

# DESIGN EDUCATION FOR YOURSELF

ANNUAL REPORT  
2022-23





**Unlearn.**  
**Choose.**



**Learn.**  
**Grow.**



Project DEFY, an alternative education organisation based in Bengaluru, India creates inclusive and community led learning spaces called 'Nooks' within marginalized communities.

We don't think that any human, young or old, is an "empty vessel", neither do we agree that any child needs to be "trained" or "raised" to become an efficient adult.

Nooks empower the learner whoever they maybe by providing them a safe self learning space where they have the choice to learn what they want to and not what they are forced to.

For if, education is to benefit the learners, the choice of learning should rest with them.



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**to each**

**their own**



**but we act**



**as a whole.**

# Letters from one Defiant to another

*"This place introduced me to the joy of learning for the first time in my life."*

*"The Nook opened the door for me to explore things that I always wanted to in my Life"*

*I realized that a lot of things had changed in me, not only in terms of projects but also in terms of my soft skills.*

*I used to be very nervous while speaking in front of groups and strangers, but now after spending time at the Nook, I am more confident in expressing myself in front of others.*



# How it all began

The concept of the Nook was conceived when a young restless man, frustrated with a purposeless job made his way to a little known village of Banjarpalya, situated on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

As he strived to make sense of life and build things that mattered, little did he know that his simple visits to the local tea stall would lead him to a momentous discovery. While sipping his cup of tea, this young man would get swarmed by young kids from the local school as he played mobile games on his smartphone.

His daily interactions with the kids also gave him a new perspective and an observation. Kids, who had no previous experience of using a smartphone before, who had no common language to communicate were somehow able to quickly learn to do so by just observing.

Learning does not have to be forced nor does it have to be boring. It can be fun, self driven and enjoyable. Struck by this observation the young man decided to put his belief to the test by building a small space equipped with tools and instruments where young kids could learn through online sources and help each other to explore creativity and the desire to build solutions.

This is how the First Nook came to life and there **has been no looking back since. We have been blissfully growing as an organization and more importantly, as a movement, with the support of those who share the same values and vision.**





**NOOK**

at the heart of learning

The relevance of conventional educational institutions in this day and age is constantly being questioned, especially in the light of little impact driven by them to transform society.

We exist to provide credible evidence to the hope that a future beyond schools, beyond the assembly line model of education is possible and it works. Our collaboration with various governments opens up the possibility of 'Nook' being hailed as a credible idea and a working model.



in terms of **partnership**

We aim to partner with national and international organizations which share our vision to create a more equitable, conscious and humane future.

Multiversities and ecoversities is already doing a wonderful job in bringing together all such possible organisations and we keep looking forward to get together and row this boat of learning revolution ahead.

Presently we're looking at a basic amount of funding necessary to keep our core team alive and working on their feet until they involve in different programs to sustain themselves.

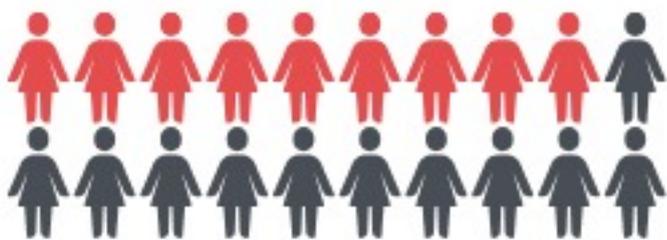


# Impact

31 active  
nooks

Total number of  
learners in 2022-23

842



Average percentage  
of female learners in  
2022 across all  
Nooks

 60%

# 5 countries

 **186**

Number of learning  
goals pursued  
across all Nooks in  
2022

# 4 states in India

goal achievement rate  
(percentage of all goals  
across all Nooks that  
have been  
completed/achieved in  
2022)



**58%** 



# Where all do we exist ?



Within India we have a diverse presence across the country, ranging from Karnataka in the South to Meghalaya in the North - East. Mentioned below is a map highlighting the location of nooks in the country.





Although an organization based in India, we have been successful in setting up nooks in other countries as well, especially in geographies where there is a dire need for an alternative education paradigm.

These countries include various African nations like Rwanda, Zimbabwe Bangladesh in the Indian Sub Continent.



Where do we exist?



# Indian

# Nooks

This year was a great shot in the arm for Nooks in India. Not only did we witness the creation of new nook spaces, the existing nooks also carved a new growth tangent for themselves as they surpassed challenges and reached new points of growth.

This year has been memorable for us as for the first time we were able to collaborate with a state government to open new nook spaces at an unprecedented scale (20 Nooks).

**Such an emphatic buy in from a state government validates our theory of change of an alternative educational reality which can capture regional and national imagination.**

Apart from this we added another Nook space in the state of Tamil Nadu, in a small town of Sriperumbudur, approximately 50 kms from Chennai.

This newly opened Nook space had its first exhibit which saw a massive turnout from the community, one of the largest till date.

# New Nook

## Katchipedu Nook

Tamil Nadu, India

Situated in a close knit community of mostly daily wage workers and owners of small businesses, setting up the Katchipedu Nook was the perfect learning of how much impact a choice driven space can have in a world submerged in instructions and routines.

The learners here mostly belong to the age group of 12-18, who attend school and treat the Nook as a daily necessity after school.



The Nook is a safe space for them to tinker around, make mistakes and explore with no one to hover over their heads telling them what and what not to do.

## First exhibition at Katchipedu Nook

Katchipedu Nook had its first Nook exhibit on November 25th, 2022. It was organised in a hall arranged by the community head.

The entire exhibit and the way it was organized proved how invested the community was in the running of the Nook.

From banners made of woven banana leaves to projects involving coconut shell necklaces and paint bucket drum sets, from family members of learners distributing lunch, to the entire gathering singing in chorus, It seemed like one big family celebration.



While the Jewellery stall of coconut shell wearables was a hit, our drummers couldn't keep their hands off their paint bucket turned drum set throughout the event.

We also had a convertible study cum dressing table to balance the everyday needs along with immersive musical and dance performances.



The event ended on a high with the inevitable dance face-offs accompanied with the amazing sense of groove the Tamil blood inherits.

Katchipedu Nook



# Kaggalipura Nook

Kaggalipura nook is one of our oldest Nooks which was setup in the outskirts of Bangalore.

This year, the Nook adopted new processes as we completed two cycles.

