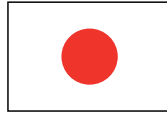




United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Japan
Funds-in-Trust

Good Practice Stories on Education for Sustainable Development in India



Presented by

Alka Tomar, Senior Consultant

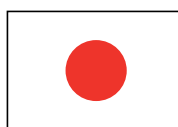
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Acknowledgement

This Project, "Good Practice Stories on Education for Sustainable Development in India", is aligned with UNESCO's Global Action Plan (GAP) on ESD. The GAP is designed to sustain the momentum on ESD after 2014 that was created by the UNESCO World Conference on ESD, held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, from November 10-12, 2014.

The document would not have been possible but for the enlivening interaction with and contribution of the many organisations and people who have contributed to the short listing of the 15 project story ideas and writing of the final five stories from the projects selected.

Those who were contacted at the outset to prepare the short list and those with whom further interactions took place for the five chosen projects are equally acknowledged for enriching and adding to the knowledge of sterling ESD initiatives across India. UNESCO acknowledges that it was tough to pick just five from the wealth of ESD good practices showcased in the short list of 15.

Towards this project, we warmly acknowledge the support and cooperation of: Dr Vinod B. Mathur, Director, Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and Mr Bhumesh Singh Bhadouria, Project Associate, WII; Mr Pramod Sharma, Programme Coordinator, Paryavaran Mitra, Centre for Environment Education (CEE) and Ms Annie Gregory, Programme Officer, Paryavaran Mitra Secretariat, CEE; Ms Mita Nangia Goswami, Director-Environment Education Division at World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India, Mr Krishnendu Bose, filmmaker and founder Earthcare Outreach Trust - ECO, Facilitator of the Participatory Video (PV) Workshop in the Sunderbans, Mr Shantanu Gayen, Principal, Dhablat Laxman Parabesh School, Sagar Islands, Sunderbans; Ms Rita Banerji, filmmaker and Head, Dusty Foot Productions, Ms Payal Molur, Wildlife Educator and Head, Go Wild Workshops, Mr Sanjay Sondhi, Founder-Trustee Titli Trust; Ms Ranjana Saikia, Director, Educating Youth for Sustainable Development, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI); also from TERI, Ms Livleen K Kahlon, Fellow, Ms Supriya Gulati, Research Associate Educating Youth for Sustainable Development and Ms Supriya Singh, Fellow, Educating Youth for Sustainable Development; Mr Rohit Kumar, Vice-President, Marketing, Zee Media; Dr Asad R. Rahmani, Director, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), India, Dr Deepak Apte, Chief Operating Officer, BNHS and Ms Neha Sinha, Conservationist, BNHS; Dr Ganesan Balachander, Director, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Mr Niraj Kakati, Coordinator, WHBPI-Assam ATREE; Prof P S Ramakrishnan, UGC Emeritus Professor and Dr K. G Saxena, School of Environment Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University; Ms Vijaya Sharma from Centre for Environment Communication (CEC) who has been instrumental in profiling the young leaders, and last but not the least, from UNESCO, Mr Bernard Combes, Information Officer –

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Our heartfelt appreciation for the commendable work being carried on by the mainstay of our project, the Young Green Leaders - Anushka, Tshetsholo, Kewekhrozo, Harshita, Dinesh, and the 10 children from Dhablat Laxman Parabesh School Sagar. You will meet them all in the pages to come.

Thank you everybody for so readily sending in details of the projects, facilitating contacts for the stories, for bearing with the endless and untimely calls for inputs to make the stories come alive, for reverting with little details that you thought must simply be included, for vetting the story like indulgent and watchful parents; to Centre for Environment Communication (CEC) for the immense assistance in identifying, sourcing and authoring the stories.

Our partners have been our strength and pride.

- Alka Tomar for UNESCO

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PROJECT OVERVIEW: BEHIND THE SCENES OF ESD GOOD PRACTICES ACROSS INDIA

Showcase ESD Projects from India

The Project comprises five landmark and diverse ESD Initiatives from India, set in five different locations across the country, and culled from five different organisations - Centre for Environment Education (CEE), The Energy Research Institute (TERI), Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dusty Foot Productions, and WWF.

They span the length and width of the country — from Kukkarahalli, Mysore in the South to Chizami, Nagaland in the Northeast and Bharatpur, Rajasthan in the west; from the biodiversity-rich hinterland of Sagar Islands, Sunderbans in West Bengal to the planned urban landscape of Chandigarh. They talk about the wonderful and inspiring work that young minds have dreamed of, lithe hands have implemented, and which the undaunted spirit has carried forward.

Two of these projects – the Keoladeo WBHPI Story and the Participatory Video Workshop and Sagar Islands, Sunderbans story — have been implemented at UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The stories show how involvement with ESD has changed the lives of specific individuals, inspiring them to become more active in their community. The stories also highlight UNESCO's involvement in and/ or contribution to the project and make the case for ESD as a crucial means to shaping more sustainable societies.

The primary objective of this Project, aligned with UNESCO's Global Action Programme (GAP) on "ESD After 2014," is to raise awareness on the crucial role of ESD in empowering citizens to achieve the transition towards more sustainable societies.

Stepping in after the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan from November 10-12, 2014, the GAP is intended to make a substantial contribution to the post-2015 agenda. It seeks to generate and scale-up ESD action in all levels and areas of education and learning to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

What is ESD?

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. It includes key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action for sustainable development. ESD, consequently, promotes competencies such as critical thinking, imagining future scenarios, and making decisions in a collaborative way.

Methodology: Behind the Scenes

Behind every story is another story and there is one here, too. It all started with the search for ESD projects from all over India. The task became even more daunting as the search yielded so much good work being done in the field of ESD that zeroing in on a few to draw up a short list seemed like being unfair to the ones that were not included.

The next step was to send in detailed emails on the what, why, where, when and how of the ESD Project and then, wait anxiously for the replies. Some replies came fast, the others not so, and a slew of round two mails and calls followed; that done, it was time to officially meet the Heads of all the organisations whose projects had been shortlisted. A hectic week full of meetings, discussions, catching some and missing out on others and then catching up again finally put the seal on the 15 ESD initiatives which would be showcased from the nine organisations shortlisted.

A brief of all the 15 ESD initiatives was drawn up with the story angle to be projected and the crux of the story, with all the partners involved in the project.

The 15 Shortlisted Projects from India

Below are the 15 Exemplary Shortlisted Projects. The ones selected are highlighted:

1. **WII: Two Projects**
 - [World Heritage Biodiversity Programme, Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, Rajasthan](#)
 - World Heritage Biodiversity Programme for India, Manas National Park, Assam
2. **CEE: One Project**
 - [The Paryavaran Mitra Programme in Manasarowara Pushkarini Vidyashrama, Mysore, Karnataka](#)
3. **Cultural Landscapes: The Basis for Linking Biodiversity Conservation with the Sustainable Development in Arunachal Pradesh: The Apatanis – A UNESCO project**
4. **TERI: Three projects**
 - Promotion of Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Education and Water Quality Monitoring in Mangalore, Karnataka
 - [Project SEARCH](#)
 - Green Olympiad
5. **WWF: Three projects**
 - The Whole School ESD Approach in Dhablat Laxman School, Sunderbans, West Bengal
 - [Participatory Videos Workshop, Sagar Islands, Sunderbans, West Bengal](#)
 - Sustainable Fishery Business Model from Gobindpur, West Bengal.
6. **Zee Media My Earth My Duty (MEMD) Campaign**
7. [Dusty Foot Production and Go Wild Hoolock Gibbon Eco Club in Chizami Village, Nagaland](#)
8. **The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) Amur Falcon Project in Nagaland**
9. **Department of Environment, Government of NCT of Delhi: Two projects**
 - Eco Club Programme
 - Anti-Firecrackers Campaign

Once the five final ESD initiatives were selected, it was time to get going. An exhaustive routine followed. Resource persons were contacted immediately, questionnaires prepared, interviews lined up, story enhancements such as images, videos, reports, links sought from the respective organisations. A to-and-fro communication and correspondence with 25 stakeholders from the five stories ensured that all aspects of the story were thoroughly explored and no detail was missed out or inaccurate. The stories were sent to all the 25 for more inputs, cross-checking, revisiting of details. Finally, the series of the five **“Good Practice Stories on Education for Sustainable Development from India”** was ready.

