

Lack of proper rehabilitation leaves bonded workers vulnerable

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CHENNAI: In the absence of comprehensive rehabilitation, bonded labourers rescued from exploitative work places still remain vulnerable, a recent study on their socio-economic conditions has revealed.

The study, conducted by Loyola College and facilitated by International Justice Mission (IJM), an NGO, surveyed 208 rescued bonded labourers in four northern districts of Tamil Nadu, viz., Tiruvanamalai, Tiruvallur, Vellore and Kancheepuram.

Lack

According to T Kuralamuthan, Director of Research at IJM, very often rescued workers don't receive the entitlements they are supposed to from the government. Referring to the 1982 Government Order. M.S no 2273 of the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu, he said rehabilitation consisted of two types – land based and skill based. "Agriculture land of 2 acres and 3 cents for housing, under various schemes, must be provided. Also they are entitled for skill development with access to subsidised loan for self employment opportunities," he said, adding that the findings proved rescued labourers were not properly rehabilitated.

Indeed, the study found that only 42 per cent were provided housing with 32 per cent receiving house patta. A mere six per cent received agricultural land. More than 90 per cent of those surveyed conveyed that they had not received any skill development training whatsoever.

"With no viable and sustainable earning opportunities, as much as 46 per cent reported about having outstanding debts and 79 per cent with absolutely no savings at all. All this leads to a scenario wherein the rescued labourers remain vulnerable waiting to be enticed by the promise of advances given by owners of either brick kilns or rice mills," said G Gladstone Xavier, Head of the Department of Social Work at Loyola College, pressing for a more comprehensive package.