

# DISCIPLINED ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION MAKES DIFFERENCE

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*The solution to many environmental problems lie in our attitude towards environment-be it awareness to keep our surroundings clean or the realization to conserve natural resources by re-using and recycling wherever possible. However, changing the attitudes of people is not going to happen overnight. The best way is to initiate community into action through children. They have no stakes. They are impressionable. National green corps (NGC) cadets believe that disciplined environmental performance makes all the difference and environmental knowledge without disciplined environmental performance makes no difference we have 5 disciplined NGC student teams for water, plants, energy, waste management, land use planning, these disciplined NGC teams are involved in practicing weekly NGC parade, daily school level or community level physical environmental actions, from these actions. This paper has been based on field visits to schools, discussions with groups of teachers, interactions with personnel from the education department, NGO's, bureaucrats and staff at the NGC Directorate besides accessing secondary material such as reports, environment education material developed, etc.*

**Keywords:** Eco club teams, Environmental action, Environmental discipline

## INTRODUCTION

The Honorable Supreme Court of India, in its judgment W.P. No. 860/91, specifically instructed the State Governments to introduce a compulsory subject on environmental education at all levels starting at the school level. The Honorable Supreme Court clarified that an integrated topic on environment in the curriculum was not sufficient. It further emphasized the necessity for a separate subject considering the growing need for instilling enhanced environmental practices and governance in the country. The primary objective is to spread environmental awareness by action orientation involving the school students. Eventually this Corps would work as agents of change, creating a spirit of awareness and thus motivating and mobilizing young citizens into environmental action. Awareness has to ultimately give way to action.

We all know that we are part of the environment we live in, and the solution to many environmental problems lie in our attitude

towards environment-be it awareness to keep our surroundings clean or the realization to conserve natural resources by re-using and recycling wherever possible. On the surface, it looks simple. However, changing the attitudes of people is not going to happen overnight. The best way is to initiate community into action through children. They have no stakes. They are impressionable. They are our future. They are the single most important influence in any family. Accordingly, the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India have launched the National Green Corps (2009) programme in all the districts in Andhra Pradesh, i.e., 250 schools in each district covering 5750 schools with NGC eco-clubs. Conservation action at the individual level must go through a range of personalized processes. This happens at a conscious as well as at a subconscious level in an individual. This process passes through a range of stages that includes receiving environmental information, developing an enhanced state of awareness, creating a concern for the environment and finally into pro-conservation action. While this happens spontaneously in the lives of some individuals through a gradual and subtle process in others it is triggered through single or a few key episodes in the course of their lives. It is important to appreciate that the initiating processes that enhance environmental concepts are related to exposure to nature and other environmental issues during the early formative years of an individual's life. This develops pro-environmental insights in a young person who later grows into a conservation conscious adult. The nature and scope of environment education and awareness generating sector needs a clear appreciation of the value of our environmental assets, how they affect our lives, how these assets are destroyed by short sighted approaches to development and what can be done about preserving these natural assets through personal actions. This paper has opened avenues to understanding the extent of the National Green Corps (NGC) program in a state that is the first to have up scaled this program to include all the schools in its jurisdiction. This paper has been based on field visits to schools, discussions with groups of teachers, interactions with personnel from the education department, NGO's, bureaucrats and staff at the NGC Directorate besides accessing secondary material such as reports, environment

education material developed, etc. The recommendations are thus based on quantifying the activities over the last five years as well as documenting the subjective perceptions of a large number of individuals.