The exercise was extremely enlightening as the projects uncovered astonishing ESD approaches being followed in far flung areas of India, the leaders it was creating and the communities it was sustainably impacting as it channelled the curiosity, creativity, commitment, integrity, forthrightness, and unrelenting spirit of India’s youth.

Hunters were now wildlife educators in Chizami, Nagaland; village boys and girls from Sagar Islands, Sunderbans turned fearless filmmakers as they staunchly defended their vision of sustainability; school children in Mysore, Karnataka turned untiring saviours of their lake; in Chandigarh, Punjab a young girl took the message of recycling to semi-urban areas, and in Bharatpur, Rajasthan the son of a rickshaw puller now aspires to be a nature guide. The one guiding force: the ESD approach being followed in their respective schools and communities which empowered them to make a change in their lives and surroundings so that nature could be nurtured.



THE ESD STORIES: SHORTLISTED AND SELECTED

The 15 Shortlisted Story Ideas and The Selected Stories

SELECTED: ESD STORY NO 1

A WORLD HERITAGE BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME, KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR: WII: A WORLD HERITAGE BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME, KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR, RAJASTHAN: As part of the WII-UNESCO Project '*Building Partnerships to Support World Heritage Programme in India*', a unique initiative of providing 'World Heritage Biodiversity Scholarships' has been implemented in Keoladeo National Park (KNP) under which 50 school going children of park staff and local communities have been selected on a competitive basis to receive a scholarship of INR 500/- month. This site has become the first World Heritage Site in the world to conceive and implement such an initiative. The scholarship recipients regularly participate in conservation awareness and solid waste management activities in the KNP.

Storyline: The story focuses on a protagonist and his family — how the scholarship for him and the subsequent learning has changed the family's life, perception, understanding and appreciation of conservation issues related to the National Park.

ESD STORY NO 2

MANAS NATIONAL PARK, ASSAM: Since inception of the UNESCO World Heritage Biodiversity Programme in Manas National Park implemented by Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), efforts have been made to attract the students and youth of fringe villages of Manas by generating awareness of the World Heritage Site and orienting them towards its conservation. The scholarship programme for the young scholars of these fringe villages of the National Park is a unique programme in this endeavour. The scheme has received tremendous support and encouragement not only from the students and teachers of the fringe village schools but also among the local community.

The Scholarship distribution in Manas brought together forest officials of all the three ranges namely Bansbari, Panbari, and Bhuyanpara, along with students, teachers and headmasters of more than twelve high schools in the vicinity of the park.

A highlight of this programme has been the collaboration of local conservation organisations that play an important role in organising scholarship distribution programmes as well as selection of students in association with teachers and headmasters of the schools. Three such organisations played an important role towards this: 1) Manas Agrang Society 2) Manas Bhuyanpara National Park Protection and Ecotourism Society, and 3) Panbari Manas National Park Protection and Ecotourism Society.

Storyline: A story of one such organisation and its role towards inspiring and raising awareness among students and community on environmental issues.

SELECTED: ESD STORY NO 3

CEE: THE SAVE KUKKARAHALLI LAKE, PARYAVARAN MITRA PROGRAMME IN MANASAROWARA PUSHKARINI VIDYASHRAMA, MYSORE, KARNATAKA

The Paryavaran Mitra programme is an initiative of Centre for Environment Education (CEE) in partnership with Ministry of Environment and Forests and ArcelorMittal India to create a network of young leaders, from schools across India, who have the potential to meet the challenges of environmental sustainability in their own spheres of influence. Under the programme, Paryavaran Mitra Young Leader for Change is a cadre of students involved in environmental action projects focusing on changes in their immediate environment. The initiative aims to develop leadership skills amongst students through experiential learning.

Storyline: Young Leader for Change participant Anushka Kale undertook an ambitious project to conserve Mysore's iconic Lake Kukkrhalli, connecting with Mysoreans through face-to-face interactions and harnessing the power of social media. Her story.

ESD STORY NO 4

UNESCO PROJECT IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH: The Apatanis have a very skilled and a uniquely evolved system of natural resource management in their settled Paddy-cum-Fish (the common carp, *Labeo Rohita*) agro ecosystem. Their highly evolved agricultural system is based on an elaborate water management technology. Apatanis are known to be efficient natural resource managers, having optimally utilised the limited natural resources in their surroundings. But increasing population pressure and rapid changes in land use practices, moving from traditional systems towards plantation economies such as through Kiwi plantations, increasing built-up areas to meet with local needs as well as to cater to tourism, etc. has impacted traditionally sustainable land use management practices. This study is part of UNESCO New Delhi's research initiative on "Cultural Landscapes: The Basis for Linking Biodiversity Conservation with the Sustainable Development in Arunachal Pradesh", in the mountain region of the Northeast India. The project has been an attempt towards building knowledge base on the links between biological and cultural diversity and to mainstream it into practices to ensure environmental, economic, social and cultural sustainability and human well-being of the region.

Storyline: The story will focus on the Apatanis' natural resource management system. The research in the region has focused on linking biodiversity conservation with sustainable development in Arunachal Pradesh. It has documented the traditional knowledge of the ethnic groups such as the Apatanis, with an effort to build a knowledge base on their sustainable use methods and ensure the continuity of methods which promote harmony among mankind and nature.

ESD STORY NO 5

PROMOTION OF WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE EDUCATION AND WATER QUALITY MONITORING IN MANGALORE, INDIA:

The project aims to promote human value-based water, sanitation, and hygiene education, augment provision of safe drinking water and provide sanitation facilities in schools in Mangalore. The programme, developed by The Energy and Research Institute (TERI), empowers not just students but the community to adopt adequate measures to minimise water-borne diseases. Two schools have been identified as model schools where Water Resource Centres are being established.

Storyline: How the implementation of the project in a model school has been able to bring about an attitudinal change in student consciousness towards responsible water handling, hand washing behaviour and healthy hygiene habits in general.

SELECTED: ESD STORY NO 6**TERI: STEP UNDER PROJECT SEARCH IN VIVEK HIGH SCHOOL, CHANDIGARH, PUNJAB**

Project Search is a school education programme by The Energy and Research Institute (TERI) that aims to raise awareness amongst students, teachers, school community and the society, at large, on waste management and active citizenship. A key activity of Project SEARCH is STEP - a leadership development programme for school students. It aims to train and enable young students to become leaders and active participants in sustainable development movement. Designed for students of classes 9-12 from the member schools, the students undergo training in leadership, life skills, sustainable development, and project management. Post the training, they implement a sustainability project that they feel passionate about and act as multipliers.

Storyline: Harshita Saxena's story of going through the training, selecting her team, and as the team leader implementing a green project, thus widening the circle of inspiration.

ESD STORY NO 7

TERI, GREEN OLYMPIAD: The aim of the GREEN Olympiad — initiated in 1999 — is to develop student capabilities to comprehend diverse locale-specific, regional, national and global environmental issues. As an excellent example of a multi-stakeholder strategic alliance with several education boards and government bodies, this examination is conducted in cities, townships, villages, tribal areas, encompassing all strata of the Indian society in its cultural and ethnic diversity. The ultimate goal of this project by The Energy and Research Institute (TERI) is to create an environment conscious, informed, national and international school network.

Storyline: Focus on a teacher-coordinator of a particular school which has been a consistent participant in the initiative. Through the coordinator and a student, the story will trace the mind map of students and the change from low awareness on environmental awareness to the level of "I am a green ambassador for my school". The story would also show how a child's environmental education can impact the family and community around the child.

ESD STORY NO 8

WWF: THE WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH (WSA), DHABLAT LAXMAN PARABESH SCHOOL, SAGAR ISLANDS, WEST BENGAL: A WWF India project from West Bengal, it is an example of the WSA as observed in Dhablat Laxman Parabesh School where the parent-community works closely with the school. A former student started a bio-fertiliser distribution business which now provides his community with a sustainable product through a sustainable business model.

Storyline: The story will map the individual's entrepreneuring spirit and its successful implementation buoyed by the ESD tool; it will also show the community benefiting from the sustainable product manufactured.

