



WHEN WE DO
THINK ABOUT
CLIMATE FUTURES,
WHOSE FUTURES
ARE WE ACTUALLY
THINKING ABOUT
AND WHOSE DO
WE NEGLECT?

Who decides these futures and whose voices are absent from the decisions?

Whose solutions get prioritised and whose get overlooked?

Local communities are struggling with the effects of change and environmental deradation in their day to day lives.

The effect is exacerbated for young people because rapid industrialisation, advances in technology, and a changing political climate has led to the youth of today to inherit a volatile world.

Yet, their voices remain absent in conversations about the futures they will have to inhabit.

HOW ARE YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING CLIMATE CHANGE IN INDIA?

While decision-makers debate climate futures in distant conference rooms, young people across India are already living with climate change as their daily reality. Their experiences reveal how climate crisis impacts their education, health, safety, and emotional wellbeing.



The harvest is not very good. Dust from the mines affects our crops' growth. This year, the rainfall deficit affected our yields and harvest

The heat is unbearable and pollution is increasing day by day. It's difficult to breathe here. They keep cutting all the trees. People don't think that they will have to do something about the pollution. No one is thinking of our safety.

We have become habituated to the water, but when it floods, we are not able to do anything. The telephone lines are shut; we get extremely bored

We will go home after this. While we are cycling home, the hot wind feels like a slap on our faces. We have to cycle for 5 kilometers in this weather. It gets so hot that we are not able to cycle.

There was water everywhere. I lived on the streets. we used to live in a camp

All the handpumps have dried up. I have to travel farther away to fetch water these days. Sometimes my mother asks me to get water at 12PM in the noon! The need can arise anytime. I make 5 trips on some days.

We were very scared when the cyclone hit us. We were sleeping at night when it came. The whole family was wondering whether we would be alive



A boy in Bhavnagar



A girl in Angul



A girl in Bhojapa



A girl in Nuapada



A boy in Assam



A boy in Kalahandi



A girl in Saurashtra



A boy in Barpeta



Climate change is a bodily experience which is felt deeply by young people.



But in the current discourse, it has come to be known only through science.

This has led to disengaged approaches to public participation that ignore the emotional pain of those concerned.

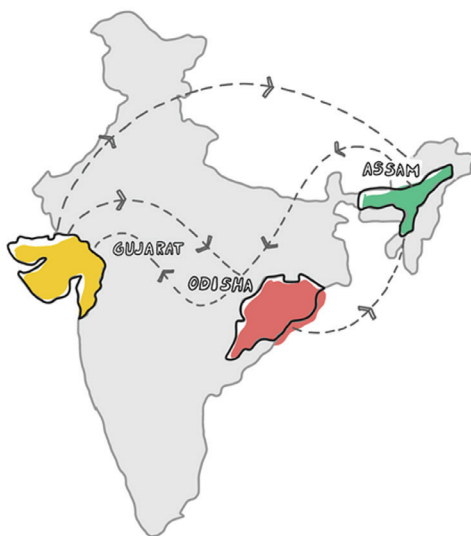
Because of this, young people passively accept the futures imposed on them rather than feeling agency in deciding their own futures.

About the project:

At Quest Alliance, we have grappled with the questions of creating just and inclusive futures for young people for more than a decade.

When we arrived in Assam to understand what informs young people's aspirations, we realised rather early that climate crisis was a lived reality for many young people.

This led us on an expedition to understand how climate change is affecting young people and how they imagine their futures.



