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The role of NSS volunteers in environment Protection: A case study of Moreh College NSS units

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Abstract

The National Service Scheme, also known as NSS, was launched in 1969 with the aim to engage student volunteers of colleges and universities in community services. It has given platform for student volunteers to render their service to the nation at various levels. In recent times many of the NSS activities revolves around environment protection and its related issues. The environment we live in is exposed to various harmful elements causing degradation to a very large scale. Loss of forest, extinction of various animal and plant species both in land and water, increase land, air and water pollution, large scale extraction of renewable and non-renewable resources, decrease in fresh air and water, etc. needs special human attention. The study is an attempt to highlight the various activities taken up by NSS in their endeavor to enrich the environment and also protect it from further degradation. The two NSS units of Moreh College, Moreh, Tengnoupal District, Manipur are taken for the case study. The study found that NSS has given a very conducive platform for students (volunteers) to contribute to the society by protecting the environment through their activities which includes observance of world environment day, plantation of trees, cleaning of roadsides and Integrated Check Post campus, construction of sanitary latrines and urinals, cleanliness drive in Moreh town etc. It also creates a sense of awareness and responsibility among the volunteers to protect and enrich the natural environment for the benefit of the larger community.

Keywords: Environment protection, national service scheme, volunteers, awareness campaign

1. Introduction

Environment conservation is a widely used umbrella term that defines any activity taken up to protect the earth and conserve its resources so that all living things, including human beings, can sustain life to its best. According to the Environment (Protection) Act 1986 "environment" includes water, air and land and the inter-relationship which exists among and between water, air and land, and human beings, other living creatures, plants, micro-organism and property. Today, many concerns have arisen due to the misused or overused of the many resources. The major concerns of environment are deforestation, degradation of land resources, population of air and water, threat to natural living resources-wildlife, fisheries, etc, and problems associated with urbanization - slums, sanitation, and pollution. All the resources needed by human beings are provided or found in the environment itself. The environment in the form of soil, water, air, plants, animals, other living organisms, etc. needs nutrition, reproduction, and regeneration to sustain. Deforestation and increasing destruction of the natural habitat of animal has put many plants and animals in danger. Environment protection is important for sustainable development. Environment protection is necessary because protecting them is protecting mankind.

The constitution of India gives provisions for environmental protection through various legislations such as Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, Biodiversity Conservation Act, (1999) Water and Air pollution Prevention Acts (1974 & 1981) etc. Apart from the implementation of these acts, there are various organisations, groups, institutions that in their own capacity create awareness on environmental issues and take up various activities to protect the same. The role of NSS in the regard is worth examining as many of the regular activities taken up through the year and the special camps in recent times are related with environment issues.

The study is an attempt to highlight the various activities taken up by NSS in their endeavor to enrich the environment and also protect it from further degradation. This is done by detail

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examination of the activities taken up by the NSS Units of Moreh College Moreh from the year 2014-2018. The NSS records of the college and the personal diaries of the programme officers of the units form the primary sources from which the data was collected.

2. About NSS

The National Service Scheme also called NSS was launched in 1969, the birth centenary year of Mahatma Gandhi with the primary objective of developing the personality the student volunteers and to inculcate a sense of social responsibility through voluntary social services. It is implemented under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, government of India with the help the state/UT governments and educational institutions at the University and college levels. When it was launched initially it was taken up only in 37 universities with 40,000 volunteers. The NSS has shown great success and now the number of institutions has increased to 391 Universities/+2 Councils, 16,278 Colleges with more than 3.8 million volunteers. To encourage the volunteers the ministry institute Annual NSS Awards at national level, provides opportunities to NSS volunteers to participate in Republic Day Parade, International Youth Delegations, Adventure Camps, etc. The essence of self-less service to mankind is clearly reflected in the motto of NSS "Not me, but you." To develop the social service capacity of the volunteers each NSS volunteer is required to put in minimum 240 hours of service for two years i.e 120 hours each year. The regular activities of NSS are General Orientation of NSS Volunteers, NSS Day Celebrations, Career guidance for the NSS Volunteers, skill development (first aid, disaster management, public speaking, leadership motivation, HIV/AIDS awareness etc.), Community Development Projects (in the adopted village) – Survey in the village, tree plantation, Health, Cleanliness, Road Safety, Visits to Homes, technical training for rural youth and SHG, sanitation, women development programmes, consumer Awareness etc. In addition to these regular activities it is compulsory for a volunteer to participate at least once in the 7 Day Special Camp organized by the unit during the two years of membership. The Special Camp conducted in the adopted village helps the volunteers in developing their social and personal skill and community involvement.

