



ECO - REPORTERS



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Terre des Hommes
Suisse



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ECO - REPORTERS: An initiative for a Joyful Planet

Context

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention in 1989, on the Rights of the Child with the aim of protecting and promoting the rights of children all over the world (United Nations, 1991).

All have the right to live in an environment that does not put them at risk. Common people and all governments must work together to protect the planet and children's rights. Based on this resolution, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) published The General Comment No.26 (2023), a legal document that focuses on children's rights and the environment, particularly climate change. It recognises children's right to clean, healthy, and sustainable environment and urges all countries to act against climate change and environmental pollution.

Children and youth are most exposed to negative environmental impacts, which threaten their rights to health, life, food, water and sanitation, education, housing, culture, among others. Moreover, it is evident that these impacts may continue to affect future generations for a long time to come.

To create a happy planet for children, we must listen to the voices of those affected by global crises and work together to find effective solutions. Children must learn to communicate and tell stories because they have the power to inspire and motivate others to act. If children learn to communicate effectively, their voices will be heard and reach more people. Therefore, it is essential to take individual and collective action to promote meaningful changes for the present and a better future for those who are yet to be born.

The Project

Eco Reporters – A Project is conceptualized by Terre des Hommes Suisse regarding children's rights and its relationship with Planetary Boundaries. It is not enough for the children to know their rights but to exercise and disseminate them for their own context and realities particularly in terms of the environment they are living in. In this project, children and youth are trained to understand how planetary boundaries / climate risk is posing a threat to the children's rights and understand the areas where it interferes or collides with the same, risking their rights. Children learn in various ways, which includes – their life experiences, reading, experimentation, listening to discussion, participation in interfaces etc. Learning is not limited to formal education framework only.

This project is such an initiative which allows children to learn through action research. It gives them opportunities to explore new avenues, to know about the relationship between planetary boundaries and child rights.

Process

The project aims to engage children in the learning process of various local environmental issues and challenges. It enables children to become warriors, to prevent environmental degradation and to address climate change. The children explore sustainable mitigation strategies to address these issues.

Local issues were identified, children interviewed community members and other actors, took photographs of such issues and developed news articles. A photo journal is developed for showcasing the issues of climate change and ways to mitigate it.



Foreword

Indian Children are actors of change to keep their mother earth protected and make their planet healthy.

Terre des Hommes Suisse is proud to present the first ever issue of Eco Reporters' photo magazine from India. It consists of 31 photo reports of 62 girls and boys who shared their experiences and learning about the threats posing before their environment in which they live.

From the tribal villages of Ghatsila, Jharkhand, from the migrant community in Jangipur, Murshidabad, West Bengal, and from the closed teagarden villages of Alipurduar, West Bengal, children are able to report the current environment scenario which shows the impact of climate change and how it threatens children's rights.

The relation between environment and child rights is not easy to stand by many but these child reporters have been able to present in simple but sincere ways, how chemical fertiliser is destroying our mother earth, river water, pisciculture and how single use plastic is the root cause of multidimensional pollution. They also report how brick kilns are destroying the atmosphere. In this photo magazine, there are many such reports which act as eye openers.

Children sincerely feel that this is the time when we all should wake up, act collectively and save the planet. Terre des Hommes Suisse's motto is to strengthen children to actively participate in building a more equitable, liveable and sustainable world that respects everyone's rights and planetary limits. Terre des Hommes Suisse motivates children to become actors of change for immediate reflection and action, starting with creating their own participatory space, plant a tree, produce food in the community based organic garden, protect animal life, reduce use of plastic, encourage responsible consumption, eat healthy, and so on

Eco-Reporters' project is a global flagship programme of Terre des Hommes Suisse. It covers 6 countries of 3 continents Asia, Africa and Latin America.

This project not only makes us proud, but also educates us to consciously behave in a responsible way, making this planet liveable for the next generation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ashish" with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Ashish Ghosh

Regional Coordinator – Asia
National Coordinator – India
Terre des Hommes Suisse

Use of ideal **organic fertilisers** to increase soil quality and yield

■ Ibran Sk. and Samiul Sk.; Murshidabad, West Bengal

Farmers of Murshidabad's Barjumla Colony village are suffering from the consequences of excessive use of chemical fertilisers. As the use of chemical fertilisers has increased in the

the crop is also increasing and the yield is low. Due to the effect of chemical fertilisers, the number of earthworms in the soil is also decreasing, as a result of which the fertility of the land is also decreasing. Talking

stopped, and the pond is getting filled with water hyacinths.

Tabjul Hossain has now started using vermicompost (organic fertiliser) instead of chemical



Organic fertiliser

villages, on one hand the fertility of the land is being destroyed, on the other hand, the farmers are getting only one harvest in a year, even though, earlier they used to get the harvest according to the season.

Talking to Tabjul Hossain, a resident of Barjumla Colony village, it was learned that due to the regular use of chemical fertilisers on the land, the amount of weeds in the roots of

to a local farmer, it was also revealed that he had contracted a skin disease from spreading chemical fertilisers on the land with his bare hands. Talking to the nearby villagers, it was further learned that a local pond used to produce a lot of fish. As the pond is adjacent to the agricultural land, the chemical fertilisers of that land are drained into the pond, the water of the pond is getting poisoned. Now pisciculture /fish farming has almost

fertilisers, as a result of which the yield has increased slightly, and the hardness of the land has also decreased. However, it cannot be used all the time as the supply of organic fertilisers is not high. However, if the supply of organic fertilisers is normal, he is always willing to use organic fertilisers.

Speaking to Morjina Bibi, a member of the women's Self Help Group (SHG) in that village, it was revealed that she



The use of chemical fertilisers is causing skin problems



Self-Help Group members promote organic agriculture with indigenous fertiliser



Chemical fertilisers are poisoning the water bodies, hampering pisciculture

has been making organic fertilisers for the past two years and selling them to the farmers in the village. However, due to low supply of earthworms, one of the components of this fertiliser, the production of the fertiliser has currently stopped.

She is trying as much as possible to collect earthworms so that she can deliver more organic fertilisers to all the farmers and at the same time increase her income.

Finally, both Tabjul Hossain

and Morjina Bibi appealed to the farmers to use organic fertilisers instead of chemical fertilisers to maintain the health of the land.

"Use Organic Fertilisers, Maintain Soil Health".



Ibran Sk
Age : 15 yrs



Samiul Sk
Age : 14 yrs

Villagers trying to **escape plastic** rules in villages

■ Salima Khatun and Sarida Khatun; Murshidabad, West Bengal

Plastic pollution is a big problem in today's society. Despite the repeated efforts to make people aware of solving this problem,

Sekhalipur Gram Panchayat of Murshidabad.

Tunjera Khatun, a resident of Barjumla Colony village, said,

awareness programmes in our village about plastic pollution. But still people are not aware of how dangerous plastic is. Plastic does not mix in the soil



The pond is filled with plastic waste

the use of plastic is not decreasing. If the public is not aware of the use of plastic and its ill effects in the future, then someday the whole world will be slowly drowned in a sea of plastic, and children's right to live in a healthy environment will be violated. Plastic pollution has taken a dire shape in several villages under

"There is no dustbin system in the area, so everyone throws plastic waste in the pond next to their house. A pond that was usable even 10 years ago is now ruled by plastic."

She also said that "the members of Shripur Mahila o Khadi Unnayan Samity (SMOKUS) organisation have done many

causing soil pollution and reduces soil fertility. Burning plastic causes air pollution. Cattle accidentally ingest plastic while eating waste food often left in dustbins. As a result, the animals become sick and, in some cases, even die."

In this context, Sk Ramjan, a resident near the plastic-filled pond of Paikora village, said that he is quite aware of the use of plastic. When he goes to the market, he takes a cloth bag with him and disposes off the used plastic. But the pond next to his house is used as a dustbin by other villagers. They come to the pond, throw plastic garbage, and in some cases even burn it, resulting in suffering for all.

He also said that no initiative has been taken by the Panchayat to clean this pond. Even though the local elected



Animals are eating plastic while searching for food



Burning plastic waste causes air pollution

representative visited the area last year, and several petitions were submitted to the Panchayat on behalf of the villagers, there is still no solution to the problem.

