

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Awareness campaign on 'Beat Plastic Pollution- theme for World Environment Day 2018' in Puri beach, Odisha of India

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ABSTRACT

There is a dire need of environmental awareness on every aspects of conservation of natural resources and biodiversity so as to inculcate a responsibility among the citizens of tomorrow. Plastic pollution is an emerging threat to the marine biodiversity. Swallowing of plastics by aquatic organisms leading to mortality is one of the harmful impact in the aquatic environment. Raising awareness amongst the public of the harm caused by plastic pollution (education and outreach programs to modify behaviour) is one of the mitigative measures that can be taken to reduce threats and risks of plastic waste and plastic pollution. The present communication highlights about the awareness campaign conducted as part of World Environment Day celebrations 2018 wherein the theme was Beat Plastic Pollution and India was the global host. Keywords: Plastic, Pollution, environmental awareness

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INTRODUCTION

An emerging threat to the marine biodiversity has been plastic waste which do not readily biodegrade but persist in the aquatic environment for long periods. Swallowing of plastics by aquatic organisms leading to mortality is one of the harmful impact in the aquatic environment. Plastic pollution in freshwater and marine environments have been identified as a global problem originating from land-based sources with the remainder coming from ocean-based sources. [1].

Raising awareness amongst the public of the harm caused by plastic pollution (education and outreach programs to modify behaviour) is one of the mitigative measures that can be taken to reduce threats and risks of plastic waste and plastic pollution. Environmental literacy is not just knowledge of environmental and ecological concepts but it incorporates a set of skills profound to carry out sustainable behaviours, attitude and concern for the environment which then result into profound motivation to perform environmental behaviours. [2]

"Beat Plastic Pollution" was the theme for World Environment Day 2018 celebrated on 5th June 2018. India was the global host of the event urging the citizens to come together to combat this environmental challenge. Due to plastic's versatility, light weight and relatively inexpensive production, the use of single use plastic items has become widespread. Today, the world is living in a "plastic age" to the extent that life without plastic seems unimaginable. It is estimated that the world production of plastics has increased exponentially from 2.3 million tons in 1950 to 335 million tons in 2016 and is expected to triple by 2050 while consuming 20 percent of the global annual crude oil [3].

According to United Nations, 13 million tonnes of plastic leak every year into our oceans, where it adversely threatens corals and valuable marine life. "Plastic pollution is a global problem, yet 60% of all plastic that ends up in our oceans comes from only 6 countries in Asia. By addressing the problem here, we can make great strides toward a planet free of plastic pollution," said Regional Director for UN Environment in Asia and the Pacific [4].

As part of World Environment Day celebration 2018, author was involved in conducting and facilitating awareness campaign on the theme 'Beat Plastic Pollution' in Puri Beach (Odisha State) of India. Puri is the hometown of Lord Jagannath, who is revered by people across India. It is also one of the most important sites on Hindu pilgrims' annual calendar. The town is also famous for annual Lord Jagannath's Rath Yatra.

The Puri Beach and Jagannath Temple are visited by thousands of people daily. Unclean beach has been a cause for concern for the tourists and hoteliers at Puri for several years. It was seen that tourists do not find a clean beach to sit and spend time with their family.



Environmental awareness implies knowledge about environment and inculcates values and required skills to solve environmental issues and it is a initial step leading to carry responsible citizenship behavior [5]. The aim of this public awareness campaign was to address local people (specific target group) and to increase their knowledge about plastic pollution and reduce the single use of plastic.

Through this 3 day campaign it was hoped that this shall lead to change in thinking and in behaviour towards this environment problem. The plastic pollution adversely affect oceans; hence the local communities including fishermen were made aware about the harmful effects of plastic through nukad natak (performed by school students) in local language. Many plastic products are designed for single use without planning for the potential after-use pathways. This Environmental Education would help individuals to acquire essential knowledge to take positive action towards a better environment as small steps by them can become agents of change like using cloth bags while shopping, reusable/refillable water bottles instead of plastic bottles, avoiding plastic straws etc.

More than 200 students participated in the beach cleaning activity and conducted mass rally with placards/leaflets as students can become catalysts in such kind of movement leading to the development of environmental awareness. The important goal of science education now is to develop local people's knowledge and awareness on severe environmental issue.

CONCLUSION

There is a dire need of environmental awareness on every aspects of conseration of natural resources and biodiversity so as to inculcate a responsibility among the citizens of tomorrow. The need of the hour is to make changes in our everyday lives to reduce the heavy burden of plastic pollution and explore sustainable alternatives. And to shape people's attitudes such public awareness campaigns are instrumental in promoting positive environmental actions. These activities will be very helpful in

sensitising public towards environmental problems and generating Eco-Friendly habits. It is hoped that the people have long-term lasting behavioural changes towards the use of plastics.

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