

CONTENT

Message from The Founder

Message from Team

About Goon

Goonj North-Eastern States and West Bengal

History and Reach Impact

- People-led collective rural development
- Reaching out in Covid times
- Building an urban network of relationships

Learnings and Possibilities

Message from The Founder



Founder- Goonj., and Gram Swabhimaan

Dear Friend of Goonj.

North-Eastern States and West Bengal are blessed states; rich in culture, natural resources and surrounded by beautiful mountains and rivers. People here are also deeply vulnerable to annual floods and cyclones. Goonj has been working in these areas for years but initiated its formal setups when people were hit by large-scale disasters. Since then, as our work here focussed on disaster relief and rehabilitation, it has brought huge learnings about the connection between disasters and development.

In West Bengal, post-2009, when Cyclone Aila hit the Sundarbans, and we intervened to support impacted people, our attention was drawn to this ecologically sensitive region and its people. We weave climate action into nudging, and collaborating with local communities to plant mangroves to proactively work for the environment. Over time, as our work reached remote parts of West Bengal, it has organically embedded development issues like livelihood, infrastructure, menstrual health and education with local contexts. The Goonj team and base in Assam emerged from the recognition that natural disasters are growing in frequency, and in the scale of devastation. A stronger local network and capacities is the only way forward.

Both these state chapters have emerged as our base for disaster response and mitigation in the region, and also as a pathway to deeper development work in the other North-Eastern states. Our work mobilises disaster-vulnerable communities to be the repairers of their own lives and ecosystems. With The Goonj Alliance for Rapid Response on Disasters (GARRD), we have formalised this long-standing disaster response model of Goonj. It acknowledges the ongoing cycle of disaster and development, and the need for multi-sectoral resource commitment to disaster response in non-disaster times.

Even as annual floods and cyclones in the region are a living reality for many, a strategic and consistent response is the need of the hour. Today, Goonj regional teams work at the cross sectional hub of urban, rural, material and climate emergencies ecosystems, with relations, material and monetary, partnerships and volunteering inputs. Our sincere gratitude to each of you! The road ahead is challenging, but by walking together, we will make it.

Lagey Raho...

Anshu Gupta

Message from Team

Namaskar Friend.

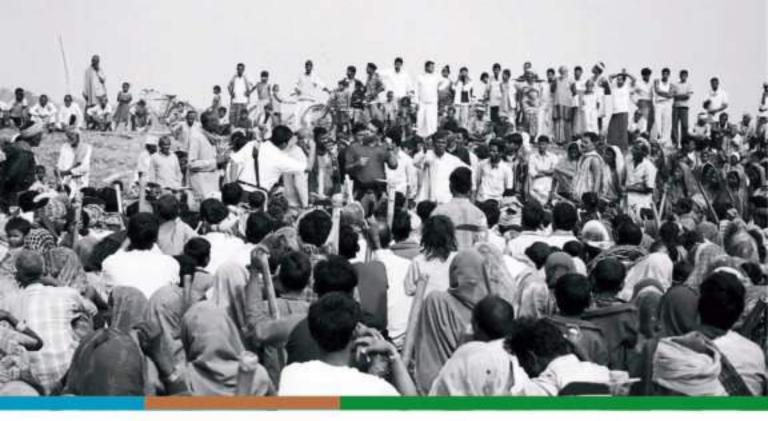
Our journey in this region started more than a decade ago with the setting up of a small Goonj Kolkata office and team and soon after Goonj Guwahati operations were set up. Together these two offices have strategically focussed on the most neglected and far-flung geographies and populations in the region. The Goonj Kolkata has also slowly emerged as the hub for urban relationship building with a strong team and hundreds of volunteers and a strong network of urban and rural grassroot organisations and government departments led partnerships. This wide network of relationships supports us in our deeper work in the region.

As with the rest of the world, Covid was a big marker of our time as well. We cherish how people from this region came together, demonstrating unprecedented dedication, commitment and fearlessness to stand with each other. Kolkata's large heart and spirit shined through as it facilitated rapid local procurement and reaching people on time. In the time to come as the world faces big social, economic and climatic challenges, we believe this people's power is our strength.

We sincerely hope to continue being the enablers to people in being their own pathfinders and builders.



About **Goonj**



Goonj award-winning an organisation working inequality and climate change, led by Magsaysay material abundance of people in cities is fast awardee Anshu Gupta. It puts people, their leading to the generation of thousands of tons dignity, wisdom and efforts at the core of of waste ending in landfills, threatening the addressing these issues. Goonj's pan-India efforts, across 28 states and union territories, engage urban and rural masses in a circular way. turning one's excess material into a resource for addressing the other's scarcity. Surplus material is used to mobilise, motivate and empower communities of people in cities and villages, to be the owners and drivers of addressing their own challenges like water, sanitation, education, menstrual hygiene, infrastructure, livelihood and disaster response.

Responding to the Systemic Gap

In overwhelming majority of materially and financially weak people reside in villages, making the rural scarcity of resources a big and potential of what the world already has, ongoing disaster. They struggle for basic focusing on circularity -material, people, material necessities, spending their meagre relationships, talent and resources. Our work is resources on essential needs. These scarcities rooted in the age-old tradition of barter; make them more vulnerable to natural

non-profit calamities and add to their day-to-day to address poverty, powerlessness and humiliation. Meanwhile, the environment. Goonj's approach addresses these issues holistically.

Approach and Design Principles

Goonj's work is based on human dignity-led development, emphasising participation and action by members of communities most affected by development issues. Gooni seeks to impact the world by mobilising, motivating and empowering the most resource and opportunities starved communities, to be the prime actors in changing their world through collaborative reflection and action. The world's surplus is at the core of our idea as we constantly explore, value and build on the between the world's unused



material and the efforts and wisdom of people. range of products made by Green by Goonj for Our work engages the urban and rural masses, as active stakeholders invested in a more promising future, offering a powerful example of citizen participation with everyday acts of mindful giving.

Key Initiatives

Cloth For Work (CFW) mobilises, motivates and empowers communities by creating a barter between urban surplus and rural labour and wisdom, positive impact on material poverty, community assets. local self-sufficiency. neglected issues and local biodiversity.

Rahat is rapid, proactive, people-led disaster relief, rehabilitation and long-term awareness building in non-disaster times, and mitigation.

Not Just A Piece of Cloth (NJPC) mainstreams menstruation as a human issue with attention to women's voice, dignity and health. Using surplus cloth to produce cloth sanitary pads, using them to hold pan India Chuppi Todo Baithaks (Break The Silence Meetings) and community-led action, on women's local menstrual issues.