We engaged with

600+

young people from
36 districts
in Gujarat, Odisha
and Assam

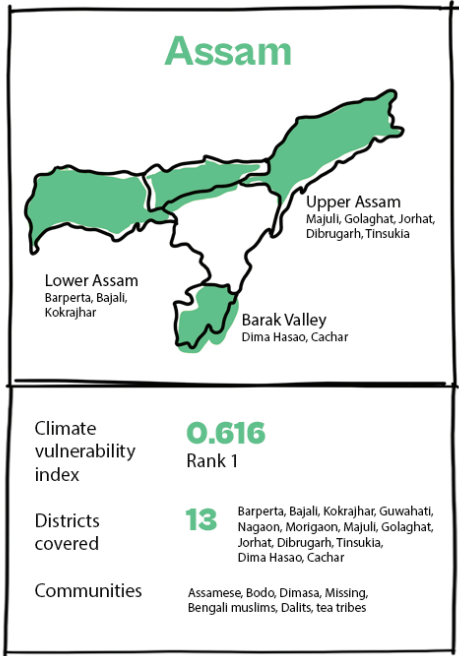
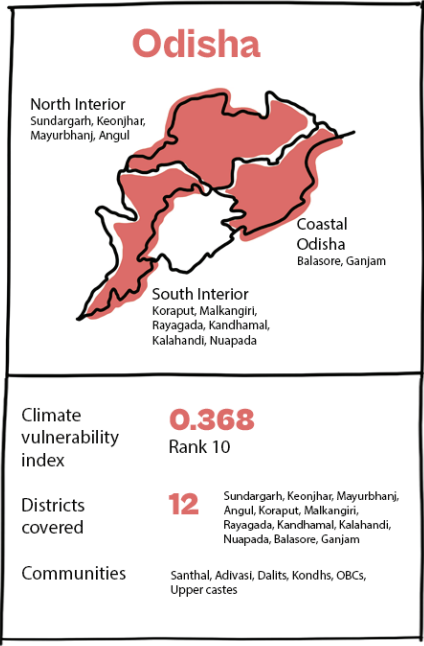
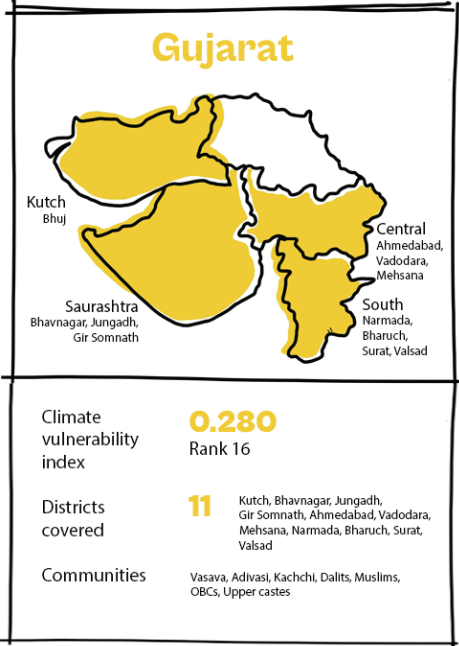
The question of agency

Our work uncovered a stark reality:

Young people, today, believe they have no agency in deciding the futures they want to inhabit. They have to passively accept and adapt to the futures that are decided for them.

The fear of what lies ahead is paralyzing. For many young people, especially those from marginalized communities, the future is a source of deep anxiety. They feel sidelined in discussions about the future, their needs and voices often unheard which elicits feelings of powerlessness.

The regions covered:



Outcome:
Emancipatory climate futures literacy pedagogy.

The outcome of this engagement was a pedagogy designed to aid young people in understanding climate change systemically and imagining their preferred futures.

Our approach, developed over multiple iterations and consultations with young people, is grounded in a five-step process that blends reflexivity, critical analysis, problem solving and creative imagination.

**How do you empower
the youth to move
from a passive
acceptance of the
future to actively
creating an
imagination of the
future they want?**

1

Introduction to futures

Students were asked to think about their own futures and paint a picture of the kind of life they will lead

Observation

There was initial reluctance and discomfort. Students often left it upto fate and said, "how will we know what happens in the future." Once the reluctance subsided, they moved to imagining their personal as well as community futures.



Personal
futuring

Community
futuring

Pedagogical design

challenges

2

Back to the present

Students were asked to look at the present critically. This gave them the space to explore systemic challenges they faced in their present.

Observation

Students went on to mention the problems and challenges specific to their lives and explored them through a critical eye.

