**Category: Obligation to Provide Access to Legal Remedies**

**Sub-Category: Improving Access to Court**

**Name of Good Practice: Faciladores Judiciales (Judicial Facilitators)**

Key Words: Access to Information, Access to Justice, Environmental Justice, Local Community, Mediation, Participation, Vulnerable

Implementing Actors: International Organisation: Organisation of American States; Courts; Local Communities

Location: Argentina, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay.

Description: The Organisation of American States (OAS) began implementing a pilot of the judicial facilitators programme in Nicaragua in the late 1990s and it has grown to a well-established initiative in multiple Latin American countries. The objective of the programme is to improve access to justice among local communities where there have historically been barriers to access to justice. Through improving access to justice, the programme seeks to reduce poverty, improve social cohesion among communities, and achieve better democratic governance, all of which can contribute to stronger environmental protection, among other benefits. Typically, the OAS establishes agreements with the judicial branch in specific countries to cooperate in establishing a judicial facilitator programme, either with local, provincial, or appellate courts. The OAS helps to initiate the programme, with the goal that each country can eventually implement the programme itself. Programmes have been established in Argentina, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay.

Judicial facilitators are nominated by local communities and appointed by judges under whose supervision they will work. They must be from and live in the community where they will work, have no criminal record, and be recognised leaders in their communities. Once appointed, facilitators are trained by the judges or courts that they will work with. They can undertake a number of functions, including providing technical assistance to individuals in the preparation of claims, disseminating information on specific legislation, providing mediation between parties, accompanying individuals to courts to help file legal papers, assisting in the assessment of damages through on-site investigations, and delivering notifications from the Court. In 2012, the OAS published a brochure outlining some of the milestones in the programme. For example, in Panama, the programme had appointed 664 facilitators, 52 percent of which were women. In Nicaragua, there were 2,563 facilitators operating in 153 municipalities.

Further Information: The OAS webpage for the programme: <http://www.oas.org/es/sla/facilitadores_judiciales.asp>.