Masuda Khatun, a youth member of Barjumla village, said that despite being aware of the use of plastic, she is forced to use plastic. Because paper bags are not used in shops, everyone gives things in plastic bags. So, youth groups are conducting village to village

awareness rallies, plays, meetings, and youth and children have submitted petitions to the Panchayat. Besides, the local shops have been made aware of the use of paper bags. She hopes the Panchayat will look into this issue in the future.

Sanjib Kumar Saha, a worker of Sekhalipur Gram Panchayat, said that they have cleaned the plastic-filled drains many times on behalf of the Panchayat. But the villagers

were not so aware. Therefore, he called upon the villagers to increase awareness about the evils of using plastic. They have arranged battery operated carts to collect plastic waste but due to lack of space to segregate the waste, this process has not been started yet. He also said that instead of plastic, they have conducted a campaign in the area to increase the use of paper packets and clay pots. He dreams of a plastic-free zone in the future so that future generations can be gifted a beautiful world.



Paper bags made by children and youth to replace plastic bags



Single use plastic bags are still in use



Salima Khatun
Age : 15 yrs



Sarida Khatun
Age : 14 yrs

Crisis in society due to **water wastage**

■ Nasrin Khatun and Ismail Sk; Murshidabad, West Bengal

There is a crisis of drinking water all around. But even in this situation, Mansur Ali tells how the villagers in the area under Sekhalipur Gram Panchayat are wasting drinking water. Though the Government provides free drinking water to the villagers, they use it for household purposes such as bathing, washing utensils and washing clothes.

Local resident Irijina Bibi said that apart from cooking, they use drinking water for bathroom purposes. The affluent people in the village are wasting groundwater by using

submersible pumps and motors in their homes. As a result, the groundwater level is decreasing day by day and water is not flowing in the tubewells of the village, which has now created a crisis of drinking water.

Halim Sheikh, a resident of Katakali village, said that water does not flow in most of the tubewells and the ones that gets water, it is undrinkable due to the high amount of iron in the water. So now the people of the area have become dependent on the water they buy. Purchased water is filtered and arsenic free. Another benefit is

that water vendors are delivering door-to-door. That is why the demand for purchased water is increasing day by day. Due to the increase in demand for water, vendors have increased the price, making it impossible for many people to buy water.

Water vendor Abdul Halim said that due to the increase in demand for purchased water, they are collecting groundwater artificially and mixing various types of medicines, filtering it and delivering it to homes as drinking water. Healthwise, how far this water is safe, is not known.



Government provided drinking water is being wasted



Drinking water being used for bathing

In some villages of Sekhalipur Panchayat, with the help of Shripur Mahila O Khadi Unnayan Samity (SMOKUS) organisation, the youth there made arrangements to install taps on open pipes to stop wastage of water. But the common people have neglected them due to lack of awareness.

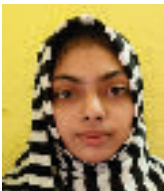
If water wastage continues in this way, the environment will lose its balance and the next generation will move towards destruction. Local residents Lutfunnesa and Mansur Sk advised the villagers to be more

aware of the use of water to increase the groundwater level. If we can collect rainwater and use it and turn off the tap after

using water, then the future will be relieved from the water crisis to some extent.



Villagers receive drinking water from local sellers



Nasrin Khatun
Age : 16 yrs



Ismail Sk
Age : 15 yrs

The crisis of human race due to **tree cutting**

■ Rumi Khatun and Sahanaj Sultana; Murshidabad, West Bengal

Trees are one of the elements that maintain the balance of nature. Oxygen emitted by trees is the source of survival of various animals on earth. But due to lack of awareness, cutting of trees has emerged as a major problem in the world today. As a result, nature is being damaged

situation has changed. Due to the increase in the number of vehicles in the area due to the petrol pumps, air pollution has also increased which is causing much damage to the environment.

Badenur Bibi, a resident of that village, said that a large number

a lot of roadside trees are being damaged. As a result of which, the natural balance is disturbed which may cause us to face a major disaster in the near future. He also said that there has been a lot of difference between the present and the previous environment. People are making money by cutting



Wood collected by the villagers for different purposes

and children's right to healthy life is also being violated.

In a village under Sekhalipur Gram Panchayat of Murshidabad, a petrol pump has been constructed by cutting trees. As a result of this, a lot of vegetation has been damaged as well as making it difficult for the local villagers to live. Earlier, houses used to stay cool in the shade of trees, but now that

of trees are being cut down to make wooden furniture. As the number of trees is decreasing day by day, the temperature is also gradually increasing, which in turn disrupts the normal activities of children like going to school, playing sports etc.

Local panchayat officer Udaygiri Das said that due to road and electrical expansion,

trees for the sake of business. There are many other reasons causing damage to the trees, such as cattle eating the saplings, which stops the plants from growing.

The Panchayat has started a tree planting programme through 100 days of work. Udayagiri Das appealed to the Panchayat and the local people to take responsibility for keeping these trees alive.



A petrol pump replaced an orchard



Infrastructure development forces cutting of roadside trees

In the coming days efforts should be made to stop cutting trees and plant more trees so that the right to live of the next generation - the children - is not violated. Everyone should be aware that one tree is one life.



Cattle damaging saplings



Rumi Khatun
Age : 15 yrs



Sahanaj Sultana
Age : 14 yrs

Environmental imbalance due to **water pollution**

■ Meherunnesa Khatun and Asthma Khatun; Murshidabad, West Bengal



Pond turned into dumping ground

The problem of water pollution has arisen in the villages under Sekhalipur Gram Panchayat of Murshidabad district. Currently, children and villagers are facing various problems due to water pollution and the right of children to grow up in a healthy

environment is being violated.

Local resident Mohbul Sheikh has been living in the area for the past fifty years. He said, “Earlier we used the pond water in this area as drinking water and for various daily activities. But now the pond

water has become unusable. Water from various drains is mixing in the pond and as there is no government dustbin system, the local villagers are filling the pond by throwing plastic and garbage in the pond. As a result, the water is becoming more polluted”.



Pond water no longer usable

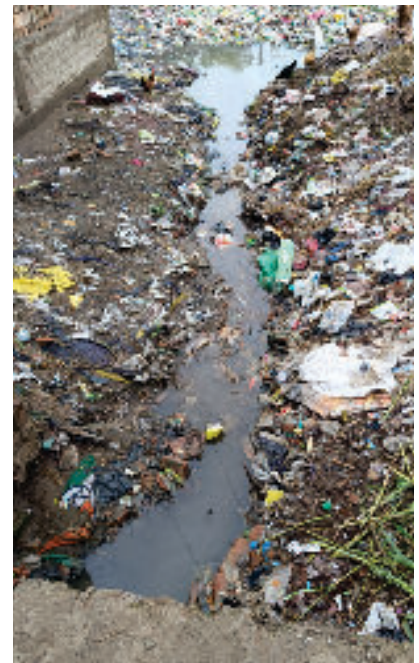
Charandas, a fisherman by profession, and a local resident, said that at present, a large amount of chemical fertilisers are being used on the land and these are being washed away by the rains and polluting the river water, resulting in a much lower fish yield than before. According to the villagers, an organisation called Shripur Mahila O Khadi Unnayan Samity (SMOKUS) works with children and youth in the area. Asma Khatun, a member of the youth group associated with

them, informed that some children and youth members of the youth group and SMOKUS organization have submitted two petitions on water pollution issues in Sekhalipur Panchayat.

Sanjeev Kumar Saha, a construction support worker of Sekhalipur Gram Panchayat has acknowledged the receipt of these two applications. He said that the Panchayat has provided arsenic-free water in four villages of Kantakhali, Barjumla, Krishnasail and Chandpur among the arsenic-prone areas. He also said that the Panchayat has a plan to

provide clean drinking water to the rest of the villages as well. Also, the contaminated water from the drains was getting mixed in the ponds causing water pollution. That is why drains are being constructed in some places by the Panchayat in such a way that the polluted water from the drains does not get into the ponds or rivers in any way.

