REACHING OUT TO THE POOREST OF THE POOR

K. Ramanna is a septuagenarian substantially impaired with a severe cataract. He lives with his physically disabled wife in a dilapidated hut at Anadrgram, located in ward number one of the Berhampur Municipal Corporation. The couple had been living a stressful life for years, with begging for alms being the sole option for a meager earning. The outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown turned their already tricky life upside down. The lockdown did not allow Ramanna to venture out to beg in the open as before. The couple was hardly able to manage just a single meal per day. As the lockdown progressed, their depleting stock of rice...
was not enough even to provide one square meal any longer. Youth for Social Development (YSD), with the support of Oxfam India was able to intervene just in time to provide them a food ration packet consisting of rice, pulses, sugar, oil, soybean, salt, and turmeric powder on the 11th of April, 2020.

Youth for Social Development(YSD) with the active support the Ganjam District Administration and Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) have reached out to 500 similarly distressed households in the municipal corporation area with food rations that would sustain each family for at least two weeks. Senior officials from the Government of Odisha facilitated and were actively involved with the identification and distribution of the food rations to the most vulnerable populations in the city. While the lockdown was considered essential to contain the spread of the Coronavirus, it has led to a humanitarian crisis and food distress of an unprecedented scale and intensity to millions of poor people living in the country. Under such situations, the coordination between multiple stakeholders for relief distribution in Berhampur provided an excellent opportunity for us to be able to reach out to the neediest in priority. The results are in the open. Ramanna and his wife, who had been starving for days, are now relieved of not worrying about starving at least for the next two weeks. The ration kits make a huge difference for people like Ramanna, who appreciate the value of each morsel of food. ‘I am not happy with begging but was not even being able to beg. This kit will provide us food enough to last for a month’, says a content Ramanna.

By Bibhu Prasad Sahu and Namesh Killemsetty
Youth for Social Development