

The School Sparrow



From the Editor's Desk

It is my privilege to bring out the first edition of "THE SCHOOL SPARROW"--- the Sustainable Sanitation and Urban Management Newsletter which is the result of the felt need for better dissemination of Sanitation Issues. Over the years, GTZ has been able to build a strong activity based programme in the urban areas in India with focus on measureable environmental outcomes. It has received strong support from Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, and other Ministries like Ministry of Environment & Forests in its endeavour.

The dynamism of the Principal Advisor, GTZ Dr. J. Bischoff has provided the desired support leading to the initiation of many new ideas backed by meaningful engagement in the sector. We would try to improve with every issue and make this newsletter a VOICE of the Indian Schools and municipal bodies on Sanitation and Urban Development.

We hope to bring out the "THE SCHOOL SPARROW" every month with the help of our Editorial Team and hope that it would be able to meet the expectations of the readers. We would welcome suggestions for its improvement.

--SANJAY

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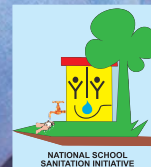


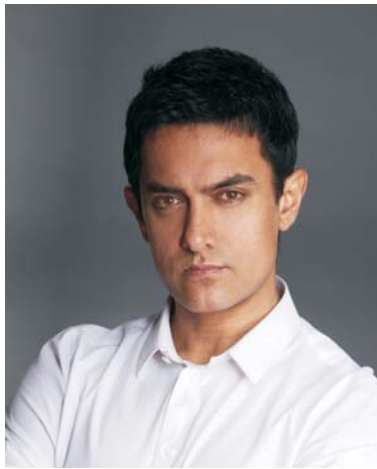
TOWARDS CITY WIDE SANITATION



**Ministry of Urban Development &
Ministry of Human Resource Development**

gtz





AAMIR KHAN

is BRAND AMBASSADOR for
NATIONAL SCHOOL SANITATION INITIATIVE!

The versatile actor who is an inspiration for school children in the country would be instrumental in rejuvenating the School Health & Wellness Clubs promoted by CBSE—by giving them a clear agenda of action. A School Sanitation Manual is being released for the students and teachers to follow. The Union Ministry of Urban Development, has issued a diktat to all the Urban Local Bodies consisting mainly of municipalities, to give special attention to the schools in their jurisdiction and provide them clean water and safe disposal facilities for the waste. They have also been asked to improve the sanitary conditions of all the schools in India with special focus on girl students.

Aamir Khan is scheduled to administer a Sanitation Pledge for all the school children of the country.

News

Benchmarking of Municipal Services: Ministry of Urban Development adopted service level benchmarks for water supply, sewerage, solid waste management, etc. in the year 2008, many of which are closely related to identifiable environmental outcomes and provide a useful framework for mainstreaming of environmental concerns in urban development. A pilot project is being implemented to institutionalize benchmarking in 26 cities. GTZ is amongst the key bilateral and multilateral agencies that are supporting the project. Other agencies include WSP, DFID, US AID, JICA and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Final Report is expected soon.

WHAT A BRAND AMBASSADOR is supposed to do?

Mr. Aamir Khan would focus on the practical aspects of sanitation in its right perspective on the Personal Hygiene, Sanitation, Clean Toilet Habits, Safe Drinking Water, Separate Toilets for the Girl Child, Proper Disposal of Waste and Waste Water, Waste Water Recycling, Waterless Urinals, Waste Segregation and Composting, Food Hygiene, and Creation & Conservation of Green Spaces.

Role of Sanitation Ambassador

1. Brand Ambassador would do a sustained educative media campaign on sanitation, personal hygiene and green measures for the school children. This Mass Awareness Generation Campaign would be through various communication medium, such as Television, Radio, Internet, etc. to promote Good Hygiene, Best Practices in Sanitation and Creation & Conservation of Green Spaces
2. An inspiration for all the school children in the country
3. Chief Guest / Guest of Honour at National Level Workshops
4. Guest of honour at the National Urban Water Awards given by President of India each year
5. Chief Guest at the proposed Annual National School Sanitation Awards for conferring them every year
6. Many other roles would evolve with time. The underlying fact is that the country's school children would seek inspiration from him.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL SANITATION INITIATIVE

Today in India 30.66 million urban households which form 35.49% of the urban households suffer inadequate access to sanitation facilities and either defecate in the open or use shared and community lavatories. Besides being an issue of human dignity, this practice results in unsafe disposal of human excreta which has a severe impact on environmental and health outcomes. The inadequate and unsanitary disposal of excreta leads to contamination of ground water and surface water. The loss due to diseases arising out of poor sanitation for children under 14 years in urban areas alone is estimated at Rs. 500 crores



at 2001 prices. A related concern is that of manual scavenging which has not been eliminated in our country even 60 years after Independence.