To get rid of this dire situation of water pollution in Sekhalipur region, people's awareness needs to be increased. This collective effort to raise awareness by children and youth is expected to be successful.



Contaminated water seeping into the pond



Children and youth submitted appeals to local authority for prevention of water pollution



Meherunnesa Khatun
Age : 16 yrs



Asthma Khatun
Age : 14 yrs

Ailing environment due to **plastic pollution**

■ Ruksa Yeasmin and Sabina Khatun; Murshidabad, West Bengal

Visiting Chandpur village of Murshidabad district, it was learned that currently, due to excessive use of plastic, the environment is constantly getting damaged. The environment is ailing as a result of this man-made damage.

paper packets, but now according to the demand of the customers, I am forced to give things in plastic against my will”.

In this context, Ayesha Khatun, a youth member of Shimultala village in Murshidabad, said

completely stop plastic, but we have held a rally and made the villagers aware by putting up posters to stop the use of plastic bags that are given from hand to hand. I also went to Sekhalipur village panchayat and submitted the application form for dustbins to the chief



Plastic is polluting Mother Earth



Plastic choking drainage system

Habibur Rahaman, a resident of Chandpur village, has been running his shop for 47 years. His opinion on the use of plastic “At the beginning of starting the shop, I used to give things in

that it is not possible to completely avoid plastic because everything that we go to buy, including biscuits, chocolate, come in plastic packaging. She said, “We can’t

(Panchayat Pradhan). The chief has given hope to arrange for dustbins in every village. Just as burning plastic causes air pollution, plastic is also a source of soil and water pollution, and dumping plastic into drains can also clog drains.

Ayesha and other youth members are making paper packets with their own efforts and distributing them free of charge to various shops in the village, encouraging shopkeepers to reuse paper packets. She also appealed to the shopkeepers to make paper packets and bags by placing orders to the youth members.

This initiative is on the one hand environment friendly and on the other hand a way of employment for the youth.

Also, visiting the villages, it was seen that drains and ponds are being used as dustbins due to lack of awareness among the

villagers. The domestic animals in the villages are often consuming plastic as food, as a result of which they are also suffering from various physical injuries.

The only way to get rid of this problem is, if everyone comes

together to stop using plastic and puts the used plastic in the right place, only then we will get back a healthy environment.



Plastic wrapped goods sold in local shops



Ruksa Yeasmin
Age : 16 yrs



Sabina Khatun
Age : 14 yrs

The use of chemical fertilisers is reducing **soil fertility**

■ Maharami Khatun and Khushi Khatun; Murshidabad, West Bengal

Farmers of Murshidabad's Kantakhali village are worried about crop failure due to excessive use of chemical fertilisers. Senior farmer Ibrahim Sheikh said that

of organic fertilisers. According to Ibrahim Sheikh, the regular use of these chemical fertilisers destroys the fertility of the soil as well as disrupts the growth of crops. He is willing to use

as expected.

From the fertiliser seller of that village it is known that now the farmers are using chemical fertilisers for very fast yield. He



Negative effects of excessive use of chemical fertilisers



Farmer using chemical fertilisers

they used to apply organic fertilisers on the land, and the yield was better. But at present farmers are forced to use chemical fertilisers due to lack

organic fertilisers, but due to long term use of chemical fertilisers, the condition of the land is so bad that even using organic fertilisers will not yield

also said that due to non-availability of organic fertilisers, chemical fertilisers are sold in large quantities.



Chemical fertilisers are easily available in the market

Due to excessive use of chemical fertilisers, soil fertility is being lost, which will make the land unfit for cultivation in the future. Vegetables produced by using chemical fertilisers are losing their taste and quality. People are getting sick after eating them, even children are not spared.

Currently, if the use of chemical fertilisers is reduced and organic fertilisers are used, the soil of the cultivable land will regain its previous fertility and the vegetables produced will be suitable for children's health.



Excessive use of chemical fertilisers disrupts the health of crops



Khushi Khatun
Age : 15 yrs



Maharami Khatun
Age : 15 yrs

No more **wasting water** - let it be a call to awaken the nation

■ Mahafuja Begum and Brishti Das; Murshidabad, West Bengal

Another name for water is life. Water is one of the components of the life of the entire plant and animal world, including humans. Water is not available in many areas of Murshidabad, due to lack of understanding about the importance of water and uncontrolled wastage of water for personal needs. As a result, all the locals, from children to the elderly, are facing various

the water lines laid by the panchayat are not supplying enough water". Now they depend on buying drinking water. Halima and her children have to carry water from long distances for other purposes, leading to various problems for the children.

Halima added that two-three years ago, adequate water was available from tubewells. But

Ibrahim Sheikh, a local water trader, said, "At present, due to wastage of drinking water in the area, the groundwater level has gone down so low that the demand for water is increasing day by day. The villagers have to buy drinking water because of this".

When contacted, Sanjib Kumar Saha and Uday Giri, two workers of the Sekhalipur gram



Finding safe drinking water is difficult

difficulties for drinking water and water for daily use.

While investigating the cause of this water crisis, various information has emerged from different locals. For example, Halima Khatun, a local resident, says, "There is no water from the tubewells and

now due to excessive wastage of water by people, water has stopped flowing in tubewells in many places. Realizing this, she now retains rainwater. And even if they can't use rainwater for drinking, they use it for other purposes. If someone wastes excess water, she makes him aware.

panchayat, also said that "if the water lines provided have been damaged, they will immediately arrange for them to be repaired if the villagers inform the panchayat through an application". They have also asked villagers to use only what they need instead of wasting excess water.

Water wastage is a serious problem that we all have to solve together. We all have to be aware and take personal steps to save water. Water is a very precious resource and should be used responsibly.

"Save Water, Save Environment".



Drinking water being used for other purposes



Villagers receive drinking water from local sellers



Rain water collected for household use



Mahafuja Begum
Age : 14 yrs



Brishti Das
Age : 14 yrs

Air pollution is leading to human respiratory failure

■ Urmila Khatun and Somu Sarkar; Murshidabad, West Bengal



Vehicle fumes and brick kiln smoke are major contributors to air pollution (A child artist's impression)

Air pollution is one of the major problems of Barjumla Colony village under Sekhalipur Gram Panchayat. The main sources of this pollution are vehicle fumes, burning of plastics and continuous smoke from brick kilns.

In this regard, pedestrian Sanjay Das said that black smoke from various vehicles is polluting the air almost every day. Every vehicle has a specific time for smog testing.

But most of the motorists do not check the smog on time and this smog is polluting the environment through air pollution.

Barikul Islam, a villager of Barjumla Colony, a shopkeeper, said that the burning of various plastics is also causing air pollution. The main reason for this problem is that there is no designated place to dispose off plastic. That is why people are burning plastic after use which is increasing the level of

air pollution manifold. He sought the help of the Gram Panchayat to solve this problem. He feels that this problem can be solved to a large extent by arranging a designated area for dumping plastic and cleaning it at regular intervals.

Smoke is constantly emitted from two brick kilns located in Sekhalipur village panchayat area. Large quantities of coal and bamboo are used for burning bricks, which is one of

the main causes of air pollution in the surrounding villages. Local residents say they are suffering from respiratory diseases due to the smoke.

Air pollution is one of the main causes of problems like global warming. In order to save the environment from air pollution, the youth members of the Indian Youth Council (IYC) have suggested that everyone in the society should be made aware. Warnings should be disseminated through various posters, awareness messages should be spread from village to village to increase aware-ness about air pollution.



Burning plastic increases air pollution

People should take initiative to plant trees and proper action should also be taken by the Panchayat.



Brick Kiln- A major source of air pollution in villages



Urmila Khatun
Age : 15 yrs



Somu Sarkar
Age : 16 yrs

The future is in crisis due to **water pollution**

■ Marufa Hasnin and Masud Hasan; Murshidabad, West Bengal



Water bodies are contaminated

In today's society, due to water pollution, there is a problem of clean drinking water in the area. Factors that can be observed as causes of water pollution are washing clothes, washing dishes, bathing cows and buffaloes etc. in water bodies. Plastics, dirty garbage, dirty water from drains are mixing in local ponds causing water pollution.

