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# Best Practices Database

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## Ecocitizen program, Rio de Janeiro Brazil

Best Practice

New for 2002

### Categories:

#### Production and Consumption Patterns:

- consumer awareness
- energy efficiency
- producer responsibility
- production/consumption cycles
- resource conservation
- waste reuse and recycling
- water use and consumption

#### Environmental Management:

- ecological sustainability
- environmental health
- environmental remediation
- environmentally sound technologies
- incentives for sound management
- monitoring and control
- pollution reduction
- resource management
- urban greening

#### Civic Engagement and Cultural Vitality:

- civic education
- community participation
- expression and animation
- social and cultural vitality
- the arts

**Level of Activity:** Provincial/State

**Ecosystem:** Tropical/Sub-Tropical

### Summary

The Ecocitizen program was first implemented in 1997, in Macae City, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It was institutionalized as NGO promoting environmental and contemporary cultural studies in 1999. It's main goal was the extension of its work to other locations. Implementation is undertaken through population's participation, education and mobilization of the society, and this has lead to the improvement of environment quality and the quality of life of the population.

Through the educational and systematic actions development, our staff works with several social sectors, working continuously to change people's awareness to help them understand more the concept of citizen responsibility, respect, cleanness, and city preservation. The program follows the Agenda 21

principles, taking into account other spheres of integration including the knowledge of the local physical environment, education, and citizen participation; education and information, which should help make citizens aware of the complexity of the urban-social- environmental system.

Hence, education and information must help the citizens to identify as soon as possible their local areas, and to understand environmental management programs and the conditions of urban life, citizen participation, where the community is expected to participate in the management of urban-social-environmental system. The achieved results are visible in the Macae landscape, and it shows the populations' participation on the program actions and proposal.

## **Narrative**

### **SITUATION BEFORE THE INITIATIVE BEGAN**

In 1980, the Petrobras was established in Macae city that produces 80% of the national oil. As a result, there were serious impacts on the urban landscape and the lives of the inhabitants. The quiet Tourist City had experienced an unequal growth, which led to environmental damage. The city did not have any policies to handle this situation.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES**

The priorities were defined through discussion of people' needs. This was evidenced through interviews, questionnaires offered to all society sectors and through conferences and debates held in schools, associations and in the City Hall.

The priorities are: to educate the public on urban cleaning mechanisms and to promote better relationship between people and the environment, develop ecological population awareness, relate income to a better quality of life and a better preserved environment, and promote social inclusion through environmental education.

### **FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES**

Some of the objectives were to disseminate information on cleaning to assist change the habits of the people, promote creativity to involve the citizens in constant debate related to environmental preservation and urban cleaning, make a contribution to the tourism development, stimulate the sustainability of culture. In addition, there was education regarding health (food consumption, skin cancer prevention and unwanted pregnancy prevention). Also the objectives include to promote the citizens' respect for the city and educate them regarding responsible consumption and encourage them to take autonomous initiatives, develop peoples' desire to live in a clean and a healthy place, to capacitate, inform and valorize the working classes as garbage collectors, papers pickers, fisherman. Finally, attain a direct relation between the population and local authorities, education and social mobilization. Educational materials are produced and distributed to the population.

### **MOBILISATION OF RESOURCES**

The resource mobilization was realized through convincing the partners. The program action results effected strong partnerships. The annual budget is defined with the prefecture that pays the professional workers and part of the campaigns and events. Other resource mobilization comes from training and transfers methods, which finances educational material acquisition and distribution. Eventually partners provide physical spaces and equipment.

Schools, churches and organizations volunteer to host campaigns and other events. The technical support comes from local and international universities. City secretary eventually provides transportation, food, office and consumption materials. The media and the cooperatives disseminate information regarding our actions. Our commitment is to disseminate information regarding the

partners' name in the educational materials we use.