SELECTED: ESD STORY NO 9**WWF: PARTICIPATORY VIDEOS WORKSHOP, DHABLAT LAXMAN PARABESH SCHOOL, SAGAR ISLANDS, WEST BENGAL**

Initiated by the WWF, a Participatory Video Workshop was offered by award-winning filmmaker Krishnendu Bose to students from Dhablat Laxman Parabesh School, Sagar Islands, Sunderbans in West Bengal. Ten students were taught the basics of filmmaking and handling the camera, and were asked to make films on themes such as trees in their village, the people of their village and their lifestyles, and current environmental challenges around them. Making the movies enabled them to look into various environmental issues more intently, to hone their research and decision-making abilities, and present their views on how ESD has changed their lives.

Storyline: How ESD has opened up a new window of learning on environmental issues and the use of filmmaking as an enlightening tool and a career option for 10 students, living in the backwaters of the Sunderbans.

ESD STORY NO 10

WWF: SUSTAINBLE FISHERY BUSINESS MODEL, GOBINDPUR, WEST BENGAL: From Gobindpur, West Bengal, comes another story of a WWF Project, where communities have taken up fishery as a green (sustainable) business. In 2009, cyclone Aila destroyed their traditional livelihoods. It, therefore, became necessary for the people to seek alternative means of subsistence. WWF organised trainings in response to their request for alternative livelihood means. The participants learnt how to raise fresh-water prawns and compatible fish in their ponds. Almost all households have adopted this sustainable practice. While for some it is a new business, others have adopted new techniques for greater productivity and sustainability.

Storyline: The story will narrate from an individual's point of view how the community has taken up the sustainable practice to generate profits for themselves.

ESD STORY NO 11

ZEE MEDIA MY EARTH MY DUTY (MEMD): Zee Media's MEMD was born in 2010. Since then Zee Media has been conducting the MEMD tree plantation programme – Earth Festival. In a unique initiative, Zee Media has harnessed its resources and reach to bring on a single platform organisations such as Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), the Eco Task Force (ETF), youth organisations such as Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme (NSS), National Youth Corps (NYC), Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to carry out cross-country plantation activities on an unprecedented scale. In 2014, the campaign planted more than 10 lakh saplings across India; till date the campaign has planted more than 1.8 crore trees. Heritage sites such as Qutub Minar, Purana Quila, Red Fort, Taj Mahal, and Hansi Fort were sites of tree plantation in MEMD 2014. The programme is an amalgam of raising awareness through media and implementing the knowledge to conserve environment.

Storyline: The story will focus on the person behind this movement. How a 24X7 news channel has used ESD's diverse approaches as a tool to raise mass awareness on environmental issues, mobilise partners, and put the organisations and communities into action by planting trees countrywide in partnership with local organisations/ communities. The campaign is a unique example of a contemporary approach by a media house in furthering environmental causes and promoting sustainable living.

SELECTED: ESD STORY NO 12**DUSTY FOOT PRODUCTION AND GO WILD HOOLOCK GIBBON ECO CLUB IN CHIZAMI VILLAGE, NAGALAND**

This project is a window to wildlife education in Northeast India. An eco-club programme was initiated with the help of North East Network (NEN) in collaboration with Dusty Foot Production, Go Wild and Titli Trust. Under a three-year programme, children were taught various aspects of wildlife using Under the Canopy biodiversity manual, field training, creative writing, and video and photography documentation. There are 20 children in each batch. In Chizami Village of Phek district in Nagaland, the children chose Project Hunt as their topic, which comprised a survey on different aspects of hunting in the village. This would serve as a baseline study for any communication work to be done in the future to ban hunting. Along with the children two local boys were also intensively trained, so that they could continue the programme in their community without the aid of external resource people.

Storyline: The story is told through the two local boys, now trainers. Their natural connect with the community coupled with the training can influence future generations to give up hunting and work towards conserving wildlife.

ESD STORY NO 13

BNHS AMUR FALCON PROJECT: The aim of the project was to stop hunting of wild Amur falcons amongst villagers from Pangti and Sungro villages in Nagaland. After discussions with the community, it was decided to inculcate a set of affirmative conservation values

through education. The goal was teaching an appreciation of nature and values of sustainable development, the balance of nature, and thresholds which may be breached in species populations if indiscriminate and unsustainable hunting is carried out. The project contributors were Nagaland Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation Trust (NWBCT), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Birdlife International, Raptor Research and Conservation Foundation (RRCF) and Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT). Patron: Nagaland Forest Department.

Storyline: The story will narrate how, using a range of customised educational material, the project reaches out to adults, who would train children. The impact: How from an estimated 150,000 Amur Falcons hunted in 2012, none were hunted in the 2013 migratory season.

ESD STORY NO 14

ECO CLUB PROGRAMME BY THE GOVERNMENT OF NCT OF DELHI: Under the Department of Environment, 100 lead schools are chosen from 2000 schools running the eco-clubs. The Eco Club Project organises several programmes. One among these is the Vacation Programme on Environment Resources organised by the Department of Environment with the help of Aravali Foundation for Education (AFE) for the eco club students every year. About 80 students (40 Govt. and 40 Pvt.) of Classes 8 and 9 are selected through a competitive process; those selected are then trained intensively on the various aspects of the environment in Delhi and also trained beyond the city limits in March, after the completion of their final exams.

Storyline: The story will focus on the Vacation Programme and look at the outcome of the training which harnesses ESD as the tool and how such learning has led to a positive impact on the students, their community, and the environment.

ESD STORY NO 15

ANTI-FIRE CRACKERS CAMPAIGN (under the ECO CLUB PROGRAMME RUN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF NCT OF DELHI): The "Say No To Crackers" campaign is conducted every year on the occasion of Diwali (the festival of lights) with the full support of the citizens of Delhi, especially the school children through the eco-clubs. The campaign, which began in 1997, employs street plays, advertisements, and posters to spread awareness on the smoke and noise pollution caused by the bursting of the crackers. A year after the drive was initiated, air pollution data showed a 50 per cent reduction in major air pollutants in several areas as a result of the campaign. According to the Delhi Pollution Control Committee which monitors the air and noise pollution levels on Diwali, there has not been much increase in air and noise pollution since the launch of Delhi government's anti-cracker campaign.

Storyline: The story will focus on the efforts of students of a particular school who have made the campaign one of the success stories of the Department of Environment. The spirit of Bhagidari (A Citizen-Government Partnership in governance launched in January 2000 by the Government of Delhi NCT) has been a guiding factor behind the success of the innovative campaign.

The Five Selected Stories

Presenting the ESD stories that shine the light on a sustainable tomorrow:

1. **WII:** World Heritage Biodiversity Programme, Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, Rajasthan
2. **CEE:** The Save Kukkarahalli Lake Paryavaran Mitra Programme in Manasarowara Pushkarini Vidyashrama, Mysore, Karnataka
3. **TERI:** STEP under Project Search in Vivek High School, Chandigarh
4. **WWF:** Participatory Videos Workshop, Dhablat Laxman Parabesh School, Sagar Islands, Sunderbans
5. **Dusty Foot Production and Go Wild** Hoolock Gibbon Eco Club in Chizami Village, Nagaland



THE WHBPI KEOLADEO SCHOLARSHIP STORY: HERE DREAMS COME TRUE

Wildlife Institute of India-UNESCO Project 'Building Partnerships to Support UNESCO's World Heritage Programme in India'

"I am a labourer, a rickshaw puller. I am not educated, but I have been working hard to ensure that at least my children get good education." Parmanand has three children. The eldest daughter was married off in January 2014. The youngest son, Pushpendra, now studying in Class 9, wants to become a cricketer.

The second son, Dinesh, now in his first year of graduation has secured the 4th rank in the state of Rajasthan in the veterinary examination. Parmanand's voice is full of pride as he speaks of Dinesh's achievement. Dinesh has dreams of becoming a guide at the Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, Rajasthan. He knows the nuances of the various birds in the park – the differentiating plumage of the males and females, what their chirps indicate, the types of plants.

But this would not have been Dinesh's dream, nor the sporting one of his brother's, had it not been for a scholarship and introduction to the world of nature which changed the course of his and his family's life. When Dinesh was in Class 10, studying at the Rajkiya Ucchh Madhyamik Vidyalaya in Mallha, people came to his school with information about the World Heritage Biodiversity Scholarship. So what was this scholarship all about?

