

# Solving the plastic puzzle

Eco club students of Nodal Upper Primary School in Boudh district, Orissa understood the problems that the plastic carry bags are affecting the health of people and also on the environment. Motivated by their teacher, students interacted with the community and tried to sensitise them about the ill effects of plastic waste. Despite several repeated awareness programmes, the community did not seem to bother. The plastic trash only increased. Disappointed with this lukewarm response and irked by the volumes of plastic trash in the school surroundings, Swapneswar Pradhan, the Principal of the school came up with this brilliant idea of reusing the plastic waste. He discussed this idea with his teachers. Excited by the idea, teachers motivated their students to tackle the problem by reusing the plastic waste. The idea was great, but no one knew how to go about it in order to generate useful products for the benefit of public. At this point, help came from Prabir Kumar Dash, a lecturer in Botany in the Government College of Boudh district who was also a NGC master trainer. He reinforced the ill effects of plastic carry bags among students. He trained 50 NGC students in the making of types of products like rope bag out of plastic waste including carry bags, cement bags, chocolate wrappers and straws which are useful to the community.



Transforming waste into useful articles

Students are now engaged in collecting disposed carry bags, cement bags, straws and so on from the neighbourhood, market place, road side as well as from nearby villages. Carry bags and cement bags are knit into ropes. Students first tie these bags end to end. When these become sufficiently long, these are knitted into a plat. The plat is then stretched and aluminium rings are tied at both the ends. These ropes gifted to villagers who use them for tying livestock like cows, goats, pigs. These ropes are now gaining popularity and are in great demand by the local people.



Caps from plastic

Students also knit waste bags into mats. Chocolate wrappers collected are used for making garlands. Straw collected by students is used for making toys. This alternate means of tackling the waste plastic has been quite successful. Two other NGC schools in Boudh district are now engaged in reusing waste plastic. Motivation for this initiation given by Swapneswar Pradhan has been recognised. Prakriti Bandu award was given to him by the Forest and Environment Department, Government of Orissa for the Boudh district in the year 2007.

This Education for Sustainable Development initiative demonstrates that there are various approaches to problem solving. It motivates young green masters to have alternative plans for tackling one problem.