



## NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR SMALL SCALE FISHWORKERS (INLAND)

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April 18, 2020

**Shri Giriraj Singh,**  
Hon'ble Minister,  
Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

**Subject:** Immediate steps needed to resume small scale fisheries activities with reference to the Consolidated Revised Guidelines for lockdown issued by the MoHA.

Respected Sir,

The Honourable Prime Minister of India in his address to the nation on the 14th of April, 2020 has announced that the country needs to extend the lockdown till the 3rd of May, 2020.

The Union Home Secretary and Chairperson, National Executive Committee for Disaster Management, has issued Consolidated Revised Guidelines on the 15th of April, 2020 as per the MoHA Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 15.04.2020 in light of extended lockdown.

The Guidelines under Clause 6 (B) have exempted Fisheries from the lockdown as per the following:

- i. *Operations of the fishing (marine and inland)/aquaculture industry, including feeding & maintenance, harvesting, processing, packaging, cold chain, sale and marketing.*
- ii. *Hatcheries, feed plants, commercial aquaria.*
- iii. *Movement of fish/shrimp and fish products, fish seed/feed and workers for all these activities*

NPSSFW(I) have welcomed the exemptions. But it is strongly felt that there are certain issues that have to be addressed on urgent footing to resume functioning of the small scale fisheries sector –

- A. Absence of clear guidelines for the fisheries sector from 24th March to 14th April 2020 and high handed actions on the part of enforcing authorities resulted in either forcible shutdown of fisheries activities or breakdown of the associated value chain in many areas including both marine and inland sectors. **This, in its turn, has resulted in severe impoverishment of small scale fishers, fish farmers and fish vendors. They do not have provisions for day to day survival, let alone for continuing with their livelihood practices of fishing, fish farming or fish vending.**
- B. **Hundreds of thousands of fish workers working in the mechanised marine fishing fleet of the country, most of whom are migrant workers, are in dire straits.** Disruption and suspension of fishing has rendered them jobless. The boat owners have stopped their payments. They are herded in some boats at fishing harbours with inadequate and irregular supplies of food and water. Far away from their families. These poor fish workers are desperate to return to their homes.



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In light of the above, we place before you the following demands:

1. Immediately provide **livelihood financial relief of INR 15,000/- per month, per small scale fish worker household** comprising of fishers, fish farmers, fish vendors, fish sorters and driers.

For proper identification of fish workers and collection of their bank details the Ministry should requisition **assistance of fish workers organisations like fish workers' unions, associations, cooperatives, fish production groups and SHGs.**

2. Immediately provide **occupational financial assistance to small scale fish workers** assessed and fixed on a graded scale on the basis of types of work like fishing, fish farming, fish vending, fish drying or sorting etc. **Financial assistance** should comprise of both grants and bank loans.

The Ministry should immediately initiate **dialogue with small-scale fish workers' unions, associations, cooperatives, fish production groups and SHGs** for both need assessment and beneficiary identification.

3. Regarding the hundreds of thousands of **migrant fish workers** living in inhuman conditions far away from their homes, the government must immediately undertake measures to ensure **proper food and lodge as well as health and safety** for them. **Safe passage** of the migrant workers to their homes should be arranged. They should be provided with **livelihood relief** as well. There are multiple reports of migrant workers being subjected to conditions which are in violation of the Standard Operating Procedures for social distancing.

In view of the magnitude of **small scale fisheries** of our country in terms of **production and employment** and also in view of its **more sustainable and equitable** character in comparison with the large scale mechanised fishing, we implore you to give the sector utmost priority.

NPSSFW(I), alongwith the small scale fish workers organisations affiliated to it, will be most happy to be of service to the Government as best as we can.

We request you to urgently initiate a communication at the Ministry of Fisheries with the concerned Union Ministries as well as with the various State/UT Governments to alleviate the crisis in the sector. There is a genuine fear that the livelihoods of millions of people in the fisheries sector may be permanently disrupted in want of coordinated action.

Thanking you,

With best regards,

**Pradip Chatterjee,**

Convener, NPSSFW(I)

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