

IMPACT ANALYSIS REPORT

## GOONJ'S YEAR ROUND WORK ON MENSTRUAL HYGIENE WITH KUI TRIBE OF KANDHAMAL DISTRICT, ODISHA



### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION FOOTPRINT

State:- Odisha  
District:-Kandhamal  
Villages:- 35  
Girls and women:- 2500

### ABSTRACT

Women across the world face many social, cultural and economic aspects while dealing with their menstruation. With over ten years work on this issue in the remotest of villages in India, Goonj sees a close linkage between menstruation and women's dignity, health and confidence. Through 'Not Just a Piece of Cloth' initiative (NJPC) Goonj has over the years tried to highlight this basic as a human issue rather than a women's issue shrouded in a culture of shame and silence. Goonj has taken up a unique approach of turning urban surplus cloth into cloth pads and then using these pads as a tool to make women more aware of menstrual hygiene and opening up the subject for women to talk about their challenges freely. The 3 A's of menstruation – Access, affordability and awareness pose a bigger challenge to women who are already struggling for their and their families survival in some of the most remote villages of India.

## Goonj's One Year work on Menstrual Hygiene with women of Kandhamal, Odisha

Working on this issue for the past 10 years, Goonj started a new journey on this issue with Mindtree funding in June 2018 in Kandhamal district of Odisha where we would work with 2500 adolescent girls and women for a period of one year on making their menstrual hygiene challenges easier.

The project was divided into three parts;

**First**, developing women health and hygiene related infrastructure focusing on sanitation/personal hygiene and water related activities.

**Second**, providing a \*MY Pad Dignity kits to each of these 2500 women \*(2 packs of MY Pads with 10 pads each, 2 undergarments, 2 sets of women clothing and 1 Goonj ka Jhola).

**Third**, conducting sessions focusing on menstrual health & hygiene, taboos, practices around clothing, personal hygiene. At the end of one year our monitoring and evaluation team visited these women to understand the changes in their lives, practices and knowledge around menstrual hygiene.

## Objective

This report aims to understand the impact of the year round intervention with focus on the following aspects;

1. Knowledge about menstrual Hygiene
2. Changes in practices around using cloth as sanitary pad
3. Tackling of menstrual Taboos
4. Attention to Personal hygiene
5. Feedback on Goonj's cloth Pad **MY Pad**
6. Feedback on Goonj's Dignity Kit
7. Understand the impact of work on infrastructure by women as part of addressing their menstrual challenges

## Impact analysis conducted in Kandhamal district

**12 Villages** - Sulumaha, Dabulmaha, Terabadi, Pangalmaha, Jagarmaha, Samanbadi, Pasumaha, Amimaha, Moring, Dasiketa, Kotabadi, Ramipanga.

## Introducing the people of Kandhamal

The Kui tribe of kandhamal district is a subgroup of a Dravidian tribe known as Kondh. They speak Kui, a Dravidian language. The community mostly relies on farming of turmeric for their livelihood. Women make plates from *sal patta* (sal leaves), which they even use as pad for menstruation at the time of emergency.

These people live in huts made from wood and a mixture of dung and mud with thatched roofs. Cooking is done over open flame and is primarily made of rice and dhal. Dug Wells are the common source of water for this community. Most of the households don't have private toilets and space for bathing. Women end up taking a bath in the open spaces near tube wells, making them vulnerable to eve teasing and sexual harassment.

Kui tribe follows various menstrual taboos as a part of their traditional practices which include not going to church, not entering into the kitchen space, washing clothes from wooden ash. 18-year-old Anjali Digal opened up and shared her first experience of menstruating.

*“I was in the forest collecting firewood when I noticed I was bleeding near my vaginal area. I got very afraid and nervous that I didn't even told my mother about it. Next morning my mother saw the blood blemish on my dress, and told me how I will bleed every month while telling not to enter the kitchen, temple and church, and not to bath for 7days.”*

### I. First Phase

#### Insights from KAP Study (Pre-Survey)

In June 2018, a KAP (Knowledge, Aptitude, Practices) study was conducted through a survey of 89 adolescent girls and women belonging to 12 villages in Kandhamal district, Orissa.

