



WBPCB INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE AWARENESS

SECTION I : WBPCB ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGN 2003-2004

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SECTION I

WBPCB ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGN 2003-2004

Introduction

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal, Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, during his inaugural speech on the World Environment Day 2003, at Paribesh Bhaban declared that the day-long event would be turned into a year-long campaign for the protection of environment, forest and wildlife. That was the genesis of what we today call the Environmental Campaign, jointly undertaken by the State Department of Environment and the West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB).

The Board together with the State Department of Environment has established collaborative

ventures with departments of the State and the Central Government, voluntary organisations and individuals as well as various NGOs. The idea is to facilitate the incorporation of environmental concerns into their ongoing activities, so that the campaign for the protection of the environment and forests gets support from a wide range of organisations in the state. On account of the budgetary constraints, the State Department of Environment could not provide any funds and it was decided that the WBPCB would provide the seed money for the initiation of the programmes.

Objectives

The major objectives of the WBPCB Environment Campaign are:

- To help acquire interest of the flora and fauna of the near and distant environment;
- To help develop an awareness and sensitivity of the total environment and its allied problems;
- To help social groups and individuals acquire skills for identifying and solving environmental problems; and
- To help change the behavioural patterns of people and develop a positive environmental attitude.

Collaborations

The programmes under the campaign have specific target groups that range from students and teachers of schools, colleges and universities to research organisations and non-government organisations; and from government officials to general public. The Board has conducted several on-going programmes on various themes such as biodiversity; environmental issues as well as laws and their applications; conservation of forests, wetlands and controlling pollution in air, water and land as well as noise pollution; restriction of plastic carry bags in ecologically sensitive areas as well as tourist/heritage sites and recycling of PET bottles. Moreover, it has been the endeavour of the Board to spread the message of the need to protect the environment among school and college students. The organisations that have collaborated with the Board are as follows:

1. Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP)
2. Jagadis Bose National Science Talent Search (JBNSTS)
3. World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India)
4. Birla Industrial Technological Museum (BITM)
5. The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)
6. Calcutta University
7. National University of Juridical Sciences (NUJS)
8. Pashchim Banga Vigyan Mancha (PBVM)
9. People United for Better Living in Calcutta (PUBLIC)
10. Concern for Calcutta
11. Institute of Wetland Management and Ecological Design (IWMED).

Synopsis of Events

Restriction of Plastic Carry Bag use

Key Collaborators: PBVM, Concern for Calcutta, PUBLIC, WWF-India

Target Group: General Public, NGOs, Government Officials including Police and functionaries of local bodies

Discarded plastics pose a threat to human health and environment. Due to its non-biodegradable nature, littering of plastics causes irreversible damage to the environment. Waste plastics hinder the natural aeration process of the surface water bodies, choke municipal sewer lines and storm water drains and clog

the bar-screens of sewage treatment plants. They interfere with various agricultural operations, prevent natural recharge of underground water and contribute to visual pollution. Consuming food wrapped in coloured plastic has adverse effects on health. Municipalities routinely receive reports of death of cows and other animals from ingesting plastic bags. Thus the overuse of the disposable plastic items, mostly the carry bags and the PET bottles, which are wasteful of resource and energy, a litter problem, a disposal problem and harmful to wildlife on land and in our waterways, needs immediate management. This



School children were the key contributors in the WBPCB Environment Campaign

WBPCB campaign therefore includes awareness programmes involving NGOs and school students of different districts, in order to fight the problem of plastic waste in the state.

Forest and Wildlife

Key Collaborator: BITM, TERI

Target Group: School Children

The world of nature is a living kaleidoscope of all the plants and animals that live harmoniously in a perfectly balanced system. It is imperative for the young children to understand how nature works before learning the ways to conserve and care for it. Nature Trails are being organised under this theme to provide the young minds with an excellent opportunity to grow, by way of observing the relationships between plants and animals. The students experienced all the fun and excitement by taking a simple walk through nature that turned out to be a real journey of exploration and discovery. In association with TERI, a series of nature trails are organised as part of the forthcoming events of the WBPCB campaign.

