The United Nations General Assembly in December 2002 dedicated a UN Decade to Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014, to focus attention on the key role education can play in fostering sustainable development. One of the key thrusts of the decade was to integrate understanding of sustainable development into education systems – at all levels and to reorient educational programmes, policies and practices so that education plays its part in building the capacities of all members of the society to work together for a sustainable future.

The need of the hour is Sustainable Development and education plays a pivotal role in sustainable development. And how do we define sustainable development? According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (‘Brundtland Commission’, 1987), “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Today’s education, therefore, is crucial to the ability of present and future leaders and citizens to create solutions and find new paths to a better future. In the Indian context, the first major step towards Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was the establishment of the National Council of Environmental Planning and Coordination, after the historic conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972.

The universalization of environment education was mandated by the Supreme Court Order on 22nd November 1991. Once again, in its judgment of 18th December 2003, the Supreme Court directed that the NCERT shall prepare a model syllabus. In the year 2004, the Supreme Court issued further directions, that “the syllabus prepared by the NCERT for class First to Twelfth shall be adopted by every state in their schools”. The National Curricular Framework 2005 was another landmark initiative in which an integrated approach to environment education was laid and habitat of students and its relation with learning was emphasized.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) of the Government of India has undertaken several initiatives towards the goal of Education for Sustainable Development. ESD recognizes the fact that
over the lifetime the educational needs of people change. The Environment Education (EE) Division of the Ministry has, therefore, designed several modules as part of its Environment Education Awareness and Training Scheme programmes. These initiatives were taken as part of two programmes – National Green Corps (NGC) and National Nature Camping Programme (NNCP).

National Green Corps Programme
It is a well established and recognised fact that children can be catalysts in promoting a mass movement. This is also true about the ensemble of environmental issues. Being future citizens, inculcation of environment friendly attitudes and behavioural patterns amongst them can make a significant difference to the long term efforts for protection of the environment. Children are triggers for a chain reaction, making a difference at the local and community level which in due course lead to awareness at the village, city, state, country and global level.

MoEFCC, hence, embarked upon a major initiative for creating environmental awareness among children by formulating the National Green Corps (NGC) in 2001-02. The phenomenal response that NGC received can be gauged from the fact that the network has today expanded to include more than 1,00,000 Eco-clubs across the country in 12 years, making it one of the largest conservation networks.

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The unique partnership between the MoEFCC, the state government agencies alongwith dedicated NGOs working in the field of Environmental Education has contributed to the success of the programme. Following are some of the activities that were taken up under this programme:

1.“Young in Green Action”: This is a compilation of inspiring stories from the National Green Corps Programme. National Green Corps, popular known as NGC is a landmark initiative in the direction of sustainable future. NGC offers a unique opportunity for reorienting education from information education to wisdom education, which will take us near the goals of Sustainable Development. NGC promotes actions that will lead to positive impacts. It attempts to take the handprint, a tool that measures ESD actions, forward through green actions by the student force.

The impact that the programme has created is remarkable and showcases positive actions of the dedicated young green corps. The handprints left behind by the Eco-club students tell the successful journey of NGC in these 10 years.

Young in Green Action is a publication in which 100 case studies have been compiled highlighting the impacts of NGC actions, representing all States and Union Territories. These cases will inspire readers to leave larger handprint on the face of the earth to make it livable and lovable.

There is at least one case from each State and UT and where there were overwhelming responses in the states. Two cases studies have been presented. In many cases, the required information was extracted from several respondents like Nodal agencies, Resource agencies, Principals and Teachers, at times NGOs who guided some of the Eco-club activities to present their case study in the shape that it is.
In this compilation, several case studies on various themes have been prepared such as Conserving Our Water Resources; Protecting Biodiversity; Sourcing Energy; Greening The Land; Managing Waste; Tradition, Culture and Conservation; Propagating Health and Sanitation; Towards Sustainable Agriculture; Climate Concerns and Actions for diverse issues.

