

WATER-WISE

Report on event held to discuss the provisions of India's laws on water pollution on January 14-15, 2022 in Delhi-NCR.

ABSTRACT: The workshop was conducted over the space of two days on the topic of water conservation. The event discussed provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974, Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act 1977, and Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The beneficiaries of this event were students of St. Columba's School, New Delhi.

Conducted by:
Mr. Pravar
Dennison, Volunteer

Under the Guidance
of:
Ms. Charvi Kumar,
Head - Legal Aid
Centre, Symbiosis
Law School, NOIDA

CONCEPT NOTE

Water-Wise: Judicious Use of Water and Our Right to Clean and Hygienic Water

Mr. Pravara Dennison, Member, of the Legal Aid Cell of Symbiosis Law School, Noida under the guidance of Ms. Charvi Kumar conducted a 2-day workshop on the topic of water wise discussing provisions of The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974, The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act 1977, and article 21 of the Constitution with students of St. Columba's School, New Delhi

“771 million people – 1 in 10 – lack access to safe Water...” ~ **Special Rapporteur of United Nations Human Rights Council**

The water crisis is a health crisis. Nearly 1 million people die each year from water, sanitation and hygiene-related diseases which could be reduced with access to safe water or sanitation. Every 2 minutes a child dies from a water-related disease. Access to safe water and sanitation contributes to improved health and helps prevent the spread of infectious disease. It means reduced child and maternal mortality rates. It means reduced physical injury from constant lifting and carrying heavy loads of water. As we face the COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever access to safe water is critical to the health of families around the world.

The aim of the workshop was to educate the students about the importance of water and how as educated and responsible Indians we can take actions when we see gross negligence on part of the governmental agencies for providing citizens clean and safe to use water.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the event were:

1. To sensitize students on the conditions of the world surrounding water resources,
2. To spread awareness of their constitutional rights and ability to seek accountability for violation of the same from government agencies,
3. To enable students to undertake water conscious activities in school and at home.

PRELIMINARY PREPARATIONS

To fulfil the objectives of the 2-day workshop the following preparations were made:

1. Contacted the Head of Outreach at St. Columba's School, New Delhi – Ms. Grace David,
2. Presented a concept note surrounding the session to the Principle of the school – Brother Miranda,
3. Preliminary research surrounding the Water Act 1974 and 1977 and linkage to article 21 of the Indian Constitution,
4. Preparing Power Point Presentation for the session on 14th and 15th January,
5. Conducted the event in an Online platform via video conferencing facilities.

CONDUCTING THE EVENT

The event was conducted through Zoom video conferencing for Class 8 to 12 of St. Columba's School, New Delhi on 14th and 15th January, 2022. Mr. Pravar on the day 1 interacted with the students and sensitized the students on the importance of water as a resource. Further, the students were made aware of the scarcity of water in the world and how it effects each and every single individual.

On day 2 the students were introduced to the concept of right to life as crystalized under article 21 of the Indian Constitution while linking it to the right of access to clean and usable water. Further the students were engaged in a small question round where they were asked to express why should government agencies take accountability for the water resources when people can pay and buy water from market places which can be used for drinking and other usages.

After the question round the concept of a welfare state was introduced allowing the students to understand why the government takes action to better the life of its citizens and why legislations such as **The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974 and The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act 1977** were enacted.

Finally, the students were briefly introduced to the concept of state and central pollution control boards along with a brief introduction of the newly formulated Jal Sakti Ministry in the Indian government.

The students were also introduced to several techniques they can use to conserve water on a daily basis in their homes and at school.

RESPONSE OF THE TARGET AUDIENCE & FUTURE PLAN OF ACTION

The students were responsive throughout the session and the teachers present along with the coordinator also partook in answering questions and presented their valuable feedback throughout the session.

Several student members and the Teacher In-charge, Mrs. Rashthree Pant, of the Environment Club of the school also came forward to present the idea of taking an oath to educate their fellow students and take up the cause of water conservation.

FEEDBACK

Positive feedback was received from the side of the school authorities. The Head of Outreach Ms. Grace David was keen to take up further sessions in the future in the physical format once covid-19 related restrictions were relaxed.

The students at the end of the session also provided positive feedback.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the 2-day webinar was able to communicate to the students the importance of water and our rights connected to water. Additionally, the session proved to move the school to take eco-conscious decisions and also educated the students and other stakeholders present in the two sessions on the legal provisions and accountability of the government in maintaining a certain standard for water distribution.

A challenge was faced when a recording of the session or pictures were requested from the school, the school administration was hesitant to allow clicking of pictures or sharing video of the session due to the presence of children in the session who were below the age of 18. The school insisted that without the permission of the parents/ or legal guardian they cannot share the images for the same.