

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam, a reputed women's college situated in central Kerala, has for past six years been persistently working to address plastic pollution through varied activities.

STEP, Society of Teresians for Environment Protection- a charitable society formed on campus strives to replace plastic or rexine products with a potpourri of trendy eco-friendly cloth alternatives such as college bags, shopping bags, laptop bags, vegetable bags, pencil pouches, lunch bags, cosmetic pouches, sanitary napkins and diapers. STEP reaches out to the community **through training programmes, exhibitions and sales**. A State-wide training centre established in the campus, trains Kudumbashree- or womens SHG units across Kerala on manufacturing such products and Video tutorials illustrating stitching process are uploaded on Government sites for public access. Through 'Chengathi Cheppu' project they manufactured over 10000 eco-friendly pencil pouches by upcycling tailoring excess.

The College has charted out an official Teresian Green Protocol which replaces single use plastic plates, glasses, straws, flex boards, plastic project covers and files on campus with reusable products. Every year the fresh batch of students are given an orientation on the green convention to be followed and STEP provides an Induction kit consisting of eco-friendly alternatives.

The green protocol is also popularised among community through house to house campaign among 10000 households in Cheranalloor Panchayath and mimising plastic use through deposit schemes in festivals at Malayattoor Hill, Cochin Carnival etc. A plastic carry bag reduction campaign (PK3) was organised for around 3000 school children in 27 schools in Ernakulam district in 2019-20 wherein nearly 7000 plastic covers sent for recycling and T shirt bags- a Zero cost alternative to plastic carry bags was popularized Another initiative was the 'SAVE OUR FUTURE' campaign of 2020, which sensitised community on the danger of single use plastics.

A year-long programme-Maatathinte Noolizha -Threads of Change Campaign was launched in 2021 to promote sustainable fashion. 'Hand me Down', 'Mix n Match', challenges were organized to promote upcycling, restyling and reshaping of old worn-out cloth in homesteads into fashionable ones as well as useful products like mops, baby shoes, floor mats, laptop

bags etc. Hundreds of women were sensitised and encouraged to take up upcycling in homesteads

The soft toy product initiative mentored by the college sanitises, shreds and converts tailoring excess into educational toys to be supplied to Anganwadis, the Government run creche network in Kerala. This project is currently under implementation in ecologically sensitive Western Ghats using Green Innovation Fund project of UNDP, KSUM and Harithakeralam Mission and in Kochi Corporation area so as to upcycle entire tailoring excess generated in these areas.

Such initiatives on reducing plastic and rexine waste and upcycling textile waste have won various State awards and also national recognition by the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi through his Mann ki Baat address to the nation on March 28, 2021.