



World Chambers' Competition

Project Synopsis

Origin of the Project – “BETTER CALCUTTA CONTEST FOR SCHOOLS”

The ICC Calcutta Foundation is a charitable trust set up by the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Kolkata with the objective of promoting the well-being of Kolkata. The Foundation funds various projects to bring about a change in the quality of urban life and is geared to reach out to almost every sphere of urban life where deprivation and denials warrant timely redressal.

The “Better Calcutta Contest for Schools” was initiated to promote greater awareness about the city’s environment among its future citizens. The idea was to involve school children in projects that would foster a sense of responsibility and put to practice what was once said in a different context, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country” and has proved extremely popular with the schools of Calcutta. Over the past 14 years, children have worked on various social, environmental, health and creative projects. Adult literacy programs, vocational training for street children, health camps, clearing of garbage and painting of walls were just some of their novel projects. Global Warming, Bio-diversity, Sustainable Development are some of the themes on which schools have worked. Over the last 3 years schools have concentrated on implementing permanent projects for beautification and improvement of the city’s environment. Over the past few years thousands of students from more than a 100 schools of Calcutta worked to create a Cleaner and Better Calcutta. These have included a wide cross-section of the city’s schools including non-formal schools for street and slum children, primary and senior schools as well as institutions for the physically and mentally challenged.

Description of the Project : Features & Process

This Project / Contest was developed with the aim of encouraging school children to look beyond their academic boundaries towards helping their less fortunate citizens and towards greening of the environment and cleaning and beautification of the city. The idea was that if children could make a difference to their environment, everyone else could do the same. Also the contest was meant to teach children to work as a

group, to plan and develop projects, plan their budgets, raise funds, implement their projects, keep meticulous records, report on their work both verbally and in writing. The contest is a flexible one, where schools are expected to develop and implement welfare projects for the betterment of their locality. The nature of the project is for the school to decide bearing in mind the abilities of their students, the nature and requirements of the area of the city where the school is located as well as the resources available to them. School teachers are only to provide advice and supervise the students in the work of the projects. All the work from start to finish is to be done by the students. Also they are not allowed to seek professional assistance though they are encouraged to meet experts and learn from them.

In the beginning, the advertisements were placed in all major daily newspapers of Kolkata, explaining the concept of the contest and requesting interested schools to contact us for more details. In the following years, this was not required as the schools themselves contacted us, and we too, developed a comprehensive database of schools in Kolkata.

Each year mailers are sent out to schools requesting interested schools to enroll themselves for the contest. The mailer provides all details of that year's contest, including theme of the contest and nature of projects implementation period for the projects, dates of evaluation visits and date of the award ceremony.

Participating schools are encouraged to consult with us regarding their project work and to invite us to visit their school to observe special events being organized by them for the contest. They are advised to keep meticulous records both written and photographic of their activities. These records must be submitted to us at the time of evaluation.

Schools are given 3-6 months time in which to implement their projects. During the evaluation period a team from ICC visits each school by prior appointment when the students must explain their project. The team interviews as many students as possible to understand the processes followed by them in implementation. They also talk to the local people to understand how they have benefited from the school's activities. All this is recorded on video for our records.

A second round of evaluation takes place when members of the jury sit together to study the video, the reports submitted by the schools and the confidential report of the evaluation team. All participating schools receive an award – awards consist of a special trophy, a certificate of merit and cash award – which is given away at a glittering award ceremony attended by more than 2000 students, teachers, representatives and noted citizens of Kolkata. At the award ceremony, clippings from the video of the evaluation visit is screened so everyone present can see what the school students have done for their city.

Activities, Results & Influence of the Project

Over the years students have implemented many novel welfare projects. These include -

- Literacy programs for street children
- Adult literacy programs including vocational training
- Night shelters for street children in the schools
- Free health check-ups for local people including awareness programs on hygiene and cleanliness for street people
- Blood donation camps
- Collection of medicines for distribution to the poor from charitable clinics
- Free cataract programs for the poor
- Construction and maintenance of free as well as pay and use toilets & baths
- Large scale tree planting
- Beautification and maintenance of public parks
- Distribution of food, clothing, blankets, books for the poor
- Adoption of villages including installation of solar powered street lights
- Cleaning of ponds and restocking with fish
- Provided unemployed men with their own rickshaws and women with sewing machines so that they could earn a decent living
- Reducing water and electricity consumption in schools and at home
- Rainwater harvesting in school
- Solar power in schools
- Segregating of waste in schools and vermin-composting
- Using waste paper in school to make hand-made paper
- teaching underprivileged women to make paper bags from old news paper to sell to local shops
- Started rooftop gardening and organic farming in school
- Countless awareness programs, rallies, leaflet distributions, door to door awareness visits, signature campaigns etc

