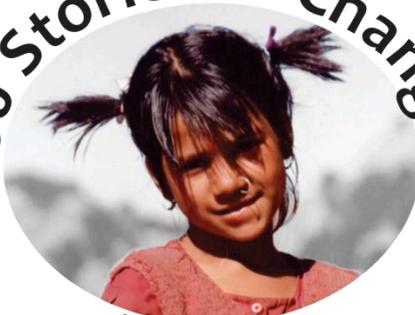


100 Stories of Change..



by Goonj..

An inimitable story of replication..



Its true that all the stories that we are sharing in the 100 Stories of Change project are very dear to us.. but this one we confess is a personal favorite. It's not just another story.. It's an inspiration even for us.

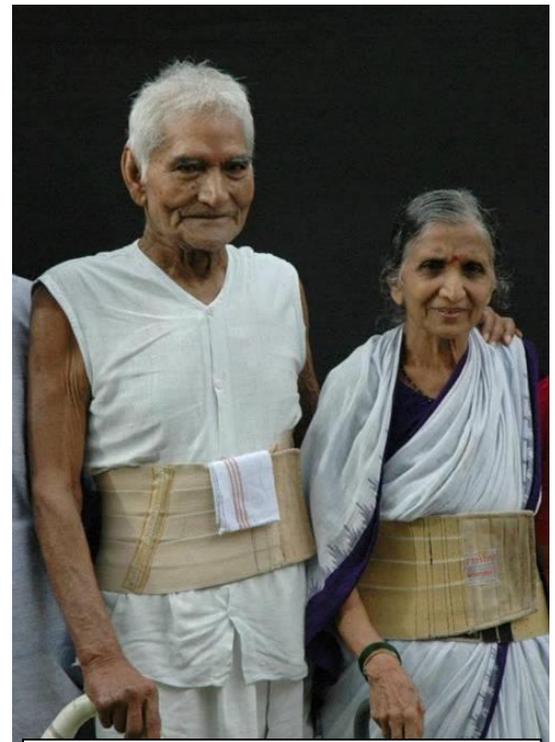
Anandwan and Baba Amte don't need any introduction.. they are revered for their service to humanity.. and when Anandwan and Baba Amte's second generation took up the idea of Goonj, it was a huge honour. This story is about how Goonj's work found resonance in Anandwan; Magsaysay award winner Baba Amte's sanctuary for the leprosy afflicted and other differently able people under the aegis of Maharogi Sewa Samiti (MSS) in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra.

For Anshu and Meenakshi Gupta (founders of Goonj) in some ways Anandwan was meant to happen.. Many years ago as they were passing by Anandwan on their way to Delhi from Tadoba, they took a chance to meet Baba Amte, the saviour of the leprosy ridden. They didn't have an appointment nor did they know anyone to put in a word for them. To their pleasant surprise they were called in as soon as they sent in a request. It was a memorable meeting with Baba and Sadhna Tai (Baba's wife) but no one knew that it would be a precursor to a strong bond with

Anandwan. Some years after Baba passed away a chance meeting at Anandwan between his grandson Kaustubh Amte (Present director of Anandwan), his wife Pallavi Amte and Anshu and Meenakshi Gupta led to a cherished friendship. It turned into a strong bond when Dr. Vikas Amte (Baba Amte's son and Kaustubh's father) later visited Goonj's work in Delhi. "I have met and interacted with hundreds of partners, NGOs and community leaders in the past. What I was shocked surprised and amazed about you is your zeal, zest, steadfast attitude and clarity in outlook. Goonj has great many days ahead. And I am equally sure your spirit would be imbibed by many a activists. Keep it up." Dr Vikas Amte's appreciation was soon turned into an successful experiment by Pallavi Amte who made relentless efforts to bring Goonj's idea to Anandwan.