The pioneering and landmark scholarship was part of the Wildlife Institute of India-UNESCO Project '**Building Partnerships to Support UNESCO's World Heritage Programme in India**'. The project is currently operational at Keoladeo. One of the prime objectives of the project was to increase the capacity of the staff and the surrounding local communities to address critical needs in conservation, management and protection of the WHB sites.

Was there the need for protection and conservation? Local communities subsisted on the forest for wood as fuel and selling it off in the market to earn their livelihood.

What was required was to enhance their stake and involvement in the management and the protection of the Park. Convincing the communities to give up drawing wood from the forest without an alternative source of livelihood would be an uphill task.

So, why not reach out to the local communities via their children? Why not help to educate the children and teach them the benefits of protecting the park? Equipped with such knowledge, these children would then become beacons for their families and the community, and spread the good word about conservation.

The understanding would seep in through the informed children that protecting the park would bring tourists from around the world to their little village; consequently, alternate sources of livelihood would be created — ferrying the tourists, setting up shops to provide for their daily needs, and a most empowering opportunity for youth: they would find employment as tourist guides.

Dr Vinod Mathur, Director, Wildlife Institute of India, says, "Although the natural world heritage sites in India have been in existence for nearly three decades, never had the site management engaged the local communities in a manner that instilled pride in the fact that they were part of a process to conserve global heritage having outstanding universal values.

Conservation, in practice, had been more of a case of promoting alienation rather than providing incentives. The World Heritage Biodiversity Scholarship (WHBS) programme changed this situation." This site is also the first World Heritage Site in the world to conceive and implement such a programme.

To reach out to the children and their families, and inspire conservation of the Park, an important component of the Project was the '**World Heritage Biodiversity Scholarship**'. The

scholarship, awarded on the basis of a competitive examination for the children of local communities and staff of Keoladeo National Park, was designed by the Wildlife Institute of India and the Keoladeo National Park Management to positively impact the lives of the staff, their families, and the surrounding local communities.

Showing to the community that the scholarship was not just a financial aid but also life-enabling would help the WHBPI achieve its aim of close community involvement in the conservation of the Park. The villagers had to be convinced that their well-being was linked to that of the Park's, and this realisation would come to them via their children who would be empowered by the scholarship and the training.

Under the project, scholarship was provided to a 100 children. Parmanand's son Dinesh was one among those 100 children who took the examination and cleared it. Dinesh started getting Rs 500/- as a monthly scholarship for a period of 60 months.

Parmanand is overwhelmed when he speaks about how the scholarship programme has changed their lives. Yes, the Rs 500/- did help him to get Dinesh to study further. But, he emphasises, and Dinesh seconds him, it is the

knowledge that Dinesh has gained under the programme that has empowered them. For Parmanand, this scholarship provided the giant leap: that his children would not live the life that he has lived.

On an average, Parmanand earns Rs 8000/- to 9000/- per month. His job offers no further scope for growth. As a guide, Dinesh would also, on an average, earn around 10000/- per month. But for him this would be just the first step. The opportunities for his personal and professional growth are ever expanding. The scope for sustainable knowledge acquisition, infinite. The stimulus: The WHBPI scholarship.

Dinesh's learning has led to a family and community learning – his younger brother, Pushpendra along with two of his friends, Ram Vilas and Chayana, have been to three surrounding villages – Ramnagar, Mallha and Aghapur — to teach people the benefits of protecting the Park. They first met with the village *Mukhiya* (village chief) and spoke to him, at length, about their mission. The *Mukhiya* called for a village gathering and described to them the details of Dinesh's Park conservation work; he urged his people to take pride in the fact that in the vicinity of their village was a national treasure.

The enthusiastic quartet followed a similar process in all three villages: saplings were planted in schools and the spare spaces in villages. Not just planted, but cared for: that the saplings did not wither away, that they were watered regularly, that pests did not infest their plants. All this was done under a silent pledge they took.

When Dinesh planted a sapling near his house, along with his friends, he pledged to the WHBPI authorities that during the entire tenure of his scholarship – 60 months – he would ensure that the saplings would be lovingly nurtured till they were mature trees. He has kept his promise. The medicinal Neem sapling he planted is now a lush, shady tree. Similarly, in the other villages they went to, the Mango, Neem, and other local doughty species they planted are now green shelters giving back to the villages their fruits and shade.

Dinesh's knowledge of the Park has multiplied manifold. All he would now need to do is apply for the post of a guide with the State Forest Department of Rajasthan and he would be well on his way to fulfilling his dream of becoming a guide. Parmanand's hard work, along with the support of the scholarship, has yielded rich dividends — a life changing knowledge opportunity for his son and an immeasurable change in the perception of Mallha and the surrounding villages towards the Park, which is now their pride. Yes, incidents of villagers sneaking into the park occur. But he says: "From 80 per cent in the 1980s, such incidents are now down to 30 per cent, since the Park was declared a Protected Zone in 1985." Bhmesh Singh Bhadouria, Project Associate, Wildlife Institute of India, concurs.

Through the WHBS programme, school children of local communities have become "brand ambassadors" for natural heritage conservation. Their families are now "friends of the site". This unique programme was the first in the world having more than 1000 world heritage sites", says Dr Mathur.

Dinesh's learning has also taught Parmanand a lot — a smattering of English words and abundant information about the Park which he liberally shares with the tourists he ferries around. I thank Parmanand for the talk he has had with me; I applaud his courage in letting his son walk the different path in the face of questions from his community. I tell him, "Dhanyvad (thank you), Parmanandji." He signs off: "Goodnight, Madam."

Story Resources

Download PDFs

- [Go Green](#)
- [WHBPI Scholarship Programme](#)

Still Images: 3

- [Tree as friend](#)
- [Dinesh with the drawing of a tiger](#)
- [Dinesh at one of the training sessions](#)

Dinesh's friends too joined him in his conservation activities



Photo credit: WII

Dinesh, now, with the drawing of a tiger sketched by him



Photo credit: WII

Dinesh at one of the training sessions



Photo credit: WII



PARYAVARAN MITRA YOUNG LEADER FOR CHANGE: THE KUKKARAHALLI CAMPAIGN

Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Ministry of Environment and Forests, Gol and Arcelor Mittal India Project 'Paryavaran Mitra (Friends of the Environment)'

When the Paryavaran Mitra (Friends of the Environment) project came to the Manasarowara Pushkarini Vidyashrama, Mysore, Karnataka, they were looking to groom a young leader from the school who would become a part of their cadre of students involved in environmental action projects focusing on changes in their immediate environment. The programme, an initiative of the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) in partnership with Ministry of Environment and Forests and Arcelor Mittal India, was to be entirely a students' initiative. It aimed at demonstrating to teachers what student action projects might look like and what students end up learning or experiencing through this process. All were asked to submit action plans they could implement on their own, to address local environmental issues.

One among the ideas submitted to CEE was by Anushka Kale, a student of Class 10. Keenly interested in nature, Anushka had been part of the youth club in Mysore where wildlife and environment experts would come and interact with children on various issues related to the city.

Among the topics discussed at the club had been the sorry state of Lake Kukkarahalli, an iconic lake in Mysore and a famous recreational spot. Of late, its beauty was being marred by a foul smell emanating from it. Construction of roads and buildings had destroyed the pipelines carrying sewage away, which was getting emptied directly into the lake, causing the stink. Plus there was illegal occupation within the lake premises. Anushka decided that her project presentation to CEE would be the conservation of Lake Kukkarahalli.

Anushka was thrilled when the school principal, Mrs Harshida Harikumar, selected her project. Once the project was selected, Anushka went to attend a workshop at CEE Ahmedabad, with students participating from all over India. At the workshop she along with the other students went through a peer review and expert mentoring on their action plans and received skills inputs

— communication media and messages, resource mobilisation, project management vis-a-vis academic timelines, etc.

But the excitement of the project was tinged with the apprehension of managing school studies with the project work. Anushka's mother had forewarned that during the campaign there would certainly be times when the project work would be delayed because of factors beyond their control. And there would be days when she would be so busy the whole day with the project that her studies would take a backseat.