School to School (S2S) fills gaps in rural education by deploying unused urban school material to mobilise, motivate and empower school children and their communities to take action to enable learning. S2S involves urban children and schools to build their empathy and awareness about the realities and challenges of rural education.

Green By Gooni (GBG) is a range of handcrafted, unique products for daily living, special events and gifting for sustainable urban living. The

rural living and basic needs, extends the material circularity for development.

Vaapsi, which literally means 'bringing back' in Hindi, aims to restore indigenous livelihood in rural areas, keeping people's dignity at the core.

Recognitions

Goonj has received national and international recognition for innovation, entrepreneurship, governance and public service including the Bank's Development World Marketplace Award, Global Development Marketplace Award, Changemakers Innovation Award, Jamnalal Balal Award for Fair Business Practices and the Mother Teresa Memorial Awards for Social Justice. Gooni's Founder Anshu Gupta is a Magsaysay awardee and a Schwab and Ashoka Fellow.

Pan India Impact

More than 18 million lives touched

63 million kgs of material channelised

Over 1 million person-days of work generated by repurposing cloth into daily utility items

9 million+ cloth sanitary pads (MY Pads) made

96000+ community development projects implemented under the Cloth For Work (CFW) initiative

The data pertaining to Goon; in this report is: only for the period FY 2014 to 2024



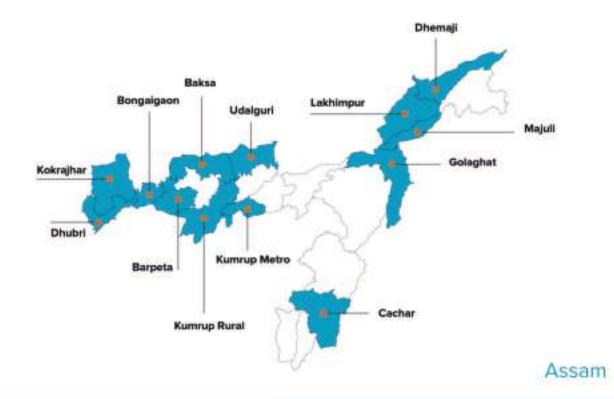
History and Reach

West Bengal can be broadly divided into two geographical areas, the Gangetic Plain to the south, and the Sub-Himalayan and Himalayan areas to the north. The state suffers regular natural disasters including floods and cyclones. Also, Assam, surrounded by valleys, hills, and the perennial river Brahmaputra flowing through it, experiences frequent flooding in the plains.

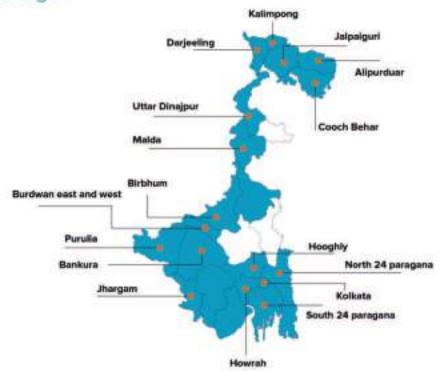
Goonj formalised its operations in West Bengal when Cyclone Aila hit the state in 2009. Heavy rainfall followed the cyclone, impacting villages along the state's coast, forcing people to flee and abandon their homes, and displacing thousands of people. Parts of Sunderbans, a mangrove area in the delta formed by the confluence of the Ganga in the Bay of Bengal, were cut off from the mainland.

Gooni's initial phase here saw us supporting affected communities with relief through local non-government bodies. Parts. Sundarbans that were severed off from the mainland due to Aila were difficult to get to. So. relief was reached out through four NGOs, and relevant government authorities. A few months later, Goonj set up an office in Kolkata. Over time, we have expanded our work, making it possible for us to reach the state's most marginalised and vulnerable communities. In recent years, we have engaged in long-term interventions to trigger rural development using urban surplus material,

There have also been some innovative initiatives in Kolkata designed to reach more people and affect a lasting impact, Among these are disaster exhibitions, which are



West Bengal



organised to inspire a deeper understanding of disaster-affected communities, and Adda with Anshu, a conversation between Goonj's Founder and a socially-conscious celebrity. Currently, Goonj West Bengal engages regularly with individuals, institutions and corporations.

Goonj's work in Assam began in 2010, during the Assam Floods, it started in Morigaon district with disaster relief and rehabilitation. This is also where the first CFW activity was ideated and implemented. We further channelised relief to the districts of Dibrugarh, Darrang and Lakhimpur. Eventually communities were engaged in long-term development work through a variety of Goonj flagship initiatives. Since then, our efforts have been focussed on enabling local populations in Assam to be the

deciders and implementers of their development needs, even as we continue to respond to disasters in the state.

For almost a decade, Goonj Assam was not a separate chapter and was run as an extension of the West Bengal chapter. However, after the first wave of the pandemic, Assam was established as a new chapter in 2020 and has been operating out of an office in Guwahati since. In addition to engaging in rehabilitation and disaster mitigation activities in the state, the chapter has also mobilised the most offmile communities to be equal stakeholders in community development.

Together, both the chapters have been successful in actioning Goonj initiatives aimed at development in 25 districts in Northeastern States and 14 districts in West Bengal Additionally. the chapters channelisation of relief material during disasters partners in West Bengal to Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and respectively. During the pandemic, Goonj Sikkim.

as also in Meghalaya's Ri Bhoi district. In carrying forward our mandate, we are oversee currently working with 31 and eight local and Assam reached out to five North-Eastern states.

Sustainable Development Goals that Goonj works on:

















SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 6: Clean Water And Sanitation. SDG 8: Decent Work And Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities And Communities, SDG 12: Responsible Consumption And Production, 5DG 13: Climate Action.



DISASTERS AND NATURAL HAZARDS

LOCAL : ISSUES AT STAKE

GOONJ RESPONSE

km flood-prone area spread over the total geographical area of the state which is 88752 sq km. The total devastated area crossed 20000 sq km in 4 different years and floods of medium magnitude (between 2000 to 10000 sq km.) occurred on 10 occasions.

Department of Disaster Management and Civil Department, Defecce Government of West Bengal (2019)

West Bengal has a 37660 sq. A total of 308 deaths caused. The average annual area. by natural disasters have been reported in the FY 2022- 23 (as of 12.07.2022) for all the 8 states in North Eastern India Inamely Arunachai Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Skkim, and Trigura) with 161 and 232 deaths in 2019 and 2020 respectively. Apart from human lives lost, the number of houses damaged is also increasing year after year from 149697 in 2018-19 to 234741 in 2022-23.

> Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Development of North-East Region (July2022)

affected by floods in Assam is 9.31 lakh hectures. The floodprone area of India as a whole stands at about 10.2 % country, but the flood- prone area of Assam is 39.58 % of the area of the state.

