

Standing Strong with the community of PWDs during COVID-19 crisis in Odisha

Background:

The Covid-19 pandemic and its wider socio-economic impact are an unprecedented development. Due to spread of Coronavirus and lockdown, the vulnerable people and their family have gotten the raw end of the deal with loss of livelihood. Previously they have been living hand to mouth; now with declaration of lockdown most of them are struggling for money and food. These groups are facing multiple survival threats at a time due to spread of COVID-19 and loss of livelihood. Even though state and national government are doing their best to address the present challenges faced by these community, still a large portion of these marginalised community are yet to receive support for their survival. With the extension of lockdown period till 3rd May, their conditions are becoming miserable day by day. Before there is severe life and death crisis for these vulnerable communities, there is need for a constructive collaborative effort by governments, donors, investors, and community groups to address the unique challenging situation created by the pandemic COVID-19.

Network for Youth Development and Healthy Environment (NYDHEE) being a reputed and experienced voluntary organisation had engaged its dedicated pool of volunteers for providing immediate relief to at risk population in the city of Bhubaneswar and adjacent area just after the declaration of lockdown. With support of our existing donors and well wishers, we are able to provide more than 500 dry ration kits and sanitation kits to vulnerable people (PWDs, Daily wagers, migrant labourers, Transgender community members and people infected by leprosy) in the Bhubaneswar and adjacent remote villages. In addition to supporting these families with dry rations, our volunteers and frontline staffs are educating the households through digital medium on hand washing, social distancing and other measures they must adapt to avoid contamination. Some cases, we are helping the target groups to access various welfare schemes/assistance declared by government.

For undertaking the relief and other response activities during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, NYDHEE has obtained required permission from district collector and DM of Khurda district.

Challenges faced by PWDs during the COVID-19 pandemic situation:

It is well known fact that the persons with disabilities are among the most marginalised in society. Along with the elderly, people who have disabilities or chronic health conditions are at higher risk than most people of complications and death from COVID-19, the illness caused by the novel coronavirus. The risk seems to be compounded by age, but some health conditions by themselves may put them in danger. The stakes are very high for society at large. The pandemic situation has put them in further vulnerable position as most of them find harder to follow recommendations that essential for curbing the spread of coronavirus. For many disabled people, even some of the simplest steps are harder to do, like washing hands. Some of them can't move their hands as freely as others. Some of them can't reach a sink reliably, or operate a soap dispenser by themselves. Also, many disabled people can't entirely isolate themselves. They need other people to not only be near them, but to touch them and help with the most

intimate everyday tasks. They are with limited options for isolating themselves for their own protection. PwDs are the most critical groups among people who are at high medical risk from the novel coronavirus. The hard realities of the coronavirus pandemic are hard enough and especially dangerous for people with disabilities.

Keeping in mind about the multiple vulnerable condition of differently abled person, we decided to create awareness on prevention of COVID-19 and supply essential relief materials for surviving through the health emergency situation.



PwDs receiving Dry ration kits in Vimatangi area- Bhubaneswar

Relief activities by NYDHEE focusing PwDs in Bhubaneswar:

Bhubaneswar which is capital of Odisha is one of the major COVID-19 hotspot with 45 active cases and government is imposing strict lockdown to prevent further spread. Being one of the fastest growing cities in India, quite large numbers of people from these marginalized groups are engaged in different type of minimal jobs in Bhubaneswar. They are also badly affected by the present crisis. Through our

volunteers, we came to know that there are some differently abled people those are living in Pallaspalli and Kapilaprasad area having dire need of essential relief items to survive during this lockdown period.

On 14th of April, we had distributed a total 22 Family dry ration kits to 22 vulnerable PwDs in Pallaspalli and Vimatangi of Bhubaneswar. The dry ration kit contains (Dal-1kg,

Edible oil 1Lit, Potato 2 kg, Onion 1 kg, Curry Masala 50 gm, Biscuits and Soap 10 packets). Our volunteers also educated them on hand washing, social distancing and other hygienic behaviors.

On 15th April, Our volunteers visited Kapilaprasad UP School where 13 PwDs (Blind) were staying and seeking immediate relief support as they have been run out of rations. Our group conducted health awareness camp and provided dry ration kits to all 13 PwDs.



Relief distribution in Kapilaprasad



Relief Distribution to PwDs in Pallaspalli, Bhubaneswar by NYDHEE



Community education activities on Hand washing at Kapilaprasad UP school