3

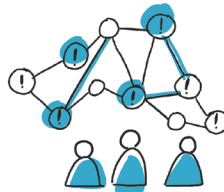
Opening the future:

Scenarios for
alternate futures

Next, students were given fictional future scenarios based on exaggerations of current climate challenges, scientific predictions or concerns voiced by climate experts

Observation

students initially denied that such a future will become their reality. They were convinced that either god or the government will ensure that this future doesn't come true. as the feelings of denial went away, acceptance and resignation took its place, they felt helpless and exclaimed, "we might die" or "we might have to leave".



Staying in the future:

Staying in the discomfort

Understanding the changes and challenges, to move towards imagining solutions in the present

4

5

Moving towards agency and preferred futures

Moving towards imagining adaptations and strategies and thinking of alternate existences (individual, community and systemic)



Observation

Initially feeling helpless at thinking about solutions and inevitably rely on information that has been told to them (planting trees, reducing waste). They then move towards more novel and contextual solutions of their own surroundings and imagine different, inclusive alternate futures. Students also start questioning dominant narrative and wonder why are people not speaking about climate crisis enough.

Observation

Students came to terms with the reality of climate crisis and accepted that this future can exist, they thought about the consequences of the challenges that people might face in these futures And imagined how that world would look like.

**How do young people
move from anxiety to
hope through
this pedagogy?**

ODISHA

In Odisha, climate change is lived through recurring disasters, cyclones, floods, and heatwaves that strike year after year.

Young people here speak of a cycle of rebuilding: repairing homes, restarting school, helping families restore crops, only to be disrupted again.

For many, education and work plans are always at risk of being cut short by the next storm or heatwave. Despite this, they imagine futures where their knowledge of resilience and community care is valued, and where adaptation means more than survival, it means dignity, security, and choice.

Odisha is seen as one of the most deprived states in India!

But when we were asked to wonder, we couldn't help but imagine Odisha's youth thrive

Some parts of Odisha have nothing to offer to the industries that's why they don't come

The youth of the state don't know what to do

In 2045, industries will thrive in Odisha. All villages will be developed into cities. Every corner will have a hospital.

100% PLACEMENT

CAREER COUNSELLOR

Our hopes came crashing down as we were presented with a dystopian climate future, which we hadn't even thought about.

How can this happen? I am sure the government will take care of this.

