

ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 25



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Message from Director

It is with great pride that I present this Annual Report, highlighting a year dedicated to enhancing livelihood security, fostering leadership development, expanding access to education, and advancing the rights & entitlements of transgender and queer individuals in Assam.

Throughout the year, the community demonstrated remarkable perseverance in advocating for its rights despite social and structural challenges. Our initiatives tackled disparities in social protection, healthcare, education and employment through workshops, legal awareness, and advocacy. By building alliances with marginalized communities, grassroots organisations, young leaders and government officials, we advanced inclusive solutions—ranging from access to books and leadership development to support with identity documents, sensitization, and livelihood models—all focused on visibility and empowerment.

Though challenges of indifference and discrimination remain, we are confident that lasting change is inevitable through collaboration and commitment to equity.

This year, we welcomed new donors and secured additional funding, allowing us to build a stable, diverse team of 10 employees, including queer and trans individuals, cisgender women, and people from indigenous and other minority background, strengthening our capacity to serve and empower the community.



Bidyutree Mitra



Overview

The year 2024-25 marked Akam Foundation's third financial year and a period of steady growth and direction. As a transgender-led, feminist organization rooted in Northeast India, Akam deepened its work on gender justice, inclusion, and social transformation across Assam.

Responding to persistent challenges faced by the LGBTQIA++ community, where over 90% of transgender persons remain unemployed (NHRC, 2018), Akam expanded its focus on leadership, livelihood, and mental health. Through initiatives such as Swabalamban, Swabhiman, Queer Xangjung, and Project Manax, we fostered queer youth leadership, promoted sustainable livelihoods, and strengthened advocacy for legal recognition and inclusion.



Our growing team of program and community associates enabled wider outreach across education, livelihood, rights access. Recognizing the urgent need for mental health support, Akam also collaborated with local professionals to develop queer-affirmative, culturally rooted care models.

This year reaffirmed our vision of a just, inclusive society where every transgender and queer person can live, learn, lead with pride.

About Us

Akam Foundation is a transgender-led, not-for-profit organisation registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013. Founded in 2022, 'Akam' means equality in the Mising language, reflecting our commitment to justice and inclusion. We empower transgender and queer communities in Northeast India, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, through grassroots programs.

Our work includes cultivating **LGBTQIA++ youth leadership**, supporting **transgender entrepreneurs with sustainable livelihoods**, advancing **legal rights and dignity**, improving access to **mental health care**, and providing financial aid to queer students in higher education. We also advocate for the right to read and a free public library system in India.

VISION

A just, inclusive, and equal society in India where every transgender and queer individual lives with dignity as equal humans.

MISSION

As a trans-led, feminist organization based in Northeast India, our mission is to:



Testimonies from Humans Around

- ☒ "I am so happy that Akam is near to us and working in Upper Assam. With support from the Akam Foundation, my income has increased, and I can contribute to household expenses with dignity."
— **Sundori, Karbi Anglong, Livelihood Champion**



- ☒ "Being a Muslim transman, taking Hijab was a disgraceful thing I felt wearing. Out of irritation, I took my father to a psychiatrist to discuss my gender identity. After attending the community meet-up, I felt inspired to take this action as resilience towards being vocal about my well-being"
— **Nihal, Dibrugarh**



- ☒ "It has been a great experience working with Akam Foundation. It has enriched my learning about the community and also about inclusion in education. I got the opportunity to interact with people from various fields, making me understand how an individual can be passionate about one's work. Look forward to attending more sessions and workshops in the future."

— **Dr. Sunita Agarwal, Former Vice Principal, Dispur College**



Thematic Areas:

Gender Justice:

Akam champions gender justice by creating safe, visible and affirming spaces for queer and transgender individuals in rural Assam. Guided by SDG 5, we work to bridge the gaps caused by stigma and exclusion through community-led platforms where queer youth can find support, express their voice and develop leadership. Our efforts transform isolation into empowerment, turning everyday spaces into movements of dignity, rights and belonging.



