



Memo No.

Date.

Institutional Distinctiveness

The entire world is dealing with the challenges posed by climate change. It is also considered a significant challenge to achieving sustainable development. Policy makers around the world are trying to find ways to deal with such problems. Sagar Mahavidyalaya is located right at the heart of Sagar Island, an ecologically sensitive area of the larger Sundarbans. The island is facing severe climate change related catastrophes and weather extremities. Because of its unique geographical location, Sagar Mahavidyalaya considers climate change awareness as well as sustainable development practices as the main thrust area of the college. We believe that as a college of this vulnerable island, both the faculties and students can contribute to this critical issue.

Over the last few years, the island is battered by some of the most severe cyclones to have recorded in India and the monsoons in the region has become wetter and more destructive. Similarly, rising sea levels and consequent erosion of the coast has been posing severe challenges to the local communities who depend largely on fishing, farming, and other agricultural activities for their livelihood. The problems faced by Sagar Island are unique, which demands that centralized top-down solutions often need to be rethought before applying to local context like Sagar. Thus, even public policies need to be evolved from the ground up and this requires the educated youth of the island to be aware of climate change, its impact on the island as well as strategies that could help the local community to address some of the devastating consequences of extreme climatic events.

Following this thrust area, the college identified climate change awareness among the youth and community to be the specific area to focus on, and programs and strategies were devised to address the objectives of this thrust area. The long-term goal of the project was to equip the youth of Sagar to be agents of climate action in the island, and spearhead campaigns and activities which would help the community to devise local strategies while being educated about global phenomena that decide their fate in the island.

To roll out the objective of the project, educating the youth and the community about sustainable development goals (SDGs) as well as equipping them with tools to look at localized climatic events as part of the larger trends in climate change was practiced by the college. SDG related talks and seminars were organized by the college and the students were encouraged to do outreach programs in the form of street plays in public places to take the message to the larger masses. Some of the themes of SDGs as well as the Millennium Development Goals that particularly affected Sagar – like marine pollution, energy conservation as well as the necessity to implement solutions for clean and safe drinking water – were identified to be the main focus area of the outreach programs and students were specially asked to bring up with local solutions which are sustainable and which have been practised in their locations for generations. The college collaborates with the local self-government in organising climate change related events as well lend necessary help in the form of materials and volunteers during cyclones or monsoon related distress.



SAGAR MAHAVIDYALAYA

Affiliated to University of Calcutta, Under 2(f) & 12(B) of UGC


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Following the close working of the college with the local community, there has been a significant improvement among the people about climate change awareness and local communities are talking about the need to build resilience as well as think of innovative solutions that could help them navigate difficult times. The students volunteer in various environment protection events and are the torchbearers of the goals of sustainable development in the island. Thus, the college makes constant efforts to reach to the largest section of the local population through these activities and its role in addressing the future challenges that Sagar faces in terms of climate change is widely accepted within the community as well.


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