

## **Empowering NGOs with Glific: A WhatsApp Chatbot Revolution**

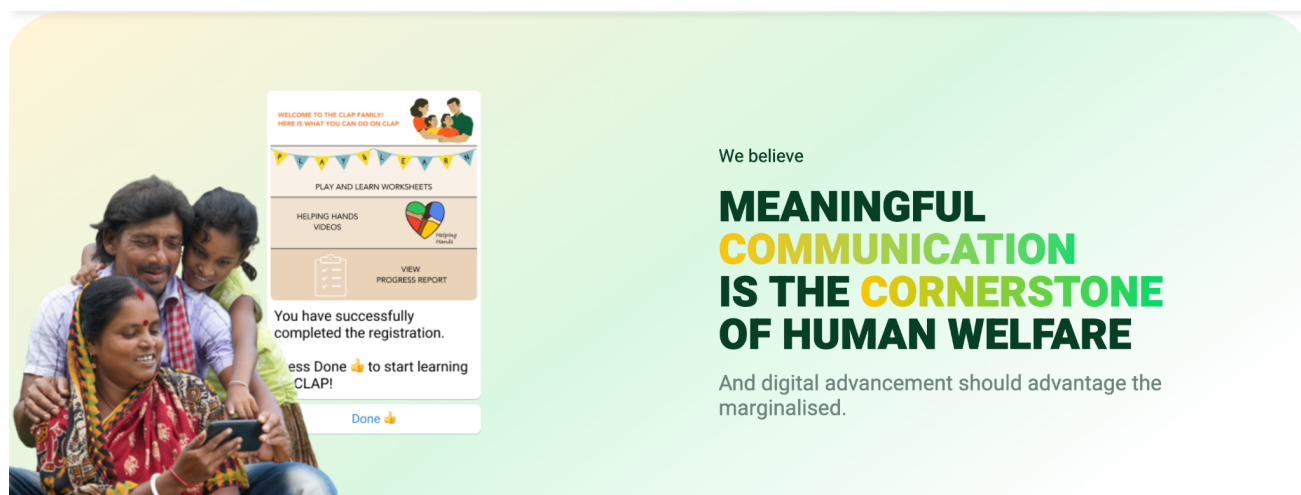
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### **Abstract**

When it comes to leveraging the latest technologies for social impact, civil society organizations face the uphill battle of inadequate tech funding and technical expertise. Glific helps to fill that gap through its open-source platform that enables intuitive, no-code creation of WhatsApp chatbots tailored for professionals in the development sector. In this piece, we dive into some of the how-tos behind opening up technological capabilities to over 100 social organizations in India and growing.