The need of this Initiative is highlighted by the existing scenario of a general deprivation of safe hygienic facilities in schools which many a times lack safe drinking water provisions and often do not have any kind of toilet or urinal. Separate facilities for girls may not even exist at many urban schools. And where they do exist they are so poorly maintained or so few in number, that most children do not use them. Instead they find a place to relieve themselves in some other place which could be a stinking corner of the school compound or even outside the school. In this scenario, growing girls normally have to endure this hardship, and this

often results in them dropping out of school or absenting themselves after recess when they go home and do not return to school. Thus, the sanitation facilities have a direct bearing on enrolment and retention of girls in the schools.

The 'National Urban Sanitation Policy' launched in 2008 gives the first dictum that the most imperative requirement to achieve 100% sanitation is “Awareness Generation and Behavioural Change”.

“Educating them Young” is the key to behavioural change. So it was soon realized that the best target group for achieving this great national goal is that of the school children who have proven themselves through the unprecedented success of “No Tobacco” as well as “ Say No to Crackers” campaigns. This is a testimony to the fact that given the opportunity, the enlightened children of our nation could do wonders.

So, relying upon the strength of the younger generation, it was decided to launch a countrywide “National School Sanitation Initiative” in collaboration with the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MoHRD), Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) & GTZ to effectuate a quantifiable achievement in the provisions and practices of sanitation in the country.

The initiative basically aims at Awareness Generation and Behavioural Change by focussing on proper Sanitation, its disposal and waste segregation in order to achieve “Open Defecation Free Life” for all the citizens. It is expected that once the students learn that open defecation is bad and shameful, they would spread the message fast, countering parents and others who advocate open defecation owing to various reasons.

Under the National School Sanitation Initiative it would be made compulsory for the schools to focus on the practical aspects of sanitation in its right perspective laying emphasis on the personal hygiene, Proper Sanitation,



Clean Toilet Habits, Safe Drinking Water, Separate Toilets for the Girl Child, Disposal of Waste Water, Human Excreta Disposal/Toilets, Waste Water Recycling, Waterless Urinals, Waste Segregation and Composting, Food Hygiene and Creation & Conservation of Green Spaces.

School and students can play a very vital role to attain the goals under the National Urban Sanitation Policy (NUSP) and making its vision a reality. Schools are considered as the most important and basic links which have a definite reach to the parents, individual families and consequently the community. It is a universal fact that children are far more receptive to new ideas and are definitely at an age when they can be influenced to cultivate good hygienic habits. The promotion of personal hygiene and environmental sanitation within schools can help the children to adopt good sanitation habits during the formative years of their childhood and adolescence.

The School Sparrow

The Newsletter has been named as The School Sparrow to draw the attention of all the Students to the plight of the House Sparrow—it is dying and the students of India must take steps to save them. When they succeed in this challenging task, then we must rename the house sparrow as THE SCHOOL SPARROW—recognizing its saviour--- somewhat akin to renaming of the tree “KU BABOOL” as “SU BABOOL” by Late Mrs. Indira Gandhi. She was impressed by the good and useful properties of the tree so from “ku” (bad) it became “Su” (good).

The House Sparrow is one bird which is deeply embedded in the Indian psyche. It was considered as a good omen and many generations in India grew together with them. It was considered so natural to have them nesting in Indian houses that they became part of the family.

The House Sparrow is, for most of us, the first bird we learn to identify and live with. Today the house sparrow is in danger. It is vanishing fast from our houses and we do not see them any more as a part of our day to day life. There is no one big reason which is causing its decline. Its slow disappearance from our lives has baffled many and this is one mystery which refuses to unfold. A leading newspaper in the United Kingdom - a country that has witnessed one of the biggest declines of the House Sparrow in recent times - declared a cash prize to anyone who could solve the mystery. Needless to add, the reward lies unclaimed.