Imagine Odisha in 2047



Excessive heat

Submerged coastline



Rising sea levels

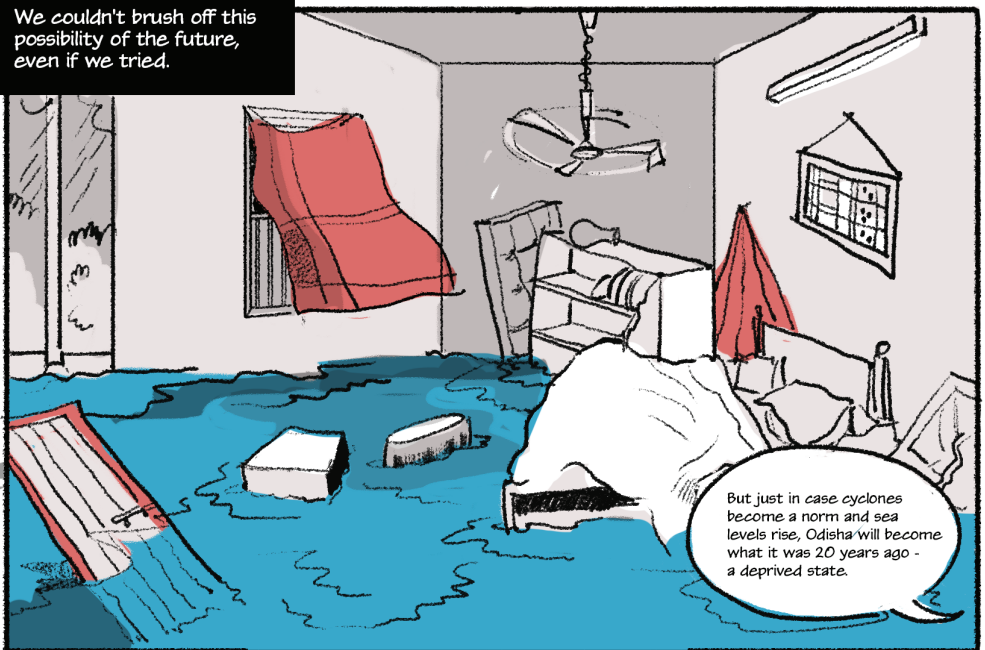
cyclones become a norm

It can be controlled. Our future cannot be this drastic.

When the dissonance settled, we acknowledged that temperature is indeed rising and pollution increasing.



We couldn't brush off this possibility of the future, even if we tried.



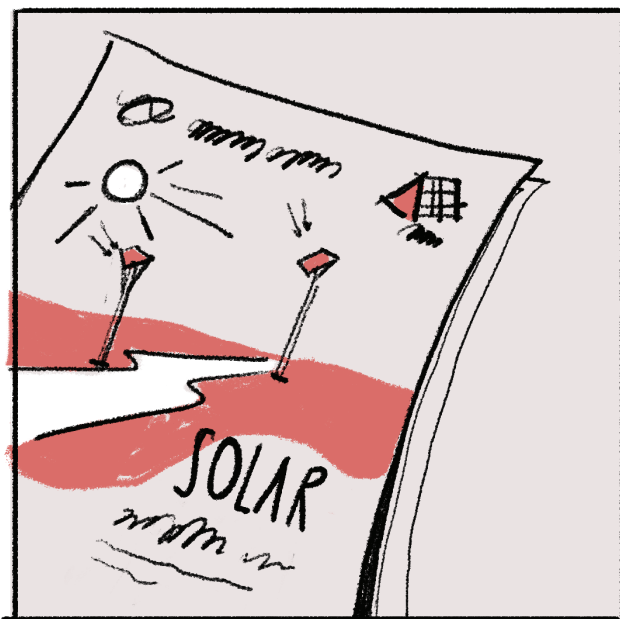


If this is the case, we need to collectively start working towards building a better Odisha.

It's time that we create our own futures instead of relying on others!



