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SUMMER 2011

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## ELAW Pioneers: The Next Generation

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Samantha Atukunda with her father, Kenneth Kakuru, and sisters Tracy (left) and Rose.

The Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide celebrates 20 years of collaboration with the world's leading grassroots advocates. After two decades, we are now celebrating the arrival of the next generation of environmental leaders.

ELAW partner Kenneth Kakuru from Uganda founded Greenwatch. His daughter Samantha is now on staff. Raquel Gutierrez has dedicated her life to protecting Mexico's Lake Chapala. Her son Pedro has joined her organization. Harper Johnson, daughter of ELAW Executive Director Bern Johnson, is one of many young ELAW volunteers with a passion for protecting the planet.

**"My father has always told me to  
speak up for those who cannot  
speak for themselves."**

**Samatha Atukunda**

ELAW has built an international corps of environmental defenders – 300 strong in 70 countries. We now welcome Samantha, Pedro, Harper, and the many others who are carrying on the important task of building a sustainable future, for all the world's children.

### **Samatha Atukunda**

#### **What are the biggest environmental challenges facing Uganda?**

Our biggest challenges are land and forest degradation, non-compliance with environmental laws, and political interference. Our economy is agriculture based and population pressure has brought over-cultivation, soil erosion, and encroachment in areas such as wetlands. Over 90,000 hectares of Uganda's forest cover disappears every year. This and climate change aggravate an already challenging situation, especially for the rural poor. We are seeing landslides and floods.

Uganda has very good environmental laws, but we lack enforcement. Politicians tend to side with the electorate, promoting their own interests, not protecting and conserving the environment. There is a lack of political will as regards enforcement mechanisms.

#### **How has your dad influenced you?**

I am inspired by my father's passion for protecting and conserving our environment, and his public interest litigation. He always told me to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

#### **What are your plans for the future?**

I have a burning passion to leave the earth better than I found it, for my children and generations to come. Given the reality of climate change and environmental degradation, I know this is a huge challenge. I plan to be a dedicated advocate for the protection and conservation of the environment, especially through public interest litigation.

#### **What is your hope for Uganda?**

Uganda has very good environmental protection laws. I hope these laws do not just remain in the statutes, but are implemented and enforced. I hope to bring these laws to life. I hope that Uganda becomes conscious of the environment and dedicates itself to protection and conservation to promote sustainable development.

**Samantha Atukunda** is Research Assistant at Greenwatch. She received her law degree from Uganda Christian University and will soon embark on a masters in law (LL.M.) in environmental and natural resources law at the University of Oregon School of Law. At Greenwatch, Samantha drafts bylaws to empower communities to protect natural areas, conducts workshops to educate communities and government officials about environmental crimes, and provides training to law enforcement officials and the judiciary on environmental law. Samantha also conducts research on climate change, food security, and land rights, and shares her findings with the public.

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The Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW) helps communities speak out for clean air, clean water, and a healthy planet. We are a global alliance of attorneys, scientists and other advocates collaborating across borders to promote grassroots efforts to build a sustainable, just future.

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**Belize Trip Report****Grassroots Organizations Hold Promise**

By **Lauren Ice**

Belize is growing quickly. Its Mayan ruins, picturesque beaches, and proximity to the Mesoamerican reef attract tourists and long-term residents from around the world. This diverse population magnifies environmental and social issues facing local communities.

ELAW is strengthening Belize-based grassroots organizations, to nurture home grown efforts to protect the fragile beauty of this small island nation. I traveled to Belize in May to work one-one-one with staff at ELAW partner organizations. With ELAW's help, each group now has one full-time staff person, giving these organizations a strong community presence. I shared with them what I have learned managing ELAW's office in Eugene and was inspired by their work. The following is more about our partners and my visit.

**The Belize Institute of Environmental Law and Policy (BELPO)** was launched in 1995. Located in the capital city of Belmopan, BELPO helps citizens ensure that their nation's leaders are implementing and enforcing laws designed to protect communities and the environment. BELPO builds public awareness and helps people make their voices heard on environmental and public health issues. BELPO also aggregates and

evaluates Belize's existing and proposed legislation, and information about development projects, and makes this information accessible to the public.

There is a growing interest among Belize youth to get active in environmental protection. I worked with Amelita Knowles, BELPO's new Administrator, and showed her ways to use tech tools to engage the public and recruit young volunteers. Amelita is now working with her first group of volunteers. She is training them to give public presentations, distribute information, and be outspoken community leaders.

