

CEJS Fellowship Mid-Year Report

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This fellowship funded three weeks of fieldwork in Costa Rica to investigate specific programs working on environmental justice and poverty reduction. The key research questions are these: How is cross-sectoral collaboration between government, business, and civil society organizations working to achieve measurable outcomes of poverty reduction for environmental justice projects in Costa Rica? What are the potentially scalable and replicable lessons/impacts for other countries in relation to poverty reduction through environmental justice projects? How can the capabilities approach to poverty be applied to understand environmentally sustainable development projects?

Activities and progress to date:

In December 2014 we spent three weeks in Costa Rica conducting the fieldwork research. We interviewed 21 different people from a variety of different projects or agencies. The interviews included government officials such as Camilo Saldarriaga, of the Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social, and Yamileth Astorga, the director of the Instituto Nacional de Acueductos y Alcantarillados. We interviewed academic/research experts such as Pablo Sauma Fiat, professor at the National University of Costa Rica and director of its development institute, and Natalia Morales, an economist with the Estado de la Nación institute that gathers social statistics. We also conducted interviews and more extended project visits with a community in the highlands that has built an economy around eco-tourism and sustainable agriculture; several different community water projects; a multi-dimensional community support organization in a poor urban neighborhood; a cooperative that provides services including electricity, education and employment to a rural area; and an indigenous community working to provide sustainable livelihoods to its members. This is only a partial list of the interviews and project visits.

The objective of this fieldwork research was to gather data for the chapter on environmentally sustainable projects for poverty reduction for our book *Understanding Global Poverty: Causes and Solutions*. We have completed a draft of that chapter, and it is currently being taught by Cosgrove in her winter Global Poverty class.

Plans for the remainder of the year:

After the first “trial run” in Cosgrove’s class, we will do a further revision of the environmental chapter. In late spring we will approach publishers with the book manuscript, with the aim of the book coming out in 2016. We will continue to use this chapter to teach about the relationships between environmental conditions and poverty in coming years.