The third fourth and fifth objectives of NSS reads: identify the needs and problems of the community and involve them in problem-solving; develop among them a sense of social and civic responsibility and utilize their knowledge in finding practical solutions to individual and community problems. These objectives of the NSS are materialized and fulfilled in the community based activities undertaken by them in their regular activities in general and the special camp in particular.

3. NSS in Manipur

In Manipur the National Service Scheme has been implemented since 1980 through the Manipur University and its affiliated colleges in one side and different Higher Secondary Schools through State Liaison Officer. There are 45 NSS units with strength the of 4,500 student's volunteers in 33 colleges and 2 units in the University. Since 1992, again the Directorate of YAS, Government of Manipur has been implementing the mission by way of distributing the NSS fund to the Principals of different colleges and schools in the state.

4. NSS Units of Moreh College

Established in the year 1995 Moreh College is situated at Chikim Village, Moreh which is 110 Kms from the state capital Imphal. The first NSS Unit of the college was opened in 1997 with 100 volunteers. At present there are 3 NSS units - Unit I for Higher Secondary Students, Units II and III for the Degree Students. The three units comprise of 300 volunteers. Mr. Henry Singh, Dr. Seiyang Baite and Mr. John Ngamkhon Haokip are the present programme officers of NSS units I, II and III respectively. They are permanent teaching faculty members of the college. For the study the activities of all the three units were collectively considered.

5. Activities of Moreh College NSS Units

There are varieties of activities taken up by the NSS Units of the college. However, the study here focuses on the environmental related activities only. The type of activities with the venue and number of volunteers are given on yearly basis.

Table 1: NSS Activities from the year 2014-2015

| Sl. No. | Type of the Activities | Venue/Area | No. of volunteers |
|---------|---|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 100 saplings plantation | College compound | 50 volunteers |
| 2 | Cleaning of the college pond and the road sites | College premises | 100 volunteers |
| 3 | Cleaning of village roads, church campus and community hall as part of environment related social service | Khudengthabi village | 150 volunteers |
| 4 | White washing of tress | Khudengthabi village | 150 volunteers |
| 5 | Panel discussion on deforestation and its impact | Moreh college | 100 volunteers |
| 6 | Panel discussion on Global warming organised by NSS Cell, Manipur University in collaboration with NSS unit of Moreh college as part of youth Month Observation | Moreh college | 100 volunteers |

From the table it is known that the activities of the NSS units in relation to environment comprise of awareness sessions among the volunteers as well as the practical

activities. Tree plantation and cleanliness drive has been its major activities or service.

Table 2: NSS Activities from the year 2016-2017

| Sl. No. | Activities conducted | Venue/Area | No of volunteers |
|---------|---|----------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Cleaning of college compound and the surrounding | ADC Office Moreh | 50 volunteers |
| 2 | Cleaning of college surrounding and plantation of trees | Moreh College | 50 volunteers |
| 3 | Cleaning of Moreh Town | Moreh town | 100 volunteers |
| 4 | Cleaning the road side, drain, Community hall and the church premises | Khudengthabi village | 100 volunteers |

Table 2 also shows cleanliness drive and tree plantation as the major activities or services rendered by the NSS units with regards to environment.

Table 3: NSS Activities from the year 2017-2018

| Sl. No. | Activities conducted | Venue/Area | No of volunteers |
|---------|---|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Cleaning of the village road path and around the Community Hall | Kwatha village (adopted Village) | 80 volunteers |
| 2 | Constructed Public Urinal | Kwatha Village | 20 volunteers |
| 3 | Cleaning of different areas of the Market areas | Moreh Town | 150 volunteers |

In this table (Table No. 3) apart from the regular cleanliness drives of the NSS one very important unique activity of NSS is observed, i.e construction of Urinal at Kwatha village in which 20 volunteers took part.

6. Conclusion

The case study shows that majority of the activities of the NSS units of Moreh college in relation to environment revolves around cleanliness drive which is a very important activity as Moreh being a warm place is very prone to malaria and other airborne and waterborne diseases. The tree plantation taken up by the NSS units are commendable as more trees are required for supply of fresh air in such a warm area. The public urinal constructed at Kwatha village is commendable and it highly recommended that such construction is taken up in Moreh town as well when fund is available.

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