



The Coronavirus Pandemic and State Response in India

30 March 2020, New Delhi

The global coronavirus pandemic has created an unprecedented situation across the world with states struggling to treat infected persons and contain the spread of the virus, which has no known cure as yet. As with every crisis, the already marginalized, excluded, and discriminated individuals, groups, and communities are most vulnerable and suffer disproportionately – both in terms of their heightened risk and in terms of their inability to cope with preventive measures such as complete lockdowns.

While curtailing public mobility and taking other adequate precautionary measures are critical to controlling the spread of the pandemic, the sudden 21-day lockdown announced by the Government of India on 24 March came as a shock to many. In the first five days of its implementation, the lockdown has taken a huge toll on the nation's informal sector workers, who comprise over 90 per cent of the country's workforce and include homeless persons and migrant workers who have been left unemployed overnight without housing, food, and the means to return home. This has led to a series of other acute crises in the country – of hunger, of overcrowding in shelters and at food distribution points heightening risk of infection spread, and of masses of people walking to their villages from large cities across India – without food, water, transport, and any form of state assistance.

In response to the lockdown, several state governments have announced relief measures ranging from the provision of advance pension, free rations, cooked food for the urban poor, and home delivery of children's mid-day meals for as long as schools are closed. On 26 March, the Government of India announced a Rs 1.7 lakh crore (Rs 1.7 trillion) relief package for the nation, including provision of free rice/wheat and pulses for three months to beneficiaries under the Public Distribution System. The measures do not suggest cash transfers or unemployment benefits for the majority of those employed in the informal economy, the daily wage workers, who are most severely hit by the lockdown.

Protecting the health of the most marginalized should also include measures to address the structural inequalities and entrenched poverty in the country, where millions live in grossly inadequate conditions, in overcrowded settlements, in underserviced homeless shelters, and on the streets, without access to adequate housing and essential services such as water – both deemed as essential prerequisites for protection from COVID-19. Though the scale and impacts of this pandemic are unprecedented, it has exposed major gaps in our social protection systems, including with regard to access to social security, adequate housing, and healthcare, and thus holds valuable lessons for moving forward.

On 13 March 2020, Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN), through a [press release](#), had called for urgent measures to be taken to protect the most vulnerable, especially homeless persons and others living without adequate housing, against the spread of COVID-19.

Given the exacerbation of the national situation, including in light of the recent lockdown, Housing and Land Rights Network would like to emphasize the following recommendations:

1. Increase in the number of shelters and provision of emergency housing for homeless persons in vacant government buildings, community/marriage halls, schools, and hotels with adequate services, across the country.
2. Special facilities for stranded migrant workers who have not been able to return home on account of the lockdown, including adequate temporary housing, sufficient food and water, and access to adequate healthcare. Safe and secure transportation services should be provided, as required, with coordination across states to ensure that those who need to go home can do so safely, without any risk to their health and lives. In this regard, army vehicles could be used to transport stranded and vulnerable individuals and groups.
3. A national moratorium on evictions and home demolitions, for any reason, across all states of the country, for at least the next three months. People should also not be evicted on account of their inability to pay rent/mortgage on their home loans.
4. Protocols and facilities for isolation and quarantining of homeless people and those living without adequate housing across the country.
5. Adequate and free water supply in all settlements and homeless clusters, through additional government water tankers.
6. Increase in the number of community toilets with adequate sanitation facilities; access should be free for the urban poor.
7. Improved access to healthcare for the urban and rural poor, including through regular visits of mobile health vans and availability of free medicines and testing facilities, especially during the lockdown.
8. Free rations/food grains and cooking supplies to residents of informal settlements and to homeless families living on the streets in all cities as well as to the rural poor who are not registered under state schemes and do not have access to food supplies as a result of the lockdown. All food distribution centres must ensure adequate space and distancing between people. Free masks and sanitizer facilities must be made available at these centres. In addition, people who need to reach these food centres should be provided with passes and their movement must not be curtailed on account of the lockdown, as this could have adverse effects on their health, including the very real threat of starvation.
9. Free packed meals for homeless persons who are destitute, older, unwell, have disabilities, and are living with mental illness. Pregnant/lactating women and children in street situations should be provided with special facilities.
10. Distribution of soap, sanitizers, disinfectants, and masks in informal settlements, homeless shelters, and areas where homeless people live.

