

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24



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## NOTE BY FOUNDER

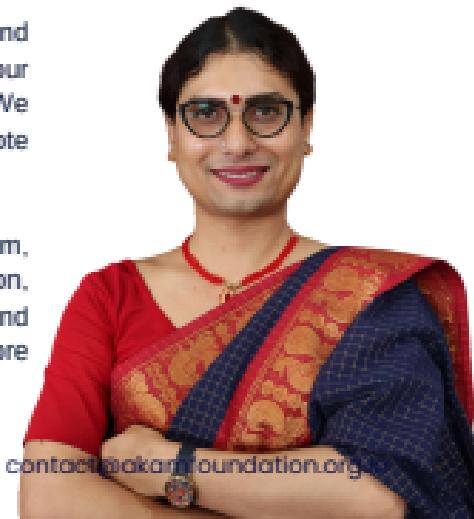
This past one year has been a remarkable journey of growth, resilience, and transformation. Despite the challenges, we have continued to make significant strides in our mission to promote gender justice and literacy in Assam.

Our flagship project, Project Kitape Katha Koi, has continued to thrive, bringing the joy of reading to children in Ahatguri Village and beyond. The establishment of free community library spaces has not only promoted literacy but also provided safe and inclusive environments for learning and growth.

Drishti: A Queer Collective has been at the forefront of our advocacy efforts, championing the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community in rural areas and small towns. Our intersectional feminist approach has guided our initiatives, ensuring that we address the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to our vision of a just and equitable society. Our goals for the coming year include expanding our outreach, strengthening our programs, and deepening our impact. We will continue to advocate for the rights of the marginalized, promote literacy, and create inclusive spaces where everyone can thrive.

None of this would have been possible without the support of our team, partners, volunteers, and the communities we serve. Your dedication, passion, and belief in our mission have been the driving force behind our success. Together, we will continue to build a brighter, more inclusive future for Assam.



## ABOUT US

Akam Foundation is a youth-led, queer feminist, rights-based organisation in Assam, registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013, in 2022. Akam means "equality" in the Mising language and reflects our commitment to justice. Our work focuses on gender justice and education, emerging from Project Kitape Katha Koi (2020), which promotes the right to read through community libraries, and Drishti: A Queer Collective (2021), which advances LGBTQIA+ rights in rural Assam and small towns through an intersectional feminist approach.



## OUR VISION

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

## OUR MISSION

- Build and co-create free, community-run libraries as inclusive feminist spaces.
- Nurture and support LGBTQIA+ leaders working toward gender justice.
- Center the voices and experiences of the LGBTQIA+ community in northeast India through education, economic opportunity and access to rights & entitlements.

# OUR APPROACHES

## COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION & ORGANISATION



Through direct engagement and outreach, we mobilise queer and transgender communities in Assam to identify their needs, challenges, and aspirations, co-creating locally grounded solutions. Akam Foundation believes in collective strength, supporting local groups and community-led collectives that drive social action, increase visibility, and form the foundation of a stronger queer movement in Assam.

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Developing leaders within the community by building their capacity and strengthening the skill to make them independent to recognise their own problems and create solutions out of it

## RESEARCH & ADVOCACY

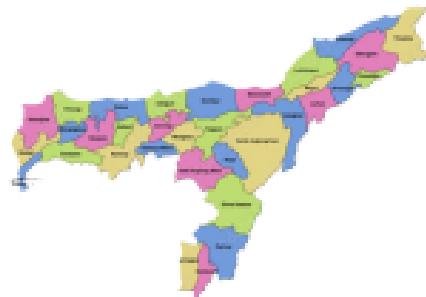
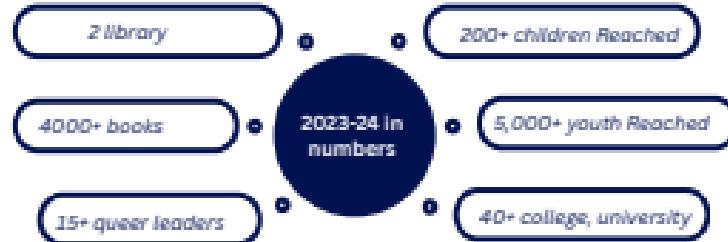


To work within the community it is good to understand their problems so as to deal with it. This includes the research of their needs and problems which help in depth realisation of the community. Therefore this can be used as a tool for advocacy in the larger context.