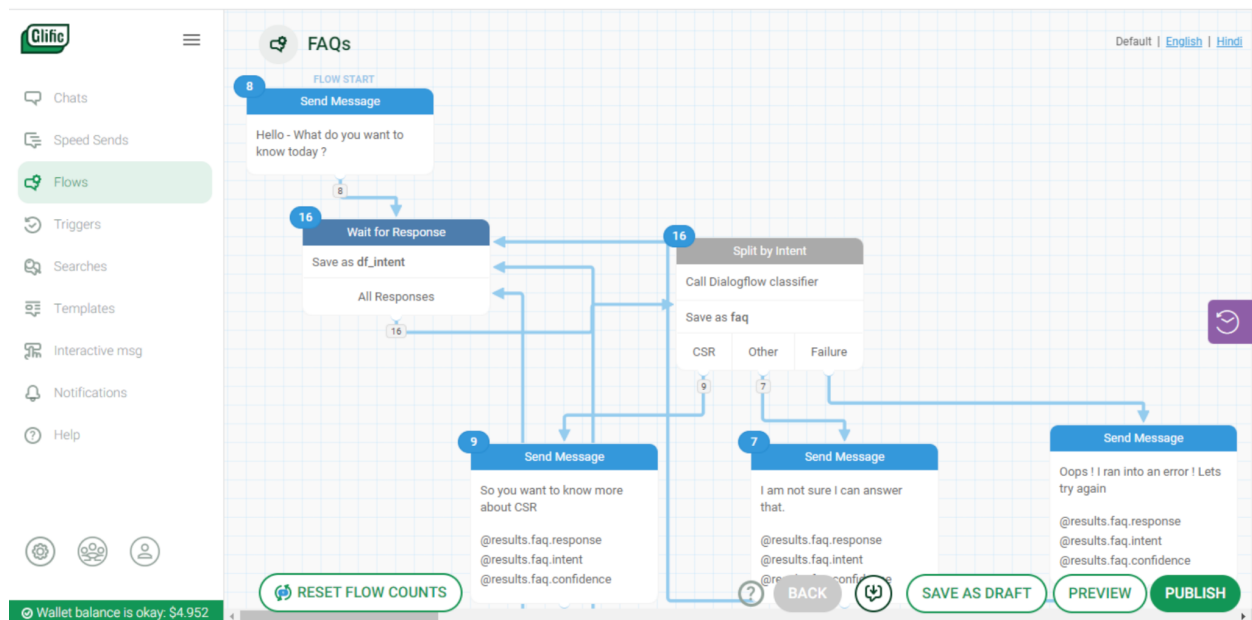


### **Introduction**

Glific is an open-source, two-way communication platform that allows organizations to communicate with their beneficiaries at scale in an intuitive manner over WhatsApp. With over 100 non-governmental organization (NGO) partners since its inception, what started as a project to deliver to the needs of a select few organizations during the pandemic has enabled chatbots to capture the imagination of a linguistically diverse and voice-forward populace. At Glific, we rely on four design principles that solve the challenges of the Indian social sector and have allowed NGOs to scale, leverage the latest technologies in multiple languages, and influence positive social change.

NGOs that leverage Glific are able to gain support within the Glific community of NGOs and also collaborate at in-person Tech4Dev quarterly sprints to learn and share their learnings with others. Glific team's expertise allows organizations to use the chatbot and its technical integrations to solve some of the hard challenges and turn them into opportunities. Due to this holistic approach, NGOs are able to maximize the impact of their chatbot at scale and across different demographics and languages.

Civil society organizations face the uphill battle of inadequate tech funding and technical expertise. With Glific, they get technical support in addition to social sector expertise. Combined with Glific's no-code flow editor, NGOs are able to onboard and start pilot projects within a week at a low cost. The platform delivers the latest in technology at subsidized costs to them, thanks to generous grants from funders to Glific (an initiative of Project Tech4Dev). The organization adheres to its "develop with the community" tenet even today, as inculcated by the founder, Donald Lobo when it was founded in 2019. Glific is an open-source platform that invites other developers to contribute and NGOs to collaborate as they scale beyond India.



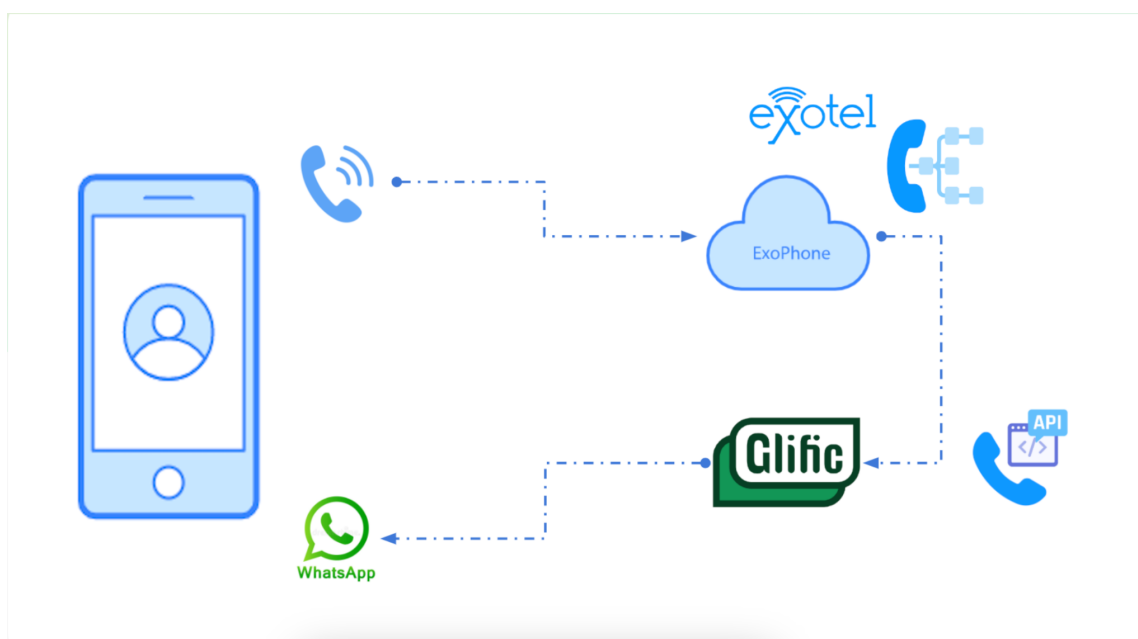
Screenshot of flow editor in Glific platform. Flow editor enables NGO leads to create conversations in the form of a decision tree.

