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of:

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

ABSTRACT

BONDED LABOUR - Rehabilitation of Bonded Labour - Guidelines of Government of India - communicated.

SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT

Dated: 22-9-82

O.Ms.No.2273

Read:

From the Government of India, Ministry of Labour,
D.O.letter No.S-11011/20/82-BL, dated 3-9-82.

ORDER:

Recorded.

2. Copy of the letter together with the "Blue Print on Rehabilitation of Bonded Labour" is communicated to the Director of Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare, Madras and all Collectors for information and guidance.

3. A copy of the guidelines of the Government of India, Ministry of Labour, for drafting schemes is also enclosed for information.

(BY ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR)

J.ANJANI DAYANAND
COMMISSIONER & SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT

To:
The Director of Adi Dravidar & Tribal Welfare, Madras-5(w.e.)
All Collectors.(w.e.)
Copy to: The Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Labour, New Delhi.

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sd/- Section Officer.

Section Officer

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of D.O.No.S-11011/20/82-B L, dated the 2nd September,
from the Secretary, Ministry of Labour, New Delhi
addressed to the Chief Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu,
St. George, Madras-9.

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Dear Diraviam,

In Labour Minister's D.O. letter No.U-11016/

82-B1, dated the 24th May, 1982 to your Chief Minister, a
note indicating the methodology and the various agencies
which we could think of for identification of bonded labour
and for securing their immediate release from debt bondage was
enclosed. We had emphasised that such identification in the
current socio-economic milieu is an extremely difficult task
that it requires massive efforts and involvement of various
agencies, i.e. Government, non-Government, individuals and
institutions dedicated to the cause of labour and that the
selection of agencies must be done by the State Government with
great care. We had also stressed that fresh efforts towards
identification must begin and continue with full momentum till
all the bonded labourers have been identified and released within
a specified time frame.

2. Being greatly encouraged by the positive
response from some of the State Governments to Labour Minister's
letter above, I write now on the next and the most important
subject after identification i.e. rehabilitation of freed
bonded labourers. The enclosed note explains at great length
as to how to make rehabilitation more purposeful by integration
of various schemes and programmes. The concept of rehabilitation
as spelt out in the note, has four main features. They are
detailed below:-

(i) Psychological rehabilitation must go side by side
with physical and economic rehabilitation.

(ii) The physical and economic rehabilitation has 15
major components namely allotment of housesites
and agricultural land, land development, provision
of low cost dwelling units, agriculture, provision
of credit, horticulture, animal husbandry, training
for acquiring new skills and developing existing
skills, promoting traditional arts and crafts,
provision of wage employment and enforcement of minimum
wages, Collection and processing of minor forest produce,
health medical care and Sanitation, supply of essential
commodities, education and children of bonded labourers
and protection of civil rights;

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are not drawn from different for the same purpose, funds drawn from different sectors for different components of the rehabilitation scheme are integrated skillfully; and

- (iv) While drawing up any scheme/programme of rehabilitation of freed bonded labour, the latter must necessarily be given the choice between the various alternatives for their rehabilitation and such programme should be finally selected for execution as would need the total requirements of the families of freed bonded labourers to enable them to cross the poverty line on the one hand and to prevent them from sliding back to debt, bondage on the other.

3. Such integration, in our opinion, is essential not only in the interest of securing a better livelihood for the freed bonded labourers, but also to help them to regain the dignity, beauty and worth of human existence. Since the Collector of the District happens to be the ~~Chairman~~ Chairman of the District Level Vigilance Committee as also the Chairman of the District Rural Development Agency, such integration will be possible if some amount of initiative himself.

4. Against this background we would request you to kindly give a serious thought to this and make sincere efforts with a view to achieving integration of the various schemes i.e. central schemes, centrally sponsored schemes and the ongoing schemes of the State Government for a better and more meaningful rehabilitation of the freed bonded labourers. We would be happy to have your reaction to the suggestions contained in the note.

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A BLUE PRINT ON
REHABILITATION OF FREED BONDED LABOURERS

Rehabilitation of bonded labourers is one of the items in the revised 20 Point Programme of Government of India announced on 14-4-1982. The task of simultaneous identification, release and rehabilitation of these labourers is enormous and has been engaging the constant attention of Central and State Governments concerned even since the enactment of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. The urgency and yet the complex nature of this problem would be evident from the reply to the debate on the Bonded Labour System Abolition Bill in the Lok Sabha by the Labour Minister on 27-1-1976. "Socio-economic legislation is bound to be reduced to a dead letter, if appropriate follow up steps are not taken on the economic and social front". Analysing the economic problems which a bonded labour would face on being freed, the Minister had observed:

"He will not have inputs for production or any supply of credit, he will neither have any professional skill that would enable him to pursue an independent livelihood. If he were installed in a profitable activity, he will have no income during the period of gestation. The freed labourer who is used to a world of domination and exploitation will not obviously be aware of his rights. At the same time he may not even like to undergo the strenuous process of economic rehabilitation and may even prefer reversion to thralldom".

These indeed are some of the real challenges facing the planners and administrators even today, six years after the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) act, 1976 was passed in the houses of Parliament.

It is against this background that the Ministry of Labour has been constantly addressing, itself and the State Governments concerned on the need for planning and implementing schemes of rehabilitation of the bonded labour immediately after release from debt bondage, taking into account his special needs and characteristics. After recognising the limitations of various ongoing schemes and on the persistent demand from several quarters including the Ministry of Labour, the planning Commission approved the idea of having a Centrally Sponsored Scheme and also the outlay of Rs. 94.64 lakhs in 1978-79, Rs. 53.62 lakhs in 1979-80, Rs. 198.93 lakhs in 1980-81 and Rs. 80.41 lakhs in 1981-82. The objective of having a Centrally Sponsored Scheme was to give a matching grant to the State Governments to provide seed capital to the beneficiaries. The Ministry of Labour has also sent to all the State Governments the guidelines for preparing schemes of rehabilitation by a circular letter No. Y.11011/(1)/80 dated 30-5-1978. The existing Centrally Sponsored Scheme for