A few of these measures have been included in state government relief plans. Courts in Bombay and Allahabad have called for temporary bans on evictions, while the Madras and Karnataka High Courts have asked for relief measures for the marginalized, such as free cooked meals, distribution of food packets, and improved shelter facilities. Mumbai, Delhi, and Chennai have announced plans to accommodate homeless persons and migrants who have been stranded by the lockdown. We commend states that are providing free meals to the urban poor and have announced other measures to protect homeless persons and daily wage workers, and hope that others will follow soon.

Given the acute magnitude of this health crisis and the threat of national hunger and deprivation that could result from the lockdown, HLRN calls on the Government of India, at all levels, to ensure the adoption of a **human rights approach** in its response to the coronavirus pandemic, as emphasized by the [United Nations](#) (UN) Secretary General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and various other UN human rights mechanisms. This requires prioritizing the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable, and ensuring that all human rights are respected and protected in all state interventions related to this pandemic. State response to COVID-19 cannot, under any circumstances, justify the violation of human rights, including the right to privacy.

In an attempt to promote the sharing of positive practices in these challenging times, Housing and Land Rights Network has compiled this document of relief measures pronounced by various state governments and the central government in India. While appreciating such measures, we urge the central and state governments to ensure that they are implemented adequately and in a manner that ensures non-discrimination, gender equality, and respect for human rights. All vulnerable and marginalized groups must be able to access and benefit from these provisions, including those facing historic and widespread discrimination such as Scheduled Castes/Dalits, indigenous and tribal communities, transgender persons, and sexual and religious minorities.

We hope this document will help strengthen the development of a more coordinated and robust human rights response to this pandemic that has threatened the world in unprecedented ways. It is only through solidarity, humanity, compassion, and an emphasis on human rights that we can find a way out together.

Attached: Compilation of State Relief Measures in India (as of 30 March 2020)



**Relief Measures Announced by States in India to
Assist Marginalized and Vulnerable Groups
During the COVID-19/Coronavirus Pandemic and Lockdown**

