

“What good is it to have wind-powered lights to brighten the night if you can’t see anything green during the day?” –Thomas L. Friedman

Environmental Education

The Way to Go

If things go the way they are, there might be a time when technological advancements might do no good in reversing the outcomes of the environmental degradation that is steadily taking place. It is our duty to amply prepare our children for the future they will inherit.

Studies have shown environmental education engages students in learning, raising test scores, and encouraging youth to pursue career in environmental and natural resources. Essar Foundation recognizes the importance of making a rigorous investment in environmental education and outdoor learning.



Collaboration, being the key to seeking sustainable engagement in environmental education, Essar Foundation has joined hands with several institutions of repute besides a number of schools across eight States. For instance, through the association with Center for Environment Education (CEE), a frontrunner in environmental education, and Katha, a leading NGO in story pedagogy, interesting modules for teachers’ trainings have been developed and rolled out in three districts of Gujarat.

‘Jhagdo’, an environment play by visually impaired children

Organizations specializing in alternative education methods are selected from across the country and brought together in a mélange of self-expression and creativity... a programme named ‘Indradhanush’. Experienced NGOs having in-depth understanding of biodiversity, local environmental issues and conservation, co-create a range of exercises, games, practical projects, models and experiments with children. Activity-based learning methods make subjects like Science and Math easy to learn from objects and features of nature around. Themes like energy conservation, harnessing solar energy, ideas for a greener planet and saving wildlife are triggers for imaginative expressions by children and adolescents.

Such humble, yet intensive endeavours at orienting the young minds towards being more sensitive citizens of the planet are immensely important. Towards this, investing in initiatives of environmental education is the way to go, and it is here to stay.

- ***Diverse mediums like art, music, theater, storytelling, model making, games and live projects are being used by the teachers as activity based methodology for environment education.***
- ***Environmental education (EE) has been introduced as a regular subject of study in formal school education system in India following the directive of the Honorable Supreme Court of India.***

Essar Foundation is the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of Essar committed to making positive impact in communities across more than 500 villages of India. The Foundation facilitates sustainable development initiatives in line with provisions under the Companies’ Act, 2013, and aligns its vision with Essar’s philosophy of 4Ps – PEOPLE at the core, PROGRESS towards aspirations, POWER of synergy, and PASSION with compassion.

“I bleed each month to help make humankind a possibility. My womb is home to the divine. A source of life for our species.” says **Rupi Kaur**, poet and author who is currently fighting social-media giant Instagram on its unreasonable approach to images of menstruation. Similar battles go on in everyday lives of women and girls across rural India, where a natural biological process is hounded by numerous myths, taboos and misinformation.

Dispelling Myths, Shattering Taboos

Power Women of Sahaj

Menstruation and menstrual practices are to this day, clouded by taboos and socio-cultural restrictions resulting in adolescent girls and women remaining ignorant of the scientific facts and hygienic health practices, making them highly vulnerable to adverse health outcomes.



Sahaj sanitary napkin manufacturing unit at Dantewada, Chhattisgarh

And then there are such women who manage to not only run a family making sanitary napkins, but also continue to foil myths around menstrual hygiene. Sahaj, an Essar Foundation initiative of low cost sanitary napkin production, is entirely managed by rural women and promotes safe menstruation. Laxmi Devi (40yrs) and 15 other members of her Self Help Group are entrepreneurs and social change agents in their own rights in a remote village of Chhattisgarh.

Hailing from a tribal village in one of the most insurgency-affected districts in India – Dantewada in Chhattisgarh, a single mother of two teenage sons, Lakshmi shares...“When we began we were so unsure... people ridiculed us. But as we continued to learn, produce napkins and sell, there was much greater acceptance. More women and girls have begun using the napkins without being shy or superstitious. We also confidently interact with important people of the Govt.... even the Collector!”

So far, about 96,000 sanitary napkins are produced and sold by this unit in Palnar. The Sahaj initiative has won the Think Media Best CSR Case Study award in November, 2014. Lakshmi plans to keep supporting the education of her two teenage sons. The women plan to increase their production capacity to meet the rising demand for the sanitary napkins.

Sahaj Units are entirely run by trained women’s Self Help Groups.

- ***Essar Foundation’s initiative ‘Sahaj’ has established low cost sanitary napkins in remote rural Chhattisgarh. ‘Sahaj’ literally means ‘to ease’ ; indicating a ‘stress-free period’***
- ***Menstrual hygiene education and supply of Sahaj napkins is regularly done in eight government girls’ hostels.***