

Toledo Institute for Development and Environment
Roots and Shoots Campaign Report
May 2017

Name of Project: Reducing the use of plastics in the MAR Region

Grantee: Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE)

School involved: St. Benedict Catholic Schools

Theme: 'If the MAR you want to use, plastics you must reduce'

Classes: Std. 2 and Std. 3

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Time Frame: March to May 2017

Executive summary: Implementing the Roots and Shoots campaign at St. Benedict School was a good continuation for a Reef Guardian's Project that was implemented by TIDE with Australian Aid in 2016. Both projects focused on taking specific actions to protect the Mesoamerican Reef, a valuable resource in our region. I am glad to say that in this first phase of the project, students were motivated by Jane Goodall's work in the world. Teachers appreciated that once they learned how to use the Roots and Shoots Campaign template, they could use it to plan other school projects.

The use of plastics is a huge problem in our society and students learned about the impacts of plastics to the environment, particularly the Meso-American Reef. They found innovative ways of re-using plastics and pledged to use less plastics in their everyday activities both at school and home. A major accomplishment of this project was re-using plastic bottles in school gardens and replacing plastic bags with the use of cloth bags. The number of other activities done at the school created awareness of the need to minimize the use of plastic bags and bottles.

Although school teachers were eager to participate in the project, they were concerned about the limited time allotted for completion of the project. I advised that they could complete the short term objectives and continue with longer term objectives throughout the school year and that motivated them to commit to the project.

Long Term Objective: To minimize the use of plastics in the Mesoamerican Reef

Short term objective:

1. To create awareness of the negative impacts of plastic bags and bottles in the environment.
2. To seek a variety of ways to re-use plastics in school garden project.
3. To minimize the use of plastic bags at school and home.

Progress: Personnel from the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment visited 2 principals from primary schools in Punta Gorda to ask if they would be interested in

participating in the Roots and Shoots campaign coordinated through Fundacion Mundo Azul and sponsored by MAR Fund. Principals were interested in the overall goal of the project committed to having 4 teachers participate in the campaign.

The four teachers, one from St. Peter Claver School and 3 from St. Benedict's School attended the first meeting coordinated by TIDE. At the meeting, teachers learned about Jane Goodall, were introduced to various Roots and Shoots Campaigns online and began planning draft activities for their campaign to minimize the use of plastics at their schools. They reviewed the methodology to clarify the steps taken to further develop their campaigns with their students and registered the main campaign ideas on the Roots and Shoots webpage.

Main activities planned in the campaign include:

1. Creating awareness of the increased use of plastics at schools, community
2. Teaching students about the impacts of plastics on the environment and Mesoamerican Reef
3. Sharing information on the time that plastics take to dis-integrate
4. Brainstorming - various ways plastics can be reduced and re-used
5. Brainstorming ways plastics can be re- used in school gardens
6. Replacing plastic bags with cloth bag

Obstacles: Time was the main obstacle in this project. Teachers said they needed more time to teach (in depth), all the concepts and to carry out the entire campaign. However, they accomplished a number of activities as listed above.

Results: Students can speak about the the impacts of plastics on the environment and marine life in the Mesoamerican Reef. Students are using less plastic bags at school, replacing plastics with cloth bags and re-using plastic bottles in their school garden.

Lessons learned: Teachers need ongoing support to implement the Roots and Shoots Campaign. They have a number of deliverables at school so they need assistance/mentorship with planning and executing their campaigns. However, students enjoy the additional activities that are planned as a result of being engaged in the campaign.

Effects of Project: It is difficult to measure the effects of project; however, I can tell that all students who participated in the project are much more aware of the negative impacts of plastics especially on marine life and pledged to take action to minimize their use. This is a huge step!

Communication of Results: Students presented their project at their school assembly where the entire school population was present so this action had a ripple effect on a larger number of students. There are plans to have a media interview with school teachers; however, this has not occurred.

Continuation of project: TIDE intends to ask the schools to integrate continuation of this project in 5 coastal schools with the regular Fresh Water Cup environmental projects that is done between October to February annually. However, we can already tell that teachers will need additional support and we do not have the human resources to concentrate on this project.

Pictures of Project

