

Empowering with Energy Efficiency and Sustainability Skills

Energy Efficiency is the key to a sustainable future. BRPL–TERI’s energy-awareness campaign ‘Energy Wise, Energy Rise’ (EWER) that targets students from classes 6 to 8 in 100 government schools of Delhi concluded its first phase with a session on ‘Empowering with Energy Efficiency and Sustainability Skills’.

Delivering the welcome address, Dr Ajay Mathur, Director-General, TERI, said, “EWER is a very important initiative as it is reaching out to that part of the citizenry which will be active tomorrow and the day after. Children are easier to shape and influence and they will likely remember these learnings throughout their lifetime.”

Mr Amal Sinha, CEO, BRPL, delivering the Inaugural Address, said, “EWER is a logical outcome of our belief that we can ‘do well by doing good’. Since we recognize children as the rightful stakeholders of our society, it is our responsibility to reach out to them and help them shape a safer, healthier planet. We plan to build on our learnings from the first year, as EWER will eventually reach out to 300 schools and 90,000 students in the next two years.”

He thanked the Delhi government for putting its weight behind the campaign. He added, “All corporates have a social responsibility towards the environment, and we are keenly aware of the global and local environmental challenges we face. Campaigns like EWER can play a key role in turning students into change-makers and promoting the integration of renewables with the existing way of life.”

Talking about his decision to support EWER, Mr Manish Sisodia, Deputy Chief Minister, Government of NCT of Delhi, in his Keynote Address, said, “I liked the topic of energy efficiency as I consider it very important. When we tell children to save energy, we usually cite the cost factor. The fear of higher electricity bills doesn’t stay for long in children’s minds. We have to tell them that everything available to us is given by nature, and therefore natural resources are precious. Programmes like EWER should focus on the larger canvas of the human contract with nature.” He added that educators can play a key role in devising and improving such programmes by giving inputs and feedback.

The panel discussion on ‘Improving Energy Efficiency Participation’ threw up some interesting and thought-provoking insights from the panelists. They were unanimously of the view that the campaign should be expanded to include both government and private schools. Parents as well as the larger society should also be involved to bring in wider participation and strengthen the sense of belonging with the city. There should be more hands-on activities by way of experiments with renewable energy, and students who lack a scientific temper should be involved through theatre and debate groups that discuss environmental challenges. Inter-school competitions can be conducted and dedicated eco clubs can be formed to increase the frequency of student engagement. Another way of increasing participation is by attending the parent-teacher meetings in schools and tapping the parents as well so that they can take back the message of sustainability to the larger society. E-booklets and videos can also be distributed

free of cost to the targeted schools for later use and wider dissemination to reach students other than those targeted by such campaigns.

Rajiv Yaduvanshi, Principal Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi, said that awareness campaigns should particularly focus on cleanliness and saving energy. The current generation is going through a massive social transformation and is already quite aware of the concept of efficiency. Energy-awareness campaigns must build on and supplement the existing knowledge. Additionally, the school curriculum should include the idea of turning waste into energy and add more practical knowledge. The larger goal should be to encourage young students to think of what they can do for their surroundings and their city.

Mr Praveen Saxena, CEO, Skill Council for Green Jobs, said, “Renewables have been part of the school curriculum for quite some time, so children are aware of the fact that we have limited resources and that renewable energy is the solution. In view of this, environment-awareness campaigns should target even younger students who don’t have access to such information through school syllabi.” He also stressed that teachers should lead by example and act as role models for students.

Ambassador Deepak Vohra, who joined the session briefly, said that India’s big advantage is that it is the youngest country in the world. Younger people adapt to new ideas and technologies much more readily than others. “When technology and the youth meet, we will be unstoppable”, he said.

Mr Amit Kumar, Mentor, Department of Energy and Environment, TERI School of Advanced Studies (SAS), who moderated the panel discussion, said that in order to further maximize the outcomes of campaigns like EWER, children should be trained to carry out energy and water audits of not only their homes but also their surroundings.

The discussion also focused on how to persuade more businesses to support environmental campaigns and how to design a bigger, mass-scale programme on the lines of EWER. In order to bring more businesses on board for environmental CSR, Mr Abhishek Ranjan, Head-Renewables, BRPL suggested that experience sharing can be promoted and officials from other businesses can be invited to attend EWER workshops to give them a ringside view of how young citizens can be turned into agents of change. “Being a regulated entity, we are limited in terms of our geographical reach, but we are more than willing to share our experiences with other corporates so that this message could be taken far and wide”, he said.