



## Goal 3: Promote Materials Management, Waste Management, and Clean Sites

### Watershed Cleanup and Recycling *Cultivation of two gardens on the banks of the Tecate River*

*Border 2020: U.S.-Mexico Environmental Program is a bi-national partnership aimed at improving the border environment by fulfilling the goals and objectives of the Border 2020 Program*

The Comité de Mujeres Lluvia del Sur, an informal community group in Tecate, Baja California collaborated with Fundacion la Puerta, to strengthen community around a campaign to clean up the Tecate River and promote sustainable community practices. These practices involved a plastic and cardboard community-led recycling program and composting in association with a community garden.



Young Community Volunteer

The Colonia Colosio community gathers cardboard and PET (Polyethylene terephthalate) plastics commonly used for beverages (marked with recycling number code "1") and sells these materials to recyclers. These efforts have diverted plastic and paper items along with organic materials from landfills. By recycling plastic and paper, new raw materials were not used, thereby avoiding the creation of additional greenhouse gases. This project mitigated the effects of climate change by eliminating 647 equivalent of CO<sub>2</sub> (MTCO<sub>2</sub>E, US EPA WARM Model, Ver. 12, Feb. 2013)



Bundled Cardboard for Recycling

The Colonia Colosio community also collects landscape cuttings and food scraps to prepare compost for use in their community and school gardens and continues to organize and implement voluntary trash clean up events, according to committee chair, Carmen Rodriguez Herrera.

Composting breaks down plant matter, generating a compost rich in nutrients. The compost serves as a soil amendment, adding nutrients to soil, thus reducing or eliminating the need for artificial additives such as fertilizers. Composting avoids dumping the food scraps in a landfill or worse, a dump, where the organics are under

anaerobic conditions that generate methane, a green house gas 26 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>.

Guillermo Romero Ibarrola, Director of Fundación La Puerta (FLP), said that he met the women from Colonia Colosio at a Tecate River cleanup campaign event; they asked what they could do to help care for the environment and obtain funds and he proposed establishing a community garden using the low-input, high-yield bio-intensive organic farming method and receiving training from the Ecología y Población Association (ECOPOL) headed by Juan Manuel Martinez Valdez.



The community garden in the Colonia Luis Donado Colosio

Six years ago, FLP and the Southern Rain Women's Committee established a partnership that has only become stronger with time. Through this grant and with the work of the Southern Rain Women's Committee, the community has strengthen and broaden community and environmental activities in recycling, composting, and educational outreach, especially to young adults and children.

During the project's first phase, the foundation contracted with ECOPOL and Juan Manuel Martinez trained the community women on how to create their garden. Their efforts produced a harvest of lettuce, garlic, squash, strawberries, chard, corn, radishes and rosemary available to committee members who work jointly in the garden's care and maintenance. "The first garden, more than the crop itself, yielded confidence, as the group started to take ownership of it as a collective project," said Guillermo Romero. Salvador Tinajero, the master gardener at Rancho La Puerta, advised the Colonia Colosio ladies in his spare time and taught them how to practice high-quality agriculture. They also received assistance from environmental engineers throughout the process.

The second phase includes the expansion of the garden to a quarter of an acre plot and implementation of school-based orchards that included training workshops on the proper handling of solid waste and composting at five schools that reaches a total of 680 preschool, elementary and special education students. These workshops continue to be taught by Carmen Rodriguez and help teach students about zero waste practices and the role they play in keeping the environment trash free.

Guillermo Romero believes that organic gardening has become an outreach project, as basic gardening courses and guided tours are provided to the public. "We try to help people become self-sufficient so they can fend for themselves, so that they become agents of change," the FLP Director said. Romero added "Doña Carmen and her group have all my appreciation; they have come a long way."