Environmental Studies

Key Collaborator: JBNSTS, WWF-India

Target Group: School children and school & college teachers

Under this theme, teacher orientation programme were organised, which was

primarily meant to inculcate the importance of environmental protection among the teachers to convey the same to the students by undertaking various environmental awareness related activities for their schools and colleges. This theme also includes events such as inter-college debates and workshops on soil testing – in order to create awareness on environmental protection among the school and college students.

Environmental Issues, Law and Practice

Key Collaborator: NUJS

Target Group: College & University Students

The key role of the WBPCB has been to establish coherent, uniform and workable environmental practice, standards and regulations to restore, protect and enhance the quality of the environment in the state. Thus in order to provide training on various environmental issues, law and practice, the programmes under this theme were devised for the students of colleges and universities, NGOs and government officials.

Noise Pollution

Target Group: Government Officials including Police and functionaries of local bodies

Over the years, the major mandates of the WBPCB include strengthening and enforcement of laws, and generation of awareness for curbing noise pollution in the state. In its effort to eliminate the menace of

noise pollution, under the Environmental Campaign of the WBPCB, training programmes were conducted. The target groups of these training programmes comprise of government officials including police officials, functionaries of local bodies and others. The participants were trained on various aspects of environmental pollution, especially on issues that are related to their job. Also noise monitoring programmes were conducted on the festive days and necessary regulatory actions were taken against the violators.

Biodiversity

Key Collaborator: WWF-India

Target Group: School children (including physically & mentally challenged children), NGOs and government officials

All life on earth is part of one great, interdependent system. It interacts with, and depends on, the non-living components of the planet: atmosphere, oceans, freshwaters, rocks, and soils. Humanity depends totally on this community of life, the biosphere, of which we are an integral part. Biological diversity, or biodiversity, is the variety of the world's organisms, including their genetic diversity and the assemblages they form. Under this theme, programmes such as the distribution of potted medicinal plants, study on medicinal plants and study of birds have been undertaken for the school students, the prime target group of the campaign. The programme is aimed at making the students understand the various aspects of biodiversity, which is essential to develop a perception of its conservation.

Personal Hygiene and Public Health

Key Collaborator: WWF-India

Target Group: School Children

This programme is aimed to improve the condition of environmental hygiene in the state. The main target group being school students, this programme help students achieve more effectively the cultivation of a sense of responsibility and healthy lifestyle and to strengthen civic and health education. This

helps incorporate the concept of civic responsibility and its relationship with personal and environmental hygiene and thus enhance their ability to develop skills and capacity of moral judgment with regard to personal and public health issues.

Nature, Natural Resource, Environment and Society

Key Collaborator: PBVM, TERI

Target Group: School Children

The state departments of Environment and Forest have jointly organised competitions for students of higher classes of the schools in West Bengal under the National Green Corps (NGC) programme to organise events and competitions under the theme "nature, natural resource, environment and society". The National Green Corps (NGC) programme introduced by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India is aimed at spreading environmental awareness among school children by involving them in various environment-related activities. The WBPCB is the State Nodal Agency for the implementation of this programme in our state.

Under the NGC programme, there are 1900 schools in 19 districts of the state including Kolkata. As part of the campaign, 50 more schools per district have been added, bringing the total number of schools under the NGC programme to 2850, which also includes the schools for the mentally and physically challenged students. The events of this programme include four individual events, namely, Sit and Draw Competition, Making Posters with a Slogan, Essay Writing Competition and Project Preparation and four group events, namely, Nature Quest, Medicinal Plant Garden, Biodiversity and Eco-club Diary. The eco-clubs of the participating schools of the different districts of the state had conducted these individual and group events since August 2003. As a reward, the winners of these events are being taken to nature camps, which helped cultivate a sense of caring and appreciation for the environment.

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Also, in association with TERI, a series of sit-and-draw competitions were organised as part of the forthcoming events of the WBPCB campaign.

