Environmental Service Learning-
Experience of a few Indian colleges

Compiled & presented by
Nirmala Jeyaraj
India program advisor
Academic Service-Learning  
(in a nut shell)

• Experiential education with reciprocal learning- application of classroom knowledge to community and vice versa, mutually benefiting the service providers and the recipients

• Provides a venue (or platform) for critical thinking, analysis and group interaction with structured time for reflection-talk/write (both formal & informal)
Key elements of Quality S-L

- Integrated into academic curriculum and apply academic skills to solve real life problems
- Thoughtfully organized to address genuine community needs
- A Collaborative effort of ‘stakeholders’ - students, teachers, administrators, NGOs and service recipients-in designing & implementation of service project
- Provides time for reflection before, during & after the service deliberately connecting curriculum, personal socio-cultural and civic aspects
- Evaluation by all partners to assess progress & realization of set goals
Environmental Service Learning (ES-L) - an effective pedagogy

• Hits 3 mangoes at one stroke-
  - Effective learning
  - Meaningful service
  - Improved Environment

• Makes all the difference in learning, career options, life style & behavior, attitude & outlook of all involved

• Net result - Better persons, Better world and Better society
## Institutions (Indian) involved in ES-L

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>S-L Environmental project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Ann’s College of Education, Mangalore</td>
<td>Environment &amp; health awareness through community based S-L</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stella Maris College, Chennai</td>
<td>Eco initiatives for environmental conservation and health management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madras Christian college, Chennai</td>
<td>Systemizing recycling methods &amp; reviving life of recyclers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s Christian College, Chennai, Chennai</td>
<td>Plastic bag menace-an assessment, sensitization &amp; mitigation program</td>
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<td>Union Christian College, Aluva</td>
<td>Green campus Green minds</td>
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# Profile of academic ES-L in institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants &amp; beneficiaries</th>
<th>S-L courses</th>
<th>S-L activities</th>
<th>Community benefits</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>St Ann’s College Mangalore</strong> (Teacher training)**</td>
<td>Students, school children, parents &amp; rural community</td>
<td><strong>S-L courses</strong>- Geography, Environmental Education, Biol.Sci</td>
<td>Environment &amp; health awareness program-field study, rally-preparation of advocacy materials on SWM &amp; distribution, Demonstration of waste segregation, organic manure preparation, &amp; setting up eco-garden</td>
<td>Got convinced of the need for safe disposal of waste Learnt to convert waste into wealth-paper/cloth bags, organic manure preparation</td>
<td>Got sensitized &amp; convinced of the need for SWM Obtained practical skills in waste segregation, recycling, manure preparation and eco gardening Took initiative in planning &amp; execution of eco projects</td>
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<td><strong>Union Christian College, Aluva</strong> students &amp; faculty</td>
<td>- Installing vermin-compost units, rainwater harvest units</td>
<td>Campus greening &amp; beautification, Enhancing campus biodiversity</td>
<td>- Gain hands-on experience in eco action</td>
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<td>School children, campus &amp; neighboring community</td>
<td>- Develop vegetable garden, medicinal &amp; ornamental plants collection, maintenance &amp; distribution of seedlings and campus greening</td>
<td>Become aware of good environmental practices, Gain monetarily by growing vegetable garden, ornamental plants</td>
<td>- Opportunity to know campus &amp; community needs and involve in fulfilling them</td>
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<td><strong>Madras Christian College Chennai</strong> students &amp; faculty of Chemistry, NGO, formal &amp; informal recyclers, target village community</td>
<td>Survey &amp; pilot study on SWM &amp; recycling plastics e waste</td>
<td>Know-how of sorting &amp; recycling waste, Become aware of health issues and safety precautions</td>
<td>SWM of local community-recycling methods to convert waste to wealth, socio economic and health issues of recyclers</td>
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<td><strong>S-L Course</strong></td>
<td>Study of pollution levels Generating public awareness</td>
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<td><strong>Women’s Christian College, Chennai</strong>&lt;br&gt;Students and target community&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;S-L course: Envt.Biol, Envt.Studies, public Health &amp; Hygiene</td>
<td>Survey on environment &amp; health hazards of plastics among college and neighborhood community</td>
<td>Very positive &amp; cooperative</td>
<td>Exposure to community living in simple houses yet greener spaces&lt;br&gt;Learnt stringent usage of water&lt;br&gt;Became conscious of reducing plastic carry bags</td>
<td>Community-initially reluctant later became more open and cooperative&lt;br&gt;Students’ concerns-safety while working in the community</td>
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<td><strong>Stella Maris, Chennai</strong>&lt;br&gt;Chemistry students, school children and local community&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;S-L course-Pollutants &amp; adulterants</td>
<td>Environmental &amp; health awareness to school children and families in neighborhood&lt;br&gt;Skills, posters, pamphlets, discussions, lectures &amp; quiz</td>
<td>Interaction with students triggered positive attitude towards safeguarding envt and spreading envt’al concerns</td>
<td>Real-time experience in water &amp; food analysis to benefit the community&lt;br&gt;Improved communication skills&lt;br&gt;Gained knowledge on envt.health issues</td>
<td>S-L activity in communities in which the institution has built a rapport is easier &amp; effective</td>
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<td>Christ University, Bangalore</td>
<td>Solid waste management</td>
<td>Producing documentary and screening, Campus sorting &amp; segregation of waste, organic composting Paper recycling unit</td>
<td>Nearby slum women get livelihood in paper recycling</td>
<td>Environmental consciousness, social responsibility, Contributes to carbon reduction - green campus initiatives</td>
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<td>Participants- students volunteers</td>
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<td>Scottish Church College, Kolkata</td>
<td>Waste disposal management towards green campus</td>
<td>Establishing Vermin composting units Setting up eco clubs Active campaigning for water conservation &amp; plastic free envt</td>
<td>College and neighboring school campus becoming greener Community eco-conscious</td>
<td>Personal lifestyle changes in usage of resources-water, electricity, reduced use of plastics, students turned environmental campaigners</td>
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<td>Participants- campus community and neighborhood school children</td>
<td>School interface program(off campus) campaigns, exhibitions</td>
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### Other Environmental Service projects

