Development of Medicinal Plants Gardens in Schools in NCR Delhi

Background:
The project “Development of Medicinal Plants Gardens in Schools and Colleges of New Delhi” is a joint initiative of National Medicinal Plant Board, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi and Centre for Environment Education which targets 300 schools of New Delhi. The project encourages to promote sustainable practices for use and conservation of Medicinal Plants Gardens by partnering schools and students to learn the benefits from the use of medicinal plants in day to day life.

The project promotes intergenerational knowledge between schools for effective processing and benefits from medicinal plants. Through the development of Herbal Medicinal Plants Gardens (HMPGs) in the schools and colleges conservation practices and use of medicinal plants will be addressed in our day to day life for better health and immunity and influence parents, friends and kinship for their use in cooking etc. At present, a wide range of medicinal plants are threatened to extinction due to several factors like deforestation, over exploitation, improper collection due to lack of knowledge about proper techniques and poor investments in adopting their use. The project also aims at developing mother herbal gardens for sale of these plants from one school to the other. Developing a pro active set of gardeners in schools for HMPGs.

Progress:
1. Through interactive workshops and meetings (120) with more than 88 schools since last 6 months and based on their importance and need of conservation of the plants; Centre for Environment Education (CEE) has identified and agreed 26 varieties of herbs and shrubs which will be planted in the Herbal Medicinal Plants Gardens. These include: **Andrographis paniculata** (Kalmegh), **Stevia spp.** (Meethi tulsi), **Spilanthes acmella** (Akarkara), **Kalanchoe pinnata** (Pather Chatt), **Vinca rosea** (Sadabahar), **Bacopa monnereire** (Brahmi), **Acorus calamus** (Sweet Flag), **Aloe vera** (Guar Patha), **Mimosa pudica** (Touch Me Not), **Cymbopogan citrates** (Lemon Grass), **Trachyspernum ammi** (Ajwain), **Ocimum sanctum** (Tulsi), **Mentha piperita** (Peppermint), **Lavandula spica** (Lavender), **Plantago ovate** (Isabgol), **Lawsonia Incermis** (Mehandi), **Ocimum Grassitum** (Ram Tulsi (Niazbo)), **Phyllanthbus amarus** (Bhui Amla), **Moringa olifera** (Sohanjana), **Morus alba** (Shahtoot), **Azadirachta indica** (Neem), **Hibiscus rosa- Sinensis** (Chinese Hibiscus), **Nerium Oleander** (Indian Oleander), **Tinospora cordifolia** (Giloy), **Gliriosa superba** (Agni Shikha), **Argyreia nervosa** (Elephant Creeper).

2. Till now 71 schools have made written agreements with CEE to develop the medicinal plant gardens. Each partner school will get 104 plants consisting of 4 plants of each of the 26 varieties. Out of these 10 schools will also develop mother nurseries to supply the saplings to the other schools in their respective regions.

3. In this direction a school orientation workshop was held on 9th May at the UN premises in New Delhi; and in which 88 school principals and teachers; citizens forums; corporate; Delhi Government and UNIC officials participated to promote the project in their schools. Each participant was given one sapling and one kg of organic manure as a token to adopt enjoying with nature and inculcate the medicinal plants cultivation practices among the students, children and society even in households and pots in gardens/houses.

4. To broaden the message and to effectively implement the project in all the schools CEE has made partnership with Department of Environment, Government of NCT of Delhi. The linkage will involve the Eco-clubs of their schools. Two NGO partners – Eco Roots Foundation and I-
Dream have also been made partners to extend the coverage through networking and capacity building.

5. A school educational material “Medicinal Plants and their Usefulness” has been developed by CEE to promote the values of medicinal plants among the students and teachers. A brochure “Developing Medicinal Plant Gardens” is also developed for wider disseminate of the project philosophy, objectives, strategy and activities.

6. More than 100 internal meetings within CEE and its partners have been held in the last 8 months on a range of issues to develop a more proactive strategy. Also in more than 10/12 in country workshops the ideas have been shared on the approach.

7. A face book page (www.facebook.com/schoolmedicinalplantsgardens) has also been developed to have more interactions with a wider communities of practices, wherein everybody is sharing their views and ideas.