## BACKGROUND

With the realization that children are a very powerful media to institute change in society, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India has launched the National Green Corps Program in all districts of India. National Green Corps is a students' movement initiated by the Ministry of Environment and Forests for promoting environmental action orientation and to supplement the endeavors of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in greening of the curriculum. The main objectives of this program are to educate children about their immediate environment and impart knowledge about the eco-systems, their inter-dependence and their need for survival, through visits and demonstrations and to mobilize youngsters by instilling in them the spirit of scientific inquiry into environmental problems and involving them in the efforts of environmental preservation. Under this program, eco-clubs are being set up in 250 schools of each District of the country. This program is being implemented in each State/UT through the Nodal agency appointed by the State/UT Govt. The Government of India provides financial assistance for establishment of Eco clubs at Rs. 2500 per Eco-club, Training of Master Trainers, teacher training and distribution of resource materials. The NGC program in Andhra Pradesh (AP) is presently being implemented by the Directorate of National Green Corps a separate body that was established for this program in the state. The program is being implemented in class 8 of all the Government and private schools in the state numbering 17,050. Of this 5750 schools are funded by the MoEF and 16,000 schools including the 5750 schools supported by MoEF are either provided with resource material or provided funds by the State Government. Some components of the program have also been introduced in 72,000 primary and upper primary schools in the state in collaboration with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA).

## FINDINGS – STRENGTHS

This review has focused on evaluating the present strengths and weaknesses of the National Green Corps program in Andhra Pradesh.

### *Program design*

While some states in the country are still grappling with the implementation of the NGC program, Andhra Pradesh has become the first state in the country to upscale the National Green Corps to cover all the schools in the state through the establishment of the Directorate of National Green Corps. This is a tremendous step towards developing a cadre of environmentally aware citizens.

It has also been the first and only state in the country to implement the Supreme Court's decision on environment education in formal curricula by preparing special textbooks for standards 1 to 10. This is unprecedented in the country.

The NGC program has been appropriately designed to ensure effective implementation. The NGC team has developed a close collaboration with key individuals in the Education Department even on a personal level ensuring adequate support for the program.

### *NGC environmental discipline*

Today Environmental Movement in our country lacks focus on "Environmental Discipline". The need of the hour is to create Environmental Discipline in the younger generation. Earlier NGC Students Environment Movement was based on Environmental action. This was a step ahead from environmental awareness. Now since there is a need to move forward in order to protect our environment and ourselves, NGC took a stand to instill Environmental Discipline in 8<sup>th</sup> class students through 5 NGC Eco club teams in each NGC School. The first step is to promote disciplined movement and action promoting environmental discipline. This is a clear shift of NGC from environmental knowledge promotion to environmental discipline promotion.

National Green Corps programme aims at spreading 'environmental discipline' among school children and involves them in environment related actions in the schools and communities. Children have infectious enthusiasm. They are custodians of natural resources and nature.

We all know that we are part of the environment we live in, and the solution to many environmental problems lie in our attitude towards environment-be it awareness to keep our surroundings clean or the realization to conserve natural resources by re-using and recycling wherever possible. On the surface it looks simple. But changing the attitudes of people is not going to happen overnight.

The best way is to initiate community into action through children. They have no vested interests. They are impressionable. They are our future. They are the single most important influence in any family.

### *Activities*

- Building 5 NGC natural resource management teams in each school and conducting NGC weekly parade drill for 20 weeks along with band.
- Conducting daily natural resource monitoring through 5 NGC students' teams and Annual School Environmental Audit by November every year.
- Participating in District level parade on 15<sup>th</sup> August (Independence Day) and 26<sup>th</sup> January (Republic Day).

- NGC Eco Club Student Cadets will be in charge of retaining cleanliness in the mid day meals or daily lunch time and also greening the school premises.
- In the above context NGC trains PET/PD of the selected/registered schools. The NGC training program covers parade drill and natural resource conservation monitoring and environment audit.

### **Objectives**

- To create environmental discipline among school children.
- To train young students for environment action.
- To utilize the unique position of school children for awareness of the society at large.
- To facilitate children's participation in decision making in areas related to environment & development.
- To bring children into direct contact with the local environmental challenges and respond positively.
- To involve children in disciplined action based programmes related to environment in their neighborhood.

### **NGC parade foot drill**

The aim of the drill is to inculcate discipline, improve smartness in appearance, turnout, and self confidence and to develop qualities of team spirit and obedience in the cadets.

### **NGC camps**

Let's Learn and enjoy. AP NGC is promoting 'environmental discipline' amongst students through NGC Eco Clubs. Promoting environmental discipline and action are on the agenda for conducting camps at various towns in Andhra Pradesh (APNGC, 2007, 2008, 2009).

