

## Best Practice 2: Developing Ecological Consciousness and Sustainability

### Objectives:

1. To promote ecological consciousness among the faculty, students and community
2. To develop an eco-friendly life style and habits among our faculty, students and community
3. To take consistent efforts in maintaining the vegetative cover of the campus at an optimal level.
4. To undertake eco-friendly practices like plastic free zones, herbal gardening, vegetable gardening, mushroom culture and rain water harvesting.
5. To be a beacon light in the efforts of the local community for conservation of rivers
6. To promote an understanding of the historical significance of the locality

**The Context:** Kerala known as ‘Gods own country’ is well known for its bounteous glory of nature, including 44 rivers and rich water resources. However, Kerala is facing the ravaging effects of environment pollution and destruction in recent years. The devastating floods and landslides of Kerala point to this direction.

The college is located at Mannanam in Kottayam district of Kerala. Located in the lap of mother nature, the college atmosphere provides peace and solace to its wards. In 1831 Saint Chavara Kuriakose Elias, founder of CMI congregation landed at Mannanam hill through a river called ‘Pennar’. This place was unknown till then. The foundation of the CMI congregation, the very first indigenous congregation in India was a historic moment in the history of Kerala. The river Pennar and its boat landing at Mannanam, later renamed as ‘Chavara Kadavu’ after the legendary social reformer assumes historic significance in this context. We have the dream of reviving the spirit of the Founders, to be inspired from them and return to the roots of our existence.

The surging urbanization and industrialization in recent times has destroyed nature. Speed and ruthless exploitation of nature were the norms of growth and development. Water transports were replaced by roads and heavily polluting motor vehicles. Deforestation and land mining are posing serious threats. The rich natural resources of river water are neglected and polluted.

Mannanam is part of “Athirampuzha” panchayat. The noun Athirampuzha has two Malayalam words in it namely ‘athir’ and ‘puzha’ ‘Athir’ means boundary and ‘puzha’ means river.

Therefore, the name Athirampuzha means the land bordered by various rivers. So rivers and river transport have always formed an essential part of the life of the local community.

However, the present generation completely ignores the existence of rivers as a source of human sustenance. Due to the influx of pollutants from the surroundings such as use of pesticides in the agriculture lands and indiscriminate dumping of waste into it, rivers became dirty and even harmful for human life itself. Rivers though being the life blood and energy resources of any ancient society are totally ignored by the modern public.

The project to clean the rivers became the need of the hour as flood of 2018 took its toll on the people all over Kerala. Rain water became a bane rather than a boon for the small state. Regaining the water ways forms the most essential part of existence for the State. As such it is very much essential to clean our water ways. Rivers are our roots. We should own them so that we are blessed by their bounties.

**The Practice:** The college has always strived to promote ecological consciousness among its faculty, students and the local community. Situated in the lush greenery of Mannanam hills the college always takes care in maintaining its vegetative cover. The college promotes eco friendly practices like herbal gardening, vegetable gardening, mushroom culture, and rain water harvesting. It celebrates days of importance like World Environment Day and World Water Day in a befitting manner. Nature camps, plogging events and cleaning campaigns are regularly organised by the college. It took the lead in testing the water quality of the locality when there arose issues regarding the same. The campus is declared a plastic free zone and green protocol is followed in organising events.

The college is offering Environmental Education as one of the elective course for both B. Ed and M. Ed students as part of building ecological consciousness in them.

The college took the lead in organising a field trip and conducting a survey on the health practices of the local community at R Block, Kuttanadu, Alappuzha. Kuttanadu being the wetlands of Kerala, are well known for its ecological uniqueness. Familiarising our students and faculty with the fine ecological balance of the area is sure to make an impact among them.

Realizing the role of nature and environmental consciousness, the staff and students of St. Joseph's Training College began the historic task of cleaning our rivers. We have come up with this notion after due consideration and evaluation as we are endowed with abundant river beds around the Campus.

The river protection group was formed and with the help of sister institutions and the panchayath authorities we are fast proceeding in our mission to provide cleaner and brighter rivers. The hyacinth and weeds were plucked and cleared from St. Chavara Kadavu, Mannanam. It was decided to set apart the place for the public and start a boating cruise.

**Evidence of Success:**

The continuous efforts of the faculty and students along with the supporting groups from the community has been successful in transforming Chavara Kadavu to a place of beauty and joy. Students and faculty who have participated in the cleaning programmes will always think twice before throwing any waste into any water body as they have known the difficulty involved in cleaning it. They could also experience the joy of seeing nature in its pristine beauty which is a rare sight these days.

**Problems Encountered and Resources required:** The rapidly growing water hyacinth poses the major challenge to our cleaning efforts. It takes no time to regrow and fill up the area soon after our cleaning efforts, which is depressing to watch. It requires the programme to be a continual and consistent effort. It makes it difficult for the institution to find the time and resources to sustain its efforts. Support from local self-governing bodies is essential in this context.