



LIME 3

SEASON

CASE STUDY

IIM-K • NGO • GOONJ

GOONJ... A VOICE, AN EFFORT

Introduction

It's already June, a quarter has already passed. This year's expected expenditure is Rs 4Cr and the incoming revenue is not in that flow.. Anshu is not worried about sustaining the organization, but certainly wants to come up with some innovative ways for doing this. Despite being one of the leading social enterprise he still wants half of GOONJ's revenues to be people based..

"We don't like to ask for donations directly, we want people to understand our work and then support on their own " Says Anshu Gupta, Founder Director of Goonj, whenever he is questioned about fundraising. He recalls an incident during the Orissa Cyclone, when a person from the marketing department of a top airline called him up; they wanted to give Rs 5000 and asked him how they should send it to him. "We don't need that much money right now. Why don't you buy something of Rs 4000 and we'll take the Rs 1000 for logistics and other things." Was Anshu Gupta's reply, years later the person, who became a huge advocate for Goonj and its cause, would tell Anshu that it was this answer that made her work so closely with Goonj.

This is not an isolated incident, Goonj has never pursued funds. Individual contributions, foreign donations, corporate projects and awards have always allowed the organization to grow according to its plans, however, with the increase in scale, change in government regulations and the desire to spread the message as far as possible, has created a need.

The Beginnings

Goonj began its journey in 1998, after completing his masters from IIMC and working at various corporate houses, when Anshu Gupta realised that his urge to do something substantial would not go away. In his journalistic stint Anshu closely analysed the suffering due to lack of proper clothing especially in winters and that's when he had decided to make Clothing a Matter of Concern.

Goonj was started in his house, with his wife Meenakshi not only being a strong support for the initiative. From going door to door to inform people about Goonj to sorting and then packing the collected material, the husband and wife duo did everything in the beginning. It after all had begun with their own clothes in their own house. A place which is still the head office.

"We want to maintain the family attitude in Goonj. Everyone should care if the walls are going to be painted." That's the attitude they started with and though the organization now has office in over ten cities, the same state of mind prevails with all the team members (he hates to call someone an employee !!).

The Initiatives

Goonj started with clothing. They would collect clothes with the intention of informing people about their need not just during disaster, but also during every other day of the year.

"You see a person with patches on his shirt, there is a high possibility of that being his only shirt. Isn't he in need of clothes?" This was a question Anshu asked himself and wanted others to ask themselves. Goonj, wanted to help people realise their intrinsic potential and for that they started the Cloth for Work campaign.

Cloth for Work

Cloth for Work was a simple concept. They would give people cloth instead of money or food for the work they did. The work to be done would be related to the social development of the people who would participate in it. It varies from cleaning drains to building bridges. While initially sceptical about it, within a few discussions with the people of the villages they realised that it was something that was on top of the people's minds.

This is one of the reasons why Goonj has a structured sorting and packaging division. Since, the clothes are not just being given for free; they have to be of certain standards.

As information spread, people started coming forward with clothes and other material. Initially, they did not know what to do with them, however gradually processes were developed to take care of all kinds of relief materials. Now they accept everything from clothes to harmoniums. Two such initiatives are Not just a piece of cloth and School to School.

Not Just a Piece of Cloth

While travelling in the villages of the country, the Goonj team realised that there was a massive need for sanitary hygiene add to that the taboo associated with menstruation made a horrific scene related to menstrual hygiene for the women and children in rural areas. Girls dropped out of school, women were beaten up and some even lost their lives. One such story that led to the development of NJPC is:

A poor woman from a place called Shikohabad in India, used a piece of cloth from her blouse, as a sanitary napkin, but unfortunately this piece of blouse had a metal hook inside and the lady died of tetanus. In many parts of the world, especially in India, women from the villages and lower income group end up using the dirtiest and useless cloth, since they can't afford anything better and are not aware of the health risks involved.

From the clothes that weren't fit to be given in exchange for work, cotton ones were selected. These were then washed, sanitized and made in disposable sanitary napkins. Goonj pioneered the development of disposable cloth based sanitary napkins. These were sold at a cost of one Rupee per piece.