## Key Insights:

1	Knowledge around menstruation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>93% of girls and women report having no knowledge of menstruation before its first period.</li> <li>100% of girls and women feel shy and hesitant to talk about menstruation</li> </ul>
2	Practices around cloth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>57% of girls and women use cloth during their menstruation and they get their supplies from old sarees/bedsheets. Out of them only 50% dry it in the sunlight.</li> </ul>
3	Health Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most prominent health issues women face are irregular periods, white discharge and cramps. 85% of them do not consult doctors for their health issues; they ignore the pain and bear it.</li> </ul>
4	Availability of Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>83% of the girls &amp; women don't take bath in covered places, they either go to river or to dugwell to take a bath.</li> </ul>
5	Taboos & restriction around menstruation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major taboos girls and women follow in the area are they don't enter in the kitchen and the religious space.</li> </ul>

## Knowledge about menstrual Hygiene

Lack of awareness about menstruation and menstrual hygiene that a woman should practice every month during her menstruation, is one of the biggest gaps we notice all across among the women in villages of India. It is such a taboo topic that no one is willing to talk about it openly. That means women don't have all the information they need to make decisions for their well-being. The culture of shame and silence around this basic further aggravates the ignorance and risks that young girls and women face every month.

In Daringbadi, during the one-year implementation program, Goonj team together with our local partner organization conducted awareness sessions with 2,500 women of Kui Tribe. These sessions talked about Menstrual health, hygiene followed by discussion on taboos, practices around menstrual cloth, personal hygiene and how women can make their own cloth pad. At the time of impact analysis when we spoke to these **95% said they found these sessions called *Chuppi Todo Baithak* (Break the silence meetings) useful.**



## Key impact points of the awareness sessions



Sulumaha village, Kandhamal district of Odisha

Bijaylakshmi Pradhan, attended awareness sessions conducted by Goonj. She shared that these sessions were very useful as she got a chance to share her menstrual problems with other women. She shared that entire implementation work done by Goonj helped her to open up about

menstruation without any hesitation. When asked she was easily able to share the information shared with her at Goonj's Chuppi Todo Baithaks.

- 91% girls and women we spoke with, talk openly about menstruation.
- 94% of women have further shared knowledge they received from awareness sessions, with their family, friends, relatives and neighbors.

## Practices around Menstrual cloth

The shame and secrecy around menstruation and limited resources available with women leads them to follow unhygienic practices around menstrual cloth, which in turn risks their reproductive health. When Goonj started work in Daringbadi we noticed that some women were not washing the cloth properly before reusing it for menstruation and used to hide it in shadow.

Post Goonj's awareness sessions we noticed a dramatic improvement in the practices around menstrual cloth. Women are now cleaning the cloth properly using soap and in some cases using dettol as well. They are even drying the piece of cloth under the sun and storing it in a safe place. For disposing off the menstrual cloth women are mostly burying menstrual cloth in the ground.



Changes in practices around cloth



**Samanbadi village, Kandhamal district, Odisha**

Sabita Pradhan from Samanbadi village shared that she used to just rinse her menstrual cloth in water. She said that she was not in the habit of using soap or detergent to clean her menstrual cloth before reusing it. After the session she is now using soap and it has led to improvement in her white discharge problem.

## **Tackling of menstrual Taboos**

Different types of stigma, misconceptions, and taboos are associated with menstruation in different communities across India. In Kui tribe a four-day festival celebrates menstruation and womanhood known as ‘Raja Praba’ every year. The celebrations are marked by a number of games, indoor and outdoor, while girls play around on swings hung from trees.

The community also follows a lot of taboos like menstruating women are not allowed to enter the kitchen or church. After one year of work by Goonj on this issue, girls and women in this area have started challenging and questioning these taboos. After Goonj’s awareness sessions they have started going to churches or some have tried to cook in the kitchen when nobody was around.



