

Project Report: Pop Culture for Environmental Awareness

Project Execution

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Context

Pop Culture for Environmental Awareness, a joint project between Oorvani Foundation and St Joseph's University (SJU) was designed to enable young Bengalureans to learn about the city's environment and sustainability issues.

We offered 'Bengaluru Environment Unplugged', a 1-credit guided internship programme for undergraduate students from January to April 2025. The 3 months of credit programme was followed by an internship for a select set during May-Jun 2025.

BEU Credit programme

Participation

- Number of students who expressed interest/signed up: More than 35
- Total active participants as of April 2025: 15 students
- We had students from Psychology, Journalism, Environmental Science and Chemistry and Microbiology on the programme

Motivations

- **Environmental Passion and Activism:** Many respondents expressed a strong passion for environmental issues, sustainability, and making a positive impact on Bengaluru's ecology.
- **Desire for Skills Development:** Interest in improving creative communication skills such as storytelling, journalism, and public outreach, particularly to make environmental issues relatable and engaging.
- **Personal Connection to Nature:** Experiences with disappearing green spaces, childhood connections to nature, and feelings of loss from urbanization inspired participation.
- **Concern for Climate Change:** Respondents highlighted concerns about global warming, urban pollution, and climate regulation, wanting to contribute to meaningful solutions.
- **Creative Expression:** The programme's blend of pop culture, art, and journalism aligns with their interests in using creativity to address serious issues.
- **Educational Opportunities:** Aspiration to gain holistic knowledge about local environmental challenges and learn innovative solutions.

Expectations from Participants

- **Knowledge Gain:** Learning about Bengaluru's environmental challenges (e.g., waste management, air pollution, climate change) and global sustainability trends.
- **Practical Experience:** Opportunities for hands-on projects, real-time collaboration, and engaging with communities to create tangible impact.
- **Skill Development:** Improving storytelling, journalism, and creative writing skills to effectively communicate environmental issues.
- **Networking:** Building connections with like-minded peers, mentors, and experts to collaborate on sustainability efforts.
- **Impactful Change:** Using the skills and insights gained to advocate for sustainability, promote eco-friendly practices, and inspire community action.
- **Career Exploration:** For some, this programme serves as a stepping stone to explore potential careers in environmental journalism, science communication, or sustainability-focused professions.

External Sessions

- The session 'Journey of waste' by Hasirudala on 24-Jan-2025 allowed the students to observe the importance of waste segregation and what happens to each category of waste when waste is not segregated, what kinds of waste cannot be recycled and also showed how waste pickers and recyclers are given employment and a defined source of income and dignity when we formalize waste management.
- The session 'Water in Bengaluru' by WELL Labs on 20th Feb showed the position of Bengaluru, sources of water, how lakes were connected, what happens to sewage water, the importance of rain water harvesting and why there is flooding.

- The session 'Pop Culture X Social Impact' by Civic Studios on 28-Feb-2025 explained to students the step by step approach to building a story, the research to be done, the power of spotlighting environmental narratives and helped students break down the journey of content creation from idea to execution.
- The session 'Mobility' by Pravar Chowdury on 7-Mar-2025 used a simple blackboard to categorize modes of commute and how multi-modal methods can be combined to make commuting easier. The speaker broke down the road network of Bengaluru to show the various areas and how they are connected. The students were also briefed about how a little bit of walking, the simplest means of transport can be combined with other modes to make commuting easier.

Facilitation Tasks

Sessions management

- Prep and session design including assignments plan
- Class facilitation and mentoring
- Work with external facilitators to set expectations and discuss possible topics of discussion
- Feedback on work

Output Management

- Review, edit output and post, and track

Programme Coordination

- Coordinate with facilitators and faculty, setup meetings, exchange material, discuss the programme and confirm for sessions
- Creation of assignment forms, organize presentation, assignment materials and the programme content, discuss and firm up assignments.

- Followup with students
- Manage all student data including tracking their attendance, assignment completion, social media accounts
- Address clarifications and open questions
- Attend the session in SJU to coordinate the sessions

Content Generation

During the sessions, facilitators steered conversations analysing different examples of content. Students were asked to create content depicting their understanding of various issues post each facilitation session. Individual exercises included pitches, memes and shortform content like Instagram posts were conceptualized by students during the sessions under supervision from Oorvani and would be submitted within a day. These short exercises were meant to immediately reiterate some of the lessons learnt.