Compilation by Housing and Land Rights Network: 30 March 2020

State	Provisions
Andhra Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free ration and an amount of Rs 1,000 to be paid to families living below the poverty line in the state. • Ration to be made available at the doorsteps of ‘white ration card’ holders by 31 March 2020. • One kilogramme (kg) of <i>toor daal</i> (pulse) to be provided free of cost; to be made available by 4 April 2020. • Daily wage earners to be paid Rs 1,000 to address challenges faced due to loss of livelihoods.
Bihar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One month’s free ration to all ration card holders. • Three month’s advance pension to be deposited directly to beneficiaries under existing pension schemes for older persons, persons with disabilities, and widows. • Scholarships to students of government schools (Classes 1 to 12) by 31 March 2020. • “Emergency Relief Centres” to be set up in Patna and other urban areas in the state where labourers will be provided with shelter and food. For migrant workers from Bihar who are unable to return home, arrangements will be made to assist them. Rs 1,000 crore (10 billion) to be allocated for the same from the Chief Minister’s Relief Fund.
Chhattisgarh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Lump sum’ rice, salt, and sugar to be distributed in the months of April and May to all ration card holders through the Public Distribution System (PDS). Priority to be given to <i>Antyodaya</i> and <i>Annapurna</i> card holders. • Mid-day meals to be provided to children for 40 days, consisting of dry ration, including <i>daal</i> and rice. Primary school students to be given 4 kilogrammes of rice and 800 grams of <i>daal</i> and Higher Secondary school students to be given 6 kilogrammes of rice and 1,200 grams of <i>daal</i>. • To ensure food security of ‘moderate and severely malnourished children between the age of 3 and 6 years’ who avail of <i>anganwadi</i> services, ‘take-home’ 750 grams of ration to be home delivered. • Essential commodities, including lentils, rice, and vegetables to be distributed to indigenous peoples/tribals/<i>adivasis</i> in a few districts in the state.
Delhi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free lunch and dinner to be provided at all homeless shelters. • Free ration, with more than 50 per cent increase in quantity, to be provided to 7.2 million people (18 lakh families) across Delhi.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doubling of pension provided under schemes of the Government of Delhi. These include 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). • Pensions of Rs 4,000–5,000 to be paid to 0.85 million beneficiaries by 7 April 2020. • More homeless shelters to be set up across the city. • Rs 5,000 grant to be made to all construction workers. • ‘Hunger helpline’ set up for all districts of Delhi.
Goa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State government to move all homeless persons to shelters. • Food helpline to be set up to ensure homeless persons in the city have access to food.
Gujarat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free ration, including food grains to be provided for 60 lakh (6 million) families consisting of 3.25 crore (32.5 million) people, from 1 April 2020. • Each person to get 3.5 kilogrammes of wheat, 1.5 kilogrammes of rice. Each family to get 1 kilogramme of sugar, <i>daal</i>, and salt. • Cost of cooking mid-day meals to be paid to families of children of primary schools closed due to the coronavirus.
Haryana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry rations to be distributed to beneficiaries of Angwanwadi Centres at their doorsteps. • Rations for the month of April to be provided free of cost to all Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. • Dry rations to be given to all government school children and those enrolled in <i>anganwadis</i> (state-run crèches) for the period that schools and <i>anganwadis</i> stay closed. • Special financial assistance to be provided to BPL and low-income groups like daily wagers, labourers, street vendors, and construction workers. • A Haryana Corona Relief Fund (HCRF) to be set up to mitigate hardships of those affected by the spread of COVID-19. • A sum of Rs 4,500 per month to be provided, on a weekly basis beginning March 30, to all those registered with the Haryana Board of Construction Workers but not registered under the <i>Mukhya Mantri Parivar Samridhi</i> (Chief Minister’s Family Welfare) scheme. The sum will be credited directly to people’s bank accounts.
Himachal Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Rs 500-crore (5 billion) relief package to be provided to the poor and needy, and Rs 30 crore (300 million) to be provided to construction workers, who are likely to face financial troubles due to the coronavirus outbreak and lockdown. • Rs 2,000 to be provided, as a one-time relief, to about 105,000 workers registered with the Building and Construction Workers’ Board. • Ration, including flour and rice, for two months to be given to targeted PDS/ration card holders. • Rs 160.2 crore (1.6 billion), as first quarter pension, to be released to social security pension holders in the first week of April. Rs 3,000, as first quarter pension, to be provided within a fortnight to about 534,000 social security pension holders, including about 125,000 widows and disabled persons.
Jammu and Kashmir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rs 1,000 each to be provided to 3.5 lakh (350,000) construction workers registered with the Building and Other Construction Workers’ Welfare Board for purchase of ration. • Relief, including in the form of wages to be provided to 2.26 lakh (226,000) workers under the Employees’ State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme.
Jharkhand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Khichdi</i> (meal with rice, lentils and vegetables) kitchens to be set up across the state to provide meals to the poor. • Subsidized ration to be provided in advance to all ration card holders. • All poor and homeless persons to be taken to state-run shelters across the state;

	arrangements to be made for the provision of adequate food.
Karnataka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free food for the poor and homeless to be provided through state-run Indira Canteens. • The Karnataka High Court directed the state government to provide food packets to daily-wage workers during the coronavirus pandemic and also urged the Karnataka Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board to provide remedial measures for the workers.
Kerala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rs 1,000 to be given to all BPL and <i>Antyodaya</i> families, who do not receive social security pension. • Ten kilogrammes of free ration to be distributed to all families (below and above the poverty line); Rs 100 crore (1 billion) to be set aside for the purpose. • Delivery of mid-day meals to children at home. • 1,000 low-cost hotels, providing food at Rs 20, to be opened across the state in April 2020. • Loans worth Rs 2,000 crore (20 billion) to be made available to needy families through the all-women's network 'Kudumbashree' during the months of April and May. • Social security pension of Rs 1,320 crore (13.2 billion), which was to be given in April, to be distributed in March. • Community kitchens to be set up in every Panchayat across the state. • Special arrangements to provide essential items to indigenous peoples/tribals/<i>adivasis</i> in a few districts in the state.
Madhya Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One month free ration to be provided to all BPL families. • Rs 2,000 each to be provided to Scheduled Tribe families in the state, including Saharia, Baiga, and Bhabha families. • A one-time payment of Rs 1,000 to be provided to all labourers in the state through the State Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board. • Food packets to be provided for daily wage workers. • An advance amount of Rs 1,200, for two months, to be provided to all beneficiaries of Social Security Pensions for Senior Citizens, Widows and Persons with Disabilities.
Maharashtra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Aurangabad, shelter to be provided to homeless persons on streets, with arrangements for food and sanitation. • The Maharashtra Labour Commissioner has advised Worker Boards and Labour Departments to issue advisories to employers/owners within their jurisdiction to ensure workers, contractual or casual, are not terminated and wages are not reduced.
Odisha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Rs 2,200 crore (22 billion) package announced to help the poor and needy, including 940 crore (9.4 billion) to be disbursed to all Public Distribution System beneficiaries in the form of Rs 1,000 each. • Rs 1,500 to be given to 22 lakh (2.2 million) construction workers in the state at a cost of Rs 330 crore (3.3 billion). • Dry rations to be given to students of Classes I to VIII of government and government-aided schools for the next 90 days. Primary students (Classes I to V) to be provided 3 kilogrammes of rice per month and upper primary students (Classes VI to VIII) to be given 4.5 kilogrammes of rice per month, through Fair Price Shops/ PDS outlets. • Distribution of old-age pensions of four months (April to July) in advance, to ensure availability of cash. • Five kilogrammes of rice at 1 rupee a kilogramme to be provided to 500,000 additional poor and deprived people. • Take Home Ration (THR) in the form of <i>chhatua</i> (dry roasted and powdered cereal), <i>ladoos</i> and other food, for the month to be provided to children (6 months to 3 years) and pregnant and nursing women, in their households, by <i>anganwadi</i> workers and

