

**CONSERVATION EDUCATION PROGRAMME WITH SCHOOLS
IN BAGHMARA TOWN
2008**



CONDUCTED BY



**SAMRAKSHAN TRUST
MEGHALAYA FIELD OFFICE
WWW.SAMRAKSHAN.ORG**

SUPPORTED BY



**THE RUFFORD SMALL GRANT
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Background

Samrakshan's Meghalaya field office has been working for conservation of wildlife and its habitat in the periphery of the Balpakram National Park and in the surrounded akings (villages) of the landscape since 2004. This landscape falls under the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot. The area is covered with large patch of primary and secondary forest and immensely rich in faunal and floral diversity. These forests are crucial for survival of many endangered wildlife species including Gaur, Serow, Goral, Tiger, Asian Elephant, and many primates including Hoolock Gibbon, Slow Loris, many different species of macaques and lesser cats such as Leopard Cat, Clouded Leopard etc. Under the support of the project, we made an attempt to alter people's attitude towards Wildlife and Nature especially children as they

are an important segment of the community. Eventually we have also targeted adults through participating in various occasions, local functions and by organizing selected calendar events like Wildlife Week, World Environment Day etc.

Our School education programme has targeted four different schools of Baghmara town. We developed a conservation education programme for a period of 45 minutes for different classes from V to X. We discussed and planned the slots of such activities with the schools to design the schedule of the programme. The programme with schools focused on three pronged objectives which intimidate the wildlife population of the landscape –

- a. Anti-hunting – hunting of wild animals is the primary threat to wild animal's population in the landscape. Local community even people from Baghmara town are also involved in such activity to a greater extent. Our programme with children focused to generate more sensitivity towards wild animals that eventually prevent them to harm wild animals and will demoralize their family to involve in hunting as well.
- b. Anti-pet – keeping wildlife as pet in the landscape is a common phenomenon and one of the major causes of removal of wild animals from forests especially species like primates and birds are more vulnerable. Mostly children are interested in catching and keeping of wild animals, so our education programme was designed to deliver the negative impact of this activity towards wildlife of the landscape and meanwhile it also appeals not keep wildlife as pet.
- c. Catapult – catapults are widely used across the landscape towards killing wildlife especially birds. Children are the significant hunter section vis-à-vis use of catapult. They often harm birds and their nest using catapults. Through our education programme efforts will be made to minimize the habit of using catapults.

These objectives evolved from experiences and learning our conservation education initiatives in the landscape in past years and need to be addressed by intense education programme. Our school conservation education programme had targeted those objectives with specific activities in different schools.

Conservation education before August 2008 –

Our team had a verbal agreement with the school management and with senior schoolteachers of the two different schools namely Bethel Academy (BA) and Pioneers' higher secondary school (PHS) towards conducting conservation education programme. We developed the programme by using the Zoo's¹ materials to emphasize on wildlife and nature sensitivity among the students of both schools. These sessions were conducted among the classes from V to X in three groups of two classes like class V-VI, VII-VIII, and IX-X. We scheduled the slot for our conservation education class between classes of school curriculum. There were sessions of 45 minutes in alternate days with different sets of classes. A Series of four different sessions was carried out with every set of classes in both the schools (details in Table No-A). Topics of the sessions varied from class to class and were developed as per understanding and knowledge of the students.

1. Topics and pedagogy –

In the first phase of our education programme in Bethel Academy and Pioneers' secondary school of Baghmara town, we divided students of class V- X in three groups and selected three different topics for the above groups. Moreover, we designed four sessions or activities for three groups on their respective topics. Brief description for three sessions is as follows ---

1. (A) South Asian Bats:

Being smaller children having lesser understanding, we designed the programme of class V-VI with simpler and easier content which will enable them to understand and start admiring which is commonly seen in their daily life. This programme consisted of colouring of different activities of bats such as eating fruits, eating flies, different types

¹ ZOO – Zoo Outreach Organization is a non-government organization based in South India working on environment education in India and abroad.

of bats, sketching of mother and baby bat, discussion, habitat, food, size, threats, importance and its value. This session was a combination of lecture, discussion and role play.

1. (B) South Asian Monkeys:

For the students of classes VII and VIII, the activities were designed with more discussions on four different kinds of monkeys which are also found locally and to enable the students of higher classes to sensitize the varieties of the same species and how important all of them for healthy forest. The contents were developed considering that student can understand easily, handouts containing information about the monkeys were developed for each student as well. The design of the programme contained colouring, showing poster on different primates and discussions over them especially focusing over their diet, characteristics, habitat, threats and values.



1. (C) Hoolock Gibbons:

This topic for bigger students of class IX-X was developed with specified wildlife species with a view to influence them and to have an in depth understanding of specific endangered species which also found in the region. Mature students would be more responsive towards education featuring specific species. This programme consist of mapping ranges of Hoolock Gibbon, discussions over their habitat, diet, characteristics, threats, status and values.

