Category: Obligation to Protect Rights of Expression and Association

Sub-Category: Protection of Environmental Human Rights Defenders

Name of Good Practice: **Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW)**

Implementing Actors: Civil Society Organisation: ELAW; Local Community: various

Location: Worldwide

Key Words: Advocacy, Environmental Human Rights Defenders, Support, Network

Description: ELAW is a network of 300 public interest advocates from 70 countries. The core mission of ELAW is to assist its partners, who are grassroots environmental lawyers working in their home countries protect the environment and communities through use of the law. Grassroots advocates play a key role in helping communities speak out, and ELAW gives these advocates the legal and scientific support they need to challenge abuses and build a sustainable future.

ELAW collaborates with environmental defenders working in low-income communities, to pursue seven major initiatives to advance environmental justice: 1. providing critical legal tools; 2. providing critical scientific tools; 3. strengthening organisations; 4. hosting visiting Fellows; 5. outreach; 6. protecting human rights of public interest lawyers; and 7. community legal and scientific workshops. For example, ELAW provides: strategic support as partners develop cases and strengthen environmental laws; scientific equipment and training to monitor environmental conditions; scientific assessment of environmental data to identify toxins and their source; model laws and regulations, such as laws protecting water quality; environmental and human rights records of multinational corporations; expert scientific testimony to support cases against polluters; critiques of environmental impact assessments and development proposals; support for challenges to international financial institutions; and help in drafting petitions and other court filings.

ELAW's Community Legal Education program works with its partners to publish guides to citizen participation, train community “paralegals” to represent community interests, and empower citizens to play a role in decisions that impact their lives. ELAW has also hosted more than 100 lawyers for ELAW Fellowships in Eugene, Oregon, where they gain language skills, tap legal and scientific resources, work closely with ELAW staff, and learn from U.S. efforts to protect communities and the environment.

Further Information: ELAW’s website: <http://www.elaw.org/>.