



## **SUMMARY OF THE 2009 SUSTAINABILITY PRIZE AWARD CONFERED TO 2 GRADUATES FROM EARTH UNIVERSITY**

### **TITLE OF THE PROJECT**

Building a network of Communities to strengthen their efforts towards sustainable management of solid waste.

### **AUTHORS**

Valodia Kruskaya Flores Rugama and Keylin Soto Hernández

### **ADVISERS FROM EARTH UNIVERSITY**

Julieta Mazzola, M.Sc. and Jane Yeomans, Ph.D.

### **SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT**

This project focused on strengthening a network of communities in their efforts towards sustainable management of solid waste. The initiative of integrating the communities of El Ceibo, Palacio, Campo Dos, and Monte Rey, in the county of Pococí, Costa Rica, into a network developed from the interest of the community members in finding appropriate methods for solid waste management and environmental protection. This project was conducted in conjunction with EARTH University, MINAET (Ministry of Environment, Energy, and Telecommunications), and 25 active members from the communities, through meetings, workshops, and complementary activities. In two of these workshops, the main actors developed new ideas and techniques to extend the useful life, and generate new potential uses of, solid waste. The concepts of organization and leadership were reinforced in a third workshop, and strengthened through theoretical and practical approaches. One of the final results of the project was the projection of this community network at the national level with the crowning of the "ecological princess". The work in organization and community leadership promoted the strengthening of social capital, which was important for the development and completion of this project. The members of the community highlighted the following as key elements in the success of the network: communication capacity, tolerance, respect, and teamwork. The experiences in this project can be applied as a model for community organization to resolve any issue of concern in a rural community.

### **SUMMARY OF THE SELECTION PROCESS**

The five core principles of sustainability can be expressed in relation to five fundamental domains: the material domain, the economic domain, the domain of life, the social domain, and the spiritual domain. All graduation projects of the students in the 2009 graduating class were reviewed to determine which of the projects considered at least three of the five principles in the execution of their work. Of the 70 projects reviewed, seven, or 10 % met the criteria to be considered semi-finalists for the prize.

A committee of three professors read each of the seven projects and based on the criteria of inclusion of five core principles in the execution of the work, each professor ranked the seven

projects. When the committee met, they were able to agree on two final finalists. The projects were reread and each committee member voted for the project they considered to be worthy of the sustainability prize.

Because two students conducted the project, each high school of these students received \$1000 and each student received \$4000. The two prize recipients decided to donate \$500 of their prize money to the continuation of the project in the same communities, with the continuing support of MINAET. A representative of the Ministry and other community members have continued the work with this network of communities and with the money from the sustainability prize has supported the activities for the crowning of the “ecological princess”, including the donation a bicycle for the winning princess.



**Manuel E. Cerrato**  
Dean of Academic Affairs



EARTH University, Costa Rica  
[mcerrato@earth.ac.cr](mailto:mcerrato@earth.ac.cr)  
[www.earth.ac.cr](http://www.earth.ac.cr)  
Tel +506 2713-0000