The major reasons which could have caused this decline range from the destruction of its habitat to lack of insect food for the young and even the increasing microwave pollution from mobile phone towers. One reason why there are fewer



House Sparrows is modern construction. House Sparrows love to tuck into crevices but glass and concrete constructions leave little space for them. The Indian Schools can do wonders in raising awareness about the conservation of the house sparrow. Just give them space in your schools by allowing them to nest or by providing them nests at certain places in your school where no other bird replaces them.

It is easy to do with little understanding and with really not much extra effort. In this National School Sanitation Initiative we are also focusing on “Creation And Conservation of Green Spaces”. The idea is to “Generate Awareness through Action” by aiming at arresting the decline of the House Sparrow and throw light on the problems faced by them in their final fight for survival

HOUSE SPARROWS NEED OUR SUPPORT!

Nature, we must understand, does not come with a lifetime guarantee.

The little House Sparrow is a big indicator of the health of our environment and the health of our immediate ecology. We also need to start House Sparrow habitat conservation drives by providing water and food regularly to them (and enjoy seeing them bath in the shallow waters even placed in a large plate!!), by switching back to organic gardening, planting more hedges, creating functional Green Spaces, and putting up nesting boxes dedicated to House Sparrows. This means we need to utilize the Green Spaces available in the schools in an optimum manner.

SPARROWS OF INDIA

In India, five different species of sparrows are found, with *Passer domesticus* or the House Sparrow being the most abundant and widespread.

The other sparrows found in India are the winter visitor Spanish Sparrow (*Passer hispaniolensis*) Sind Sparrow (*Passer pyrrhonotus*) of North West India, Russet Sparrow

(*Passer rutilans*) which is a resident of Himalayas and North Eastern Indian hills and Range of Russet Sparrow or the Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) which is normally found in Northeast India, Eastern Ghats, and Bangladesh.

(In our next issue we will continue to highlight the facts about the House Sparrow.)





Urban Green Spaces Why Should We Create And Conserve Them?

India is entering into the World's First Urban Century wherein in the next 20 years, 40 percent of its population will live in urban areas. The greatest challenge of this era definitely lies in achieving sustainable and ecologically viable urban habitats. It is clear that if unrestrained, the concrete blocks would gobble up the natural open spaces at a faster rate and the already not so pristine air would further strive for staying breathable. The trees would go to give way to roads, the chirping birds would find their habitat gone and the lesser primates would further retreat to nowhere.

The school would feel the pinch of development. Already they are losing the green space which they have, following in the foot steps of the ultra urbanizing cities and this is happening despite everybody being willing to conserve and preserve the areas under green patch so passionately. What would happen in such crunching situations in the future? The FUTURE SHOCK is waiting to happen, a time bomb ticking every second waiting for its day!

It is the schools who can prepare the future citizens of prominence to take up the challenges of evolving a New Urban Ecosystem and discarding the anti-green overwhelming urban dystopia.

Benefits of Green Spaces

In the quest for healthy, livable and sustainable cities, urban green spaces with trees as a major component have a vital role to play. These not only provide a breathing space and an area for relaxing in leisure time, but freshen up air and provide a viable option for games and recreation as well.

School Green Spaces provide many contributions to health, hygiene and ecological system. They promote ecological literacy and environmental stewardship among students, teachers, parents and the surrounding community. Green Spaces help in maintaining a healthy school environment by providing clean air, water and soil.





The Green Space Economics

There are always complaints from the general public that in the capitalist and laissez faire ball game the profit oriented schools often shun the green spaces for constructing buildings for school expansion or hostels, etc. The loss is always justified by the school authorities and decried by the users comprising mainly of the parents and the students.

The question arises how to make them financially attractive for the schools? If we don't try to optimize financially viable models, no school would take the ecological bait to suffer financially. Ecological measures must contribute to financial sustainability and prosperity.

The solutions are not difficult to find. The green spaces can be allocated to private entrepreneurs for developing world class sports facilities, gymnasiums, swimming pools, etc. which could be made available to the schools at a nominal costs.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development is taking up the matter with the Ministry of Urban

Development to facilitate this process without any legal hitch, especially for the Government Schools which have appreciable Green Spaces lying in poor condition.

(This Green Spaces article is based on inputs received from Ms. Rupam R.R. Okhandiyar, IFS, CCF Government of MP, Neeta Srivastava & Sanjay K Srivastava)

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Masthead image courtesy: MP Forest Department