Jibonnesha Khatun, a resident of Chandpur village in Murshidabad district, said

water pollution is one of the major problems of the people here. As a result of this water pollution, the scarcity of clean drinking water in the area is increasing day by day. Water pollution is occurring due to the accumulation of dirty garbage and plastic in the surrounding water bodies. Drinking that water is causing stomach problems and the water smells bad. The villagers of the area are not getting clean water, and the tubewell water also has a lot of arsenic, so they have to buy

drinking water.

Many applications have been submitted to the Gram Panchayat to get rid of this problem. Provision of drinking water has also been made by the government, but completely pure water is not available even from there.

Hafiza Begum, a resident of Chandpur village, is a community worker who cooks for children. She said that the clean water used for cooking



Daily chores polluting the water bodies



Plastics waste contaminates river water



Waste dumped within the community

has to be carried from home. As water pollution is increasing, it is causing various diseases such as stomach ailments. In the future, stomach diseases can get bigger.

Dr. Enayetullah Biswas, a senior physician of Krishna Sail village, said that the number of patients suffering from water pollution is increasing day by day, such as stomachache, cholera, fever etc.

According to him, people are getting diseases due to the fact that they throw dirty garbage everywhere. He also believes that children are getting sick from drinking water with excess

iron, in schools. He advises that dirty garbage and plastic should not be dumped anywhere or in water bodies. We should create pollution free environment and drink clean water.

Hafiza Begum, a resident of Sekhalipur village panchayat, and Jibonnesha Khatun, a member of the Self Help Group (SHG), told the public that everyone should throw dirty garbage at a designated place, keep water bodies clean for healthy environment and disease free life.



Drinking water contains high amount of iron



Marufa Hasnin
Age : 16 yrs



Masud Hasan
Age : 14 yrs

Villagers are troubled by the terror of **wild animals**

■ Sahil Ansari and Priya Lohar; Alipurduar, West Bengal



Wild animals destroyed houses

At present, due to cutting and destruction of forests, the habitats of wild animals are decreasing. Due to this, wild animals start struggling for their existence and start moving towards villages, which creates problems for the villagers.

The safety of children and villagers is endangered due to the entry of wild animals in villages. Attacks by wild animals can cause physical harm to children and villagers, and sometimes even death.

Jatuline is a small tribal village in Dalsingpara Gram Panchayat under Alipurduar district of West Bengal. While talking to the villagers there, they said, “Excessive trees

and plants of the forest are being cut and due to this, wild animals like elephants, leopards are coming to our village and creating an atmosphere of fear”.

They also said that 25-30 years ago there were a lot of fruits, flowers and other trees in the forest. At that time there was not so much terror of wild animals, and it was not so hot either.

Now it is seen that wild animals like elephants and leopards are spreading terror whenever they enter the village and causing damage in various ways, such as breaking houses, breaking shops, eating goats, cows etc.

A woman living in the same village, Chandni Kharia said that a week ago elephant broke her house, and also destroyed rice, pulses and many other things.

According to Suraj Kharia, another resident of the village, if trees are replanted and the forest is not damaged, wild animals will not come towards the village. Moreover, if the leopards or other animals coming to the village are caged with the help of the forest department and released in the nearby Buxa forest, then this problem will be reduced to some extent. As a result, children and villagers can stay safe, and can also escape from the heat.



Forest officials captured leopard from the village (File picture)



A local resident sharing her experience of man-animal conflict



Damage caused by wild elephants



Priya Lohar
Age : 15 yrs



Sahil Ansari
Age : 16 yrs

Story of the **trees**

■ Akriti Khariya and Rushma Chik Baraik; Alipurduar, West Bengal

There was a beautiful village where the greenery and tranquillity attracted everyone. In that village, there was a place with many trees that provided shade and coolness to the villagers.

In the summer, the villagers would sit around that tree, and the children would play there. But gradually, the villagers started cutting down those trees and began building houses, installing water tanks, and constructing large buildings in their place.

Now, the village does not have the same greenery and peace

as before, and the villagers have to go somewhere else to find relief from the heat. The children cannot play there anymore, because there are no trees or shade from the trees.

This story teaches us how important trees are, and we should appreciate and protect them. Cutting down the trees is destroying the beauty and peace of the village and also reducing the amount of oxygen in the environment, making it difficult to breathe. Furthermore, the lack of trees is causing changes in the environment, leading to an increase in natural disasters

such as floods, droughts, and storms.

According to Sumanti Khadia, "Due to deforestation, wild animals are entering villages and harming villagers and crops. There has been a significant difference between the previous environment and the current environment. Earlier, there were many more forests, but now the forests have decreased. Deforestation is harming both adults and children, as trees provide us with oxygen, fruits, grains, etc., which are now becoming scarce".



Villagers cutting down trees

to address this issue, we can undertake the following measures: engage with local authorities to curb deforestation, conduct awareness campaigns to educate the public, impart knowledge about the significance of afforestation in schools and colleges, organise community based tree planting initiatives, leverage government afforestation programmes, and disseminate information regarding the detrimental effects of deforestation.

By implementing these measures, we can effectively conserve trees and preserve our environment.



Villagers gather wood for daily needs



Water tanks built at the cost of nature



Akriti Khariya
Age : 15 yrs



Rushma Chik Baraik
Age : 16 yrs

Tea garden shuts down due to **chemical fertiliser** use

■ Runjhun Sha and Komal Kumari Sha; Alipurduar, West Bengal



Torsha tea garden shuts down (File picture)

Torsha tea garden in Alipurduar district was shut down a few months ago. As a result, the workers there have been facing financial difficulties and their household conditions have deteriorated significantly. Manju Oraon and Bijita Oraon, workers from the garden, said, "Despite working from 7 am every day in the garden, we haven't received our wages

because the owners incurred losses and had to shut down the garden."

The main reason for this loss is chemical fertilisers. While their use increases tea production, it deteriorates the quality of the tea leaves, making them unpalatable. Consequently, the leaves are not selling in the market. Excessive use of chemical pesticides in the

garden burns the tea leaves and destroys the fertility of the soil.

This is a very serious problem, as the closure of the tea garden has led to the workers' families facing financial hardship, forcing children to work and become child labourers, depriving them of their rights. The workers also say that if the garden owners had reduced



Chemical fertilisers being used by the tea garden workers

the use of chemical fertilisers and used organic fertilisers instead, perhaps the garden would not have closed and they would not have faced the

problem of unemployment.

The workers demand that organic fertilisers be used in the tea garden to improve the

quality of the leaves, enhance soil fertility, and prevent the closure of the tea garden.



Tea leaves are damaged by chemical pesticide.



Runjhun Sha
Age : 14 yrs



Komal Kumari Sha
Age : 16 yrs

Due to littering, villagers are facing difficulties during rainy season

■ Mehek Oraon and Kajal Lohar; Alipurduar, West Bengal

The garbage problem in the Madhu tea garden area of Alipurduar district has become very serious and needs urgent attention. Indiscriminate littering has caused the village drains to clog, leading to waterlogging on the roads during rainy seasons.

children and adults, have contracted dengue”.

Savitri Turi, another resident of Madhu tea garden and a Self Help Group (SHG) member, says, “The garbage problem in the village is very serious. Instead of throwing garbage

The statements of Premika Oraon and Savitri Turi clearly indicate that the villagers need to be made aware of this problem, and should work with the administration, to find a solution as soon as possible to prevent the spread of diseases like dengue.



River water getting polluted with garbage

Premika Oraon, a resident of Madhu tea garden, says that the accumulation of garbage and dirty water in the village drains during the rainy season, leads to the breeding of mosquitoes and the spread of diseases like dengue. She also mentions “This year, many people in this area, including

into rivers and drains, villagers should collect the garbage in a safe place and manage it regularly. Additionally, mosquito-killing sprays should be sprayed regularly, and people should use mosquito nets. Villagers need to be made aware of this problem”.