Weekly group assignments included videos, reels, Instagram carousels and comic strips. These were meant to spark deep dives into finer aspects of each of the environmental topics discussed and give students a chance to exercise greater creative and storytelling freedom.

Project Deliverables

Exercises and Assignments

Each topic had a number of in-class and post session exercises, including reading review, content analysis, quizzes, and content creation. In addition, there were individual and group assignments.

Audience Engagement on Social Media

Some of the content (shortlisted based on quality and completeness) from individual and team exercises were also posted on the [Bengaluru Environment Unplugged Instagram platform](#). Posts were shared in collaboration with the student creators - to ensure greater youth reach and the Citizen Matters Instagram Handle (for general audience reach). With just 14 posts, the BEU Instagram Page currently has over 100 followers.

The posts have garnered over 86000 views, 1500 likes and 140 shares. Content creator [Vickypedia](#) shared a post inspired by his work widening the audience base. This [post](#) served as a compelling example of how pop culture can effectively communicate environmental messages.

Students observe that [posts with humour](#), [popular references - such as memes](#) and [strong personal narratives](#) resonated with their audience.

Student Portfolios

The programme ended with students submitting their final portfolios. This was a requirement for certificates. The portfolios helped students consolidate their work over the course of 12 weeks and reflect on their learnings during each session. For each section of their portfolio, students were expected to reflect on the 1) expected takeaway for the audience 2) and strategy to increase reach of their content.

Facilitators from Oorvani were able to guide these reflections as students worked on the portfolios as part of their final session.

Portfolios:

- [Ananya Baruwa](#)
- [Ashray Krishna](#)
- [Blessy Mendes](#)
- [Gahana Indiresha](#)

- [Jerusha Cruze](#)
- [Osbert Fernandez](#)
- [Prajwal AM](#)
- [Keerthana S](#)
- [Dhyaan Prateek](#)
- [Cheytana V](#)
- [Razin Koshy](#)
- [Siddhi Halyur](#)

Student Internships

We offered a six-week summer internship to three students. Two students worked on field reports and research projects focused on environmental issues in Bengaluru. A third student was unable to complete her internship due to unforeseen circumstances.

Ananya Baruwa, a journalism student, focused on mobility in Bengaluru. She researched and created a carousel post on the importance of BMTC to the city and the support the organisation needed. She then went on to interview civic changemakers working on highlighting mobility issues in the city. The goal of this project was to delve into a topic that was of particular interest to students (mobility and bus travel) and to highlight links between environment, mobility and city through changemaker interviews. Changemakers interviews include: Satya Sankaran (Bicycle Mayor), Shaheen Shasa (Bus Prayanikara Vedike), Pravar Chaudhary (Bengawalk), Yatish Kumar (Friends of BMTC), Lalithamba (HSR Feeder Service) and BMTC Bus Conductor (Anonymous).

Cheytna Vijay, an environmental science student, worked on an [overview of sustainable mobility](#) and why it matters. She then researched large-scale tree-felling projects across Bengaluru (later extended across Indian cities) and citizen groups working to protect urban forests using mainstream media and social media sources.

The data is currently being vetted and will be visualised for public consumption through our data portal [OpenCity.in](https://open.city.in/). with a simple explainer.

All content will be posted on the Bengaluru Environment Unplugged Instagram page in collaboration with Citizen Matters and other relevant accounts.

Playbook

We worked on a guide to help anyone taking up such a programme, with some sample set of topics and exercises.

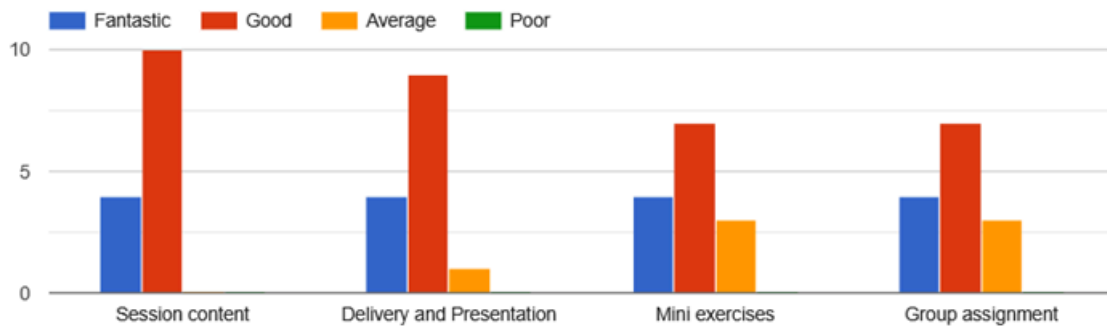
Conclusion

Feedback

We gathered feedback from the students mid-way into the programme. We learnt participants faced challenges in the schedule, as well as synchronising time to work with their fellow team members on group assignments. Overall they appreciated the sessions and felt they learnt a lot.

