



## Association of Water Committees in the Southern Sector of Pico Bonito National Park (AJAASSPIB)

### partnership **SNAPSHOT**

Country: **Honduras**

Regions: **Yoro**

Medium: **Visual Arts and  
Performing Arts**

Partner Since: **2009**



**AJAASSPIB** is an alliance of 22 water councils in the Pico Bonito National Park in Honduras. Unlike other water-focused organizations, it does not concentrate solely on water treatment and home delivery. Instead, AJAASSPIB helps its member communities steward their watersheds from top to bottom, with the understanding that resource management requires an integrated approach to conservation, infrastructure, water treatment, education and community organizing.

### the **NEED**

Located on the northern Caribbean coast of Honduras, Pico Bonito National Park is comprised of 265,000 acres and includes 19 major watersheds that supply drinking water to more than 500,000 people in surrounding communities and nearby cities. The park's diverse landscapes include tropical broadleaf and pine forests teeming with biodiversity, and it is the source of more than 200 rivers and streams. In addition, there are over 200 communities living in poverty within the park's buffer zone. These communities struggle daily with water scarcity, lack of economic opportunities, substandard healthcare and food insecurity. Although both the water councils and conservation efforts are of vital importance to the lives and livelihoods of those in the Pico Bonito National Park, children and youth have not traditionally been involved in either.

### the ArtCorps **OBJECTIVE**

AJAASSPIB has partnered with ArtCorps in order to communicate more effectively with stakeholders of all ages, facilitate communication between the water councils and surrounding communities and cultivate youth leaders who will head up local conservation efforts in the future.

**Community-based Resource Management,  
Leadership Development**

### our **IMPACT**

- *Significantly increasing the interest and participation of youth and children in AJAASSPIB's projects*
- *Successfully utilizing visual arts to encourage youth and children to identify local problems and solutions*
- *Increasing community-wide awareness of environmental issues through public art and events*
- *Fostering dialogue and collaboration between two communities with a history of conflict*



# INITIATIVES

## Youth Engagement Community Murals

In order to increase participation in AJAASSPIB events, Maria facilitated the creation of murals in public spaces that illustrated local environmental issues, such as the importance of protecting local trees and rivers and keeping communities free of trash. While participation by children and youth had previously been low, during the mural paintings sometimes more than 30 children wanted to participate at once. In addition, the murals taught group members to collaborate.

## Community Clean-up Campaign

Maria and a team of 14 youth organized a campaign to clean up the town of Chorerra. The youth created flyers and posters inviting the community to collect their trash and place it on the curb on a specific day. On that day the youth went around town in a pickup truck and collected the trash. In addition to raising community awareness about trash disposal, this project allowed the youth to take a leadership role and gain recognition.

## Mini Workshops

In collaboration with AJAASSPIB, Maria encouraged youth in Santa Barbara and Chorrera to participate in a number of mini workshops. Participants learned artistic skills such as painting, theater, drawing and puppetry, while identifying local environmental issues and possible solutions.

## Self-Expression

Maria worked with youth in both Chorerra and Santa Barbara to develop short plays on topics of importance to them. One of the plays focused on the protection of animals and the environment. A second play focused on the impact of the migration and the death of a father of five children, which reflects a common reality in these communities.

## generational BRIDGE

[Before the collaboration with ArtCorps] young people and children had never been involved. ArtCorps is a bridge for bringing together youth and older members of the community.

**Carolina Zelaya, Director of AJAASSPIB**

## creative PROBLEM-SOLVING

The artists have opened new windows and have shown new ways and options to address the problems the communities face, enabling increased participation and leadership development, while generating institutional capacity.

**Carlos Cruz Estrada, President of AJAASSPIB**

## Youth Environmental Stewardship

Building on Maria's youth engagement efforts, Monica is training youth from two neighboring communities to be environmental stewards and leaders. These projects foster solidarity between El Nance and Tacualtuzte, two communities that have historically viewed each other as rivals for scarce resources.

## Murals for Clean Water

Monica worked with 15 youth, comprised of members from of each community, to design and paint two murals—one in each community—that raise awareness of natural resources and water. The youth collaborated with local water councils to design the environmental message.

## Screenprinting and Reforestation

As team-building strategy for solving water distribution disputes, Monica will use a silkscreening workshop to help the youth create a cohesive visual identity.

## Environmental Documentary

Together with the youth and members of the Tacualtuzte and El Nance water councils, Monica will produce a video about water and environmental issues for AJAASSPIB to use as an educational tool.

## Radio Show/Theater Production

As a culminating project, Monica, 10 youth and 5 members of the boards of Tacualtuzte and El Nance water councils will create a radio story. The project will bring current and future leaders together to share knowledge about environmental and social issues, while developing key communication skills.



## our ARTISTS

**2010:** Monica Gutierrez, a Canadian/Colombian multimedia artist, works in many disciplines, including animation, documentary film, lithography, silkscreen and painting. She will use her artistic skills and passion for community development to increase the participation of youth and children in AJAASSPIB's programs and work closely with the water councils' leadership to develop an education and outreach strategy that targets future leaders.

**2009:** Maria de Los Angeles Lagos Lagos, a visual artist from Chile, brought children and youth together to protect their water supply, secure clean water and promote conservation. She held numerous workshops to help young people express their concerns and possible solutions to environmental and community issues.

## community ACTION

[The public murals] demonstrated to the community that everyone was capable of doing something for the community...[The youth] earned the respect and trust of the adults.

**Maria de Los Angeles Lagos Lagos**  
ArtCorps Artist