Waterlogged roads during rainy season



Garbage being dumped in river water



Garbage dumped on the bank of the river



Mehek Oraon
Age : 16 yrs



Kajal Lohar
Age : 14 yrs

Flash flood

■ Nafisa Parvin and Muskan Khatun; Alipurduar, West Bengal



Flash flood

A flash flood is a type of disaster that occurs due to catastrophic rainfall without any prior notice or warning. These rains are often heavy to torrential, resulting in water logging, crop failure, house damage and disease outbreaks. This rain can happen at any time of the day or night.

In the Dalsingpara teagarden, a small village, Jatu Line is located. River Torsha flows past this village, which makes

this place more attractive and beautiful.

Mangru Kharia, a villager in Jatu Line, said that due to climate change, the water level in the river is rising. Incessant rains and the opening of dams from the neighbouring country Bhutan, floods the village. Other villagers also said that the problem is increasing every year and their crops and property are being damaged.

It is clear from the villagers that

the problem of flooding in the village due to climate change and opening of dams is a serious issue that needs immediate attention.

In addition to the risk to children's lives due to flash floods, its adverse effect on vegetation is a serious problem. Flooding poses a safety risk to children as they can be trapped or swept away. Floods also cause damage to property, which creates financial problems for people.



Flash flood-induced soil erosion is a concern



Trees are uprooted due to flash flood

Due to flooding, land along the riverbanks is being eroded into the river causing soil erosion, which is a serious problem.

River water entering the village destroys the vegetation, due to which the environment and wildlife habitat are also damaged. As a result, wild animals like elephants enter the village and harm the villagers. Children's safety is also at risk due to wild animals entering the village.

Krittika Chhetri of this village spoke about the increasing problem of flooding and said that to deal with the problem of flooding, planting of trees and construction of protection dams along the riverbanks can reduce the impact of water and prevent soil erosion, ensuring the safety of the village.

By taking these suggestions, the villagers can ensure the protection of their village and village children by avoiding floods and by planting trees.



Nafisa Parvin
Age : 14 yrs



Muskan Khatun
Age : 15 yrs

Plastic is causing harm to life

■ Karan Lohar and Neha Chik Baraik; Alipurduar, West Bengal

In the Malangi tea garden of Kalchini block, Alipurduar district, people are not aware of the harmful effects of plastic, due to which people are using more plastic and throwing plastic waste in the open areas. Due to excessive use of plastic, people in the village are facing many problems, and children are also being affected. Health

problems of children are increasing.

Problems caused by plastic waste such as - water and air pollution, land pollution, health problems, death of animals, damage to the environment are happening.

Village resident Nilen Oraon said that due to lack of information in the village,

people are using plastic too much. He said that people do not know how many problems are caused by plastic waste and how much damage it causes to the environment. We have to reduce the use of plastic and keep the environment clean so that the people and children of our village can remain healthy and safe. The problem of plastic



Plastic waste littered in open areas within the community



Plastic waste causes harm to animals

waste can be reduced by taking some concrete steps in Malangi tea garden, such as giving information to people about the ill effects of plastic by running an awareness campaign, will prove to be a very important step, because when everyone will know how many problems are caused by plastic waste, they will be inspired to change their behaviour.

Some suggestions to solve this problem are :

- Conduct awareness campaigns to inform people about the ill effects of plastic.
- Promote alternatives to plastic, such as cloth, paper, or materials made from naturally degradable materials.
- Strengthen the waste management system so that plastic waste can be disposed off properly.

- Ban or reduce the use of plastic at the local level.
- Educate people about the ill effects of plastic through education and community programmes.

By implementing these suggestions, we can reduce the problem of plastic waste in Malangi tea garden and preserve the environment so that children can get a safe environment.



Plastic litter in the drain is causing waterlogging, harming children's health



Children documenting waste disposal problem within the village



Karan Lohar
Age : 15 yrs



Neha Chik Baraik
Age : 14 yrs

Man-animal conflict

■ Nikita Oraz and Manjula Khariya; Alipurduar, West Bengal



Forest cover is getting reduced

In Alipurduar, the conflict between elephants and humans is increasing due to the destruction of forests. The frequent entry of wild animals into villages due to deforestation has created a climate of fear. In the Kalchini block of this district, elephants have come to the area adjacent to the Madhu tea garden, many times in the last six months. A female resident of this tea garden, Magrate Lohar, said that elephants are entering the villages in search of food. In these elephant attacks, the houses of the villagers are being demolished, food is being wasted, and the safety of children is also being compromised.

For the past few days, almost every day, elephants have been entering the village and six houses have also collapsed in 2024. Magrate Lohar says, "Ten-fifteen years ago, the forest was dense and elephants and other wild animals had food provisions in the forest itself, they did not come to the village so frequently. But now the situation has changed due to excessive cutting of trees. In search of food, elephants enter the village and break houses, due to which the villagers are living in fear and insecurity. Children are also afraid to go to school, go out on the road, and play".

Villagers believe that by planting trees and restoring the forest, a permanent solution to this man-animal conflict problem will be found and both human and animal will be safe.



House damaged by wild elephant



Elephant intrudes in the village (File picture)



Nikita Oraon
Age : 15 yrs



Manjula Kharia
Age : 15 yrs

Adverse effects of **water pollution**

■ Ronika Oraon and Diwash Oraon; Alipurduar, West Bengal

Water pollution has become a major problem in Malangi tea plantations which is harming the health and rights of children.

Malangi village has one tap for 30 houses, from which all the family members use water for washing clothes, washing dishes and other purposes. But

household waste is dumped into drains, which accumulates drain water and breeds mosquitoes and insects, whose bites cause diseases such as dengue, malaria, chikungunya, etc. Also due to the accumulation of dirty water in one place, bad smell caused by methane gas, mixes with the air and pollutes the environment. This affects all organisms,

animals, birds and environment.

Jyoti Saraki, health worker of Malangi village, when asked for a solution to the impact of accumulated water on people's health said, "Waterlogging affects our health badly as garbage clogs the drains due to which the water in the drains does not drain properly. And



Household waste dumped into drains

mosquitoes breed there; when these mosquitoes bite humans, diseases like dengue, malaria or chikungunya occur and the foul-smelling methene gas that is released due to stagnant water, pollutes our environment”.

Jyoti Saraki was asked, about the number of children who have been effected by dengue.

In response to the question, she said, "There were two to three children in our Malangi tea garden who had dengue". When asked what steps should be taken to stop water pollution, she said, “first of all, to keep our village, society and environment healthy, water pollution must be stopped. As tap water is properly drained, we should clean the drain from

time to time so that water does not accumulate. If this does not happen then the impact will be on our children, society and community. So, we should stop water pollution as much as possible and keep our society clean”.

When Bajrang Gowala of Malangi village was asked about the impact of water pollution is not coming out properly; because people throw garbage in the drain, which causes the water to accumulate and breed mosquitoes, which cause diseases like dengue, malaria, chikungunya etc. Further asked about the effect of stagnant water on our health, Bajrang said, "Water should not get accumulated anywhere, children fall sick by deliberately playing in dirty water. Our tea garden hospital does not have the facility to make the children recover quickly, so, they have to be sent to the Latabari hospital, only then the children can recover.

He also confirmed that four or five children in village had dengue. It can be concluded that water pollution must be stopped, and the dirty drains must be kept clean so that children and their families, communities and villages remain safe and healthy.



Tap water used for household purposes



Stagnant water becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes and insects



Ronika Oraon
Age : 16 yrs



Diwash Oraon
Age : 14 yrs

Our right: Pollution free air

■ Ujala Choudhary and Rohit Kumar Sha; Alipurduar, West Bengal

Air pollution is a serious problem that affects our environment, health and child rights in various ways.

Pasakha Industrial Estate located in the Indo-Bhutan border area near Upper Khokhla Basti in Alipurduar district was established in 1988. Since then, the environment of the area has

been adversely affected due to smoke coming out of the factory chimneys. Air quality in Pasakha and surrounding areas such as Torsha tea plantations is also deteriorating. The toxic fumes emitted from the factories located in Pasakha and the fumes emitted from the vehicles plying are mixing in the atmosphere in large quantities.

Due to this, the villagers have to face extreme problems.

Local resident Sita Tamang said, "Air pollution is adversely affecting our generation. If more such factories are built, it will have a very bad effect on our children. The growth of plants is also hampered. This air pollution causes cough, asthma, heart attack, eye irritation, allergy, etc".