Government of Assam (June

Goon; is working with a reliable. time-tested, needdisaster relief and rehabilitation. approach that engages a network of stakeholders in of the total area of the urban and rural India with a unique disaster management protocal invalving sensitising masses for a rapid and better response to a disaster. Goonj is mobilising and motivating disaster-hit communities. usually considered victims, as powerful stakeholders, in repaining and restoring their own buildings, roads and bridges damaged in a disaster.

GLOBAL: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ADDRESSED



Environment Conservation (Focus on Mangrove plantation in the Sundarbans)

LOCAL: ISSUES AT STAKE

GOONJ RESPONSE

The impact of sea level rise in the Sundarbans has accelerated due to the slow subsidence of land at the rate of 2.9 mm/year. Since 2009, 4 cyclones have devastated the area. The sea-facing islands of the Sundarbans are shrinking in size, and the coast of Purba Medinipur is eroding at an average rate of 5 m/year. It has been reported that two metres high waves generated from the Muriganga swept away the Ghoramara island, a part of the Sundarbans area.

The West Bengal Pollution Control Board by the Government of West Bengal (2021) Between 2007 and 2021, the Sundarbans' very dense mangrove cover (canopy density of more than 70%) has come down from 1038 sq. km to 994 sq. km, while moderately dense cover (canopy density of 70%-40%) suffered a greater loss from 881 sq. km to 692 sq. km.

Union Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change in their 'The State of Forests' in India report (2021)

- Good has been working extensively with communities residing in the Sundarbans on mangrave plantations to protect the embanisment area under CFW.
- Over 390,000 Mangroove plantation done in West Bengsi.*
- Thousands of community members mobilised towards taking action to conserve the environment.

"This data is in last low years including 2023-24

GLOBAL: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ADDRESSED

EDG R: Decent Work and Economic Growth, EDG H: Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 12; Responsible Consumption and Production, EDG 12; Climate Action





LIVELIHOOD

GOONJ RESPONSE

Agriculture is the main Agriculture supports more The female unemployment. nearly two-thirds of the West Bengal. The absolute number of workers in the organised sector has been consistently declining and the number of casual workers increased from of Assam, January 2023 37.3% in 2004-05 to 44.6% in 20th-12 in the total workforce in West Bengal

Ministry of Agriculture and

Farmers Welfare, GOI 2018

- source of rural livelihood as. than 75% of the employment. (directly or indirectly) for population depends on it in more than 53% of the total workforce of Assam.
 - Panchayat and Rurill Development, Government
- rate in Assam is 33.9% compared to 8% for males. The youth unemployment rate is also high at 37,7%; Geographically.
- unemployment is highest in the tell gardens (15.3%) and flood-affected areas (15.2%)

Transformation and Development Department. Government of Assert. 2022

- Gooni assists people who have given up jobs due to a lack of resources and reaches out to them with specialised tool kits, such as Farmer Kits, Mason Kits, Barber Kits and Plumber Kits to facilitate the resumption of work.
- promotes Goon! alternative employment opportunities in the Sundarbons, other than fishing, and encourages communities cultivate diverse crops.
- Goant supports people with fruit saplings, which in turn helps them to sustain their livelihood options through the selling of fresh produce.

GLOBAL: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ADDRESSED

SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 5: Gender Equality , SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth



MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE

LOCAL : ISSUES AT STAKE

GOON J RESPONSE

- About 47.6% of women in West Bengal use cloth and locally prepared sanitary napkins during their menstrual period. About 17% of women still do not have access to adequate menstrual health products.
 - National Family Health Survey, NFH5-5 (2019-21)
- Of girls aged between 15 and 24 in Assam, only 44.8% use hygienic products during their menstruation. The figure is 70.8% in urban areas and 40.9% in rural areas.

National Family Health Survey, NFHS-4 (2015-16)

- Goon reaches out to women from the remotest parts of West Bengal and Assam and involves them in Chuppi Todo Baithalis (Break The Silence Meetings).
- Goorij involves women in different health. hygiene and sanitation awareness activities, enabling them to maintain their health and hygiene during menstruation. Women are engaged in creating private spaces to address their privacy needs (during menstruation and otherwise) and kitchen gardens to address their nutritional issues.

GLOBAL: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ADDRESSED

SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation



LOCAL : ISSUES AT STAKE

GOONJ RESPONSE

- West Bengal has a 77.08% The school dropout rates There Iteracy rate which ranks Indian amongst states. There are 10 districts below the state average. It is one of the worst-performing states in higher education in India Census 2011 and Union Ministry of Rural Development.
 - at the secondary level in Assam in the last 5 years from 2017- 18 to 2021-22 were higher than the national average at 33.7% Ohereby topping the list in the country) in 2017- 18 ascompared to the national average of 18.9%.

GOVERNMENT OF NEW MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION & LITERACY (2018)

- inadequate | # Goons infrastructural. facilities in Assam, a schools in shortfall in opening new schoots, inadequacy in the training of teachers. absence of an effective mechanism of tracking and enrolment and irregular supply of free textbooks. Comptroller and Auditor General of India in Audit Report (Civil) for the year ended 31 March 2011
- supports disaster-impacted communities of West Bengal and Assam in building permanent structures for Aanganwadis and repairing damaged school buildings.
 - Goors supports students with educational materials to enable attending school and enhance the learning environment.
 - Goors establishes strong ties with schools. parents and volunteers in urban and rural areas. In rural communities, Goonj engages parents, teachers and the wider community to address educational challenges and involve children in activities to foster dignity.

GLOBAL: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ADDRESSED

SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 8: Decent work and Economic Growth



INFRASTRUCTURE

LOCAL: ISSUES AT STAKE

- GOONJ RESPONSE
- During the period 2013-17, the value of the Out of all water bodies in Assam, 98.2%. flood damage in West Bengal to houses (1,69,352) water bodies are in use and public utilities was about 43997.27 whereas the rest 1.8% (3.140) are not in crore rupees. The average annual use on account of drying up, siltation, damages during these five years were salinity, destruction beyond repair, and 8799.45 crore rupees, which was much other reasons. higher than the all-India average of the last 60 years.
 - CAG on Performance Aurest Implementation of Flood Control Measures in West Bengal (2018)

Irrigation (statistics) wing. Government of India (2013-14)

- Many disaster-prone rural parts of WB and Assam suffer from loss of property and community assets. Goon is connecting with local communities, their needs, and engaging in infrastructure projects for development.
- Gooni's Clath For Work incentivises community participation, with members exchanging work for essential items, to build and repair community assets.

