



REPORT ON WILDLIFE WEEK CELEBRATION 2008

Venue: Rangku Memorial Girls' Secondary School, Baghmara.
Date: October 4, 2008.



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Wildlife week 2008 was observed in the Baghmara, the headquarter of the South Garo Hills District on through a function on 4 October 2008 by Samrakshan Trust in collaboration with partners- the Meghalaya Forest Department, Youth Development Vigilance Committee (YDVC) and the Meghalaya Rural Development Society (MRDS).

The focus of this year's programme was on changing attitudes of children towards wildlife, specifically weaning them away from:

- Using catapults and wanton killing of birds;
- Disturbing nests and removing eggs and fledglings from nests;
- Killing of reptiles, particularly snakes
- Keeping wild birds and animals as pets.

The schools that participated in the programme were a part of Samrakshan's ongoing conservation education work with schools in Baghmara that attempts to alter the attitudes of children in favour of wildlife and change specific behaviour that harms wildlife. All the activities during the wildlife week function were designed with this in view and were a culmination of conservation awareness activities that have been undertaken with the select schools since August 2008.



1. Quiz; Participants discussing themselves.



2. Skit; Don Bosco School-performing "Using of catapult".



3. Skit; Bethel Academy -performing "Poaching".



4. Skit; JNV-performing "Keeping wildlife as pets".



5. and 6. Pledge; Each and every one of the participants standing and saying the pledge.





7. Don Bosco School-Baghmara.



8. Bethel Academy -Baghmara.



9. JNV-Baghmara.

The programme was presided over by the MLA of Baghmara and was conducted in the local Garo language. It comprised of an essay competition, a quiz and a skit contest. The essay writing was structured to encourage creativity and originality of thought. Some of the pieces written as part of the contest reflected the information that has been absorbed as a result of the conservation education work being done by Samrakshan. We are now asking ourselves if this additional information will result in changed attitudes? The quiz contest similarly showed the high levels of awareness among children. How much of this will translate to greater compassion and sensitivity for wildlife remains a question that we are seeking an answer to. The quiz got the audience very excited and there were lots of 'Ohhhs!! and Aiaooos' from the audience depending on how their team responded to the fielded questions.

The skit contest was truly remarkable as it reflected the creativity of the children (and their teachers). In advance, themes had been suggested to different schools and brief scripts had also been provided. These pertained to the use of catapults by children, poaching of animals, and keeping wildlife as pets. The students along with their teachers prepared full length skits and used improvised props with great effectiveness. The skit performances did seem to suggest that some substantive messages had in fact been communicated to the children and that wildlife had begun to enter their active imagination.

Following the skit, the final item of the programme was a pledge that was led by the senior students. The entire gathering took a pledge to protect wildlife and to specifically abstain from actions that harm wildlife. This included promising not to kill wildlife, not to use catapults, no more keeping wildlife as pets, preserving forests near the village, to work for the welfare of wildlife and passing the same message to others. The participants also pledged to be ambassadors for wildlife by spreading awareness about conservation among their peers.

The pledge was followed by prize distribution to the winners. The essay writing was won by Kennyrock Marak from JNV followed by Honsley N Sangma of Bethel Academy and Yuritha Marak of Don Bosco. The quiz contest was won by Bethel Academy followed by JNV and Don Bosco School. Bethel Academy took the first position in the skit as well followed by Don Bosco School and JNV. Attractive books on wildlife and nature were given away as prizes. It is hoped that these would help further increase the interest levels of the prize winners in conservation.

The Wildlife week programme was the culmination of a 3 month long pilot conservation education programme that had been undertaken in select schools of Baghmara. We are in the process of understanding the lessons from this exercise and based on such lessons will frame a fresh programme for the coming academic year.

Acknowledgements:

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- 2) MLA- Baghmara (Mr. Satto Marak) who have spent his great time unconditionally and took much trouble to come to the celebration.
- 3) The members of the Youth Development Vigilance Committee (YDVC) for extending their valuable time for scheduling programme, budgeting and managing the programme.
- 4) District Management Unit - Meghalaya Rural Development Society (DMU-MRDS) for their financial assistance for the celebration and for some suggestions.
- 5) Balpakram National Park Division-Meghalaya Forests Department for the financial assistance for the celebration.
- 6) Don Bosco School, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Bethel Academy for extending their valuable time in preparation and participation in the celebration without which the entire celebration would not have happened. Taken the celebration seriously and helped to be a successful.
- 7) Other participants of Baghmara town for being coming to the celebration which is an encouragement.
- 8) The NeTV team who took trouble of coming to the celebration for coverage in media. It was decided that if there is media coverage of the celebration would be helpful in spreading the message of wildlife week easier to others.

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