In order to raise funds for their projects students have contributed their weekly allowance, run raffles and organized jumble sales, sales of handmade good etc

Over 100 schools have participated in the contest. Some schools participate once or twice, some sporadically, others regularly. These schools include a wide range ages from primary to senior secondary (K-12) classes both formal and non-formal, as well as institutions for the physically and mentally challenged. Children from elite schools as well as schools run by non-governmental organization for underprivileged children have participated. Schools with as few as 20 children under the age of 5 as well as schools secondary schools with more than 5,000 students have participated. Each year 25 – 30 schools involving nearly 100,000 school students participate in the contest.

Through this contest, school children have shown that they too can contribute to the life of the city and its residents in an effective manner. The Contest has enabled

school students in the city of Kolkata to emerge as more confident human beings, and as true Leaders of Tomorrow.

List of all schools that have participated in the Contest :

1. A K Ghosh Memorial School – KG & Primary Dept
2. Abhinav Bharati High School
3. Aditya Academy Secondary – Dum Dum
4. Aditya Academy Senior Secondary - Barasat
5. AIWC Buniyadi Vidyapith girls High School
6. Akshar
7. Albany Hall Public School
8. All Bengal Women's Union Primary School
9. Apeejay School, Salt Lake
10. Apeejay Schools, Park Street
11. Army Public School, Kolkata
12. Arya Kanya Maha Vidyalaya
13. Ashok Hall Girls Higher Secondary School
14. B D Memorial Institute, Pratapgarh
15. Ballygunge Shiksha Sadan
16. Bankim Ghosh Memorial Girls' High School
17. BGESS
18. Bikash Bharati Welfare Society School
19. Binodini Girls High School
20. Birla High School
21. Birla High School (Girls Section)
22. Calcutta International School
23. Calcutta Public School
24. Carmel Primary School
25. Centre for Special Education, Indian Institute for Cerebral Palsy
26. Chowringhee High School
27. Cossipore Institute
28. Delhi Public School, New Town
29. Delhi Public School, Ruby Park
30. Disharee Montessori House
31. Don Bosco School, Park Circus
32. Dum Dum Prachya bani Mandir for Boys
33. Future Foundation School
34. Future Hope School
35. G D Birla Centre for Education
36. Gokhale Memorial Girls' School
37. Greenfields, Santoshpur
38. Hariyana Vidya Mandir
39. Holy Child Girls High School
40. Holy Child Institute
41. International Public School

42. Jewish Girls School
43. Joyland Nursery & KG School
44. Julien Day School, Elgin Road
45. Julien Day School, Ganganagar
46. Kendriya Vidyalaya #2, Salt Lake
47. La Martiniere for Boys
48. La Martiniere for Girls
49. Lakshmipat Singhanian Academy
50. Little Champion's Montessori House
51. Loreto Day School, Dharamtala
52. Loreto Day School, Sealdah
53. Loreto House
54. Mahadevi Birla Girls High School
55. Mahavir Institute for Education & Research
56. Mentaids
57. Modern High School for Girls
58. Modernland Girls High School
59. Mother's Care Montessori
60. N K Pal Adarsha Shikshayatan
61. National Gem's Higher Secondary School
62. National High School (Boys)
63. National High School (Boys) – Primary Sec
64. National High School for Girls
65. National High School for Girls – Primary Sec
66. NECSWO – Shiksha
67. North Point Day School
68. Our Lady Queen of the Missions School, Salt Lake
69. Oxford House
70. Parivarikkee
71. Patha Bhavan Montessori & Primary
72. Pratt Memorial School
73. Prem-E-Asha
74. Prerna Montessori cum Playhouse
75. Saifee Hall Golden Jubilee English Public School
76. Sanat Roy Chowdhury Institute for Girls
77. Sanat Roy Chowdhury Institution (Boys)
78. Santoshpur Shikshayatan
79. Shree Daulatram Nopany Vidyalaya
80. Shri Shikshayatan
81. Sir Syed Group of Schools
82. South Point High School
83. Sreegopal Vidyamandir
84. Sri Daulatram Nopany Vidyalaya
85. St Anthony's High School
86. St Augustine's Day School
87. St Helen's School

