

Good Practices with the Earth Charter

November 2010



Itaipú Binational: a public enterprise spearheading efforts of good governance

Manage the use of renewable resources such as water, soil, forest products, and marine life in ways that do not exceed rates of regeneration and that protect the health of ecosystems.

- Principle 5e

Uphold the right of everyone to receive clear and timely information on environmental matters and all development plans and activities which are likely to affect them or in which they have an interest.

- Principle 13a

Very often the comprehensive ethical framework of the Earth Charter serves as a platform and common ground for various interest groups seeking cooperation. One of the best illustrations of this trend is the case of Itaipú Binational – the world's largest energy-production hydroelectric dam. Located on the borders of Brazil and Paraguay, Itaipú came as a result of a decade-long diplomatic process between Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay.



Addressing the dam's environmental impacts, a program called Cultivando Agua Buena (Cultivating Good Water) was started. Focusing on the preservation of water, soil, and life, this program is using the Earth Charter as an inspiration and framework for all its activities and projects, such as engaging local farmers, and empowering regional leaders to represent and discuss their sectors' needs.

The program involves farmers, schools, businesses, citizen groups, and local governments from 29 municipalities that surround the area where the company is located in Brazil. The program has the support of over 2000 institutions, including universities, governmental organizations, and NGOs. It offers capacity building, training, and a forum for

local communities. It enables all participants to find areas of common interest and shared priorities, and to agree on a local sustainability plan.

As a result, the inclusive, global framework of the Earth Charter is being transferred into local settings, benefiting the interested parties in a practical way through an interesting example of good governance and building opportunities for cross-sectoral cooperation.

Area of interest: Business and local communities

Action: Environmental training and coordination campaign

Outcome: Increased cooperation, 2000 endorsing organizations

Further information: <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/invent/images/uploads/Itaipu%20Binacional%20EN.pdf>

Earth Charter, Global Reporting Initiative and sustainability reporting

Require multinational corporations and international financial organizations to act transparently in the public good, and hold them accountable for the consequences of their activities.

- Principle 10d

The Earth Charter and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) have been collaborating since 2008. This collaboration has been very fruitful for both initiatives, and in the framework of the 10th anniversary of the Earth Charter, ECI and GRI signed a Memorandum of Understanding, recognizing a common mission of raising awareness about sustainable development.

As part of this mission, the Earth Charter and the GRI are actively cooperating on bringing the two frameworks closer together through the development of practical tools for sustainability accounting in businesses. While the GRI focuses on promoting sustainability reporting around the world using the G3 framework, the Earth Charter seeks to inspire and encourage the green shift in business, offering its Principles as an ethical framework to guide business decision-makers.

This mutually beneficial partnership has inspired many other actors to seek stronger collaboration with the Earth Charter. Among these, a group of Central American business associations has recently prepared a first draft, matching its sustainable reporting indicators framework – IndiCARSE – with the Earth Charter Principles.

Recognizing the complementary nature of the Earth Charter, the Global Reporting Initiative and other frameworks enable all actors to seek opportunities to support and harmonize each other's work.



Area of interest: Business

Action: Increasing cooperation between Earth Charter and sustainability reporting frameworks in business

Outcome: Increasing business transparency

Further information: <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/545/1/ECI-and-GRI-sign-an-agreement-during-the-celebration-of-the-10th-anniversary/Page1.html>

Earth Charter and Philips Brazil Sustainability Report 2010

Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.

- Principle 10

The 2010 Sustainability Report by Philips Brazil demonstrates the ease with which internal business goals can be matched with the ethical framework of the Earth Charter. This year, for the first time, Philips Brazil has integrated the Earth Charter Principles into its sustainability reporting, in conjunction with the GRI guidelines, the Global Compact, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Ethos CSR Indicators.

Philips started its activities in Brazil in 1924 in order to facilitate imports from its European partners. Philips Brazil currently operates in three segments: healthcare consumer products, and lighting. Hiring 4.137 employees in four manufacturing plants and six research centers, the company is one of the largest privately-owned employers in Brazil. Its headquarters is located in Barueri, São Paulo, and the current CEO is Mr. Marcos Bicudo.

The Report presents information on actions by Philips Brazil in areas of good governance, energy efficiency, dialogue and relationship with stakeholders and the strengthening of local communities through good business practices.

The links between every issue and policy discussed, and the corresponding principle from the Earth Charter and other instruments are clearly marked, enabling the company to analyze its performance from a variety of perspectives. Together with GRI-based indicators, this cross-reference approach presents better transparency and accountability to stakeholders, and can be seen as a fine illustration of Earth Charter recognition and its practical application in business.