As tourism on the coast has risen, so has development. The **Placencia Citizens for Sustainable Development (PCSD)** and the **Ambergris Caye Citizens for Sustainable Development (ACCS)** have emerged in popular coastal towns to speak out against irresponsible development and offer sustainable alternatives.

Residents of Maya Beach, Seine Bight, and Placencia are all worried about rapid, unplanned, and unsustainable tourism development on the Placencia Peninsula. PCSD helped these communities get organized when a cruise operation announced plans to build a major port in their lagoon. The group was just a few hundred strong, but successful



**During my visit I learned that short-sighted developers fail to see what ELAW partners and community members see quite clearly: That without a healthy reef and rainforest, and without water resources for crops and recreation, tourism is impossible.**

Lauren Ice

the potentially devastating project. Now, PCSD is exposing other irresponsible and illegal developments and working with local leaders to demand that only sustainable projects be approved. Their work is preserving mangrove forests and empowering communities.

PCSD's Adrian Vernon wears many hats. He was born and raised in Placencia and his knowledge of the ecosystem is unrivaled. He splits his time between the office and the field, where he monitors activity in the lagoon and plants mangrove seedlings. Adrian is respected by the local community and helps publish *Roots and Reef*, a widely read newspaper about local threats to the environment and community solutions. I helped Adrian strategize on effective ways to split his limited time. We worked on electronic communication tools and other time-saving techniques to reach and mobilize residents.

ACCSD in San Pedro serves as a community watchdog, monitoring new developments and reporting irresponsible behavior. They are developing a master development plan that includes ways for developers to better protect the local environment and be held accountable to local communities. ACCSD is also working to expand the protected area in the Hol Chan Marine Reserve and recruiting local volunteers to monitor the transforming coastline.

I worked with Coqui Rodriguez, ACCSD's Administrator, and showed her organizational tools to help her better communicate with the island community. ACCSD has many supporters and is working to mobilize that support into action. With ELAW's help, they plan to make their organization more visible with a new website and messaging with simple steps that concerned residents can take to protect their island against unsustainable development. ACCSD hopes to use electronic communication tools to establish a new community monitoring program that will put more eyes in the field and empower the community to defend valuable resources.

BELPO, PCSD, and ACCSD are all part of the Coalition to Save our National Heritage, a national alliance that is challenging offshore oil drilling.

During my visit, I learned that short-sighted developers fail to see what ELAW partners and community members see quite clearly: That without a healthy reef and rainforest, and without water resources for crops and recreation, tourism is impossible. Belizeans welcome tourism – they rely on tourism – but tourism does not have to be destructive.

I was inspired by the organizations I worked with

and how they are realizing practical alternatives. Many thanks to the Summit Foundation and the Oak Foundation for supporting ELAW's work in Belize.

For more information, please visit our partners' websites: Belize Institute of Environmental Law and Policy ([www.belpo.org](http://www.belpo.org)), Placencia Citizens for Sustainable Development ([www.saveourpeninsula.org/](http://www.saveourpeninsula.org/)), and Ambergris Caye Citizens for Sustainable Development ([sites.google.com/site/accsdbze](http://sites.google.com/site/accsdbze)).



*Lauren Ice began work as ELAW Office Manager in 2008. She recently left to pursue a law degree at the University of Oregon School of Law. Before ELAW, she conducted field studies at Kimana Group Ranch in southern Kenya and received a B.A in environmental studies from Austin College. She was an Organizer, Senior Field Manager, and Program Assistant at the Texas Campaign for the Environment.*



# ELAW Fellowship Program

*For 20 years, the ELAW Fellowship Program has welcomed hundreds of grassroots advocates to Eugene for individually tailored opportunities to collaborate and build skills to better protect communities and the environment. This spring we hosted ELAW Fellows from Mexico and Slovakia, and this summer we are pleased to host our current ELAW Fellow from the Dominican Republic.*

## Mexico: Defensa Ambiental del Noroeste

### Fernando Ochoa Pineda & Maria Llano Blanco

Watching whales in the lagoons of Baja California is an unforgettable thrill. Fernando Ochoa Pineda and Maria Llano Blanco are deeply committed to protecting these fragile whale breeding grounds. Fernando and Maria both participated in ELAW Fellowships this spring, to collaborate on their work protecting the world's richest whale habitat and other natural wonders in Baja California threatened by bad development projects.

