



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR TEACHERS AT THE GUATEMALAN CARIBBEAN AS A KEY FOR CONSERVATION IN RURAL AREAS



Guatemala, April 26th 2017

REPORT III: Beach Cleanup

Introduction. The environmental educational program for teachers at the Guatemalan Caribbean as a key for conservation in rural areas, is a project sponsored by Rufford Foundation. Its main goal is to create replicators of knowledge in rural schools of Izabal, promoting access of environmental education to children and youth, so that they can change their attitudes and perceptions about the environment.

On April 24th and 25th 2017, the third environmental workshop was held in Puerto Barrios and Livingston, Izabal. During these days, two beach cleanups were done in Punta de Palma and Queuche respectively. Through this activity, teachers learned to monitor trash using quadrants; furthermore, they collected 10 big bags of solid waste (plastic, Styrofoam, aluminum and glass), and also enjoyed the cleaned beach in an environment of nature connection.

One of the main concerns that popped up during this activity, is the big amount of plastic waste that is on the beaches. The sea is taking out great amounts of tiny pieces of plastic, which are difficult to collect and that can be easily ingested by different animal species such as gulls, crabs, mollusks, fish and domestic animals like cats and dogs.

As part of these workshops, perception interviews were made to the participants. This material will be edited as an environmental awareness video that will be uploaded on social media for its distribution.

All the activities in this report were done through inter institutional support between Semillas del Océano (Seeds of the Ocean), the National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP) and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), who lent their boats to transport people to the beaches and donated t-shirts, caps and gloves for the cleanup.

A special thanks to Rufford Foundation, who believe in this project and are giving financial support for these activities.

Puerto Barrios

On April 24th the first beach cleanup was held in Punta de Palma, Puerto Barrios, Izabal. 19 people attended this activity, whom after picking the trash up, learned how to classify and count it.



Figure 1. Teachers picking the trash up of Punta de Palma, Puerto Barrios (2017).

A total of 10 transects were done, where different types of waste were identified. Nevertheless, the dominant types were plastic and Styrofoam, both present as cups, plates, bottles and cutlery.



Figure 2. Photograph of the collected plastic on transect 5, Punta de Palma, Puerto Barrios (2017)

During the trash classification, teachers could realize of the impact that the plastic is having for our ecosystems, and how these plastic is a critical threat to animals that inhabit those ecosystems and for themselves too.



Figure 3. Collected trash classification, Punta de Palma, Puerto Barrios (2017)

To this activity attended the teachers that are part of the project, as well as institutions like the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), members of the municipality of Puerto Barrios, and personnel of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN).

Both, CONAP and MARN, lent their boats to transport the participants to the beach, as well as the captains' and auxiliaries' time. MARN donated t-shirts, caps and a pair of gloves to the participants. This was done through a campaign "Playas Limpias", which is a national-level-initiative that has being performed to aware people of pollution problems and to reduce solid wastes in Guatemala.



Figure 4. Teacher receives a t-shirt of “Playas Limpias”, Punta de Palma, Puerto Barrios (2017).



Figure 5. T-shirt and cap of “Playas Limpias”, Punta de Palma, Puerto Barrios (2017)

Livingston

On the 25th the same activity was held in the beach of Queueche, Livingston, Izabal. 12 people attended this activity, who did 33 quadrants of 1 m² to classify and count trash.



Figure 6. Teacher of Livingston classifying the trash on his quadrant, Queueche, Livingston (2017)

The most impressive thing of this beach cleanups is when you realize that all the plastic that we are using is coming to our oceans, and even worse, that this plastic has been fragmenting into thousands and thousands of little pieces that can be ingested by animals and cause great damages to the ecosystems.