Each NGC Camp will cover the following aspects:

- Drill practice
- Band practice
- Natural resource use monitoring and auditing
- Visit to locations environment improvement activities

### **Why camping?**

The roads, transport, management of solid waste and sewage safe drinking water, biodiversity conservation, maintenance of natural tree cover, refuge for wildlife and use of alternative sources of energy can be observed and learnt. NGC Camps help in practicing intensively is learnt in NGC.

The saying 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness' comes to life in Tirumala. TTD endeavors to practice it. The NGC-TTD Camp is an inspiration to adopt these principles in our lives.

### **Who can participate?**

NGC organizes 2-3 camps in each location per month. Each camp is conducted for 10 days. The campers are selected division-wise from every district. 5 NGC Training Officers and 50 students of VIII class from each district are selected for each camp. Each camp is for 5 NGC Training Officers and 50 students. The camps are open to NGC schools priority is for schools with active NGC Eco-clubs.

### **Activities at the NGC camp**

NGC cadets, who are VIII class student campers, will undertake the following activities during their 10-day stay at the NGC Camp.

- Participate in Natural resource monitoring and auditing everyday.
- Visit alternate energy run facilities.
- Observe and understand the functioning of wind mills.
- Visit the drinking water treatment facilities and sewage treatment plants.
- Learn about the solid waste management facilities.
- Visit the National Parks/Zoo and adjoining forests. Learn from nature, natural rock formations and wildlife.
- Practice daily physical drill and parade.
- Practice band.
- Visit medicinal plant centre and learn about ayurvedic medicine preparations.
- Prepare a report of their observations and activities each day and discuss with fellow campers.

### **Activities after attending the camp**

On returning from the 10 day NGC camp, every participant is expected to complete the following tasks:

- Share the findings with school management, other NGC students and non NGC students.
- Explain the duties as citizens of India, towards conserving nature.
- Based on experience at the camp, identify at least one aspect of the village or town where change can be brought.
- Initiate action to bring that change.

Welcome to the NGC camp! Join in our mission to make India an environment friendly and a progressive nation.

### **NGC eco club teams**

Every school needs to form five NGC natural resource management teams. All 8<sup>th</sup> class students in the school could fall into either of these teams. Students could shift membership later based on their shifting interest.

These five school level NGC natural resource management teams are

- Biodiversity Management Team: Responsible for the flora and fauna in the school.
- Water Management Team: Responsible for the drinking and waste water.
- Beautification Team: In charge of reducing, reusing, recycling and composting of waste.
- Energy Management Team: In charge of energy audit and conservation.
- Land use Management Team: Planning and conducting of vehicles movement to and fro in the school. Plan for park, parking, play ground and, water storage.

#### **NGC themes**

Some of the NGC Activity themes are: house hold garbage management, hospital waste disposal, water pollution, shortage and conservation, air pollution, civic amenities and their care, school and community plantation, cleanliness of public parks and gardens, cleanliness and composting of vegetable and fruit market wastes, cleanliness at bus stands, railway stations and public places, study and conservation of ecosystems, discovery and documentation of the role of local bio-diversity, fuel, energy and resource conservation.

The reporting mechanism involves the participation of the Education Officer which in turn ensures monitoring. Although the effective monitoring may or may not happen, this mechanism however ensures that NGC agenda gets the necessary attention and support. The Headmaster of the schools has been named as the NGC Captain and the in charge teacher as the NGC vice Captain. A simple designation ensures the support of the school heads for the program which is otherwise left solely to the teacher in charge.

The themes of the NGC program have been designed effectively so as to leverage both the occasion and the social activity enhancing its relevance. The NGC annual action plan links environmental issues to the season and the social activity taking place at community level during that month. It is planned in such a way that the purpose and the process are made very clear to the participants in National Green Corps and in the local community. All these activities are conducted at four levels i.e., NGC group level, school level, neighborhood school level and the community level.