Rural Environment

Key Collaborator: STS Systems

Target Group: NGOs

This programme is aimed towards creating environ-friendly villages with the application of sustainable technologies such as, solid waste composting and vermiculture with vat concept, bee keeping, birds' nests and construction of folk art huts and chatal along with briksharopona pedestal handicraft shelves and environmental art architecture. Growing medicinal plant gardens and preparation of carry bags made of biodegradable materials (like old newspaper) are some of the other key features of these villages. One such eco-friendly scheme has been completed at Pearson Palli Tribal Village, Santeniketan.

Rainwater Harvesting & Conservation of Water

Key Collaborator: Action for Food Production (AFPRO)

Target Group: Officials & Functionaries of Government Departments & Local Bodies

Under the theme "Conservation of Water", the WBPCB organised a workshop at Paribesh Bhaban on 16th January 2004, to create awareness on water conservation and rainwater harvesting, and also to disseminate information on the low cost technological solutions that are available for the same. Under the theme of "Rainwater Harvesting", the WBPCB encourages the implementation of rooftop rainwater harvesting in educational institutions, factory premises, corporate offices and government offices. In this context, the WBPCB have already implemented two demonstration projects with the active participation of Action for Food Production (AFPRO), a Guwahati-based NGO, the sites are at Bidhannagar Municipal Complex-Poura Bhaban and Bidhannagar Govt. College.

As tabulated below, a total number of 85 events were conducted under the Environmental Campaign and Operational Programme of the WBPCB during the year 2003-2004.

TABLE 2.9.1
NO. OF EVENTS CONDUCTED UNDER THE WBPCB
ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGN DURING 2003-2004

Sl. No.	Themes	No of programmes
1.	Environmental Studies	06
2.	Noise Pollution	09
3.	Restriction of Plastic Carry Bag use	32
4.	Forest and wildlife	11
5.	Bio-diversity	09
6.	Nature, natural resources, environment & society	10
7.	Water Conservation	02
8.	Environmental Issues, Law and Practice	01
9.	Rainwater harvesting	02
10.	Personal Hygiene & Public Health	02
11.	Rural Environment	01
	Total	85

A brief summary of the above-mentioned events is given in **Annexure IX**.

SECTION II

MAJOR EVENTS, FAIRS & FESTIVALS

Since long, the West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB) is spearheading activities aimed at focusing public attention and sensitising the general populace on environmental issues. The target groups of the Board have ranged from school and college students, government authorities and general public at large, to spread the message of the various aspects of environmental pollution and restoration and conservation of the natural resources in the state. On a regular basis, the Board have been actively participating at various fairs and festivals held throughout the year as well as organising environmental training programmes with active participation from the departments of the state government, local bodies, industry associations and NGOs. During 2003-2004, the Board has been involved in various awareness-generating events, either by way of conducting them or taking direct participation or rendering financial assistance. A synopsis of such events conducted during 2003-2004 is given below.

- The Board observed the World Environment Day 2003 at the Auditorium of Paribesh Bhaban, Salt Lake on June 5, 2003. Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, Hon'ble Chief Minister of the state and Shri Manabendra Mukherjee, Minister-in-charge, State Departments of Information Technology & Environment, were present on the occasion, in addition to various people from the industries and other dignitaries. A Sit and Draw Competition was organised at the Netaji Indoor Stadium for school children. About 194-odd children of age groups 8-12 and 12-16 years participated in the competition.
- Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal launched the mobile air quality monitoring van on 05.06.2003 at Paribesh Bhaban, Kolkata. Shri Manabendra Mukherjee, Hon'ble Minister-in-charge, State Departments of Information Technology & Environment was present on the occasion.
- The Board participated at the Sukanto Mela at Phoobagan, Kolkata that was held on and from September 13th to 28th, 2003. This fair was organised by Runner, a social-service organisation. The Board displayed important information related to pollution control in West Bengal in order to increase environmental awareness in the state.
- The Board also participated at the CII Consumer Fair held on and from October 17th to 21st, 2003 at Kolkata Maidan. The Board displayed information boards to create awareness on environmental issues, such as on air pollution and its health effects, river water quality, noise pollution, use of sound limiter for control of noise pollution from loudspeakers, microphones etc.
- The Board organised workshops at Paribesh Bhaban, Kolkata with the NGOs located in the northern and southern districts of the state for the control of noise pollution during the festive seasons. These workshops were organised to make the NGOs aware about the hazards of noise pollution generated from loudspeakers and firecrackers as well as to train them to adopt safe practices during the festive days.
- A cultural festival-cum-exhibition titled 'Nodir Shongey Dekha' (Tryst with River) was organised on and from November 28th to 30th, 2003 on the bank of the river Ganga at Princep Ghat. Organised by the Sea Explorer's Institute, the WBPCB

