

## Three day training programme for Educators (Samrakshan Trust-Northeast) on wildlife education, Umran, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya

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Given the rich and threatened biodiversity of the project areas of Samrakshan Trust both in Meghalaya and Mizoram, activities on Environmental Awareness for local communities form a crucial component of the Trust's intervention. Hence Samrakshan Trust trustees and staff at Meghalaya and Mizoram offices felt the need to develop



innovative environment education programme plans sensitive to local culture and needs. Thus, a three day training programme was organised with Zoo Outreach Organisation trainers and selected members of Samrakshan's Meghalaya and Mizoram teams. The programme was conducted at Rural Resource Training Institute (RRTC), Umran, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya from 3-5 November 2007.

**Objective:** The objective of this training programme was generate specific skills to select staff members on communication techniques for wildlife teaching and tools to ensure effective delivery of the programme to a varied audience throughout the two states and to help the Meghalaya and Mizoram field offices to develop an innovative Environment Awareness programme.

**Training details and tools:** Since Samrakshan Trust work with the communities who live in close proximity to Hoolock Gibbon habitats, the entire training programme was based on Hoolock gibbons, using the charismatic and threatened species as a model. ZOO had developed a manual entitled 'Helping Hoolock Gibbon Hang On' for a Great Ape Conservation Funded project of USFWS, that was developed for the wildlife educators of North eastern India. The manual was introduced to participants all of whom were given a copy. The manual has five units: i. Evaluation, ii. South Asia's Only Lesser Ape, iii. Asian Primates Purely Asian, iv. Understanding and acting and v. Species problems and solutions. In addition to the manual, the

programme also included selected activities from another programme, Teachers for Tigers, which was developed by Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx, New York. These included a tool kit, ZOO drama kit, species based education packets by ZOO and games from various other sources. There were seven members, four from Meghalaya office and three from Mizoram team. Dr. B.A. Daniel and Mr. R. Marimuthu from ZOO were the resource persons for the three day programme.

After ice breaker activities, all members shared their experience with regard to environmental education that they currently conduct. Later, the networking and education activities of Zoo Outreach Organisation were explained. Both Hoolock and Tiger manuals were introduced to participants who tried some of the activities. Content survey (pictorial and written), facts about Hoolock gibbons, drama on poaching, primate dance, Hoolock range map, videos on drama clips for discussion, Hoolock behaviour and biology, Tiger biology: little cats to big cats, finger challenge, Hoolock gibbon History (drawing), basics of taxonomy and taxonomic shuffle: sorting out species, Hoolock taxonomy and species, presentation of story of life, Palpur Kuno WLS citizen's debate, ZOO's education materials, drama kits and creating drama are the activities covered in three days.

ZOO has developed and distributed a number of species and theme-based education packets targeting South Asian audiences. A variety of educational materials along with guidelines were



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given to base offices in Meghalaya and Mizoram for their use. All the members were well informed about the ways to use the materials.

**Energisers:** Energisers are generally used to increase participants energy level or enthusiasm levels, to encourage team-building, or to make people think about a specific issue. Throughout the workshop different energizers based on animal themes were used and enjoyed.

**Closing:** The programme ended with an evaluation by an activity called 'pass the ball'. At the end it was decided to work on a detailed plan for education programmes for Meghalaya and Mizoram. It was decided that a course of action be developed suitable for the working areas of Samrakshan Trust North East. It was also decided that reports about this workshop will be exchanged between ZOO and ST. BA Daniel thanked Sally Walker for making this possible and thanked Arpan Sharma for inviting.



The Rural Resource Training Institute (RRTC) at Umran, RRTC has a big campus with a total area of 360 acres. The institute runs many projects such as model village organic farming, pig rearing, poultry farming, livestock diseases, goat rearing, fish farming, vermicomposting, stabilized mud block for low cost housing mushroom cultivation and orchards. The entire group went around the campus early morning hours to witness the success stories of the institute. The authors greatly acknowledge the travel support by US Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Ape Conservation Fund.