



A Story of the Red Fields of Visakhapatnam and Resilient Enterprises

The Indian Micro Enterprises Development Foundation (IMEDF) is a special purpose vehicle of the DA Group that accelerates the development of micro enterprises at scale. IMEDF is the Nodal Agency (NA) for the SFURTI programme empaneled with the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. SFURTI programme consists of 16 clusters and 24 partners across India. Vishkhapatnam 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.

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. The 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.

VC 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 where 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 to make food kits.” Each kit includes 10 kg of rice, 2 kg of dal, 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 a 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 in communities that needed it the most.

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