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rehabilitation of bonded labour (which is a Plan Scheme) provide for a total subsidy of Rs. 4000/- per released bonded labourer, 50% of which is given as Central assistance, the remaining 50% being met by the concerned State Government. The Planning Commission has approved a total outlay of Rs. 25 crores for the Sixth Plan period (1980-85). Such assistance includes allotment of agricultural land, house sites, provision of income generating units like milch animals i.e. cows/buffaloes, other animal husbandry units like sheep, goats, mules, poultry, etc. provision of agricultural implements and inputs, assistance for promotion of crafts/skills like carpentry, blacksmithy, weaving, tailoring, knitting, etc. The State Governments concerned prepare schemes for rehabilitation and send them to the Ministry of Labour for according necessary sanction. A Screening Committee under the Chairmanship of Director General (Labour Welfare) and comprising representatives from the Planning Commission, Ministry of Home Affairs (dealing with Special Component Plan for development of Scheduled Castes and Tribal Sub-Plan), Ministry of Rural Development (dealing with IRDP and NREP) and the Ministry of Finance scrutinises these schemes and accords sanction. The State Governments are required to report the progress of expenditure in the shape of monthly and quarterly progress reports and also submit utilisation certificates in support of such expenditure once in every quarter.

This is the pith and substance of the genesis of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme and the procedure for sanction and utilisation of the amount released under that scheme by the State Governments on their side have represented from time to time that the present quantum of rehabilitation assistance is totally inadequate for formulating any worthwhile scheme of rehabilitation and have, therefore, pleaded for enhancement of the ceiling. This has also been highlighted by the Export Working Group under the Chairmanship of Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, former Member Planning Commission to recommend measures for alleviation of poverty. The Working Group too has recommended that as a step in this direction funds under different plan schemes should be pooled and integrated with the Centrally Sponsored Scheme so as to give a new shape or dimension to the schemes for rehabilitation. It is precisely keeping this recommendation in view that an attempt has been made in the succeeding paragraphs to formulate detailed guidelines to bring about an integration between the schemes formulated by different Ministries of Government of India, ongoing schemes of different State Governments and the Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

Different Components of Rehabilitation:

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Psychological Rehabilitation:

This is an extremely difficult and delicate task which has to be performed with great care and diligence. The officials at the village and block level who are directly concerned with the release of bonded labourers have a significant role to play in this regard. It is they who have to bring home the provisions of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, the role of vigilance committees, the various need-based and development oriented programmes launched by Government like the minimum needs programme, integrated rural development programme, national rural employment programme, the tribal sub plan for development of Scheduled Tribes, the Special Component Plan for development of Scheduled Castes etc. For this purpose, the provisions of the Act as well as the various schemes will require to be translated in regional languages so as to make them intelligible to the bonded labourers. Audio-visual shows of the legal measures as well as the various development schemes would be the most effective way of communication to them and in instilling in them a feeling of self-assurance. The State Information and Public Relations Department will have a very useful role to play in this direction.

The freed bonded labourer, hitherto 'an exile of the civilisation' also needs a access to the modern world. He needs to familiarise himself with the latest trends in development in order that he may assimilate himself with that development process fully in due course. He needs an aide, a friend, philosopher and guide, ~~in due course he needs a friend, philosopher and guide~~ who can help him in merging with the mainstream. The Project Workers appointed by the U.P. Government in April, 1982 have come to play

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this role admirably. In all, 54 Project Workers have been appointed by the Tribal Project Authority under the Hill Areas Development Department in the scale of Rs. 250-425. Eighteen per cent of them belong to the Scheduled Castes and thirteen per cent to Scheduled Tribes. They have been recruited from the hill areas to facilitate easy communication with the hill people in their local language and dialect. On an average, each Project Worker has been put in charge of rehabilitation of 150 freed bonded labourers spread over in 15 to 20 villages. He provides a bridge between the needs, urges and aspirations of the freed bonded labourers and the Project Authority on the one hand and the Project Authority and the District Administration on the other.

Appointment of such Project Workers is an example worthy of emulation by other State Governments. While appointing such Project Workers, the following guidelines may be kept in view:

- (1) They should be selected from out of the educated unemployed in the family of freed bonded labourers;
- (2) If not available, the second preference for such selection should be from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families. This is extremely relevant as there is no use in recruiting Project Workers from such families as had bonded labourers at any time;
- (3) Such persons should be selected from among the age group of 25-35 years; should have a good sense of general and social awareness, sympathy, consideration and catholicity in outlook to understand and appreciate the peculiar needs, hopes, and aspirations of the bonded labour. If these qualifications are fulfilled, no minimum educational qualification need be insisted upon. Yet another important aspect of psychological rehabilitation is that the freed bonded labour should be wrenched from the old habitat and surroundings wherever possible and should be rehabilitated at a place where he will no longer be subject to the pernicious influence of the landlords and unscrupulous money lenders of the village.

PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC REHABILITATION

This has the following major components:

- (i) Allotment of house-site and agricultural land;
- (ii) Land development (including irrigation of lands already in their possession and irrigation of lands

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- (iii) Provision of low cost dwelling units;
- (iv) Agriculture;
- (v) Credit (including consumption loan);
- (vi) Horticulture;
- (vii) Animal Husbandry, dairy, poultry, piggery; feeder cultivation, etc.
- (viii) Training for acquiring new skills; developing existing skills; Role of TRYSEM;
- (ix) Traditional arts and crafts;
- (x) Wage employment, enforcement of minimum wages etc;
- (xi) Collection and Processing of Minor Forest Produce;
- (xii) Health, medical care and sanitation etc.;
- (xiii) Supply of essential commodities;
- (xiv) Education of children of bonded labourers, and
- (xv) Protection of civil rights
- (i) Allotment of house-sites and agricultural land

According to a National Survey, 66% of the freed bonded labourers belong to the Scheduled Castes and 18% of them belong to the Scheduled Tribes. Majority of them again belong to the category of landless agricultural labourers. The most important and immediate aspect of physical rehabilitation of freed bonded labourers is, therefore, removal of their landlessness. This has a direct beneficial impact on them in 2 ways namely (i) it enables them to have access to other production units (ii) it improves their social status in the rural community. The latter consideration is specially important for the freed bonded labourers belonging to the Scheduled Castes in the context of their long struggle against economic dependence and social discrimination.

