

## Initiative 6: Himalayan Students' Nature Awareness Campaign

*Facilitating development of a culture of creative nature based learning*

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#### Background

Creating environmentally aware and active citizens is crucial for the future environmental development. Therefore, focusing on young students is an imperative. However, across the globe, young people, who are often considered as the most marginalised group, face significant hurdles in getting their voices heard and valued. As elsewhere in the country, the wild race for professional subjects (e.g., Engineering, Medical, Business Management, etc.) has resulted in gross disconnect of Himalayan young students with nature and its components. Further, in spite of enough talent available, the lack of exposure, opportunities, resources, modern infrastructure and poor access to subject experts, the young students with innovative ideas always find it difficult to pursue their ideas/liking during higher studies. All this subsequently has resulted in growing disinterest in science in general and natural sciences in particular, which has far reaching implications. This initiative attempts to find an amicable solution by way of motivating young talents, facilitating development of a culture of creative nature-based learning. The main idea is to provide a platform to young students across Himalaya wherein they get regular opportunity of nature learning. The young students, thus involved, would be nurtured and provided enough exposure on nature, its value for life, complexities, and vulnerabilities through their linkage with subject experts and specialized institutions/laboratories.

*...Today's children are much less connected to the natural world than at any other time in history. This natural connection has been replaced in various ways – greater interaction with the digital ('plugged-in') world, less unstructured outdoor play, and via growing urbanization. This decreased exposure to nature has consequences that we are just beginning to understand...*

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Excerpts from *Researching the Child-Nature Connection*. A White Paper prepared by Nicole L. Migliarese for California State Parks' Children in Nature Campaign.

The earlier experiences of the institute (i.e., GBPIHED) through various programmes (e.g., the in-house Conservation Education programme of GBPIHED, World Environment Day Programmes, the National Green Corps – NGC project sponsored by Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), U-PROBE project sponsored by DST, and National Nature Camping

*Schools have a vital role to play in preparing our young people to take their place as informed, engaged, and empowered citizens who will be pivotal in shaping the future of our communities, our province, our country, and our global environment.*

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Ontario Ministry of Education, *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future* (2007).

Programme of MoEF, etc.) have provided enough evidences that the students in the region have talent, creative aptitude and willingness to participate in various programmes of local, national and regional importance. The analyses of responses under various programmers have further suggested that the student participants in the region are enthusiastic about learning and pursuing advance studies in areas of societal and environmental concern. Following these results and realizing that any investment on this

environmental concern. Following these results and realizing that any investment on this

group of stakeholders will have long-lasting implications for the region in general and concerned participant in particular, the Institute has initiated establishing **Himalayan Student's Nature Awareness Campaign** towards facilitating development of a culture of creative nature-based learning right from the beginning.

### **The initiative**

Under this initiative, among others, the Institute would attempt to institutionalize a process of active and sustained interaction with and amongst young students of the Himalayan region by facilitating the Himalayan Student's Nature Awareness Campaign each year as a prelude to International Biodiversity Day (IBD) and World Environment Day (WED) events.

Himalayan Student's Nature Awareness Campaign attempts to provide a platform and exposure to budding students whereby they could appreciate the environmental, socio-economic and life-support values of the nature. The initiative aims to bring together students of diverse Himalayan provinces and with diverse socio-economic backgrounds, to understand and interact on various environmental issues concerning the Himalaya.

### **The objectives**

This campaign broadly envisages:

- (i) to communicate excitement of understanding and working with different aspects of nature.
- (ii) to create sense of belongingness and motivate students to connect with nature and pursue nature-based studies.
- (iii) to link such students with programmes and schemes of national/provincial importance so as to inculcate a sense of pride.
- (iv) to promote promising students to take up leadership role for motivating other children in the region.
- (v) to facilitate handholding of young environmental leaders (students and/or schools) by premier institutions/organizations.

### **The outcomes**

The envisaged outcomes of this initiative include:

- **Development of a functional network of motivated Himalayan School Children's** who are excited to take up nature-based studies while pursuing higher education.
- **Promotion of a cadre of young environmental leaders** having a sense of belongingness with the Himalaya and its people.
- **Establishment of linkages of enthusiastic and promising students/schools with premier institutions/organizations** to strengthen long-term handholding.

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