

ShowCase

Hinduism and H₂O

Topic:

Sustainability

Organisation:

London Sustainability Exchange

Location:

London

Dates:

Phase 1: 2006 to 2007; Phase 2: 2007 to 2008

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Overview

Run as a partnership between the London Sustainability Exchange and Thames Water, Hinduism and H₂O aimed to promote water conservation with Hindu communities in East London, by making the link between scripture and sustainable consumption.

The programme included: Sustainability Starter Kits containing practical products such as water saving devices; temple talks and workshops; coffee evening sessions with women's groups; participation at festivals; and a Community Champions scheme. This trained and used trusted figures of the community to run training sessions and in-home advice about sustainable water consumption.

Results:

- 3,000 representatives of the east London Hindu community were engaged in the programme
- 520 pledges were made to use water more efficiently
- 264 pledges were made to take on other environmentally friendly actions
- Community Champions reached around 1,000 householders
- A sample survey of 208 participants at the end of the programme showed that:
 - 40 per cent were interested in greening their lifestyle
 - 25 per cent felt the activities provided had helped them gain a better understanding of environmental issues



London Sustainability Exchange (LSx) was set up in 2001 by a partnership of public, private and voluntary sector organisations to accelerate the transition to a sustainable London. Its mission is to provide organisations and networks of individuals with the motivation, knowledge and connections they need to put sustainable practice into place.



In 2005/06 the average household water use in London was over 166 litres per person per day, up from 161 litres in 2004/05. During recent years, a number of factors have put pressure on London's water levels. London has been declared an area of serious water stress, with rainfall in the capital lower than the national average. This is combined with high population density and growth, meaning there is less water available per person than elsewhere in the country. In particular the growth in single-occupancy homes in London has led to an increase in demand. A Thames Water study concluded that single-occupancy homes use 78 litres per person per day more than a household with 4 people. Other factors include escalated droughts, drier winters and leakage from old water pipes (with 20 per cent of water pipes in the capital being over 150 years old).

Thames Water has a statutory duty to promote water conservation to its customers and is therefore keen to understand how customers perceive and use water at home.

However, a 'one size fits all' approach to inspiring people to adopt more sustainable

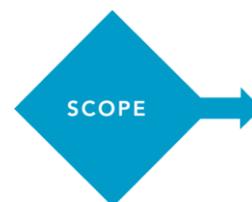
lifestyles does not work. Over 300 languages are spoken in the capital and more than 1 in 3 Londoners are from an ethnic group.

As Samantha Heath, LSx Chief Executive observes, "We're delighted to have created a programme that has impacted so positively on so many people's lives."

Following a successful campaign in 2005/06, which promoted a range of green issues in a Muslim community in Tower Hamlets by making links with relevant theological drivers, LSx devised a programme called 'Hinduism and H₂O', promoting water efficiency in six East London boroughs.

This programme was jointly sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Thames Water and was informed by a broad policy base, including:

- Defra – *A Framework for Pro-Environmental Behaviours*
- Future Water – The Government's Water Strategy for England
- Water Matters – The Mayor's Draft Water Strategy
- WWF One Planet Living
- Regional Development Framework



Segmentation

Based on previous experience LSx had obtained using Islamic beliefs with the Muslim community to encourage them to adopt greener lifestyles, it was decided that the target audience for this project would be segmented by ethnic grouping and geographical region:

- Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi and Tamil-speaking members of the Hindu community. These

groups were mapped by identifying the location of temples, then using their congregations as a target audience. This meant that interventions were mapped around communities of interest (faith)

- The London boroughs of Newham, Redbridge, Greenwich, Tower Hamlets Hackney and Waltham Forest. Thames Water pinpointed these boroughs as high priority, based on Water Conservancy statistics

Following completion of the project, retrospective work was also done to map the target audience against Defra's Pro-Environmental Behaviours segmentation model. The majority of participants fell into segments 1 to 4, and the project's Phase Two Community Champions were recruited from the 'Positive Greens' segment.

