

Environment Education and Awareness Programme for Secondary School Students of Thane Municipal Corporation Schools

Executive summary

Following the judgements passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in 1994 and 2004, the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (SSC) included Environment Education (EE) as a separate and compulsory subject from the academic year 2005-06. Topics like ecosystems preservation, depletion of natural resources, waste management, environmental values and human rights, pollution, energy crisis, water conservation, wildlife conservation and sustainable use of resources were introduced to the students of class IX and X through text books. However, most schools find it difficult to convey complex environmental messages to the students in an effective way due to the lack of teachers trained in the subject. While private schools can afford to acquire the necessary expertise from external agencies and professional NGOs, the municipal schools are unable to do so due to insufficient resources at their disposal. Therefore, to bridge this gap and to bring EE at an easy-to-understand level for the benefit of teachers and students, TERI approached the Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane municipal corporations with a proposal to implement a comprehensive 'Environment Education and Awareness Programme for the Secondary School Students of Municipal Corporation Schools'.

The Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) responded positively to TERI's proposal and the project was launched in TMC in the academic year 2008-09. This was the first project of the TERI Mumbai Office in the area of Environment Education and Awareness (EEA).

The overall objective of the project was to create awareness among the students and teachers of Thane Municipal Corporation Schools on urban environmental issues through interactive, competitive and activity-based learning modules.

The project activities were planned around five environmental themes: Urban Biodiversity, Global Warming, Solid Waste, Electricity, and Water. The themes were carefully selected to include most of the urban and locale specific environmental issues included in the school curriculum.

The following were the salient features of the project:

- The project had an outreach of around 500 students and 22 teachers from 8 TMC schools.
- Orientation programmes for participating principals and teachers were conducted to explain the project concept, activities and outcomes.
- Reference booklets were compiled on the five project themes that served as a ready source of authentic scientific information on the themes to be used by the external resource persons who conducted the classroom sessions in TMC schools.
- Development and distribution of posters was an important aspect of the project. The posters would serve as a permanent resource material that could



benefit not only the students from the current batch but also the future batches.

- Meetings with external resource persons to orient them about the project's themes and to develop the content to be delivered during the classroom sessions and the activities to be conducted.
- Two-hour activity-based informative classroom sessions per theme were developed. These sessions were the first direct interaction with the students on the project themes. The sessions were a mix of theory, activities, games and use of visual material including posters as teaching aids.
- Theme-based project assignments were compiled for the schools. The students were expected to undertake the activities under the guidance of their teachers.
- An environment festival was organized at the end of the project. The one-day event was the grand finale of the project activities and was organized to provide a common platform for all the participating schools to present the work done throughout the year as well as to share their experience and thus contribute to collective learning. At this festival, competitions were organized for students and the winners were felicitated. Based on the overall participation through the project, a special award for the Green Teacher and Green School from among the participating TMC schools was adjudicated and conferred.