Both cycles had a majority of Women from the community who came to the nook in search of new learning opportunities.



The kaggalipura Nook thus has been able to create a safe space for women from the community, where they can come and be themselves and do what they like.

On occasions the Nook acts as a safe space for these women to get some respite from domestic violence that they go through in their homes.

Learning is only possible if there is mental, social and physical well being.



# JP NAGAR Nook

JP Nagar nook is a nook in the Avalahalli Community in JP Nagar 9th Phase, Bengaluru.

Avalahalli community is a marginalised community in the middle of the city. This community has seen the city grow around it without getting the benefits of its growth.

This year was a new start for the nook as we had new nook managers and Innovation Leads (Divya and Saadiq) joining the space. In a short span of time, they have been able to gain the trust of the community members.

Saadiq bhai and Divya Di, as the learners fondly call them, have been torchbearers of the self designed learning in the JP Nagar nook.

Currently the nook is going through its routine cycle phase



Noor Tamanna from our nook has already been able to taste entrepreneurship by taking an order for a readymade dress from a Client.

We are supposed to have the exhibition day for the nook cycle in the first quarter of the coming year.



*I had stopped learning.  
The Nook gave me an  
opportunity to start over  
in my life again.*

**-Saadiq**  
Nook manager



*I wanted to study science but  
had to take commerce, it felt  
like I had lost my dreams.  
But after I started coming to  
the nook I explored robotics,  
piano, and painting.*

**-Roohina Banu**  
Learner, 19yrs



# Nongwah Nook

What stands out the most for the people of Nongwah is their openness, acceptance, and dedication as a community.

There is never a day where one would be deprived of good company or a good conversation. They love helping each other out, no matter what the circumstances.



One might mistake their simplicity for naivety, but Nongwah is one of the most progressive villages in terms of implementing various government schemes, farmers committing to organic farming.



Over the course of 2 cycles, the Nook has seen many changes like the village headman visiting the Nook frequently to encourage the learners and even suggesting project ideas.

Earlier parents would not send their younger kids to the Nook, but by the 2nd cycle we started having many young learners below 16 years of age ( They are probably the sincerest learners since 1st cycle, always on time)

## wins

- One of the learners Shalinda Umdor was offered the job to be the main cook for a new fast-food restaurant in Tyrsad after she completed the 1st cycle of cooking various fast-food items, she plans on continuing the 2nd cycle to hone her skills.
- Learners take initiative and ownership and don't depend entirely on the resources from the Nook.

## losses

- Lack of male representation. While the Nook is an inclusive space, maintaining gender parity has been a struggle with only female learners at the Nook for the past 2 cycles.
- 21 out of 44 learners left the Nook after setting goals due to various reasons like pursuing higher studies, enrolling for Job Card, etc.

*Since the day I came here, I don't ever remember paying for my cup of tea in the shop where I go regularly, whenever community members are there, their generosity knows no bounds.*

*From Sohrarim to Nongwah, 2022 has made me experience all the highs and the lows. I've learned so much in a span of a year. Finding a home, adjusting to the community, where community members made it easy for me to adjust, going for outreach, setting up the nook, taking up the induction program, helping learners reach their target goals (even learning and helping them with the skill required for every project), to gaining much more than I anticipated and finally accepting failures and learning from them.*

*Was it easy? , not really, but was it worth it? Absolutely!"*

*-Mintioneth Falcon*

*Nook manager*

*My journey for the past few months in this organization gave me immense knowledge and exposure.*

*From adjusting to the community to working with the learners, it had its highs and lows. The one thing I observed about this community is that they are really willing to help one another despite their busy schedules..*

*Even the learners make sure to finish their projects on time beyond their personal challenges.*

*That gives me my daily dose of motivation*

***-Dabialabaster Marwein***

*Nook Fellow Nongwah*



*I came back to my village Nongwah in 2021 during the second lockdown, I never stayed in one particular place since I was a child, so I am very introverted, and I don't talk much to people. But last year when I joined the Nook, I met so many people from different communities, It helped me come out of my shyness, and now I've made so many friends.*

*Nook feels like home, even when visiting other Nooks it has the same ambience.*

***-Nialty Mary Rani***

*Learner, 20yrs*

# Sohrarim Nook

This Nook is the first in Meghalaya, simultaneously paving way for our first ever government partnership and many more Nooks to come.



Sohrarim is a beautiful village located in the east Khasi hills in Meghalaya with little over a 100 households.

It is a hardworking tight knit community, with cleanliness as an important aspect. The major source of income depends on agriculture, accompanied with daily wage work. With lesser economic opportunities in village, leading to migration to urban.



The community consists of only three schools, so most students travel further to neighbouring villages to complete their higher education. Dancing, and sports are two areas where one might find participation of the entire community.

The Nook here completed its 1st year and it has seen its ups and downs. While we have seen learners taking up a wide variety of projects, earning good money and starting off small businesses, there have been days with very few learners or learners leaving the Nook to their daily wage work.

Sincerity and diligence adorn this place. There are learners who don't really consider holidays if their projects are at stake. They have also been receiving non stop business orders, especially the carpentry teams. At times, they have chosen to stay back and work at the Nook despite of having a 10km walk to their homes.

The Nook saw very less footfall in the beginning but eventually gained some trust with exhibitions as well as learners starting off small businesses with their projects.



*The overall experience was amazing. The space brought a lot of change into our lives. It pushed us beyond boundaries we were scared to cross and helped us build the confidence we needed. The concept itself (Self Learning) gives us motivation to explore, play around, make mistakes and yet build something which is necessary to move ahead.*

*From an experience in not just building our products but also marketing or advertising them, as well as selling them, there was an assistance in our wholesome growth.*

**- Preety Nongrum**

Learner, Sohrarim Nook



# Whitefield Nook

It has been one of our stand-alone nooks in the Whitefield community for more than 2 years and it has successfully finished its second cycle with 15+ Learners with interesting projects.

Due to the location of the space inside a school, there were a few limitations on the accessibility of the community members and the hours of operation. This year, the Whitefield Nook had shifted to a new locality which is less than 3 kms from the previous location thereby allowing more access to the community members.

