Report : ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME AT SARISKA

Kiran Desai and Santosh K. Gupta

An environmental education programme was conducted for school students who live in villages situated in and around the Sariska Tiger Reserve (STR), Alwar, Rajasthan. The methodology and the educational material developed through this programme should act as the first step for starting intensive programmes of EE in the Aravalli region and elsewhere in the country. The field work for this programme was started in 1987 November and continued till 1993 August. Now we are working on the second phase to develop some more educational material and are making efforts towards starting intensive programme in Alwar and elsewhere in the Aravalli region.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

- to use STR as a site for education
- to learn about flora and fauna of the area.
- to understand what is STR
- to understand the village environment.
- to understand about importance and the need for conservation of STR and the village environment.
- to understand the concepts of eco-development.
- to take active support of students in conservation
- to train the teachers and village youth to carry out this programme.
- to involve local NGO's and government in the programme.
- to make efforts towards starting such intensive programmes in Alwar, other areas of Aravallis and elsewhere in the country.

TARGET GROUP

-School students of Standard VI to VII
- Youth and teachers

METHODOLOGY AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMMES

The method adopted for our work in the field may be summarised as follows:

A. Introductory Programme: This participatory programme introduced us to teachers and students. Questions about air, water, soil, environment, biosphere were asked. An earthen pot was used to communicate concepts related to the biosphere. We are developing a booklet about this programme to help educators in carrying out this programme.

B. School Programmes: Thrust areas of these programmes were to use environment related concepts in the text books, to use school events for EE and to select students who are keen on learning more about environment. These programmes were carried out by teachers. School programmes were conducted in 15 schools of 12 villages.

A few programmes carried out in schools were:

1. "Exploring a tree" programme:
This is a continuous long term programme in which students observe a single tree and its surrounding and take down notes under the guidance of the teacher.

2. Creating events in school:
Drawing, Drama and other competitions. A five day workshop in performing arts was organised. As a follow-up, a drama competition was organised. Teachers and students developed the script themselves.

To introduce and enrich from EE point of view, events like Van Mahotsav, Earth day, Wildlife week, etc.

Van Mahotsav Programme: In the morning a meeting of all students and teachers was held in the school. The importance of forests and trees was explained. Method of planting saplings is also demonstrated.

Van Mahotsav rally: Preparation for this rally started 20 days before the function. A group of students wrote slogans on cardboards, pits were dug for tree plantation programme, villagers were informed about the rally. On the programme day, this group of students organised the rally in the village. A camel cart follows the students with the saplings. These are distributed to the villagers by the students.

3. Using common school events/ programmes for EE.
- Scouting, Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW)
- Morning prayers, Saturday Sabhas.
- Celebration of festivals such as Basant Panchami, etc.

4. Expanding on environmental concepts used in different subject text through quiz, essay, debate, etc.

5. Nature observation activity by students with the help of workbooks developed for this programme.

C. Bal Sabha Programmes: Balsabha is a group of students who are interested in learning more about environment. They come forward to form the Sabha after school time (minimum qualification XI standard). Educated unemployed village youth organise the Sabha in villages. The Sabha were organized in 12 villages. The main objectives of the Sabha are :

- to provide opportunities for learning more about the environment.
- to start the process of group formation in students.
- to take active support of students in conservation.

The main programmes conducted in Balsabhas are as fol-

Sundarvan - a nature discovery centre, Surendra Mangaldas Road, Jodhpur Tekra, Ahmedabad 380 015

lows:

1. Observation of flora and fauna in a group situation with the help of workbooks.

2. Nature trek near the village.

3. Data collection on people's use of forest, tourist traffic in the reserve, recording of different migratory waterfowl species. On one occasion, the students and youth of 3 villages worked together to establish 8 checkposts to count the head-loaders (their own parents, friends, relatives, etc). They counted some 700 men, women and children!

TRAINING OF YOUTH LEADERS OF BALSABHA AND TEACHERS

We have conducted a five-day training programme of EE for 40 teachers and youth in Ahmedabad. Teachers and youth were regularly helped in efficiently carrying out different activities and programmes.

COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL AGENCIES

Many local government agencies and NGO's have collaborated with us. Some of these are R.R. College, Alwar, Agriculture Department, Education department, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Forest Department, Alwar, Tarun Bharat Sangh, Bikrampura, Nehru Yuva Kendra, etc.

Teachers and youth who were involved with us came together to form two registered societies. They are now conducting many programmes with the help of Government agencies. These societies are Manoran Paryavaran Chetna Kendra and Aravalli Parayavaran Samrakshan Samiti.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL USED/ DEVELOPED FOR THE PROGRAMME

1. **Educational material** developed by CEE was used in our school and Balsabha Programmes.

2. **Charts of medicinal plants** were produced for the programme. The main objective of these charts are :

- to tell the students about the bio-diversity found in the area.
- convey the mportance of this diversity for mankind.
- to draw their attention towards the disappearance of these species and also the traditional knowledge about these plants.

3. **Nature education book series**

The main objectives of this series are :

- to motivate the reader towards self learning (and to develop confidence in his own observation).
- to explain how to observe and record the observation.
- to explain the interrelationship of different elements of environment through the observation of flora and fauna.

Till now, two books have been published in the series. These are about (1) Birds and (2) Mammals of the area. Both books have three parts. First part has general information, second part deals with specific species giving its illustration and information about it. Students are supposed to answer questions asked about each species, blank space is provided for each query. The third part gives details about characteristics of each group of animals/birds.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1. **Development of remaining educational material**

- We are working on two more books in the nature education series. These books are about flora and invertebrates of the area.

- "What is Sariska" booklet. This booklet tries to explain the complex question of "What is Sariska?' in a story form for students as well as for teachers and youth.

- "Introductory Programme" Booklet. This booklet is based on our introductory programme (details of this programme are given earlier in this report). We hope that this booklet will help the EE educators in conducting this creative participatory programme in schools.

2. **Intensive programme of EE** in Alwar and other districts of Rajasthan. We are willing to start intensive programmes which will cover all schools in the district. We feel that it is necessary to have such programmes to make impact on the overall environmental situation of an area. In the coming time we would be working on the proposal of such a programme and will try to get funds.

3. **Unemployed educated youth** (minimum XI standard) are an important part of this programme. One of the major new initiatives of this programme would be to start sustainable livelihood training programme for these youth in villages and small towns. Apart from this we would be training them in conducting Balsabha for school students as described earlier.

4. **Publicizing this programme in Aravalli and other parts of the country.** For this purpose we are planning to bring a booklet about this programme. Through this booklet and other means like seminar, workshop, etc. we want others to know about this programme. We want such programmes to begin in other areas. We would like to help the interested government agencies and NGOs for starting/ enhancing their programme.

5. There is an urgent need to know what others are doing in this field, what are their experiences and what are their needs.