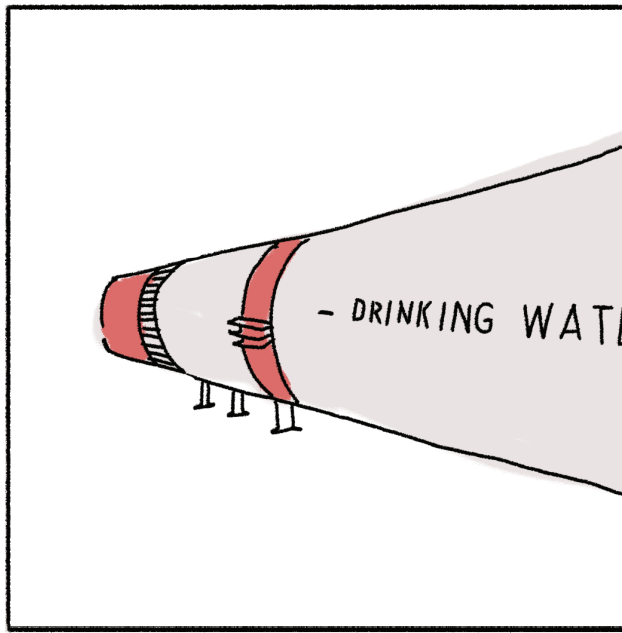
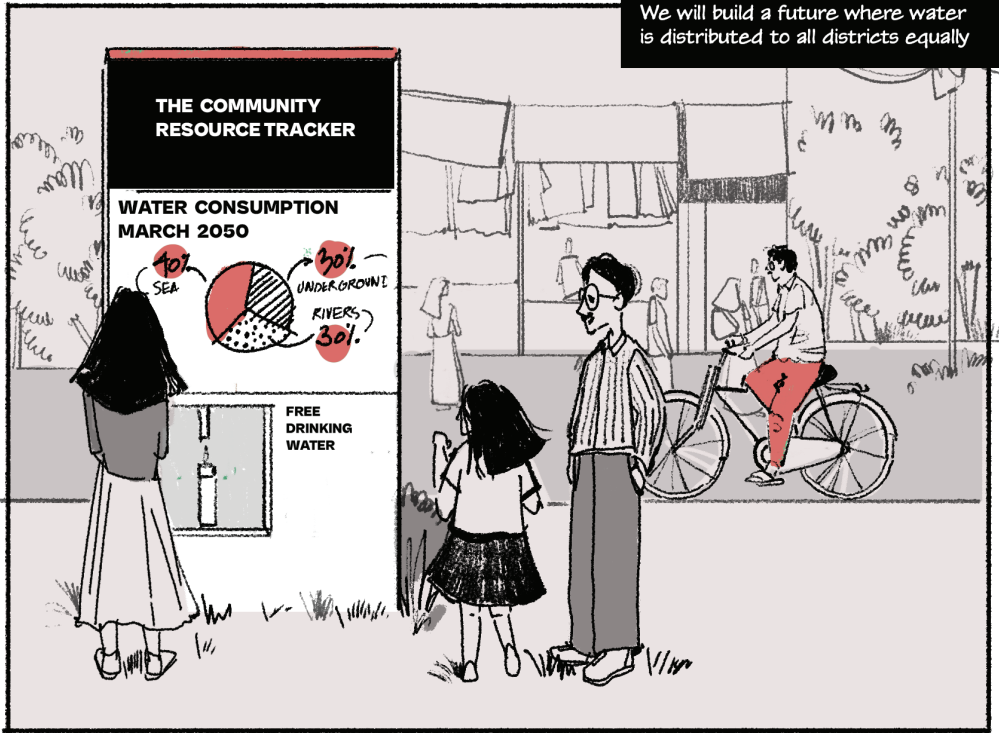
We want a future where
renewable energy is used for
communities' needs



Solar foot path

In Odisha, in 2047, there will be footpaths to make every city and town walkable. These footpaths will ensure that sunlight and heat doesn't directly affect people and communities. The footpaths will be powered by solar energy and will maintain a cool temperature to ensure people do not feel the heat.

