

The Red fields of Vishakhapatnam



On most days, the residents of Chintapalle village in Visakhapatnam can be found in their coffee fields: patches of red surrounded by forests. The fields give off a fairy tale like energy with people humming and picking on fruits. These fields are part of a cluster that employs 500 coffee producers from tribal communities and links them with traders who procure coffee in bulk at fair prices. With the lockdown, there is of course silence in the fields. With traders no longer procuring, the coffee producers have been forced to sell their beans at cheap prices in the local market. With little to no income and insufficient supply of ration by the government, the families are living by the day.

V.C Aliveni leads a civil society organisation in the area working to strengthen the coffee cluster. Since the lockdown, she has been distributing food kits to tribal communities the government has not been able to reach. She shares, “with every passing day the misery of tribal communities is increasing, and they were finding it hard to even manage a single day’s meal. With a team of 30 members, we decided on making food kits.” Each kit includes 10 kgs of rice, 2 kgs of daal, 500 g of chilli powder, 250 g turmeric powder, 1 kg of sugar and oil, with 4 soaps. Over the past two weeks, her team has distributed more than hundred kits and they are planning to extend their reach to more communities.

Indigenous communities and daily wage labourers continue to be the worst hit by the pandemic. Changemakers like Aliveni have added some hope where it was missing, but such efforts continue to be very less in number. Those that exist, don’t reach many.

Aliveni is the Director of Mani Amma Chaitanya Shraavanthi. You can reach out to them at: manyammacs@gmail.com or +91- 8500254151. She is part of the SFURTI network of Ministry of MSME and Development Alternatives’ IMEDF, which consist of 16 clusters and 24 partners across India. Vishakhapatnam Coffee Cluster is one of these clusters which employs more than 500 coffee producers from 127 villages with tribal communities of over 46,000 members.