

## ShowCase

### Hinduism and H<sub>2</sub>O

**Topic:** Sustainability

**Organisation:** London Sustainability Exchange

**Location:** London

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

**Website:** [www.lsx.org.uk](http://www.lsx.org.uk)

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#### Overview

Run as a partnership between the London Sustainability Exchange and Thames Water, Hinduism and H<sub>2</sub>O 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

## 1. BEHAVIOUR

For members of East London Hindu communities to:

- Adopt more environmentally friendly lifestyles
- Reduce water consumption
- Spread water saving messages to neighbours, colleagues and friends

## 2. CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

- Primary research by MORI
  - Three focus groups with Hindu residents
  - One-to-one interviews with community leaders and opinion formers
- Follow-up focus groups with target population, to gather reactions to Phase One of the programme
- Use of Community Champions to conduct questionnaires with friends and family, to work out ecological footprints

## 3. THEORY

- **Social Capital Theory:** Uses a community's links and resources to benefit that community
- **Gladwell's Theory of Social Networks (80/20 Principle):** In any situation, 80 per cent of the 'work' will be done by 20 per cent of the participants (in this case the Community Champions), who are an influential minority

## 4. INSIGHT

- Approaches must be relevant to people's everyday lives
- Linking water conservation with Hindu scripture could be effective
- Community requires practical tools for immediate action
- Use community champions to engage communities

## 5. EXCHANGE

- **Barriers:** English not first language; Poor literacy in mother tongue; Lack of knowledge of water saving techniques; Lack of understanding of importance of water conservation; Time constraints; Perception that saving water creates more work; Water billed per head, not per litre
- **Responses:** Translated materials into Tamil, Gujarati, Hindi and Punjabi; Held practical demonstrations; Distributed info through temples, community and women's groups, festivals and schools; Emphasised saving water is simple and does not require extra time or effort; Encouraged people to install water metres; Goody bags

## 6. COMPETITION

- View that so much water is wasted by Thames Water through leaky pipes, so no point individuals saving water – Worked with Thames Water to counter this belief
- Scepticism about link between scripture and the environment – Worked with respected scholars to translate religious scriptures

## 7. SEGMENTATION

- Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi and Tamil-speaking members of the Hindu community
- London boroughs of Newham, Redbridge, Greenwich, Tower Hamlets Hackney and Waltham Forest
- Women specifically targeted – Identified as the key influence in Hindu family life and play key role in water usage in the home

## 8. METHODS MIX

- Water-themed temple talks
- Practical demonstrations – E.g. on water saving techniques, plumbing, saving energy
- Sustainability Starter Kits – Included save-a-flush device, energy efficient light bulbs, info and top tips, etc.
- Coffee evening sessions with women's groups
- Faith school water awareness classes
- Promotional materials – E.g. shower timers, tap flow devices, houseplant gel, tea towels
- Community Champions programme
- Presence at festivals and community events
- Free water audits