Designing a better life

Students from the US attend IIT-Gn workshop, find solutions to improve hygiene, education, water management in rural India

Ahmedabad Mirror Bureau amfeedback@timesgroup.in TWEETS @ahmedabadmirror

Students from the US who visited IIT Gandhinagar for a 10-day workshop came up with innovative designs to solve real-life problems in rural and semi-urban areas.

Twenty-eight students from The New School (Parson School of Design), a university in New York, attended the 'Design for A Billion' worshop at IIT-Gn's Indian Institute of Technology. As part of the cross-disciplinary workshop, students interacted with people in Palaj village, understood various issues faced by them and came out with solutions to problems related to waste management, village ecosystem, education system, water management and bus transportation. Mirror profiles some of the solutions.

The Marble Jar

TEAM: 9 students

Innovation: The Marble Jar design involves in encouragint students to take up assignments that allow for greater community engagement and interaction

THE MARBLE JAR is a concept in schools in the USA, said students. Nyantee Asharnan, a student of Master of Fine Arts in design and technology, said, "Whenever a class completes a task as a team, they put something in the jar. When it gets full, the students get a pizza party or something that encourages them."

She added, "Our project was to encourage students to take leadership roles and implement community-building activities." This team's design concept focuses on educational reform in primary schools. The students believe 'The Marble Jar' will encourage personal and communal responsibility by giving tasks that allow students to interact with their community and environmental surroundings.

Saaf Mahavari (Clean menstruation)

TEAM: 5 students

Innovation: A portable menstrual hygiene kit that has low-cost sanitary napkins and an informational booklet. This kit can be discreetly worn inside traditional clothes

STUDENTS interacted with 19 women in the age group of 14-22, and realized they used clothes, confined themselves to the house and avoided going to the kitchen mainly because of hygiene concerns. Halley Mittelstaett, a master of Fine Arts in design and technology, who was part of the team, said, "To help these women, we designed a kit to help them. It contains an attachable pouch that has space for sanitary napkins, a guide (in three languages) on how to use napkins and healthy practices during menstruation." The pocket will be distributed through existing retail locations such as beauty parlours and sold at just Rs 10 to encourage the adoption of hygienic methods.

TransPotatoes

TEAM: 5 students

Innovation: a smart card for bus commuters. While some passengers can purchase these cards, others with smartphones can download its application that will help them find the best route to commute, and enable them to pay the fare electronically.

THE STUDENTS observed that people used multiple and various modes of transportation in India. While they thought common ticketing is a help, they found out that there are people who do not have smart phone. "We designed a smart card for bus commuters so that they can purchase tickets easily. For people who do not have smart phones, we designed a physical card that can be topped up and reused. We also designed an application through which passengers can find the best route to their destination and pay online," said team member Jennifer Hsiech. This ticket can be single ticketing for AMTS, BRTS and Metro, proposed students.

Village Wash

TEAM: 5 students

Innovation: A mechanical washing machine that uses less amount of water. The machine uses manual power to rotate a drum filled with water and special ceramic pebbles that rotate with the dirty clothes and help remove dirt, stains and microorganisms.

STUDENTS learnt that female villagers spent 30 minutes to an hour every day washing clothes.

The women were concerned about excessive use of water and costly detergent. To help these women, the students designed a manual washing machine which neither requires electricity nor uses soap to wash clothes. This means that water is conserved too.

Wenchi Huang, a student of Master of Fine Arts in design and technology course, said, "We made a proto-type of the manual washing machine and proposed to use ceramic pieces that substitute as soap."