

# Chapter 4

## Harnessing Art as a Catalyst to Environmental Awareness

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*Environmental awareness is crucial for ensuring a sustainable future. This chapter presents how fostering environmental awareness in children is important for securing a safe Mother Earth for future generations. This chapter showcases an initiative implemented through an art-integrated project for environmental awareness across three public schools in Lahore, Pakistan. Beyond strengthening academic and creative skills besides social-emotional learning (SEL), the program also cultivated a deep sense of environmental responsibility in students, teachers, and administrators. Olomopolo Media (Pakistan) launched the global “River of Hope” British Council program to raise awareness about rivers and their deep connection to the cities they flow through. This program used traditional printmaking to raise awareness about river Ravi’s problems. It focused on inspiring action for its restoration by presenting the power of art for environmental causes resulting in the culmination of a student-created printmaking exhibition displayed during the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in England.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Environmental education fosters an understanding of the intricate balance of our planet's ecosystems and human activities impact on them (Kumari & Thakur, 2023). This awareness is crucial for making informed decisions and achieving a sustainable future. The Earth's climate has undergone constant shifts throughout history. However, the current rate of global warming is unprecedented in the last 10,000 years (IPCC, 2023; *Past Climate*, 2021). Scientific evidence from ancient natural records like ice cores and modern tools like satellites shows that our planet is warming (IPCC, 2023; *Past Climate*, 2021). This warming isn't happening in isolation. The world's ecosystems, the intricate web of life on Earth, are experiencing a rapid transformation unlike anything witnessed before. Human activity is the primary driver behind this change ("Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis," 2005). Land conversion for agriculture is a major factor, with vast areas being transformed into cultivated fields at an alarming rate. Fresh water resources are also under strain ("Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis," 2005). The construction of dams has significantly altered natural water flow patterns ("Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis," 2005). Even coastal ecosystems like mangroves and coral reefs have seen substantial losses in recent decades ("Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis," 2005). These changes highlight the interconnectedness of our planet's systems. A warming climate and human actions fundamentally alter the delicate balance of Earth's ecosystems ("Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis," 2005). Given the pressing nature of these environmental challenges, equipping school-going children with knowledge is crucial. Educating them about these issues empowers them to become responsible guardians of the Earth. This knowledge will enable them to advocate for change and develop solutions for a sustainable future (Kumari & Thakur, 2023).

Out of the numerous impactful methods of teaching environmental awareness, project-based learning has left profound outcomes among young learners. John Dewey is believed to have developed the idea of project-based learning. Dewey(1976) argued, "Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results" (1916, p. 191). Project-based learning effectively allows students to explore a topic more deeply through hands-on activities. It fosters active engagement and a deeper understanding of the subject (Cervantes et al., 2015). It also encourages students to apply their knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems. This can include environmental projects like designing sustainable communities or cleaning up local parks. Moreover, project work often involves collaboration and communication, preparing students with essential skills for the future (Cervantes et al., 2015).

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