Section 7(1) of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, no doubt, specifically provides that immediately after the bonded labourer had been identified and released, his property which might have been under any mortgage, charge, lien, etc. should be freed from such mortgage and restored to his possession. A strict implementation of the legal provisions would help in restoration of landed property to the bonded labour in large number of cases, where it has not been. In case of bonded labour taking recourse to litigation, the State Government

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must come forward to fully defend the interests of freed bonded labourers.

For the purpose of allotment of house site and agricultural land, three categories of land can be considered i.e. ceiling surplus land, Government land (including forestland) or private land. The Working Group on the development of Scheduled Castes constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs in its report of September, 1980, has made several useful recommendations on the allotment of land and house-sites to the landless agricultural labourers belonging to the Scheduled Caste and these have great relevance for rehabilitation of freed bonded labourers. These recommendations are:-

- (1) It should be the primary responsibility of the State Government concerned to ensure that ceiling laws are properly implemented at each stage till the delivery of undistributed and peaceful possession of the lands to the allottee.
- (2) All lands owned by the Central or State Governments and any other public authority or institutions which are not required for any public purpose and Bhodan and Gramdan lands should be distributed among the landless poor agricultural labourers with due priority for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes.
- (3) Long lease of temple lands, wherever they exist, should be given to the landless, poor agricultural labourers with high priority to the Scheduled Castes. The minimum percentage of Scheduled Caste allottees should be at least 75% in each case and in the State as a whole.
- (4) In the distribution of lands, Scheduled Castes should receive due priority in either of the two ways:-
 - (a) The percentage of the surplus lands allotted to the Scheduled Castes may be fixed as equal to their percentage among the agricultural labourers of the State Plus atleast an additional 10% margin in recognition of the extra-ordinary social disadvantage suffered by them for centuries, or
 - (b) All available surplus lands must be first given to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and only after fully meeting their requirements, should allotments be made to other categories.

The Ministry of Labour has already written to all the State Governments (Letter from Union Labour Minister to

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all State Chief Ministers vide D.O.No.U/11016/10/82-BL, dated 24th May, 1982) emphasising that there should be separate programmes for allotment of land and house sites for the bonded labourers immediately after they are released. This will give them a sense of belonging and will also help in identifying the actual number of freed bonded labourers rehabilitated. We would like to further emphasise that the list of identified bonded labour and the list of these freed bonded labourers assisted with allotment of land and house sites should be cyclostyled and be available with the Block, Tehsil, District, Divisional and State Headquarters.

(ii) Land development (including irrigation of lands already in their possession on lands allotted)

There may be cases where the freed bonded labourer has already in his possession a plot of agricultural land but it suffers from locational disadvantages like undulating landscape, poor quality of soil, lack of irrigation facility, agro-climatic conditions, etc. In all such cases, a comprehensive and integrated programme for the total development of the land holdings of the freed bonded labourers should be formulated so that the grant of land and its development are simultaneous. In other words, any programme for land development over actual possession to the freed bonded labour should go up to improvement of its quality by levelling, terracing, provision of a complete package of all necessary inputs such as irrigation facilities, ~~plants~~ wherever water resources exist and include arrangements for lifting water, plough bullocks, agricultural implements, all necessary production inputs (including seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and credit) so that each agricultural season is put into maximum use. In such efforts, resources from all other developing departments/agencies and financial institutions should be pooled. Resources like IRDP, NREP (on a community basis), special central assistance under the development of SC & ST could also be pooled for this purpose. A freed bonded labourer who has already got some agricultural land or has been newly allotted a small plot of land cannot become a viable cultivation without a comprehensive programme for his land development including a package approach for provision of all services and facilities in less time, easy reach and least cost.

Several demonstration/pilot projects for land development are already in existence in different States. It will be a step in the right direction that whenever such a pilot project is taken up, the freed bonded labourers should be the first beneficiaries thereof.

(iii) Provision of low cost dwelling units.

Next to allotment of house site and agricultural land, provision of low cost dwelling units is yet another essential

component of rehabilitation. The programme of construction of low-cost dwelling units should be based on local designs, local material and local skills. Such a programme can be undertaken by combining the efforts of the State Government who may give some housing subsidy, the agencies executing the work under the N.R.E.P. and the freed bonded labourers contributing their own labour for constructing their own houses. In Uttar Pradesh, about 2000 low-cost houses have been built for occupation of the freed bonded labourers in the hill areas by the joint efforts of the Tribal Project Authority and the U.D. Housing Corporation for Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections, Housing subsidy at Rs.3000/- per house has been paid to each rehabilitated family. Building plans have been made by the housing corporation, building materials at concessional rates have been made available from the forest department/forest corporation and the units have been built by the Tribal Project Authority. Similar initiative, it is understood, has been taken by Government of Andhra Pradesh and group housing schemes have been successfully undertaken. Since N.R.E.P. permits development of house sites and group housing for the SC & ST the experiments in U.P. and Andhra Pradesh could be extended to other states as well (wherever there is need for construction of low cost dwelling units for the freed bonded labourers).

While allotting a house-site on a plot of agricultural land, care should be taken to see that segregation and isolation are avoided and that all freed bonded labourers are rehabilitated in one place in such a way that different communities are intermingled with each other and true integration among different communities is possible. It should also be ensured that common facilities and backup services like drinking water, electricity, drainage and convenient access to the main road, to dispensaries and educational institutions are provided. This is to ensure that each freed bonded labourer has an independent identity, he has also a sense of belonging and a feeling for the community in which he lives.

(iv) Agriculture:

The programme for distribution/handing over possession of agricultural land should be backed by provision of a complete package of various services and facilities such as a provision of plough, bullocks and agricultural implements to the freed bonded labour (this is already being done under the Centrally sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Labour), provision of irrigation facilities by way of construction of Jar bandh near the place of his rehabilitation (this can be taken up under the N.R.E.P. Special Central assistance under the Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub-Plan in irrigation sector) which will have a directly beneficial impact on the freed bonded labour, digging of a shallow tube-well or dug-well (this can be taken up as an individual beneficiary scheme under the I.R.D.P. on an individual basis and under the Special Central Assistance under the Special Component Plan for S.Cs. on a community basis) and supply of

endeavour of the State Government to ensure that all the land holdings of freed bonded labourers are covered with irrigation wells to the fullest possible extent. Wherever such holdings come within the command of command areas, they should be fully covered through channels and necessary physical and financial resources made available for this.