88. St James School
89. St John's Diocesan Girls HS School
90. St Joseph & Mary's School
91. St Lawrence High School
92. St Stephen's School
93. St Thomas' day School
94. St Xavier's Collegiate School
95. Tender Care Montessori
96. The Assembly of God Church School – Park Street
97. The Bhowanipore Gujarati Education Society School
98. The Cambridge School
99. The Future Foundation School
100. The Heritage School
101. Tollygunge girls High School
102. Vivekananda Mission School
103. Welland Gouldsmith School

Scope of Replication of the Project in other parts of the Country / World

Given the uniqueness and the positive societal impact of the Project, it surely can be replicated in other parts of the country & the world. The unique Project is extremely popular among the school authorities and students. The contest has been organized for 14 consecutive years due to demand from schools. The program , as indicated earlier, was originally initiated to promote greater social and environmental awareness among the future citizens and involve school children in projects that would foster in them a sense of responsibility has succeeded beyond expectation. In the early years, teachers reported that parents objected to their children wasting valuable study time in social welfare projects which they felt were better taken up by the civic authorities. Now, it is the parents who ask the school authorities when their children will get an opportunity to participate in the contest.

Through this contest, school children have shown that they can be important contributors to societal progress and sustainable economic development. They have shown that they are capable of implementing programs and projects that adults tend to ignore and that they are able to get the civic authorities to cooperate with them. They have shown that they are a force to be reckoned with and now authorities like Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) , Kolkata Police etc are trying to involve them in their programs.

In schools, students – teacher rapport has improved due to this Project. The students have found joy in helping those less fortunate than themselves and many have expressed their desire to continue with this type of projects and to involve more people even when they finish their school.

The Project can be identified as a Best Practice and replicated elsewhere. Today, most national governments worldwide have begun to incorporate sustainable development into their planning and policy. Pro-active businesses across the globe have brought sustainability to their products and processes. Local initiatives have had success in informing citizens of the importance of participating in reducing waste, renewing urban spaces and other programs. In spite of these efforts, though, putting the principles of sustainable development into practice has proven to be anything but simple or straightforward. After all, both people and institutions have their habits, and changing them, even when the need is obvious, can be daunting. A key question remains whether we have made enough progress, or taken the warnings seriously enough to allow us to grasp and confront our biggest, most pressing problems. We have solid evidence of climate change, with projections pointing to an increase in extreme environmental events with potentially devastating consequences for the systems that support human life and society. About half the world still lives on less than \$2.50 dollars a day, lacks access to clean water, sanitation, adequate health care and education – an unacceptably stark contrast to the much higher standards of living in developed countries. Some emerging economies, such as China and India, are undergoing rapid growth, resulting in more wealth, but also an increased demand for energy and greater pollution problems. Finding sustainable solutions for growth holds the potential to help reduce poverty, foster development and preserve the environment. Implementing them requires networking & co-operation on a global scale.

Hence social & environmental awareness will have to increase manifold among citizens, and the process of promoting an environment-friendly , sustainable socio-economic development, has to involve the future citizens, that is, the student community. Given the nature and the tremendous influencing capacity of the Project, it surely deserves to be replicated in other parts of the world – particularly, in the less developed countries of South Asia & Africa, and the emerging nations of South-East Asia and Latin America.

Selection of the Project for the 8th World Chambers Congress

The Project certainly deserves to be selected as a finalist and presented at the 8th World Chambers Congress because of it's uniqueness and far-reaching societal impact. It is a great Contest which enables schools to take up long-term projects & initiatives which bring about positive changes with respect to the environmental conditions of the city, and also promotes social progress. Climate change , global warming and environmental pollution are today thwarting development & progress , and the challenge of balancing industrialization and environmental protection is becoming tougher by the day. Sustainable and inclusive growth & development holds the key to a better world ; and hence this noble Project deserves to be a finalist at the 8th World Chambers Congress.

The United Nations has made sustainable development as number one priority. This is the way forward to address all the issues - population, climate change, water

scarcity, food security, human rights and gender empowerment, particularly providing decent jobs for youth and many people, and global health issues. The Better Calcutta Contest is a small step towards these goals, and needs and deserves a major platform for showcasing it's features, goals and achievements.



Chowringhee High School

Recognised by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education

Managed by : Meera Singh Education Trust

12A, Chowringhee Lane, Kolkata - 700 016 Ph.: 3200 4494 / 2252 2087

The Director General,

November 26, 2012

Indian Chamber of Commerce,

4, India Exchange Place,

Kolkata-700001

Dear Sir,

Greetings from Chowringhee High School!

