pregnant women—328 of the labourers surveyed mentioned having a pregnant family member, and half of them said they didn't have enough ration to sustain for the week.
- o With women migrant labourers also being put into relief camps at destinations, menstrual hygiene products should be included as an essential good to be provided to them.
- Take mental health into account <https://www.kamgar-india.org/>
- **The report by Centre for Policy Research titled “A Crisis of Hunger: a ground report on the repercussions of COVID-19 related lockdown on Delhi’s vulnerable populations”** draws on conversations with CSOs with deep networks on ground to highlight key issues and possible solutions. Three key Delhi government announcements are discussed: the deployment of homeless shelters for provision of food, the use of the construction workers cess for direct benefit transfers, and the increase in PDS allocations. Additionally, attention is drawn towards measures under the ICDS and on the specific and acute distress among residents of violence affected north-east Delhi. Further, the plight of migrants trapped inside Delhi who want to return home, is discussed.

Key Recommendations for the government:

- o **Regarding the homeless and migrant workers:** government-run community kitchens; assessment of overcrowded shelters and areas for relocation; identifying meal distribution points; temporary housing with food facilities; providing information on COVID-19 risks.
- o **Regarding direct transfers to registered construction workers:** wide reach of these funds through ensuring a waiver or lowering registration requirements; setting up a CM relief fund to channelise individual and CSR donations to feeding the hungry in the city.
- o Regarding PDS and ICDS benefits: on-demand PDS; better doorstep delivery of mid-day meals; protective gear for those involved in doorstep delivery. <https://cprindia.org/research/reports/crisis-hunger-ground-report-repercussions-covid-19-related-lockdown-delhi%E2%80%99s-1>
- The document by **Azim Premji University** titled “**District Covid 19 Pandemic Response Plan**”, is an attempt to bring together experts & practitioners from relevant fields and to put together a set of guidelines that will guide our work and help Civil Society Organisations, to focus, amplify efforts and provide support to the sections of society that need it the most. This will continue to be work-in-progress as the situation evolves. The information provided is current at the time of release of this document. https://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/SitePages/pdf/District_Covid_19_Pandemic_Response_Plan_1.2.pdf
- In an article published on **LSE’s blog Engenderings**, a Brazilian feminist, **Sonia Corrêa** analyses the trend that emerged in Panama and Peru which, in order to reduce drastically the circulation of people, established a rotation of who can or cannot leave home each day of the week based on a sex/gender criterion. As one of its effects, the measure has led to systematic discrimination against the trans community. As the author argues, we are experiencing a crisis that is also political and bio-political, in regards to large-scale management of the population, as well as to micro-disciplinary devices for the surveillance of social and individual bodies. https://bit.ly/2XqyqkP*
- **Articles on an increase of VAW and DV during lockdown:** There has been a global surge in domestic violence cases as women are trapped at home with their abusers owing to the COVID-19 lockdown. This lockdown has forced many women to live in close proximity with abusers and for a longer period of time. COVID-19 is also a calamity which has caused anxieties, job loss and frustrations. In a patriarchal society, women and other vulnerable populations bear the consequences of these frustrations. Lockdown has been detrimental for the well-being of women and girls, leading to an increased workload and incidents of violence. Trans persons are being forced to fit into gender binaries and face misconduct by parents and relatives during lockdown.

Women and trans activists in have recommended functional helplines and broadening the scope of essential services to include helplines as well as medicines and reproductive health services. Other measures that have been suggested include the constitution of an emergency fund for trans persons, rent support and ration provision.

While violence has increased, calls to women’s and domestic abuse helplines have decreased since women have no privacy and fear facing more violence if they complain.

It is important to have a Standard Operating Procedure defined by the government so that women who face violence can have some recourse and access to sexual health services. Further support for women in distress should be considered an essential service in times of pandemics and natural disasters. Helpline numbers should be identified as an essential service and these, along with messages against domestic violence, need to be included in the campaign being run to create awareness on COVID-19 and its effects.

