

‘Cultivating Good Water’ with the Earth Charter

Itaipu Hydroelectric Power Plant, BRAZIL

Background

The Itaipu Hydroelectric Power Plant, one of the largest power generators in the world, is a bi-national public-sector enterprise jointly developed by the governments of Brazil and Paraguay. Itaipu is committed to a high level of social engagement in the Cuenca of Paraná region, where it operates.

Itaipu has used the Earth Charter as a valuable ethical framework, an educational tool, and as the common thread linking the 70 or more individual projects that are part of its socio-environmental programme *Cultivando Agua Buena (Cultivating Good Water)*, which began in 2003, under the leadership of Nelton Friedrich.

ITAIPU's production of the year 2000 was responsible for the supply of 95% of the electric power consumed in Paraguay and 24% of the total demand in the Brazilian market.

Source: ITAIPU website

Aim

The aim of the *Cultivating Good Water* programme is to help establish conditions to guide socio-environmental action related to the preservation of natural resources in the Cuenca of Paraná, and thereby to improve the quality of people's lives in the region.

Participants

To date, 29 municipalities, 200 NGOs and 370 schools representing over 88,000 students have

been involved in Itaipu's educational work with the Earth Charter.

Timeframe

The project, *Cultivating Good Water*, began in 2003 and was ongoing at the time the case was written in 2005.

Description

The foundation for all actions and projects of the programme is based upon three documents: the Millennium Development Goals, Agenda 21, and especially the Earth Charter. Itaipu is using the Earth Charter as an ethical framework for all of its individual projects and as an educational instrument for selected ones.



Cultivating good water publication

Specifically, the Earth Charter is presented in:

- Conferences of the *Cultivating Good Water* Programme
- Informative and educational materials
- Environmental education actions
- Newspaper articles and media communications
- Discussions and actions to improve socio-economic conditions in the region

In September 2004, the Earth Charter received honourable mention during the 2nd *Cultivating Good Water* Encounter. The event had the participation of more than 2,200 people from the area: politicians, educators, fishermen, small agriculturists, and Indians among others. The ceremony became news in the *Cultivating Good Water* newspaper, January edition, with 20,000 copies including the Earth Charter contents in full.

Itaipu holds numerous training projects with local governments, schools and in communities. To facilitate that, Itaipu has printed over 6,000 copies of the Earth Charter in Portuguese in its efforts to disseminate the document. It has also included the Charter in a number of other publications, including its newsletter. Itaipu sponsored the production of 1,500 videos, 1,000 posters, and 25,000 brochures; it is also helping diffuse the Earth Charter via its web-page.



Cover of Earth Charter Booklet

Funding

The projects are staffed by more than 150 people from Itaipu and account for a budget of US\$ 7.5 million annually.

“Just as we cultivate earth to have the good fruits of our labour, it is necessary to cultivate water, so that it maintains its quality and quantity for everyone, since everyone depends on her.”

*Jorge Samek, Direction General of
ITAIPU, Brazil*

Results

Some results directly related with the actions of the programme include:

- Enhanced awareness in the region of the values on principles for sustainable development
- The formation of an Environmental Educational Network involving 29 municipal districts and 370 schools
- The establishment of a faculty discussion group on the Earth Charter in the Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Parana (West Paraná State University)
- In early 2004, Itaipu published an Environmental Education guide, titled: *EARTH CHARTER – Values and Principles for a Sustainable Future*.

Conclusion

Itaipu presents a unique example of a public bi-national enterprise investing heavily in socio-environmental actions in its region of operation. Given the diversity in the scope of its projects, the Earth Charter allows Itaipu to have a strong philosophical foundation for its work. According to Friedrich, “The ethical framework of the Earth

Charter provides a counterbalance to the prevalent over time.”
utilitarian culture that is becoming more

This case was directly drawn from the following sources:

- <http://www.itaipu.gov.br/> consulted September 29, 2005
- Earth Charter Award application by Nelton Freidrich, Programme Director.
- Earth Charter Annual Report 2004