Right to Read:

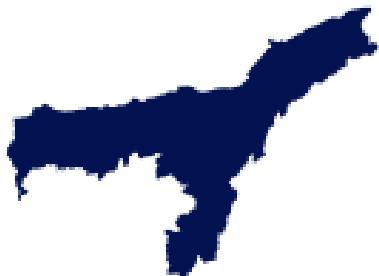
Rooted in SDG 4, Akam reimagines the Right to Read as a way to create equal opportunities in rural Assam. In communities where books are few and learning is uneven, we build free, inclusive libraries that inspire curiosity, restore access, and celebrate imagination. These reading spaces give children and marginalized groups a chance to explore knowledge, build confidence and unlock opportunities, making literacy a shared journey, not a privilege.



2024-25 at a Glance

Geographical Reach

- Dhemaji
- Karbi Anglong
- Sonitpur
- Nagaon
- Kamrup (M)
- Kamrup (R)



- Dibrugarh
- Tinsukia
- Sivasagar
- Jorhat
- Golaghat
- North Lakhimpur

2 Libraries & 4500+ Books



400+ Children Reached



8+ Documentation Support



5+ Trans* Entrepreneur



5000+ Youth Reached in
20+ College, University



275+ Govt. Stakeholders Reached



5+ Education Support



2024-25
in Numbers

27+ Queer Leaders Nurtured



Livelihood Security

Swabalamban: Sustainable Livelihood for Transgender & Queer Community in Assam



92% of transgender persons in India are excluded from formal economic opportunities. - NHRC, 2018.

Across Assam, LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to lead with resilience despite lack of visibility in society. While the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, schemes like SMILE and Orunodoi 3.0 have laid strong policy foundations, broader inclusion in education, employment and skill development remains limited. However, most of the Trans*, Queer Individuals are out of formal economic opportunity.

In 2024, we launched **Swabalamban: Sustainable Livelihood for Transgender & Queer Community in Assam**, a pilot initiative combining action research, entrepreneurship development and policy advocacy. Swabalamban nurtures entrepreneurship and builds inclusive livelihood ecosystems aligned with SDG 1, 2 and 8, envisioning a future of dignity, sustainability, and collective empowerment.



Action-Research on Livelihood Security of Transgender Individuals in Assam

As part of our community-level research, we engaged with community members, stakeholders across 11 districts of Assam - Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Karbi Anglong, Nagaon, Kamrup Metro, Kamrup Rural, Darrang and Sonitpur. Meetings with district officials such as DSWOs, Gender Specialists, and ASRLM Managers provided critical insights into local needs and challenges, guiding inclusive intervention strategies.



Geographical reach :
Across 11 districts
In-depth Interview:
96 participants
Focus Group Discussion:
3



Key Findings:

- Education:** Literacy rate at 53.69%; high dropouts due to bullying and exclusion.
- Employment:** Only 11% in formal jobs; most rely on informal work.
- Healthcare:** 72% avoid government hospitals due to stigma, lack of gender-affirming care.
- Legal Documentation:** Many lack valid IDs; only 28% aware of welfare schemes like SMILE.
- Social Exclusion:** Family rejection and housing bias lead to homelessness and limited access to safety and services.

District-Level Advocacy Workshop

We have organized Two district-level advocacy workshops in Karbi Anglong and Dibrugarh, in collaboration with SELCO Foundation & State Transgender Welfare Board, Government of Assam. These workshops brought together government stakeholders like District Legal Services Authority, District Industries & Commerce Centre, National Urban Livelihoods Mission, National Health Mission, Women Justice Forum, Assam Police, SEWA Dibrugarh & Karbi Anglong Cultural Society (KCS), along with members of the transgender community with total 50+ participants.



Exposure Visit for Champions of Trans* Livelihood

A five-member delegation from Assam, accompanied by a representative from Akam Foundation & SELCO Foundation, participated in an exposure visit to Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu. The objective was to learn from existing grassroots interventions, gain practical experience, explore models of empowerment and livelihood development that could be adapted in Assam.



Entrepreneurship Development with Transgender Individuals

In FY 2024-25, we started our pilot phase by supporting 5 community champions in 3 districts of Upper Assam to develop their entrepreneurial ventures, including tailoring, small retail and beautician services.



Access to Rights & Entitlement

Swabhiman: Accessing Rights and Entitlement for Transgender Community



Data from the 2024 Lok Sabha elections reveals a stark gap - only 414 transgender voters were registered out of an estimated 20,000+ population in Assam.