A slew of recent articles on the issue of the gendered impact of COVID-19 and key recommendations by CSOs, activists etc. can be found at:

- <https://www.indiaspend.com/activists-urge-roping-in-asha-workers-and-other-novel-approaches-as-domestic-violence-rises-during-lockdowns/>
- https://theprint.in/india/indian-women-are-locked-in-with-their-abusers-but-are-finding-new-ways-to-seek-help/393949/?utm_source=TPWeb&utm_medium=Telegram&utm_campaign=TappChannel&utm__twitter_impression=true
- <https://www.asiavillanews.com/article/during-covid-19-lockdown-domestic-violence-cases-double-in-india-37994>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/covid-19-lockdown-spike-in-domestic-violence-says-ncw/article31238659.ece>
- https://thewire.in/women/south-asian-domestic-violence-survivors-in-silicon-valley-grapple-with-covid-19-lockdown?fbclid=IwAR3XCJ0j75DGB6PV0_AHp3dgBNwmnfXGehZgFUhDWv_K4wFTnx6c-j9b2cQ
- https://fightcovidnotpeople.in/2020/04/04/ensure-womens-rights-during-the-lockdown-an-open-letter-to-delhi-cm-kejriwal/?fbclid=IwAR2dnkX58XJRmbHcQeHPDL0DbEwv3oVmzkzdoF2EP_4ekkCqqCZvJwGS6794
- <http://safetipin.com/domestic-violence-in-covid19/?fbclid=IwAR0C2Fp9gyeNANcZIHFXpzJnI14jWZP5X6BLrAJaTmf2KtL8fXJ5VWZuJA>
- <http://feministallianceforrights.org/blog/2020/03/20/action-call-for-a-feminist-covid-19-policy/?fbclid=IwAR3vEEKEOILo7868qdRNRoGGtm0v3dm-WkhmXjh50NVFh86Wjo6QrRC80-4>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/28/lockdowns-world-rise-domestic-violence?fbclid=IwAR1fDar6OOe-ASbflkWRHypZKUKmheKnGQyPvmMet2zfRQ-dkoDWI6QaeGM>
- <https://qz.com/india/1826683/indias-approach-to-fighting-coronavirus-lacks-a-gender-lens/?fbclid=IwAR3utQ6qVuiBJ0wE1K2apugbC3h1z0TtsLwUR9e1eC6JNV26JzwdoOeTN-k>
- <https://www.ideasforindia.in/topics/poverty-inequality/covid-19-what-can-be-done-immediately-to-help-vulnerable-population.html?fbclid=IwAR3ppmRJ4uLddFbPV2r0wx38n0iKCVQQyJD6A-u2RkB0On4BBwTrQNzFdE>
- https://medium.com/@leila_billing/what-does-feminist-leadership-look-like-in-a-pandemic-35b2ee0eb994?fbclid=IwAR3qW5JICxreWudaBC8AFKnkJIU4zZZ8vmXs3_Ly3iulWPYcW5sGEE5qrh8
- <https://scroll.in/article/956326/13-demands-what-the-government-must-do-to-tackle-coronavirus-in-india?fbclid=IwAR2qmRkw9B4RQan1QZvN-kMuwvECqqmUsyKJNEpS900MCiqfmv69wY4AoI>
- https://caravanmagazine.in/amp/health/icmr-little-basis-to-claim-no-community-transmission-covid?__twitter_impression=true&fbclid=IwAR1B33il7crg1D5fCllmvAYqzNCJaGGYTkpPynhI746GHV5RMgx84XmxRvi4
- <https://t.co/0p86IfhC12?amp=1>
- <https://www.unsdgadvocates.org/news/sdg-advocates-statement-covid>
- <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/the-coronavirus-fallout-may-be-worse-for-women-than-men-heres-why/>

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/31/us/equal-pay-coronavirus-economic-impact.html>
- https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2020/03/domestic-abuse-rises-lockdown-france-fund-hotel-rooms-200331074110199.html?__twitter_impression=true
- <https://news.trust.org/item/20200326160316-710uf/>
- <https://blogs.unicef.org/blog/covid-19-gender-equality-5-actions>
- <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/3/statement-ed-phumzile-covid-19-women-front-and-centre>
- <https://idronline.org/the-blindspot-in-our-response-to-covid-19/>
- <https://feminisminindia.com/2020/03/24/covid-19-gender-should-matter-india/>
- [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30526-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30526-2/fulltext)
- <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/how-will-covid-19-affect-women-and-girls-low-and-middle-income-countries>
- <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/north-and-central/domestic-abuse-cases-rise-as-covid-19-lockdown-turns-into-captivity-for-many-women-819653.html>
- <http://safetipin.com/covid-19s-disproportionate-impact-on-girls-and-women/>
- <https://data2x.org/resource-center/gender-and-data-resources-related-to-covid-19/>
- <https://linktr.ee/INbreakthrough?fbclid=IwAR26Ikb8t0gNYHdIimqOiatB1ojI84l1y-sFqIs25Xa4Jx0zY040raywKA>

