

Government of India/ भारत सरकार
Ministry of Defence/ रक्षा मंत्रालय
D/o Ex-Servicemen Welfare/ भूतपूर्व सैनिक कल्याण विभाग
D (RES-II)/ रक्षा पुर्नवास II

Subject: Brainstorming Session with NGOs/AWWAs/Associations/Individuals working for welfare of Veterans.

Please find enclosed herewith approved Minutes of the meeting of Brainstorming Session held with NGOs/AWWAs/Associations/Individuals working for welfare of Veterans.

2. It is requested to take necessary action and submit the reply to the points pertaining to your department/organization to this section at the earliest.

Encl: As Above


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- i. US(Res-I)
 - ii. US(WE)
 - iii. US(Pen/Policy)
 - iv. Kendriya Sainik Board
 - v. AG's Branch
 - vi. To all the NGOs as per list attached
- MOD ID no/7(18)/2021/D(Res-II) dt 21 March, 2022

Copy to:

- a. PPS to Secretary (ESW)
- b. PS to JS(ESW)

Minutes of the brainstorming session with NGOs/AWWAs/Associations/Individuals working for welfare of Veterans for formulating suitable welfare schemes under the Armed Forces Welfare Fund.

The brainstorming session with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)/Army Wives Welfare Associations (AWWAs)/Associations/Individuals working for welfare of Veterans for formulating suitable welfare schemes under the Armed Forces Welfare Fund was held in Room No. 203, South Block on 25.02.2022 at 10:30 AM to 2:30 PM. The session was chaired by Shri B. Anand, Secretary, Ex-Servicemen Welfare (ESW). List of participants is at annexure.

2. Secretary ESW welcomed the participants. All the participants were requested to give a brief introduction of their organization. After formal introduction Secretary, ESW informed that presently 16 schemes are being handled by Kendriya Sainik Board (KSB) through Armed Forces Flag Day Fund (AFFD). KSB may have their own budget from next Financial Year and existing 16 schemes could be run not only through KSB but also through NGOs.

3. The participants were further requested to give a brief presentation about nature of welfare schemes being done by them and areas where they can help the government for extending the welfare schemes to ESMS.

4. All NGOs, KSB, Directorate General Resettlement (DGR) and Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) gave a brief presentation about their welfare schemes being run by them and their success stories. ECHS in its presentations stated that there may be following areas where NGO may give their assistance:

- (i) Construction of polyclinic
- (ii) Modern medical equipment
- (iii) Ambulatory equipment
- (iv) Ambulances
- (v) Voluntary hours at Polyclinics

[Action: CO ECHS/ NGOs]

5. During the presentations and discussions, NGOs raised following issues:

(i) **Welfare for families of Battle Casualties.** : There needs to be clear distinction in formulation of policy, delivery of welfare entitlements, grants and schemes amongst the various affected families . The distinction should be made on the following criteria :

- a) **Next of Kin and family of Battle Casualties** (Indian Armed Forces personnel who while in service die due to operational reasons)
- b) **Next of Kin and family of Physical Casualties** (Indian Armed Forces personnel who while in service die due to non operational reasons)
- c) **Next of Kin and family of Veterans** (Indian Armed Forces personnel who have retired/discharged/dismissed with or without pension)
- d) **Veterans** (Indian Armed Forces personnel who have retired/discharged/dismissed with or without pension)

There is a need to Identify, Verify, Establish connect to make the database of these four categories of beneficiaries through a robust database which should be correct, complete and current.

Project Sambandh offered the services of Col Vembu Shankar, SC , Indian Army Veteran Founder of Project Sambandh to assist in the correct database of the Next of Kin of the Physical Casualties of the Indian Armed Forces.

[Action: AGs Branch/ DIAV]

(ii) War Widows Pension on Remarriage: Earlier the widows of ESMs were not given benefits if they re-marry anyone who is not a brother of his husband. The remarriage clause concerning reduction in pension for War Widows has already been quashed. However, the current orders for restoration should be backdated from 2005 to 1996 and proper publicity is required for entitled War Widows to avail of their arrears.

[Action: D(Pen/Policy)]

(iii) Correctness of Pension to War Widows:- By its own admission CGDA has intimated about discrepancy in both under(3542) and over(1326) paid cases of Special Family and Liberalized Family Pension. Special care needs to be taken not only in correcting and speedily disbursing the arrears but also ensuring that this does not occur again, as a big number of pensioners are in rural areas.

[Action: D(Pen/Policy)]

(iv) Correction/alteration in smart card : This is needed both for the War Widow and children of Fatal Battle Casualty. Categorizing them under the 'ESW' changes their real status from war widow/son-daughter of a soldier killed in action to a retired ex-serviceman. This is both incorrect and also makes it difficult for them to access their entitlements and other benefits.