## SOCIAL INSTITUTION BUILDING



With the help of advocacy and mobilising the community, building a strong social institution within the community will help in the sustainability of the movement.



# OUR REACH

## LITERACY AND EDUCATION:

- Two community libraries established and operational.
- 2500+ books and resources available in each physical library.
- Increase in the number of active members and regular readers.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

- More than 12,000+ youths were mobilised across Assam.
- Awareness raised on gender issues.



## QUEER LEADERSHIP AND GENDER JUSTICE

- 2 workshops on Gender
- Trained 50 Youth on issues of gender.
- Progress in advocacy efforts.
- Impact on the trans and queer community in accessing public facilities.



## PROJECT KITAPE KATHA KOI

A Community Library in Ahatguri, Jorhat District that has initiated the Free Library concept during lockdown of Covid-19 pandemic in Jorhat. It serves around 100+ children from 5 villages in the Chenijan area. The Community library focuses on the access to the library for everyone, because in the rural areas of Assam, access to the library has been difficult for people. The library has a collection of 2000+ books and it runs regular library programs like book circulation, reading programs, story telling, book talk etc.



## CHANDRAPRABHA SAIKIANI FEMINIST LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTRE



The Feminist Library in Dibrugarh, inaugurated on 19th March 2023, serves as an anti-discriminatory safe space, a feminist action hub, and a vibrant center for readers. With a collection of 2,000+ books, it engages local communities and the LGBTQIA++ community through activities like dance, drama, music, games, storytelling, read-alouds, and weekly book readings. It also fosters political awareness, creating a space for dialogue and learning among children, adolescents, and adults alike.

## ALLYSHIP BUILDING WITH LOCAL INSTITUTES (MOU)

To bring a change, we could not walk alone. To work in solidarity Akam Foundation had signed MoUs with Dispur College, Tinsukia College, West Guwahati College of Education, Digboi Women's College, Manohari Devi Kanoi Girls's College in order to have a long term work relationship and exchanges of resources.



## PARTNERSHIP WITH GUWAHATI MARATHON

Akam Foundation had partnered with Guwahati Marathon as a Charity Partner for the Event in Feb, 2024. We had put up a Pop-Up Library cum Stall with illustrated books for everyone as well as badges with different rainbow and book motifs, for engaging with community outreach as well.

## LIBRARY OUTREACH TO COMMUNITY

Our Community Library outreach works in local communities across Dibrugarh district, with one active library at Jalan Nagar, Alu Bari village. We engage children aged 3–14 years through activities like storytelling, read-aloud sessions, music, games, dance, drama, and weekly book reading. We have recently started issuing books so children can read at home. The library focuses on improving access to books while supporting children's cognitive and motor skill development. We are expanding to more community spaces and have also supported the setup of Nagarkhelia Gaon Children Library in collaboration with MDKG College.



## SOLIDARITY WITH FREE LIBRARY MOVEMENT

Our Free Libraries are a part of the Free Libraries Network, India (FLN). As a member of FLN, we aim to reach out to remote communities and to people who are enthusiastic about books and libraries, contributing to help build a free library movement in India demanding people's policy for free public libraries in India.

We extended our solidarity through hosting workshops, volunteering, and actively engaging regionally to strengthen the free library movement in Assam & north east India.



# WORKSHOPS BY AKAM

## LIBRARY WORKSHOP

### “RIGHT TO READ: PROMOTING INCLUSION IN LIBRARY”

Akam jointly organised the 'Right to Read: Promoting Inclusion in Library', a three day residential workshop with Free Libraries Network in Bosco Institute, Jorhat. 20 participants from different parts of the country joined the workshop. The workshop focused on developing an inclusive curriculum for the library.