Area of interest: Business

Action: Combining Earth Charter framework with internal reporting guidelines

Outcome: Increased transparency and clear ethical vision

Further information: <http://www.sustentabilidade.philips.com.br/relatorio-de-sustentabilidade-e-publicacoes.htm>

Earth Charter as framework for sustainable cities

Adopt at all levels sustainable development plans and regulations that make environmental conservation and rehabilitation integral to all development initiatives.

- Principle 5a

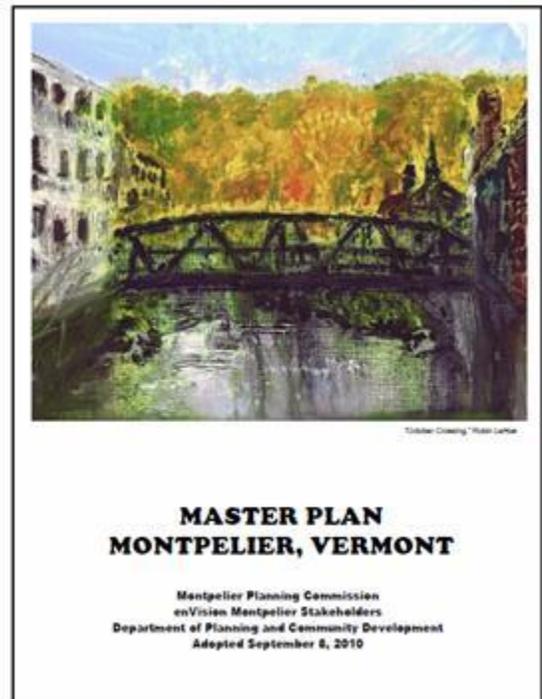
As more than half of the human population now lives in cities, and with the trend expected to accelerate further, the need for sustainable urban planning is greater now than ever before. Tackling such challenges as urban sprawl, pollution, and traffic congestion, as well increasing cooperation between urban areas can be difficult, but is essential for the realization of a sustainable future.

Two cities that have used the Earth Charter to envision and adopt sustainable development initiatives are: Toronto, Canada, and Montpelier, Vermont.

After endorsing the Earth Charter in 2002, the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) began a process of comparing the Earth Charter principles with existing policies to identify the gaps and similarities. This effort was followed by the design of its strategic plan called "The Living City". The plan took into account a summary of consultations, as well as expected challenges the TRCA may encounter in pursuit of their vision, values, and principles, drawn largely from the Earth Charter.

Operating with similar needs in mind, the city of Montpelier, Vermont, has been working closely with the City Council on the design of a new Master Plan for the city's development. As with the case of Toronto, the Montpelier Plan is strongly based on the Earth Charter principles and contains many environmental and social goals, formulated with the long-term view of sustainability in mind.

Both Toronto and Montpelier have successfully adapted the Earth Charter as a guideline for defining their green futures, and as a reference document for local policy making.



Area of interest: Business and local government

Action: Environmental urban planning

Outcome: Redefined vision for sustainable urban planning

Further information: <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/574/1/enVision-Montpelier-Sustainability-city-planning-with-the-Earth-Charter/Page1.html>

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Toronto,%20Canada>

North-South Collaborative Project: Tackling Poverty in Zambia

Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.

- Principle 9

One of the largest challenges related to achieving sustainable development is the crisis of poverty. Deeply intertwined with the environmental and social spheres, economic poverty not only constitutes a tremendous humanitarian problem, but is also hampering progress in other areas of sustainability. The natural environment, overexploited by urgency-driven, short-term solutions forced by poverty is especially threatened by this mechanism.

An example of the Earth Charter helping to address this problem at its core comes from Zambia, where Victor Phiri, National Coordinator for the Workers Education Association of Zambia, and George Sherman, Board member of Earth Charter US (ECUS), have developed the COPE Project.

COPE is an ambitious 20 year plan, inspired by the Earth Charter, to eliminate rural poverty by creating a Contentment Economy based on the traditional cultural practices of the villages. The key to eliminating poverty is the elimination of health problems through sustainable methods. Thus, the project initially focused on solar and fuel-efficient cooking, water purification, and waterless toilets.

Gains in health and labor-saving practices are used for education, organizing women's social groups focused on crafts or micro lending, expanding small scale agriculture, and the stimulation of local economies. Each village is trained in all details of the project, and in return agrees to train another village the following year.