participated in the event and displayed information and models related to water pollution.

- The Board participated at the 17th Industrial India Trade Fair held from December 19, 2003 to December 31, 2003 at Kolkata Maidan. Stretched on a 1000-sq-ft area within the fair premises, the WBPCB pavilion displayed environmental models prepared by school students of West Bengal, alternative fuel kits and fly-ash bricks (displayed on behalf of Durgapur Steel Plant) for public information. The Board also displayed important newspaper clippings as well as information boards on various aspects of environmental pollution of the state, such as air quality of Kolkata and its health effects, noise pollution, effects of plastic waste etc. The WBPCB pavilion also had an exhibition of biodegradable bags made of jute, paper and cloth that can be used as viable alternatives to plastic carry bags. Eminent NGOs, Indian Jute Industries' Research Association (IJIRA) and Jute Manufactures Development Council (JMDC) participated in the exhibition by displaying their eco-friendly products. School students also participated in an anti-plastic campaign within the fair premises.
- The Board also participated at the Poush Mela held at Santeniketan on and from December 23rd to 26th, 2003. The Board displayed information boards and pollution control equipments to create awareness on environmental issues. In addition, the Board exhibited the ambient air quality monitoring van and biodegradable bags prepared by non-governmental organisations in order to help fight plastic menace in the state.
- The Board participated at the Paribesh Mela held at Madhyamgram on and from January 13 to January 17, 2004. The Conference was organised by the Madhyamgram Municipality and Madhyamgram Green March, an empanelled non-governmental organisation of the Board. The WBPCB exhibited information boards and pollution control equipments to create awareness on environmental issues.
- The Board participated at an International Conference on Environment and Development held at Science City, Kolkata held on and from February 4 to February 8, 2004. The Conference was organised by the Institute of Social Studies, an empanelled non-governmental organisation of the Board. The Board displayed information boards to create awareness on environmental issues, such as on air pollution and its health effects, river water quality, noise pollution, use of sound limiter for control of noise pollution from loudspeakers, microphones etc.
- The Board offered financial assistance for the Banabibi Utsab that was held at Kaikhali, Kultali, 24 Pgns (S) on and from February 8th to 12th, 2004. This festival was organised by Department of Sundarban Affairs, Government of West Bengal in association with Nimpith Sri Ramakrishna Mission Ashram.

SECTION III

NATIONAL GREEN CORPS PROGRAMME IN WESTBENGAL

Activities conducted under the National Green Corps Programme during the year 2003-2004

The National Green Corps (NGC) programme introduced by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India is aimed at spreading environmental awareness among school children by involving them in various environment-related activities. Children constitute the most significant fragment of our society. As the foundation for developing responsible citizens begins in the school years, young children are at an ideal age to start learning about environmental issues. By participating in environmental activities under NGC programme, the children would very easily acquire the basic knowledge, skills and values that promote environmental responsibility.

The objectives of the NGC programme are as follows:

- To make children understand environment and environmental problems;
- To provide environmental education opportunities for school children;
- To utilise the unique position of school children as conduits 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 environmental problems facing the society they live in and make them think of solutions; and
- To involve children in action based programmes related to environment in their surroundings.

In order to coordinate the implementation of the National Green Corps programme in West Bengal, a State Steering Committee was constituted. There is another committee in each district i.e. District Implementation and Monitoring Committee (DIMC) headed by the District Magistrate to oversee the implementation of the programme at the district level. So far, the DIMC have been constituted in the districts of Kolkata, Hooghly and Purulia.