Statements:

- Over **100** individuals committed to women's and transpersons' human rights submitted a letter to the **Delhi CM, Arvind Kejriwal**, urging him to act in accordance with women rights standards in his government's response to COVID-19.

Key recommendations:

- o A standardised protocol and comprehensive measures for ensuring the health of all health and women relief workers
- o A task force to assess the problems of women doctors, nurses, hospital staff, and para-medical workers
- o Safe accommodation, health insurance, safe transport and home care assistance for women doctors, nurses and staff
- o A fund for women scientists and researchers to be able to work on discovering a cure for COVID-19.
- o Helplines and short-stay homes for victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence during lockdown.
- o Counsellors for women to call to deal with the violence and stress of the lockdown.
- o A legal aid panel for cases of rape, cruelty and abuse to be considered on an urgent basis by courts during lockdown

- o Free education by the government for all girls in schools and women in colleges from dis-privileged backgrounds for a year
- o State government should make it clear that COVID-19 afflicted are not impure or contagious
- o The Delhi government must advertise that the law on prevention of atrocities may be applicable in cases identifying the contagion with people from the North East.
- o There should be no tolerance for Islamophobic speech or practices of boycott, ostracisation or any other degrading practice that attributes the virus to entire communities of Muslims.
- o A helpline for Muslim women preferably run by Muslim women since many Muslim neighbourhoods remain vulnerable to police harassment, and lodging of criminal cases.
- o Ban on the use of sexist and patriarchal language and terms such as “Lakshman Rekha”
- o Recognition of abortions as essential and emergency services.
- o Supply of condoms, pills and sanitary napkins as part of ration supplies.
- o Priority focus on the health and nutrition of pregnant women by the State Government
- o Recognition of the grave risk to all dalit women, children and transpersons including safai karmacharis, and all caste communities in the sanitation sector (formal and informal).
- o Special provisions for domestic workers, daily wagers, sex workers, single women, elderly women, widows such as food deliveries, deliveries of essential commodities and access to healthcare services.
- o Provide extra financial and mental health support for families caring for children with disabilities.
- o Announce a gender budget for meeting the challenges that women and transpersons face during this health emergency. https://images.assettype.com/barandbench/2020-04/a84d6e6f-4851-49e0-8813-55f8fd111ee2/Ensure_women_s_human_rights_during_lockdown_docx.pdf
- **19 CSO representatives** submitted a letter to the **Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani** and other key departments with a set of recommendations for including a gender perspective in policy formulation and emergency and long term support for rural women and vulnerable groups to combat COVID 19 pandemic.

Key recommendations:

- o Ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services, contraceptives, menstrual health supplies, medicines and maternal health care and functional women’s helpline, shelter homes and child help line classified as essential services.
- o Support Panchayats and local groups for ensuring women’s access to water and sanitation, LPG cylinders, food supply to those who don’t have a ration card and access to PPEs to ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers and FHWs.
- o Ensure specific needs of women with disabilities, single women, elderly, transgender community and homeless.
- o Constitute a Civil Society Coordination Committee that will assist government in the implementation of the suggested measures and should draw plans for reaching out to the most marginalized women and groups and also undertake any assessment on an urgent basis. <https://counterview.org/2020/04/06/impact-of-virus-on-women-girls-requires-special-attention-civil-society-intervention-needed/>

- A press release was issued by **Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAM)** to draw attention to some of the aspects of the relief package announced by Finance Minister, Government of India on 26 March 2020. This was released on behalf of 13 representatives – Secretariat members and State Anchors.

Key recommendations:

Farmers

- o Ensure decentralized procurement and issuance of IDs at the Panchayat level.
- o Protect women vendors and farmers against harassment and support for marketing their produce.
- o Institute systems for collection of produce in areas where farmers are unable to reach mandis such as mobile vans.
- o Ensure a robust supply chain of food and vegetables and support farmers for the same.