While the broad direction for experimentation and research for the traditional agriculture would come from the Ministry of Agriculture would come from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, care should be taken to see that such research is oriented to develop a farm technology which is adaptable to the local conditions. The research efforts should be particularly directed to meet the special needs of bonded labourers such as their incapacity to make substantial investments, inability to hold the produce even for the shortest possible period or till such time when the market prices become more remunerative (This is true of many tribal areas in the country where due to absence of a proper linkage with marketing, the tribals sell away their produce at throw away prices to the intermediaries who approach them and pay them advance on the eve of the harvesting season only with a view to mopping up the produce at exorbitantly cheap rates). This is also true of Scheduled Caste farmers and others who due to poor economic conditions and dire needs of the family take recourse to such distress sales.

(v) Credit (including consumption loan).

The bonded labourer who generally belongs to the category of landless agricultural labourers, has, even after release from debt bondage to turn up to the various money lenders of the village (some of whom may happen to be his erstwhile masters) for loan which he needs for various purposes ranging from daily necessities to purchase of agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilisers and pesticides etc., social ceremonies such as son's/daughter's marriage etc. The money lenders do give loan but at an exorbitantly high rate of interest (sometimes ranging between 30% to 40%) due to which the principal multiplies very fast. If it is to be ensured that the freed bonded labourers do not slide back into debt bondage, the vicious grip of the money lenders on the village economy in general and on the freedom of the freed bonded labourers in particular must be completely broken.

Since exploitation of persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes beings through extortion of usurious rates of interest (which invariably leads to bondage), financial purchase and sale, credit assumes both a protective as well as a development form. Consumption loan already forms a part of B.Y.M. credit and it bears certain percentage of component (cash loan for agriculture purpose and component 'B' (loan in kind of seeds, fertiliser, insecticide etc.)). The prescribed percentage may be

(vi) Horticulture:

This has a special relevance for the freed bonded labourers particularly in the tribal areas of Orissa, Bihar & Madhya Pradesh. In such areas where the land is extensive and undulating with high incidence of soil erosion, an expensive programme of plantation of fruit trees can be profitably undertaken which besides checking soil erosion can be a source of good income for the freed bonded labourer and his family. In Orissa plantations in hilly areas have been found ~~xxxxxx~~ to be one of the answers to the age old problem of shifting cultivation (popularly known as Podu). Side by side, kitchen orchards on a small ~~xxxxxx~~ scale can also be encouraged by the State Horticulture Department for every freed bonded labourer household having a minimum house-site ~~xxxxxx~~ of 10 cents of land. A shallow tube well or dug well can be taken up with the assistance from I.R.D.P. ground water survey indicates scope for such a well. A kitchen orchard besides being a source of subsistence can also be a source of good income with proper arrangement for marketing of surplus fruits and vegetables in the nearby market. In a State like Himachal Pradesh where horticulture as an economic activity is undertaken on a large scale, it would be worthwhile to instal processing units on a cooperative basis which can provide employment to large scale it would be worthwhile to instal processing units on a cooperative basis which can provide employment to large number of freed bonded labourers. Inlands which are of inferior quality belonging to the freed bonded labourers, horticulture for growing cashewnuts could be profitably taken up.

(vii) Animal husbandry, dairy, fodder cultivation, etc.

In view of various constraints which adversely affect productivity of land and which reduce agriculture to a subsistence based economic activity (particularly in hilly areas, drought prone areas or areas with undeveloped land scope) some other subsidiary activities with alternative sources of livelihood. The one which throws upon the maximum opportunity and possibility in this regard is the animal husbandry sector, such as provision of milch animals, i.e. cows and buffaloes, sheep units, goat units, piggery and poultry etc. The animal husbandry programme has a special significance for the freed bonded labourers belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe. Here again there is tremendous scope for bringing about an integration between different sectors like the N.R.E.P. I.R.D.P. Special Component Plan for Scheduled Caste and the tribal sub plan. Under the existing Centrally Sponsored Scheme for rehabilitation of freed bonded labourers, financial assistance (100% grant) is already being extended for purchase of milch animals, sheep rearing, goat keeping, piggery and poultry etc. This could be supplemented further by the Special Component Plan in the sectors of I.R.D.P. D.P.A.P. etc. This

type of integrated approach for extending assistance to the freed bonded labourers belonging to Scheduled Castes in the animal husbandry sector has been successfully translated into action in some districts of Andhra Pradesh by pooling resources from different sources. Illustratively poultry sheds in a large number (say fifty or hundred) can be constructed for a number of freed bonded labourers under the N.R.E.P. and also the Special Central Assistance under the Special Component Plan for S.Cs/S.Ts (as the case may be) and each shed can be allotted to the individual freed bonded labourer for rearing of a given number of birds to be supplied by the Animal Husbandry Department of the State Government. Assistance could be availed of under the I.R.D.P. for this purpose.

The importance of growing fodder for a group of freed bonded labourers who have been supplied with milch animals is imperative. Such programme can be profitably undertaken under the N.R.E.P. by assigning Government land to a group of freed bonded labourers exclusively for the purpose of growing fodder.

The need for an integrated plan for development of the animal husbandry programmes has been forcefully stressed both by the Working Group on the development of Scheduled Castes and by the Working Group on the Tribal Development during the Sixth Plan period. It has been emphasised that programmes in the animal husbandry sector should not be taken up at random and the beneficiaries should not be brought into these programmes in a haphazard manner. Care must be taken to see that composite programmes covering health services, fodder, feed and marketing etc. large enough to generate incremental incomes adequate to enable them to cross the poverty line are properly devised and effectively implemented so that the beneficiary concerned becomes economically viable as an animal husbandry man.