GLOBAL: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ADDRESSED

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities



People-led Rural Development

Managing Relief and Rehabilitation During

Disasters

The North-Eastern states of India are afflicted by various natural disasters: annual cyclones and floods, earthquakes and landslides. The West Bengal chapter started with channelising disaster relief material in the impacted areas



during Cyclone Aila in 2009. Assam, in fact, suffers floods every year. Goonj has supported almost all the North-Eastern states with relief material, and rural development, through our offices in West Bengal and Assam.

70000+

Families reached under floods, cyclones, earthquakes and fires in North eastern and West Bengal

2009	Alla Cyclone (West Bengal)	4
2010	Assam Flood	DISASTER TIMELINE
2011	Sikkim Earthquake	K-IIW
2015	Meghalaya Flood and Landslide Manipur Flood and Landslide	SACSIE
2016	Manipur Earthquake	
2017	Mizoram Flood and Landslide	
2018	Manipur Flood and Landslide	
2019	Fani Cyclone (West Bengal) Nagaland Flood Bulbul Cyclone	
2020	Amphan Cyclone (West Bengal)	
2021	Yaas Cycione (West Bengal)	
2022	Dana Cyclone (West Bengal) Assam Flood & WB Flood	
2023	Nagaland Fire	
2024	Flood in Assam & West Bengal Landslide West Bengal Manipur Riots	

North-Eastern States and West Bengal













Cyclone Bulbul of 2019 severely affected parts of West Bengal and North East India. A large number of lives and properties were lost. Communities that rely on agriculture and fishing for their livelihood were hit the hardest. Paddy fields, crops, and fishing farms were destroyed. Many school buildings were damaged and had to be shut down.

Goonj stepped in to support affected areas with Ration Kits, Family Kits and other essentials such as torches, matchboxes and candles. Kanchan Paramik, who witnessed the havoc wreaked by cyclone Bulbul, remembers:

"As soon as the cyclone hit our neighbouring area, it swept away the roof of my house. We hid beneath beds. Then, we had to rush to a school building to protect ourselves. This is when local organisations and Goonj came together and supported us with meals for nine days, as our kitchens, and our homes, were destroyed."



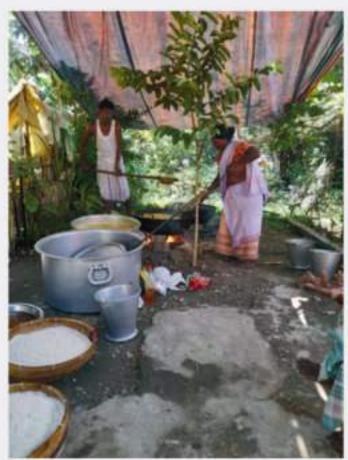




The Assam floods of 2022 caused havoc in parts of the state, displacing people, killing livestock and destroying agricultural land. Many people had no choice but to move into relief camps, with bare access to food and essentials.

This is when Goonj stepped in and set up six community kitchens in the most impacted districts, namely Darrang, Tamulpur, Kokrajhar and Kamrup, with partner organisations. These kitchens ran for more than ten days, catering to thousands. Abdul Hamid, who was the head chef for a community kitchen that was set up in Kachukata village of Kokrajhar district, says:

"I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Goonj for their invaluable support in our noble endeavour, which was the setting up of a community kitchen for flood-affected families. It gave me immense joy to see people eat their meals well."







Facilitating Environmental Conservation

In the past few decades, floods and cyclones have regularly damaged the Sundarbans of West Bengal. Residents of the Sundarbans have been campaigning extensively to save the environment and prevent natural disasters. From 2019 onwards, Goonj began attempting to make mangrove planting a people's movement through direct implementation.

3300+ Plantation drives 1500+ Initiatives on water management



Mangrove plantation as an effort to save the Sundarbans' fragile ecology essentially began after Cyclone Aila. While Goonj initially focused on reaching out with relief material in the area. we eventually expanded our work to include long-term rehabilitation and development in two districts that the Sundarbans is spread over, namely South 24 Pargana and North 24 Pargana. Together with local grassroot organisations, we mobilised and motivated local communities in the most vulnerable mangrove plantations to take collective action through our CFW initiative. Thus began our climate action journey in the Sundarbans. Since then, over 20 community- led exclusive mangrove nurseries have been set up along the riverside in the area.

Hemlata Mondal, a participant in a Sundarbans plantation drive, says:

"During the Yaas Cyclone, embankments collapsed on many islands. However, in the areas where we had planted saplings, the embankments were intact."

Uma Mandal, a resident of a village that was affected by Cyclone Aila, recalls:

"I can never forget how that cyclone impacted our lives. The embankment collapsed and our entire village was flooded. Planting mangroves is the only solution. And we must all do our bit to protect our villages."











Bagar village and its surrounding area in the Majuli district of Assam are highly susceptible to soil erosion and land loss caused by the Brahmaputra River. Goonj teams mobilised the residents here to use local wisdom and natural resources to solve this problem. We used basic needs material to nudge people here for this work under our development initiative, CFW.

A group of 36 residents planted 2500 saplings of the easily found Stal Padma (also referred to as Hibiscus Mutabili). The roots of this plant bind soil particles together, providing muchneeded strength to the fragile topsoil.

Dibyajyoti Das, a participant farmer, states:

"This is a very good initiative. It protects the soil from getting washed by the mighty Brahmaputra. Plus, the leaves of the trees are beneficial for our cattle and wild elephants. Also, we use the tree barks to make ropes."



Improving

Infrastructure

Massive property loss and severe damage to infrastructure due to regular cyclones and floods have been eroding lives in rural North-Eastern States and West Bengal over the past some decades. Goonj's efforts in the region have consistently focussed on motivating and mobilising impacted communities to construct, repair and manage their community assets better by using indigenous wisdom and local resources.

3400+

Community assets developed



Chilapata village in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal has its residents migrating out in search of sustenance and increasingly so. Adding to the village's woes, its agricultural land was regularly being destroyed by elephants. When the Goonj team approached residents here, we nudged the community to look at their natural nurturing OWIT assets for sustenance. People came together to revive a non-functional local pond, unused for many years. A thick layer of weeds and other plants covered the pond.

Goonj motivated and mobilised 48 residents to come together and clean the 160-foot-long and 100-foot-wide pond. The families of Chilapata village now have a source of income in fish farming. Romain Basumata, a resident, says:

"Cleaning of the pond has really helped us. Apart from fish farming, women in the village now have a place to bathe and wash clothes. Also, there is water for livestock to drink."



Aunibari Moderguri Chapari village in Assam's Lakhimpur district is surrounded by several rivers, and is highly prone to flooding. It is home to the Mising Tribe. The residents from the tribal community here required a Murong Okum (community house) which is essential for their harvest festival Ali-Ai-Ligang, which also marks the onset of sowing seeds.