	<p>helpers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry ration, in lieu of morning snacks/hot cooked meals for the month, will be provided to pre-school children (3 to 6 years) at their homes. Eggs, as per entitlement, are to be distributed to such beneficiaries, on a weekly basis, at household level.
Punjab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free food, shelter, and medicines to be provided to the poor. Rs 20 crore (200 million) sanctioned from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for free food and medicines for those in need. • Payments of electricity, water and sewerage bills to be deferred, as a means to reduce the economic burden. • Registered construction workers to be paid Rs 3,000 each. • Pensions amounting to Rs 150 crore (1,500 million) to be disbursed to all eligible beneficiaries in the state. • In Mohali, the Municipal Corporation, in coordination with gurudwaras will identify homeless, needy, and hungry people living on the streets and provide food and shelter. Rs 15 lakh (1.5 million) has been allocated for the same.
Rajasthan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A core group to visit deprived and poor sections of society to check on their needs during the lockdown period. • Cash assistance of Rs 1,000 each to be given to 36 lakh (3.6 million) families covered in the BPL/<i>Antyodaya Anna Yojana</i> as well as to 25 lakh (2.5 million) construction workers and registered street vendors not covered by social security schemes. • Free wheat to be provided for two months to families connected with the National Food Security Act (NFSA). • Free food packets to be provided for two months to those who live in urban areas, and are not on the NFSA list, from 1 April. This includes street vendors, daily workers, the urban poor, and other needy people. • Pensions under all social security schemes to be paid by the first week of April.
Tamil Nadu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A relief package of Rs 3,280 crore (32.8 billion) to be provided to those engaged in the informal sector, including construction workers, daily wage labourers, agricultural labourers, auto rickshaw drivers, and, older persons, amongst others. • Rs 1,000 and free ration, including rice, dal, cooking oil and sugar to be provided to all PDS/ration card holders in the state. • Rs 1,000 and 15 kilogrammes of rice, 1 kilogramme of dal, and 1 litre of cooking oil to be provided to construction workers and auto rickshaw drivers, who are members of the Tamil Nadu Social Welfare Board. • 15 kilogrammes of rice, 1 kilogramme of dal, and 1 kilogramme of cooking oil to be provided to migrant workers and their families in the state who are unable to return to their homes on account of the lockdown, sealing of inter-state borders, and suspension of public transportation facilities, after identification and verification. • Food to be supplied through Amma Canteens. • Common kitchens to be set up to cook and distribute food to the destitute. • Special provisions to be made for older persons dependent on food in <i>anganwadis</i>; arrangements to be made to distribute food to them at their homes. • Community halls to be used as shelters run by the Municipal Corporation of Chennai for homeless persons, including homeless families. • Shelter premises to be disinfected regularly to ensure cleanliness. • Homeless persons in Trichy to be moved to 'all-weather' shelters run by the Trichy Corporation where free meals will be provided three times a day.
Telangana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All BPL families to be provided 12 kilogrammes of rice free of cost, immediately. • Cash assistance of Rs 1,500 to be provided to each family towards purchase of other food items.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and pregnant women/lactating mothers to be provided Take Home Ration till 31 March 2020. • Temporary shelters to be provided to the homeless and migrant workers. • Migrants to be provided with a financial assistance of Rs 500 and 12 kilogrammes of rice/wheat flour.
Tripura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked food packets to be distributed to homeless persons in the state twice a day.
Uttarakhand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rs 1,000 to be paid to each registered labourer.
Uttar Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 lakh (3.5 million) labourers to be paid Rs 1,000 each as financial aid to address loss of livelihoods. These include 15 lakh (1.5 million) daily wage labourers, including rickshaw-pullers, hand-cart pullers, and 20.37 lakh (2 million) construction workers in the state. • Food to be made available to the urban and rural poor. Free of cost ration to be provided to BPL ration card holders. • Additionally, families of 1.65 crore (16.5 million) <i>Antyodaya</i> workers, workers bearing Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNGREGA) cards as well as construction workers and small wage earners to be given one month's stock of free food grains by the state government. • Food grains to be provided by about 80,000 PDS stores will include 20 kilogrammes of wheat and 15 kilogrammes of rice. • Old Age, Disability, and Widow Pension to be paid for two months to 83 lakh (8.3 million) beneficiaries.
West Bengal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty-seven 'night shelters', with arrangements for food, to be opened in Kolkata to accommodate all homeless, poor, needy, and stranded migrant workers along. • Five kilogrammes of rice/wheat to be provided free of cost to 8 crore (80 million) people till September 2020. • Packets of 2 kilogrammes of rice and 2 kilogrammes of potatoes to be provided to the homes of children enrolled under the Integrated Child Development Services/<i>anganwadi</i> scheme. • One-time payment of Rs 1,000 to labourers in the unorganized sector.