(viii) Training in acquiring new skills and development existing skills role of TRYSEM

Before contemplating rehabilitation of the bonded labour (after release from debt bondage) through an economically viable individual beneficiary scheme (other than these schemes which do not require much training like a dug wall) under the I.R.D.P. it will be worthwhile to provide some elementary training for the beneficiaries. The training of rural youth for self-employment or what is popularly known as TRYSEM has an important role to play in this regard. For this purpose, a specific exercise by each sectoral department/agency must be undertaken to identify opportunities and the potential in each area for schemes in cottage and village industries, handicrafts, small trade and business and there after to establish linkage with training programmes under TRYSEM is restricted at present to the

certain peculiarities of the bonded labour system i.e. debt bondage, years of servitude, the atmosphere of ignorance, poverty and backwardness and the resultant psychological depression in which he has lived and grown, the TRYSEM will have to be made flexible enough to suit his requirement. The basic objective of such training should be promotion of the basic skill which a person freed from debt bondage might be possessing in a rudimentary form and which might need to be sharpened further. Illustratively, we may think in terms of training in logging which is somewhat different from felling, sawing, some rudimentary items of carpentry which are in great demand, which do not require high skill and yet, which if properly executed can be remunerative and can satisfy their creative instinct to a great extent. Provision of tools which forms an inseparable part of such training will have to be made free of cost. Along with provision of training, care must be taken to see that infrastructural and institutional arrangements for marketing, supply of raw materials, credit, are woven into the programme as an integral part so that the freed bonded labourer and his family members have the necessary physical and financial resources to commence the production activity immediately after training and that the finished products can be got sold easily and at remunerative prices. This is how the gap between skill formation and income generation could be reduced to the minimum. The Collector who heads the District Rural Development Agency would be able to get Schemes for the freed bonded labourers who might be possessing some basic skill as rural artisans through the District Industries Officer.

To the extent funds from TRYSEM are not adequate, funds under the Special Central Assistance could be utilised for the training of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for specified items of development programmes (including the freed bonded labourers).

(ix) Developing the Traditional Arts and Crafts further:

There are large number of bonded labourers belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who have the requisite background and skills in various traditional crafts. Due to want of opportunities for making such skills marketable, many of the traditional craftsmen have given up their crafts and turned to agricultural labour. During field visits to one of the villages in Jaunpur block in U.P. it has been observed that many of the freed bonded labourers are traditional craftsmen and are adept in the art of building pillars in a house carved out of wood and decorating the same with attractive floral motifs. Years of servitude have not stifled their creative urge but unfortunately they have become agricultural labourers due to want of opportunities for development of such talent and due to pressing economic reasons.

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It is necessary, therefore, to restore such agricultural labourers/bonded labourers with artisan background to the height of excellence of their traditional art and crafts. A beginning may be made by taking them to the Production-cum-Design-cum-Training centres under the Khadi and Village Industries Board for intensive training on payment of a monthly stipend. On completion of training, some of them can be appointed as master craftsmen in the Board itself for training others in due course. Those who cannot be absorbed in the Khadi and Village Industries Board could be encouraged to pursue an independent career of master craftsmen where they can conveniently earn their livelihood with incentive/help from the Industries Department.

The working Group on the Scheduled Caste Development during the Sixth Plan (1980-85) has in its report made a telling review of the difficulties faced by lacquerware producers in Udaipur in Rajasthan and Gannapatna in Karnataka due to restrictions in procuring raw materials from nearby reserve forest which necessitates their procurement from far off places. The Working Group has, therefore rightly emphasised that a comprehensive programme for such artisans, spanning arrangement for supply of raw materials, technology inputs and training, common facility centres, marketing, etc. needs to be drawn up.

(d) Wage Employment:

It is necessary to think of provision of wage employment throughout the year which alone can provide some subsistence income to the freed bonded labourers and his family members. It is here that programmes like the National Rural Employment Programme can be very helpful. At the same time, such programmes should be selected as will help in building up of community assets.

The N.R.E.P. is a residuary employment programme which is intended to generate additional employment opportunity to the needy in the rural areas and also to create community assets which will provide a direct boost to the rural economy. Resources given under the N.R.E.P are allocated to States/districts/Blocks on the criteria evolved in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and the Planning Commission under which 75% weightage is given to the number of agricultural workers and marginal farmers and 25% weightage to the incidence of poverty. In the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Rural Development relating to selection and execution of Projects under the N.R.E.P. there is a clear indication that in the selection of works, preference should be given to such works as directly benefit the Scheduled Caste

and Scheduled Tribes. Since almost all the freed bonded labourers are landless agricultural labourers belonging to SC&ST there should absolutely be no difficulty in selecting these Projects in such areas as would secure maximum wage employment for them. In other words, N.R.E.P. which provides wage employment and which also creates community assets is ideally suitable for rehabilitation of freed bonded labourers and this can be done in the following manner:-

- (1) The State Government concerned may issue instructions to the Collectors of the districts to select Projects under the N.R.E.P. in such areas as are having a concentration of Scheduled Caste and scheduled tribe population and freed bonded labourers;
- (2) Such Projects may be selected as will have a direct beneficial impact on the SC/ST population, freed bonded labourers. Illustratively, community Projects like Jore bundhs/cross bundhs, community bore wells, levelling and terracing of grounds, development of house sites, group housing, reclamation of agricultural land to make it fit for cultivation, pasture development for groups of freed bonded labourers who have already been assisted with milch animals under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme, poultry sheds for groups of bonded labourers plantation/afforestation, schemes of social forestry like woodlots for growing fruit trees fodder, oil seed and trees for supply of firewood and timber to the freed bonded labourers families at concessional rates, growing of ash, arjun and mulberry plantation with suitable arrangements for buying tasar through the sericulture department or khadi and Village Industries Board can be profitably taken up and all these projects will be directly beneficial to the freed bonded labourers; and
- (3) While planning and executing all such programmes, the emphasis should be on (i) providing wage employment for as many days in a month as possible (ii) ensuring payment of wages which are not less than the statutory minimum wages (both in cash and kind) and (iii) direct beneficial impact of the project on the freed bonded labour and his family. Quite apart from the wage employment available under the N.R.E.P. works programmes under the different departments of the Central and State Government such as agriculture, irrigation, public works, soil conservation, community development, animal husbandry, forest as also other Centrally and State owned Corporations should be intensified in or near the place of rehabilitation so that the freed bonded labourer and his family members are assured wage employment throughout the year.