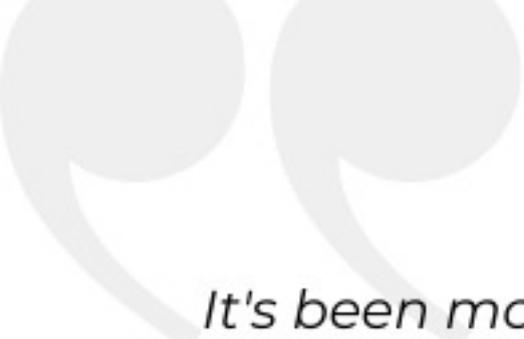
## wins

After working for more than a year at the Nook, our Nook manager Akhila has taken the first step towards entrepreneurship by starting her own waffle cart business in the Whitefield community and providing jobs to some of our oldest learners.

## losses

Due to school examinations, we don't get to see much of the learners from schools and colleges.





*It's been more than a year since I've been in Whitefield Nook. This is my first job as well as the first time I'm staying alone in a different community. Initially I never wanted to do any job which was related to facilitation but after coming here I love to be with learners and facilitate sessions for them*

*I never thought I will ever try and start my own business. This would not have been possible without Nook and the learners.*

*"I strongly believe true learning leads to change"*

*- Akhila*

*Nook Manager*

*Nook is one place that has supported me in developing many of my skill sets. I remember working on a simple Motor fan after completing it in my early days in the Nook.*

*I was overjoyed because I did something on my own and it worked. With each phase, I gained more confidence.*

*-Balaji*

*Learner, 20yrs*



# Dhun Nook

The existing caste system gives an important character to the community, a hierarchical system that manifests at a very subtle level.

Outside every village there is a small community of people who belong to the same caste, these communities are called Dhanis.

At present, most of the Dhun learners are from two Dhanis which are at the lowest pedestal of the caste system.

Major population of Raithal, one of the villages where the fellows work, comprises of the Meena Community which in the past was famous for theft. Interestingly, no one is shy of telling stories of great theft that their grandparents have done and even police were afraid of entering into their village.



For girls, life is challenging and the community is not open to let them out of their houses but few families are courageous enough to send girls out for further education.

When the Nook Fellows Ankit and Kabi started outreach for the Nook, asking around about their idea and choice of learning, girls from the Meena community took an unconventional call saying they wanted to learn bike Riding which was quite unheard of for women in this region.

# Nook Exhibitions

## Nongwah Nook

Nongwah Nook outperformed this year with it's interest in organic food and banking projects.

It made a total of Rs 7000 in sales on the exhibition day and had a turnout of at least 350-400 guests.

## Katchipedu Nook

Our first venture into the state of Tamil Nadu, the Katchipedu nook was set up within a heavily misunderstood community. The youth of the community have been far too long, labelled as miscreants and the Nook here started with a motto of changing that narrative.

With two stellar fellows Venkatesh and Sona who came from Auroville, the Nook perfectly settled in the community with young learners livening up the new space!



# Whitefield Nook

Whitefield Nook from Bangalore had it's second Nook exhibit this year with a variety of crafty projects, even selling a number of them. These included paintings, sustainable jewellery, macrame home decor items, scrunchies etc. The total value of sales on the exhibition day was around 3500 rupees. The learners showed their interest in art and craft as well as electronics and carpentry. Seeing their projects sell served as a motivation for the learners to carry forward their ideas while making them more innovative.



# Nooks in Chief Minister's Youth Centre (CMYC) Meghalaya



The largest scale up project till date and the first of its kind government initiative in alternative learning, we got the opportunity to set up 20 Nooks under the banner of Chief minister Youth centres.

All the Nooks are set up covering the rural regions of Meghalaya with an aim to upskill and provide a variety of opportunities to the Meghalayan youth.



The on ground training for Nook managers was launched on the 10th August after the inauguration of the CMYC project by the Chief Minister at the Chibra Agal Centre. As on December 2022, there are 22 self designed learning centers fully operational across Meghalaya with more than 800 learners pursuing their projects.

The training was conducted with an aim to equip CMYC team with the skills to effectively run the centres by themselves. The 2 month training was designed in a way for Nook Fellows that will allow them to participate in the learning process together with the learners and facilitate the process at the same time.

The fellows got first hand experience of how to set up the Nook and run the learning program.



# why a state youth centre?

Community building, job creation and upskilling are among the very few attributes we're looking at the CMYCs to fulfill.

Meghalaya has seen a considerable amount of youth migration to other states and this was one of the primary issues for which the Youth centres are set up. Through choice building and access to a diversity of skillsets, be it technical skills, financial skills, analytical skills, project or event management skills, all these learnings come together for the community as a part of the learning process.

From sports events to community building activities, spaces like these have enough to offer to both the communities as well as individuals.



# Nooking Around

Feats and activities of Nooks outside the Nook

## Katchipedu Nook

Nook Managers of Katchipedu Nook took the initiative to take the learners from Katchipedu on a field trip to the famous Vandalur Zoo in the outskirts of the city.



## Dhun Nook

Learners from Dhun Nook, Jaipur visited the Nahargarh Biological Park for an exposure trip, learning about the flora and fauna that exists within their ecosystem.

Dhun Learners were also invited recently by a leading EV car company, Pravaig for a fully funded visit to Bangalore after one of their learner projects received recognition.

A small cycle workshop was set up in the Nook with all tools & equipments for cycle repairs.

One of the biggest obstruction to the working of the Nook is the lack of travel facilities from the villages to the Nook. The summer heat makes it even more difficult. .

Now, whenever you walk into the Nook, you will be sure to find at least one of our learners engrossed in repairing their cycles

Two learners Shisha and Tainisha participated in YIC 2022 (Young Innovator Challenge) and Tainisha bagged one of the awards for her project- Organic Jams. After coming back home, both of them shared their experience with fellow learners where the majority of them hoped to participate in the future as well.



