

Brazil: Energy, Education and Participation

Activity: Tocantins Energy, Education and Participation, Brazil
 Program Area: Energy Sector Governance
 Implementer: Institute of International Education
 Geographic Focus: Latin America
 Countries: Brazil
 Duration: July 2001 – September 2003



Background

Tocantins State came into existence 14 years ago, and is the newest of Brazil's states. It is also home to a significant number of planned hydroelectric power projects under the federal government's national energy plan. Its economy is largely agricultural and a number of indigenous peoples live within its boundaries. The population of Tocantins was unprepared to deal with the great number of environmental, social and economic changes that were triggered by the development of the hydropower projects. The Tocantins Energy, Education and Participation project was initiated to help the local population manage with

these changes and provide them with the tools to interact with the government and the utilities and to have a voice in determining how these projects would be carried out, especially the environmental protection activities.

Approach

This project defines and encourages the interaction between the electric utilities, government agencies and the communities that will be affected by new hydroelectric plants (HEPs). The training directly involves local community members and explains their rights under existing legislation. The program relied on a series of training workshops for "multipliers" of various groups who, with related training materials, disseminated this knowledge throughout their communities. With this newly gained capacity, the population will be better able to take an active part in the planning processes and determine the manner in which HEPs are implemented. This level of involvement is essential to the planning and implementation of the social, environmental and economic measures designed to mitigate the impact of the HEPs.

Objectives

The objectives of the project are to inform the population of the impacts and benefits of hydropower project development, the rights of the interested and affected persons under Brazilian law and to facilitate the participation of communities affected by hydropower development in the decision making process.

Stakeholders include citizens of impacted municipalities, civil society organizations (e.g. Tocantins NGO Forum; National Bar Association) government (e.g. the state and national environmental agencies, the state public attorney, state department of education, national Indian agency), as well as private sector companies involved with hydroelectric development.

Activities

Eight training sessions were presented throughout the region including two training sessions for multipliers in areas populated by the indigenous peoples of Brazil. Seventeen municipalities affected by new hydroelectric dam construction were added to the program and the Federal Water Agency signed an agreement with Ecologica and helped develop an additional training module on water resources.

Results

350 non-indigenous and 30 indigenous “multipliers” were trained. Over 6,000 pieces of literature including the formal training materials have been distributed throughout Tocantins to inform people of their rights and how to get involved in the planning of the hydroelectric plants in their state.

Project Partners

- Ecologica Institute
- The National Water Agency
- The Tocantins State Public Ministry The Brazilian Federal Environmental Agency
- The Tocantins State Environmental Agency

Development Impact

Twenty-four (24) communities in the areas affected by hydroelectric plant development were trained to take part in the planning and development of these plants. Their response was overwhelmingly positive. Some of the outcomes were as follows:



Training session that informs attendees of their rights and how to get involved in the planning of the hydroelectric plants in their state.



The community of Palmeiras analyzed the RIMA (environmental impact study) and found discrepancies, which they reported to the State Prosecutors Office.

The community of Filadélfia held a public meeting with the developer and the city council and asked for clarification of the work that was planned.

The communities of Aguiarnópolis, Darcinópolis and Palmeiras planned a regional event about hydropower development to be presented in the city of Darcinópolis.

The community of Caçu formed a committee of TEEP participants with the support of the Municipal City Hall and the City Council to analyze hydroelectric development and make recommendations.

The State Secretary of Education distributed TEEP training material through the Department of Educations' existing network. The materials are to be used for environmental education in all the schools of the state. IBAMA replicated the TEEP methodology in the cities of Araguaína and Babaçulândia.

Representatives of the communities to be impacted by the Estreito HEP, were taken by the developer of the HEP to visit another HEP that was constructed by the same company to show the representatives how the work in that locality was carried out with respect to the resettlement of the people.

Community leaders of Ipueiras agreed that they are much better prepared to negotiate with the private consortium than they were previously. The community has already been affected by the construction of one dam, and will be further affected by another. With increased knowledge came a sense of increased power and a confidence that the community could positively influence their own future.

The Governor of the state, Mr. José Wilson Siqueira Campos, the vice president of the Rede Group (the hydropower consortium that is building most of the new dams); the director of Celtins (the local electric utility); the head of the Office of the State's Attorney, Dr. Jacqueline Adorno; Dr. Luciano Ayres, a member of the Brazilian National Council of Lawyers, the Secretary of the NGO Forum, and the State Secretary of Education, Ms. Maria Auziliadora Seabra all have great praise for the program. According to Dr. Adorno, the main problem with hydropower development for local communities has been the unevenness of the playing field when negotiating resettlement and compensation issues. The educational level of the state as a whole is very low; therefore, she believed that the TEEP program served a very valuable purpose in raising the educational level of the local population and further leveling the playing field.



Lessons Learned

Timeliness is critical; training needs to be provided early enough for communities to affect decisions about HEPs.

Matching support by Federal, State and local agencies could have helped extend

the training to more communities and provided more training materials.

Grassroots support can have a dramatically positive impact on HEP development in remote states.

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