### Some other taboos followed by some



Terabadi village, Kandamal ditrict Odhisha

As a part of their cultural practice, Urmila Pradhan age 30, **used to wash her menstrual cloth with wood ash**. She used to soak her menstrual cloth in ash and water. In the morning she would use a brush to clean the cloth and then dry it in the sun. **After Goonj's awareness session on using cloth pads hygienically she has started using soap which she received in the dignity kit. Now she has stopped using ash to clean her pad, altogether.**

The points that were discussed in the awareness sessions on personal hygiene - including washing hands, taking bath regularly, keep the surrounding clean and drinking safe water, we notice a lot of women are adopting some of these good practices.



## Using MY Pads

Goonj's Cloth pads, MY Pads, made from cotton and semi-cotton cloth is playing a big role in solving three big challenges of menstruation for women; access, affordability and awareness. MY Pad is deliberately basic to make it familiar and easily adaptable to the varied needs of rural women across India. Every woman who has ever used cloth, is comfortable with My Pad. It is easily disposable and reusable, making it affordable for women at the lowest economic strata of the society. Instead of trying to introduce a new product or design, these pads are an improvisation and mass-scale replication of the existing usage patterns or practices. Goonj has simply removed the risk elements of the existing practices of rural women and done a lot of value addition in terms of cleanliness and awareness.

Two packs of MY Pads were given to each woman of kui tribe in one year. **16% of the women we spoke to after one year shared that there is improvement in their itching, infection and white discharge. 82% now know how to make their own clean cloth Pad because of the simple training on the same.**

MY Pad is a tool for Goonj to open up a dialogue around menstruation. After the awareness session **91% of women said they started sharing their menstrual issues like cramps and excessive bleeding with their mother, sister and husband. 53% women said that they will go the doctor in future whereas 22% women can't go to a doctor because they either don't have a doctor nearby or they can't afford it.**



Saringipi village, kandamal district, Odhisha

Sulata Pradhan and Snehalata Pradhan both 15 year old girls in the area told us that though they receive sanitary napkins in their school but sometimes these are not enough. Fear of stain often leads them to miss school some days. They said, “Goonj’s MY Pad is very comfortable and we don’t have to worry about stains.”

## Goonj’s Dignity Kit

Under the project women received ‘MY Pad Dignity kits’ where each kit included **2 packs of MY Pads (10 pads in each pack), 2 undergarments, 2 sets of women clothing, soap, Goonj ka Jhola (bag), and other accessories.**



I am wearing the suit I got in dignity kit and I loved it. I mostly go to church wearing this.



I loved bindis in the dignity kit. They were so beautiful and glittery.



Though all the items in the dignity kit were useful we divided the items amongst us. I got the sarees. Now I have 4 pairs of sarees in total.





Samanbadi Village, Kandhamal district, Odhisha

These women shared, “We don’t have many undergarments and since in Daringbadi it can rain anytime of the day. *It’s difficult to find and wear dry undergarment. In dignity kit we receive two more undergarments and it also has loops in it, which makes it easy to place our menstrual cloth in it.*”

## Engaging women in solving their own issues

Past literature suggests that access to water, toilet and bathroom facilities have a significant relation with a woman’s well-being. In Daringbari we found that the issue of limited access to secure bathing spaces with adequate water needed immediate attention.

Private bathing spaces for women do not exist in majority of rural areas across India. Women have no option but to bathe fully clothed in nearby ponds, wells, hand pumps or streams. Apart from hygiene, this is a matter of their dignity as well.

Women of Kui tribe during our implementation work made covered bathroom, drainage canal, apart from cleaning their dugwells etc. Our goal was behavior change, providing them safe and clean surroundings and water. The women who took part in these activities shared that overall these have benefited the community.

After Goonj intervention, today in 35 villages women have covered space to take a bath. All the women we spoke to in the post survey said that now they can bathe safely and with drain and tube well cleaning they are getting clean water which they use for bathing, washing utensils, clothes, and even menstruation clothes.



Terabadi village, Kandhamal district, Odhisha

**Bathing Space**

In Kandhamal district, most families don't have private toilets and bathing spaces. They defecate in the open and take a bath in open space. **They were in constant fear of eve teasing and staring by men all around. Now as they are bathing in covered spaces, it has brought an immediate relief even as they have more space to take a bath.**