

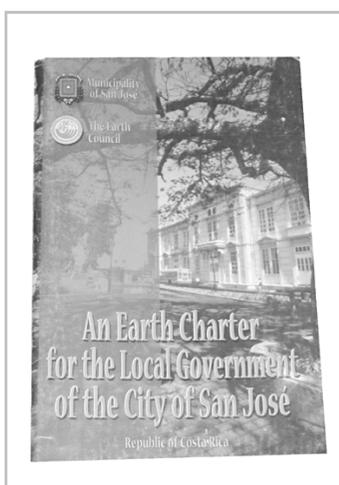
## Training Municipal Workers with the Earth Charter

### *City of San José, COSTA RICA*

#### **Background**

In early 1999, two municipal representatives from San José requested support from the Earth Council to assist the City in implementing a project aimed at incorporating the principles of sustainable development and Agenda 21 into San José's programs and activities.

Following a joint study by the district council of San José to identify key issues, a representative group of municipal executives attended an initial workshop to discuss sustainable development and to define objectives for a pilot programme. The outcomes of this effort resulted in a project entitled '*The Municipality of San José Toward Sustainable Development*' involving training workshops based on the Earth Charter.



*Publication of process by  
city of San Jose*

#### **Aim**

The aim of the workshops was to take the municipal workers of San José through a participatory training process in which they would come to an understanding of the meaning of sustainable development. The workshops would also give them space to identify the ethical principles that they needed to embrace in order to ensure a better quality of life for both present and future residents of the municipality. A central output was for municipal workers to create an Earth Charter specifically for the City of San José that would outline common values to be adopted by all staff members.

#### **Participants**

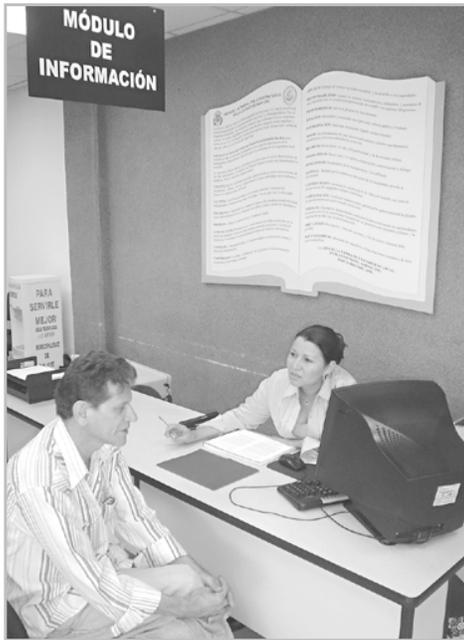
This project engaged some 1800 employees of San José's municipality (involving police, administration, sanitation, infrastructure, and health departments) – this represented about 80% of the total municipal workforce.

#### **Timeframe**

The project was executed by the City of San José over a period of 6 months during the year 1999-2000.

#### **Description**

The project consisted of a series of 15 training sessions and workshops delivered to the staff of the Municipality of San José. During these workshops, the participants were trained in



*The Earth Charter of the local government of the city of San Jose*

sustainable development issues, the meaning of the principles of the Earth Charter, and their application within public institutions. A comparative analysis of the Municipality policies against the values and principles of the Earth Charter demonstrated considerable gaps between the two. The democratic nature of the project allowed the municipal workers involved to not only internalize the values of the Earth Charter personally but also to incorporate them into the strategic planning process of the city.

Additionally, an exercise was carried out for participants to express their opinions on what priority values should guide the work of the city government in order to move towards more sustainable practices. Through multiple participatory processes, the participants in the workshops asserted the commitment of San José to implement a strategy for sustainable development within all of its activities. They agreed that, in order to achieve this goal, it was

essential to promote a change of attitude and mentality among all of the municipal staff members. The staff therefore chose a collective set of values for all members of the Municipality. San José municipal officers worked to incorporate this set of values into the document '*An Earth Charter for the Local Government of San José*'.

## Funding

The funding for the project was budgeted for by the City of San José.

## Results

In the year 2000, the Mayor of San José convened a public meeting to present the results of this Earth Charter process, the Municipality of San José's local version of the Earth Charter, and their commitments to its implementation. A poster of the Earth Charter of San José with its principles was inaugurated at the entrance to the Municipality main public building. The outcomes and future plans of this programme were documented in a publication entitled *The Municipal Community En-route to Sustainable Development*.

Through these training workshops, nearly 80% of municipal staff members acquired understanding of the meaning of sustainable development. Inspired by the Earth Charter and the dialogue among the staff, a code of ethical behaviour based upon twenty-one desirable virtues was adopted by seminar participants in mid-1999. Among the values that received most support to be incorporated into a new ethical code are: moral awareness, courage, tolerance, discipline, responsibility, loyalty and honesty. Naturally, the success of the project depended upon perseverance as well as continued training and orientation.

## **Conclusion**

The project helped to generate a sense of commitment and responsibility among staff in the context of their duties as employees of the city of San José. Ethical values aiming at promoting better conditions for all were

identified and the city's own version of the Earth Charter was elaborated to serve as a guide to its operations. The training workshops provided municipal workers with the theoretical and ethical foundation that they need in order to contribute to the endeavour of building a sustainable city.

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

- *An Earth Charter for the Local Government of the City of San José*. Publication of the Municipality of San José , Costa Rica, 1999/2000