In a meeting with the village chief and other elders, the community decided to construct Murong Okum under Goonj's CFW initiative. Thirty-four women led this effort, and men in the community helped with the roofing. The community members were mobilised to contribute material for the construction including bamboo, ropes and straw.

Rina Pegu Doley, one of the women who worked to build the structure, explains:

"I don't think we could have made the Murong Okum in such a short time without the community coming together. We are grateful to Goonj for showing support and motivating us all."







Enabling Dignified Livelihood

In disaster-prone states such as North-Eastern States and West Bengal, sustainable livelihood is near-impossible to hold on to, and depend on. Disasters destroy agricultural lands and infrastructure, and cause debilitatingly huge losses of crop, livestock and fisheries. Indigenous occupations can barely survive, making communities here financially unstable.

In the Sundarbans, particularly, employment opportunities are limited, with the majority living off of fishing and the cultivation of very few crops. During the pandemic, many who had migrated for work were forced to return to their

villages here, without any means of earning a living. Goonj has been working in these areas with a focus on restoring indigenous livelihood and decreasing migration.

2100+

Families reached through local livelihood initiatives to restore a stable means of sustenance



In Khansaheb Abad, a village in the South 24 Pargana district of West Bengal most residents are landless and rely heavily on daily wages from agricultural work. It is common for them to migrate to nearby cities in search of employment opportunities. As a way to revitalise the village's livelihood possibilities, residents here decided to develop a community sunflower farm with Goonj's support. They planned on consuming the sunflower oil and seeds produced in the farm in-house, and selling whatever remained of the produce. Fifteen residents of the village came together to develop this farm. Another two contributed their land for it. Within 12 days, two plots of land were ready to be cultivated for oil and seeds. Three months later, the residents sold 175 kilos of oil and 200 kilos of seeds for Rs. 50000. Pintu Giri, a village resident, says:

"As a result of this cultivation, the fertility of the land has increased. We get pure oil without chemicals now which is very good for our health. Also, the money we earn by selling the produce is making us self-sufficient."



The Bordolopa village in Assam's Dhemaji district suffers monsoon floods every year. Since most residents rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, the months following the monsoons are tough. Each year, when the area is flooded, Goonj collaborates with some local organisations to support the residents with relief material. After several discussions about finding alternative means of livelihood, the community decided to set up an incense stick making unit with Goonj's support under the Vaapsi initiative.

This would provide the residents with a safe source of income through the year. Today, 12 women run the unit and make about Rs. 4000 monthly by selling the incense sticks they make.

Pushpa Dihingia, who works in the unit, shares:

"Working here has ensured that I have a stable income now. The unit provides all of us who work here, a sense of security."



Addressing Menstrual Health and Hygiene

Disaster-prone and heavy rainfall states like North-Eastern States and West Bengal throw up uniquely tough menstrual health and hygiene challenges. At the most basic level, during disasters, the menstruating are deprived of safe and clean menstrual products and private spaces to clean. Often, these products are unavailable, or cannot be purchased due to lack of funds. Therefore, many are forced to manage menstrual flow using improvised methods, such as old rags, ash and other unhygienic practices.

For women from the fishing communities in the Sundarbans and the floodplains of Assam, menstruation poses difficult problems, even in non-disaster times. Because, as fisherwomen, they are regularly needed to remain submerged in salt water for hours at a time.

Goonj, through its menstrual health and hygiene initiative NJPC, supports such communities with cloth sanitary pads. We also promote behavioural change around

500000+ MY Pads channelised 1400+ Chuppi Todo Baithaks (menstrual health and hygiene awareness meetings) held



In Katamari and Deulbari villages of West Bengal's South 24 Pargana district, women struggle with menstruation. Largely fisher women, they depend on their work for daily sustenance. Because they work in water through the day, they are unable to use cloth while menstruating. So, they usually end up using plastic bags which commonly cause itching and rashes. As a result, menstruation means added discomfort, and also the risk of skin and urinary tract infections.

When the Goonj team started working here, we held Break The Silence Meetings or Chuppi Todo Baithaks (CBTs), urging the fisherwomen to pay more attention to their menstrual health and hygiene and evolve local solutions. Together with Goonj, the women set up a Goonj MY Pad ATM to proactively address their menstrual needs. They found the use of Goonj's MY Pad cloth sanitary pads together with plastic more effective, while working in water. About 150 people attended the ATM inauguration that turned into a local cultural event. During a meeting with Goonj, a woman shared:

"Many men usually get drunk in the mornings, and take no responsibility for their families. The whole burden of earning is on us. We go fishing for long hours in salt water, develop various skin diseases. We have to do so even when we are menstruating."



In the Bhuma Kapchan and Dakhin Chapari Arasuti Chuburi villages in Assam's Lakhimpur district, two Goonj MY Pad ATMs were installed. The villages are primarily inhabited by the Mising Tribal community, and they have access to minimal resources, including meagre means to procure sanitary pads.

A mud house was built by the women of Bhuma Kapchan for an ATM booth to safely store MY Pads. Also, this group was responsible for maintaining the space, keeping records of the MY Pads purchased, and using funds generated by sales for community work. Within two months, they had about 50 buyers, and the word about the MY Pad ATM spread to the neighbouring villages as well.

Minumai Doley, who has volunteered to maintain the MY Pad ATM at Dakhin Chapori Arasuti Chuburi shares:

"The MY Pad ATM is gaining momentum. In the first month, sales were low as many women were shy and skeptical about approaching us. We are doing our best to increase sales and raise awareness about menstrual health and hygiene here."



Closing Gaps in Rural Education

Natural disasters have a deep, long standing effect on many aspects of development that are beyond infrastructure, and the tangibles. In West Bengal and Assam, the devastation they wreak annually impacts education adversely. The impact is manifest in a rise in absenteeism and dropout rates, reduction in educational attainments, and the overall lowering of learning environments. Some parts of these states are entirely cut off from the mainland during disasters, which isolates damaged school buildings and Aanganwadis; and makes it impossible for supplies and assistance for repairs to reach them. In addition to supporting communities with school supplies and educational material, Goonj, through its

education initiative School to School, mobilises and motivates them to repair damaged school buildings and develop kitchen gardens. Efforts are made to ensure that teachers, parents and students come together to work collectively to create and maintain conducive learning environments.

700+ rural schools supported through education initiatives



People of Irfan Khali village in West Bengal's South 24 Pargana district, have many hopes for their children but little means to fulfil them. Most parents here either work at the brick kiln or fish, or have migrated to cities for work. When Goonj began discussions with locals here on community assets they would want improved, they decided to set up a study centre; 42 residents worked at constructing it. When built, the study centre became an example of collective effort to affect change. The centre now has books and toys for children of all ages.