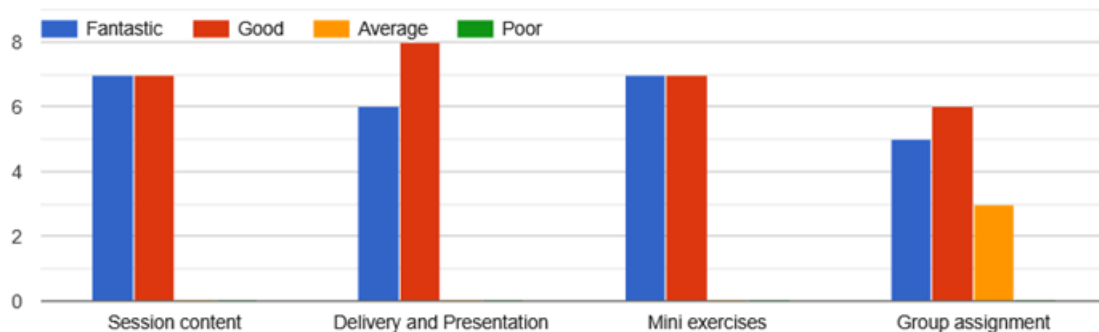
Waste topic: How would you rate the following

 Copy chart



Water topic: How would you rate the following

 Copy chart



Qualitative feedback:

→ Feedback about the programme

- ◆ It has been very insightful, and the experience has been great Wish I could spend more time on the individual and group assignments in tandem with college work, that's all
- ◆ At times it felt a bit scattered and random. I'm here for the credit nothing more nothing less anything I learn at the sessions is additional
- ◆ Very informative and loved session with NGOs
- ◆ I have learnt a lot and enjoyed the sessions so far but I feel as though there is a journalism element lacking.

- ◆ More interactive content about real problems like today's session on transportation in cities etc would be great. Something on urban planning or skills to equip us in our careers as environmentalists or anything related.
 - ◆ This is a great opportunity to learn new things in and about Bengaluru
 - ◆ Learnt a lot, very informative, helped me think before I do things.
- Anything that can be better?
- ◆ I do want to try different forms of content which we are not getting the time to do on the weekly group assignments. Something that could make it possible.
 - ◆ The group activities really added on additional pressure to the existing work already given by the college. It was hard to collaborate with the other team members and give a final output. I feel group activities should be done on the spot

Observations

- We had 15 regular students in the programme while we had targeted more
- Quality of output: We expected to see more depth and nuance in the artifacts. Captions are currently given by facilitators. It could be due to lack of bandwidth or lack of clarity in expectations. Also, the output types are limited to memes, graphics etc. The Oorvani team noted that they could explore other formats such as games, genz language, dance, pod casts, art, graffiti and reels.
- Need to increase reach of artifacts. Students were not comfortable accepting “Instagram collaboration” or sharing non personal stuff in their account. The programme could have benefited from a marketing campaign or by connecting with college clubs.
- Timeline issues: Limited availability of time/bandwidth. Students arrive for the programme after multiple shifts and many are exhausted by that hour. Also, exams advanced to early April so needed to wrap up by March end, with a deadline of Apr 4th for final submissions.

- Expected more internship applications: We expected around 5-6 students to take up the summer internship, we finally took in 3 of them.
- Given that participants enjoy the design and deliberation, we can structure this as an extra curricular programme. A weekend jam could bring together interested participants for a fun half /full day event.
- Another approach could be a challenge or contest, inviting young people to create and submit pop culture content.

Impact snapshot

- Students reached: 15 active participants
- Content created: 28+ artifacts
- Social media impact: 86,000+ views | 1500 likes | 140 shares
- Internships offered: 2
- Sessions held: 4 expert sessions