The objective of the integrated rural development programme is to provide assistance to the identified families of a target group or those whose income is below Rs. 3500/- per annum for raising their income to a level above the poverty line. The target group would generally consist of the poorest of the poor in the rural areas, namely the SC/ST, the agricultural and the non agricultural labourers, rural artisans, etc. and those whose annual income from all sources is below Rs. 3500/- per annum. The persons released from debt bondage who are obviously among the poorest of the poor should be given the first priority for inclusion in the target group so as to entitle them to assistance under the I.R.D. Programme. The latter provides assistance to every economic activity which is viable and has the potential to provide substantial additional income and self employment to the beneficiaries. Agriculture, minor irrigation (for those who have a limited extent of poorly developed land), animal husbandry, fisheries, poultry, forestry, handicrafts, cottage industries, small business, trades virtually every viable economic activity could be taken up under the I.R.D.P. Programme. As far as persons released from debt bondage are concerned, the choice of the appropriate economic activity will depend on the market demand of the finished product, the inclination and suitability (along with training wherever necessary) of the beneficiary, the potential of the proposed activity in generating adequate income, to service and amortise the loan component and net income to enable the family to cross the poverty line etc. Since conditions vary from State to State and region to region, it would be practicable to specify the activities for any segment of the population covered by the I.R.D. Programme. It should be left to the block and district level functionaries to draw up suitable investment proposals for the benefit of the families in the target group, including those released from debt bondage. The Ministry of Rural Development has already issued detailed instructions to the State Governments and Collectors as Chairmen of District Rural Development Agencies to see that the programmes for the rehabilitation of freed bonded labourers and assistance for the members of the target group under the I.R.D.P. Programme are administered in a well co-ordinated and effective manner. The circular has specifically stressed that the bonded labour family who are among the poorest of the poor are assisted under the I.R.D. Programme. Since the Collector of the district is the Chairman of the District Level Vigilance Committees for identification and rehabilitation of bonded labourers and he is also the Chairman of the District Rural Development Agency, it is stressed that there ought not to be any difficulty in bringing about such coordination or integration. The assistance given should be a complete package.

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with all linkages and back up services necessary for success of any programme and for enabling the family to derive the potential income of the scheme. If a single scheme is not capable of delivering the desired results, the package should consist of more than one scheme so that cumulatively it may be capable of generating sufficient income for the family to cross the poverty line and preclude the danger of sliding back to debt bondage. This would also require a greater degree of co-ordination and integration among the different departments which the Collector should be able to bring about.

Doubts have been raised about the extent of subsidy under the I.R.D.P. which could be pooled and integrated with the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for rehabilitation of freed bonded labourers. It is emphasised that the central objective of any worthwhile scheme of rehabilitation is to provide them gainful employment on the one hand and income generating units as would ultimately help in lifting them above the poverty line on the other. As the amount available under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme is extremely limited, it is desirable that funds under different Schemes are pooled and integrated with the former so that the objective of a more purposeful rehabilitation is achieved. Illustratively speaking a freed bonded labourer gets some assistance by way of plough, plough bullock, bullock carts, supply of milch animals, other animal husbandry components, etc. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on a 100 percent grant basis. If even after supply of such productive assets they do not generate sufficient income for him and he continues to be below the poverty line he may still be eligible to be identified as one among the target group for receiving assistance under the Integrated Rural Development Programme if he fulfils the guidelines and the criteria under that Programme. In other words, a freed bonded labourer may after availing assistance under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for a specific purpose could he well qualify to be identified as a beneficiary under IRDP if he fulfils all the conditions for such identification and may receive assistance under that Programme (by way of both subsidy and loan) for different purposes so as to have better avenues of earning his livelihood and for a better quality of life.

The same principle of integration could be extended to the area of special Central assistance under the Special Component Plan for development of Scheduled Castes. This assistance is to be used only for income generating economic development schemes and programmes including directly relevant training, directly relevant back up services and institutional build up and arrangements for implementation, supervision and evaluation. It is imperative that the S.C.A. is used in an integrated, optimal and cost-effective manner in conjunction with flow of outlays and benefits from the various sectors of

the State plan as well as with resources from other sources like that of the various corporations, co-operatives and commercial financial institutions. The Ministry of Home Affairs dealing with the development of Scheduled Castes have clarified that there is no rigid pattern of tying up the of the S.C.A. with any individual schemes and that the State Governments have been given complete flexibility in this regard. As the field conditions of the S.C. bonded labourers vary from State to State and from region to region within a State, the above approach becomes highly relevant and thus needs to be imaginatively utilised. This flexibility is a powerful instrument in the hands of State Governments for a realistic formulation and implementation of development schemes of SC&ST freed bonded labourers provided it is used with thought, thorough planning and imagination. As a matter of fact, many States have already utilised the Special central assistance funds to enhance the subsidy under I.R.D. Programme (33-1/3%) to 50%. The essence of integration of funds is to avoid duplication i.e. pooling resources from different sources for the same purpose. It would be prudent to ensure that for the same scheme funds are not drawn from different sources, while funds drawn from different sectors for different components of the Scheme are integrated skilfully.

The Scheme of economic rehabilitation of the rural poor launched by the Government of Orissa (known as E.R.R.P) is a model of such integration under this Scheme the Government are extending a subsidy of 75% (amounting to Rs. 75000/- in large number of cases) for the poorest of the poor families who are totally assetless. This amount is over and above the subsidies available under the I.R.D. Programme, Centrally Sponsored Scheme for bonded labour, etc.