The motive of writing this letter to you is to express our sincere gratitude and reciprocate our feelings to ICC Calcutta Foundation for organizing the "Better Calcutta Contest". Our Institution has been one of the participating schools since 1999-2000 – until 2009-10.

BCC had not been just a contest for our school, but an opportunity for the young students to learn to **"LOVE", their city, "CARE for their city"** and **"RESPECT" the city's rich cultural heritage**. What a time these students used to have is just un-imaginable? Whether it was raising funds for building a Public urinal, organizing and themselves carrying act cleanliness drive; working hand in hand with Kolkata Municipal Corporation, Kolkata Traffic Police, and organizing free Medical Camps for the less fortunate brethren of the society – all these came up from one platform and that is – **THE BETTER CALCUTTA CONTEST BY ICC CALCUTTA FOUNDATION**. I would just say "Hats Off" to Ms. Rakhi Sarkar, Ms. Nivedita Sen and of course all your ex- Secretary General because of the initiative taken by them we were able to inspire and motivate Life Skill Values among our students. Some of our the students who were a part of BCC team had worked on the various projects, have become successful professionals like Doctors, Engineers, Chartered Accountants, Company Secretary as well as business men.

Getting an award was not the primary objective of our participation, what I found was the willingness of the students to do something for their city. From introverts, BCC made them extroverts because they got the exposure while conducting and organizing medical camps, fund raising, vocational training etc

Ext. 2A & 2B Chowringhee Lane, Kolkata - 700 016

E-mail : contact@chowringheehighschool.com

Website : www.chowringheehighschool.com



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CHS will always cherish a decade of this great association with ICC and looks forward to continue the same.

At the Opening Ceremony of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of our school to be held on 10th February, 2013, a special mention and thanksgiving will be given for the role of ICC's Better Calcutta Contest in providing an opportunity to our students in shaping their lives for a better future.

Thanking you

With Best Regards

H. Dasgupta

Principal

Chowringhee High School



Ext. 2A & 2B Chowringhee Lane, Kolkata - 700 016

E-mail : contact@chowringheehighschool.com

Website : www.chowringheehighschool.com



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"BETTER CALCUTTA CONTEST FOR SCHOOLS" : EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ICC "Better Calcutta Contest For Schools" aims to encourage school children to look beyond their academic curricula, and actively take up citizen-centric social & environmental projects in the city of Kolkata (Calcutta), India. The Projects range from Literacy programs for street children; Adult literacy programs including vocational training; Free health check-ups for local people including awareness programs on hygiene and cleanliness for street people; Blood donation camps; to Rainwater harvesting in schools, among others. The Contest teaches students to work in a Team, encourages them to plan and develop projects, plan their budgets, raise funds, implement their projects, and monitor the progress of the projects which they take up. The Contest encourages schools to develop and implement welfare projects for the betterment of their localities. The nature of the project is for the respective school to decide, bearing in mind the abilities of their students, the nature and requirements of the area of the city where the school is located as well as the resources available to them. Each year Indian Chamber of Commerce sends out mailers requesting interested schools to enroll themselves for the Contest. The mailer provides all details of that year's Contest, including Theme of the Contest and nature of projects, implementation period for the projects, dates of evaluation visits and date of the award ceremony. Participating schools are encouraged to consult with ICC regarding their project work and to invite the ICC Team to visit their school to observe special events being organized by them for the Contest. They are advised to keep meticulous records both written and photographic of their activities. These records are submitted to ICC at the time of evaluation. Through this contest, school children have shown that they too can contribute to the life of the city and its residents in an effective manner. The Contest, which has received wide attention among Policy makers, Educationists, NGO's, Civil Society Groups, Media and Corporate Houses over the years, has enabled school students in the city of Kolkata to emerge as more confident human beings, and as true Leaders of Tomorrow. Given the uniqueness and the positive societal impact of the Project, it surely can be replicated in other parts of the country & the world. Through this contest, school children have shown that they can be important contributors to societal progress and sustainable economic development. The Project demands and deserves replication elsewhere, because worldwide, sustainable economic development, that is balancing environment with growth, has become a real challenge. Also, since the Contest aims at improving human development indicators and promotes social development, ICC, as one of the largest Chambers in India today, strongly believes in Corporate Social Responsibility and encourages its Members and other stakeholders to drive social development projects. The 'Better Calcutta Contest for Schools' has today emerged as a prominent initiative which has contributed towards making ICC an Institution of repute which believes growth has to be equitable and sustainable in nature; and social progress cannot by any means, be overlooked.