To make our work possible we need lasting partners, which are formed by companies and public institutions that collaborate with the Ecocitizen program, showing interest in environment preservation and collaborate with the community health, doing their part of the job to create a fair and a better society.

## PROCESS

Brazil is a third world country where the majority of the population doesn't know it's own rights and duties. A large part of the population has bad habits and does not keep the city clean. They consider it their right to make the environment dirty without thinking of the consequences.

There are no effective actions to solve this issue. There are courses, speeches and isolated actions. There isn't any environmental education investment. Macae is located 182 km from Rio de Janeiro City, and it has 40 km of coast, it has several ecosystems, beaches, Atlantic forest, solvent soils and mountains. Between 1980 and 2000 there was a big population growth from 40,000 to 132,000 inhabitants with a daily mobility of 35,000 workers coming to Macae from near by towns. These workers go to work on the Petrobras and other petroleum industries.

These scores of changes impacted adversely and created more urban problems. The volume of garbage increased tremendously and to keep the city clean was a real challenge. Searching for solutions the Mayor of Macae Sylvio Lopes invited the Eco-citizen Program to work in Macae with new proposals and dealing with themes as such as "quality of life" and "people participation". Action strategies were created to sensitize the citizens, making them notice that their attitudes can make the place better or worse. With the objective to involve a bigger part of the population, partners and the media showed that beyond formal education, different language resources can be educational instruments to attract all citizen. Through a specific questionnaire, which is given to several sectors of the community, the priorities and actions, and needs were demonstrated.

The small staff and scarce resources made us search for alternative solutions and partners to mobilize people. The utilization of art was used as an educational tool, through presentations that demonstrate the critical situation of the city. The program work group goes to the streets and gives people sticks, plastic bags, green stamps and certificates as an educational tool, which is complementary. The material is written in Braille to assist the blind and they too can participate in events. The program is presented in schools, home visits, public places, taxis, gas stations, markets, churches, associations, banks, industries, and beaches. The objective is to make the city as clean as possible and bring to people's attention the consequences of their action regarding the environment.

## RESULTS:

After the Ecocitizen implementation:

- The garbage thrown on the main streets decreased by 4 tons per day;
- Utilization of the public garbage containers increased by 70%;
- Correct packing of domestic/ commercial garbage on the streets increased by 70%;
- Garbage collectors' accidents decreased by 87%;
- Relationship between bosses /garbage collectors/ community is improved;
- Absenteeism by garbage collectors decreased by 82%;
- The garbage collectors resistance to use uniforms correctly decreased by 85%;
- The recyclable material collectors monthly salary increased by 70% after the ACATA creation;
- 86% of Macae society knows the Eco-citizen Program;
- 75% of the garbage collectors started to deal with their own reality in a better way;
- 51% of the garbage collectors said that the population started to respect the day and the time of the garbage collection.
- 15% of the fishermen used sun protection;

- The time spent per day on the collection decreased by an hour, that represents a saving of US\$30,000/year to the city.
  - Helped the creation of the recycling industry by the Macae Prefecture which processed the material into bricks, which are donated to the needy people.
  - Improved aesthetic aspects in the city after the peoples' attitudes changed with the public gardens and squares, making all the community get in touch with the government through discussions that allow them to realize that they are responsible for the environmental and social advance.
  - The successful experiences are brought to everyone's knowledge and a lot of them are used by the local administration.
  - The garbage collectors income has increased by 40% a month because of the recyclable material used by the population.
- Macaé is not considered a "dirty" city anymore and that helps the tourism activities and also business and entertainment.

## SUSTAINABILITY

The excluded sector of society including fishermen, garbage collectors and the blind underwent social inclusion that was not possible because of lack of an environmental education. These categories of society feel more respect from the population and have become informed citizens. Other institutions began to be interested in helping them by using other initiatives. The fishermen awareness has contributed enormously to the water preservation. In most cases they don't throw their fishing nets in the river bay or on the coast rather they throw those nets in deep ocean. Fishermen have also been mobilized to stop dropping oil coming from their boats into the sea.