Toxic fumes emitted from the factories causing air pollution



Local resident sharing her experience of air pollution

She also said, “Overall, our health and environment are at risk, especially the younger generation and children may suffer the consequences. It is directly and indirectly preventing us from ensuring the rights of children like right to life and right to live in a healthy environment. We need to find a solution before this problem escalates”.

To reduce the effects of air pollution there is a need to spread awareness in our society especially among the youth. Use of vehicles should be reduced as much as possible, factories should use clean energy, trees should be planted as much as possible. In this way victory can be achieved against air pollution.



Air pollution has led to barren land



Ujala Choudhary
Age : 16 yrs



Rohit Kumar Sha
Age : 16 yrs

Destruction of forest for one's own benefit

■ Soma Paul and Laxmi Paul; Ghatsila, Jharkhand



A remaining tree stump

The felling of trees is increasing day by day in the forest in front of Mahtam village of Ghatsila area. For their own benefit, humans are cutting trees and collecting the wood for domestic purposes, thereby spoiling the environment.

60 year old Kalachand, a resident of Mahtam village, said that when he was young, this forest was very green and dense. They were afraid to even go to the forest. There used to be tall trees and plants in the forest and at that time tiger, bear, jackal were also

found in the forest, but today the wild animals in the forest have become almost non-existent. Perhaps that is the reason why people are not afraid to go to the forest for cutting trees. They are cutting forest trees for their benefit.

Kalachand also said that earlier the monsoon was on time, but because of deforestation, the amount of rainfall has reduced a lot. He says that earlier water used to come out even after a little digging but now the water level has reduced to a very low level. He also said that earlier they used to bring different

types of fruits, flowers and medicines from the forest but after the cutting of those trees, all those fruits, flowers and medicines are no longer available.

Mithila Singh of Mahtam village also confirmed that people cut trees and plants from the forest and bring them home and are using wood as fuel for cooking in their homes. If they continue to use wood like this, then the future generation will not get a healthy environment.

Another villager of Mahtam, Roshni said that whenever they

need wood, they cut wood from the forest. She said that elephants come to the village more than once a year and destroy small trees, plants and assets. She also said that there is a Forest Protection Committee to save the forest, but people cut trees secretly so that the Forest Protection Committee cannot fine them.

Suggestion to stop deforestation

Forest is an important part of the environment; therefore, it is the responsibility of all of us to save forests. Local people gave some suggestions to save trees from cutting, in which they said that people will

have to understand the importance of forests and that deforestation is causing damage to the environment. The Forest Protection Committee will have to bring

more stringent rules to become more vigilant and responsible. Community people have equal responsibility to protect forest for their own benefit and their children's future.



Local villager collecting wood from forest



Deforestation causing harm to the environment



Soma Paul
Age : 16 yrs



Laxmi Paul
Age : 14 yrs

Brick kilns are causing severe damage to the environment

■ Sonali Tudu and Dukhiram Soren; Ghatsila, Jharkhand

While visiting the brick kiln of the nearby village of Ghatsila, it was seen that clay was being transported in some vehicles. While talking to a woman worker Basanti Murmu, she said, "I have been making bricks for the last 5 years". She mentioned that a lot of clay is required to make bricks and the clay is prepared by wetting it. It is pressed, then put into the form, then dried. After drying it is put in the furnace. She also said that a large amount of water is required to make bricks, for which they have to bring water from the river. For the excessive use of water in brick kilns farming can not be done properly.

Another labourer named Salma said, "The children of permanent labourers are not able to study because there is no school near the brick kiln, and also due to the polluted smoke generated from the chimney, the children have difficulty in breathing".

In a village named Kharswati under Ghatsila block, Vishal, Shiva and Mahakur, labourers in a brick kiln said that a large amount of coal is burnt to make bricks, but the workers are not aware of the damage it causes to the environment. They work only to earn a living for themselves and their families.

Krishna Manki, a local resident of Kharswati village, whose

land is near the brick kiln, said that the smoke coming out of the chimney of the brick kiln is polluting the environment, but some villagers make their living with the help of the brick kiln. She said that she has land around the kiln, but the soil is getting depleted as it is used to make bricks. Also, the number of living bodies around the area is reducing. She is of the opinion that the brick kiln is providing financial help to the villagers but on the other hand it is causing great harm to the environment and health.



Brick kiln causes air pollution



Workers bringing soil with a tractor to make bricks



Brick kiln workers carrying coal



Brick kiln workers carrying coal



Sonali Tudu
Age : 16 yrs



Dukhiram Soren
Age : 14 yrs

Villagers are facing problems due to **lack of water**

■ Kiran Karmakar and Subarna Karmakar; Ghatsila, Jharkhand

There is water shortage in Jharbera, a small village in Ghatsila block; people are going far to get drinking water. Villagers are struggling with water shortage every day. The situation worsens in summer.

Community worker Malti Tudu of Jharbera village says that there are hand pumps in the villages but as the water is not pure, the women of the village

animals also face the problem of drinking water”.

Kade Tudu, a farmer of Jharbera village, said that earlier he used to do farming twice a year. But at present farming can be done only once a year. Farming can be done only during the rainy season. This problem is also faced by all the farmers in the village.

In view of the problem of

drinking water, community workers and villagers together have given an application to the head of the Panchayat, in which there is an appeal for repairing damaged hand pumps, constructing ponds and space for rainwater conservation.

At the same time, the children of this area, with the help of Rural Development Association (RDA), a civil



People going far to get drinking water

bring drinking water from distant places. The water is not clean, as the wells are old.

Another member of the village, Mayna Hansda, says, “The pond in my village is very far away. During summer, the water level decreases a lot and the water becomes muddy. Along with the villagers,



People fetching water from old well

society organisation, are continuously making the people aware of the importance of saving water by holding rallies and performing street theatres. The efforts of these children are continuing. If everyone makes efforts then this initiative will be successful. Everyone will have to come together and take a pledge to conserve water, only then water conservation will be possible.



Damaged hand pumps



People depend on community taps and wells for water



Depleting water resources



Kiran Karmakar
Age : 16 yrs



Subarna Karmakar
Age : 14 yrs

Villagers troubled by the wrath of wild elephants

■ Manish Tudu and Ramchandra Tudu; Ghatsila, Jharkhand



Pictorial representation of elephant entering human settlement (A child artist's impression)

Jadunath Tudu, a resident of Pithati village of East Singhbhum district, is a farmer by profession, cultivates paddy, wheat, vegetables etc. In the month of November 2023, when his crop was ready for harvesting, a herd of elephants arrived. As a consequence, the crop grown in his field was damaged to a great extent, due to which he lost his income. Along with him, other farmers of his village were also affected.

According to the head of Baqi Panchayat, Fagu Soren, farming is the main source of livelihood of the villagers, but due to elephants entering the rural areas continuously for the past few years and crushing their crops, the lives and mental peace of the villagers are getting badly damaged. Earlier, elephants did not enter the rural areas that much, but in the last few years, elephants are coming in herds because community people have destroyed the habitat of

elephants to a great extent by logging and cutting of trees.

This not only causes harm to the villagers but at the same time elephants also lose their lives due to electrocution from the electric pole wires and getting hit by the speeding trains while crossing the railway tracks. According to Fagu Soren, people should not destroy the forest and plant fruit bearing trees in the forest. A better habitat should be arranged in the forest for the

elephants as per their needs so that there is no change in the biodiversity.

Vikram Tudu, head of Peethati village, says that the loss that farmers have to face due to elephants is huge and they do not get timely compensation from the Government, due to which their economic condition becomes very bad. It is suggested that the Government should consider this issue seriously and improve the process of compensation so that the farmers can get their compensation as soon as possible. People should not cut trees in the forest and the wild animals living in the forest should not be harmed.



A local resident sharing his experience of Elephant attack

पूर्वी सिंहभूम : जंगल कटने से गांव में घुस रहे हाथी, ग्रामीणों पर बरपा रहे कहर, नुकसान की सरकार करे भरपाई

घाटशिला अनुमंडल क्षेत्र की सीमा उत्तर में पश्चिम बंगाल और दक्षिण में ओडिशा की सीमा से लगी हुई है. अनुमंडल का अधिकतर इलाका वन क्षेत्र में है, जहां जंगली हाथियों व ग्रामीणों में टकराव की स्थिति बन गयी है.