## Sohrarim Nook

Learners in Sohrarim started selling their handmade jewelry online and offline and have been receiving orders non stop from around the physical and virtual community since then

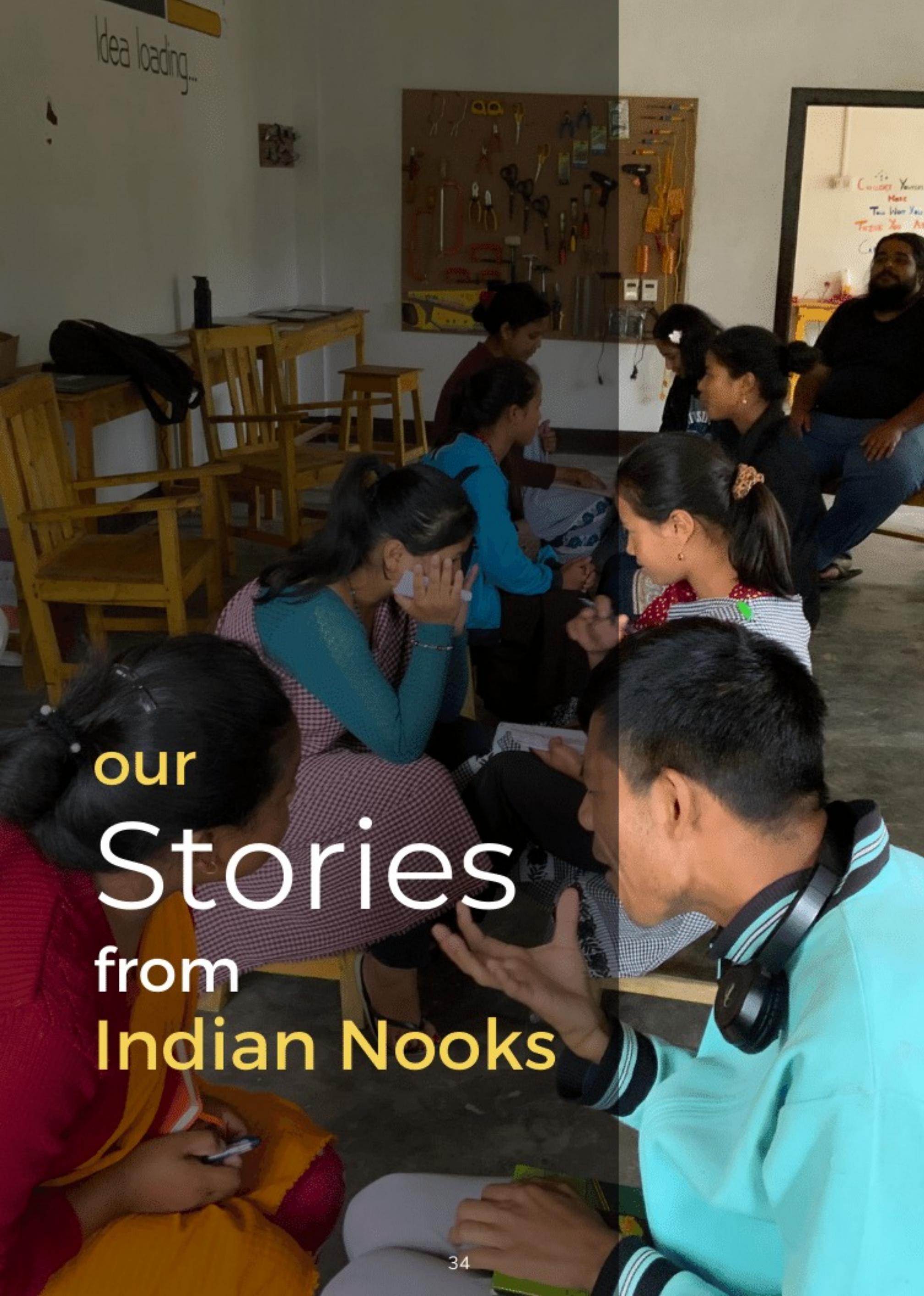
Sales worth Rs 16,500 have been made so far for carpentry, jewellery and food projects.



## J P Nagar Nook

Weekly potluck, movie screenings are conducted at the Nook, to create a space for learners and Managers to bond, beyond the Nook and projects.

Movie screenings and post screening discussions are also very popular..



our  
Stories  
from  
Indian Nooks

# Dimery Sawkmie

## Nongwah Nook

Dimery Sawkmie first came to the Nook with the intention to attend just twice a week, as she earns a living through MGNREGA and also takes care of her 5 children.



As she took up her project on crocheting, she didn't anticipate that language would be one big barrier, and using Youtube for the first time be quite a challenge. From twice a week to coming daily, she began to get the grasp of these challenges and worked on her fluency.

She started crocheting her first sweater and it took her almost 2 weeks to complete it. After getting the basics of it she continued to work on her project despite having to work in between breaks and staying up late at night to be able to complete her project. After selling 2 sweaters on Exhibition Day, she got almost 8 more orders from community members.

Now she is connected with the Prime Sauramandala Rural Entrepreneurship Fellowship team to help her further with the business.



# Mohan and Antriksh

## Dhun nook



Mohan and Antriksh became celebrities in their own right when they were invited to Nagpur for their ideas they had pitched in the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Contest 2022.

This was organised by Lemon Ideas Innovations to give chance to aspiring entrepreneurs under the age of 18.

Mohan and Antriksh started working on their ideas in August.

Mohan wanted to explore the possibilities of baking millet cookies as he felt that so much more could be done with the millet that are in abundance around him.

His idea was given the title of Traditional Ancient Wisdom Innovation and was selected among the top ten best ideas.

Antriksh on the other hand proposed setting up a small park near his village that will generate kinetic energy to set up street lights around his village. He was also invited to Jaipur and given special appreciation.



“ Now I can  
communicate with  
strangers without  
hesitation





# International Nooks

This year we saw a lot of growth on our international turf, accompanied with challenges, learnings and quite a number of wins!

Even though it looked bleak in the beginning, selling new products, internship opportunities, learners starting their own businesses, it was our turn to witness resilience from the learners and communities as they continued to follow their dreams and come up with solutions that helped them look forward.

New adventures are coming up as we look to scale and create a sustainable model for all of the Nook communities.

A new **baseline survey** will be conducted in **Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Rwanda** and **Uganda**.

We will be starting a **Business Accelerator program** as a step ahead for the learners and communities to enable them to create and sustain businesses in connection to the CTF Fund (Community Transformation Fund) !

# Exhibition

a display of the Nook celebrating the fruits of each cycle

## Barisal Nook

All the learners from Barishal Nook were able to finish all the set 9 goals and exhibited their projects. This is the first ever Goal Cycle that achieved all the goals set by the learners among all the Nooks/Nook Hubs.