The flood and inundation that used to occur frequently in down town because of the garbage that the garbage collectors threw in the street holes has decreased a lot after the awareness creation programme. The beach maintenance has become possible after the island preservation action that shows the importance and how efficacious the environmental preservation actions are.

The garbage and the forest fires decreased a lot, which had been prevalent. Campaign against the waste culture represents 29% water and light saving for the public sector. The encouragement to re-utilize materials that usually are thrown in the garbage helps to decrease the consumption and as a result save natural resources.

Preservation campaigns to restore the cultural aspect and environmental beauty of the city have succeeded. Spontaneous partnerships have been accomplished and the support coming from different parts of the society has increased. The program sustainability is demonstrated in the large number of invitations from the community, and numerous proposals. The Program re-utilization on Sao Pedro da Aldeia-RJ and the other proposals coming from different places show the possible practical and economical use of the Program.

## LESSONS LEARNT

The experiences and information exchange and also the program implementation with SMLU- PBH (public urban cleaning department from Belo Horizonte City) have made possible common solutions to problems through social mobilization, communication, theatre and technical urban cleaning services. The periodic visits to Belo Horizonte City Department by the program group had helped their professional qualification and their own professional growth because of the information exchange. The Brazilian NGO association has also facilitated dialogue to overcome the financial and group organization difficulties, which are so ordinary in the third sector in Brazil.

The participation in the association meeting has been very useful for us because we get to know the new initiatives and the new ways of doing things.

The participation on the Mercocities meetings (cities from Mercosul economic bloc) had encouraged integration and identification of common activities. It can also be potential source for additional staff.

It has become possible to identify causes of social and environmental problems. A closer relationship with the technical cooperation developed has given us sustainability bases and makes it possible to direct project actions to an active economical, social, cultural and environmental practice.

## TRANSFERABILITY

The relationship with the media has been very positive because of the educational focus, which are encouraging people and entities to contact us for more information exchange. As an invitation from the Brazilian tourism company, in 1998 we showed our experience representing the southern Brazilian region to 5,300 representatives from other Brazilian cities. At that time our objective was to stimulate the initiatives in other places. The presentations in other cities of this region (11 cities) have helped sensitize the mayors to treat the environmental aspect with the right attitude. The Sao Pedro da Aldeia Prefecture started the Program in September 2001 and our staff helped replicate work methodology and also started training new local new work force yielding good results.

Right now other two cities on Rio de Janeiro State are studying the program implementation. The people from other cities helped transfer learned concepts to their own cities. Conferences, speeches and meetings are considered methods to transfer proposals and action plans and also encouraging new behaviors and values, divulging the initiatives.

After the program implementation NGOs, projects and other actions started to be implemented concerning environmental, social and cultural aspects. The action plans are defined through statistical data, information and observation that in most of the cases are possible because of the partners' help. This kind of help is given to the projects that already have a defined structure for data collection.

## Key Dates

September, 3 rd, 1997- Ecocitizen Project implementation with the Macae Prefecture as a partner.

March, 1999\_ Environmental and Contemporary Culture Studies Center creation

Year 2000- Ecocitizen Program proposals and actions extension: Ecocitizen Award, educative events.

September, 2001- Program implementation at Sao Pedro da Aldeia ?RJ-Brazil

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**Type of Organization:** Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

## Partners

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**Type of Partner Support:** Technical Support

## Financial Profile

Year	Total Budget (US\$)	Partner A Macae Prefecture (% of the budget)	Partner B-Commerce (% of the budget)	Partner C -Partner (% of the budget)
1997	25,000	60%	30%	10%
1998	35,000	70%	20%	10%
1999	45,000	70%	20%	10%
2000	50,000	70%	20%	10%
2001	51,000	60%	20%(Sao Pedro da Aldeia City)	10%

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