By Prabhat Khabar News Desk | December 20,

2023 1:09 AM



Local newspaper coverage



Manish Tudu
Age : 15 yrs



Ramchandra Tudu
Age : 13 yrs

Plastic is being used in large quantities even in rural areas due to which the **environment is getting polluted**

■ Mugli Tudu and Tulshi Hansda; Ghatsila, Jharkhand

Due to increasing use of plastic in our daily life, many diseases are occurring since plastic is entering the human body through food, salt, fish and air.

The use of plastic is increasing in the nearby weekly markets, such as in sweets, fish and spice shops. Plastic is being used to deliver goods. Apart from this, plastic packets are being used for selling goods, such as biscuits, salt, oil, masala, chocolate, etc.

People throw these plastic packets here and there, which is destroying the environment. If we keep doing this, then no one can save us from its side effects in the future.

Compulsion to sell goods in plastic bags

Budhu Mandi, a resident of village Gandhania, East Singhbhum Jharkhand, has been selling goods in the weekly market for many years. He says that due to non-availability of paper packets, he uses plastic bags.

Despite being aware of its ill effects, people still use plastic.

Ajay Namata of Digha village says that he has been coming to the market for the last 16 years and he also uses plastic bags to buy goods because



Irresponsible disposal of plastic waste in the community

everyone does so and the shopkeeper where he buys goods from also keeps plastic bags. Ajoy has received information about the harm

caused by plastic, and he also communicates his friends, but they also have compulsion in using plastic bags.



Irresponsible disposal of plastic waste near weekly market

Suggestion to reduce the use of plastic

To avoid the harm caused by plastic, we all have to decide that we will not use plastic anymore. We can sensitise community people by organising rallies; while going to the shop, we can use our own cloth bags.

Amit Mandi, resident of Kashida village says that he has been coming to the market since childhood. The environment is getting polluted due to use of plastic, but the Government is not doing anything to prevent it. Instead, plastic companies are making plastic and people are compelled to use plastic. If an alternative is found in its place, then the use of plastic can be reduced. One can go to the market with one's own cloth bag. Amit's appeal is that the Government will have to take steps to prevent the use of plastic.



Single use plastic bags being used to deliver goods in the market



Sellers using plastic packets due to unavailability of paper packets



Mugli Tudu
Age : 14 yrs



Tulsi Hansda
Age : 12 yrs

Villagers are making efforts to overcome ground water crisis

■ Dulari Soren and Rita Mandi; Ghatsila, Jharkhand

In this period of water crisis, the work that everyone is doing is the importance of people's participation in awareness and publicity in maintaining the ground water level through rain water harvesting.

Shasodhar Singh, a resident of

In order to make efforts, the people of his area are making pits in front of tube wells, constructing dobhas (waterbodies), ponds etc. near the agricultural land and he himself is building a big well in his field so that he can collect rain water and beat the summer. During

work, due to the efforts of RDA (Rural Development Association) organisation and their people, the water of the spring is being saved from getting wasted and is being utilised. According to what they are doing in agricultural work and in their daily work, they are



Construction of well to collect rain water

Paharpur village in East Singhbhum district, says that water crisis is a big problem for the people. Ground water level is decreasing day by day. People of their area have become aware of this. People are trying to increase the ground water level through rain water harvesting.

these days, they can get water for irrigation of crops and improve their economic condition.

According to Lakshmi Singh, a resident of Mahatam village, a pipeline was laid after collecting the water of Chatrakocha spring. For this

collecting spring water. After the construction of pond, dobha (waterbodies) etc., the water level of their area has improved to some extent and they have started doing agriculture throughout the year, which has improved their economic condition.

Due to increase in the water level and storage of spring water, children have benefited a lot; they no longer have to go far to take bath and they are no longer late in going to school. They have made small pits at some distance, on the empty land, below the hill so that rain water can be collected.

According to Dashrath Manki, a resident of Katsol village, a check dam was constructed 30 years ago with the help of the government and villagers on the Budhijhor canal of Katsol village, due to which people of about four villages are able to irrigate their crops even during summer and the groundwater level around the area has increased.

To increase the ground water level, Shesdhar Singh, Lakshmi Singh and Dashrath Manki suggest that people have to be aware of rain water harvesting and there is a need to construct more and more ponds, dobha (waterbodies), dams etc. in their area and at the same time wasting of rain water must be prevented.



Pit has been constructed in front of tube wells to collect waste water



Pipeline constructed to collect stream water



Waterbodies constructed adjacent to agricultural lands



Dulari Soren
Age : 16 yrs



Rita Mandi
Age : 15 yrs

Gradual degradation of **soil**

■ Susmita Murmu and Manko Murmu; Ghatsila, Jharkhand



Excessive use of pesticides

The quality of soil is deteriorating day by day. There are many reasons for soil degradation. Excessive use of plastic, excessive use of chemical fertilisers are some of the reasons.

Farmers of Karaduba village of East Singhbhum district believe that the soil is getting deteriorated due to the use of chemical fertilisers.

Most of the farmers believe that earlier when chemical fertilisers were not used, the taste of food was good. But at

present the food does not taste good. Still these people are using chemical fertilisers, as the crop does not grow much if chemical fertilisers are not used. They have no other option as these people do not get profit from the cost of farming. The family's expenses are also not covered. Due to this, children also face problems in education. Villagers say that no special facilities are provided even by the Government.

Since the monsoon does not come on time, more pesticides

or chemical fertilisers have to be applied. They say that after 2-10 years the bad effect of chemical fertiliser on children will be visible. If pesticides or chemical fertilisers continue to be used for 50 years, the land will become barren.

People who are using plastic say that because of deforestation it is becoming difficult to use leaf made materials.

Kishan Dharamal Soren of Dakpathar village advises to reduce the use of plastic and collect it at one place instead of

throwing here and there, and not to use chemical fertilisers. He advises doing organic farming by rearing domesticated animals and making manure from their wastes, and thereby protecting the soil from contamination.



Degeneration of land



Chemical fertilisers are being used to maximise crop yield



Plastic waste scattered everywhere in the village



Susmita Murmu
Age : 14 yrs



Manko Murmu
Age : 13 yrs

Villagers are facing **air pollution** in the village near Ghatsila

■ Vishnupriya Singh and Puja Singh; Ghatsila, Jharkhand

Visiting Mahatam village near Ghatsila, we came to know that animals and plants die due to forest fire. While talking to the people, we have come to know that the fire is lit by the villagers for making the forest path clear for their movement. They also said that the trees, plants and animals present in the forest are harmed and therefore, the environment is also getting harmed.

Due to increase in forest fire, smoke is coming out everywhere, due to which air pollution is occurring. Due to this, rural people are having trouble in breathing.

During a visit to the brick kiln of a village named Kharswati in Ghatsila block, a large amount of smoke was seen coming out of the chimney. And it was also revealed that a large amount of coal is being used in the

process of making bricks. Due to the air pollution caused by this, people in the neighbourhood are facing health-related problems.

Bhabesh Kumar, a senior resident of Kharswati village, said that due to the smoke coming out from the brick kiln next to his village, the air pollution in the neighborhood has increased a lot. He said that he also faces problems in farming.



Fire set in the forest by the villagers

In rural areas, the stubble is burnt after harvesting the crop. This has also created a new problem of air pollution in rural areas. Earlier, we came to know from the media about the burning of stubble in the Punjab and its consequent pollution in the area. Currently for last few years, villages around Ghatsila are facing similar problems.



Forest fire leads to air pollution



Smoke coming out of a brick kiln



Burnt stubble in the field



Vishnupriya Singh
Age : 15 yrs



Puja Singh
Age : 13 yrs

Water scarcity problem in Pithati village

■ Nisharani Tudu and Kapurmuli Tudu; Ghatsila, Jharkhand



Depleting ground water level

According to the villagers, they do not have availability of water in every season. There is a lot of problem of water in June and July, due to which they have to face a lot of difficulties like cooking food, washing utensils, washing clothes, fetching drinking water. Due to lack of water, children are not able to get ready for school early. Along with the villagers, animals also face problems.