### “LIBRARY FOR ALL: DELIVERING THE RIGHT TO READ”

Akam hosted Free Libraries Network's 'Library for All: Delivering the Right to Read', a three day residential workshop in Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati. 30 participants from 5 states in India participated in this three day residential workshop. In this workshop, policy development for free libraries in India is one of the main aspects.



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# PROGRAMMES AT AKAM

## YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Youth Exchange Program is an initiative to build young leaders in the educational institutions where the leaders from Drishti Collective handhold the leaders from the educational institutions. We have conducted a 2 days program on leadership development at Dispur College on 12th June, 2023 and Tinsukia College on 2nd and 3rd June 2023. It was facilitated by the leaders of Drishti Collective where sessions were based on identification of issues, community mobilization, stakeholder involvement and advocacy. These programs have been the medium to carry forward gender justice around the educational institutes.



## COLLEGE OUTREACH PROGRAMS

College outreach programs are one of the important ways to create awareness in the educational institutions so that the educational institution becomes a safe space for the community. We and Drishti: A Queer Collective together mobilised more than 12,000+ youths within the colleges and Universities of Assam on Gender Sensitization. These outreach programs helped to build notions of gender beyond binary in the educational institutes from different parts of Assam.



## Q-DRISHTI : SUMMER SCHOOL ON GENDER

Within the premises of Chandraprabha Saikiani Feminist Library and Resource Centre, a five days extensive workshop on gender and sexuality beyond binary was organised from 23rd June, 2023 to 27th June, 2023. It is a queer youth leadership workshop. The workshop focuses on building vivid perspectives on gender and sexuality beyond binary among the youths of assam. Youths from different parts of Assam participated in the workshop. Every session was based on gender, sexuality, patriarchy, masculinity, social exclusion, intersectionality, relevance of feminism and legal rights.

**Dr. Anita Boruah, Dr. Pranjali Buragohain, Dr. Mayuri Sharma Borua, Indranee Kalita, Dr. Debojanee Borah** were invited as the guest resource persons for the workshop. 23 participants across Assam joined the workshop.



# EVENTS AT CHANDRAPRABHA SAIKIANI FEMINIST LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTRE

## YOUTH LED COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS:

- A three day workshop on queering desires was held at the Chandraprabha Saikiani Feminist Library & Resource Centre from 20th April, 2023 to 23rd April, 2023. The session of this workshop was Queering Desires: Rongali and Rainbows, storytelling and creating writing workshop on Queering Desires. Deepjyoti Bhatta and Barnali Nath Dowerah were the guest resource persons for this workshop. 12 participants across Dibrugarh joined the workshop.
- Conversation on Equal Marriage Rights Law, Debate, Dialogue by Rituparna Borah, Co - founder of Nazariya.
- Conversation on fulbright Scholarship & PhD in US by Christian Morgan James.



- Exploring Queer Story through objects by Rishav Thakur, PhD Scholar at Columbia University
- Crocheting Session by Darshana Konwar, young entrepreneur.

# EVENTS AT CHANDRAPRABHA SAIKIANI FEMINIST LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTRE

## YOUTH LED COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS:

- Conversation on Practicing Ethics, Care & Solidarity in Research by **Dolly Kikon**, Noted Anthropologist, University of Melbourne.
- A conversation on Sexual Harassment at Workplace: Insights into Academic Spaces by **Dr. Madhumita Purakayastha**, H.O.D of English Department, Dibrugarh Hanumanbox Surajmal Kanoi College.
- A webinar with **Dr. Bhargabi Das**, Assistant Professor, Rural Management, Shiv Nadar University on M.A in Rural Management, 2024-2026, Shiv Nadar University.
- Crafting Session by **Darshana Konwar** and **Sumu Borgohain**, young entrepreneurs.
- Crafting Session by **Sumu Borgohain**, a young entrepreneur.



## KITAPOR XOITE ADDA: (A DISCUSSION WITH BOOKS)

31th May, 2023 - Book Reading Session with Ratna Bharali Talukdar, Author, Journalist.