Agricultural and migrant workers

- o Ensure safe return of the migrant workers many who are women.
- o Free ration proposed by the govt. for over a period of 3 months to be increased from 5 kg to 10 kg as part of relief measures. Extend the relief cover to include all of those who are without a ration card and not covered under the NFSA beneficiary list – women farmers from farm suicide affected households, nomadic and denotified tribe populations residing in peripheries on common lands of villages and other migrant workers.
- o Arrange to provide dry rations under the Mid Day Meal Scheme and the ICDS, and transfer the cooking cost to the bank accounts of the head of the household as per the NFSA.
- o Provide work with all the required medical precautions to enable harvest and procurement of produce through MNREGS.
- o As workers, irrespective of whether or not they have job cards every agricultural worker should be paid wages under the MNREGS scheme and all the pending payments must be cleared with immediate effect. Priority should be given to women headed households, single women.
- o All pending wages of MNREGS workers should be immediately released. The minimum wage under MNREGS should be increased to match the minimum wage level for agricultural workers in the state (around Rs 250).
- o Mobile banking services to give access to cash at village level to minimise people's need to travel to banks.

Single women and women farmers

- o Cash transfer under the jan-dhan account holding should be increased to Rs. 5000.
- o Pensions under government schemes such as Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana and the Shravan Bal Yojana should be given in advance for three months and arrears should be cleared.
- o Small packages and online training for women farmers engaged in livestock management and poultry farming.
- o Recovery of all loans at this time should be penalised.
- o Fresh loans to be made available to SHGs, cooperatives and FPOs to produce hygiene products.
- o Training of young rural women, girls and boys as para-health workers.

- o Use of community centres, public halls, schools etc. to shelter migrants and the shelterless.
- o Increased support for women facing violence and access passes for care-givers of those with disabilities.
- **An Appeal by Dalits and Adivasis to the Central and State Governments in the view of Covid-19; 26 signatories**

Key recommendations:

- o Ensure that all preventive measures and actions are equitable, inclusive, non-discriminatory, and dignified.
- o 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.
- o Enhance the no. of testing centres and its capacity.
- o Introduce livelihood support compensation packages and undertake a systematic process of enumerating informal/migrant sector workers.
- o 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.
- o Integrate the losses of informal/migrant sector workers as recognised and described by the corresponding laws, into the State /National Disaster Response Fund Norms.
- o 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.
- o Ensure that the designated public fair price/distribution shops are functioning with adequate stocks of provisions as per schedule but enhance the entitlement till the uncertainty over Covid19 passes.
- o Wherever mohalla clinics are established, have their strength increased to reach out to urban poor with correct information and awareness drive. Institute similar local community-based systems to support and complement regular public healthcare systems to prevent, test and treat the Covid-19 issues among marginalised communities.
- o 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.
- o 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.
- o Create greater awareness in local languages about testing labs, free testing and treatment of Covid-19 to avoid private practitioners and quacks from exploiting and deceiving the poorest sections by charging money.

- o 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. http://www.ncdhr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2Appeal-_Eng_Covid-19_Inclusion_CM_final.240320.pdf
- A joint letter was submitted by **Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA)** Mumbai, United Nurses Association Maharashtra, Clinical Nursing Research Society, and Nursing and Paramedical Staff Union Mumbai to government officials in Mumbai and Maharashtra regarding safety concerns and other issues of nurses in public and private hospitals in Mumbai, and demands.

Key recommendations:

- o Adequate supply of PPEs and their usage based on MHFW protocols
- o Put in place proper infection control & triaging protocols
- o Formal training when posted in COVID ward or isolation especially when new facilities are planned
- o Hospitals must ensure appropriate working hours with breaks & nutritious meals
- o Accommodation of nurses should be near to hospitals
- o Access to mental health & counselling services
- o Diploma/BSc students & pregnant nurses should not be out on duty in COVID ward
- o In cases nurses are affected, ensure their treatment, care & support free of cost
- o Pvt. Hospitals must adhere to MHFW guidelines & regularly report to MCGM/state administration about no. of COVID positive patients, nurses quarantined & care being provided to the patients
- o Nursing personnel must be included in all state-wide committees of the govt. to ensure their participation in decision-making.
- An advisory for the Centre and State governments on strengthening health systems, to manage the COVID 19 pandemic dated **2th April 2020**, was drafted by **JSA and All India Peoples Science Network (AIPSN)** and sent to the Health Secretary, Government of India. **Key recommendations for state governments:**
 - o Arrangements for Testing
 - o Arrangements for Isolation and Treatment of Mild and Moderate cases
 - o Arrangements for Treatment of Severe Patients and for Critical Care
 - o Addressing Human Resource Requirements
 - o Addressing Human Resource Rights and Safety
 - o Ensuring Supply Chain Management
 - o Ensuring Ambulance and Patient Transport
 - o Engaging community Volunteers <http://phmindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/JSA-on-health-systems-preparedness.pdf>
- An appeal to the government regarding COVID-19 on the occasion of 7th April, 2020, World Health Day by **JSA and AIPSN** during a press conference with speakers from **Sama Resource Group for Women and Health, Jan Swasthya Sahyog (JSS), AIPSN, Right to Food and JSA.**

Various **important issues** were raised on the health system's preparedness during and post-lockdown, specifically three inter-related crises at play at this time:

- o A public health crisis due to gaps in the COVID-19 strategy
- o A high level of stigmatization and brutality in the anti-COVID-19 measures
- o A social and economic crisis precipitated by the nation-wide lockdown http://phmindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/WHD_Press-Release_JSA-AIPSN.pdf
- **Bebaak Collective** released a statement for public awareness and media sensitisation to prevent the spread of vicious communal polarisation at such critical times and appealed to strive together to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. It also urged the government to relieve the poor of the burden of hunger and make publically available the information on no. of available facilities for treatment, test kits and protective gear. <https://www.sabrangindia.in/ann/stop-communalising-covid-19-pan>
- **Right to Food Campaign** released a letter to the PM demanding for urgent Steps for **Mitigation of Impact of Covid-19 on the Poor and Vulnerable** on 19th March, 2020. http://phmindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/RTFc-Letter-on-COVID_Final-2.pdf

Key recommendations:

- Enhance the PDS entitlements by increasing the allocations of food grains by 50%, and also include pulses and cooking oil. Distribute soaps through PDS.
- Relax the requirements for priority/Antyodaya cards.
- Make arrangements to ensure that everyone is able to access their PDS rations through multiple means such as arranging for people to take turns to come and collect their rations so as to not crowd the shops, facilitate home delivery and so on.
- Ensure arrangements to home-deliver the nutrition/meals to all the target groups including homeless, young children, pregnant and lactating mothers and elderly.
- Enhance the old age pensions, widow and disability pensions
- Stop the use of biometric devices/PoS machines for the delivery of access to all welfare schemes as this could be a way through which infection can spread.
- Each urban unorganized-sector worker and MGNREGA worker should be given at least Rupees Three Thousand cash transfer per month for the period of the crisis.
- Make available cooked food to a much larger section of people including destitute, homeless and migrants through multiple mechanisms.
- Make people's access to handwashing facilities (with adequate water and soap) in various places in urban areas – outside dhabas, food shops, metro stations and so on.
- Equip the prisons with adequate food rations and ensure that there is a scope for proper wage compensations for innovative prison labour mechanisms like the one launched by the Kerala government.

The campaign is regularly updating relevant information including data base of govt. orders on COVID-19, on its website **link:** <http://www.righttofoodcampaign.in/home/covid-19>