Table No- A:

Sr.	Month	School	Classes	No. of Students	Activity
1	April	PHS	V, VI	71	First
2	April	BA	V, VI	43	First
3	April	PHS	VII, VIII	81	First
4	April	BA	VII, VIII	19	First
5	April	PHS	V, VI	71	Second
6	April	BHS	V, VI	43	Second
7	April	PHS	VII, VIII	81	Second
8	April	PHS	IX, X	46	First
9	April	BA	VII, VIII	19	Second
10	April	BA	V, VI	43	Third
11	April	PHS	VII, VIII	81	Third
12	May	PHS	IX, X	46	Second
13	May	BA	VII, VIII	19	Third
14	May	PHS	V, VI	71	Third
15	May	BA	V, VI	43	Fourth
16	May	PHS	VII, VIII	81	Fourth
17	May	PHS	IX, X	46	Third
18	May	BA	VII, VIII	19	Fourth
19	May	PHS	V, VI	71	Fourth
20	May	PHS	IX, X	46	Fourth

2. The outcome:

In the sessions, students were asked about Hoolock Gibbons, have you all seen it? Where have you seen? How do they call? All the students responded saying – yes, in Baghmara Reserve. Some students grinned with shy but most of them imitated its call. There were differences between the urban school students and rural school students in the level of respond to any type of question irrespective of knowing the answer or not. The students had taken the activities as learning or as an entertainment along with their regular scheduled class. Such conservation

education programme was conducted for the first time in any schools at Baghmara and the students seemed to enjoy and learn something new for the first time in their life which is again informal education.

3. Experience:

In the initial stage, we had undergone training conducted by ZOO and learned new activities but to apply those activities directly and practically in our region were difficult. We thought of focusing on specific wildlife species (Hoolock Gibbons) and tried to do small workshops in schools but there was not enough time to conduct intensive training programs since the time availed by the school administration was inadequate. We just managed to enhance the basic knowledge and it was a general awareness message of wildlife species only. Entire activities are not much effective, and we were unable to involve the teachers at a same time.

This was again our great experience in dealing with the schools in urban areas and with the school management and would help us in designing plans for future educating programme. These are all our practical experiences that we can deal such difficulties in future for improvement. Therefore, we thought of reviewing our objectives and focus only on specific and the direct effective tools that would help us in communicating conservation message in changing attitudes directly.

Conservation education programme after August 2008

From the first phase of our education programme we realized that we would have to focus on a specific objective which will have direct impact on children and people of Baghmara town towards conservation of wildlife and nature then to simply organizing general environment education programs in future.

The programme was designed towards reaching objectives mentioned above. It introduces children with different wildlife species which occurs in the region towards enhancing their motivation and positive attitude towards wildlife. Then the programme followed by basic wildlife knowledge and specific message towards addressing local issues pertaining to the wildlife.

Towards delivering the programme an initial meeting and discussion with management and teachers of the schools was undertaken and we scheduled our conservation education programs along with their existing classes. The pedagogy of the programme was discussion and power-point presentation. We developed four different presentations on different issues however we applied three presentations so far in four schools. Roughly, a presentation takes around 45 minutes and it was a combination of lecture; discussion and role play. We started the programme in around August and carried out till annual examination i.e. December 2008. Tables placed below depicts sessions conducted with different schools in Baghmara town during the period (Table No – B, C, D & E).

Table No - B

Bethel Academy – Baghmara			
Sr.	Date	Class	Programme
1.	14 th August 2008	V	First module
2.	21 st August 2008	VI	First module
3.	22 nd August 2008	VII	First module
4.	28 th August 2008	VIII	First module
5.	29 th August 2008	V	Second module
6.	4 th September 2008	VI	Second module
7.	11 th September 2008	VII	Second module
8.	12 th September 2008	VIII	Second module
9.	18 th September 2008	V	Third module
10.	19 th September 2008	VI	Third module
11.	25 th September 2008	VII	Third module
12.	26 th September 2008	VIII	Third module

Table No - C

Don Bosco School – Baghmara			
Sr.	Date	Class	Programme
1.	13 th August 2008	V	First module
2.	18 th August 2008	VI	First module
3.	20 th August 2008	VII	First module
4.	25 th August 2008	VIII	First module
5.	27 th August 2008	V	Second module
6.	1 st September 2008	VI	Second module
7.	3 rd September 2008	VII	Second module
8.	8 th September 2008	VIII	Second module
9.	10 th September 2008	V	Third module
10.	15 th September 2008	VI	Third module
11.	17 th September 2008	VII	Third module
12.	22 nd September 2008	VIII	Third module

Table No - D

Jawaharlal Navodaya Vidyalaya – Baghmara			
Sr.	Date	Class	Programme
1.	18 th August 2008	VI	First module
2.	20 th August 2008	VII	First module
3.	25 th August 2008	VIII	First module
4.	26 th August 2008	VI	Second module
5.	27 th August 2008	VII	Second module
6.	1 st September 2008	VIII	Second module
7.	2 nd September 2008	VI	Third module
8.	3 rd September 2008	VII	Third module
9.	8 th September 2008	VIII	Third module

Table No - E

Pioneers' Higher Secondary School – Baghmara			
Sr.	Date	Class	Programme
1.	29 th August 2008	V	First module
2.	12 th September 2008	VI	First module
3.	19 th September 2008	VII	First module
4.	26 th September 2008	VIII	First module
5.	3 rd October 2008	V	Second module
6.	17 th October 2008	VI	Second module
7.	24 th October 2008	VII	Second module
8.	31 st October 2008	VIII	Second module
9.	7 th November 2008	V	Third module
10.	21 st November 2008	VI	Third module
11.	28 th November 2008	VII	Third module
12.	5 th December 2008	VIII	Third module

Students start asking more questions and getting more vocal compared to the beginning. Questions pertaining to the wildlife indicate their curiosity of knowing more on the subject. We understand, this programme will enhance their interest towards the wildlife and enrich their nature sensitivity.

It is our pleasure of thanking four schools for their commitment and assistance towards conducting this conservation education programme at their respective schools. We are grateful to the Rufford small grant programme for their support for the same.