(xi) Collection of minor forest produce and forest based industries

Those of the bonded labourers who belong to the Scheduled Tribes are used to collection of minor forest produce for their subsistence for many years but they are deprived of full income since major portion of the forest produce is siphoned off by non functional and dis functional middlemen. They should, therefore, be provided with necessary institutional support to eliminate middlemanship. For example, various oil seeds like Sal, Karnaj, Kusum, Niver, Castor which are now being sent out of tribal areas in many States could very well be converted to oil by setting up of ghanies in these areas where the landless agricultural labourers (belonging to the category of bonded labourers released from debt bondage) could be gainfully employed. Similar operations like treatment of gums, and resins, converting forest products like Tamarind into concentrate, extraction of honey, rolling of kendu leaves

into bidis, manufacture of broomsticks, rope making, basket making, reeling of tassar cocoons, reeling and weaving of tassar can be conveniently and economically undertaken to the advantage of such labourers belonging to the freed bonded labour category. This can be done through co-operatives of primary collectors or by opening branches of Forest Corporations in particular areas having abundants of such products where it is done through Forest Corporation or other agencies, the tribal collectors should be paid the full price of materials collected, based on the price of the material in the ultimate market deducting the cost of transport.

The Working Group of tribal development during the Sixth Plan has emphasized combination of the commercial aspects with the development aspects of the running of such Corporations. It has also emphasised that tribals should be trained to actively participate in various economic activities like felling, logging, processing of minor forest produce. The Group strongly feels that this will be possible only with the elimination of forest contractors and building up of a direct partnership between the forest authorities and the tribals. The Group has rightly endorsed the experiment of social and community forestry as has been undertaken in Valsad District in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh for adoption by other State Governments with financial assistance from the Agricultural Refinance Development Corporation. During one of the field visits in U.P. it was observed that with strict implementation of the provisions of the Indian Forest Act, some of the traditional rights of hill tribes (belonging to the category of freed bonded labourers) for collection of minor forest produce have been considerably restricted with corresponding limited scope for locally processing of these products. It is, therefore, recommended that consistent with the need for preservation of forest and protection of ecological balance, there should simultaneously be a planned supply of the full quantity of raw materials for (a) ongoing operations of the S.Ts. (b) similar planned supply for expanding the existing operations (c) for planning future operations and (d) where the raw materials are not adequate, to plan development of such species taking into consideration the full requirements of the S.Ts. In other words, the planning of species to be grown in these areas should be consistent with the needs and requirements of the people who depend on them most.

(ii) Health, medical care and sanitation:

Through years of bondage, the bonded labourers and their family members have suffered from a state of acute malnutrition and consequential loss of health and vigour. Their health, therefore, needs special attention. Immediately on release from debt bondage they should be subjected to thorough medical

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check/and such checks should be arranged by doctors of primary health centres holding regular camps in the village where they have been rehabilitated and regular camps in the village where they have been rehabilitated and also by regularly visiting the bonded labour households for check up. Special health surveys of hamlets with bonded labour households known for high incidence of general or specific diseases should be launched. Similar and equally important attention may be directed towards preventive side, sanitation and hygiene along with the curative side.

Since supply of protected drinking water is a basic need for health, it is extremely important to ensure during the Sixth Plan period to provide a drinking water well in every baste where freed bonded labourers have been rehabilitated. Fund for this purpose can be found by tapping the following (a) for problem villages, for which there is specific outlay in the State Plan with matching assistance from Government of India spot source of non-tribal villages should be located in the Scheduled Caste baste. All SC/ST villages/hamlets which are problem villages/hamlets should be provided with drinking water well. In this manner, all such villages can be provided with drinking water. (b) In case of non-problem villages, provision of drinking water sources in Scheduled Caste villages and bastes and tribal villages and hamlets is permitted under the N.R.E. Programme guidelines. This should be fully utilised.

(iii) Supply of essential commodities:

It is very essential that arrangements are made by the district/block authorities to open Fair Price Shops in the hamlets or the vicinity thereof, where freed bonded labourers have been rehabilitated for supply of essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, kerosene, etc. at controlled prices. This is on account of two reasons: (a) the freed bonded labourer whose daily average earnings are low needs to be compensated by supply of ration at concession rates, (b) since he remains busy throughout the day in wage employment or collection of minor forest produce or such other occupations, the fair price shops should be easily accessible to him so that he does not have to spend lot of time in travelling a long distance for purchase of ration. To go a step further, it will be a great help if the dealership of some of these shops is allowed to at least one member from such families who has got the minimum educational standard for this purpose. Since most of the bonded labourers belong to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe Community, the following concrete steps in the location of fair price shops need to be taken: (a) In the case of fair price shops in non tribal villages, they should be located in Scheduled Caste bastes/ villages, ~~they should be located in Scheduled Caste bastes/~~ (b) Tribal areas should be provided with sufficient number of fair price shops in central location so that tribals in all villages/hamlets have a fair price shop at a reasonable distance.

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(xiv) Education of children of freed bonded labourers.

The Expert Group under the Chairmanship of Dr.M.S. Swaminathan, former Member, Planning Commission, has made certain valuable recommendations in its report on measures for alleviation of poverty. One of such recommendation relates to opening of balwadis in the hamlets where freed bonded labourers have been rehabilitated for primary education of their children. This needs to be implemented by all State Governments. Besides, considering the high percentage of illiteracy among the members of the bonded labour launched by the State Governments to promote adult literacy. Since the freed bonded labourers will remain busy in pursuing avenues of their economic livelihood throughout the day, such classes will have to be held at night only. While planning the adult literacy drive more stresss should be laid on non formal education. The preparation of curricula and reading material need sensitive and perceptive handling and the care must be taken of the culture, the ethos and the assimilative faculties of the persons from the bonded labour households to be inducted into such non formal education.

The Working Group on the development of the Scheduled Castes during the Sixth Plan (1980-85) has made certain specified and useful recommendations on the content of education and training for the beneficiary participants in its development process. These are:-

- (a) Avenues of marketable self-employment, the various criteria of their viability and successful working, threats to their viability and successful working, preventives and remedies to deal with those threats;
- (b) Information regarding various departments and agencies concerned with the delivery of programmes benefit to them, their procedures, the addresses of functionaries at different levels, etc;
- (c) Important aspects of implementation of their programmes and the care areas to which their attention should be invited in order that programmes/schemes get successfully implemented;
- (d) Understanding of their rights under various statutes such as the Land Reforms Act, Minimum Wages Act, Protection of Civil Rights Act, Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act and how to secure their rights; and
- (e) Linkages with the agencies concerned with the above and with the law and order agencies for their protection.