Behavioural goals

The project aimed to change individual, household and business behaviour in East London Hindu communities to:

- Adopt more environmentally friendly lifestyles
- Reduce water consumption
- Realise how easy it is to save water
- Spread water saving messages to neighbours, colleagues and friends

Primary research

Prior to delivering any activities the social research agency MORI was commissioned to conduct formative research, to gain insight into the understanding and attitudes of the Hindu community towards the environment and water consumption, and to test the idea of using faith to encourage people to adopt sustainable lifestyles. This research involved three focus groups with a cross-section of representatives from the Hindu community:

- Hindu men from the London Borough of Greenwich

- Hindu women from the London Borough of Redbridge
- Hindu men and women from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets

One-to-one interviews were also conducted with key community leaders and opinion formers, including representatives from the National Hindu Council. The research objectives were to:

- Understand whether London's Hindu community was responsive towards religious messaging that promoted reduced water consumption, and to ensure this would not fundamentally contradict any religious or cultural beliefs
- Identify this community's motivators and barriers to action with regard to reducing water consumption
- Understand the key communication channels that could be used to communicate with the East London Hindu community

Focus groups indicated that to successfully inspire people to adopt more sustainable lifestyles, approaches needed to be relevant to people's everyday lives. Feedback from community leaders supported the premise that the community would welcome a campaign promoting water efficiency by highlighting the relevant links with Hindu scripture:

"It's quite clever for them to make the link between our religion and saving water. It makes sense to Hindus because respecting nature is our 'dharma' or our duty and so we can vibe with their message easily." (Female, community leader, Greenwich)

"It is basically reminding us that god is in everything and therefore it is not ours to take. Krishna is demonstrating that we have to respect even the essence of water because he is that essence." (Male, community leader, Ilford)

Barriers

The focus groups helped identify the following barriers to the target audience using water more sustainably:

- Language barriers
- People not literate in their mother tongue
- Lack of knowledge of water saving techniques
- Time constraints
- Perception that saving water creates more work for them
- Lack of understanding of the importance of water conservation
- A disincentive to conserve water because water is paid for per head, not per litre, so they want to make the most of it

Competition

A major source of competition against sustainable behaviours was the attitude that so much water is wasted by Thames Water through leaky pipes that there is no point in individuals trying to save water. Pipe leakage is a high-profile problem that is fairly specific to London.

“I heard about the leaking pipes and if they are not going to do anything about it then you wonder whether we can change anything just by ourselves.” (Focus group participant)

A second source of competition was scepticism about the validity of equating scripture with water conservation and the argument that translations from Sanskrit into Hindi, Gujarati and English could be misleading (especially when statements are taken out of context).

“I’m not sure why they have put the word ‘taste’ in there. It is not about the taste of the water but the essence of nature. So the literal translation is not appropriate.” (Focus group participant)

Practical tools

There is a need to deliver practical tools that would provide the community with the

inspiration, tools and knowledge to take immediate action.

“Most people will get bored of a long lecture so they need to make it more fun and interactive, get people to try out different devices like taps, and actually show how to reduce water when washing dishes.” (Focus group participant)

Reaching non-regular temple users

There is a need for stalls and lectures specifically during festivals to target a wider audience, who may not go to the temple regularly.

“We have a lot of religious and cultural festivals in our Hindu calendar. We organise many events that bring the whole community, not just the ones who go to temple regularly. This will be a good platform for you to have these stalls or a discussion or lecture. It will reach many people.” (Focus group participant)

Targeting women

Female participants identified that women are the key influence in Hindu family life and play a key role in water usage in the home, so should be specifically targeted and educated.

“Ultimately it is through educating the wife, the mother, that things in the household will change.” (Focus group participant)



Cultural diversity as a ‘hook’

Cultural diversity can be employed as an effective ‘hook’ with which to motivate sustainable behaviour. ‘Hooks can often be a value system such as faith, and in this case

promoting the links between theological messaging around stewardship of creation and living more sustainable 'One Planet' lifestyles.

"It is a very good idea to have these talks on Hinduism and nature because it is fundamental to what we believe. Conservation and preservation is the core of our lives and every Hindu has this duty to respect nature." (Focus group participant)



Community Champions

An idea recommended by the focus group participants was using 'Community Champions'. These are respected faces and trusted sources within target communities, who are familiar with local nuances and able to exert subtle influence and peer pressure to successfully transform community behaviours.