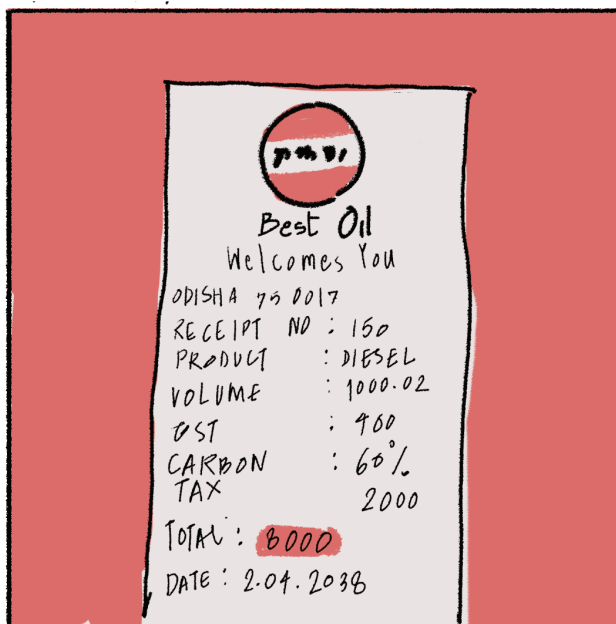
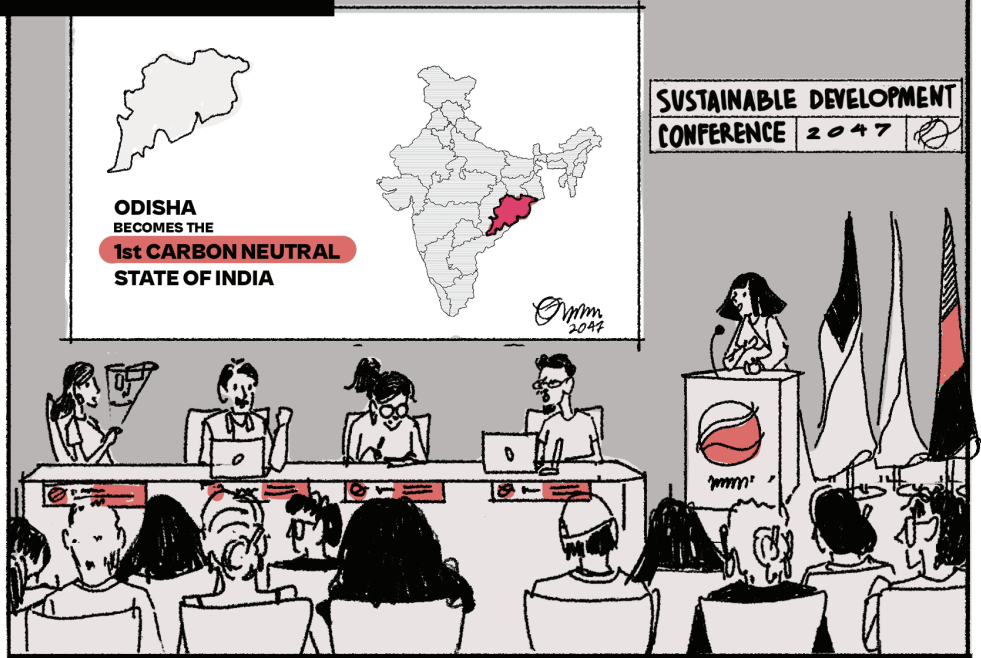
We will build a future where water is distributed to all districts equally



Coastal Water Supply

In Odisha of 2047, there will be water available in all districts of the state. This water will be supplied through the sea and largescale purification plants will be set up in coastal regions to ensure safe and purified water is being pumped in the state. Water will be free of cost and will be supplied by the government bodies.

We want a future where Odisha is a carbon neutral state



Carbon Tax

To discourage industries from continuing mining in Odisha, the state government, under pressure from global climate activist groups and local communities, decided to levy a carbon tax on industries and products that rely on fossil fuels in their production or output. As a result, many industries either shut down or transitioned to greener energy sources leading the land of Odisha to replenish.

We want a future where we
rely on indigenous farming practices



Indigenous Framing Practices

Due to soil degradation caused by excessive mining and deforestation, farmers in 2040s abandoned modern farming practices. Instead, they adopted indigenous techniques like shifting cultivation to grow traditional crops that help restore the soil quality.



ASSAM

In Assam, floods reshape the map every year. Entire communities are uprooted as the Brahmaputra swallows homes and farmland.

Young people here describe their futures as “temporary,” because land, schools, and even friendships can disappear overnight. The emotional toll is heavy, anxiety about exams mixes with anxiety about whether the family will have a roof tomorrow.

Yet, there is resilience: young people also imagine futures where their knowledge of rivers, land, and forests becomes central to adaptation and survival.

Our present is so bleak that thinking about the future seems futile

But one is bound to dream. When asked what kind of future we want to see, we let our thoughts wander.

"Assam lacks industries and job opportunities."

The central government has neglected us not focused on our development.

"We want our town to be the next Delhi or Mumbai"

Our hopes were short lived. Soon, we were presented with a devastating vision and we didnt know what to think.