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<td>Bishop Heber College, Trichy</td>
<td>Community health awareness program</td>
<td>Measurement air quality and noise levels on campus, fluoride mapping, carbon foot printing, Vermin composting, environmental action Among self help women groups</td>
<td>Became aware of dental flourosis, Plastic waste mgt, vermin composting and flourosis</td>
<td>Hands on training to acquire skills in environmental methodologies irrespective of disciplines Concern for envt and societal health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students from various depts &amp; faculty</td>
<td>Campus air quality and SWM studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karunya University, Coimbatore</td>
<td>Solid waste management-developing a model</td>
<td>Data collection, Analyzing type &amp; quantity of waste and suggest strategies for reduction, recycling and conversion</td>
<td>Awareness on solid waste mgt Campus follow up action-waste segregation, and processing facility being set Shop keepers sensitized on the issue</td>
<td>Problem of pollution and waste mgt relevant to the immediate context-change of attitude and sensitivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty students, neighboring community, visitors</td>
<td>Solid waste management-developing a model</td>
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<td><strong>Christian College, Katakada</strong></td>
<td>Water quality assessment</td>
<td>Analysis of water samples</td>
<td>Became aware of health issues related to water contamination</td>
<td>Developed water testing skills Concern for water quality</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Salesian College, Darjeeling College and neighborhood community</strong></td>
<td>Solid waste management</td>
<td>Awareness program-community &amp; individual families Water testing</td>
<td>Awareness of safe drinking water and Waste mgt</td>
<td>Students became environmentally conscious and action oriented</td>
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Tender moments..touched hearts..making a difference...Impact of S-L on students

• Became **environmentally conscious** to minimize water usage, live a simpler life style, reduce use of plastic carry bags and not to litter the campus
• Got **impressed** by families living in small houses yet having green spaces
• Took back the **local wisdom** of community to class room
• **Improved ability** to apply theoretical knowledge to life situations
• Started promoting **healthy environment** in their own household and neighborhood
• Became **concerned** of the waste strewn on the streets with swarming flies
Tender moments..touched hearts..making a difference...Impact of S-L on Students

• Improved **leadership** skills-planning, organization, time management, sense of responsibility and accountability
• Got motivated for **hard work**
• Felt the **joy of helping others** and a sense of satisfaction
• Developed **positive values** –sharing, cooperation, tolerance
• Developed **human skill** to interact with people and greater self awareness
• Developed **specific skills** related to eco-action-water/food analysis, vermin composting, recycling methods etc
Tender moments..touched hearts..making a difference...Impact of S-L on students

- **Change** of negative stereotypes and accepting others who are different
- Better understanding of the **complexity of social issues** ie: poverty, illiteracy and unemployment
- Increased sense of connection to the target community
- Some developed concern for the elderly in the community & volunteered their time.
- Better understanding of the intricacies of Community service
Eventually

- Academic learning became more meaningful and practical
- Deepened understanding of the topics related to environmental service projects
- Widened their career options
- Became more civic responsible
Challenges in adopting S-L Approach

• In some institutions, the system does not lend for incorporating S-L into curriculum with credits
• Both faculty & students find it hard to spare extra time outside class hours for service
• Lack of administrative support in few cases
• Safety of women students while immersed in community service (in slums/remote areas)
• Sometimes new teachers are not aware of S-L methodology (lack of orientation)
Factors favoring S-L adoption

• All institutions are already engaged in Community service - what is missing is direct link to academic study and reflection on service experience
• Partnership with NGOs working in a given community
• Administrative support in terms of finance & personnel
• Cooperative effort of more departments - not single department or single teacher
• Leadership - encourages and recognizes the extra effort put in service - Institutionalizing S-L
• Committed & experienced faculty - periodic training of teachers and proper orientation of student leaders a must
Factors retarding S-L practice

• Time constraints
• Resource crunches
• Lack of incentives / recognition and administrative support
• Accessibility & response of target community
• Networking with NGO’s & Communities
• Political intervention
A few practical tips to faculty for effective S-L

• Plan S-L as **optional** activity incorporated into a course or a project (for interested or motivated students) with extra credits / certificate of recognition (Better not to make it compulsory)
• Take care to **link** S-L goal, outcome, reflection and assessment
• Take active part in planning, initiating and monitoring S-L activities,
• Be responsible to conduct **reflection sessions**, evaluation and remember to take back the community experience to the class room.
• Encourage students to lead, organize and work with flexibility, involvement and commitment
Some glimpses of student reflection

- S-L experience was interesting since it was activity based
- Triggered my interest to involve in more such awareness programs
- Improved my communication skill and removed the fear of interacting with people
- S-L gave me a chance to disseminate my Chemistry knowledge
- I feel lucky to do this course
- Wonderful opportunity to get educated as well as to educate others
- Excellent experiential learning opportunity
Finally to conclude.....

“Environmental S-L is a proven pedagogy for purposeful learning and meaningful service. It has the power to transform self & society and the physical world we live in”

Let us as educators and environmental activists commit to universalize S-L as an integral part of Asian Higher Education.
Thank you