Measures Announced by the Central Government at the National Level

- On 26 March 2020, the Government of India launched the 'Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana' (Prime Minister's Welfare Scheme for the Poor) with a budget of Rs 1.75 lakh crore (1.75 trillion), including food and cash transfer to address the concerns of 80 crore (800 million) "poor, migrant workers, and those who need help." The scheme includes the following measures:
 - 'Poor and needy' to get free 5 kilogrammes wheat/rice along with one kilogramme of pulses for the next three months, in addition to the ration received by them under the National Food Security Act.
 - A one-time ex-gratia payment of Rs 1,000 to be made to 3 crore (30 million) widows, pensioners, and persons with disabilities.
 - An ex-gratia payment of Rs 500 per month, for three months, to be made to about 20 crore (200 million) women who have Jan Dhan bank accounts.
 - Free Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders to be provided to 8.3 crore (83 million) BPL families across the country for the next three months.
 - An advance payment of Rs 2,000 to be made to 7.3 crore (73 million) farmers across India in April 2020.
- The Ministry of Labour and Employment has issued an advisory to states and Union Territories across India to transfer funds (Rs 52,000 crore or Rs 520 billion) into the accounts of about 3.5 crore (35 million)

registered construction workers through the Direct Benefit Transfer mode from cess fund. The fund is collected by Labour Welfare Boards under Building and Other Construction Workers' Cess Act.

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has directed Municipal Corporations across 10 cities, including Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Indore, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, and Patna to open 'Feeding Centres' for beggars till 15 April 2020.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs has directed all states and Union Territories to take immediate steps to provide adequate support, including shelter and food to migrant workers, including agricultural workers, industrial workers, and other workers employed in the unorganized sector. In addition, the Ministry of Home Affairs has also directed all states and Union Territories to explore options, including relief shelters identified in disaster management plans, to provide shelters to homeless persons and migrant labourers immediately. Adequate facilities are to be provided, including 'drinking water, sanitation, common kitchens, storage' amongst other facilities.
- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has directed all states and Union Territories to provide three meals a day to all homeless persons living in shelters constructed under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (SUH-NULM). Cleanliness, personal hygiene, provision of sanitizers, hand wash facilities, and masks to be ensured and maintained in the shelters.

Note: This is a working document and will be updated regularly, as and when more states announce initiatives. This compilation is dated 30 March 2020.

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