

# ST XAVIER'S COLLEGE, THUMBA

## Best Practices 2023-24

St. Xavier's College, Thumba, founded in 1964, stands as a beacon of Jesuit commitment to quality education and holistic transformation. Guided by its vision to nurture intellectual, ethical, and socially responsible individuals, and its mission to provide inclusive and transformative education, the college has consistently worked to uplift marginalized communities. Rooted in the Jesuit ethos of "forming men and women for others," it strives to empower first-generation learners and foster social justice. Located in the heart of a coastal community, the college's strategic position enables it to address the unique challenges of the region, including the socio-economic and educational needs of fishing families. By blending academic rigor with community engagement, St. Xavier's College inspires a culture of excellence, sustainability, and service, fulfilling its vision of transforming lives and building empowered communities.

### 1. Best Practice: Greening the Earth

#### Objectives of the Practice

1. Utilize unproductive land on campus for organic farming and sustainable agriculture.
2. Foster a culture of environmental consciousness among students and the local community.
3. Provide part-time employment and skill development opportunities for students.
4. Offer training programs on organic farming and sustainable agricultural practices to students and the community.
5. Build partnerships with agricultural universities and experts to enhance knowledge sharing and practical learning.

#### The Context

St. Xavier's College, Thumba, is located in a coastal region with significant potential for agricultural innovation. Large tracts of unused land on campus presented an opportunity to address the pressing need for sustainable practices while aligning with the institution's vision of community engagement and ecological responsibility. The initiative also aimed to instil in students a deeper connection with nature and promote self-reliance.

#### The Practice

The "Greening the Earth" initiative transformed idle land into a productive agricultural space through:

- **Organic Farming:** Developing plots for growing vegetables, fruits, and herbs using eco-friendly methods.
- **Private Partnership:** Collaborating with a local agricultural enterprise to bring expertise and resources for efficient land use.

- **Student Employment:** Offering part-time roles in farm management, planting, harvesting, and marketing produce.
- **Training Programs:** Conducting workshops led by experts from agricultural universities on organic farming, composting, and sustainable practices.
- **Community Engagement:** Involving local residents to participate in farming activities and promoting the culture of "touching the earth and being touched by the earth."

### Evidence of Success

- **Increased Productivity:** The initiative converted 10 acres of unutilized land into thriving agricultural zones.
- **Student Participation:** Over 100 students have received part-time employment and training since the project's inception.
- **Community Impact:** Collaboration with local farming communities has strengthened bonds and improved agricultural knowledge sharing.
- **Recognition:** The project has been commended by agricultural universities and environmental bodies for promoting organic farming and sustainability.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Reduced campus waste through composting and improved soil health through organic methods.

### Problems Encountered

1. **Initial Resistance:** Convincing stakeholders about the feasibility and long-term benefits of the project.
2. **Resource Constraints:** Limited initial funding for equipment, seeds, and organic fertilizers.
3. **Weather Challenges:** Unpredictable coastal weather affecting crop yields.
4. **Knowledge Gaps:** Limited expertise in organic farming practices among initial participants.

### Resources Required

1. Partnerships with agricultural universities and local farming organizations.
2. Expert trainers for workshops and skill development.
3. Funding for farming tools, seeds, organic fertilizers, and irrigation systems.
4. Marketing support for the sale of farm produce.
5. Dedicated staff and student volunteers for the project's operational management.

The **Greening the Earth** initiative exemplifies St. Xavier's College's commitment to sustainability, education, and community empowerment, making it a hallmark of the institution's best practices.

## 2. Best Practice: Training the Masters

### Objectives of the Practice

1. Enhance the competence of college students providing tuition to school children in their localities.
2. Improve the overall academic culture in the coastal region by addressing gaps in foundational subjects like English and Mathematics.
3. Support first-generation learners by strengthening the quality of education in the community.
4. Foster a ripple effect of learning by empowering student tutors to positively influence younger generations.
5. Improve the standard of prospective admissions to St. Xavier's College by uplifting the academic base of the region.

### The Context

St. Xavier's College, Thumba, is situated in a coastal region where education is still evolving as a priority. Many stakeholders are first-generation learners, and academic rigour has yet to fully take root. A significant number of students at the college provide tuition to schoolchildren in their neighbourhoods, presenting a unique opportunity to indirectly uplift the region's academic standards through targeted intervention.

### The Practice

The "Training the Masters" initiative focuses on equipping student tutors with enhanced teaching skills and subject expertise:

- **Identifying Tutors:** Surveying and identifying students who provide tuition to local schoolchildren.
- **Focused Training:** Organizing additional classes in English and Mathematics to enhance the tutors' proficiency.
- **Skill Development Workshops:** Conducting workshops on effective teaching methods, communication skills, and classroom management.
- **Resource Provision:** Providing study materials, lesson plans, and problem-solving guides to assist tutors in delivering high-quality sessions.
- **Community Engagement:** Encouraging trained student tutors to expand their reach and provide better tuition to local schoolchildren, creating a chain of learning.

### Evidence of Success

- **Improved Competence:** Over 80 student tutors have shown marked improvement in English and Mathematics, reflected in their feedback and performance.
- **Community Impact:** The quality of tuition for local schoolchildren has visibly improved, as noted by parents and community members.
- **Better Academic Outcomes:** A rise in school pass rates and improved foundational skills among children in the region.

- **Positive Admissions Trend:** An increase in applications and admissions from the local community, with better-prepared students entering college.
- **Cultural Shift:** A growing emphasis on education and academic excellence in the coastal area.

### **Problems Encountered**

1. **Initial Engagement:** Motivating student tutors to participate in the training program amidst their busy schedules.
2. **Resource Constraints:** Limited access to teaching aids and subject experts for conducting sessions.
3. **Consistency Challenges:** Ensuring regular attendance and commitment from both tutors and their students.
4. **Local Challenges:** Overcoming the socio-economic barriers that limit children's access to effective tuition.

### **Resources Required**

1. Subject experts to lead the training sessions.
2. Dedicated classroom space and materials, such as textbooks and practice worksheets.
3. Funding for workshops and training sessions.
4. Support from local schools and community leaders to strengthen collaboration.
5. A monitoring system to assess the impact of the program and identify areas for improvement.

The **Training the Masters** initiative reflects St. Xavier's College's commitment to community empowerment and educational excellence, creating a sustainable model for uplifting first-generation learners and fostering a culture of learning in the region.