Across Assam, transgender individuals continue to demonstrate resilience despite ongoing challenges in accessing their rights and entitlements. While progressive frameworks like the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, the Assam Transgender Policy, 2020, and the Transgender Welfare Board mark important milestones, many still face challenges in documentation and access to welfare systems. To strengthen inclusion and ensure legal recognition, Akam Foundation launched **Swabhiman: Accessing Rights & Entitlements for the Transgender Community** - an initiative that focuses on documentation support, awareness building, district-level advocacy, advancing dignity, access and empowerment for transgender individuals across Assam.



Access to Rights & Entitlement

Swabhiman: Accessing Rights and Entitlement for Transgender Community in Assam



- Distributed 305 + IEC materials on legal awareness materials in local languages across 8 districts among the community members.
- Organized 15+ community meetings across 8 districts to strengthen solidarity and awareness, reaching 236 transgender, queer individuals.
- Supported 8 transgender persons across 8 districts with financial & technical help for legal documentation applications.
- Organized 10 one-on-one advocacy meetings with 18 government stakeholders across 10 districts for effective implementation of TG Act, 2019.
- Conducted 7 District-level advocacy meeting on The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 with 255 government stakeholders & community members across 6 districts of Assam.



Queer Leadership Development

Queer Xangjug - Connecting Young Queer*, Ally from Assam in Gender Justice



Queer Xangjug at Glance:

5 Phase
27 Participants
96 HRS of Learning
20 Resource Person
3 Mentor



Queer Xangjug, launched by Akam Foundation, is a **10-month** journey empowering young queer individuals and allies across Assam through five phases on gender, sexuality, intersectionality, leadership, and social action. Combining residential workshops and virtual sessions, it created a transformative space for queer youth leadership and community building.

Queer Xangjug stands as a celebration of self-discovery, leadership and collective vision for queer justice and inclusive change.



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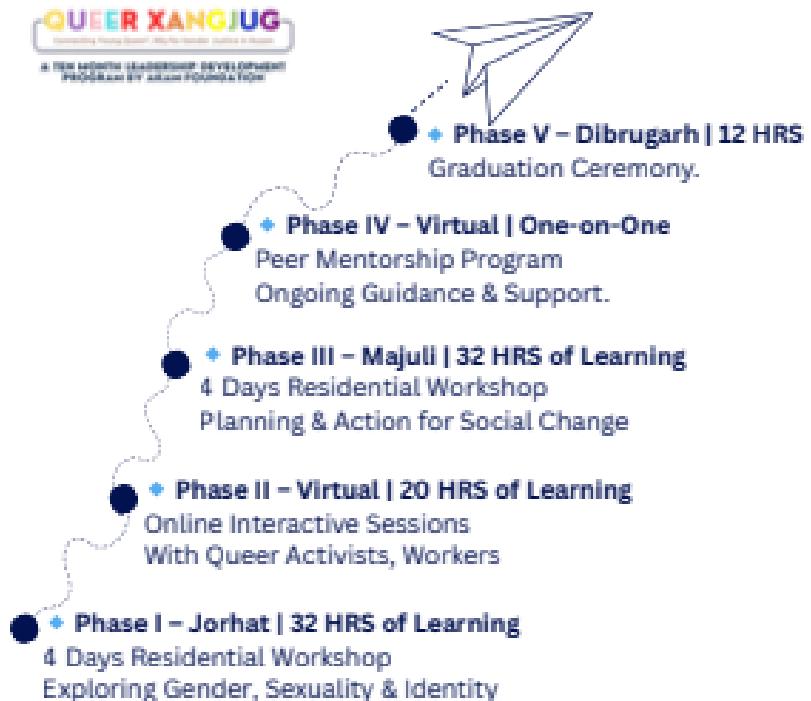
Queer Leadership Development

Queer Xangjug - Connecting Young Queer*, Ally from Assam in Gender Justice

QUEER XANGJUG

Developing Young Queer* Ally for Gender Justice in Assam

A 5-Month Leadership Development Program by Akam Foundation



Access to Education

Engaging with Higher Educational Institutes in Assam for Safe & Inclusive Campuses



-52% of transgender youth drop out of school or college before completing Class X.- NHRC, 2018.