The West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB) is the State Nodal Agency for the implementation of this programme in our state. Paschim Banga Vigyan Mancha, a non-government organisation has been implementing the programme on behalf of WBPCB. As tabulated below, under the NGC programme, there are 2850 schools in 19 districts of West Bengal including Kolkata.

TABLE 2.9.2
NO. OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS UNDER THE NGC
PROGRAMME IN WEST BENGAL

Sl. No.	Name of the District	No of participating schools
1.	North 24 Parganas	202
2.	South 24 Parganas	171
3.	Dakshin Dinajpur	131

Sl. No.	Name of the District	No of participating schools
4.	Uttar Dinajpur	89
5.	Bankura	206
6.	Nadia	96
7.	Malda	112
8.	Purulia	100
9.	Birbhum	162
10.	Mushidabad	154
11.	Burdwan	202
12.	Hooghly	152
13.	Dajeeling	139
14.	Jalpaiguri	110
15.	Pashchim Medinipur	166
16.	Purba Medinipur	176
17.	Kolkata	201
18.	Cooch Behar	118
19.	Howrah	163
	Total	2850

Every NGC school has an eco-club. Each of such eco-club has around 50 children, who have joined voluntarily. The children are given theoretical inputs about environment as well as involved in hands-on activities, which helps to cultivate a sense of caring and appreciation for the environment. Each eco-club is being supervised by a teacher-in-charge, selected amongst teachers of the school on the basis of their inclination towards environmental issues. There are one/two Master Trainers in each district to assist the teachers-in-charge for smooth functioning of the eco-club activities.

On World Environment Day 2003, the Board had initiated a campaign for the protection of environment, forests and wildlife, which is being jointly coordinated by the Departments of Environment and Forest. The main target group of the campaign is the students of the eco-clubs of the schools covered under the NGC programme. In order to implement the campaign at the district level, the existing DIMC have been expanded to form an Expanded District level Implementation and

Monitoring Committee for carrying out the various school-related activities of the campaign. The different programmes undertaken by the eco-clubs of the NGC schools are given below.

Seminars/talks/debates: The objectives of the seminars/talks/debates are to inform the student members of the eco-clubs on issues related to exposure to various kinds of environmental pollution, the state of the problem and further actions that could be undertaken by them to minimise (or eliminate) such problem.

Nature camp/Field Visit: The world of nature is a living kaleidoscope of all the plants and animals that live harmoniously in a perfectly balanced system. It is imperative for the young children to understand how nature works before learning the ways to conserve and care for it. During the nature camps and field visits, the student members of the eco-clubs are given worksheets that they have to work on. The worksheet has various aspects related to flora and fauna of the area. These

programmes provide the young minds with an excellent opportunity to grow, by way of observing the relationships between plants and animals.

Plantation programmes: Plantation programme for school children is an important investment in environmental education. Planting trees by children is a campaign aimed to develop interest of children to save environment with earth's lungs. It is a part played, to fight against rapid loss of greenery, by the small tender hands of future planners of the earth.

Cleanliness Drive: With a vision that "Cleanliness begins in schools", the schoolchildren are involved in activities, such as cleaning their school premises, before starting to make efforts to make the world a cleaner place to live in.

Awareness by rallies: The student members of the eco-clubs participate at rallies to make the people in their locality aware of various environmental issues, such as plastic pollution, noise pollution, observation of important days related to environment etc.

Survey: Intensive nature survey works



Eco Club student members participating in an Environmental Awareness Campaign programme

conducted by school children enable them to recognise the intricate problems and devise strategies to eliminate them. For instance, student members of the eco-clubs doing a survey of a nearby wetland would be able to identify the problem easily and thus solve a local environmental problem.

Other activities: The other key activities undertaken by the individual schools and District Committee are eco-meets, planting medicinal plant garden, observation of important days related to environment, such as World Environment Day, World Wetlands Day, National Science Day, Forest Week, etc.