[Action: KSB/ Record Offices]

(v) Posting of Veer Nari in ZSWO: One Veer Nari may be oriented to all entitlements and benefits for NOK and be posted in each ZSWO.

[Action: KSB]

(vi) Compassionate Job to Veer Nari: Veer Nari gets compensation from the domicile state of her husband if he is Killed in Action (KIA). But in many cases Veer Nari State of domicile is different to her husband's domicile state and if she desires to settle down in her parent state then the issue arises that she cannot be given any job in her parent state.

[Action: KSB]

(vii) Uniform Compensation in Operations: All the operations should be treated equally when it comes to compensation. Like the compensation for Operation Rakshak, Operation Rhino, Operation Vijay, Operation Meghdoot etc should be the same.

[Action: AGs Branch/ DIAV]

(viii) Age Relaxation in Jobs for Veer Nari : Veer Nari s who lost their husbands at the nearing upper age of eligibility for SSB should be given one chance to appear in SSB.

[Action: AGs Branch/ D(Res-1)/DGR]

(ix) Time Relaxation in Jobs: There is a time frame in which the Veer Nari or her children have to apply for the job on compassionate grounds. Many times, the children are too young to apply for the job. Children should be allowed to complete their studies before they could apply for the job.

[Action: AGs Branch/ D(Res-1)/DGR]

(x) Increase in Amount of Education Grant: The educational grant given to families of ESMs should be increased to cover the actual expenses that they are incurring.

[Action: KSB]

(xi) Education Grant till Post Graduate level: Fee reimbursement for children of fatal battle casualty / physical casualty/ disabled soldiers till post-graduation level.

[Action: AGs Branch/ DIAV/KSB]

(xii) Home Based Income Generation : Entrepreneurship training and grants for widows / wife / daughter of disabled soldier for home based income generation.

[Action: AGs Branch/ DIAV/KSB]

(xiii) Housing and accommodation : Extension of accommodation for widows with school going children on subsidised rent and priority allotment in housing schemes.

[Action: AGs Branch/ DIAV/KSB]

(xiv) Definition of Next of Kin: The definition of the NOK (Next of Kin) needs to be readdressed. When a boy/girl joins the defence forces, the NOK are the parents but the day the officer/Jawan gets married the NOK is the spouse. Parents cease to be the NOK of their own son or daughter. If the soldier killed in action is unmarried, parents get the compensation and the monthly pension but if the soldier killed in action is married, the wife gets all the benefits and the parents are left sans anything. Though in some cases, the pension gets divided but those are very rare cases. Hence Parents be included in the list of recognised NOKs for all ESMs whether married or unmarried and given share in all benefits including pension and calling them on Raising Days.

[Action: AGs Branch/ DIAV/KSB]

(xv) Lifelong Healthcare facilities to Parents of KIA : Parents of the soldiers killed in action should be given medical facilities lifelong.

[Action: CO ECHS]

(xvi) Upper cap on Compensation by States : There should be an upper cap for the compensation disbursed by various states.

[Action: KSB]

(xvii) Identity Cards to Parents of KIA : On the lines of Veer Naris, the parents of the soldier's KIA should also be issued identity cards.

[Action: KSB]

(xviii) NGOs Directory : Preparation of Directory of NGOs working for ESMs and their families.

[Action: KSB]

(xix) Recognition of the NGOs : NGOs working for welfare of ESMs and their families be given recognition by the Govt.

[Action: KSB]

(xx) Non-Categorisation of Death : Death should not be categorised and there should be no differentiation between one category of death and another for the purpose of grant of benefits. All deaths while on duty must be treated equally.

[Action: AGs Branch/ DIAV/KSB]

(xxi) Adequate Care for Non-Battle Casualties : Those dying outside the duty hours also need to be taken care of adequately and their families taken care of adequately.

[Action: AGs Branch/ DIAV/KSB]

6. During the discussions it was emerged that there is a disconnection between welfare schemes and its beneficiaries. The ESMs and their families in villages and towns are not aware of the various benefits they are eligible to get, the authorities they need to approach, the forms they need to fill up etc. As such they are unable to avail the facilities for which they are eligible. Hence KSB, DGR, ECHS, PCDA's must publicise information that is relevant for them in various ways in addition to carrying them on their respective websites. The huge information gap needs to be filled up and NGOs may fill this gap by working as extended arms of Government.

Concluding remarks: After discussions, Secretary, DESW stated that the minutes of the meeting will be circulated to all participants and they will submit their action plan/suggestions through which they may work as extended arms of government so that benefits of welfare schemes may reach to maximum beneficiaries.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks to the chair.