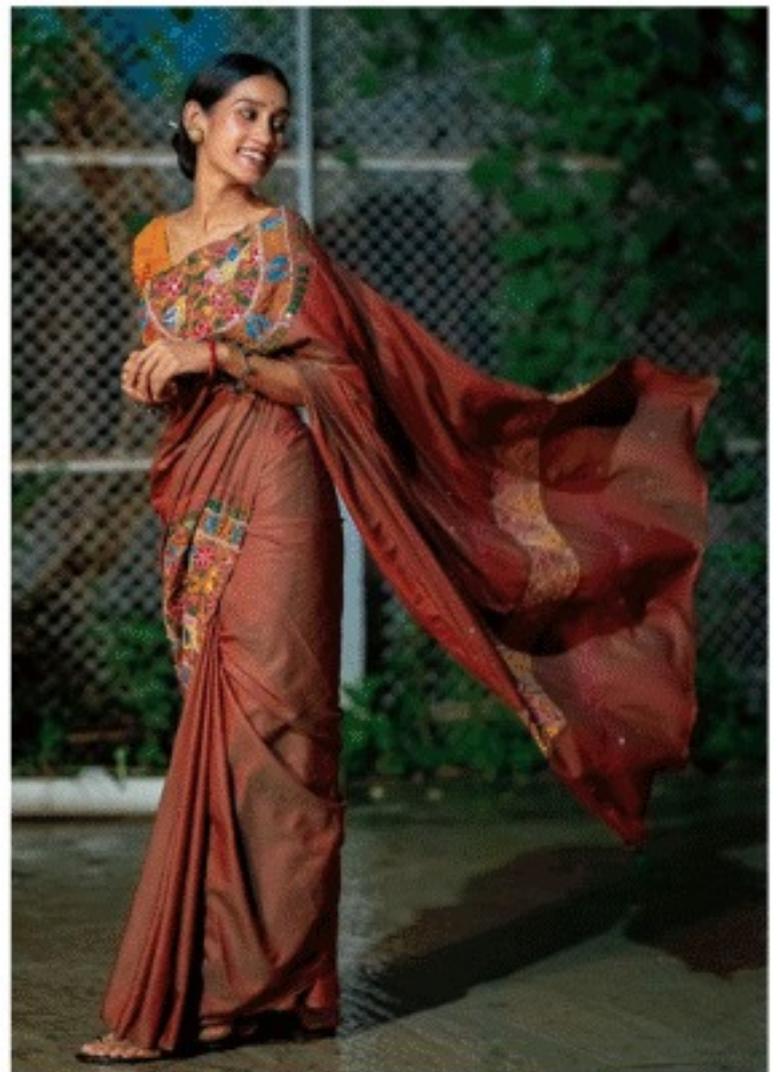


Iqtidar Taj surprised the invited guests and community members with his artistic skills by showcasing the wall graffiti.

Sharmin Esha, Educational Officer, Plan International, Bangladesh, appreciated him by saying,

"When I watched the wall graffiti, I didn't feel it was the work of an apprentice. The details of the character can claim to be designed by a professional artist. I will look forward to learn more about the Nook."





# Rwanda Nook Hub

In Rwanda Nook Hub, 35 Learners showcased 15 projects and some of the groups received orders for Shoes and Furniture from the guests. Alumni of Rwanda Nook Hub also attended the exhibition, sharing their feedback and suggestions on the projects to the other learners. They also shared their own experiences of the Nook Hub to the guests.



Exhibitions

Learners also started a Community Radio Program in the Nook. Various topics like problems on education, aspirations of youth etc were discussed in the program. Learners and team members will be working on a concise program including fun and entertainment programs.



# Bulawayo Nook Hub

After finishing the third goal cycle successfully, the learners had the opportunity to showcase their work and network with industries. During the exhibition, various companies and organizations promised to help out the learners in different ways.

There were projects based on carpentry, crafts, videography and entrepreneurship training that facilitated offerings on various levels from soft skills to business opportunities



Carpentry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction of Learners to advanced tech carpentry machinery</li> <li>• Use of machines for carpentry related project for free</li> <li>• Mentorship for carpentry related projects</li> </ul>
Crafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentorship on different arts and crafts skills</li> </ul>
Videography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support on publishing Teen pregnancy documentaries on other institutes and platforms like National AIDS Council and be made as a learning tool to youth programs.</li> <li>• To screen the Teen pregnancy documentary on KeYona TV (a local television station that will be soon broadcasting)</li> <li>• Teen pregnancy documentary to be presented on the ZGC national inquiry that gathers strategies on ending child marriage, sexual exploitation and teen pregnancy</li> </ul>
Entrepreneurship Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction of learners on economic strengthening using the Internal Savings and Lending Schemes (ISALS) tool</li> <li>• Training for learners on entrepreneurship and budgeting</li> </ul>

# Matibi Nook Hub

24 Learners showcased their 9 finished projects during the exhibition. Community members, parents and invited guests were really happy to see the progress of the Nooks and how the learners were doing.



Exhibitions

One interesting project, a hostel that learners are designing for the Nook, to create a resting place for themselves and others, since most travel long distances to get here.

The new cycle started and learners are exploring different uses of locally sourced materials such as leather and wax to make clothes, bags etc.



# Impact and Opportunities

## Feats and activities of Nooks outside the Nook

- 5 Learners from Rwanda Nook Hub got internship opportunities in different companies and business establishments based on their learning areas.
- Inter Nook Learning Exchange - 11 Learners including the Innovation Lead from Matibi Nook Hub visited Bulawayo Nook Hub as a part of the Nook learning exchange program.
- Learners from both Nook Hubs shared their learning experiences and did various activities together. Nook Managers from both hubs conducted a psycho-social support workshop program in Matobo National Park, Zimbabwe.
- 2 Learners from Bulawayo Nook Hub got internship program at a Bakery Shop after completing their projects
- An amputee among the learner group and his team made an artificial/ prosthetic leg for himself and is looking forward to making it for others also.



- Learners from Anondo School were invited to the Barishal Nook to get a tour and check the presence of the Nook. They enjoyed a movie screening in Nook premise and had a fun tour of the Nook



- Barishal Nook organises Community Addas where discussion of relevant social issues takes place in guidance of relevant professionals on a regular basis to eliminate existing biases and prejudices in the community.



Community Addas have become a common part of Barishal Nook



Some of the learners from the Barishal Nook are taking up entrepreneurship journeys and are starting new initiatives and companies.