By using only local people to run the project, COPE costs only a small fraction of the amount normally used by an NGO. So far the entire project, which is funded by ECUS, has required less than \$10,000.



Area of interest: Local communities

Action: Eliminating poverty

Outcome: More self-sustaining communities

Further information: <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/414/1/Zambian-and-EC-US-affiliates-partnership/Page1.html>

Capacity building for young leaders through the eGLO Learning Platform

Provide all, especially children and youth, with educational opportunities that empower them to contribute actively to sustainable development

- Principle 14a

A crucial element in sustainable development is the empowerment of youth. As today's young people will become the decision makers of tomorrow, it is essential that they engage with the dialogue on addressing the interconnected challenges of today's world.

Created in response to this need, the first e-GLO took place in 2008. e-GLO is a semester long, online leadership course that is executed on Heart in Action Enterprises' virtual multimedia platform. The course, which involves about 40 youth leaders every year, aims to make a positive impact on society by familiarizing local youth activists with sustainability leadership skills and shared ethics. The third e-GLO took place during the second semester of 2010, bringing together youth activists from all over the world.

The course is implemented in collaboration with Canadian organization *BeatBoard*. During the sessions, the participants learn in an interactive manner about innovative skills in sustainability project planning, management and fundraising, as well as facilitating the effective use of new media. The ultimate aim is to further develop the necessary capabilities to conduct Earth Charter inspired action projects in the participants' own communities. Due to e-GLO, numerous youth-led projects have been implemented in all regions of the world, and new Earth Charter Youth Groups and Affiliates have been created.

Bringing together the ethical vision of the Earth Charter and 21st century technology, the e-GLO course will no doubt continue well into the future, empowering youth and providing the world with a group of highly competent sustainability leaders inspired by the Earth Charter.



Area of interest: Education and research

Action: Global, online course on sustainability leadership

Outcome: Promoting the concepts and tools related to sustainability leadership and change

Further information:

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Earth%20Charter%20Global%20Learning%20Opportunity>

Earth Charter Youth Groups

Honor and support the young people of our communities, enabling them to fulfill their essential role in creating sustainable societies.

- Principle 12c



As part of the Earth Charter Initiative there is a bold, diverse, and dynamic action-oriented youth network promoting the principles of the Earth Charter among young people. This network involves active young people from over 100 countries, with more than 90 Earth Charter Youth Groups (ECYGs) and numerous partners around the world.

One of the Earth Charter Youth Groups, *Rafique Research & Educational ECYG*, is located in Pakistan. After the devastating floods in 2010, the group wanted to take action to help country's Internally Displaced People. This group was able to fundraise more than 3500€ through Earth Charter's Dutch partner, 1%CLUB. With this financial support, the group helped more than 1100 people in their home community, Lodhran, by providing emergency food and medicine.

This is just one example of how the Earth Charter Youth activists, all over the world, are living out the vision of the Earth Charter in their communities. These young people study the declaration, get inspired by it, and then organize small action projects that promote justice, sustainability, and peace. Through their work, ECYGs achieve a multiplying effect in their communities.

Area of interest: Education, local communities

Action: Empowering local communities

Outcome: Multiple regional projects and campaigns

Further information: <http://earthcharter.org/youth>

<http://ecyg.wikispaces.com/>

UMAPAZ and Education for Sustainable Development

Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.

- Principle 14

An example of the Earth Charter's leading role in Education for Sustainable Development (EDS) is the case of UMAPAZ, Brazil. In January 2006, the Open University of the Environment and the Culture of Peace (*Universidade Aberta do Meio Ambiente e Cultura de Paz – UMAPAZ*), established by the environmental authorities of the state and city of São Paulo, began its operations.

The University uses the Earth Charter as its conceptual guideline to train local educators, who in turn promote the values and principles of the Earth Charter, and contribute to the understanding of the sustainability vision within the São Paulo education network of 1200 schools and over one million students.



The program started with a focus on teachers, trusting in their capacity for self-transformation and in their potential to spread sustainability concepts through their actions. This combination of transformative-learning experience and using the target group's area of competence is not only time- and cost-effective, but guarantees a much higher commitment to the goals of the Earth Charter and sustainable development.

Empowering educators encourages further dissemination of the Earth Charter vision through pupil and student initiatives. Following this successful effort in 2006 and 2007, UMAPAZ has expanded its use of the Earth Charter by offering ongoing short courses to a broader public, not limited to educators, since 2008.