Fernando and Maria work for Defensa Ambiental del Noroeste (DAN), the highly respected legal arm of an integrated conservation effort that challenges short-sighted development plans, before they leave the drawing board. DAN and colleagues recently celebrated a victory for whaleshark feeding grounds in the Gulf of California that were threatened by plans for a marina and yacht club.

"Tourist development should fit with the landscape, respect laws and land use ordinances, integrate the best

interests of local communities, and respect the integrity and health of surrounding ecosystems," says Fernando.

Fernando and Maria worked closely with ELAW Staff Attorneys and Scientists and other local experts. Maria met with Andy Stahl, Executive Director of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics (FSEEE) and Doug Heiken, Conservation and Restoration Coordinator of Oregon Wild. Fernando also had the opportunity to observe a federal court hearing about reinforcing laws protecting forests.

At the end of his stay, Fernando wrote: "Each one of you has given me invaluable feedback on so many levels. I can't thank you enough... I feel relieved to find a partner in this difficult endeavor to make the earth a better place to live." Maria concurred, "I felt at home here... you have really helped me and inspired my work."

**"Tourist development should fit with the landscape, respect laws and land use ordinances, integrate the best interests of local communities, and respect the integrity and health of surrounding ecosystems."**

Fernando  
Ochoa  
Pineda



Maria Llano Blanco

Fernando Ochoa meets with fifth graders during Edison Elementary School's "Ocean Week." He shared his passion for his work and photos of breaching gray whales, blue whales, Orcas, whalesharks, fin whales, and more.



## Welcoming Grassroots Advocates

### Slovakia: Via Iuris

#### Imrich Vozar

Imrich Vozar is Staff Attorney at Via Iuris, Slovakia's leading public interest environmental law organization. He came to Eugene in June for a ten-day ELAW Fellowship. At the end of his stay, he filed the following report.

"This was my first opportunity to visit the U.S. and touch the Pacific Ocean. My goals were to explore U.S. solutions to specific environmental law problems in Slovakia and to learn about the inner workings of ELAW. I also wanted to practice my English and learn about life in the U.S.

I spent many hours with Jen Gleason [ELAW Staff Attorney]. We talked about specific legal issues pertaining to access to justice, access to information, environmental impact assessment, and nature conservation. I learned that Slovakia and the U.S. face similar challenges. I received answers to all of my questions and learned how this information can be applied in Slovakia. I met with Mark Chernaik [ELAW Staff Scientist] and learned the importance of a good scientist. I am thankful to ELAW legal interns Rachel Rivers and Zach Klonoski for their valuable research

At the end of my stay in Eugene, I rented a car and explored Oregon. In seven days I covered 1,000 miles. I saw the high desert, the Warm Springs Reservation, the Umpqua River Valley, wild rivers, Crater Lake National Park, Mt. Hood, and the Oregon Coast. I really enjoyed my stay. Thank you ELAW!"

Many thanks to the Trust for Mutual Understanding for supporting Imrich's ELAW Fellowship.

### Dominican Republic: INSAPROMA

#### Maria Rosario Mayi

Two weeks after Maria Rosario Mayi received her law degree she boarded an airplane for the first time and flew to Eugene for a ten-week ELAW Fellowship. Maria is our Laurie Prosser/Xiaoli Jiang Fellow. She will be at ELAW until late August.

Maria works with the Dominican Republic's leading grassroots environmental law organization: Instituto de Abogados para la Protección del Medio Ambiente (INSAPROMA). ELAW has collaborated with INSAPROMA for several years to protect the environment and communities in this Caribbean nation.

Maria will work with ELAW on several projects, including protecting the Dominican Republic from polluting mining operations. She will also study English at the University of Oregon's American English Institute. Many thanks to Laurie Prosser and Xiaoli Jiang, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the American English Institute for supporting Maria's Fellowship.



Imrich and Maria (above) toured Short Mountain Landfill, Lane County's only municipal solid waste landfill. They also toured state-of-the-art recycling operations at Bring Recycling and NextStep Recycling.

## The Next Generation (CONTINUED)

### Pedro Leon

#### What are the biggest environmental challenges facing Mexico?

Water pollution, access to clean water, the booming mining industry, and dealing with GMO's and pesticides are the most pressing issues. Climate change is a problem, but Mexico is not taking it seriously, yet.

#### What is your hope for Mexico?

I hope for many things. Unfortunately, we are facing very hard times and there are challenging years ahead. I am grateful to be involved in the process of seeking solutions and advocating for change.