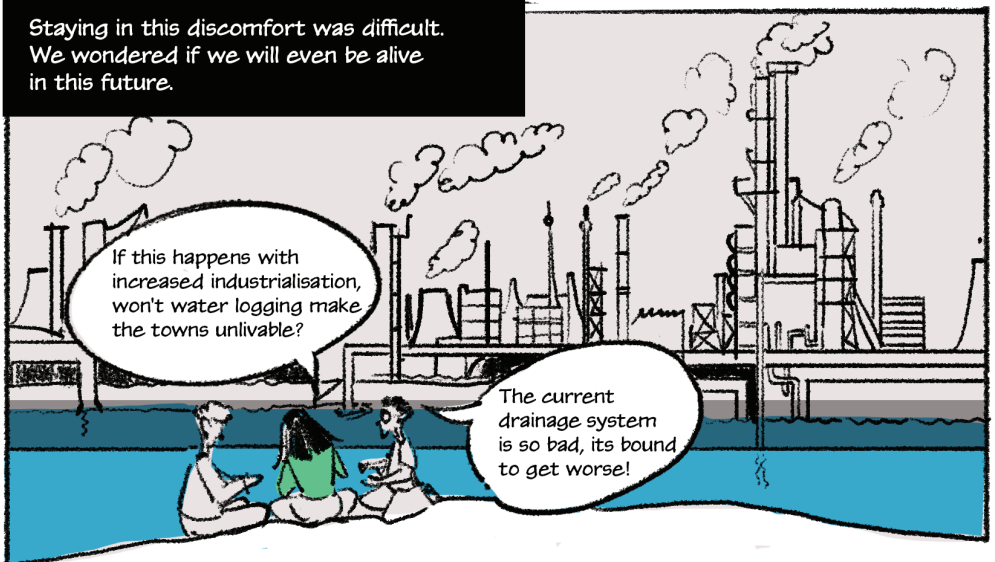
ASSAM
SUBMERGES FOR
MONTHS IN
2047!

"This can't happen"

The vision of a flood hit assam was a hard pill to digest. We denied this possibility because we don't want Assam to get affected.



Staying in this discomfort was difficult. We wondered if we will even be alive in this future.



We worried that Assam will become unrecognisable.

"People from lower assam will migrate to Upper assam"

"This will increase conflict between communities"

This makes us wonder if the government is even thinking about what these floods will do to our futures.

Maybe its time we listen to communities voices and dreams

What will we do with so many industries if floods will engulf us all?

ASSAM TV
2040
BREAKING NEWS
Mr. Kumar 10:50
LOWER ASSAM SUBMERGED

Now, we will show the future we want to create



Resource Bank

Since 2037, the District Bank of Resources (DBORs) of Assam have helped people in resource management during flooding. Each house has a separate account for depositing and withdrawing items as needed. The system uses a sliding fee scale, charging interest to the rich while providing free resources to the poor. The government leverages these banks before floods by depositing emergency supplies directly into family accounts.

If migration is going to become a norm. Why don't we have informed migration?