Area of interest: Education

Action: Sustainability training for educators

Outcome: 1 million students made sensitive to the challenges of sustainable development

Further information: http://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/meio_ambiente/umapaz/

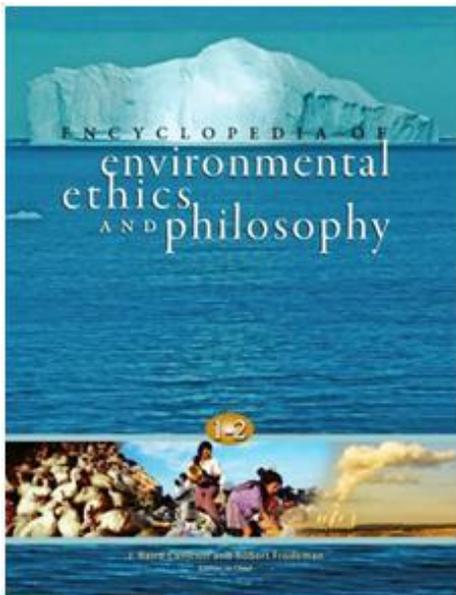
Earth Charter in the new Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Sustainability

Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.

- Principle 14

Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.

- Principle 16



A new, two-volume *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, published in the United States by Macmillan, identifies the Earth Charter as one of the ten primary source documents for the rapidly expanding and important field of environmental ethics research and writing. The Earth Charter is the only document among these ten texts that appeared in the last three decades; the other nine documents being essays written prior to 1978.

According to the *Encyclopedia*, 'the Earth Charter provides an excellent overview of the essential elements of sustainable development and world peace, and it is widely used as a teaching tool in schools, colleges, universities, and nonformal education programs. A number of international lawyers recognize the Earth Charter as an increasingly influential soft-law document'.

This recognition of the Earth Charter as a primary reference document highlights the special significance that the Charter has acquired for scholars working in the field of environmental ethics and philosophy. While often focusing on practical issues in business and policy-making, the Earth Charter remains an important ethical framework document of growing recognition, addressing some essential questions facing humanity today.

Area of interest: Research and education

Action: Earth Charter recognition

Outcome: Earth Charter recognized as an essential source of knowledge on sustainable development

Further information: Callicott J. Baird, Frodeman Robert (Eds), 2008. *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA. In-text quotation taken from page 220, volume 1.

Earth Charter textbooks in Costa Rican schools

Promote the contribution of the arts and humanities as well as the sciences in sustainability education.

- Principle 14b

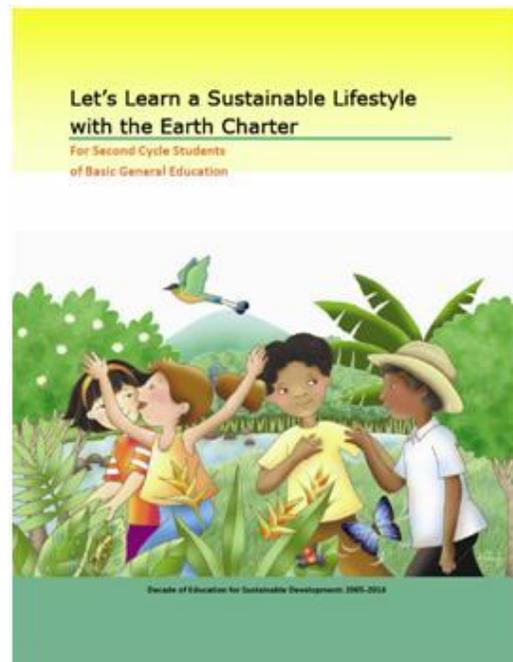
Even since the creation of the Earth Charter Initiative, several organizations, universities, and government bodies in Costa Rica have been cooperating with it on various projects. In October 2001, the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Education of Costa Rica declared the Earth Charter to be an initiative of public interest, and affirmed their intention to incorporate it in their respective ministry's activities.

As a result of this broad-based support and collaboration, a set of educational materials has been created and distributed among the teachers and students of Costa Rican schools. The materials, entitled *Educating for a sustainable lifestyle with the Earth Charter*, and consist of a teacher textbook, a student workbook, and a planner, have been developed for primary schools. Between 2005 and 2007, over 100,000 copies of these books were distributed together with teacher training workshops.

In 2008 and 2009, these books were included in a teacher training campaign, called the *Education for Sustainable Development Regional Course*, organized by a coalition of governmental and nongovernmental organizations and coordinated by the Costa Rican Ministry of Education and the *Peace with Nature* initiative.

The Japanese Embassy in Costa Rica funded the design and reproduction of the materials, while the development of the content was an in-kind contribution of the Earth Charter Secretariat, the National University and its partner organizations.