So, a work-study balance was devised. Towards this, the mentoring at the CEE workshop helped Anushka much: She would study beyond midnight, preparing her lessons in advance, and when her teacher reached that particular chapter in school, it would be like a revision class for Anushka. It was tiring, she says, but certainly very exciting.

It was the guidance and unrelenting support of the school principal and her teachers, Rohan Ramanujan and Swaroopini, that allowed her to balance the Lake conservation work and her studies with such aplomb.

"Such initiatives and engagement of young people is ESD in action, a transformative process in which the child discovers the self, the environment and understands the context of the issues. Here education is preparing them with skills to live successfully in a fast changing world, in fact preparing them to shape the world," says Pramod Kumar Sharma, Programme Coordinator, Paryavaran Mitra.

Anushka's team comprised students from her school, some also from Class 9. Their first step was to understand people's perception of the lake and its pollution. For this they designed:

a. Visitor's Survey b. Spoke to the fishermen who subsisted on the lake and c. Did a water analysis of the lake.

A promotion plan was also drawn up: Awareness would be raised via a facebook page and an online petition on change.org. They would also meet the important personalities of the city — the local MLA and the Deputy Commissioner under whose jurisdiction fell the upkeep of the lake. Anushka and her team members Amruth Anand, Keerthi Varumbudi, Aditya S. Rao, Aishwarya Sunaad, Sana Padival, Saagarika Shyamnur, Pranav Y, and Aparna S. U. were all set.

The Visitors Survey showed that (*Refer Visitor Survey*) as high as 72 per cent people had noticed the deterioration of the lake and were aware that the lake's biodiversity was being threatened. People suggested placing bins around the lake. The suggestion has been taken and some bins have already been placed around the Lake; more are in the process of being placed. A water analysis was also conducted and the results were bad.

Next on the list of survey subjects were the fishermen who knew much about the lake. Was fishing necessary? They said, "Yes, to stop the lake from becoming overpopulated". This observation has a scientific basis: the less the fish, the less is the demand for oxygen from the lake and the healthier the lake is. Another important concern for the fishermen was if the fish in the lake decreased in quantity, they would have nothing to eat and sell. (*Refer water analysis and fishermen interview*).

Such experiential learning involved in the entire exercise is an important component of the Paryavaran Mitra Programme. Only if the student is fully involved in the project, with the challenges the implementation throws up being handled entirely on their own, will the benefit of such an approach in terms of educational outcome become worthwhile.

Anushka's project highlights that nature conservation is a multilayered and bigger exercise of sustaining a complete cycle of life — from conservation, to earning one's livelihood from natural resources but also returning back to nature to ensure its sustaining capacities by protecting and conserving it.

Anushka recalls the reactions of the people when the team went around cleaning the lake. "At first", says Anushka, "everyone looked at us as if we were crazy. All were accustomed to throwing and seeing people dump rubbish in the lake; but, for a change, here we were fishing plastic bottles out of the water! It was hard work but great fun."

In the meanwhile, the facebook page had gathered lots of likes and the online petition had 450 members in the first month after overcoming an initial glitch in the website.

Not all was smooth sailing for the team. There were hiccups galore. Meeting with the authorities was a major problem, especially meeting the Deputy Commissioner. The team also tried meeting the MLA for almost three weeks, got an

appointment, but at the last moment he had to leave for a meeting.

Then there was the team coordination. At times, some members were missing because they were occupied with some other urgent task and at times, mails were sent but got stuck in transit or were not opened on time. This led to lack of equal participation. Arguments naturally followed. But like the cliché, all is truly well that ends well.

The young team has put into motion the work of getting bamboo bio decks constructed at the lake. These will filter sewage water, prevent the indiscriminate disposal of wastes and keep the biological oxygen demand in check.

Thus, the "Save Kukkarahalli Campaign" became a holistic process to understand the fate of lives and livelihoods linked to it, the sustaining lifecycle, and the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. This was made possible by making Anushka and her team equal stakeholders in the process as they understood the problems, devised strategies to raise awareness, implemented an action plan, interacted with authorities, thrashed out their own differing time schedules and arguments, of course. A medley of things to manage and their outcomes would lay before them the sustainability of the initiatives taken.

The positives far outweighed the negatives, says Anushka. Time management was something she learned hugely from the campaign and has been constantly working on since then; soft skills such as the team learning to approach a person and efficiently introduce themselves was another plus. Anushka also got to interact with a lot of people from various walks of life and the stakeholders of the lake.

She now understands the functioning of governmental and non-governmental organisations. She has been able to influence even common citizens through the online petition, the facebook page, seminars and interactions during the surveys and gain their support for the preservation of the lake.

Anushka has tracked posts on facebook commenting: "So you are kids. What can you do?" When they conducted the visitors' survey, people would look at them with amusement as they asked the questions. Were these kids really serious? Their skeptical looks said it all.

In her neighbourhood, Anushka recalls, the tone in which her work was queried about was not really complimentary. But she would happily answer their questions. This was also a way to make them aware, she says.

Paryavaran Mitra, she says, has taught her to be prepared for any situation. She now knows the right way to approach problems and the right way to prepare for and implement

various activities. It has taught her to accept her mistakes and not back off if failure is the first outcome.

It has been five months now that Anushka has moved from Mysore to Coonoor. Her friends ask her: Have you found a lake there, laughs Anushka. It is early days but Anushka has had some talks with a family friend who would like to organise an environmental activity for children. Nothing concrete yet, but if it comes up Anushka is raring to go.

The project has given her a direction in life. She would love to work in the field of conservation and wildlife study. Paryavaran Mitra has taught her that age is immaterial: anyone can make a change.

Story Resources

Websites

- Facebook Campaign: <https://www.facebook.com/kukkarahallcampaign>

- Change.org Online Petition Page: <http://www.change.org/en-IN/petitions/save-swarana-sarovara-our-kukkarahalli-lake>

Videos

- A Film on Young Leaders for Change: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrJenDT5d-E>

Download PDFs

- Visitors' Survey
- Interview with Fishermen and Water Analysis

Still Images: 4

- Checking water quality
- Save Kukkarahalli Rally
- Kukkarahalli campaign
- Girl on a mission

Anushka conducting a test to check the quality of the lake's water



Photo credit: CEE

Students participate in the "Save Kukkarahalli Rally"



Photo credit: CEE

Campaigning to save Lake Kukkarahalli



Photo credit: CEE

The girl on a mission, Anushka Kale



Photo credit: CEE



THE TERI-TETRA PAK STEP PROGRAMME: GROOMING LEADERS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) - Tetra Pak Project 'SEARCH'

"She was never the one to conform," says Harshita's mother Vandana. A sunshine child, who always knew how to look at the lighter side of life in situations where others would be perplexed, Harshita Saxena once, surprised her teacher by answering a simple situation in a manner not-quite-so simple. The situation put forth by the teacher was this: A man quits his job. Share reasons why he would have quit his job.

Some children said the low salary, perhaps; others said maybe the boss was not good. Harshita said: "Because of the poor hygiene." The teacher called for her mother in school, an educationist herself, and said the answer reeked of attitude. Her mother just let it be. That is Harshita, she says. Always with an out-of-the-box idea. Always happy when seized with a new thought. And always the one who would carry the idea to its logical end, never leave it midway.

The ideas, her father Navneet says, were always very simple, very doable. She would go and discuss it with her friends, and lo behold! they would all be raring to go! A born leader, Harshita?

She has attended two exchange programmes: a Scholarship AFS Exchange in Malaysia and a Round Square Exchange to Chadwick, Los Angeles, USA. Recently, she was part of a Global Social Leadership conference held in August 2014, at Wellington College, Berkshire.

But one of the most cherished and valuable experience for Harshita has been her participation in STEP, a one-of-its-kind initiative for school students under The Energy Research Institute's (TERI) Project SEARCH. She was the first student from Vivek High School, Chandigarh, Punjab to be selected for the STEP Programme when she was in Grade 9. Harshita recalls her EVS classes from Grade 3. The classes perhaps did not hold much meaning for her then, but the learnings seemed to have seeped in subconsciously. As she grew up, EVS became not

a subject to mug up but one which offered infinite scope for analysis, a subject which empowered her to make a difference in her surroundings. Harshita was hooked to it.

So when TERI's STEP Programme II came to her school, she was all charged up. Her mind was flooded with ideas which she discussed with her teacher-in-charge, Farah Shamsi. A practical proposition was required.