2. Educating for Sustainable Development – A Resource Handbook for National Green Corps: This publication is an important contribution to the resources for the DESD India Programme, supported by the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), GOI. NGC network includes the Master Trainers and Teachers who are key partners in the NGC programme’s successful implementation. Training of the Master Trainer and Eco-club teachers is, therefore, an important ongoing component of NGC. The objective is to ensure that there is considerable uniformity and high quality in the training process across the country, which can be addressed by providing suitable training and support material. This compilation is for NGC master trainers to support them in training Eco-club teachers, and provides basic understanding of EE and ESD and an orientation to a range of training techniques, along with year-long activity as well as action project, planning and evaluation tools.

3. “Journey from Grey to Green”: This is a self-assessment manual for NGC Eco-clubs which focuses on guiding and helping teachers in assisting the Eco-club students to assess outcome of activities undertaken by the Eco-clubs. The outcome can be seen at three levels: at the level of individual students, the school and in the neighbourhood. The assessment is to be carried out by the Eco-club students. The role of the teachers will be to act as facilitator, assisting the Eco-club students to see how far they have gone on the journey from “grey to green”.

The activities listed in the manual focus on five thematic areas—biodiversity, waste management, sanitation, energy and water conservation. There are three exercises in the manual namely: Ano apne Hastchap/Hast Chinh Ko pahchane aur bada karein (let’s increase our handprints), Journey from Grey to Green and Greening the Neighbourhood.

4. “Green Stories: Stories from NGC-NEAC Programmes in North East Schools”: This publication includes 100 case studies from North East Indian schools about their hand print activities carried out under the National

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<td>2. Made a magazine holder from waste cloths and plastic sheets.</td>
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<td>2. Collected the water used at home for rinsing the fruit and vegetables and used it to water house plants.</td>
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Srija, a 10-year-old girl in 2005 from the Holy Mary School in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India gave her handprint for participating in a project, Taking Action for Sustainability.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Some Indicators for a Green School

- Water quality
- Waste Management
- Tree Cover
- Various sources of energy being used for activities/actions
- Awareness of surroundings
- Learning resources on environment

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Green Corps (NGC) and National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) programmes. This compilation is a collective effort of MoEFCC and Centre for Environment Education (CEE) with support from the State Nodal Agencies (SNA) of NGC and Regional Resource Agencies (RRA) of NEAC programmes in the North East.

The purpose of this compilation is to give ideas to schools, which will motivate them to act for protecting the environment. The effort was to find out replicable unique efforts for sustainability carried out by children that give glimpses of diverse actions in different geo-climatic and cultural backgrounds.

Stories with greater impacts from the sustainability point of view have been prioritized. Stories that will be difficult to replicate elsewhere have been avoided.

National Nature Camping Programme

This is an initiative of the Ministry which is aimed at creating greater awareness, understanding and empathy of children with and for the environment. Through this initiative it is hoped that every child who goes through middle school (classes VI to VIII) will get at least one opportunity for a 2-3 day camping experience during these years. The ‘nature experience’ to children and teachers has huge potential to trigger sensitivity towards nature appreciation and conservation, leading to positive environmental actions at different levels.

Values picked up in early school years through camping and similar experiences become a positive influence in shaping our attitudes and practices with regard to nature, use of natural resources, and our response as a whole to issues of environment and development. Young people also learn values of team working, confidence building, facing challenging goals in unfamiliar surroundings, and so on.

Partnership and resource sharing will take these programmes to the next level. Both the programmes lay the foundation on which one can build a cadre of young leaders, many of whom will prove to be environmental stewards in the time to come.

We hope that all our initiatives will transform education from ‘information education to wisdom education’. We also hope that in future we will be able to progress towards hands-on education for sustainable development and children will pave the way for a better world upholding the famous lines of Gandhiji: “Be the change you want to see in the world.”

(Acknowledgement: We thank the State Nodal Agencies of NGC and organisations approved under NNCP for conducting these programmes. Also we would like to thank Centre for Environment Education for providing support in developing the publications.)

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