

CAFTA-DR



Costa Rica • Dominican Republic • El Salvador • Guatemala • Honduras • Nicaragua • United States

Democracy in Action in the CAFTA-DR Region

Citizen Involvement in Environmental Decision-Making and Enforcement



Planting perennial grass naturally filters waste water

In May of 2008, high school students at the Lincoln School in San Jose, Costa Rica designed a strategy for convincing their government to treat waste water using *Chrysopogon zizanioides*, a perennial grass that works as a natural filter. This was part of a two day environmental congress named ECO-1. The School, with funding from the State Department's Ocean Environment and Science Bureau (OES), brought over 270

kids from 45 different schools from all over Costa Rica to participate in a two day workshop on how to engage with their national and local governments on environmental matters.



ECO-1: Helping high school students understand environmental protection in San Jose, Costa Rica

The ECO-1 Congress was part of a broader initiative that OES and the Department's Regional Environmental Hub at the U.S. Embassy in San Jose are spearheading throughout the CAFTA-DR region to educate civil society about CAFTA-DR public participation mechanisms and to encourage people to work with their governments to ensure effective enforcement of environmental laws.



Community meeting in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

To date, as part of this initiative, the Department has issued a total 12 grants to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or academic institutions in all of the CAFTA-DR countries.

For example:

- **In Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua** the NGOs Helvetas (Guatemala), Alianza (DR), and Promoción y Desarrollo Empresarial (Nicaragua) organized mass media campaigns to inform the public of opportunities for involvement in environmental decision-making and enforcement.

- **In El Salvador**, the NGO the Instituto de Investigación y Promoción Ambiental (IPA) organized workshops for environmental units (EUs) in several municipalities to communicate and highlight the mechanisms for public participation in environmental matters.

- **In Honduras**, the Central America Technological University (UNITEC) organized workshops directed at government and non-government sectors on CAFTA-DR Chapter 17 (Environment) and the new opportunities that it offers for public involvement in environmental decision-making and enforcement.



- 1) Dominican Republic: encouraging public participation
- 2) Guatemalan environmental outreach campaign: promoting awareness
- 3) Print ad: "Let us choose our future"
- 4) Newspaper headline: "Promoting public reporting of environmental crimes"

Through this initiative, the Department and its partners have reached at a minimum 25,000 people through trainings, newspapers, flyers, and radio spots, and provided them with tools to work with their governments to protect the environment.

Contact Information:

U.S. Department of State - Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science, **CAFTA-DR Program**, Office of Environmental Policy, Division of Trade and Environment (202) 647-9312



GUATEMALA



LINCOLN SCHOOL

