



# SPARKING CHANGE

Children are the best ambassadors of change and this has been proven once again by the success of Tata Power's Club Enerji campaign aimed at the conservation of energy and natural resources

**T**rain up a child in the way he should go, says the Bible, and when he grows older he will not depart from it. A similar sentiment has helped Tata Power's Club Enerji — an energy and resource conservation club that propagates the efficient usage of energy and educates society on climate change issues — bring about attitudinal change and promote sustainability in India.

Since its inception, Club Enerji has reached out to more than 400 schools, sensitised over 9.3 million citizens and helped save 14.2 million units of electricity, the equivalent of saving 14,200 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. However, like all big ideas, it too started small in Mumbai.

In 2006, India's financial

capital faced a severe power supply shortage and one of the measures contemplated was load-shedding — which would have crippled the city's economy and left life in disarray. "A strong need was felt to educate people on the significance of energy conservation and ways to achieve it," recalls Shalini Singh, head of corporate communication, Tata Power.

The city's public sector utilities, led by Tata Power, unveiled an advertising campaign to propagate the importance of energy conservation. While the campaign was appreciated and everybody agreed that conservation was essential, few people took steps to walk the talk.

Meanwhile, in Delhi, a similar awareness campaign, conducted by Tata Power's subsidiary Tata Power Delhi Distribution (TPDDL, earlier known as North Delhi Power), was achieving impressive results. The campaign — NDPL Energy Club — entailed creating awareness on preventing electricity pilferage and energy conservation. Ms Singh says, "We realised that the reason their campaign had worked so well was because they sought to educate children. The children championed the cause to their families."

## AN IDEA TAKES SHAPE

Inspired, Tata Power decided to replicate the success of the campaign by conducting a pilot, christened Tata Power Energy Club, in Mumbai in 2007. Along the way, the company decided to rename the campaign as Club Enerji.

To make the campaign more broad-based and to increase its reach, Tata Power decided to dissociate



### Club Enerji organises activities to create interest in energy conservation

its brand name from the campaign, which helped reinforce the fact that Club Enerji was open to all and not just restricted to customers of Tata Power or its subsidiaries. Tata Power showed its eagerness to join hands with anyone who cared enough to make a difference to the planet through their actions. The decision to change the name was also taken to render the campaign more appealing to its young audience. A spiffy new logo was also created to go with the new name.

The pilot generated a good response, encouraging Tata Power to scale up the programme to 41 schools the following year, registering an incremental increase year-on-year.

The target audience was children studying in grades four to eight. Children in these age groups were

not burdened with board exams and other concerns, and had the time and the inclination to learn about conservation issues. They also had the knowledge and the maturity required to understand the importance of saving the environment.

#### LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Club Enerji's modus operandi involves approaching a new school by getting the buy-in of the principal. This helps ensure that the school management devotes time and resources to promote the club's activities. The principals appoint science teachers as mentors to interact with the children and explain the activities to them.

At the start of every academic year, the club sends out letters, inviting newer schools to become

a part of the club. Each school is therefore at different stages of evolution, with regard to the awareness levels of its students. Club Enerji also organises principals' meets, where schools get an opportunity to learn from the experiences of their peers. Recognition programmes are also held to felicitate the most energy-efficient schools, the schools with the largest number of energy champions, the best mentors, children showing maximum savings, etc. Additionally, schools are also felicitated if they have done well to further the programme's mission.

What sets Club Enerji apart from other programmes is the fact that it empowers children to make a difference and celebrates their efforts. Ms Singh explains, "The children are required to show significant savings in their family's electricity bills over the course of a year to be an energy champion. Once they spread the message of energy conservation to three other families, they are designated as energy ambassadors."

Schools have appreciated the programme for increasing the students' level of confidence and bringing out their leadership qualities. Another noteworthy feature of the programme is that once people see savings, they are energised to be a part of the campaign. Tata Power recommends six golden tips which can help consumers reduce their energy consumption by as much as 12 percent.

When Tata Power spoke about Club Enerji at a climate change workshop, the programme received appreciation from all those in attendance. The president of



Club Enerji empowers children to make a difference and celebrates their efforts

the ICICI Foundation offered ₹5 million in support. Galvanised by the funding, Tata Power scaled up its programme to touch other metros and go national.

### SUSTAINING CHANGE

Broad basing the participant base to include subscribers of other power utilities has been one of the key reasons for the success of the programme. In fact, Tata Power had very little retail presence in Mumbai in 2007 when the programme began. “Going national showed that our effort was not targeted at our customers alone. It proved that as the largest private utility in the country, we wanted to spread the message of sustainability, irrespective of whether it was our marketplace, our customer or even our country. It was this commitment that gave birth to Club Enerji and fuelled its growth,” says Ms Singh.

The commitment also ensured the simplicity of Club Enerji’s structure. Anybody can come to the club’s website, get educated, and start saving energy. Some of Club Enerji’s members even hail from the US, Canada and the Philippines.

With a view to expanding the reach of its sensitisation efforts, Club Enerji has tied up with Tata ClassEdge, whose educational modules are subscribed to by 1,200 schools across India. Club Enerji’s

modules have been inserted in Tata ClassEdge’s programmes, enabling a host of children to avail of this knowledge. Learning, however, is not restricted to children alone. The club’s online modules are available to anyone with the will to do their bit towards energy efficiency.

Club Enerji also organises a number of activities to stimulate interest in energy conservation. These activities include competitions like Energy Q and Carnival; Spark of Life, a poster competition; and Every Watt Counts, an essay competition.

Today, the scope has been broadened to include the inculcation of moral and civic values in young citizens. This evolution has been a natural one, aiding Club Enerji’s goal of grooming the children of today into responsible citizens of the future. The team is conducting a pilot, with these newer elements, in 12 schools. The pilot has been eliciting a good response.

Ms Singh says, “Children have to be constantly engaged, so we had to keep renewing the programme. We created a programme called Power Kids Lead, under Club Enerji, to extend the debate from energy conservation to resource conservation of water, waste and fuel. These modules, designed by Tata Interactive Services, incorporate gaming and quizzing elements.

This programme has been cascaded across schools over the last few years.” The team is now working on a mobile app for Club Enerji.

### VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Club Enerji continues to keep in touch with its former members through its newsletter, Energy Xchange. Thanks to its online presence, the membership of this young club has swelled, with parents, teachers and others joining its ranks. To take the message further, many young members form their own mini-clubs in the real world, organising skits, cycle rallies, *batti bandh* (lights off) campaigns, etc.

Tata Power takes great pride in the manner in which Club Enerji has grown. Ms Singh says, “Club Enerji is the pride of this organisation. We are promoting it, teaching children to use less power at the cost of our business, and our schools respect us for that. They say, only the Tatas have the mindset to invest in the greater good. That speaks volumes for the core values of Tata Power and the group.”

Children can change the world. The meteoric growth of Club Enerji is a striking example of how a great idea, combined with the enthusiasm and dedication of children, can bring in real and lasting change. □

— Cynthia Rodrigues