Over 30 children study at the centre, as it is a safe place for them to meet and engage with each other. Supriya Das, a resident who oversees the centre's running, and also educates young girls on menstrual hygiene practices, observes:

"This centre is a small step towards moving forward with the community. I too have lived a difficult life, so I devote my time to bring some change. That's how we can progress. I get so much love from the people here. I am happy to say our village is changing in a good way!"







When the Goonj team noticed the state of the local school in Dhakuakhan village of Assam's Lakhimpur district, we held discussions and mobilised the local community to address the issue. Soon ten residents, including the school's headmaster came together to work on this initiative. Other village residents generously contributed bamboo to make furniture for the school.

Additionally, people built a bamboo fence around the school, repaired the damaged walls and built two toilets, for boys and girls. This is how the community, using their wisdom and skills, transformed their own school, making a more conducive learning environment for their children. Raju Pegu, the school headmaster, shares:

"This was a heartwarming initiative! The school staff now has a proper place to sit and teach. The availability of washrooms within the school will really help my students. Parents are very happy to see this transformation."







Reaching Out in Covid Times

In Assam, West Bengal and other Eastern states, Goonj responded on a war footing to the inequalities further escalated by the pandemic. We reached out to thousands of pandemic-affected families in these states and supported them in many ways; with Medicine Kits, Occupational Kits, cash transfers, food rations and much more. We also attempted to stand with the people who were in the frontline, by supporting them with Health Worker Kits. Meanwhile, temporary mask- making units were set up across West Bengal.

During the lockdowns, as markets shut down and supply chains were disrupted, farmers saw their produce wasting away. At this time Goonj

purchased farm produce of vegetables at a large scale and added these to our Ration Kits going to the most vulnerable communities. Many Missed Out Communities (MOCs) including PLHIV (People Living with HIV), sex workers, artisans and people with special needs were also reached out to with essentials and ration.



4800+

Health Worker Kits channelised

11,500+

Family Medicine Kits channelised

210000+ kgs

Vegetables procured from local farmers

This data is only for the period between

April 2020 and March 2022.

Building an Urban Network of Relationships

Goonj's initial focus in this region was on responding to the neglected needs of the most disaster ravaged rural parts of West Bengal and other neighbouring geographies. The resource generation for this work came from the rest of the country, especially Delhi and Mumbai. In 2011, however, as Goonj set up its urban relations and Processing Centre in Kolkata, it started raising resources, together with a stronger urban community to support the growing scale of its work. In the same year, the first local volunteer-led collection camp was held in Kolkata. Soon after, a Goonj Dropping Centre opened up in New Alipore. Today, Goonj has five Dropping Centres in Kolkata and Durgapur city, led by a network of more than 200+ volunteers.

In 2020, together with the devastating impact of the pandemic, the region also saw one of its

biggest cyclones, Amphan, It ravaged many parts of coastal Bengal. We accelerated our local and national partnerships to generate more resources for the region. The city of Kolkata, with its large heart and dedicated force of urban network also helped localise the procurement and channelisation of material.

We also saw many more ideas emerge from our Kolkata work to reach and engage urban masses with rural development issues. Holding disaster-related panel discussions and photo exhibitions engaged the urban masses more intensely with disaster-impacted communities. Adda with Anshu, a freewheeling and insightful conversation between Goonj's Founder and a socially-conscious celebrity, drew people. Today, Goonj West Bengal engages regularly with individual volunteers, institutions and corporates.



Some outputs of Goonj's engagement with people are immidiately visible. They show up as the enthusiasm with which people and organisations take charge of the neglected needs of those with lesser financial means. Gooni's volunteer networks are growing. Meanwhile, the long-term impact of the urban connections Gooni is forging are continuously in the making. It is affecting behavioural changes, nudging people to be mindful of the dignity of the users of the material while giving and collecting. It is engaging children and youth in the creation of a culture of mindful giving too. Importantly, our work is extending the life cycle of urban surplus to make for positive climate action. Our urban network in West Bengal comprises:

Individuals: The work of Goonj in North-Eastern States and West Bengal has been made possible through the efforts of a team of dedicated volunteers coming from all walks of life: homemakers, professionals, senior citizens, school children and college-going youngsters. They hold collection

camps, run volunteer Dropping Centres, share space and spend time to reach out to others, become our voice in different forums, and our link for connecting many dots.

Institutions: There has been an active involvement of schools and colleges in Goonj Kolkata's urban operations.Along with collection drives. student organising volunteers have conducted awareness sessions and held dialogues to change people's behaviour towards urban surplus and mindful giving.

Corporates: For the past two years, the Goonj West Bengal chapter has built strong relationships with many Indian and multinational corporates. Organisations have engaged with Goonj through their employee volunteer participation, material and monetary contribution, as also project funding.

500+

Collection camps conducted

* This data is only for the period from 2024 powards.



Aneesha Paul is a young philanthropist, content writer, and most importantly, a compassionate Goonj volunteer. Babita Singhania has been a Goonj volunteer for more than six years now.

She shares:

"Goonj's CFW initiative has left a lasting impression on me. What I love about the initiative is that it does not support the communities for free. It firmly believes in the dignity of all individuals. The work people do for themselves and their community is rewarded with Kits, and basic material necessities. This what real development is!"

She says:

"Goonj makes every contribution worth it.

I want to contribute here in every way
possible with my time, skills and network of
friends. In Goonj nobody ever is an outsider."





Ten-year-old Aayushmaan Jalan studies at the Heritage School in Kolkata. Like many urban children, he is keenly interested in learning how Goonj uses urban material to nudge rural communities to bring changes in their own lives. He always helps his mother organise Goonj collection camps. During summer vacations, both Aayushmaan and his brother decided to be a part of the Goonj summer camp. They made it their mission to collect stationery and make School Kits. They also made Goonj Kee Gullak (Goonj's Piggy Bank)

with empty ice cream boxes by spray-painting them. They searched for used one-sided paper and engaged their friends in their quest.

Vandana Jalan, Aayushmaan's mother, says:

"Goonj has given us a platform for mindful giving, which has changed our lives. My son is more responsible today and appreciates what he has, and avoids wasting material and saves for Goonj."







The DPS Howrah School organised a collection camp and held an empathy-building session for its students during the Joy of Giving week, now called Daan Utsav. The students had come prepared with their contributions. Many students were inquisitive and wanted to know more. The events proved to be a successful attempt at beginning a culture of mindful giving.

