Community Support Leads to Green Apple Week in India

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CHF International, a humanitarian relief and development organization, has been working with slum communities in India since 2003. With support from the Caterpillar Foundation and in partnership with the Centre for Social Action (CSA) of Christ University, CHF is improving waste collection and management in the slums of Bangalore and raising the dignity of the waste recyclers, who had been working informally and were often targeted by police as thieves. CHF helped the waste pickers organize and form an association, Hasirudala, which means “green force” and the city government issued identification cards for the first time to more than 5,000 waste pickers.

To build on our efforts to raise awareness about the importance of proper solid waste management and to promote sustainability, CHF International, as a member of the U.S. Green Building Council, decided to launch an entire week of activities in Bangalore as part of the Green Apple Day of Service. With funding from the Caterpillar Foundation, CHF International partnered with CSA and Reap Benefit, a green social enterprise which helps monitor sustainable operations of schools and colleges across India. The campaign was launched at the Christ University campus by the chief guest Mr. Sadashivaiah (IFS Retd), former chairperson of the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board. During the week, volunteers from Interface, a global Green Apple sponsor, and Caterpillar also joined in and worked side-by-side with the community.

The "Green Apple week" launched on Sept. 25 with planting trees at seven schools, continued with field trips by children from six eco-clubs to the CHF-supported Kasa Rasa 2 recycling, paper unit and composting facility, and concluded with children-led rallies and street plays in two slums, and a huge clean-up and street sweeping effort. More than 160 students participated in the tree planting and learned about the medicinal benefits of many of the plants.

Close to 250 students visited the recycling center to learn about the importance of proper solid waste management. They got to try their hand at making paper, and took a pledge to sort and separate their garbage at home. The funding provided by the Caterpillar Foundation for the initial centers, inspired the city of Bangalore to donate land for four more for a total of seven so far, including Kasa Rasa 2. CHF International is working with the India Green Building Council to seek LEED certification for the facility.

The Green Apple week continued with a student rally on Sept. 27, organized by CSA and Reap Benefit with support from CHF International. The rally was inaugurated by “Corporator” Mr. Lokesh Nayak (Councilman Ward 116) who appreciated that CHF International is raising awareness through students who will help to educate parents as well. Students in craft classes learned to make paper bags and distributed 350 bags to households during the rally with a message to replace plastic with paper and reusable bags. Over 500 community members and students renewed their commitment to keep the Rajendra Nagar and LR Nagar neighborhoods clean and to protect the environment. The students held posters displaying the message and also performed a street play to demonstrate how to segregate garbage at home and to promote the reuse and recycling of materials.

On September 28, volunteers from Jyothi Nivas College and InterfaceFlor India helped with a clean-up campaign in Kormangala. As many as 130 volunteers removed recyclables and food waste from Kormangala area during a three-hour period and all recyclables were taken to the Kasa Rasa waste management unit.

The week of amazing activities and hard work ended with a well-deserved celebration on Saturday, September 29 to recognize the winners of a number of competitions designed to promote the spirit of the Green Apple Week of Service. CSA organized a video competition on, “A Green Campus: How My Institution is Green” and a street play competition on waste management. Winners were selected from several entries - five schools participated in the video

competitions, five colleges in the street play competition and 10 teams from the community participated in a collage competition. More than 150 students took part. Participants received tokens of appreciation by the visiting dignitaries who congratulated the winners in all categories with prizes and certificates.

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