

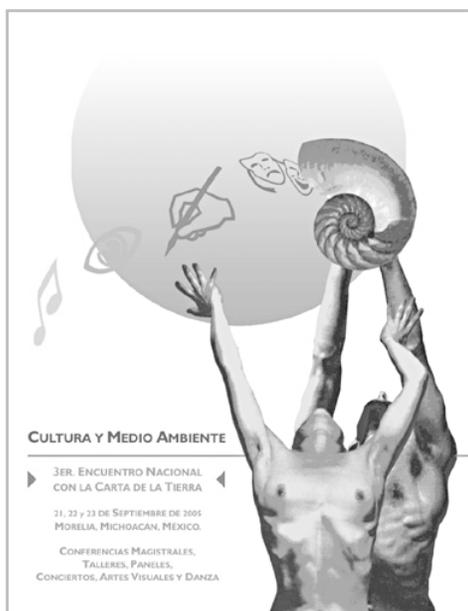
## Education for Sustainable Living with the Earth Charter

### *National Earth Charter Committee, MEXICO*

#### Background

The President of Mexico, Vicente Fox Quesada, during his address at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, expressed his commitment to the Earth Charter and announced that *“Mexico supports and shall make efforts to disseminate the Earth Charter, which contains principles and values that are fundamental to sustainable development.”*

Furthermore, one of the important outcomes of the WSSD was the launching of official partnerships. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), along with several other countries and non-governmental agencies joined the partnership, *Educating for Sustainable Living with the Earth Charter*.



*Poster of 3rd National Mexican encounter*

#### Aim

The goal of this project in Mexico has been to provide community leaders and the communities themselves with information and training concerning the fundamental principles of sustainable development and how to blend these into decision-making processes. The Earth Charter is being used as a primary teaching instrument in this process.

#### Partners

A National Committee for the Earth Charter was created especially for implementing this partnership. It is made up of representatives from the five Regional Councils for Sustainable Development, the National Council, the Centre for Education and Training on Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Public Education, and interested non-governmental organizations. To strengthen local work, there are focal points by state, municipality, and educational institutions, among others.

#### Timeframe

The project began in 2002 and was ongoing in 2005, when this case was written.

#### Description

Given the commitment of the above mentioned partnership, a National Strategy for disseminating and internalizing the principles and values contained in the Earth Charter was

developed. An Earth Charter National Secretariat was set up inside the Consultative Ecological State Council for Michoacán. The Secretariat is in charge of supporting the agencies and organizations that need assistance in the dissemination of the Earth Charter, recording all the activities developed in Mexico where the Earth Charter is used and promoted, as well as making available the mechanisms for implementation, follow up, and evaluation. The project has been organized keeping in mind the following functions: communication, information and education. Below are selected important processes that have been undertaken.

- An education and training programme has been designed using experiential learning workshops conducive to internalizing the principles and values of the Earth Charter.
- National meetings for educators have been held every two years to stimulate reflection on ethical aspects of sustainable development, taking advantage of experiences and work developed in the country.
- The Ministry of Education's *Citizenship Training and Ethics* programme has been strengthened using the contents of the Earth Charter.
- Evaluation of Mexico's performance on the basis of the four fundamental axes of the Earth Charter is being carried out. The evaluation provides indicators to establish plans for re-orienting and improving the living conditions of the Mexican people.

To respond to the needs of local governments, a project called "Model of the Consistent Pair – Agenda 21 and Earth Charter" has been designed especially for local governments and is taking place in the State of Michoacán. It uses Agenda 21 as an action plan and the Earth Charter as an inspirational tool to motivate, and raise awareness and commitment of the citizens and local government staff. The model consists of four workshops, each one two-



*Earth Charter meeting in Apatzigan, Mexico*

days long involving 200-300 participants. The first of these workshops is dedicated to the Earth Charter and the other three to elaborating a Local Agenda 21. It also includes the process of evaluating the projects to ensure that they follow Earth Charter principles and are sustainable. The cities of Morelia, Cotija, and Aguacana (in the state of Michoacán) have gone through the training process. Two more cities will be going through the process in late 2005.

### Funding

The State of Michoacán provides the office space and staff to coordinate the National Secretariat of the Earth Charter. The Ministry of Environment, among others, has funded the printing of brochures and the Earth Charter adaptation for children and youth.

### Results

The Earth Charter has been presented via conferences and workshops in 25 out of 31 states in Mexico. Between 2003 and 2005, 27 conferences were offered with a total of 5,400 participants. In addition, 43 workshops involving over 4,000 participants were held. Over 75,000 general brochures, 40,000 youth



*Adaptation for children*

adaptations and 10,000 children's adaptations were produced locally with the financial support of SEMARNAT. Sixteen municipalities, 23 educational institutions, three private institutions and over 4,000 individuals have endorsed the Earth Charter in Mexico.

Promoting citizen participation is, and always will be, a necessary factor for achieving objectives aimed at the conservation of the environment and better living standards for the population. For this reason, participation has become one of the fundamental pillars in conducting the dissemination process of the Earth Charter in Mexico. As evidenced by the above numbers, it is worth stating that the Earth Charter is a document highly accepted by the Mexican population.

The Earth Charter National Secretariat has intensified its activities in different institutions nationwide. This has brought about an increase in the number of population sectors that have joined this important project.

One notable example is the commitment taken on by the Michoacán Institute for Educational Sciences, that created a Master's degree in Sustainable Development with the Earth Charter. It is worth underscoring that this professional degree gave rise to close to 30 work projects with the Earth Charter.

### Conclusion

In Mexico, the project *Educating for a Sustainable Living with the Earth Charter* has been successful due to the support from federal government and the state of Michoacan. It marked the beginning and inclusion of a new paradigm based on the principles of sustainability that, in the medium and long term, will make plausible a new Mexican lifestyle model. It has brought sustainable development principles to the attention and understanding of many local governments.

The National Committee plans to continue to help implement the vision of the Earth Charter, and build a curricular paradigm so that schools may be able to assist, in helping the new generation move towards a more sustainable lifestyle. It hopes to expand the project with local governments to all states in Mexico.

*This case was directly drawn from the following sources:*

- Earth Charter Award by Mateo Castillo
- Country Report – The Earth Charter in Mexico 2003-2005, Consejo Estatal de Ecología