Apart from this the program encourages the celebration of several environmental days and also conducts summer camps, a month long environment activity program and the students' environmental congress.

#### **NGC eco-club activities**

Some of our NGC eco-club activities, as follows:

##### **National Science Day on 28th February**

It is envisaged that thirst for knowledge and desire to innovate can exist among students at varying degrees of preparedness, from urban to rural regions. To enhance the awareness, interest and opportunities at all levels for innovative thinking, multi-level competitions on regular basis can be of great help. To enhance the need of developing such an attitudes Our NGC Eco Club organized school level celebrations of national science day on 28th February, 2010 in that we conducted essay writing competitions: "Disaster Management Importance Of Science" elocution competitions: "Planet Earth-Natural Resources-Sustainability".

##### **Earth day April 22**

Earth day is an annual observance held on April 22 every year to increase public awareness on the environment. Earth day activities offer important point of entry to address world wide environmental concerns as well as opportunities for individual and community to focus on their local environmental problems. Earth day should be used as a powerful catalyst to involve people in making a difference towards a healthy, prosperous and sustainable future. Keeping in mind the importance of Earth Day, the NGC ECO CLUB celebrated the Earth day – 2010 with the active involvement of School Community, on the auspicious occasion of the Earth Day: Cycle Rally cum public awareness programme was conducted.

##### **NGC Week programme in our school premises**

We have conduct week long environmental programme in the schools by forming into teams for water, waste management, energy, biodiversity and land use planning by taking an oath to protect environment. On the first day we prepare a school map incorporating the resource we are responsible for including the drinking and waste water routes, waste pockets and location of trees. On the second day our focus is on water tank cleaning and monitoring and tree plantation and plant protection. On the third day, we focus is on planning & making arrangements for rain water diversion & harvesting and Playground, Parking planning, school cleaning, dust bin introduction. On the fourth day, we conducted Quiz, Essay writing and Elocution competitions along with Eco Cultural programmes. On the fifth day we the focused on planning composting of waste and linkage with the local waste handlers and conducting the Mock Eco Assembly and the final day activity is to plan Eco club management, Eco calendar and reporting the progress through the School Wall Magazine.

### Mock Eco Assembly

(Grooming in Leadership and Environment Awareness): Our NGC Club organized A 'Mock ECO Assembly' At our School the Participants Came in Batches, Posing as Legislative Assembly Members from the Ruling and Opposition Parties, Sat at the right and left sides respectively and exchanged views and concerns about environment issues facing the Country. We feel that, we are the future youth leaders presenting our views on the steps to be taken for the welfare of the country and how to work towards achieving India, a dream nation and stand high in the World. As The Mock Eco Assembly Was Aimed At Instilling Confidence, Improving Communication Skills And Environment Awareness. In Children at the same time the eco assembly programme are to strengthen the roots of democracy, to inculcate in the young minds healthy habits of discipline, tolerance of views of others and to equip them with the knowledge of assembly procedures and eco friendly practices.

### ECO SCHOOL AUDIT PROCESS AND GREEN SCHOOLS PROGRAMME REPORT

The Eco school audit process assists students in conducting audits and develops action plans on air, energy, land, waste management and water management in the school environment. We are done all the chapters simultaneously, as five teams are working on the five different resources. Five teams comprising of children from class VIII & IX coordinated by the teachers, one each for the five, segments are responsible. There are 5 to 12 children of mixed classes in each group. All the teacher coordinators have found that children are enjoying auditing their particular resource.

Major findings and suggestions of Eco School Audit:

**Water:** Sanitation facilities and rain water harvesting methods have to be improved with the help local public representatives.

**Air:** Oxygen balance has to be improved by planting and protecting of trees.

**Land:** Green area has to be improved by planting the trees in the forth coming rainy season and special policy document has to be followed on land use and biodiversity.

**Energy:** Renewable energy resources have to be adopted in Mid Day meals. Cooking and using CFL bulbs have to be encouraged.

**Waste:** Collection of used text books at the end of Annual Exams by the school and to maintain Book Bank and some manure pits and land fills have to be dogged in the school.

