

**Primates for Posterity: Assessment of a Primate Conservation Education Program
on 15-17 year old students in schools in Tamilnadu, India.**

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Abstract: India is home to vast diversity of wildlife. Sixteen species (after the addition of *Macaca munzala* in 2005) and 39 subspecies of non-human primates occupy the expanse of the subcontinent with certain endemic species like the lion-tailed macaque (*Macaca silenus*) and Nilgiri langur (*Trachypitecus johnii*) occupying a narrow range in the Western Ghats of Southern India and Gee's golden langurs (*Trachypitecus geeii*) in the Eastern Himalayas. Knowledge about primates and their conservation crisis would bring about ecological awareness and responsibility: conservation education best serves this function. 'Primates for Posterity' was designed to endow the participants with techniques and values required to exhibit ecologically responsible behaviour. The project was conducted in four schools in Tamilnadu, India: 2 test schools (one from lowland and one from mountain) and 2 control schools (one from lowland and one from mountain). The authenticity of the programme was measured in various respects.

The programme demonstrated that time is not a barrier to environmental education by proving the credibility of 'Primates for Posterity' through pre-test and post-test knowledge and attitude score assessment of the participants. A significant rise in post-test scores was evident across the sample. The test schools scored higher than the control schools in the post-test indicating the intervention of the education programme. The attitude scores of the participants remained fairly constant before and after the programme. The mandatory Environmental Science module and religious views of the participants could be considered to influence the attitude of the participants towards animals. The impact of geographical location (participants were either from the mountain region close to wildlife or a plain farther from wildlife) was tested as a possible factor of influence on the environmental knowledge and attitude of the participants. Geographical

location was found to have a significant impact on the environmental knowledge and attitude quotient of the participants. Both male and female participants showed no difference in knowledge and attitude scores, thus indicating that gender was not a possible factor of disparity.

The credibility of tools such as MICROSOFT PowerPoint was tested and a new tool, namely Jungle Sounds, was introduced and assessed. The first presentation “Primates for Posterity: Primates and their conservation” was the most favoured among the participants followed by the ‘Virtual Jungle: Jungle sounds’ session. This assessment paves the way for introducing more creative tools that bring conservation to life in a classroom by prompting the aesthetic awareness of the participants. Another important feature of “Primates for Posterity” is the career lecture which sought to explain to the participants the careers one could have in conservation. Twenty-five percent of the test group participants found the lecture to be “very informative” and 46.9% found the lecture to be “informative” thus reinstating the importance of similar features in environmental education in India.