STEP (Sensitizing, Training and Empowering Peers) is a leadership development programme for school students. Initiated in 2011, the programme caters to a very important target group – school students. An activity of the Project SEARCH (A TERI-Tetra Pak Initiative), the STEP Programme is fuelled by the desire to create a generation of informed and thinking youth who understand themselves and their relationship with their family, society and environment and can rise above their nationality, class and "isms" to work as citizens of the Earth. Until now, 200 students have successfully completed this programme. The project has received UNESCO-(APEID) and the National Commission of China for UNESCO, the prestigious Wenhul Award 2012 for Education Innovation.

Harshita's first idea was to make white boards out of husk and adhesive but it was turning out to be a very expensive undertaking. She turned to her sister for guidance, and the two soon came up with a viable project idea: Recycling paper to make diaries out of it. This seemed very doable. Harshita's parents supported her idea and Farah Shamsi guided her throughout. Effective mentoring from TERI and Tetra Pak helped Harshita birth the **Revamping Papyrus Project**.

STEP has a two-camp training format which is residential and is held in ecologically-sensitive zones. For Harshita, it was the TERI Himalayan Centre in Mukteshwar, Uttarakhand, which largely runs on renewable energy. It was on April 30, 2012, when after a 12-hour long journey, with 33 new faces, from

six geographically and culturally diverse locations in India, Harshita entered a world of endless possibilities.

“At the camp, each one of us was given our own space to think the way we wanted to”, says Harshita. “The mentors only guided us in the right direction”, she adds. STEP is based on the belief that in order to be in harmony with nature, one needs to be in harmony with oneself. So, at the camp, each student underwent an intensive training with sessions on self exploration, identity, stereotypes, SD challenges, project ideation and management and leadership.

After the training programme, and back at school, Harshita formed a core team and delegated duties to the different team members to launch the Project financially supported by Tetra Pak. The goal was to create diaries using recycled paper; the team started the collection of scrap paper such as card boards, old answer sheets, cartons, extra circulars etc. to create the recycled pages. The scrap was then processed at the papier mâché department in school; that done, the team designed the cover page of the diaries and finally, sent it for binding.

So where or who would the diaries go to? Harshita had an idea. Instead of selling these diaries to generate funds, she thought: Why not distribute the diaries to the youth residing in the semi-urban areas? And why? She says: “We wanted to show them the end product of recycled paper to motivate them to collect scrap paper, recycle it to fashion products and create livelihood opportunities for themselves.” This was very much in line with the ethos of Project SEARCH that emphasises on the 4Rs – Refuse, Reuse, Recycle and Reduce.

Harshita says: “I reasoned that there was no point in simply explaining to them, until and unless we showed them the final product.” For this, they contacted the Pustak School (NGO centre), where they distributed these diaries.

Harshita recalls the moment when one of the girls took the diary and sat in a corner to flip through the pages with a beautiful smile on her face. After a while she came up to Harshita to ask: “*Didi (elder sister), itni sundar cheezen aap gandhi cheezon se kaise banate ho?*’ (Didi, how do you make such pretty things out of garbage). That the idea had fetched Harshita a positive response was for her the biggest reward.

To accelerate collection of waste paper by the NGO, innovative competitions such as who could collect the maximum quantity of waste paper and who could collect it the fastest were held. The winner was rewarded with a small prize such as sweets or crayons.

Harshita was also keen to sensitise the children at the NGO towards environment conservation. She designed games and activities to introduce the idea of conservation and made it a part of their daily routine.

In school and at home, the core team members of Revamping Papyrus put up Tetra Pak dustbins and also encouraged the other students to do the same. Students were also asked to bring the used Tetra Pak cartons from home for recycling. Marketing skills, time management, public interaction, team work — the STEP project has put Harshita through all the paces en route to becoming a leader.

Looking back at the journey of STEP, Ranjana Saikia, Director, Educating Youth for Sustainable Development says: “When we started STEP as part of Project SEARCH in 2011, we were gripped by a strong desire to empower young people with the right values and attitudes to make the right choices as individuals and consumers. We have seen students transform over the one year that we work with them. We are preparing sustainability champions for tomorrow – young people who will be able to integrate sustainability in whatever they do. It is also excellent thought leadership shown by Tetra Pak to support programmes like Project SEARCH.”

Harshita has learnt her lessons well. She has realised that what is needed is to dream big, and have a bigger vision — one STEP at a time and every challenge is scalable.

Story Resources

Videos

- Harshita Distributing Diaries https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bzn_EqYXkw_4WUdCRHZCa2RpQ1k/view
- Harshita Distributing Dairies https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bzn_EqYXkw_4aU5sNFQzZUtFc0E/view

Still Images: 4

- Championing the four Rs
- Motivating children towards conservation
- NGO Pustak School
- Recycling scrap

Download PDFs

- Report on Revamping Papyrus

Harshita Saxena: Championing the Four R's



Photo credit: Vicky Gharu

Motivating children to take part in environment conservation



Photo credit: TERI

Children at NGO Pustak School showing off their diaries



Photo credit: TERI

Recycling scrap at school



Photo credit: TERI



WWF ESD IN SAGAR ISLANDS, SUNDERBANS: TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India and Earthcare Outreach Trust - ECO ESD
Project 'Participatory Video Workshop'

“As civilisations rise, environment falls. This is what we have learnt through the making of the film (*Sabhyatar unnoti shathe paribeshar obonoti hoye*). Suchismita’s understanding of the process of “development” encapsulates the learning of the 10 teenaged children from Dhablat Laxman Parabesh School, Sagar Islands, Sunderbans, West Bengal, who underwent training at a Participatory Video (PV) Workshop, a part of the ongoing WWF India ESD Project in their school.

Under the stewardship of the principal, Shantanu Gayen, the school, supported by WWF and also by the West Bengal government, already has a rainwater harvesting facility, uses solar cookers, sustains a food chain in its school premises and hosts a meteorological facility.

WWF India has been working with four schools in Sunderbans since 2010, orienting them about ESD through a whole school approach (WSA). A seminal theme in the WSA is stoking critical thinking and building democratic competence amongst the students.

“We wanted to delve deeper than just getting the students to green their school campus by planting trees; hence, a filmmaking workshop which would enable them to crystallise their viewpoint about sustainability in their context seemed a perfect tool,” says Mita Nangia Goswami, Director-Environment Education at WWF India.

Krishnendu Bose, filmmaker and founder of Earthcare Outreach Trust, who facilitated the project for WWF India says: “It is not the final film or the video that is important. It is the opening up of the minds to get the children to rethink their lives in the context of the changes that are happening around them, that is the objective of the PV workshop.”

Ten children from the Dhablat Lakshman Parabesh High School were selected to be a part of the workshop. The selection process involved sessions with the children to gauge their perception of the surrounding environment and changes around them, while also trying to assess their ability to tell a story. “The selection is an unfortunate process”, says Krishnendu. “Each child is uniquely creative and I wish all of them had been a part of the workshop, but that is simply not possible”.

A classroom of the school was utilised to carry out some of the sessions. “There would be a bigger crowd outside than inside”, Krishnendu recalls. The onlookers would come up and ask why they were not made a part of the project. At all levels of the workshop, a curiosity was manifest — in the children participating, in the people watching the process.

The children were from diverse backgrounds. Krunamoyee’s family was well off with 30 bighas of land and a two-storied house; Ranajit, who had stopped studying since the past three years due to financial problems, was the son of a cycle van driver; Runa and Suchismita lived with their mother — Runa’s father had committed suicide, while Suchismita’s father had deserted them and remarried. Astik came from a musically-inclined family. His father was a travelling musician, his brother a rhythm pad drummer. Sourav and Arindam took to the camera more than anybody else. They demonstrated a keen sense of framing and shot taking. Though everyone had a go at filming, it was these two boys who did the bulk of the shooting. Bishwaranjan had an astute skill of drawing and colouring. He, along with Astik was mainly responsible for the part of the script, which would be narrated through paintings.

Monica and Anima were the most mature and intellectually inclined. Monica had a very developed skill of writing. Monica

ended up writing the voice over/ script and rendering the “voice” and Anima “directing” the film. “The girls”, says Krishnendu, “were a fearless and fiery lot. If the perception exists that they lived in a village and would be less outgoing than the boys, it was exactly the opposite, with the boys being the quieter and the subdued ones!”

