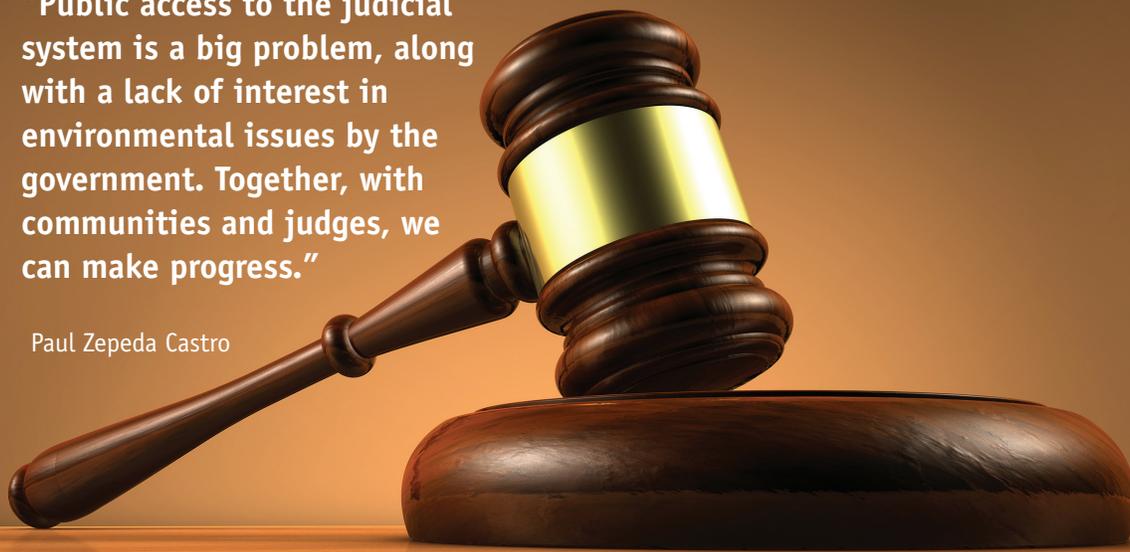


Training Judges

“Public access to the judicial system is a big problem, along with a lack of interest in environmental issues by the government. Together, with communities and judges, we can make progress.”

Paul Zepeda Castro



Environmental law is a complex subject with novel and technical issues that can be challenging for judges to resolve. ELAW partners in Uganda and Honduras have launched training programs to build the capacity of judges to interpret and apply international and domestic environmental law.

Oil development in **Uganda** is threatening national parks and local communities. Raising awareness among judges on relevant laws holds the promise of strengthening governance and protecting valuable national resources for future generations.

“We have collaborated with the Uganda Judicial Studies Institute to train about 20 judicial officers,” says Frank Tumusiime, an attorney with Advocates for Natural Resources Governance and Development, based in Kampala, Uganda.

“Training judges is key to preserving the rule of law, transparency, public participation, and accountability in the natural resources sector.”

In **Honduras**, attorney Paul Zepeda Castro has helped the Honduran Institute for Environmental Law (IDAMHO) partner with the Supreme Court of Honduras to raise awareness of environmental issues among members of the judiciary. Paul is Board Secretary at IDAMHO and recently completed an ELAW Fellowship.

“Honduras does not have a court dedicated to environmental concerns so it is important that judges have an opportunity to explore these issues, with experts,” says Paul.

Honduran scientists and engineers participated in workshops with Honduran judges. International experts also participated, including a member of Panama’s Supreme Court and a professor from the National University of Costa Rica. Participants discussed the interaction between international and domestic environmental laws, as well as the role that scientists can play as expert witnesses.

IDAMHO is engaged in a related effort to educate communities about environmental laws. Paul worked with IDAMHO to publish a popular community mining guide that uses clear, concise language to help citizens understand and defend their rights when mining activities threaten community welfare. Mining is widespread in Honduras, and the laws regulating mining operations are complex. Communities have found the guide extremely helpful.

