## Greening minds greening communities.....



The Mulshi, Mawal and Karjat talukas lie in the Northern Western Ghats a hotspot of biodiversity. Pressures of unsustainable development destroy the rich biodiversity in the area. While development is aspired by the population, it is essential that they have the requisite knowledge and abilities to make the decisions that foster sustainability and result in long term benefit.

The best way to attempt to bring a change in the society is through children. They have no vested interests and are the single most important influence in any family. Schools and schools children are very effective conduits to society.

This joint programme of the Tata Power Company and the Bharati Vidyapeeth Institute of Environment Education and Research, Pune aims to reach out to community. It focuses on knowledge building, skill development and harnessing of traditional knowledge to foster knowledge transfer and support the design of sustainability initiatives.

25 schools and 1500 students are a part of the programme. Two modules focusing on fostering understanding about land change and assessment of handprint and footprint of students have been implemented in the month of July 2014.

## Module 1: Let's understand our village

The programme in schools commenced with an interactive module, introducing students to past and present environment of their own village using 'Google Earth'. An audio visual containing slides of the unique flora and fauna of the region was screened. Students were asked to identify the flora and fauna. Their enthusiastic replies made the session highly interactive. Though 'Google Earth' satellite images, students were taken into the past and were asked to comment on changes by comparing the past and present satellite images. While some villages showed a few changes, students observed several major changes in others. Issues related to 'development' and 'sustainable development' were then introduced and discussed.

To ensure that this discussion is carried to their homes, each student was a given set of three cards. They have been asked to discuss past, present and future scenario of their villages with their parents, grandparents and other elder in the villages and make drawing depicting their visions. There drawing will be discussed in the forthcoming month.



A student explaining the key species of Western Ghats





Discussion among students about land use change using Google Images

Discussion about biodiversity and landuse changes of the area helped in consolidation of students knowledge about their areas and also provided an opportunity for them to present their inherent knowledge about their village.

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## Module 2: Assessment of ecological handprint and footprint





Students viewing their handprint and footprint assessment



To ensure that students developed an understanding of the quantum of resources they use, this module introduced the concept of highly simplified ecological footprint using a specially designed poster. The poster contains examples from the students own lives and quantifies the ecological footprint as small, medium and large.

Using a specially designed format with related questions, students were asked to assess their ecological footprint. The fact that the ecological footprint could be offset with a handprint was then introduced with various local examples.

This module has not only provided a baseline on the ecological footprint of every student but also provided insight into their dependence on natural resources and the action and initiatives they can take at individual, family and community level to make it sustainable.

As a measure of their handprint, students from all the schools have immediately undertaken an initiative to make new note-books out of the remaining pages of their old note-books.



Students calculating their handprint and footprint



A school teacher involved in rating his school using the poster

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