THEME FOR JUNOON AWARDS 2025:

Redefining Resilience: Climate Action for Lasting Change

Today, we are experiencing an existential threat: climate change. Its devastating impacts are already being felt across the globe, particularly within marginalized communities. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events are disrupting livelihoods, exacerbating poverty, and forcing people to migrate. These communities, already burdened by systemic inequalities, with the added pressures of anthropogenic changing climate are living an extremely vulnerable life. In India, climate change is disproportionately affecting at-risk communities. For small hold farmers- erratic monsoons, droughts, and floods is contributing to crop failures, reduced yields, and loss of income. **Bundelkhand Region** in central India has experienced severe droughts, mass migration and distress sales of land by small farmers. Coastal communities, including fishermen and those living in low-lying areas, are facing the threat of sea-level rise and coastal erosion. This results in loss of land, displacement, and damage to infrastructure. **Eastern India** is a burning example of this. Indigenous communities, deeply connected to their environment, are facing the loss of biodiversity and traditional knowledge due to climate change. In Andaman and Nicobar Islands, communities are facing threats to their traditional fishing practices due to changes in marine ecosystems. Women in rural areas, particularly those from lower castes, are disproportionately affected by water scarcity and climate-related disasters, as they are often responsible for water collection and agricultural labor. The need of the hour is to prioritize the holistic development of marginalized groups who are already burdened by the systemic injustices to build a more equitable and resilient future.

This year's Junoon Awards highlight the pressing need to address climate emergencies and honor organizations pioneering innovative, impactful, and community-centered solutions to climate change. We have set four parameters to recognize organizations:

Circularity for a Greener Tomorrow:

To achieve lasting change, there is a pressing need to re-envision the model of development. A circular economy, which aims to minimize waste and maximize resource efficiency, offers a promising approach to building a more sustainable and equitable future. Goonj, by collecting and redistributing material surplus, creates a virtuous cycle of resource utilization. This innovative approach not only reduces waste but also empowers marginalized communities by providing them with much-needed goods and services. By redefining resilience as a collective effort, we strive to create a more just and sustainable world for all. Let us embrace the power of community, innovation, and the circular economy to build a future that is resilient to climate change and its social impacts. We repurpose and upcycle collected textiles and other materials through mindful giving into stylish products and essential items like menstrual hygiene products. We are bridging the material gap between urban and rural areas.

Responding to Climate Emergencies:

Dignity is often overlooked during disasters. Goonj's Rahat initiative is a vital lifeline during times of crisis, providing essential relief and rehabilitation efforts across India. This initiative has been instrumental in responding to various disasters, from earthquakes and tsunamis to floods and cyclones. Rahat focuses on creating a robust network of stakeholders, both rural and urban, to ensure timely and effective aid distribution. By addressing invisible disasters like winters, Rahat aims to minimize suffering and loss of life due to the lack of basic necessities like clothing. Goonj goes far beyond immediate relief. Goonj Alliance for Rapid Response on Disasters (GARRD) equips communities to handle future emergencies. A group of cross-sectoral entities has joined forces to improve how we respond to disasters. The goal is to create a better system where everyone, from the ground level up, works together to prevent, respond to, and recover from disasters.

Civic Participation in Climate Action:

Indigenous communities, with their deep-rooted knowledge of ecosystems and sustainable practices, have been at the forefront of climate adaptation. For instance, Ladakh is a high-altitude desert region with harsh climatic conditions. Ladakhi people have developed ingenious water harvesting techniques like "karez" or "pulu" systems. These underground channels divert water from snowmelt and glaciers to fields and villages, ensuring water supply even in the driest months. Goonj facilitates a self-sustaining future for marginalized communities. Empowering them to become active participants in rebuilding infrastructure, from bridges and rainwater harvesting/groundwater recharging to ponds, canals, wells, kitchen gardening, community farming, vermicomposting, and sanitation systems, fosters social cohesion and a sense of ownership.

Innovative Climate Solutions:

GARRD is one of our innovative solutions, where we are creating a network of rural and urban stakeholders in bringing out creative solutions to address quick crisis mitigation and foster sustainable development. It's not a one-size-fits-all approach. A greener tomorrow should be a coming reality, and by adopting a community-centric approach that synergizes innovation with traditional knowledge systems, we can address climate change. Climate change foreshadows the apocalypse. Thus, instead of quick fixes, we need lasting solutions to realize a habitable future.

Learn more- https://goonj.org/