As per the 2011 census, the total literacy rate among transgender persons was **56.1%** for a total population of around 4.8 lakhs, against the national average of **74.04%**.

-A significant number cite bullying, harassment and lack of gender-neutral infrastructure as key reasons for leaving school. - NHRC, 2018.

In Assam, cases like the expulsion of a queer student in Guwahati reveal ongoing discrimination and the urgent need for inclusive policies and sensitization.

At Akam Foundation, we work with educational institutions to build safer campuses through awareness programs, workshops on gender & sexuality, faculty dialogues and training gender champions to advocate for queer rights.



Access to Education

Engaging with Higher Educational Institutes in Assam for Safe & Inclusive Campuses

- Workshop on Promoting Gender Inclusivity and Diversity in Higher Educational Institutes at UGC Centre for Women's Studies, Dibrugarh University - **23 Students**
- Workshop on Gender, Sexuality & Feminism with UGC Centre for Women's Studies, Dibrugarh University - **22 Students**
- Workshop on Gender, Sexuality & Intersectionality with LGBTQIA+ Internal Affairs Committee, Dispur College, Guwahati - **30 Students**
- Discussion on Promoting Gender Inclusivity and Diversity in Higher Educational Institutes with LGBTQIA+ Internal Affairs Committee, Dispur College, Guwahati - **55 Participants (Faculty + Students)**
- Scholarship support provided: **5 Transgender, Queer Individuals**



Enabling Queer Affirmative Well-Being Ecosystem

Project Manox: Towards a Queer-Affirmative Well-Being Ecosystem in Assam



Screening Survey : 47 Participants
In-depth Interview: 28 Queer Individuals

17 Mental Health Practitioner
5 Queer Right Activists
10+ Queer Individuals through virtual support group
200+ Queer Individuals through community meet up in small towns

Over 63% of LGBTQIA+ participants reported at least moderate depression, with high rates of anxiety and stress. - NHRC



Project Manox began its pilot phase in 2024-25 with the aim of strengthening queer-affirmative mental health access in Assam. The project conducted qualitative research involving LGBTQIA+ community members, mental health professionals, and queer rights activists across districts to understand barriers such as stigma, family rejection and lack of sensitized mental health services. Alongside this, Project Manox initiated a dedicated support group that offers a safe, non-judgmental space for emotional expression and peer connection. Findings from this pilot phase will help shape a long-term intervention model to build an inclusive and accessible mental health ecosystem for queer individuals in Assam.

LIBRARY PROGRAMS:

Project Kitape Katha Koi Community Library



Ahatguri Gaon,
Jorhat

A Community Library in Ahatguri, Jorhat District, initiated the free library concept during COVID-19 lockdown.

Serving over 100+ children from 5 villages in Chenijan area, it promotes access to books in rural Assam, where libraries are scarce. With a collection of 2000+ books, the library regularly organizes book circulation, reading sessions, storytelling and book talks.



- Total Members Engaged: 125+
- Total Overall Footfall: 1000+
- Total Books: 2000+
- Total Circulation of Books: 400+
- Total Read Aloud Session: 100+

Chandraprabha Saikiani Feminist Library & Resource Centre, Dibrugarh

Chandraprabha Saikiani Feminist Library & Resource Centre, established in March 2023, is a feminist and anti-discriminatory safe space that houses over 2,000 books and serves both local communities and the LGBTQIA+ community. The library functions as a hub for **youth-led discussions, community engagement and queer-centered research**. It provides a platform for learning, dialogue, creative expression through reading sessions, cultural activities, advocacy events fostering awareness, solidarity, social change.



Youth-led community discussions:

- Discussion on 'Idea of Safe Space' by Dharitri and Annanya.
- 'Kitapor Hoite Adda' with Dr. Swati Kiran on Assamese Translation from a Feminist Lens.
- Open Mic on the occasion of Pride Month.
- Discussion on Youth Engagement for Social Change with Dr. Amrita Pritam Gogoi, Dibrugarh University.
- Residential Capacity Enhancement Workshop on Advocacy on Queer Rights Movement Building.

Library Outreach to Community

📍 Alubari, Jalan Nagar, Dibrugarh.

Alubari, a tea-tribe community in Dibrugarh district, is one of the areas where Akam Foundation works closely to promote education and creativity among children. Through our community library, we encourage reading habits, imagination and self-expression. The library now hosts storytelling sessions, art activities and book-sharing circles, fostering creativity and a growing love for reading among children.



