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

Sub-Category: Improving Access to Courts

Name of Good Practice: *Amparo* Cause of Action and **the Principle of *Intereses Difusas* in Costa Rica**

Key Words: Constitutional Right to Environment, Standing, Accountability, Access to Justice, Remedy, Jurisprudence

Implementing Actors: Court: Constitutional Court of Costa Rica; Individuals

Location: Costa Rica

Description: Article 48 of the Costa Rican Constitution provides for the remedy of *amparo* in order to maintain or re-establish the enjoyment of rights set out in the Constitution, as well as those of a fundamental nature established in international human rights treaties enforceable in Costa Rica. The *amparo* cause of action has been construed very broadly, to allow any person to file a case regarding a constitutional right without a lawyer, with no filing fees, in any language, at any time, on any day of the year and in any form, including handwritten notes. Furthermore, in 1994, the Constitutional Chamber broadened the notion of legal standing further by establishing the principle of *intereses difusas*, whereby individuals are allowed to bring actions on behalf of the public interest, including in the interest of environmental protection. *Amparo* and *intereses difusas* have enabled the people of Costa Rica to have easy access to the justice through the Constitutional Chamber, and they have responded. In 2012 alone, the Constitutional Chamber received 14,953 *amparo* petitions; it has received 68,537 petitions since 1989.

Further Information: See Report of Independent Expert on Mission to Costa Rica for an overview of the *amparo* cause of action: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Environment/IEEnvironment/Pages/Countryvisits.aspx>; he web page of the Court for statistics on amparo actions: <http://sitios.poder-judicial.go.cr/salaconstitucional/estadisticas.htm>.