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As has been said earlier, the bonded labourers represent the extremes of poverty and backwardness in the community of landless agricultural labourers. In such a situation, fraught with availability of employment for less than a day and low wages, the need for pressing into service the children of the freed bonded labour families (for occupations like tending of cattle, goats sheep, etc) for getting a bare subsistence income is not unusual. It is unrealistic to expect that these families can afford to send their children to school. This being the major constraint in the educational development of the children of the freed bonded labour families, any programme, whether of formal or non formal education for them can be thought of only if the same is backed by intensive execution of public works for wage employment throughout the year supplemented by avenues of other gainful occupations so that the opportunity cost is fully commensated. This aspect has been clearly recognised in the Sixth Plan document (p.355) itself.

(xv) Protection of Civil Rights:

Despite all the above resources for the rehabilitation of freed bonded labourers, which are only illustrative and not exhaustive, there may still be need for providing them a protective cover against the possibility of their civil rights being committed on them by the powerful and influential groups in the village community who once held them in bondage and who dominate the village life even today. Caste and feudal factors being at the root of the very existence of the bonded labour system, it is quite possible that even after abolition of the system by law and release of bonded labour, these groups would be pursuing a grievance against them and would even now not hesitate to subject them to the various social and civil disabilities to which they have been subjected for generations. The link between their economic plight on the one hand, the crimes and atrocities and the social and civil disabilities on the other has already been clearly established and the Governments ~~series~~ of India have already communicated to all the State Governments series of preventive, precautionary and firm measures to be taken against such elements/forces. Vide Home Minister's D.O. Letter No. III.11014/4/80/NID(D) dated 10-3-1980 (the annexure to this letter lists out all such measures in great detail) followed by P.M.'s D.O. Letter No. 281/PMO/80, dated 12-3-1980. Two such important preventive measures are (a) Scheduled Castes should be put in effective possession of lands belonging to them or allotted to them and enabled to carry on cultivation even in the face of disputes and obstruction (b) It must be ensured that the agricultural labourers in practice should not get less than the statutory minimum wages and have alternative and additional employment opportunities throughout the year to improve their

bargaining power for fair wages. Since debt ~~is at the root of the~~ pernicious practice of bondage, there must be credit support/coverage from cooperative societies, rural banks etc. Special care is to be taken to see that they get consumption loan without difficulty instead of being driven by necessity to the usurious money lenders for social and ceremonial needs and development purposes. If the above measures are strictly implemented by the administration with conviction and commitment to the particular cause they will ~~instill in the freed bonded labourers a sense of~~ undoubtedly instil in the freed bonded labourers a sense of security and protection, so essential for their psychological rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION

Bonded Labour represents the extremes of poverty and backwardness among the category of landless agricultural labourers. They have widely different socio-economic background. Even conditions vary between different areas of the same State, such as hill areas, plains, drought prone and desert areas. No uniform guidelines for physical, psychological and economic rehabilitation of the freed bonded labourers can, therefore, be laid down, far less being implemented. The basic approach behind any such rehabilitation effort should, however, be need based and development oriented. In other words, viability of a particular scheme/programme from the point of view of the special needs of the freed bonded labourers (which again are determined by the ~~topographical, environmental, agroclimatic and market condition~~ must be examined and ensured. The latter must necessarily be given the choice between the various alternatives for their rehabilitation and such programmes should be finally selected for execution as would meet the total requirements of the bonded labour families to enable them to cross the poverty line and to prevent them from sliding back to debt bondage. The basic approach should be not to thrust any scheme on them without ascertaining their skill, ingenuity, aptitude and resourcefulness which are key to successful implementation. Even the most well intentioned schemes have floundered on the ground on account of the difficulty in absorption of such schemes by the beneficiary. They may, in the process be some delay but making the scheme acceptable and viable is much more important than the time factor.

The rehabilitation schemes in the preceding paragraphs could be very broadly divided into land based and non land based categories. Those of the freed bonded labourers who had a plot of agricultural land or who have been allotted one such plot by Government after release from debt bondage could settle down to agriculture with necessary assistance from the State Agriculture Department by timely provision of a package of inputs, back up services and facilities.

There may be cases where initially for one or two years, the land allotted may not be suitable for raising paddy. In such cases, the emphasis should be on land development. There are demonstration and pilot schemes to make the land fit for cultivation and the advantage of such schemes should be freely availed of by the freed bonded labourers. Simultaneously, instead of paddy, he should be given the resources to grow fodder with the help of Animal Husbandry Department so that he can sustain the milch animals allotted to him under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

Those who are totally assetless and to whom it is immediately not possible to allot a plot of agricultural land due to non availability of ceiling surplus or Government land could turn either to wage employment under the NRE Programme (by selection of works of direct benefit to them) or the Departmental Projects under Irrigation P. W.D. Soil Conservation, Forest, etc. or could think of an individual beneficiary scheme under the I.R.D. Programme.

Those who happen to be traditional artisans or craftsmen could think of an enterprise with the help of State Industries Department/District Industries Centres/Khadi and Village Industries Board and with the help of industrial co-operatives or institutional finance. Since almost all freed bonded labourers belong to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, there is scope for securing adequate funds from a number of sources namely (i) outlay for bonded labour rehabilitation in the State Plan matched by the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Ministry of Labour, (ii) outlay from I.R.D. Programme (iii) outlay from N.R.E. Programme (iv) outlay from various sectors under the Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub-plan (v) outlay from Special Central Assistance to States Special Component Plans and State's Tribal Sub-Plan (vi) Non-Plan resources (vii) resources of Corporations enacted in relevant functional areas, (viii) institutional finance. All this requires close coordination and integration at the State level, district level and even at the block level for which State Governments will have to make lot of efforts and systems buildings. The Ministry of Home Affairs have already issued guidelines to all State Governments to give a premier place to the rehabilitation of freed bonded labourers along with development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Special Component Plan and the Tribal sub-plan by proper utilisation of special Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. With the requisite administrative and commitment, it ought to be possible to fully and satisfactorily rehabilitate freed bonded labourers within this plan period so that there is no scope for sliding back to debt bondage.

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