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GOONJ: Turning City Waste into Useful Materials

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GOONJ
Turning City Waste into Useful Materials

Beneficiary country: India

GOONJ's sanitary napkins made using unused cloth materials

GOONJ hopes to advance an ownership model in which the masses are involved in development work, so that the villagers become more resourceful and practical solutions can pave the way for education.

THE THEORY/PROBLEM

Urban areas in India are facing a glut of waste: specifically that of unwanted cloth. Meanwhile villagers across various states face a shortage of basic needs such as winter clothing and school uniforms, as well as sanitary napkins for girls and women, leading to all manner of social and psychological problems associated with shame, status and immobility during a young woman's monthly cycle.

THE INNOVATIVE IDEA

GOONJ hopes to advance an ownership model in which the masses are involved in development work, so that the villagers become more resourceful and practical solutions can pave the way for education.

HOW IT WORKS

While urban communities are trained to become more aware of the need to recycle waste into products/materials that can be re-routed to rural communities, rural communities are encouraged to participate in rural development programmes, from road repair to river cleaning and plantation work, in exchange for cloth and sanitary napkins (Cloth-for-Work Programme and Napkins Programme) – a much-needed resource for daily life.

STEPS TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT

GOONJ has:

- Analysed areas where the project will be implemented;
- Searched and selected appropriate local, grassroots partners (non-governmental organisations) in the states where the project will be implemented;
- Outlined two programmes, "Cloth-for-Work" and "Napkins Programme" (sanitary napkins for women), which are already in the early

Organisation Bio

GOONJ enables the recycling of urban waste clothing and materials so that the poorest sections of society in India can make use of these resources. GOONJ has several initiatives including "Cloth for Work", "School to School", "RAHAT" for flood relief, "Not Just a Piece of Cloth" and others.

http://www.goonj.org/

implementation phase after initial trials and testing on the ground were conducted to assess cultural attitudes, taboos and resistance to such initiatives on the ground amongst rural communities.

CHALLENGES THAT HAVE ARISEN IN IMPLEMENTING PROJECT

The immediate challenges are in two distinct areas i.e. the villages and the cities.

In the villages, the challenges are:

- Communicating the significance of the work to partner groups. Most grassroots groups, even those that work closely with women, have initially been hesitant about the work, owing to the taboos, shame and silence associated with women, menstruation and hygiene;
- Raising awareness about the project among grassroots organisations and engaging in capacity training for their staff.

In the cities the challenges are:

- Capacity-building to implement the project while sourcing for resources such as space, manpower, materials, etc.
- Securing a supply of materials from unreliable sources, requires forward planning to ensure that materials reach rural communities.
- Constantly needing new target audiences, new markets and new strategies for getting more materials from across the country.

CHALLENGES THAT HAVE ARISEN, WHICH WERE NOT ANTICIPATED WHEN DRAFTING PROJECT PROPOSAL

None so far. Challenges may arise as the project moves further in its efforts to scale up.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT (ALREADY UNDERWAY)

The following are some examples of the success of the Cloth-for-Work project in different parts of the country:

In West Bengal:

- Following the Aila Cyclone that hit the Sunderbans area, GOONJ is working closely with local organisations in some of the affected islands. Three such organisations are:
  - Mollarpur Naisubha
  - Halderchak Chetna Welfare Society
  - Nimpith Handicapped Welfare Society
- GOONJ initiated the Cloth-for-Work programme in Matmulia, Swaska, Purbabijaybati and Hanarbati villages.
- About 100-150 people from each village participated in road repair and plantation work.
- People received cloth and other materials in return for taking on community work in their villages.

In Orissa:

- In Orbaer Singh Gram panchayat, thousands of villagers from more than 30 villages took on the work of restoring the Gheri Bandh plantation, to plant mango and coconut trees among other species.
- A widespread village sanitation drive was implemented which included cleaning the village pond and roads.
- The drive also included 200 children from 15 schools in the area.
- GOONJ initiated these projects with local partners.

People from Kuilvar village in the state of Bihar go on cleaning drives and build drains or pits, in exchange for cloth.