5th November,2023- Conversation of an Assamese Book " camouflaged" by Juri Borah Borgohain.

9th December,2023- A Conversation on the Book 'Public Secrets of Law' by Dr. Amrita Pritam Gogoi(16 Days of Activism Against Gender- Based Violence)



## A COMMUNITY SPACE

Chandraprabha Saikiani Feminist Library & Resource Centre is a community resource centre. Community people celebrate festivals to feel togetherness. Community utilise the resource centre when they need it. Community can find information, materials and have discussions on different topics. The events by community are mentioned below:



- **Celebration on Rainbow Rongali Bihu Festival at the Chandraprabha Saikiani Feminist Library & Resource Center**
- **Poster Making Event for Dibrugarh Pride Walk**
- **Inauguration of the new Space**
- **Celebration of Queer Diwali**
- **Post Christmas and Pre New Year Celebration**
- **Queer Bihu Celebration, Open Mic and Launching of the Queer Helpline Number**
- **Celebration of Love**

# CAMPAIGNS AT AKAM PART OF ONE BILLION RISING - RISE TO FREEDOM IN UPPER ASSAM

The observation of One Billion Rising started in Dibrugarh from 12th March. 2024. The theme of our OBR is "Rise for Freedom with Cross Movement Solidarity ( একা, সাথীনতো আক অধিকাব)." People from various movements and educational institutes stand in solidarity with Akam Foundation against Gender based Violence. Through different forms of art and activities, Akam Foundation raised a question on the silence for Gender based Violence in Upper Assam. It focused on creating space for youth to carry forward the movement. Akam Foundation collaborated with UGC Centre for Women's Studies, Dibrugarh University; Centre for Social Works Studies, Dibrugarh University; Gender Champion's Club, Dibrugarh Hanumanbox Kanoi Commerce College and The Internal Complaints Committee, Manohari Devi Kanoi Girls College. The broadcasting partner was Radio Gyanmalini and Radio Brahmaputra. The activities of One Billion Rising are mentioned below:



- Flash Mob & Drama "SUKURMANI"
- Poster Making Event



# CAMPAIN BY AKAM

## #NOMOREHOLDINGMYPEE

A campaign demanding gender neutral washroom in higher educational institutes in Assam. WASH is basic rights for everyone. Transgender, queer people are excluded in public toilet due to binary way of dividing public spaces.

Our campaign is demanding Higher Education Department Government of Assam to implement a policy by providing gender neutral washroom in colleges & universities in Assam.

We launched the campaign in pride month of 2022.



# EXPOSURE VISIT & CAPACITY BUILDING OF TEAM

- An Exposure Visit to The Community Library Project, Delhi
- An Exposure Visit to Snehjori Library by Akam Team, Guwahati
- An Exposure Visit to The Blue Ladder Trust and Deuka, Guwahati
- An Exposure Visit to The Savitribai Phule Fatima Sheikh Library, Bhopal
- An Exposure Visit to The Community Library Project, Delhi



- Residential workshop on "Gender, Human Rights, Just Governance, Sustainable Development and Women's Empowerment" by Jagori Rural Charitable Trust.
- Participated North-East Youth Leadership Conclave by NFI.
- Residential Workshop on Right to Read by Free Libraries Network.
- Training for Campaign in Launchpad x of She Creates Change.



## OUR TEAM

- Rituparna Neog (she/they), Founder Director
- Nabajyoti Hazarika (they/he/she), Program Associate
- Padma Prasad Sharma (they/them), Community Mobiliser
- Darshana Hazarika (she/her), Program Associate
- Parijit Mahapatra (they/he), Program Associate
- Jyotishman Borah (he/him) part-time Accountant
- Kalpana Borah (she/her), Library in Charge (Jorhat)

## PARTNER

- Surge Impact Foundation
- Free Libraries Network, New Delhi
- Dispur College
- UGC Centre for Women's Studies, Dibrugarh University

## CONTACT US.

## EMAIL

## WEBSITE

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## ADDRESS

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