"They need to collaborate with us. Many of us here are very active in running the temple and organising events for the community, so if they approached us we can help them promote these projects. If they do it on their own, then people may not trust them so much." (Focus group participant)

The research concluded that the Hindu community were positive about the initiatives proposed by LSx and were happy to be involved.



Hinduism and H2O developed a strong methods mix for Phase One of the project, which sought to counter the barriers highlighted during the scoping phase:

- **Language and literacy barriers** – Materials were translated into Tamil, Gujarati, Hindi and Punjab, and practical demonstrations combated a lack of literacy
- **Lack of knowledge of water saving techniques and the importance of water conservation** – Information about water saving techniques were distributed through temples, community groups, women's groups, festivals, schools and in goody bags. Information also included facts such as leaving a tap on while cleaning teeth can waste as much as 10 buckets of water
- **Saving water takes time and effort** – Emphasised that saving water is surprisingly simple and does not necessarily require any extra time and effort, for example, dishwashers do not use a lot of water, which is a common myth
- **As water is traditionally billed per head, not per litre, people want to make the most of it** – Encouraged people to install water metres where possible

To address the competing attitudes identified in the scoping stage, LSx asked Thames Water for a response statement that could be used to inform participants that the problem of leaking pipes was being addressed and that individual action was still urgently needed.

All translations of religious scriptures were done by an independent expert on Hinduism and Ecology, who is the author of 10 books on the subject and carries considerable authority in the field.

Phase One intervention mix

Sustainability Starter Kit

Goody bags were developed to enable recipients to take up the actions being promoted through the various project activities. The bags included materials that were carefully selected to facilitate a lasting change in behaviour, rather than a transient change that stops once the incentive is removed:

- Save-a-flush device, placed in toilet cisterns to reduce water used per flush
- Energy efficient light bulb
- Pencil or pen made from recycled materials
- Briefing sheets with more information and simple top tips
- Cycle maps

Where appropriate and possible, kit materials were translated and included culturally relevant scripts and images, such as tea mugs advocating 'Boil a cupful not a kettleful', tea towels highlighting that water was 'precious', and prayer or other faith based calendars displaying culturally appropriate and seasonal messages.

Water-themed temple talks and practical demonstration workshops

Temple talks were delivered by independent experts in Hinduism and ecology to promote the links between the Hindu faith and water conservation (through the idea of the stewardship of creation). Practical demonstration workshops taught attendees how to use water saving devices. These were followed by information stalls and goody bags containing practical products.

Coffee evening sessions with women's groups

These sessions were designed to encourage debate and questions among women (who had been identified as household decision makers) in a relaxed atmosphere. A PowerPoint presentation was used as a visual aid, along with translations, and goody bags were given to participants to thank them for their time and to

ensure they had the tools to take immediate action towards living a greener lifestyle.

Faith school water awareness classes

These were developed based on LSx's previous work which suggested that children's activities help set off a snowball effect whereby parents are influenced to take action. Qualified teachers were sourced from The London International Gallery of Children's Art. The sessions included interactive discussions about the Hindu faith's links to water conservation and the negative effects and impacts of careless water use with games and worksheets. The children were then asked to develop posters on the topic.



Promotional material

A competition was run where participants could win a range of prizes, including a water butt and watering can. Promotional materials included:

- Mugs
- Tea towels
- Leaflets
- Shower timers
- Tap flow devices
- Save-a-flush
- Stickers
- Bookmarks
- Fridge magnets
- Calendars
- Houseplant gel
- Toothbrushes



Participation at festivals using 'faith and fun' as a hook

Stalls were held at the festivals of Janamashtami, Diwali and Navaratri, using 'faith and fun' as a hook, and goody bags were distributed.

Phase One review

These interventions were implemented between summer and autumn 2006, and were followed by three focus groups conducted by MORI in temples located in Greenwich, Ilford and Forest Gate with people of the Hindu community. The main objectives of this research were:

- **Reactions to initiatives** – To identify whether there was any change in the level of interest in, or awareness of, reducing water consumption among the Hindu community since May 2006
- **Impact on behaviour** – To identify whether this was a consequence of, or independent

to, the faith focused activities, and if possible, which particular activities

- **Make recommendations** – To explore what the barriers are to reducing water consumption and make suggestions as to how these can be overcome in the future

Phase One directly reached nearly 3,000 people. The promotional materials and goody bags were particularly successful at attracting people to stalls and engaging them in conversations about water conservation.