Did they understand what “sustainability” was all about since that was the thrust of the project? Since sustainable development was a part of the school curriculum under the ESD approach, there were children who gave the theoretically and politically correct definitions. But this was not “sustainability.” The “taught” definition was simply a set of appropriate words strung together to create a “correct meaning.”

The facilitators, Krishnendu and Dharma, sat down the children and explained the concept of sustainability, piece-by-piece. Sustainability issues, they were told, were to be understood in the context of changes happening in their lives, how the industrial activity in the village was impacting them and the environment of their village. So what did they think about such development? Their answer would be their vision of sustainability.

Sagar Island is on the brink of a proposed development — a port, a bridge joining mainland Kolkata to their island and power stations are in the pipeline. Tourism and infrastructure development is next.

Suchismita said that she did not want power stations in their village. With power came problems and pollution. This remark from Suchismita was placed in the context of a particular trip to her house by the facilitating team. Her house was powered by solar light, a fact the family was proud about. But the entire journey to her house had to be made in pitch darkness as there were no streetlights. On a cycle van, powered by just a single torch, the team lurched dangerously towards her house. What if the van had overturned into the ditch?

The next day, Krishnendu had a discussion on the necessity of power with the entire team.

With the situation of that perilous journey as the context, did Suchismita really think that power was not a vital need in their daily lives? A heated debate followed. Sushismita pointed out that if power was necessary why could it not be solar power so that there is no black smoke to pollute the Sagar Islands? In their interview to the CEC, Sourav and Arindam also stressed that while economic development was good for the Islands, it should not cause pollution. Renewable energy resources should be harnessed to bring development to their village like the solar lighting they have in their homes.

To the query that what kind of industry would they like to see in the village, the boys remarked: “Perhaps something related

to tourism. Then the village will not be polluted by the smoke from the industries.” Provoking such a rethinking of their lives and the situations it presented was the crux of the PV workshop.

While ECO via the PV Workshop would equip the children with the technical knowledge of making the film, more importantly it would channel their imagination and creativity and their lived experience to bring forth their own stories.

Story telling through one’s film can be a very liberating experience where the camera induces a kind of detachment from reality, which in turn encourages self-reflection. The core of any filmmaking process, ECO uses this to lay out the foundation of its workshops.

A primary objective of the PV workshop was also to demystify technology. Towards this, the role of the facilitators and their approach was crucial. The facilitating team was like a friend to the children — chatting, listening to their anecdotes, witnessing their quarrels; Krishnendu was once made to wear spectacles made of grass which the children made during a story board session because they said, “he simply had to wear it.”

The non-judgmental attitude of the facilitators helped build trust with the children enabling them to open up, reach within their recesses, and share their life experiences on camera. The fact that they would be telling their story, recording issues which mattered to them, and made a difference to their lives was the empowering factor — the camera was but just an elementary tool, as simple as a pen is to writing stories.

The choice of subject was theirs, too. So when they decided to make a story on how the industrial activity in their village was not a sign of development but the harbinger of dark days to their village, Krishnendu asked: Would they be able to defend their story? The film in all likelihood would be screened at their school, and the principal would invite the local political representative to see it. Would they be able to stand up to him when he countered the angle projected in the film? It was their film, and they would own it, was the unanimous reply.

The film was screened to their parents, in the presence of the village head, Sajal Kanti Barik, and also on the school’s annual day; the children were ready with their answers and eager to field the queries put to them.

That courage comes from being able to share a perspective from one’s own lived experiences, and hence, there is confidence in the resources within the heart and the mind to defend it. That fearless and independent thought is what WWF ESD PV Workshop sought to stimulate.

The two experts with the camera, Sourav and Arindam, now employ their learning by making videos with their mobile

phones. Given a bit of economic support they would like to choose camerawork as a career option. The village head would also like such workshops to be held more often as it opens up various employment avenues for the village students. Principal Gayen, also a member of the governing body of the biodiversity board, dearly wants to set up an eco museum and an eco park in the school. The dreams are many.

The outcome of the WWF ESD PV Workshop is the final film the children made and which needs to travel far and wide for the courage and forthrightness it channels. Put together by a group of teenagers, who were filmmaking debutants, living far away from and unexposed to the city bustle, the film is an eye-opening template for all emerging societies who choose

“development” perspectives based on blueprints decided in boardrooms by people who do not know the “kind” of development that such societies need. For all of them “Ajana Deepyer Galpo” is a story they need to really “see” and truly “hear”.

Story Resources

Websites

- Blog: <http://earthcareoutreach.blogspot.in/2012/12/story-of-little-village-road.html>

Videos

- <http://vimeo.com/58776012>

Still Images: 3

- The Crew on a Boat
- Suchismita
- Capturing their Perspectives

Krishnendu Bose (far left) and the children on a boat trip



Photo credit: WWF

Capturing their perspectives: The children during the PV Workshop



Photo credit: WWF

The girl who asked too many questions, Suchismita



Photo credit: WWF



THE HOOLOCK GIBBON ECO CLUB, CHIZAMI: BREAKING FREE OF CONVENTIONS

Dusty Foot Production, North East Network (NEN), Go Wild Workshops and Titli Trust
Project 'Gibbon Eco Club (HGEC)'

“Will you give up hunting,” Seno Tsohah had just asked Kewekhrozo Thopi the most difficult question of his life. Tshetsholo Naro loved hunting in the wild, gathering meat for the family’s consumption, for medicinal purposes, but most of all for leisure – the thrill of chasing down a wild animal and killing it gave him that rush of adrenaline. Would he be able to give it up, completely?

Two boys from Chizami village, Phek district, Nagaland. The same dilemma. Growing up in an atmosphere where elders killed wild animals because they loved the meat, the children followed suit. Aiming a catapult to bring down a bird because they wanted to eat it was, literally, child’s play. Would they then be able to give it all up, forever?

Before the Hoolock Gibbon Eco Club (HGEC) came to Chizami village, there was the North East Network (NEN), a pioneering initiative by Seno Tsohah. The NEN had been working since 1995 to empower women in the Northeast by forming women self-help groups. Seno is the recipient of the Stree Shakti Puraskar Award 2006 by the Government of India, for her contribution to women’s empowerment and development in difficult situations. She has also been the guiding hand in bringing the boys into the HGEC fold.

With the support of the NEN, which had already established a ground connect with many families in Chizami, HGEC stepped in, in December 2010, as a follow up of ‘Under the Canopy’, an education programme in Northeast India, initiated by Rita Banerji’s Dusty Foot Production along with Payal Molur’s Go Wild Workshops.

HGEC started with a select group of 20 children between the ages of 10 and 14 years. Under its three-year programme, children learned about wildlife and environment issues through tools such as interactive classroom activities, photography, writing, and field-based learning.

Several experts stepped in to guide the children. Payal Molur’s Under the Canopy training manual helped to ground the kids in understanding wildlife ecology. Maya Khosla used drawings, poetry, and field observation exercises to enhance their sensory perception. Sanjay Sondhi, Founder-Trustee, Titli Trust introduced the kids to the frogs, butterflies, and moths and opened up a whole new world for them. The children were taught that these were amazing creatures, important to the well-being of their lands and not to be seen only as food. At the same time, photography and video classes conducted by, Rita Banerji, Shilpi Sharma and Sanjay Barnela encouraged the kids to see nature through their cameras and document the diversity around them.

Thus taught, the children also took an oath that they would not hunt or kill animals and eat wild-meat anymore. The idea was to raise a generation which would nurture nature. But what after the three years of the programme? Who would sustain the programme? So, what better way to carry it forward than to train youth from that area as trainers for the club?

And here we come to the story of Tshetsholo and Kewekhrozo. It travels almost twin patterns. In 2010, when they were 21, they joined HGEC. Since they knew so much about the forest, they were asked to join as trainers.

“It was a difficult decision”, says Kewekhrozo, “when Seno asked me whether I could give up hunting. It was my passion. A part of me wanted to join this exciting programme but a part of me was reluctant to give up hunting.”

