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Email: [mediarelations@ishafoundation.org](mailto:mediarelations@ishafoundation.org)

**Isha organizes biodiversity and herbal medicine awareness camp for government schools**

*Hundreds of students participate from 136 government schools in Vellore district*

**22 November 2019, Vellore:** Project GreenHands, Isha Foundation's ecological initiative organized a biodiversity and herbal medicine awareness camp in collaboration with Tamil Nadu Education Department for government school students in Vellore district. The awareness camp was conducted through Project GreenHands' school initiative, Green School Movement, at the Government Muslim Higher Secondary School, Vellore, today, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Hundreds of students and teachers from 136 government schools participated in this event. The camp included morning and afternoon sessions containing awareness education and drawing competitions.

The morning session saw Dr. Pandi Kumar, interacting with students on herbal medicines and its various benefits while Dr. M. Boobesh Gupta, Founder and Director of Universal Eco Foundation extolled the importance of biodiversity. A fun drawing competition was conducted in the afternoon for the students to express their creativity.

Swami Rabhya from Isha, addressing the media said, "We are implementing Isha's Green School Movement with the support of Tamil Nadu Education Department. We started this initiative in Vellore in 2018. In the first year, we provided environmental awareness and sapling preparation training to 165 government higher secondary school in Vellore. In each school we built one nursery created entirely by students. Last year,

those students planted 3,11,000 saplings in their homes and school premises with support of 1,25,000 students. This year we increased our target to 4 lakh saplings. We chose 36 schools out of 165 govt. schools in Vellore as a model for the nurseries as they had performed very well at building these nurseries. This year, special training will be given to the selected 36 schools and an additional 100 government high school will be given sapling preparation training. As a part of this initiative, we organized this awareness camp on biodiversity and herbal medicine awareness today.”

### **Green School Movement**

The Green School Movement (GSM) was conceptualized by Project GreenHands, an environmental initiative of Isha Foundation. It is being implemented in hundreds of schools each year in association with the Tamil Nadu Education Department. The objective is to instill green consciousness in students so that caring for the environment becomes a natural part of their lives.

Students in the age group 11-17 grow, plant and distribute saplings. They are taught to establish herbal and kitchen gardens in school. The saplings grown in schools are planted on the school premises and distributed to local residents, government offices, schools, hospitals, business establishments and interested individuals for planting. The ownership of the trees is transferred to the local community who ensure the survival of the saplings.

GSM also offers students the opportunity to experientially learn about Nature by organizing bird watching trails, nature walks, environmental awareness workshops and maintaining their nurseries under guidance and support.

GSM is launched in a new district every year and is active for a period of 3 years in every district. So far, it has been launched in 9 districts - Coimbatore, Erode, Krishnagiri, Trichy, Puducherry, Salem, Vizhupuram, Kanchipuram, and Vellore. Students in these districts have raised, cared for, distributed and planted nearly 46 lakh saplings.

**Media Contact:** + (91)63831 25184, + (91)90435 97080

If you would like to know more about this, please write to [mediarelations@ishafoundation.org](mailto:mediarelations@ishafoundation.org).