“We did a faith based calendar conveying seasonally appropriate water conservation messages, so in December you would lag your pipes and here’s how you do it and here’s the number from Thames, and here’s a quote from the Hindu scripture which shows why it’s a good thing to do. That sort of thing worked very nicely.” (Gayle Burgess, Behaviour Change Programme Director)



Another key success was the social aspect of the work, which participants considered to be a reward in its own right. Building community cohesion was seen to be a fundamental benefit of the project. Involving groups of people already part of the temple made the project more sociable by bringing together existing social groups, rather than just individuals.

Some challenges, however, arose during the implementation of Phase One. Some of these were practical, such as the difficulty of encouraging water metre installation, especially

amongst residents living in higher-level or council-owned flats, who did not have control over water supply arrangements. In addition, temple talks achieved variable success. While this had been very successful in a previous project with the Muslim community, this format was less successful with the Hindu community, which preferred debates to lectures.

“We had run a lecture series with the Muslim community which went really well, and we thought it would be a parallel, and in some areas it was, but it depended on who your audience was. So when we ran a lecture series with the Hindu elders in one of the temples, they seemed not really interested because they didn’t want somebody external lecturing them, that wasn’t their usual style. What they would do is run more of a debating society around the scripture. If I had done it again, I would have sourced a respected Hindu spiritual leader and picked up on a particular theological aspect of the scriptures, creating more of a debating society.” (Gayle Burgess, Behaviour Change Programme Director)



Following findings from Phase One of the project, LSx secured further funding from Thames Water to run a Community Champions programme to promote water saving behaviours to additional members of the east London Hindu community. Phase Two used Gladwell’s Theory of Social Networks, or the 80/20 Principle, which posits that in any situation roughly 80 per cent of the ‘work’ will be done by 20 per cent of the participants (in this case the Community Champions). This influential minority falls into three categories:

- **Connectors** – People who have a special gift for bringing people together – good at

making friends and possessing a rich network of acquaintances who can be drawn into a programme

- **Mavens** – Information specialists who we rely on to connect us with new information. They accumulate knowledge and know-how to share it with others
- **Salesmen** – Persuaders – charismatic people with powerful negotiation skills

By understanding this mix of personality types, Community Champions could be actively recruited to create the most effective team possible. LSx subsequently recruited, appointed and trained five Champions from the east London Tamil community, and empowered and equipped them to run practical workshops with friends, relatives and neighbours.



The Champions took a very hands-on approach and initiated debates to discuss environmental issues and theological links. Training enabled the Champions to provide practical demonstrations to save water, such as installing a save-a-flush and fixing leaking taps. The 5 Champions successfully encouraged 1,000 householders to take up greener practices, particularly saving water, confirming the value of viral marketing and social networking approaches, where people learn from friends, who in turn influence their friends.

Phase Two activities

- Delivered practical demonstrations on water saving techniques and advice on small simple steps that could be taken to live 'One Planet' lifestyles, outlining the rationale for doing so and the personal and collective benefits this could bring
- Equipped community members with the skills, resources and tools to adopt 'One Planet' lifestyles through distributing Sustainability Starter Kits
- Hosted a series of plumbing workshops with key household decision-makers in relation to water use (active advocacy role)
- Held practical demonstrations, such as in-home demonstrations to housewives identifying where and how energy could be saved in their homes
- Carried out outreach work with Hindu temples and at festivals and community gatherings
- Offered free water audits



These activities were delivered during autumn 2007 and spring 2008, reaching around 1,000 people. The use of Community Champions in Phase Two was deemed successful, but the planned plumbing workshops were not implemented due to lack of availability of a plumber from Thames water.



To monitor water conservation accurately, access to quantifiable systems such as meter reading and audits is required. As this was not realistically achievable, a variety of alternative quantitative and qualitative evaluation mechanisms were developed to assess the project's effectiveness. These included:

Phase One

- Quantitative – Self-reported changes, self-recorded diaries, and number of water efficiency devices requested
- Qualitative – Three focus groups, conducted by MORI with the target population in temples

Phase Two

Community Champions conducted questionnaires with their friends and family at the start of Phase Two, and again after six weeks. The questionnaires were based on the WWF One Planet Living survey, which allows people to work out their ecological footprint. Once completed, an LSx intern computed the results to develop individual footprints.