#### Has your mom been an influence?

My mom walks the talk, at work and in her daily life. She is a great example of how someone can move through life and achieve many things along the way. Her struggle, perseverance, and passion to fight for what is right made a big impression.

#### What are your plans for the future?

I want to work for things that I care about and try to solve even the smallest of problems. Human rights and the environment are two things I care deeply about. I will remain focused on this. Someday I would like to get a Ph.D. to perhaps better understand and analyze some of the problems I encounter.



***Pedro Leon** works on contract for ELAW, helping environmental advocates around the world protect the environment through law. He also coordinates the Human Rights and the Environment Program at the Instituto de Derecho Ambiental (IDEA), in Guadalajara. Pedro's mother, Raquel Gutierrez Najera, founded IDEA and won a 2009 Environmental Merit Award for her work protecting Lake Chapala. Pedro received a law degree from the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Occidente in Guadalajara and a masters degree in international human rights law from Lund University in Sweden. Pedro is currently seeking relief for families in Juanacatlan and El Salto who suffer due to severe pollution in the Santiago River.*

### Harper Johnson



#### What are you doing at ELAW?

I am an ELAW volunteer, trying to help, in a small way, advance ELAW's mission of protecting the global environment. I am learning about environmental problems and how to become an effective advocate. I haven't spent much time thinking about what I want to do when I grow up, but I know that I would enjoy a job where I educate people about the environment.

#### What environmental problems are you concerned about?

I want to protect the ocean as habitat for native marine life.

#### Has your dad been an influence?

When I learn about problems that my father is working to solve, I am inspired because I know that I too could help make a change and protect the global environment. When lawyers from different countries visit, I enjoy learning about where they are from, what they are working on, and how people everywhere are concerned about the environment.

***Harper Johnson** (14 years) will be a freshman at South Eugene High School. She started volunteering at ELAW when she was 11 years old. This summer she is helping with ELAW's database, mailing lists, and other administrative tasks. She enjoys rafting in Oregon and Montana, and going fly fishing with her dad. She is a budding photographer, plays piano, and has traveled to Belize. Harper's father, Bern Johnson, has served as the Executive Director of ELAW for 20 years.*



## Inside ELAW

### Meet our Summer Interns

**Zach Klonoski** (left) is a legal intern. He is entering his third year at the University of Oregon School of Law. He is a native Oregonian with a particular interest in climate change and energy legislation. One of his projects is helping ELAW evaluate the best renewable energy policies for partners abroad.

**Rachel Rivers** (right) is a legal intern. She is entering her third year at Penn State's Dickinson School of Law. She is interested in the intersection between human rights and the environment. One of her projects is helping ELAW partners in Africa advocate for displaced communities. She grew up in the Bay area which she says exposed her to "a culture focused on reducing one's carbon footprint, and working for change."



**Aleah Jaeger** (center) is a program intern. She is a rising junior at Whitman College, majoring in environmental science and sociology, with a minor in French. She is assisting the ELAW Fellowship Program and translating materials for ELAW's work with partners in Haiti.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities at ELAW, visit: <http://www.elaw.org/getinvolved/volunteer>

### Award Winning Partners

In April, ELAW partner **Ram Charitra Sah** won a Stockholm Convention PCBs Elimination Network (PEN) Award for outstanding achievement in the environmentally-sound management of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Ram is a scientist and Executive Director of Environment the Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED). He has collaborated with ELAW since 2002.



In May, ELAW partner **Asis Perez** became the new Director of the Philippines Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. Asis is the former Executive Director of Tanggol Kalikasan (Defense of Nature) and winner of the 2010 Clark R. Bavin Wildlife Award. In his new post he has vowed to combat destructive fishing methods and the intrusion of commercial fishers into municipal waters in the Philippines. Asis has collaborated with ELAW since 1998.





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ELAW partner Kenneth Kakuru and his daughter Samantha (see page one).

Our children deserve to inherit a clean, healthy Earth. That's why ELAW helps partners protect communities and the environment around the world. These local advocates are forging lasting solutions to environmental challenges.

You too can be part of the solution. By donating to ELAW today, you can help us create a skilled, committed corps of environmental advocates championing strong environmental laws in more than 70 countries. Together, we can ensure that the next generation inherits a healthy planet.

To make a donation online, please visit our website:  
<http://www.elaw.org/give>

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