

OI-11012/13/2017-OIA I
Ministry of External Affairs

Guidelines on Indian Community Welfare Fund
Established in Indian Missions/Posts abroad

1. Background

a. The 'Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) was established in the Indian Missions of 17 Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) Countries and Maldives after due approval of the Cabinet, vide letter No. OI-11012/25/2007- US(EP-I) dated 12th October, 2009 of the Ministry to meet contingency expenditure incurred by them for carrying out various on-site welfare activities for Overseas Indian Citizens in distress.

b. Revised guidelines for utilization of ICWF were issued with the concurrence of IFD vide Dy. No. 4476/Dir(F)/12 dated 04.08.2012.

c. After due consultations with the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance the following guidelines are being issued to enhance the utilization of the fund, expand the scope of activities and purposes for which the fund can be used, and enable activities for welfare of both distressed overseas Indians, and the Indian community.

2. Source of ICWF

2. i.a. **Service Charges** The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) set up in the Missions will have the following revised charges:

I Funds raised by the Indian Missions by levying a service charge on Consular Services as under:

- (i) For Visa, OCI/ PIO Cards – US \$3 /- per document rounded off in local currency to the next whole/round number
- (ii) For Passport Services – US \$2 /- per document rounded off in local currency to the next whole/round number
- (iii) For attestation of employment document – US \$2/- per worker rounded off in local currency to the next whole/round number
- (iv) Attestation of other documents and other miscellaneous consular services rendered by Mission (other than in death cases) – US \$2/- per worker rounded off in local currency to the next whole/round number

2.i.b. The charges so levied shall be in local currency rounded off to the next whole/round number. The official exchange rate prevalent at the time of such calculation shall be used, and shall not be changed thereafter during the Financial Year keeping in view that charges so levied are adequate to meet requirements of Missions/Posts and to build a suitable reserve to meet unforeseen contingencies. The service charge may be revised by this Ministry from time to time.

2.ii. Voluntary contributions by Indian community.

Need by ICWF
Missions/Posts may receive contributions into ICWF from local Indians or Indian community organizations and shall issue a receipt thereto indicating clearly the names and addresses of such contributors. Such receipts should be included in their monthly statement of ICWF accounts sent to MEA and Pr CCA.

2.iii. **Income from deposits and investments:** If surplus ICWF funds are maintained in FDs, the interest accrued through the investment shall be deposited on yearly basis in the main ICWF corpus.

2.iv. **Existing welfare Funds operating in Mission/Posts** shall be merged with ICWF after performance audit of existing Fund by the O/o Principal Chief Controller of Accounts. A certificate in this regard will be furnished to MEA.

2.v **For Missions/Posts which have not set-up ICWF so far**, Ministry of External Affairs would provide budgetary support for setting up the ICWF in the Indian Missions to the tune of Rs. Five lakh annually, for three(3) years or till the period the fund becomes self sustaining, whichever is earlier. The amount would be limited to meet the deficit in financial resources of Missions, with due regard to the utilization of the amount released during previous years.

3. Criteria for Utilisation

3. 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.

3. 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.

3. 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 HOM/HOP has recorded his satisfaction to the effect that the circumstances of the case necessitate providing assistance under ICWF.

4. Procedures for approval

4.i. Missions/Posts will consider requests from Indian nationals, written or verbal, for grant of assistance. All verbal requests shall be followed by written confirmation.

4.ii. Written proposals for expenditure from ICWF should originate from the Welfare officer/Consular officer/Community Affairs officer of the Mission/Post who will examine and submit them to the competent authority for approval with his/her recommendation, on a case-to-case basis. In Missions/Posts where such officers are not designated, the HoM/HoP may designate an appropriate level officer for proposing such assistance.

4.iii Approval of expenditure from ICWF will be at the level of HoM/HoP subject to ceilings specified for various ICWF related items of expenditure in Sections A, B and C of the Guidelines respectively. **HoM/HoP should ensure that ICWF shall not be used for routine activities or expenses for which budget spending is available.**

4.iv HoM/HoP may formally authorize DCM/DHC/DCG to approve requests for assistance from ICWF subject to an upper limit of

US\$ 2000 per case in ECR Countries; *Approx 7300 AED*

US\$ 1000 per case in Other Countries.

4.v If HoMs/HoPs consider it necessary to deploy the Fund in most deserving cases, for services not indicated in these guidelines or if Mission/Posts' funds are not adequate to meet a contingency, they shall send a detailed self contained proposal, alongwith facts, justification etc. seeking prior approval of Ministry.

4. vi Proposals received from Missions/Posts will be considered in the Ministry, by a Committee comprising of following members:

- (i) Joint Secretary, OIA Division, MEA (dealing with ICWF);
- (ii) Joint Secretary (CPV), MEA; and
- (iii) Director (Finance) or DS (Finance), MEA.

4. vii The recommendation of the above Committee shall be submitted to Foreign Secretary. Proposals involving expenditure upto Rs. 25 lakhs can be approved by Foreign Secretary. Proposals involving expenditure beyond Rs. 25 lakhs shall be submitted to EAM for approval.

4. viii Requests for transfer of additional ICWF funds from other Missions/Posts(if there is shortage of funds in the ICWF account of the recipient Mission), to assist distressed overseas Indians during crisis/emergency situations, shall be submitted by HoM/HoP concerned, to the Ministry for approval of EAM.

5. Assistance from ICWF will be permissible for the following activities:

- a. Section 'A': Individual Financial Assistance for Indian nationals in distress
- b. Section 'B': Support for Community Welfare Activities
- c. Section 'C': Improvement in Consular Services