These materials (two books and a planner, designed specifically for the Costa Rican curriculum), form a valuable set of didactic materials, providing important resources for the implementation of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.



Area of interest: Education

Action: Creation of primary education materials on sustainable development

Outcome: 35.000 teacher textbooks and student workbooks used by 100.000 students

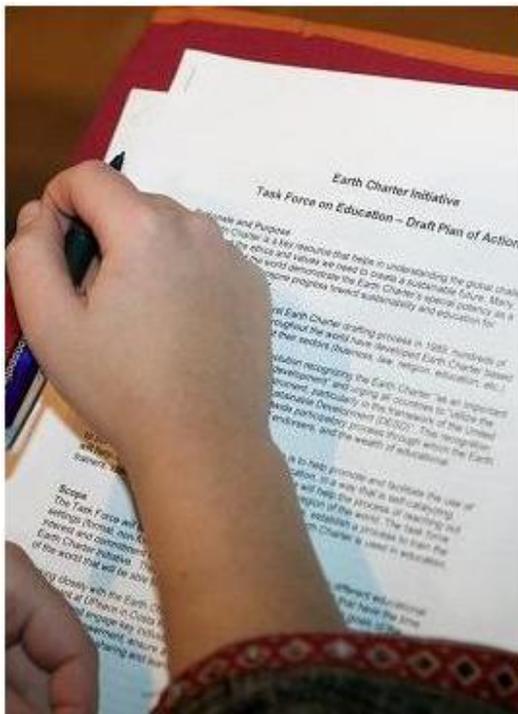
Further information: <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/invent/details.php?id=842>

Earth Charter Resources and Virtual Library

Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.

- Principle 8

The sixteen Principles of the Earth Charter, formulated through a decade-long global dialogue between thousands of participants, serve as an excellent ethical basis on which to guide decision-makers in their pursuit of sustainability. Still, at the implementation level, many practical tools might be required to fulfill Earth Charter's vision of a sustainable, equitable, and peaceful future.



For this reason, the Earth Charter International Secretariat is constantly encouraging and supervising the creation of materials to be used in transferring the principles of the Charter into action. The Earth Charter Virtual Library offers free access to numerous resources, addressing the varied spheres of sustainable development, and aiming at a wide range of stakeholders.

Offering essays on spirituality and the Earth Charter, resources on education and local communities, and EC Assess tools for measuring ethical commitment in business, the Virtual Library seeks to address all of the Earth Charter Principles in a practical way.

Among the resources available in the Virtual Library are: an Earth Charter Teacher's Guidebook (available in over 10 languages), an Earth Charter music album with 12 songs for the use of teachers of primary schools (available in English and Spanish), and an Earth Charter bibliography. Moreover, with the completion of the new Earth Charter Center in 2011, the Charter's role of serving

as a sustainability education hub is bound to increase, leading to even more output of high quality materials related to sustainable development.

Area of interest: Education

Action: Tools for practical implementation of the Earth Charter Principles

Outcome: A set of varied tools useful in all sectors

Further information: <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Resources.html>

Earth Charter used as a reference in a conflict between India and the Netherlands

Implement comprehensive strategies to prevent violent conflicts and use collaborative problem solving to manage and resolve environmental conflicts and other disputes.

- Principle 16b

On 6 December 2007, the Dutch denim brand G-Star company publicly announced that it had pulled out of its long-term relationship with the Indian/Italian jeans manufacturer and supplier Fibres & Fabrics International. This meant that over 20,000 people would lose their source of income.

The constitution of India guarantees the freedom of speech and the freedom of association. The Indian Trade Union Law functions adequately: unions represent employees in labour issues.

Since laws are mainly organized within state-based systems, commonly resulting in different legal standards, it is difficult to solve these conflicts by means of legal standards only. Given this very delicate case of conflicting interests between companies and the governments of India and The Netherlands, between mid December 2007 and the end of January 2008, Ruud Lubbers and Ashok Khosla were invited to act as mediators of this conflict and the Earth Charter was used as a reference and instrument against which to measure decisions.

The negotiations achieved good outcomes and the Earth Charter was strengthened as a soft law instrument.



Ashok Khosla



Ruud Lubbers

Area of interest: Government, International relations

Action: Earth Charter used in conflict resolution

Outcome: Successful conflict mitigation and the increase in Earth Charter's role as a soft-law document

Further information: <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/92/1/ECh-used-as-a-reference-in-a-conflict-between-India-and-The-Netherlands/Page1.html>