Tshetsholo was already half-inclined to give up hunting. A particular incident when he went hunting for squirrels and chased on the second day the one he could not kill on the first set him thinking about the squirrel’s mother. A great unease settled upon him. When the call came from HGEC asking him to join as a trainer, his decision was made.

That moment for Kewekhrozo and Tshetsholo was life-altering. As Kewekhrozo journeyed with his camera and took nature walks with the enthusiastic eco-club children, the rich forests, the call of insects, the vibrant colours of birds and butterflies gave him a thrill beyond the hunting experience.

Tshetsholo, after being involved with the HGEC for more than three years now, has learnt how to teach and guide the children, how to run the eco club and conduct wildlife research and documentation. He is adept at mobilising and interacting with the community on conservation issues. One of the most important and new skills he has learnt is the use of a computer.

Now 25, the two have swapped, with equal ease, equipments such as a camera (video and still camera) for the gun, silent now. The children they trained have also begun doing better in school, in the English and Science subjects, specifically. Tshetsholo and Kewekhrozo interact regularly with the teachers to ensure that the children do not lag in their school work due to the eco club activities.

The two have also made a concerted effort to learn more from the external trainers, reading late into the night. The results have been wonderful: The beautiful and informative Butterfly Book, The Bird Book, posters and the newsletter — publications of the HGEC — have all been designed by them.

The challenges and criticism from the community and friends were many. Community people would make fun by ill-treating animals and killing them in front of the eco-club children with lewd comments, "Animal lovers," recalls Kewekhrozo. There were problems, says Tshetsholo, when people had to be convinced about the benefits of the conservation education programme.

Traditionally, the community practised hunting according to different seasons; all would be involved; the meat, though not sold for cash in the market, served as a source of food for the community people. But rampant hunting has gradually led to an imbalance in the ecosystem. Hornbills, which are seed dispensers and were seen frequently by the elders of the community, are no longer visible in Chizami, impacting the growth of a new generation of fruit-bearing trees.

Over exploitation has led to a decline in the wildlife population, making it very scarce to hunt, say Kewekhrozo and Tshetsholo. Earlier, a hunter did not have to go further than 500 metres from the village to find wild meat, but today, to get any game, one had to trek 15-20 kilometres towards the Manipur border, says Molur.

But the HGEC is changing all of this. In this context, a certain presentation of the eco-club children is worth mentioning. Sanjay Sondhi, Founder-Trustee, Titli Trust, recalls: "At the end of the presentation, one of the HGEC children stood up and

read this out: "Do you, our parents, want to join our nature club? Well, we know you want to, so we have written down your names. Now that you are all members of the eco-club, the next time you see a frog, don't collect it for eating. The next time you shoot at a bird and miss, don't be angry, and the next time you see a worm or a snake, don't squish it!" Well begun, it is said, is half the battle won.

Towards this, Tshetsholo and Kewekhrozo have a big role to play. Theirs has been a remarkable commitment, says Payal. "I have seen these two boys get up at 5:00 am and be on their toes catering to the children, catering to their work at NEN and catering to us external trainers till 8:00 pm and still smile and laugh excitedly about the next days programme. I have seen both of them wait patiently with binoculars/ cameras to get that perfect shot of a bird or butterfly so that it can be identified by experts and they can document the biodiversity of Chizami accurately."

Their belief that more and more people will give up hunting and become conservationists is absolute. Tshetsholo (Alo to his friends) has two scientific papers to his credit in the international peer reviewed *Journal of Threatened Taxa* ([Download PDF](#)). Kewekhrozo (or Peter for those who find it difficult to say the name) has slowly begun identifying beetles and dragonflies, both difficult to do as there is very little information on both. Now, Peter has also started helping some fish experts in the area. They are ensuring that there are tangible scientific results to bolster conservation education in the region.

The name Kewekhrozo comes from the Khezha-Chakhesang Naga dialect. "Kewe" means "positive", "khro" means "love", and "zo" means "always". Literally it means: "always love and care for the positive". Tshetsholo is a name in the Khezha dialect (mother tongue) which signifies "knowing to rise up". Literally, it means "acquiring knowledge till the end".

Love always, know how to rise up when the occasion demands, acquire knowledge till the end and strive always for the greater good. That is what Tshetsholo and Kewekhrozo stand for. Two role models from the community and for their community.

The community is in great need of job opportunities, exposure, education, and awareness in conservation and livelihood issues, information technology, and appropriate technology for farmers to help decrease their drudgery in agriculture work. Such opportunities will also motivate them to stop hunting and selling wild animals in the market for money. HGEC has opened this window of opportunity; the boys have looked beyond at the ever expanding horizon.

"Of course, there are still miles to go in seeing a larger change, yet small changes matter," says Kewekhrozo. And the boys are determined to be the change they would like to see in their community.

Story Resources

Download PDFs

- The NEN Hoolock Gibbon Eco Club: Download PDF
- Tshetsholo's Contributions in Journal of Threatened Taxa: Download PDFs (2)
- Eco Club Children in Action: Download PDF
- Rita with the Kids: Download PDF
- Kewekhrozo & Tshetsholo and HGEC Outcomes: Download PDF
- Studying Butterflies: Download PDF
- Tshetsholo Teaching: Download PDF
- Up close Chameleon: Download PDF
- Under the Canopy Training Manual: Download

Videos

- An Eco Club Child Talking about Nature Conservation: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0ByYtSUXgUwV10FJKdkFzZHRkNDQ/edit>
- Eco-club Children Nature Trail: Video <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0ByYtSUXgUwV1VFZMRDF4Y3NLRzA/edit?pli=1>

Still Images: 8

- Birdwatching
- HGEC Class in Progress
- Studying Butterflies
- Peter Thopi: A Role Model
- A Class in Progress
- Sanjay Sondhi with the Children
- From Hunter to Conservationist
- Showing their Project

Websites

- www.titlitrust.com
- dustyfootindia.com/
- <http://payalmolur.blogspot.in/>
- Dusty Foot Productions: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Dusty-Foot.../118489981545808>
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/766285606734803/>

HGEC children learn birdwatching techniques



Photo credit: Dusty Foot Productions

An HGEC class in progress



Photo credit: Dusty Foot Productions

Eco Club kids studying butterflies



Photo credit: Dusty Foot Productions

Peter Thopi: A role model for the community



Photo credit: Dusty Foot Productions

Peter Thopi taking a class with the HGEC children



Photo credit: Dusty Foot Productions

Sanjay Sondhi of the Titli Trust in a session with the HGEC children



Photo credit: Dusty Foot Productions

Tshetsholo Naro: From Hunter to Conservationis



Photo credit: Dusty Foot Productions

Children surround Tshetsholo to show their project



Photo credit: Dusty Foot Productions

Ms Alka Tomar, Senior Consultant

With an experience of nearly two decades in environmental communication, outreach and capacity building, Ms Alka Tomar has been conducting research (KAPs, M & E, Baselines), and developing strategic communication and mobilisation approaches on climate change, biodiversity, water, and sanitation issues. She has specialised in "climate change communication, environmental research and communication". Formally as Director-CMS Environment, Founding Director-CMS VATAVARAN and Director-CMS ENVIS Centre, she has been responsible for project planning, design, and management on various contemporary environmental issues.

As Founding Festival Director of CMS VATAVARAN - International Environment & Wildlife Film Festival and Forum (from 2001 to March 2014), she has established innovative credible platforms for discourses with filmmakers, environmentalists, environmental organisations, media, youth, educators, students, policymakers, corporates, defence, jail inmates, research think-tanks, and civil societies.

Her doctoral research focuses on communicating climate change from Stirling University, Scotland. She is also 2012 US International Visitors Leadership Programme Fellow on "Climate Change and Clean Energy." Ms Tomar is also member of IUCN Commission on Education and Communication.

Ms Tomar has been on the jury of various prestigious festivals and programmes such as PCRA Painting Competition; "Vasundhra Environment Awards" of International Film Festival (IFFI), Govt of India, Goa, December 2011; Online short film competition "Life. Nature. You. Make the Connection" as part of WWF International's 50th Anniversary, December 2011; Dell "Go Green" Challenge Competition, August 2010; TERI and Tetra Pak "Kabbad Se Jugaad" Competition, April 2010 and Green Film Festival in Seoul, Korea, May 2006.

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