Read Aloud Sessions: 38

Storytelling Sessions: 8

Art Sessions: 12

Reading Circles: 13

Book Circulation: 480

• Total Members Engaged: 154

• Total Overall Footfall: 800+



Read Aloud Sessions: 31

Storytelling Sessions: 11

Art Sessions: 1

Reading Circles: 9

Book Circulation: 380

• Total Members Engaged: 48

• Total Overall Footfall: 518+

📍 Kali Bari Road, Koila Patty, Dibrugarh.

The community library at Kali Bari Road, Koila Patty, Dibrugarh serves a marginalized community facing multiple challenges, including migration and high school dropout rates. Akam Foundation works here to reconnect children with learning through engaging activities in reading, art, storytelling, book circulation and creative expression.



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Stories of Our Champion

Manju Begum, a 45+ single Kinnar person from Tinsukia district in Upper Assam, has adopted two daughters and dreams of giving them a better future through education. During COVID-19 pandemic, she chose to leave her Gharana out of concern for her daughters' growth and safety. To sustain her family, she has been begging on the Kanyakumari Express and two local trains in the district, earning just enough for daily needs. With strong skills and a passion for sewing, Manju previously earned occasionally through an old second-hand sewing machine. With our support through a motor-fitted upgraded sewing machine she now aspires to earn at least ₹10,000 per month and gradually transition away from begging towards a dignified and sustainable livelihood.



Sam, a 20-year-old trans man from Tezpur, Assam, began his leadership journey by volunteering with Tezpur Queer Pride. Through Queer Xangluk Sam delved deeper into feminist perspective on the leadership journey which led to him growing more confident in expressing his identity. His mother's support gave him the courage to take bold steps. After four years in a non-affirming college uniform, he became the first to wear the male uniform, facing backlash yet opening doors for others. He shared his journey with the Gender Campaign Club and continues trying to work for the community, even in the smallest ways, hoping to inspire safer, inclusive change.



Solidarity with Free Libraries Movement

Akam Foundation remains deeply committed to movement building for social transformation and has become a leading voice in strengthening the Free Library Movement in Northeast India. As an active member of the Free Libraries Network (FLN) & its Model Library Program, Akam continues to advocate for a free and accessible public library system in India. Through initiatives such as the Chandraprabha Saikiani Feminist Library & Resource Centre - recognized as a Model Library under the PARAG Initiative (TATA Trusts). Collaborations like the 2024 Dialogue Event with Dibrugarh University's Centre for Social Studies, Akam promotes literacy, inclusivity, and community-led learning.



In 2024-25, Akam Foundation represented and participated in key national platforms, including the Indian Library Congress, Jaipur Literature Festival, Arunachal Literature Festival, Brahmaputra Literature Festival - demonstrating its continued solidarity with the Free Library Movement and its commitment to the Right to Read.

One Billion Rising

Rise to Freedom in Assam



One Billion Rising is a Worldwide Movement against Gender violence against Women, Trans & other Fluid People. In 2024, we marched under the theme of 'Rise for Freedom' in collaboration with various colleges and departments from Dibrugarh University.



- Poster-Making Event at Manohari Devi Kanoi College, Dibrugarh.
- Movie Screening and Discussion by Dr. Madhumita Purkayastha, at the Centre for Women's Studies, Dibrugarh University.
- Open Mic session at Drishti Queer Safe Space.
- Strategic Meeting on Gender-Based Violence, followed by an Art Exhibition and Public Lecture by Abha Bhalya at the Centre for Women's Studies, Dibrugarh University.

In 2025, on **14th February**, we marched with the theme of "Rise for Diversity, Inclusion and Dignity for All," organized in collaboration with Uttarang, Tata Institute of Social Science, Guwahati.



