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Educational Program “GEA – Mother Earth”: a story of success linking Geosciences to Society in Portuguese speaking countries

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The Portuguese National Committee for the International Geosciences Programme (IGCP-UNESCO) was created in 2011 under the aegis of the Portuguese National Commission for UNESCO. Since its inception it has focused its initiatives to comply with the motto "Geosciences in the Service of Society" and it has been particularly active in the promotion and development of outreach initiatives. Among these, especial highlight has been given to the implementation of the educational program “GEA – Mother Earth”. This program is based on school contests, focused on geosciences themes, itinerary exhibitions and training courses mainly for teachers, and also includes Global Geoparks and Biosphere Reserve staff members. Currently, in its fifth edition, it has been promoted among schools of the territories of the Portuguese Biosphere Reserves and Geoparks, and also in various municipalities in Portugal, including all schools of the Madeira Autonomous Region, involving more than 25,000 students. By creating awareness and looking for possible solutions [1], teachers and students have been involved in several educational projects based on different multidisciplinary approaches. In this way, the themes of the training courses focus on different topics such as education for sustainable development, climate change, geohazards, water, desertification, evolution of life and biodiversity, and geosciences for society [2] [3].

This program has also fulfilled its role in capacity building at a national and international level in Portuguese speaking countries. In the school year 2013/2014, it involved more than 75,000 students and 2,500 teachers in Brazil [3] and in the school year 2014/2015, this number reached more than 100,000 students. It has also contributed to the promotion of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Programme. This educational program, therefore, is a true story of success in linking Geosciences to Society, by playing an active role in nurturing partnerships and sharing best practices, especially with the school community.



Figure 1: “GEA – Mother Earth” Program, Award Ceremony, Araripe Global Geopark of UNESCO, Brazil.

References:

[1] Silva E. (2012) Univ. Aberta, 200 p.

[2] Silva E. et al. (2013) 12th European Geoparks Conference, 266-269.

[3] Silva E. et al. (2015) 13th European Geoparks Conference, 46.

