

CITIZENS' ACTION GROUP ON CORONA, ODISHA
STATEMENT ON ENSURING FOOD SECURITY FOR POOR

- **Ensure universal access to PDS and provision of free ration under it**
- **Procure all millets, pulses and oilseeds on war footing and millets distributed to poor**
- **Provide financial incentives to anganwadi workers, ASHA workers and ANMs for the splendid job that they are doing**
- **Immediately release all pending wages of MGNRRGA workers, in cash**

It has been a month since the Government of Odisha enforced a state-wide lockdown in its effort to contain the Covid-19 outbreak. While the lockdown might have helped slow the spread of the virus, and therefore would seem unavoidable and justifiable, it has brought upon tremendous hardship on all classes of people. For a poor state like Odisha, where an overwhelming share of the population live on the margins, it has heightened the risks of people going without food and suffering from prolonged spells of starvation. In this context,, the Citizens's Action Group takes note of an 18-point charter that the Odisha Khadya Adhikar Abhiyan (The Odisha Right to Food Campaign) recently submitted to the honourable chief minister, Shri Naveen Patanik. We endorse the spirit and content of the charter and take this opportunity to highlight the following issues and area that call for action:

1. Immediate enlargement of the food security net for ensuring access to food by doing away with the requirement of ration card or any kind of ID, and distributing it anyone who needs it during the time of the lockdown and until normalcy resumes. We request the State Government to begin unconditional universalisation of PDS in both rural and urban areas, especially for the ones whose ration cards were terminated for non-seeding of Aadhaar.
2. Odisha government has considerable stocks of millets kept at the TDCC warehouses procured under the millet mission. The state should take steps to resume distribution of the millets as it was done few months back. Since Rabi crop harvesting is almost over, immediate steps should be taken to ensure procurement of all millets, pulses and oilseeds.

3. We would like to acknowledge that the Anganwadi workers, ASHAs and ANMs are doing a splendid job both in rural and urban areas, beating the heat and fear. They should be incentivised for their critical role, including insurance coverage, release of their salaries (preferably in advance) etc.
4. Odisha had initially sought Rs 380 crore from the Centre to pay unemployment allowance to 36,10,797 active MGNREGA workers. In the second stage of lock-down the State Government has relaxed restrictions on MGNREGA work, to allow proper flow of work in rural areas. The pending wages must be released immediately along with initiating new MGNREGS works. The state should henceforth pay the wages in a time bound manner preferably in cash.
5. The urban poor, especially, the daily wage workers, street vendors and domestic helps etc are in precarious state. We appreciate that the government providing special support to construction workers and street vendors and initiated the UWEI, however the support declared has been found to be inadequate, looking at the numbers of urban poor in the state. The budget declared UWEI must be enhanced and a directive should be issued that no employers deduct the wages of domestic helps.
6. Thousands of farmers and small entrepreneurs have suffered huge losses due to imposition of lockdown regulations. They have not been able to sale their perishable harvest/produces or stored materials. We urge government to immediately conduct a survey and compensate the losses.
7. The lockdown has massively affected trade circuits across the country, and has heightened distress among farmers. We urge the Government to ensure setting up of regulated mandis to facilitate local trade and sustenance of farmers' livelihood.

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