According to the women of the village, during summer they have to fetch water from places that are 1 to 2 km away.

This problem worsens as some villagers using submersible pumps for meeting their excess need for water. This excessive use further lowers the ground water levels, making the situation more severe. At times they do not get clean drinking water because mud gets mixed in water due to excess use of ground water. According to them, they have been facing water problem for about 20 years. There is a lot of water shortage for the last two-three years. Due to the scarcity of water, the villagers are able to do farming only once a year, which does not even provide

them with enough food and on top of that, there is no money left for the upbringing of children, so they face problems in their academics. According to them, water is being misused a lot and they are facing a lot of water problems.

According to the villagers, due to excessive cutting of trees they are also facing water problem.



Woman taking out water



Stream fed canals dry up seasonally



Community tube wells



Nisha Rani Tudu
Age : 13 yrs



Kapurmuli Tudu
Age : 14 yrs

Forests are being **destroyed by fire**

■ Chintamuni Mardi and Manisha Singh; Ghatsila, Jharkhand



Forest fire

The forest area around Ghatsila is set on fire by some people due to personal gain and lack of awareness. As soon as the autumn season ends, fire is set in the forests due to which the plants, animals, insects and birds living there get burnt to ashes. The smoke coming out of the fire causes breathing problems to the animals and villagers living nearby.

Regarding this matter, Bahadur Singh, an elderly resident of Mahatam village, said that the villagers living near the forests get dry wood, fruits, flowers,

vegetables and medicines from the forests. The livelihood of many villagers depends on the forests, but some people set fire to the forests for their personal interests. Due to this the people living within the forest area face problems and the residents of nearby villages also face problems. Bahadur Singh continues, in their childhood, they used to get to eat a lot of fruits and vegetables from the forests, but nowadays children do not get to eat them. Burning of forests reduces the food resources of animals and therefore, elephants come into life and property within the

villages. This causes loss of life and property within the villages. Due to forest fire, many animals migrate from that forest area and many trees are also becoming extinct.

Rabi Sabar of Susaniyalu village said that some people light fire to clean the forest area to collect Mahua (an indigenous fruit and flower). But they do not extinguish the fire due to which the fire spreads in the entire forest. As a consequence, trees, plants and animals get burnt and also cause harm to the environment. Due to absence

of trees, heat wave blows in summer affecting the villagers and animals.

To prevent forest fires, village forest committees and forest department officials are working together and spreading awareness among the people. Forest committees are strictly enforcing rules and regulations to take action against those who cause forest fires. Also, to keep the forest green, trees are being continuously planted in the lower parts of the forest.

To save forests and wildlife, awareness among people is necessary and everyone will have to come together and take a pledge to save forests, only then can forests and wildlife be saved.



Forest fire aftermath- everything turned to ashes



Forest fire leads to breathing difficulty



Forest fire causes loss of living beings



Chintamuni Mardi
Age : 13 yrs



Manisha Singh
Age : 13 yrs

Chemical fertilisers are causing harm to the environment. Farmers want to use **organic fertilisers**

■ Puja Tudu and Muniram Mardi ; Ghatsila, Jharkhand

Village farmers have started becoming aware of the ill effects of chemical fertilisers. Due to this, some farmers have now started using organic fertilisers in their fields. But some farmers still do not have the information and facilities available. People of about 60 villages of Dampadak area still use chemical fertilisers while farming. Most farmers are able to cultivate paddy only once a year because they depend only on rain water. Whereas where irrigation facilities are available, they are able to do farming twice a year.

There is no knowledge of organic farming, profits are made from chemical fertilisers.

Nitai Kumar Pal, a farmer, resident of Karaduba Dampada area of East Singhbhum Jharkhand, does farming twice a year because he has the facility of irrigation. He says that he has been doing farming for about 20 years, in which he mostly uses chemical fertilisers. Farmers say that by using chemical fertilisers they get more profits and it helps them in running their families.

Impact on environment due to use of chemical fertilisers

According to Mukund Singh and Paluram, shared croppers, the impact on environment due

to use of chemical fertilisers are:

1. Water pollution
2. Harm to living beings
3. Decrease in soil fertility
4. Negative effect on aquatic organisms
5. Physical problems for humans.

Organic farming is more profitable

Palu Ram Mandi of Asana village is a farmer who uses manure while cultivating

Solution: To ensure the reduction of use of chemical fertilisers, the government should make strict rules so that the use of chemical fertilisers can be stopped, and also organic fertilisers should be made available to the farmers. At the same time, awareness about organic agriculture should be spread among the farmers and they should be told about its benefits.

There should be a scheme



Farmers are still using chemical fertilisers

paddy. He says, "Organic manure is very beneficial for us and it also maintains the fertility of the soil, it helps the people living in the fields. There is no effect on earthworms or other organisms".

Paddy cultivation is also good and humans do not get sick after eating it.

from the Government which will provide training to the farmers for organic farming and make agricultural goods available to the farmers at low rates.



Chemical fertilisers generate better production



Using chemical fertiliser with irrigation facility doubles up the production



Farmer Mukund Singh, who is slowly shifting to organic farming, stands in front of his cultivated crop



Puja Tudu
Age : 15 yrs



Muniram Mardi
Age : 15 yrs

Village people are changing the future of agriculture through **organic farming**.

■ Sumitra Hansda and Surajmoni Soren; Ghatsila, Jharkhand



Organic farming

Through organic farming, the villagers are giving a new example of agriculture and are abandoning chemical farming and adopting organic farming.

Padmini Mandi, a resident of Dhangakamal village, East Singhbhum district, Jharkhand has been doing organic farming since 2014 and about 50 to 60 families of her village are practising it. They make organic fertilisers themselves which include cow dung, compost manure, mustard shell, rice-bran etc. They also make medicines, which protect the crops from harmful micro-organisms. This has brought about a change in the yield of their crops; the fruits are lasting longer and the plants also remain healthy.

In the process of making compost, they make a big pit, fill it with cow dung, water,



Product of organic agriculture

green leaves, vegetable peel, etc. and leave it for two months. Through this, fertiliser is prepared. Padmini also makes the women farmers of the village aware of adopting organic farming. She got training in organic farming from an NGO called Rural Development Association (RDA). According to her, organic farming has a good effect on children; they fall sick less and their physical development is better.



Earthworm-A vital component of vermicompost

Ever since she started doing organic farming, Padmini's agricultural expenses reduced a lot, her financial condition improved. She stopped doing chemical farming and considers organic farming better than chemical farming. She suggested that all the people of the village should adopt organic farming and keep the environment safe.

Importance of vermicompost in organic farming
Sushant Kumar Munda, and



Padmini in front of her organic farmland

his wife, resident of Amlasol, a been making vermicompost since 2020 and they sell it to the farmers and some institutions. In the process of making it, they make beds (12×4) in which first they put straw and cow dung on it; then another layer of straw and cow dung and finally water and leave it for a few days. When it settles down, earthworms are put in it and they leave it for a month. When the fertiliser is ready, they sell it to the farmers. He says that the fertilisers prepared from vermicompost are completely organic, the crops grown by

farming with it are of good quality. These crops are very good for the health of children, too. This manure increases the fertility of the soil and does not cause any harm to the environment.

Farmer Dipu Das, who uses vermicompost, does organic farming believes that it increases the fertility of the soil and keeps the environment safe; Everyone should adopt organic farming.



Organic fertilisers made by the villagers



Vermicompost production unit



Sumitra Hansda
Age : 14 yrs



Surajmoni Soren
Age : 14 yrs

The Process....



Fifty-one girls and eleven boys from Ghatsila, Murshidabad, and Alipurduar took part in the Eco-Reporters Project in 2024.



Concept of planetary boundaries and child rights through experiments and actions





Creative exercise to develop photo stories

A journey from learning to action



Interviews with community members and other actors





Capturing images from the field



31 photo stories finally...





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Layout and design

Gour Nayek

Logistic support

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