Additionally, the school encouraged its students to celebrate birthdays and festivals in a more meaningful way, instead of distributing candies and chocolates. The school has in fact adopted a policy of asking students to bring stationery items on their birthdays. The school sends the collected stationery to us to be used in the Goonj School Kits.

Sunita Arora, Principal DPS Howrah, declares:

"The idea of students contributing stationery on their birthdays to those less privileged than them, instead of bringing chocolates for their peers, has been instrumental in developing good values among them. We will continue doing this and supporting Goonj."



Goonj has been engaging widely with FMCGs and corporates like HSBC in different ways including employees volunteering for making Disaster Kits and sorting material etc. beyond material and monetary contributions. Additionally, Goonj highlighted the climate crisis issues at the HSBC Climate Action Network Carnival (CAN), interacting closely with the organisation's employees.

Debapriya Ghosh, HSBC GSC Kolkata Corporate Sustainability Lead, states:

"Collaborating with Goonj was transformative and enriching. Together, we were able to ddress basic needs through organising camps and motivating our team to be a part of a good cause. Through this, we have been able to contribute for society, the environment and for sustainable development."









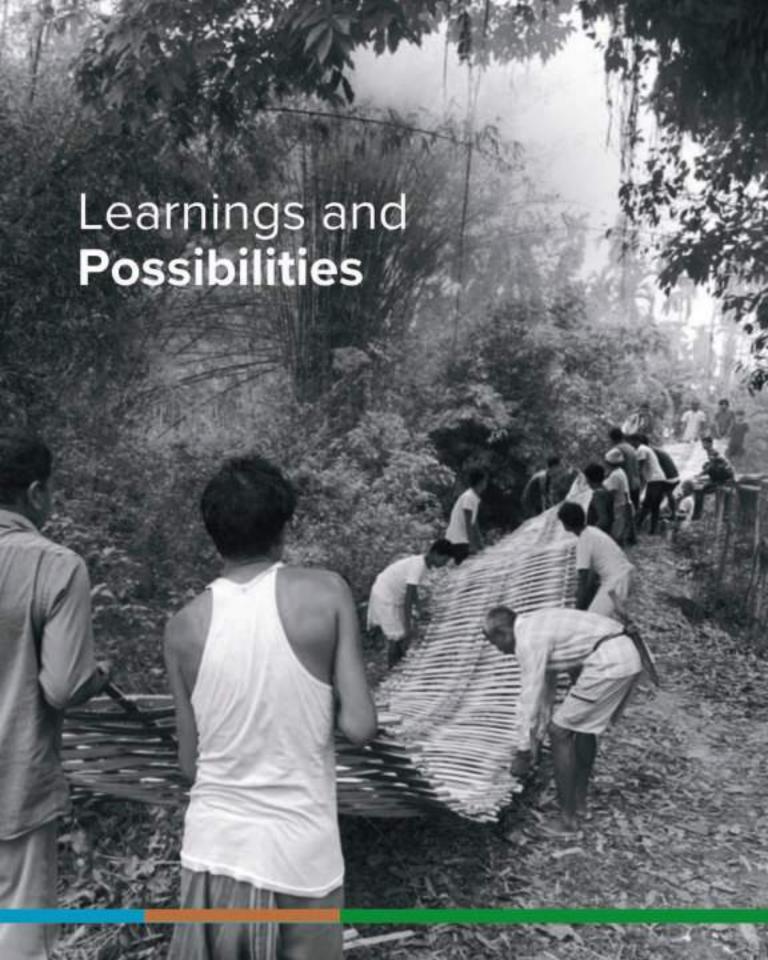
Fifty-seven volunteers from HSBC, Mindtree and British Telecom came together for a month to put together the Goonj Rahat Kits during the Assam floods last year. They would spend five to six hours each day creating these Kits. They also conducted collection camps at their workplaces and in residential areas and delivered the collections at the Goonj Dropping Centre. These Kits were then stitched up and loaded into trucks.

As many as 500 Kits were made daily by these volunteers and dispatched to Assam.

Kalpesh Bhagat of British Telecom Kolkata, observes:

"We are not born just to help ourselves and those closest to us. Goonj has given us a platform where we can come forward and contribute to others."





Goonj's work in North-Eastern States and West Bengal presents significant insights, on how we propose wide- ranging civic-society-led multi-sectoral engagement for action on key sustainable development goals (SDGs), especially on rural poverty, inequality and climate change-led disaster response.

With a mission to replace charity with dignity, Goonj has long been committed to changing society's perspective. In the last two decades, Goonj has built a pan-India network of urban and rural communities, with a cross-section of stakeholders. Our aim has been to build a sustained culture around giving and receiving surplus material for development, but more importantly, to build a culture of urban and rural civic society participation in development and disaster response work. Our work in the urban areas of North-Eastern States and West Bengal has emerged as a great example of this network building. Participation of a wide spectrum of entities has helped positive on-ground action on basic but neglected issues in the rural areas.

Evolving the world's surplus material as an alternate resource to address financial poverty, inequality and climate change One of the key takeaways of the IPCC 27 Report is the need for finances for climate change adaptation and mitigation work.

Addressing Material Poverty: For people facing financial poverty, the input of basic needs material also acts as an economic input as it frees up their financial resources for urgent needs like food and health. Big Cities like Kolkata have the potential to generate huge quantities of reusable material that can be directly used for development work.

Deploying surplus material beyond market circularity for development and disaster response: Conventionally, the world's surplus material is seen as a burden for our environment given its pollution possibilities for water, land and air. This, in turn, also creates risks for climate change. While circularity has emerged as a viable economic option for tackling the growing quantities of material there are still many barriers. Our model aims to establish larger, more sensitised and more aware alliances, enabling us to be everprepared for disasters with money and material and reach out to the affected. It also proposes a change of lens around our unused



material, repositioning it as a sector-agnostic tool for neglected development issues and needs of people. It imagines the world's surplus material as a resource for mobilising people in cities and villages to take up consistent action triggering climate action work in their own communities.

Rethinking Disaster Response: Over the past two decades, Goonj has worked together with leading organisations in India and globally to respond to disasters and established the Goonj Alliance for Rapid Response on Disasters (GAARD) in 2020. The key shift with GARRD is the ability to deploy pre-committed resources, triggered by Goonj, when disaster strikes. The main ambitions of GAARD are:

- To establish a formal alliance with grassroots and other organisations to pre-commit resources in disaster response activities. In both pre and post-disaster situations, Goonj hopes to construct a mechanism for activating and initiating essential resource mobilisation.
- To fill in monetary and material gaps and create a platform for organisations to intervene through their area of expertise such as logistics, volunteering and employee engagement, among others.
- By setting up operations and initiating interventions, Goonj and its partners can reach larger numbers of disaster-affected families faster. Over time, Goonj aims at scaling up the GAARD approach for the prompt response.