ASSAM MIGRATION FORM

Personal Info: No. of family members

Reason for migrate:
Option 1 -
Option 2 -
Option 3 -

Migrant preference

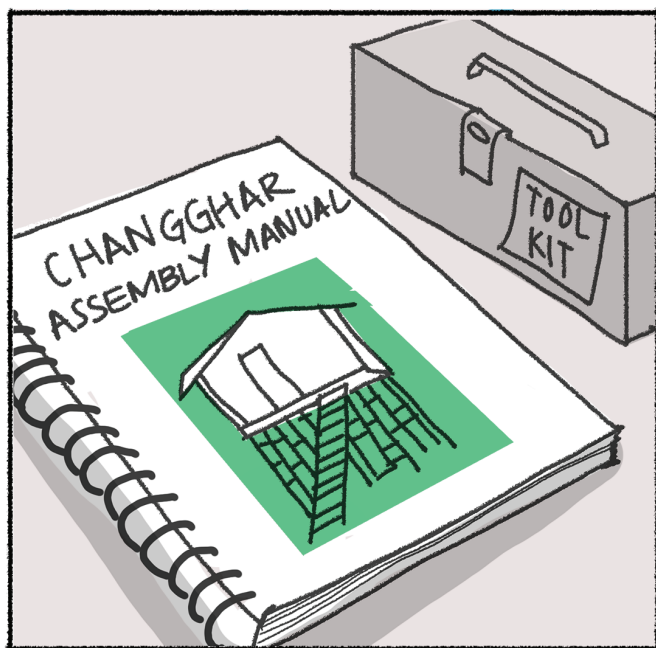
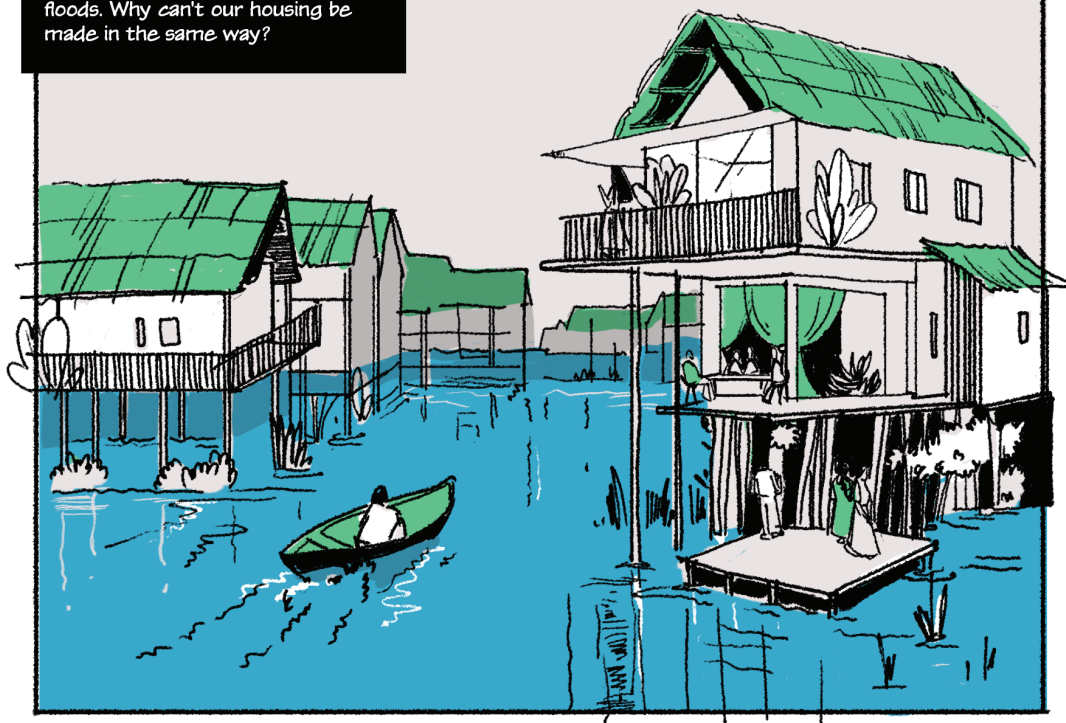
①	Where do you like to stay - Town/City/Village
②	Living cost
③	Employment opportunity
④	Healthcare
⑤	Language preference -
⑥	Weather preference -

Additional details -

Migration Department

The Migration Department in Assam was created in 2038 to address climate-related migration, following the government's appointment of migration officers in 2032. In 2045, these migration officers help people in making informed migration plans. They assist in finding the best way to migrate and appoint buddies at the destination to help migrating families cope.

We have been co-existing with the floods. Why can't our housing be made in the same way?



Folding Changghar

In the year 2045, Assam is underwater for many months at a stretch. Flooding is common. This has made people adapt to a new way of living. In Barpeta and Jorhat, people are living in detachable and foldable houses that resemble Changghars (houses on stilts). These are specially designed to support the nomadic lifestyle that comes with the recurring floods.

We can also show others how we have fun with the waters.



Boat Racing

In 2045, Assam has hosted its 3rd Annual Boat Racing Champions Trophy. The event has gained popularity and people from around the world turn up for this event. Floods have turned Assam's cities into water cities, and as a result, boat racing has become one of the adventurous activities that Assam youth are particularly skilled at.

**Now that you have seen
what young people in
the most climate vulnerable
places want their futures to
be, how would you bridge
the gap between
policymakers and young
people to make their
preferred futures a reality?**

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