Phase One results

- 3,000 representatives of the east London Hindu community were engaged in the programme
- 520 pledges were made to use water more efficiently
- 264 pledges were made to take on other environmentally friendly actions
- A sample survey of 208 participants conducted at the end of the project showed that:
 - 35 per cent of participants expressed an interest in getting involved further (they have subsequently been supported

through the Diverse London Sustainability Champion's network)

- 40 per cent were interested in greening their lifestyle
- 25 per cent felt the activities provided had helped them gain a better understanding of environmental issues

To provide a better understanding of water usage and to quantify the amount of water used, three volunteers were recruited to complete water diaries over a two-week period. Volunteers were offered a relevant incentive such as a water butt. Since the volunteers did not have water meters, volunteers estimated and recorded daily water use associated with a range of everyday activities in quantities of five-litre buckets (volunteers were shown what a five-litre bucket looked like to reduce error). All three participants reported managing to reduce their water consumption after they received information or tools through at least one of the project activities and the communication materials, resources and devices in the Sustainability Starter Kits.

Follow-up focus groups revealed that the most common forms of behaviour change that resulted from the activities were turning the tap off while brushing one's teeth and not filling the kettle to the brim.

All participants recommended more practical demonstrations to engage people of all ages, including those not fluent in English. Specifically, in-home demonstrations for housewives by taking them around a house and identifying where and how energy and water could be conserved would be well received.

"I'm very keen to support the environment and save resources that are no longer regarded as free and endless. Returning home yesterday, I instantly placed the water saving devices in the toilet flush." (Participant)

Phase Two results

Through the project LSx established strong relationships with Ilford Hindu Temple, Greenwich Hindu Temple, Shree Kutch Satsang Swaminarayan Temple, Newham Asian Women's Group, Redbridge Gujarati Welfare Association, and the East London and Essex Brahm Samaj.

Temple Committee members and Chairs, and community leaders and organisers welcomed the initiative and were pleased to participate in, or host, different activities.

Feedback interviews with Community Champions revealed that they were key to securing a lasting legacy of change. Community Champions collectively reached around 1,000 householders individually.



Findings and lessons learnt from the Hinduism and H₂O project was written up in a report to Defra in March 2008, as part of the LSx's wider Diverse London work. In addition, LSx has developed a number of templates on engaging people through their faith, and community engagement more generally, so that future initiatives can build on lessons learnt during the Hinduism and H₂O and other Diverse London projects.

In November 2008 LSx presented to the National Water Conservation Group, outlining the Hinduism and H₂O project as an example of LSx's work to promote water conservation with diverse communities.

LSx has continued to share learning from the project through its conferences and presentations about behaviour change, particularly amongst diverse communities, including at LSx's Behaviour Change for a

more Sustainable London Conference, held in September 2009. LSx also cited the project when responding to the Mayor of London's draft Climate Change Adaption Strategy in May 2010.

Lessons learned

Make relevant ideological links and use culturally appropriate channels for reaching your target audience

For this project water conservation was linked to appropriate Hindu theology and scripture, which was found to be a successful 'hook' for behaviour change. This built on the success of a previous project that used appropriate Islamic theology and scripture to encourage Muslims in Tower Hamlets to recycle.



Community Champions

Working with community champions can be very effective, but recognise that it takes time to get them on board and allow time to develop a good relationship with the community and community leaders. Community Champions can be very busy with other commitments so this will need to be factored into timelines, and it is important to recognise and thank them for the time they are giving to the project.

Use ongoing community events

'Piggybacking' on existing activities as part of a project's outreach work can be an effective way of reaching large numbers of your target audience in an environment they trust and is likely to have high footfall.

Use imagery, translated messages and peer-to-peer transmission

When working with diverse communities it is vital to recognise language and literacy barriers. Well chosen images, appropriate translations and peer-to-peer communications can be essential for engaging targeted communities.

Make your programme positive, fun and inspire aspirations

Let people realise what they are capable of achieving, rather than just negatively emphasising the size of the challenge. Highlight how small changes individually and as a community can make a large impact.