### CONCLUSIONS

Andhra Pradesh National Green Corps (APNGC) is an organization whose primary objective is to spread environmental action orientation among students in the state, from school to university level. NGC aims to involve students of all levels in the country in the environmental movement for conservation. The school unit will oversee the work done by the various NGC units in each of the classes/teams in the school. The school unit will also set certain works/goals for the class NGC units every month. It has to also keep the tempo of environmental activity in the school at an active level, always providing it with motivation, direction and thrust. Each of the items in the action plan is linked to the season and the socio-cultural activity that takes place at the community level during the month. It is planned in such a way that the purpose and the process are very clear to the participants in National Green Corps and in the community. Remember, our travel should not become travail for others. Let us give it a thought; let us become more considerate towards fellow beings; let us change our attitude and bring in a change. Today Environmental Movement in our country lacks focus on "Environmental Discipline". The need of the hour is to create Environmental Discipline in the younger generation. Earlier NGC Students Environment Movement was based on Environmental action. This was a step ahead from environmental awareness. Now since there is a need to move forward in order to protect our environment and ourselves, NGC took a stand to instill Environmental Discipline in eighth class students through five NGC Eco club teams in each NGC School. The first step is to promote disciplined movement and action promoting environmental discipline. This is a clear shift of NGC from environmental knowledge promotion to environmental discipline promotion. National Green Corps programme aims at spreading 'environmental discipline' among schoolchildren and involves them in environment related actions in the schools and communities. Children have infectious enthusiasm. They are custodians of natural resources and nature. "Nothing could be more important than training the next generation of environmental leaders—they are the future of the future. And no one has done it more consistently than Andhra Pradesh National Green Corps." The national green corps (NGC) should be given a status similar to the national cadet corps (NCC). Already the state government set up a directorate of NGC affiliated to the ministry of environment and forests on the lines of the directorate of NCC, which is affiliated to the defense ministry. The national green corps should get certificates similar to the ones given to NCC cadets. We wish them a happy journey into joyful and fruitful environment education. Green Corps alumni leading the charge, the promise of a green and renewable tomorrow burns bright.

| Year    | Total No. of schools | Supported by MOEF | Supported by State Education Department |
|---------|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| 2004-05 | 10900                | 2300              | 8600                                    |
| 2005-06 | 12050                | 3450              | 8600                                    |
| 2006-07 | 12500                | 3900              | 8600                                    |
| 2007-08 | 14350                | 5750              | 8600                                    |
| 2008-09 | 16000                | 5750              | 10250                                   |
| 2009-10 | 17050                | 5750              | 11300                                   |

Table 1: Growth of the program

| Module type                                  | Knowledge based modules | Modules for development of psychomotor and analytical skills | Activities for promoting the development of a pro-conservation attitude | No strong educational value but ensures visibility to the program |
|--|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| Environmental audit                          | ✓                       | ✓  | ✓   |   |
| Eco-rallies                                  |                         |  |   | ✓   |
| Eco-campaigns                                |                         |  |   | ✓   |
| Eco-melas                                    | ✓                       | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   |
| Eco-exhibitions                              | ✓                       | ✓  |   | ✓   |
| Model making                                 | ✓                       | ✓  |   |   |
| Seminars                                     | ✓                       | ✓  |   |   |
| Eco-debates                                  | ✓                       | ✓  |   |   |
| Discussions                                  | ✓                       | ✓  |   |   |
| Popular talks                                | ✓                       |  |   |   |
| Action projects                              | ✓                       | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   |
| Street plays                                 | ✓                       | ✓  |   | ✓   |
| Human Chains                                 |                         |  |   | ✓   |
| Plantation                                   |                         |  |   | ✓   |
| Cleanliness                                  |                         | ✓  |   |   |
| Inventorying and reporting polluting sources | ✓                       | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   |
| Environmental Congress                       | ✓                       | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   |
| NGC Parades                                  |                         |  |   | ✓   |

Table 2: Analysis of skills developed through the various NGC modules designed by the Directorate

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