**PannyoBari**  
an Environment-friendly  
startup initiated by youth  
from the Coastal areas  
selling handmade  
sustainable products



## Nakhshakar

Selling handmade customized clothes and jewellery. They have started selling and getting more orders and they received an order for customized 300 sunglasses from UNDP.





our

# Stories

from

International  
Nooks



# Woman of Steel

## Uwamahoro Pascaline Rwanda Nook Hub

*Woman of Steel* is what we call her. Uwamahoro Pascaline, is a 16 year old working her way through a hard journey to independence. She joined the Nook because her parents wanted her to learn tailoring but when she came to the Nook the different activities during exploration made her interested in something that is predominantly seen as a man's job in the community.



After exploring different things she discovered her love for welding. When she told her parents about her interest, they didn't accept it, and felt disappointed because they could not imagine a woman in a field that is male dominated and requires hard-work as women are still seen as fragile and weak. In her daily routine, she worked on both tailoring and welding to satisfy her parents, and it was not easy for her.

She came to the RNH team for advice and encouragement as she was to embark on an unknown path and breaking barriers with the community by choosing welding as her only goal and letting go of the parental, societal and peer pressure that she was facing and standing tall to follow her passion. As a team, we supported and liaised with her parents by inviting them to the nook to see and support her learning journey.

After visiting Pascaline two times at the nook, her parents gave the support she needed to pursue her dream of welding. Now, she has completed her goal cycle, and made a hanger and a garden chair. She is building forward and diving deeper in the world of welding, and we look forward to her creations.

“ I am ready to  
take bigger  
steps

## Touhidul Islam Anim Barishal Nook



After losing my mother, I think I spent more time in Nook than at my home. During this tough time, they (the people from the nook) are with me. Though being interested in different things since childhood, I could not try all of those things as our economic conditions were not suitable

Though I worked from an early age to support my family and fulfil my interests, I managed to get admitted to a polytechnic institute. But It did not go as I expected. I have some specific things to learn, and it's compulsory. I wanted to try many things, but I was just listening to lectures about them and doing nothing. My score is also not good as I am not good at memorizing things to write down.

So I thought of trying it at the Nook after hearing from others. And till now, I found it so interesting because you don't need to wait to start for a long time to do what you want to create or explore. The best thing is you have the freedom to question and make mistakes without being judged.

I, with my team, created a voice control car that is operated through Bengali command, which will help us to pass the tools while working in Nook, and we hope we can make a larger prototype that will be able to deliver food in small restaurants.”

“The best thing is  
you have the  
freedom to  
question and make  
mistakes without  
being judged



new  
ideas in  
**2022-23**



This year saw the growth of existing programs as well as the birth of new ones.

As an organisation we have been trying to expand our philosophy of choice and learning into as many areas of the society as possible.

The following programs have germinated in 2022

- DISPECS (Disaster Prepared Community Spaces)
- RAGE (Research in global alternate education)
- Nook for Sports







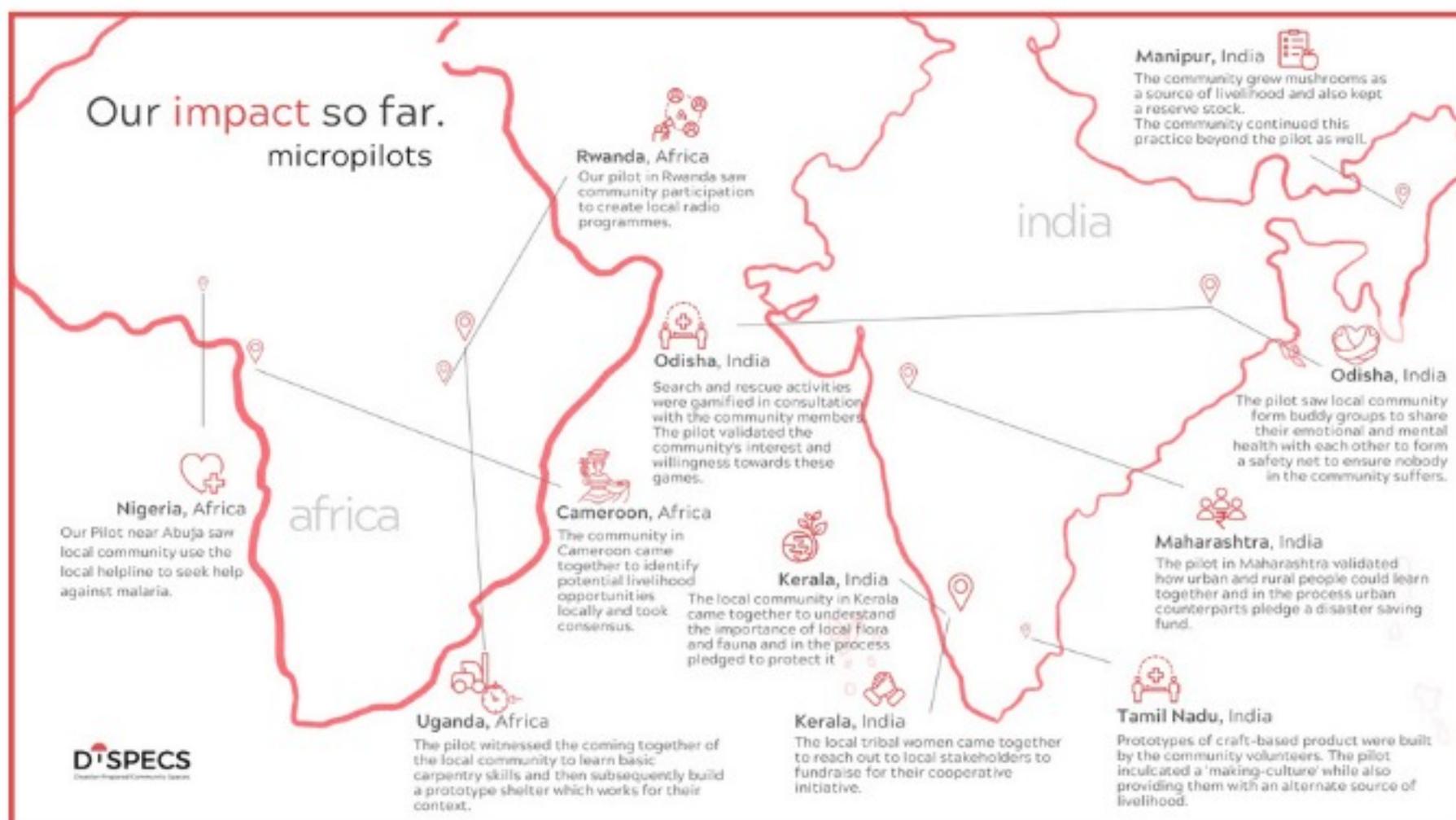
This year DISPECS moved closer to being implemented on the ground as a paradigm change in the field of Community Led Disaster Preparedness models.

