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23.
The Flip Side of Paper..

Here's a story of paper... not the crisp A4 sheet we all casually pick up to write on or to take a printout on.. but the one side used sheet, at the end of its life.

This humble '**One Side Used Papers' (OSUP)** has left an indelible mark on us while becoming a part and parcel of our core values. You may be wondering if this is going to be another 'good for the environment... save our trees' kind of slogan coming your way. Not really, this story is about a deeper yet more real connection with attention to the smallest things around us. Here's how..

In this journey of almost two decades, we have never bought a single A4 sheet !! In the last three years alone, over one million OSUP were used for our IEC material, survey forms, annual reports, leaflets, letterheads, notepads, etc. across all offices pan India. Buying one new rim of about 500 A4 size sheets costs approximately ₹170 in the market. Now imagine the savings on this small expense over the years. For a moment let's go a little deeper here..

For many people who have been to Goonj's '*Delhi Processing Centre*', the last stop is the paper unit, where they are pointed towards an innocuous-looking bowl of stapler pins, taken out of thousands of sheets of OSUP we get from corporates, schools, colleges and individuals from all walks of life. For many years now we sell these discarded stapler pins once a month. In many ways, this stapler pin is a metaphor for what Goonj does...

If you thought that is just one interesting titbit, think about thousands of old wedding cards, used envelopes and file covers... Turn around a Goonj visiting card and you are probably looking at a part of a used wedding card/file cover. If you have ever received a letter from Goonj, rest assured it will always be in an already used



envelope with **'Please use the other side'** stamped across it. The only reminder of its earlier journey.

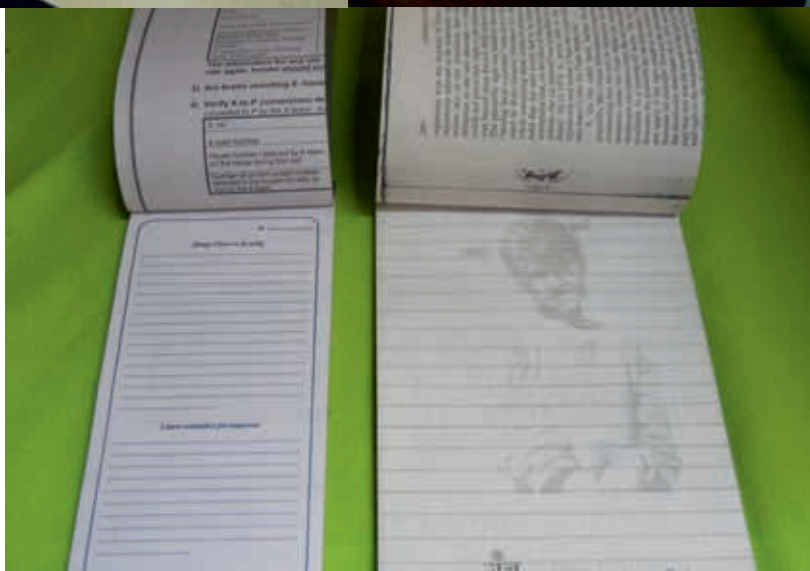
Using *OSUP* does have its share of interesting anecdotes. Many people are puzzled at receiving our monetary/material receipts printed on *OSUP* given for contributions ranging from rupees ten to ten million or for a contribution of one bag to one truckload of material. These receipts convey that all contributions are equally important to us and that we are trying to make each piece of paper count. Some people of course are still not comfortable with this practice. A gentleman once lashed out at us saying, *"You can't even give a proper certificate. That's also given on some trashy paper."* A reminder for us perhaps that there's still a lot of work to be done on this.



Like most other things Goonj gets, *OSUP* also goes through a rigorous process. First, the stapler pins are removed. Second, the paper is sorted as per its condition. Third, the used side of the paper is crossed off with a crayon and it is stamped with a message saying- **'Ignore this side & join GOONJ for re-use of paper'**

You could say this passion for *OSUP* is a fad but when Goonj started back in 1999, there was no one watching or talking about it. Today after years of highlighting this simple yet powerful message many organisations who earlier gave their paper to Goonj, have internalised the idea and started using the same paper for their own day-to-day work. We see it as a backhanded compliment.. Our ongoing work with *OSUP* is made possible by the consistent support of many such entities. A few years back an organisation contributed a roomful of their one side used survey sheets which proved very useful for Goonj's growing public campaigns. Some organisations regularly contribute their shredded paper to Goonj.

Over the years many public, private and non-governmental organisations apart from hundreds of individuals, have become a



regular part of this campaign. On the other hand, our conference pads (made out of OSUP) and file folders are very well appreciated at national and international forums...

In all these years Goonj has rarely spoken about its work around paper but we would be amiss again if the two awesome guys who have run our paper unit for more than a decade now, are not mentioned here.

Next time you come to Goonj Delhi, don't forget to say a Hi to *Rakesh* and *Guddu* 😊 They respond with the widest smiles you may have ever seen. That's awesome multiplied by infinity

So before you trash any paper at your home or office, take a moment to call up Goonj.. That would not only be your good deed for the day, it could well be the first step to a big change..



UPDATE FOOTNOTE

There's an interesting update on this story. Over the last **25** years as Goonj's operations have grown, we have been facing a constant shortfall of one side used paper for our organisational needs.

We believe the reason for this growing shortfall is two fold; one, the growing consciousness around sustainable use of resources among the masses and the corporate sector. Two, the growing number of organisations and new ideas that have emerged around using waste paper and other material. Either way, the outcome is that there is less paper going to trash. If you have a lot of one-sided paper in your home, office, corporate, or community, please write to us at mail@goonj.org to contribute.