The genesis of this connect actually goes beyond the friendship between the two families, it ties to the core principle of dignity that both Anandwan and Goonj share. In Anandwan the residents, mostly leprosy afflicted, make a dignified living and get cared for. Similarly Goonj's philosophy also centres on people contributing their labour (Shramdan) to address their own problems and earn material with a lot of respect & dignity. That's why the replication at the idea level found an easy resonance in the Karmabhoomi of Baba Amte. Not only has Goonj's idea been replicated at the conceptual level even the exact same processes have been adopted at Anandwan.

It was September, 2011 when the replication started at Anandwan. This was preceded by training and initialization of an Anandwan team in Delhi. Led by Pallavi Amte the team spent a lot of time discussing and understanding Goonj's management and logistics process. While it's true that initially making room for change had some challenges for this world renowned institution running in its 6th decade but Pallavi Amte tremendous perseverance and trust made it work.



Late Baba Amte & Sadhana Tai



Sorting, packing of material



Anandwan has lakhs of well-wishers and visitors from all over the world. Owing to the general tendency of people around giving clothes to charities, Anandwan had also accumulated tons of clothes in all these years. Truth is cloth remains on top of the in-kind donation in the minds of people whether it's needed or not. When Pallavi came across the Goonj model her first thoughts were on how to channelize the quantum of clothes Anandwan received and accumulated over the years even after satisfying the yearly needs of their inmates. Though Goonj has fine tuned the work of turning this cloth into a resource and a tool for rural development but for many organizations the extra cloth

becomes a liability which only grows in volume with time. We saw a great opportunity and a potential for constructive work with this cloth..



Cloth for Work activities..

Starting with setting up the processes with the local team, Goonj team members went to Anandwan to jointly conduct a variety of cleaning and sanitation activities under the Cloth for Work initiative at Village Paradhi Tola, Chinora, Khairgaon in Chandrapur district. The replication started showing results after some time when 4 trucks of material was dispatched from Anandwan to Goonj's Odisha & Uttarakhand floods and cyclone relief work.

Today, the centre at Anandwan is fully operational with 17 people. It works exactly like Goonj in sorting, coding & packing of the clothes as per its size, gender and age. Now the residents of Anandwan are offered only proper sized clothes as per their needs. Widely known for its handicrafts and other products Anandwan has not only replicated the Green By Goonj products made out of last shreds of cloth but also evolved their own beautiful designs and products.



Anandwan experiment with cloth pad

Over the years people from as far as Nagpur (around 100 kms distance from Anandwan) also send their material contributions to Anandwan on regular basis. Tons of material is handled by team Anandwan annually. As the work evolved Pallavi also noticed how the cloth could connect with a basic need of visually challenged girls. "Our focus was primarily the leprosy afflicted but Anandwan also houses people with many other disabilities and we wanted to pay more attention to their specific needs as well. We have here more than 350 disabled girls and women in their reproductive age but we hadn't thought about their monthly needs of menstruation. Goonj's Not Just a Piece of Cloth (NJPC) initiative

enabled us to think in this regard. A well oriented warden now takes special care of these girls, providing them information about menstruation and other reproductive health related issues." shares Pallavi. A proper cloth sanitary pads making unit on the lines of Goonj's MY Pad making unit has since come up where a team of women trained by Pallavi (after her visit to Goonj's NJPC Delhi unit) work.

Some time ago when a Goonj team member visited Anandwan to document the work with these disabled girls we were in for some shocking findings. A visually impaired girl, who was earlier using the market disposable sanitary pads, shared how she would unknowingly place the sticky surface of the pad upside down and had a lot of problems after that. Another girl shared how no one had told her anything about menses till she started bleeding.. even then she found out only when her clothes got dirty.. Pallavi and her team has designed a cloth pad on the lines of Goonj's My Pad after detailed interactions with these women on their specific needs. Pallavi is excited about the insight her work is giving her into the lives of these women, with whom no has ever taken up this issue.



Dispatch of material from Anandwan..

Anandwan and Pallavi's story is an apt example of what makes great institutions.. Not so much the awards and recognitions but their values, vision and their ability to always keep their minds and hearts open to new ideas..