School to School

School to School is quite symbolic. It is quite similar to catching them young. While a new super hero can get children in the cities to discard their school bags and a crack in the water bottle warrants a fresh one instantly, S2S brings to them the stark reality of how it is in the villages. What kind of basic necessities their rural counterparts suffer from and how these small children can help.

The icing on the cake is Pratibhimb, an annual interface event held for the interaction of urban and rural school children. The rural children are brought to the city and they spend two to three days interacting, playing and just getting to know their urban counterparts. Lots of knowledge and information exchange takes place and while there is hesitation from both ends in the beginning, at the end of the event, none of them want to return home. School to School was awarded the Changemaker's Innovation Award.

The Model

GOONJ now deals with about 70 to 80 tonnes of material every month. While they are happy with that number, what really brings a smile to the face of the team is the number of partner organizations. Realising early on, that the scale Goonj wanted could not be done by them alone, Anshu Gupta chose a model not usually adopted by NGOs.

Partners were chosen across the country who would be implementing the work. They would be responsible for distribution of the material, the sales of sanitary napkins, selection of the work to done for C4W and almost all activities at the rural end. While Goonj would focus the urban end, collection of material, selection and monitoring of partners and most importantly spread the message.

Goonj believes it is responsible for every item they collect and though the model initially appeared crystal clear separating the two entities a massive overlap exists as the work of the partners needs to be checked. The due diligence is done by their officials who are touring various parts of the country to identify new organizations and to check the activities of the existing partners constantly. For every package that has been sent, a feedback report is mandatory. This includes photographs, media clippings, name, age, sex and signature of every recipient and any other notable mention of the activity. All this information is documented with us and great pains are taken to ensure every piece of material is accounted for.

While they have about 250+ partner organization working with them, the aim is to get the number to 400 by the year end.

The Financials

Goonj was started at Anshu Gupta's house, with the family's own clothes, with their own furniture and the spirit to do make clothing a matter of concern. So funds initially were from their savings and own contributions. Though as the word spread, people did come ahead and give money, there was never dedicated fundraising for the NGO.

Projects were done with various corporate that helped and the plethora of awards that the NGO won were most of the times associated with a grant. Scrap material is sold and what can be salvaged is made into various products and then there are the individual contributions from people.

While the communication of Goonj does contain an element of accepting funds, the process never highlights it. It is always kept in the background. "We accept funds, but we don't ask for them." This is the philosophy with which Goonj has grown in

the past 12 years and they look forward to doing the same. Some tweaking though has been done; Team 2000 is one such method being adopted.

Team 2000 is supposed to be a group of 2000 people ready to commit funds of a certain amount for a certain period, all determined by the donor. Not only will this help Goonj in their financials, it will help them plan out their activities of the coming year with greater certainty.

Products that cannot be given in exchange for work are also being made into products, such as in Not Just a Piece of Cloth, however great efforts have been made to develop new and innovative merchandise. One such great idea was to use the reel from audio cassettes as a decorative material for purses and folders. Merchandise varying from pouches to carpets is made from recycled material at Goonj's workshop; however, due to govt. restrictions only a limited number of these can be sold.

The Dream

Goonj doesn't want to be known as just another NGO; in fact they don't want to be known as an NGO. Goonj is an idea, a voice an effort. They measure their success not just in terms of the number of people benefited or the amount of material collected, their success parameter is the number of organization replicating their idea, the number of people continuing the activities done in Cloth for Work without any incentive at the end of the day, Goonj doesn't want to just help people in need, they want to make them realise their potential. Goonj wants to build more and more change-makers.

Problem Statement

GOONJ.. has traditionally been a very shy organization. Funds have never been actively solicited from the public at large. With rapid expansion and increasing cost of operations, the regular channels of funding are not proving enough. However, the core belief and principals of the organization are of the nature that funds should not be solicited. The government has posed restrictions the maximum amount of sales an NGO can do and hence, it has become necessary.

The current situation demands a marketing plan for GOONJ.. that fulfils the following objectives:

1. Allow GOONJ.. to achieve a target of Rs. 4Cr of funds per annum .
2. The marketing plan should be such the core of objectives of GOONJ.. are not compromised.
3. While GOONJ.. deals with many more things than clothing, the general public associates it with just that.
The plan should emphasise on this and highlight this repositioning of the organization.

Mentor

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