Citizens in Brazil Make Decisions About Energy Challenge

The Tocantins State, the newest of Brazil's states, came into existence fifteen years ago and is the home to thirteen planned hydropower projects under the Brazilian federal government's national energy plan. The project will affect the state economy based largely on agriculture and cattle ranching, with environmental impact on the lives of indigenous peoples and small-scale farmers living within its boundaries. Environmental consequences and economic potential must be evaluated as plans are put into place.



Photo: Ecologica Institute/Maria Tereza Rodriquez

Ricardo Cerqueira leads community multipliers training in Taquaru'u district.

"TEEP has completely changed the relationship between the community and the developers. Before, the developers did as they pleased. Now we have power in our hands."

- Course Participant

Results

Initiative

The Tocantins Energy, Education and Participation Program (TEEP), funded by USAID, informs stakeholders of the impacts and benefits of hydropower project development, the rights of interested and affected persons under Brazilian law, and facilitates the participation of communities affected by hydropower development in the decision making process.

Town-hall meetings were held to invite stakeholders - citizens of impacted municipalities, civil society organizations, government offices, and private sector representatives - to be trained as "multipliers". Multipliers, chosen for their demonstrated leadership qualities, share what they learn about the hydropower projects with the others in the community.

Multipliers are trained in the politics of energy, environmental education and legislation, water resources management, citizenship, community opportunities, and negotiation skills.

New community networks, dedicated to active and constructive participation in the hydropower project planning stages, were formed. Citizens learned about the need for energy, and the benefits and consequences of increased access to energy. They also gained knowledge and skills to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. Through the TEEP program, civic organization and participation were fostered. Program alumni, using their new skills and the social momentum created by TEEP, actively participated in a community summit to plan the management of a new lake that was created by the Lajeado dam.

For more information, please visit www.usaid.gov.