The year started with onboarding new design experts for the remaining segments under the DISPECS model. For those segments for which design partners were onboarded last year, the team made progress on the design process and finished creating action plans.

By the end of this year, the DISPECS team completed all the action plans and also implemented micro pilots in various geographies to test the validity of the various action plans.

The micro pilots were conducted across the following geographies and we are happy to share that all micro pilots successfully validated the action plans created by the team in consultation with the design experts.

- Food and Nutrition - Manipur, India
- Partnership Support Network - Kerala, India
- Livelihoods - Cameroon
- Basic Health and First Aid - Nigeria
- Construction - Uganda
- Communication and Awareness - Rwanda
- Search and Rescue, Mental Health - Orissa
- Animal Life and Ecology - Kerala, India
- Community Savings - Maharashtra
- Using Technology - Tamil Nadu



As a testament to the merit of the DISPECS model, DISPECS intervention also became part of the Avoidable Deaths Network, an initiative anchored by the University of Leicester, United Kingdom.

Currently, the team is in the process of reaching out to various implementing and funding partners. The team is currently in talks with DOERS, a disaster preparedness centered non profit working in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh.

Additionally the team is also conducting a status quo study in Delhi, the information regarding which will be presented to the officials from the Delhi Government.



# RAGE

## Research for Alternative Global Education



We have been dreaming RAGE for a few years now, and this year we finally see its germination. RAGE was born out of two important insights -

- Research is reserved for a privileged few with PhDs and large institutions backing them, and largely westernised
- Alternate education has very little in the way of empirical evidence and critical formal research, and there are many unanswered questions, preventing a systemic change

RAGE will become a platform hosted within DEFY to enable alternate educators of present and future to identify key research-questions, understand various methods and approaches in research and conduct studies with support from us and our partners. One need not be a big organisation or a PhD scholar to undertake this journey. The platform will incubate research ideas and support them to fruition.

We also hope to develop a mechanism for communities to meaningfully contribute to research beyond just being subjects of various studies. We hope to record comments and opinions from the communities themselves on the studies and the outcomes, and ensure that their thoughts are well known.

We have several burning questions of our own, even within the frame of Nooks, and hence, we are beginning RAGE with our own first pieces of research until we have developed a strong framework to invite others.

We estimate that we will be able to establish RAGE to its full potential in a span of two years.

# What have we done so far?

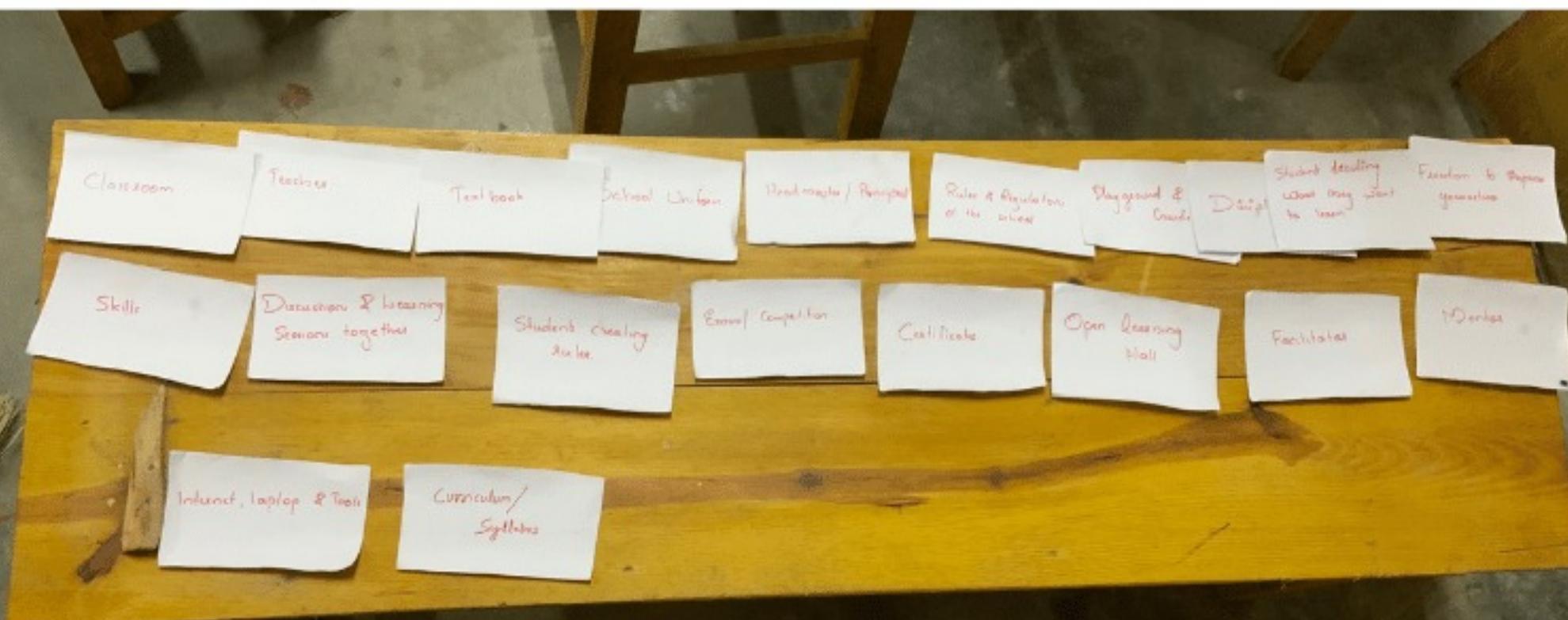
We spent a significant part of Q3 22-23 in establishing our research needs, and creating a list of priority questions that are important for us at this moment in time.

