

Nature's Solution for a Community's Problem

Today, sustainability is a key component of all our initiatives, and we encourage our students to channel their knowledge towards solving challenges within their community.

Aashraya had grown up in the city of Puttur, in Karnataka, and had lived all her life there. She was always drawn towards social movements, and was inspired to converse and understand the community around her in depth. As she participated in several rallies and awareness drives, she got a chance to talk to her neighbourhood about the far-reaching impact of proper sanitation, especially when it came to the access to safe food and water.

A Global Challenge Observed in Aashraya's Locality

People in Aashraya's locality, in Puttur, consumed Colocasia Esculenta (local name – Taro). In particular, the leaves of the plant were a staple food among the locals. While consumption was large, for the most part, *people did not know the source of their produce*, and were therefore unaware of the health risks that were associated with impurities present in the water supply. The lack of access to potable water is a global challenge, which could be observed in Aashraya's locality.

Our Methodology: Harnessing the Food-Water-Energy Nexus

It was at around this time that Aashraya was exposed to our methodology, which focused on innovation, with a larger vision of sustainability, communal relevance and solving of global challenges, by harnessing the food-water-energy nexus.

Research, Testing, and Finally, a Solution



She assessed the situation, identifying all the potential problems that could come in the way of increasing access to potable water. While considering these issues in her locality, she came across an interesting fact – the local plant, *Eichhornia Crassipes*, which grew in abundance, had the ability to absorb heavy metals such as Cadmium from drainage water in the surrounding areas. After much deliberation, and thorough analysis, **Aashraya came up with the solution of using the roots of this plant to aid the community's water treatment project.**

Through exposure to this methodology, Aashraya was able to tackle the multiple challenges that stood in the way. The project took her places, quite literally, as she had to travel to the nearby town of Mangalore to access the testing facilities, and wait for long periods for the results. She had the opportunity to explore her locality, conduct experiments, gather data and talk to farmers. **She was not**

deterred, even by the foul smell of the sewage, which she had to endure while collecting the samples.

Conclusion

The way of thinking that we instil in students makes them push their boundaries. We equip and empower them to apply their problem solving and critical thinking skills in real life to find solutions to their day-to-day problems. Moreover, Aashraya's journey into her project did not just equip her with analytical and critical thinking skills, but also enabled her to connect with her community and give back to it.

HOW THIS PROJECT CONTRIBUTES TO THE UN SDGs

SDG 4: Quality Education

SDG 3: Good Health and Well Being

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

"Sometimes the test results took as long as a month to arrive. The fact that my project was leading to an innovation and that it could potentially aid in one of the world's biggest challenges of providing potable water to communities is what kept me going throughout that period! I would eagerly wait for the test results, every single time!"

- Aashraya P.