## Impact at Scale

The impact Glific had during the arduous COVID years is a testament to the scalability it can bring for NGOs who work with the remotest of communities. One such NGO is Antarang, an organization that builds career aspirations in youth. During COVID, Antarang was able to impact the lives of over 12,000 students in their higher secondary education years (9th grade - 12th grade). As students switch to learning at home, Antarang leveraged the Glific chatbot to keep

students in the network engaged. Though internet availability is a challenge in several areas, in regions with connectivity, WhatsApp and Glific are able to help NGOs extend their reach.

Another venture, Bharat Rohan, uses Glific to communicate with farmers at scale. It enables them to seamlessly share prescription maps generated post hyperspectral image analysis and provides timely advisories on weather forecasts. Glific implemented the integration of weather predictions through Visual Crossing weather forecast. This allowed farmers to receive weather predictions, giving them ample time to prepare for any adversaries. They also leveraged the integration via Exotel, which provides a virtual phone number, enabling farmers to reach Bharat Rohan with a simple missed call and get needed support in time.



*Illustration showing integration with Exotel, an IVR platform; this is one of the many integrations possible with the Glific platform to seamlessly combine Glific with the present platforms of NGOs*

### **Accelerated Reach with Most Indic Languages**

Glific supports most Indic languages today, which is critical in a country like India, with 122 major languages. This means NGOs can roll out the same automated flow in various parts of India without increasing their manual capacity. Through Glific, NGOs share resources and drive asynchronous, self-paced, choice-based learning in various aspects. This ranges from social-emotional thinking to computational thinking and from foundational literacy to early childhood education.

Quest Alliance runs a WhatsApp chatbot-based program in partnership with Amazon Future Engineers to educate students in Odisha on computational thinking and coding. The instructional learning content uses rich media like GIFs, images, videos, and crisp text to engage the students in an immersive learning experience. The content flow is interspersed with quizzes, activities,

and interactive buttons to keep the flow two-way as opposed to pushing content one way. The program started off on a pilot with about 300 students and has since scaled to 10,000+ students covering the states of Karnataka, Gujarat, Telangana, and Odisha and, thus, in the four different dominant languages of these states. - Kannada, Gujarati, Telugu, and Odia.

### **Impact through Large Language Models and the Latest in Tech**

We can accelerate impact further by combining the power of language access with the latest Large Language Model-enabled technology. Bandhu, an NGO focused on low-income urban housing needs, helps blue-collar migrant workers get registered and find a job or housing using their app. Although it has registered over 95,000 users on its app to date, Bandhu found that a key obstacle to rapid scaling was the learning curve required for a worker to use a new smartphone app. Using WhatsApp powered by Glific made it very easy for users to search for available and affordable housing. However, for Bandhu, managing several flows and translations involved a lot of manual effort and was a roadblock to scalability. To solve this constraint, Bandhu paired up with the Glific team to incorporate Jugalbandi, an open-source platform that combines the power of ChatGPT and language translations (through Bhashini). This boosted Bandhu's new registrations by 20%. Bandhu is looking to scale up to 12 major cities now, thanks to the accelerated ability to reach users in any language anywhere in India.

### **Platform to Influence Social Change**

When designed right, tech platforms hold a powerful promise for activating agency on a large scale by responding quickly and effectively to social challenges. Reap Benefit works towards uplifting the youth and motivating them to be the change-makers in their society. They segmented the user persona and geography of their community and used it to nudge their users strategically. Such targeted nudging has led Reap Benefit to take significant steps toward its mission of activating young people across India to become change-makers in their local neighborhoods. Reap Benefit recently celebrated reaching 100,000+ citizens on their platforms.

Chatbots also allow the creation of secure spaces for individuals who may not otherwise have one. It's a forum to discuss their problems or ask questions related to puberty, menstrual hygiene, mental health, and many other sensitive issues. End-to-end WhatsApp encryption coupled with private spaces for beneficiaries makes it less intimidating for someone to ask questions or have a conversation rather than doing so in person.

As AI and other technologies continue to evolve at an exponential pace, we need more of us building accessible, open-source digital public goods so that civil society organizations can leverage their power for impact. In the last three years, we've seen a large demand for such support in India's development sector, with more than 100 organizations now part of Glific's community. We need to grow this further and keep lowering the barriers to entry.

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