

WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2024

LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

February 7-9, 2024
India Habitat Centre, New Delhi



A Tata Steel Foundation – TERI Initiative

Title: Leading Collective Action for a Greener Future

Date: 8th February 2024

Time: 2:00 – 3:30 PM

Given the impacts of climate change on our livelihoods and ecosystems, the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are considered as one of the most profound tools for promoting sustainable development and improving the future quality of life, especially younger generations.¹ Article 12 of the Paris Agreement highlights the role of the people (especially youth) in bringing about sustainable climate action. It is also amply clear that young people will be disproportionately vulnerable to adverse climate outcomes and responsible for navigating future climate scenarios. India, the youngest nation globally, has the largest youth population of 80.8 crore people and exhibits maximum chances to lead the path to climate action for a greener future.² Education and collective action are key components of the global response to climate change, and crucial for the rapid and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs.

Building on the above, 'The Green School' a joint initiative between Tata Steel Foundation and TERI, was designed and formally launched in April 2017 to prepare students across Tata Steel's operational areas through developing their critical, interdisciplinary, and holistic thinking related to environmental conservation. It works in schools through curriculum linkages, action projects, and capacity-building activities on four broad environmental themes: Energy, Water, Forest & Biodiversity, and Waste, interlinking them with climate change and SDGs. The recent objectives of project have been to (i) build advanced capacities of educators and students, (ii) bring out behavioural change to enable students and teachers to

¹ (2021) *The Paris Agreement for young people*. rep. UNICEF.

² (2023) *National Youth Policy—Will it help India reap the promised demographic dividend?* rep. ORF.

understand how their responsible actions can benefit the environment, and (iii) empower and promote responsible leadership among students.

Working in the remotest areas of Eastern India, The Green School initiative intends to make children stronger towards pro-environment behaviour—thus contributing in safeguarding the interests of vulnerable communities who bear the maximum brunt of the current environmental conditions despite their limited involvement in its genesis. The Green School has reached to around 23,000 students, 371 teachers, and 5000 community members in and around 47 schools.

For achieving the objectives of the initiative, the initiative focuses on equipping young students, teachers, and local communities with the necessary tools to become climate resilient. Students acted as ‘Green Buddies’, taking the lead in promoting environment-conscious behaviour amongst other students and community at large. The initiative empowers students through peer education, knowledge transfers systems, working towards a distinct and collaborative pedagogy for different categories of schools (Early and Experienced). The purpose of categorization is to make a collaborative framework among schools at different levels and help each other to transition towards Evolved Schools. Furthermore, the phase enhances the functioning of Environment Management Committee (EMC), an action group formed in each school to act as a change maker in the society and community to act on environmental issues. The Initiative also focuses to revitalize ecological and traditional sustainable practices ingrained in Indian civilizations by promoting a pan India social media campaign, “Green Harmony: Nurturing Eco Awareness.” The campaign encourages young school children to actively participate in the upkeep and preservation of these priceless facets of India’s cultural legacy.

The project learnings were displayed at the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) since 2019. The Green School was highlighted in the thematic track session “Younger Collectives for Greener Future” at the WSDS last year from February 22–24, 2023. This was the only thematic session where children were the speakers and were sharing action points for a greener future. As part of WSDS 2024, the initiative plans to exhibit schools as ‘centre of change’ by spreading the message of generating pro-environmental behaviour in early schools and communities. Also, it will explore case studies on how schools are spreading environmental consciousness among communities through Community Impact Projects (CIPs). Furthermore, the initiative will organize panel discussions where students will express the notable initiatives taken by them to conserve the environment. It will be organized in three stages at school level, expanding the scope by joining hands with early schools and community level.

Thirty students accompanied with 26 teachers from 26 schools and seven remote areas of Jharkhand and Odisha are travelling to Delhi to experience WSDS 2024 and also present their work to the global audience. As part of the Summit, a three-day visit to New Delhi is organized, including a session at WSDS, interactions with experts, training, and a field visit to Recycling Unit at Greater Noida for the participants.