- Given the global pandemic of the COVID-19, **Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN)** released this statement on **13th March, 2020** and called on the central and state governments to implement special measures to prevent and check against the spread of this virus among homeless and those living in inadequate settlements, who face increased vulnerability, on account of their poor living conditions and already high morbidity. Key recommendations:
 - o Need for improved living condition and access to basic services – Ensure regular clean water supply, water tankers at designated points across cities/towns, sufficient and functional community toilets with adequate water and sanitation facilities, and provide regular cleaning and disinfecting.
 - o Access to improved public health measures – mobile health vans with trained medical personnel who are equipped to respond to this crisis, health camps in areas that do not have access to Primary Health Centres, distribution of soap, sanitizers, disinfectants, and masks (to those who require them), take steps to provide mid-day meals and other nutritious food to children of homeless and other low-income communities and prioritize medical attention and care for pregnant/lactating women, infants, older persons, and those with chronic illnesses from these communities.
 - o Access to adequate information and campaigning including through the use of oral announcements and other means of information dissemination, in local languages, for those who are not literate
 - o Safe Housing – temporary housing and emergency accommodation for homeless and other inadequately-housed persons, develop guidelines on self-isolation for those who are homeless & impose a national moratorium on evictions, demolitions, and forced relocation of the urban and rural poor.
 - o Social protection measures – access to health insurance, social security, and other leave benefits. https://www.hlrn.org.in/documents/Press_Release_COVID19.pdf
- Given the exacerbation of the national situation, including in light of the recent lockdown, Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) drafted a document titled “The Coronavirus Pandemic and State Response in India on 30 March 2020, New Delhi” and is regularly updating it. This is a compilation of relief measures by central and different state governments. Key recommendations:
 - o A national moratorium on evictions and home demolitions
 - o Increase in the number of shelters and provision of adequate emergency housing
 - o Special facilities for stranded migrant workers, Safe and secure transportation services
 - o Free ration and cooking supplies to residents of informal settlements and to homeless families
 - o Adequate and free water supply
 - o Increase in the number of community toilets
 - o Improved access to healthcare for the urban and rural poor, Free packed meals for homeless persons who are destitute, older, pregnant, unwell, have disabilities, and are living with mental illness
 - o Distribution of free milk to homeless children and children living in settlements/relief camps
 - o Guidelines, special facilities, and provision of nutritious food for homeless children/children in street situations living on their own, including protection from violence
 - o Protocols and facilities for isolation and quarantining of homeless people, migrant workers, and those living without adequate housing across the country
 - o Distribution of soap, sanitizers, disinfectants, and masks.

- o Document as updated on **7 April 2020**: https://www.hlrn.org.in/documents/HLRN_COVID19_State_Response_India.pdf
- **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** issued a statement to highlight the most important impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on economic, social and cultural rights of the people and to make some recommendations to States to combat this pandemic in a manner consistent with their obligations under the Covenant. Key recommendations:
 - o Ensure that law enforcement officials respond to cases of domestic violence, that domestic violence hotlines are operational, and that effective access to justice and legal remedies is accessible to women and children who are subject to domestic violence.
 - o Need for States to adopt appropriate regulatory measures to ensure that healthcare resources in both the public and the private sectors are mobilized and shared among the whole population to ensure a comprehensive, coordinated health-care response to the crisis. As the front-line responders to this crisis, all health-care workers must be provided proper protective clothing and equipment against contagion. It is also essential that they are consulted by decision-makers, and that due regard is paid to their advice.
 - o States must make all efforts to mobilize the necessary resources to combat COVID-19 in the most equitable manner, in order to avoid imposing a further economic burden on these marginalized groups.
 - o All States parties should, as a matter of urgency, adopt special, targeted measures, including through international cooperation, to protect and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, refugees and conflict-affected populations, as well as communities and groups subject to structural discrimination and disadvantage.
 - o States should adopt appropriate regulatory measures to ensure that employers minimize the risks of contagion according to best practice public health standards.
 - o Regulatory measures should also be adopted to prevent profiteering on foodstuffs, hygiene products and essential medicines and supplies.
 - o Accurate and accessible information about the pandemic is essential both to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus, and to protect the population against dangerous disinformation.
 - o Need for international assistance and cooperation – the sharing of research, medical equipment and supplies, and best practices in combating the virus; coordinated action to reduce the economic and social impacts of the crisis; and joint endeavours by all States to ensure an effective, equitable economic recovery. https://www.hlrn.org.in/documents/CESCR_COVID19.pdf
- A note has been prepared titled – **COVID-19 Guidance Note: Protecting renters and mortgage payers** by Leilani Farha, **UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing**, April 8, 2020. UN expert stated that while good practices are emerging in a few States, the States need to take extraordinary measures to secure the right to housing for all to protect against the pandemic.

Key recommendations:

- At a minimum, to ensure protection of those living in homelessness or grossly inadequate housing, States must: cease all evictions; provide emergency housing with services for those who are affected by the virus and must isolate; ensure that the enforcement of containment measures (eg: curfews) does not lead to the punishment of anyone based on their housing status; provide equal access to testing

and health care; and provide adequate housing which may require the implementation of extraordinary measures as appropriate in a state of emergency, including using vacant and abandoned units and available short-term rentals.