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Team Capacity Building & Engagements

Trainings & Workshops

- Beyond Binaries – IMPRI International Summer School (4 team members)
- Model Libraries Residential Workshop – Free Libraries Network, Bhopal (Padma)
- Financial Management Training – National Foundation for India, Guwahati (Bhukhan, Nabajyoti)
- Peer Support Practice Training – Mariwala Health Initiatives, Goa (Rituparna, Lipi)
- REVAMP 2.0 – YP Foundation, Delhi (Lipi, Bhukhan)



- Two-Week Course on Gender, Human Rights & Just Governance – Jagori Rural, Himachal (Lipi, Bhukhan)
- SAFE Youth Leadership Program – YP Foundation, Delhi (Lipi)

Programs & Convenings

- Convening North East India – SAWF In, Guwahati (Bhukhan)
- Many Mirrors, Many Masculinities Conclave – YP Foundation, Delhi (Lipi). Exposure Visits
- Savitribai Phule Fatima Sheikh Group of Libraries, Bhopal (Padma)

Akam-Led Initiatives

- Queer Xangjug – Participation by Padma Prasad Sharma & Narsi Ahmed
- Annual Team Capacity Building & Yearly Planning Workshop – Majuli, Assam

Representing Akam:

Our Founder and Director, Ms. Rituparna Neog, continues to represent Akam Foundation nationally-advocating for feminist narratives, gender justice & cross-movement solidarity.

Key Sessions & Workshops

- Queer Perspectives from the North East – Hindu College
- Feminist Youth Leadership Development – UN Women India
- Gender, Sexuality & Transgender Rights – CKB Commerce College
- Gender, Development & Work – TISS, Guwahati
- Youth Gender Workshop – SATRA, TDH

Trainings & Institutional Engagements

- Training of Trainers on Gender-based Discrimination – Tezpur University
- Sensitisation Program – Pragjyotish College

National & International Platforms

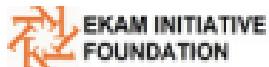
- UN Women-UNDP SDG 5 Roundtable
- International Safe Abortion Day panel – The YP Foundation
- NGO CSW69 Virtual Event – Centering Marginalized Voices

Festivals & Public Dialogues

- Brahmaputra Literature Festival 2025
- Arunachal Literature Festival
- Regional Dialogue & Exchange by NEN



Partner & Supporter



Valued Government Partner at District Level

- District Legal Service Authority (DLSA) of Karbi Anglong, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Tinsukia District
- Office of Child Protection Office, Dibrugarh & Golaghat District
- Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Sivasagar, Golaghat, Karbi Anglong District

Individual Donor

Babbli Mondol, Guwahati

Priyomoda Mishra, Guwahati

Purnima Rao, Delhi

Kaushal Shah, Mumbai

Individuals Supported Our Work as Guest/Resource Person

Nandita Deka, Advocate, Gauhati High Court

Dr. Amrita Pritam Gogoi, Dibrugarh University

Dr. Simashree Bora, Cotton University

Papori Medhi, Theatre Activist

Nelson Deb, Bodhana NGO

Sonal Roshan, Bosco Institute

Radhika Goswami, AGORA

Sanib Chakrawarty, Guwahati



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Governing Body & Advisory Council

- Dr. Amrita Pritam Gogoi, Assistant Professor, Dibrugarh University
- Purnima Rao, Free Libraries Network, Delhi
- Mayuri Deka, Researcher, Guwahati
- Dr. Sunita Agarwala, Former Vice Principal, Dispur College, Guwahati
- Prof. Polly Vauqueline, Professor, Department of Women's Studies, Gauhati University
- Dr. Sathyashree Goswami, Development Professional, Bangalore
- Sadam Hanjabam, Ya_All Youth Network, Manipur

Our Team

- Rituparna Neog (she/they), Founder-Director
- Lipi Lahon (they/he), Program Associate
- Nabajyoti Hazarika (they/he/she), Program Associate
- Darshana Hazarika (she/her), Program Associate (till Nov, 2024)
- Padma Prasad Sharma (they/them) Community Mobiliser (till Jan, 2025)
- Parijit Mahapatra (he/him/they), Program Associate
- Bhukhan Jyoti Gogoi (he/him), Program Associate
- Narsi Ahmed (she/her), Program Associate
- Akansha Das (she/her), Finance & Admin Associate
- Deepjyoti Buragohain (he/him), Junior Associate
- Trishan Jyoti Gogoi (he/him), Community Mobiliser
- Sonia Munda (she/her), Community Mobiliser
- Bobby Saikia (she/her), Library in Charge (Jorhat)

Team Akam



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