People led Rural Development: Through the 'Cloth for Work' (CFW) initiative, Gooni mobilizes communities to undertake local development projects, such as repairing roads and cleaning water bodies, in exchange for essential materials. This approach fosters selfreliance and addresses local needs effective. The key aspect is the shift of decision-making to rural communities, around their problems and solutions. This, in turn, has meant that the issues we work on in both North-Eastern States and West Bengal will be very different from what we do in other states. This freedom and agency in the hands of rural communities also means self-sufficiency and enhanced dignity in their hearts and minds.

Cloth Based Employment and livelihood: Local sourcing for and by rural India The pandemic taught us an important lesson when urban-to-rural supply chains were disrupted both ways. It brought our attention to the possibilities of using the produce of rural India to directly address the needs of rural communities. It started with us buying bulk quantities of vegetables directly from farmers of North-Eastern States and West Bengal and other states. Soon we started sourcing many other ingredients like dry ration and other essentials. This helped us cut down on logistics and transportation costs and get locally relevant material to people, while pumping money and livelihood back into the rural economy. This is an important insight for rural India producing for rural India instead of always manufacturing producing for the cities. Similar to some other states, North-Eastern States and West Bengal have been experiencing a growing manpower gap in its villages and cities. Revitalising the rural economy will help address this issue in the long term. Gooni's pan-India work with rural communities

Regional Report | North-Eastern States and West Bengal

highlights that the facilitation of an ecosystem that nurtures indigenous self-reliantcommunities, with supportive and minimal external disruptions, can reduce forced rural- to-urban migration while conserving rural biodiversity and natural resources.

Building of Rural Assets and infrastructure: Atscale building of rural assets As Goonj envisions the future, one of our key focuses is reaching remote areas of North-Eastern States and West Bengal and improving access to essential resources, with the available infrastructure. Goonj mobilises rural communities to take up projects around building roads, bridges, water bodies and other infrastructure, in turn, facilitating the adding to local assets which help sustain the community in the long term. Our rural development work is framed around communityled work on building upon and improving their local capacities. It helps identify, affirm, and call upon the gifts, resources, skills, and knowledge that already exist in the community, in turn contributing to its sense of pride and empowerment. The wide participation from community members not only contributes to their talents, resources, and skills

but also helps build better relationships and connections among them. The most powerful part is the shift of power and control for community work from the outside experts to a blend of local actors while Goonj acts as a facilitator and contributor of ideas. At the core, this helps people realise their own potential beyond the contributions of outsiders.

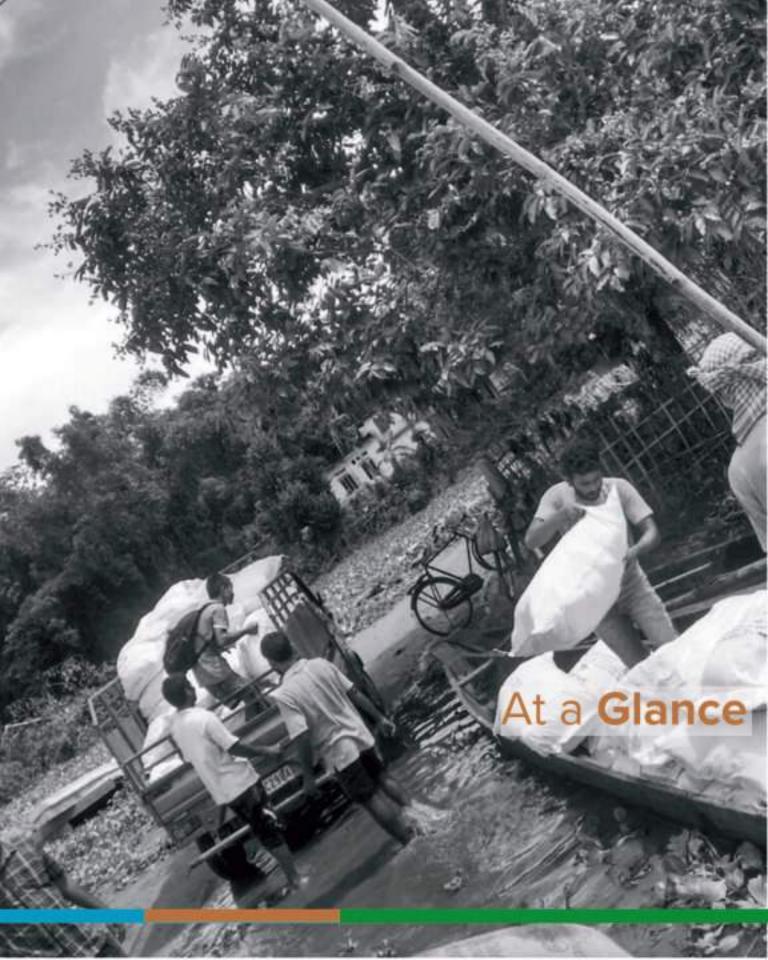
The Way Forward:

- Promote Community Participation: Encourage policies that empower local communities to identify and address their development needs, fostering ownership and sustainability.
- Leverage Surplus Resources: Implement frameworks to channel urban surplus materials into rural development projects and bring in circular solutions in the economic model.
- Strengthen Disaster Preparedness: Become part of GARRD to ensure coordinated and efficient disaster response, integrating local knowledge and resources.



A team that celebrates together... achieves together





Goonj's Work in North-Eastern States and West Bengal

URBAN OPERATIONS*

-500+ collection camps organised

COMMUNITY-LED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- -6700+ tonnes of material channelised
- -320000+ Family Kits channelised
- -1900+ projects on sanitation

DISASTER RESPONSE

-85000+ families reached under floods

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

- -3000+ plantation drives
- -1400+ projects on water management.

INFRASTRUCTURE

-3400+ projects on improving access

LIVELIHOOD

-2100+ families supported to restore livelihoods in rural communities.

MENSTRUAL AWARENESS

- -500000+ MY Pads channelised
- -1400+ menstrual health and hygiene meetings conducted

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

-30000+ School Kits and other interventions

*This data is only for the period 2014 to 2024

COVID RELIEF" (In Assam and West Bengal)

- -95000+ Covid-affected families reached
- -4800+ Health Worker Kits channelised
- -11500+ Family Medicine Kits channelised
- -210000 kgs+ Vegetables procured from local farmers

(Pan India)

- -765000 Covid-affected families reached
- -100,000 Health Worker Kits channelised
- -35000 Family Medicine Kits channelised
- -431000 kilos fresh produce procured locally from farmers

[&]quot;This data is only for the period April 2020 to March 2022





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