

We have started a seven months long school project along with Hooker's exhibition running since January, 2017. In this project, 240 students from two different Government Sponsored Schools - Dum Dum Motijheel Girls' High School & Kishore Bharati High School are participating as part of the wider engagement exercise with young people. These schools have been chosen because they are public schools with the vernacular, Bengali as the medium of instruction. The school days involve taking students of eighth standard of these two schools out for two field trips each month, one visit to the Hooker's exhibition in BSI building, Industrial Section of the Indian Museum and the second, to the Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Botanical Garden, Shibpur, Howrah, with a view of exploring the role of both English and native plant collectors, local plant names and India's rich botanical heritage.

The aim of the study days is to achieve a wider engagement with the project concerns including an understanding of natural history collection, the role of botanical knowledge both colonial and indigenous, the importance of India's botanical heritage and its conservation in terms of India's endangered flora and fauna. Another aim of the school days is to co-produce education materials through an invitation to school children to depict their surrounding environment or a plant in the botanic garden.

Out of 14 school days, till now, we have already completed six school days in three months with great success. The reason behind this success is the great effort of all the BSI people especially Dr Manas Bhaumik and Dr Saheed Shahul Hameed. We couldn't have conducted this school project as smoothly without the necessary support of the Director of BSI for this up until now and for future requirement as well.

The students are enjoying their study tour very much as most of the Bengali vernacular schools are deprived of this kind of informal way of educational activity in West Bengal.

We have provided study kits and brochure on particular topics that they would be taught during particular study days to the students. It is clear from the feedback forms filled by the students at the end of every school day and interaction of the students with their mentors that we are able to sow the seed of interest among this new generation about our environmental heritage, thus we are meeting the goal.

Besides this, the impact of the school project will be demonstrated by essays written and drawing competitions by the students on the environmental history in the last month i.e. in July.

According to the collective assessment of the feedback forms from the Hooker's exhibition filled by the students, most of the students enjoyed the exhibition while some enjoyed the medicinal plants part of the exhibition and a few others enjoyed the natural dye extraction procedure from the plants. Concluding the assessment, the students asked for live display of some local plants from these certain topics for betterment of understanding of the local plant life through first-hand-experience.