

CAFTA-DR

*"Choose Our Future:
Protect Our Environment"*



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

Enforcing environmental laws through public participation



Promoting public awareness with flyers, pamphlets & posters

Helvetas, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Guatemala, is working in collaboration with Guatemala's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) to assure widespread public awareness of, and access to, the ministry's toll-free phone line of alleged violations of environmental protection laws. The U.S. Department of State Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science (OES) support this

program through a grant to Helvetas to promote participation in the enforcement of existing environmental laws. The motto of the program is "Choose Our Future: Protect Our Environment."

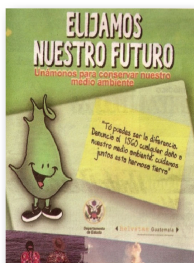
This program is part of a broader initiative that OES and the Department's Regional Environmental Hub at the U.S. Embassy in San Jose are spearheading throughout the CAFTA-DR region to educate civil society about CAFTA-DR public participation mechanisms and to encourage people to work with their governments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



Laguna Brava, Huehuetenango

The Helvetas promotional program informed and encouraged the residents of the Western Highlands to use the toll-free number established by MARN and other mechanisms for reporting environmental violations. Helvetas led forums with civil society participants in Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, San Marcos, and Totonicapán. Participants learned about laws that protect air, soil and water quality, as well as endangered species of flora and fauna.

Helvetas collaborated with governments at the national and local levels to assure the public of the integrity of the process for submitting complaints. Additionally, Helvetas worked through local non-governmental organizations to increase awareness of existing environmental protection laws and help foster confidence in the reporting mechanisms.



Print ad: "Let us choose our future" (Top) Newspaper headline: Promoting public reporting of environmental crimes (Bottom)



Community meeting in Quetzaltenango

The program used various local and mass media outlets to convey informational and promotional messages, including featured stories and advertisements in newspaper and radio. In an effort to connect broadly with the population of the Western Highlands, Helvetas delivered radio advertisements in Spanish and two indigenous Mayan languages (Kiché and Man). The public campaign consisted of 640 radio announcements, 15,000 flyers and pamphlets, 1,000 posters, 20 banners, and 9 newspaper advertisements in the regional press. Following this campaign, MARN reported an increase in the number of calls to its toll-free hotline, and that during the first half of 2009 the number of calls averaged 55 per month.

Helvetas worked closely with local schools and community organizations to promote the sustainability of the message and the use of the reporting mechanisms. Several community development organizations signed letters of commitment offering to continue to support the program's goals. Teachers who took part in the campaign were highly enthusiastic because they could use the pamphlets and flyers in their own environmental curricula to encourage children to enhance their futures by protecting their environment.



Local children learn how to protect their environment

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GUATEMALA

