

Guidelines for utilization of 14th Finance Commission's (FFC) Grants for combating COVID-19 pandemic in Gram Panchayats

OBJECTIVE: In the present difficult scenario in rural areas, which has arisen out of COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the roles and responsibilities of the Gaon Panchayats are to maintain sufficient sanitation in their jurisdiction to prevent spread of viral infection by way of taking various measures. Keeping this objective in view, these guidelines are issued.

Mechanism: 14th Finance Commission grants with 5 periodyears 2015-2020 have mandated for utilization by the Gaon Panchayats to deliver basic services of sanitation besides other services. The last instalment was released on 21st March, 2020.

As FFC grants include sanitation as one of the basic services to be provided by the Gaon Panchayats, therefore, GPs may take up activities to maintain sanitation specially in the event of COVID-19.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of India, has clarified that FFC grants which are presently at the disposal of the Gaon Panchayats, after the previous Financial year 2019-20 ended on date 31.03.2020, shall be utilized during the current Fiscal period year 2020-21 for the aforementioned purposes besides other basic services as outlined in the FFC guidelines and SFC / State Specific guidelines. Oneyear extension has already been allowed in PRIASoft accounting application and to all FFC grants receiving states to utilize FFC grants upto 31st March' 2021.

Keeping the above in view, Gaon Panchayats may incur expenditure not exceeding 10% of the total amount of the 2ndinstalment of 2019-20 released to the GPs on 21st March 2020. However, this cap will not be applicable to those GPs which had already opted for taking up schemes for sanitation worth more than the 10% of the total amount of the said instalment released on 21st March subject to the condition that these have already been included in the Gaon Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and Plan Plus.

Gaon Panchayats may also procure face masks and undertake sanitation works by following below mentioned guidelines:

A) Guidelines for procurement of Face Mask:

1. Gaon Panchayats will have to purchase Face Masks invariably from the Rural Women Self Help Groups(SHGs) only, as large number of women SHGs have been engaged in production of Face Mask by ASRLM and a significant quantity of Face Masks have already been produced by these SHGs. Under no circumstances, they will procure it from other sources without approval from the Commissioner, P&RD, Assam.
2. GP Secretary will submit requisition for face mask to the Block Programme Manager(BPM), ASRLM and BPM, ASRLM, in turn, will engage those women SHGs for production of Face Masks, who have already been trained for the purpose and are actively involved in the business of producing Face Mask.
3. BPM,ASRLM will ensure that these SHGs strictly adhere to the Advisories issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare(MOHFW), Ministry of Consumer's Affairs and relevant instructions issued by the Department of Health, while producing face masks. Under no circumstances any deviation from standard norms of making face mask will be allowed. Besides that, BPM, ASRLM will also ensure that Face Masks are properly sterilized before delivering to the GPs. Moreover, He/She will ensure that, while carrying out the production process, members of SHGs follow the standard safety protocol laid down for preventing the spread of COVID-19, such as, wearing Face MASK, frequent hand washing, maintaining social distance etc. without any laxity.
4. The price for each face mask is fixed at Rs25.00 (Rupees Twenty Five only).
5. Gram Panchayats, will distribute these masks primarily to the Vulnerable sections of 'MGNREGA' Job Cardholders (as these people will work together), old and infirm people (as they are more susceptible), workers engaged in construction of PMAY(G) houses and any other worker not engaged by any

contractor, Sanitization workers (as they are front line workers) and necessarily amongst the Gram panchayat level volunteers who are doing anti- pandemic work.

6. GPs will make payment directly to the respective Accounts of the SHGs through PFMS/ PRIASoft integrated system immediately after receiving the consignment of Face Masks subject to the verification and confirmation of the quality of the product as per standard specifications.

7. BPM, ASRLM, will ensure that all the women SHGs who are trained and qualified for making Face Mask get equal opportunity for producing and selling it to the GPs. Equitability should be maintained in this respect.

8. Involvement of middlemen or intermediaries in the procurement process should not be allowed under any circumstance.

B) Guidelines for Sanitization of Public Places and Public Buildings:

1) To prevent the spread of viral infection, Gaon Panchayats are allowed to take up activities of disinfection and fumigation of village roads, sewage drains and public utility buildings of Schools and colleges, Anganwadi centres, hospital building, library building, community hall, Panchayat bhawan, market place, bank premises, post office premises, CSC premises and veterinary hospital located within the GP.

2) CEO,ZP, of the respective District will issue suitable instructions to the GPs regarding the selection of disinfectant, fumigant including its dosage and equipments to be used in sanitation process, in consultation with the Executive Engineer, PHE, Joint Director of Health and District Agricultural Officer of the District. GPs will carry out entire sanitation operation under the guidance and supervision of the local officials of PHE and Health Department.

3) Considering the emergency situation, GPs are allowed to purchase these disinfectants and fumigants at market rate as per their requirement in

consultation with PHE Deptt., Health Deptt. And Municipal Authority of the District.They will also explore the possibility of using spraying and fumigation equipments available with the departments of Agriculture, Health or PHE. In the event of non availability of such equipments with these departments, GPs will locally arrange to hire it.

4) GPs will have to maintain proper documentation and photographic evidence of all sanitation activities and will make all payments through PFMS-PRIASoft integrated system.

Gaon Panchayats will effect necessary changes in the Gaon Panchayat Development Plan(GPDP) of the FY 2019-20 to incorporate schemes under these activities, wherever felt necessary. However, they will have to obtain post facto approval of it from Gram Sabha as soon as the Nationwide lockdown is lifted and normalcy returns or permission is granted to hold Gaon Sabha, whichever is earlier.

Action taken report in this regard should be sent to the Office of the Commissioner, Panchayat & Rural Development, Assam by the Chief Executive Officer, Zilla Parishad in a compiled way covering all GPs of the District.