We have begun conducting baselines in the first pilot Nooks, and soon will be done across all the Nooks, followed by mid-lines and end-lines for the year. We are following an RCT (Randomised Control Trials) to see potentially contrasting results within groups of people who come to Nooks and who do not.

Besides our own research, we are also supporting independent research by third-parties on Nooks. We feel this is the perfect complement required to ensure adequate faith on the findings.

## Plans for the year

- We will complete the baselines before the end of (Quarter)Q1
- Mid-lines will be designed in Q1 and executed in Q2
- Delta assessments will be done on collected data in Q3
- End-lines shall be done in Q4
- We hope to see the first publications in Q4 23-24 or Q1 24-25



# Nook For Sports



While we stayed quite busy creating new Nooks and supporting them, we kept our eyes and ears open, for new ideas, suggestions and possibilities.

In 2022, we received an interesting request, and this was to imagine if the values of the Nook could be engaged in sports?

Could we create a space/ an experience/ a program, that would enable children, youth and adults to create a space for sports in their lives, in return enabling strong physical and mental health, community bonding and purposeful socialising.

Additionally, this may become a critical possibility to support children estranged from families or devoid of one, away from the stability of homes and living on the streets, or addicted to substances to step away from harsh realities, in a way that's playful and meaningful.

And this is the problem we intend to solve with Nook for Sports in Zimbabwe, a country which has generously allowed us this opportunity to work on this problem.

Before we take communities to sports, **we want to take sports to communities, to the narrow lanes and the backyards, and the parking lots and gardens, repurposing existing community spaces into play-spaces.**

Simultaneously, we devise a structure to become professional sportsperson, through mentorship, access and resources.

As we near the completion of our designs and plans, we hope to start this program at a few different urban locations in Zimbabwe, partnering with some of the most prominent sports-people and organisations in the country. The success of this program may offer a possibility of trying this in other urban, and potentially even rural or refugee communities.

# CORE

## Consortium of Regenerative Educators

A striking contrast in our approach towards our attempt to reimagine education at a systemic level, has been in our design of partnerships and the participation of people. We think of our partners and field team members as educators, as opposed to employees or organisations, and feel their opinions matter immensely as this movement grows forward.

**CORE** is a gathering to bring these brilliant educators together once in two years to share our thoughts and ideas, and to recharge our dreams and ambitions.

We gathered in the month of May in the beautiful hills of Dharamshala (India). Unlike most educational conferences that simply focus on sharing bright ideas through lengthy presentations, talks and panel discussions, CORE is based on “action through shared experience”.

Through various sessions and experiences, we discussed our roles as individuals and as a collective in this movement, reflecting deeply the impact of our own educational experiences as children, and then the realities of the communities we live and work in.

Some **Key Takeaways** for us from this gathering were -

- Revolutions need movements and people, not organisations and companies. We must develop a collective identity that goes beyond our organisational realities. The identity of being a DEFYiant is more important than the identity of DEFY, the organisation.





- We must be partners and educators, and not funders, consultants and clients.
- Honesty and transparency, even in our failures, will only strengthen us
- The time is NOW. The will is THERE. The world is changing, and this time so will education.

We expect this consortium to evolve and grow, meet regularly online and in-person, discuss practices, develop new ideas and help each other expand their reach so that more and more communities may benefit by taking charge of their own education.

The Consortium will pave the wave for a long term process of reimagining and changing our education reality through a democratic process.



CORE



# Upcoming Nook

## Mt. Elgon Nook Hub Uganda



Located at Bubirabi in the Mt. Elgon Region of Uganda, this Nook will be the first one in Uganda, slated to start in April 2023, led by our partner MESH COP.

We have identified that the region faces strong socio-education challenges, in both quality and access, with about 45% of girls have exited formal education due to early marriage. We hope the Nook will become a space for the community to come together and re-evaluate their needs from learning and create opportunities for themselves. As the Nook begins, we hope for it to invite and engage the youth, especially young women, from the region to create meaningful educational and livelihood outcomes for themselves, while also creating a lively and colourful environment.





Learning is  
a process  
which uses  
freedom as  
fuel

# We thank all our Partners for working and supporting our vision!

## Our **Supporting** and **Implementing** partners

Those **supporting** or **directly funding** our Nooks in India and abroad.



## Other **Partners**

Those who have **supported** us through different initiatives and programs over the years.



## **Alliances** we've been a part of



# Closing notes



As the world started making peace with the post covid reality and settling into the new normal, DEFY got back on its saddle and started working towards scaling its impact.

Our vision of passing on the knowledge of community led learning spaces, 'Nooks', would only come true if we partnered with grass root organisations as well as government systems.

This past year has been a period of incredible learning that comes along with phenomenal growth! We not only ventured into new partnerships globally we set out with gusto establishing our first government partnership with the State of Meghalaya, setting up the first systemic level pilot of true alternatives to the school systems with 20 Nooks in the first phase spread across the communities with least access to resources.

We grew as a team bringing in young trailblazers who are as passionate to become educators that are breaking the mould of the existing institutional systems. This was the year when we also learned tremendously about realigning our organisation culture with the astute insights our young team brought in.

We saw our team members become entrepreneurs and cheered them on as they excitedly make their forays into the world of starting up!

We are excitedly peeking into the light of change through our interactions with more grass root organisations, young enthusiastic people in different communities, in various institutions and our team.

DEFY also ushered in a new beginning post covid with a new office space reflecting our young culture within its space design.

Designed and conceptualised by our team, the space embodies the spirit of partnerships, learning, collaboration and fun. We held two key gatherings in person with our global partners and our team.

As an organisation we believe that we are incomplete without being able to listen to everyone associated with us and imbibe change into our model.

Bringing together global partners was an exhilarating experience watching individuals from different cultures, ethnicity, languages, coming together to share their vision of changing the world with one unifying theme of agency focused choice based learning systems.

We learned tremendously from our team during the year end gatherings getting insights into the evolution of our organisation practices which we are determined to inculcate in the coming year.

The new year holds brand new opportunities as we strengthen our place in the education sector and we establish partnerships at both large scale and grass roots. We will expand our advisory board and will steadily move towards our mission of 100 Nooks over the next 2 years and we couldn't be more enthused to work with organisations who align with our vision.

**Megha Bhagat**

Chief Growth Officer



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us.

[www.projectdefy.org](http://www.projectdefy.org)

donate here.