- With respect to those facing job loss and economic hardship, States must: provide direct financial assistance for or defer rental and mortgage payments; enact a moratorium on evictions due to arrears; introduce rental stabilization or reduction measures; and, at least for the duration of the pandemic, suspend utility costs and surcharges. <http://unhousingrapp.org/user/pages/07.press-room/Guidance%20Notes%20-%20Rent%20and%20Mortgages%20Arrears%20FINAL.pdf>
- **SAAPE Call for Rapid Response from the South Asian Governments to Fight the COVID19 Crisis and to build unitedly long-term public health care for South Asians**, 11 April 2020

Key Recommendations:

- The SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund should be utilised proportionally to provide support and assistance as per the need of any member state. A regional mechanism should be formed to share and exchange knowledge, information and ideas on the status and fight against the COVID19 and express solidarity to collectively fight against the impending danger of the pandemic in the region.
- Investing in basic services, particularly the health sector, to better prepare ourselves to combat challenges that we may face in the future. All the basic services should be provided by the governments ensuring its quality, sustainability and better preparedness for any looming danger. Similarly, ensuring universal social protection for all at the time of crisis is another important step which enables all the poor and vulnerable people to sustain at the time of crisis. Strengthen social protection and start thinking for a new vision of South Asia with all people have a universal minimum income.
- South Asian governments should call for the cancellation of all external debts so that the resources can be concentrated to provide quality basic services to the people. India being the member of G20 must raise the agenda of debt cancellation at the G20 Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors virtual meeting, taking place next week, 15 April 2020.
- The governments should ensure that everyone is supported at these critical times and expenses are paid through progressive taxation on rich who have immensely benefited from the economic growth and neoliberal policies.
- SAAPE call on all South Asian governments to reduce military and defence budget by at least 10% of the national expenditures every year. The health budget should be increased to a minimum 10% of the total national budget.
- The governments must adopt social protection measures such as social cash transfer and distribution of resources and care to safeguard the livelihoods of the most vulnerable as well as the various employees who have lost their source of income due to the COVID19 pandemic.
- The governments must reduce the financial burdens on small businesses and low-earning individuals by reducing VAT and other taxes. This will reduce their burden as they face increased uncertainty during these crises.
- We urge the global political leaders and particularly the South Asian governments to take lessons from the failure of neoliberal policies exposed by COVID 19. The privatisation of the health sector resulting in downsizing and squeezing of public services particularly neglecting the role of the public health system has led us to this situation where deaths are daily occurring, where the elderly are dying in old

age homes without being counted as COVID related deaths (as in UK and France). This is high time to transform the current challenges to opportunities by transforming the global order from the controls of global wealth by a handful of people to developing mechanisms so that the wealth and opportunities are distributed evenly to develop the facilities for essential services.

- There must be curbs placed on the runaway mechanisms built up by the private sector in health care who are not regulated and who take little responsibility when there is a pandemic of this scale and magnitude.
- It is time for a serious reconsideration of where we are headed in the future...are we people-centred societies or are we to be governed and subjected to conditionalities which do not have the agreement of the people? The lockdown has seriously impacted on peoples' access to basic foods, employment and dependence on governments making the decisions without informing the citizens well in advance. While the curve may be flattened due to the lockdowns it is also true from various field reports being generated by civil society organisations that there are hunger, homelessness and joblessness facing millions of workers across the countries. Palpable anxiety is also leading to an alarming increase in domestic abuse of a kind rarely seen. <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article52910>

Other Links to articles/ videos

- Special Edition: Covid-19 and Gender Equality by UN <https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/resources/documents/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women?lang=en>
- COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls by UN Women <https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/resources/documents/2020/04/covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls?lang=en>
- Care Work During COVID-19 Lockdown by Feminism in India <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xubg6iASk0k>
- Women, Health & Covid-19: A Toolkit For General Health, Mental Health & Running A Lean Kitchen <https://thea.care/articles/women-health-covid-19-a-toolkit-for-general-health-mental-health-and-running-a-lean-kitchen>
- COVID-19 Guidance Notes on homelessness, informal settlements and right to housing <http://www.unhousingrapp.org/press-room>

