

Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF)

The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF), set up in 2009, is aimed at assisting Overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency in the 'most deserving cases' on a 'means tested basis'. ICWF has also been a critical support in emergency evacuation of Indian nationals from conflict zones, countries affected by natural disasters and other challenging situations. In view of its immense utility, ICWF stands extended to all Indian Missions and Posts abroad.

The ICWF guidelines have been revised further to make them more broad-based and expand the scope of welfare measures that can be extended through the Fund. The revised ICWF guidelines have become operational w.e.f. September 1st, 2017. They are expected to provide Indian Missions and Posts abroad greater flexibility in swiftly addressing to requests for assistance by Overseas Indian nationals. The revised guidelines cover the following three key areas :

I. Assisting Overseas Indian nationals in distress situations

- a. Boarding and lodging for deserving distressed Indian nationals abroad on a means tested basis in budget category or shelters run by Mission/Post or NGOs empanelled with Mission.
- b. Air passage to India to stranded Overseas Indian nationals
- c. Legal Assistance on a means tested basis to deserving overseas Indian nationals who have committed minor crimes, offences or have been falsely implicated by their employer and put in jails; fishermen/seamen/sailors/Indian students in distress;
- d. Legal/financial assistance to Indian women abandoned/ cheated / abused by their NRI/PIO or foreign spouses (up to seven years after their marriage).
- e. Payment for small fines and penalties in respect of Indian nationals for minor offences/crimes; for illegal stay in the host country where prima facie the worker is not at fault, and to enable release of Indian nationals from jail/detention center
- f. Transportation of Mortal Remains and expenditure on incidentals of deceased Indian national to India or local cremation/burial of deceased in such cases where the employer, sponsor or insurance company is unable or unwilling to do so as per the contract and the family is unable to meet the cost.

g. Emergency Medical Care on means tested basis to overseas Indians who are involved in an accident (with serious life threatening injuries) have life-threatening medical conditions or suffer a serious disability.

II. Support for Community Welfare activities

Indian Missions and Posts abroad, subject to availability of funds, may incur expenditure on community activities pertaining to the Indian community such as:

a. To promote Indian Culture by organizing cultural programmes by recognized Indian Diaspora organizations at major Indian Festivals, National Days of India; Indian culture Programs by recognized local artists or Indian artists based in India etc.

b. Payment of honorarium for teachers/faculty teaching Indian languages, art forms.

c. Welfare activities for Indian students towards organizing Annual Day for Indian students at Universities/educational institutions to discuss problems, issues faced by Indian students, including their visa, residence status, work permit, financial, welfare and other issues with participation of students.

III. Improvement in Consular services

Indian Missions and Posts abroad, subject to availability of funds, may incur administrative expenses pertaining to schemes/welfare measures etc. for the following purposes:

a. Hiring of limited additional staff for rendering various consular services

b. Hiring vehicles on a need basis for visits to jails, police stations; detention centres; labour camps; welfare camps; shelters for distressed Indians; prisons; hospitals; morgues and to airports for deportation/repatriation of distressed Indian nationals.

c. Hiring of local interpreters on a case-to-case basis for consular visits.

d. Design, publication, translation costs of pamphlets by Mission/Post about local labour laws, regulations, norms, dos & don'ts, welfare measures pertaining to overseas employment in the host country.

e. Organizing labour camps / consular camps for interacting with Indian migrant workers and informing them about issues related to overseas employment; labour laws; welfare and protection measures of the government.

f. Setting up 24 x 7 toll-free helplines, walk-in resource centres for providing information, advise, guidance on problems faced by distressed Indian nationals; and helping them register their grievance with the Mission/Post.

g. Development of e-Governance solutions, applications to address Consular/welfare matters.

Criteria for Utilisation

i. ICWF funds can be used to assist only Indian citizens residing in the host country or those in distress while visiting a foreign country. Persons of Indian Origin and Overseas Citizens of India Card Holders are not eligible for individual financial assistance from ICWF.

ii. ICWF can be utilized for the benefit of Indian nationals in distress on a means tested basis provided the officer approving ICWF expenditure has satisfied himself that the beneficiary deserves to be assisted.

iii. Ordinarily, only such Indian National(s) who have entered the host country legally shall be eligible to receive benefits under this Fund. In cases where it is not so, assistance may be provided after the Head of Mission/Head of Post has recorded his satisfaction to the effect that the circumstances of the case necessitate providing assistance under ICWF.

Record about ICWF beneficiary

An endorsement is mandatory in the Passport and relevant database of ICWF Beneficiary.

(Source: <https://mea.gov.in/icwf.htm>)

