

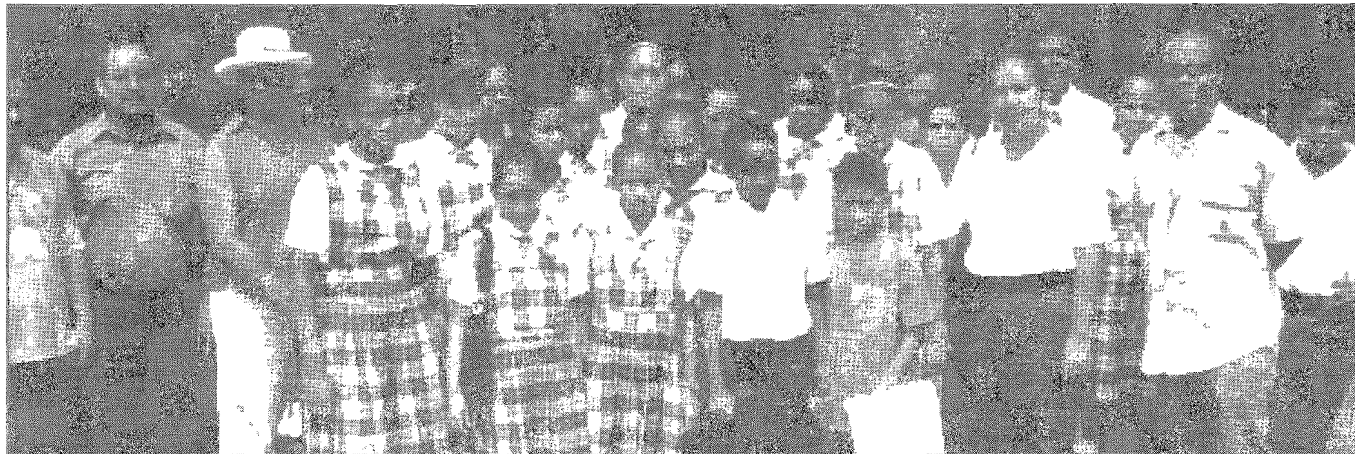
# International Biodiversity Day - Global Green Wave

By *Shane D. Williams*

In December 2000, the United Nations' General Assembly adopted the 22 of May as the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB). The purpose of this day is to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.

In Belize the preparation for International Biodiversity Day began early and on Thursday, May 7, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) distributed grants to four Non-Governmental Organizations. The Global Environment Facility is an environmental programme that provides funding for environmental community projects. This year the focus was on a Green Wave campaign and the GEF disbursed a total of \$48,000 to Sustainable Harvest International - Belize, Friends for Conservation and Development, Programme for Belize and the Belize Audubon Society. Each organization received \$12,000 to assist with the Green Wave campaign in their designated area.

The Green Wave is a global biodiversity campaign to educate



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children and youths about biodiversity. It started in 2007 and leads up to the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010. On May 22, students around the world counted down to 10:00 a.m. local time. At that time, they planted and watered a locally important and indigenous tree species in or near their schoolyard, thereby creating a figurative "green wave" starting in the Far East and traveling west around the world.

In Belize, the tree most commonly planted was the Mahogany tree. The importance of the Mahogany tree to Belize is more significant than

that of any other tree to its native country. Our earliest settlement was based on logging. Belize would be a completely different place today if it was not for the abundance of Mahogany trees in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. On Friday, May 22, 2009 Programme for Belize was responsible to continue the Green Wave in the Belize River Valley. Omar Gale, Manager of UNDP's COMPACT programme, said, "We have four sites for the Green Wave in Belize. These sites are the Memorial Park in Belize City, Maya Center, Xunantunich and Belize Rural High School."

At the Belize Rural High School, Programme for Belize got eight primary schools from the Belize River Valley to congregate and join the high school in partaking in the Green Wave.

These schools are Isabella Bank Primary School, St. Paul's Bank Primary School, Our Lady Rancho Dolores Primary School, Isabella R.C. School, Double Head Cabbage Anglican Primary School, Burrell Boom Methodist School, St. Thomas Doublehead Cabbage Primary School and Lemonal Primary School. Each school planted one tree at a designated spot on the campus of Belize Rural High.

Photos of the global initiative went up on the web at 20:10 local time on the night of May, 22. They could be viewed on the web at <http://greenwave.cbd.int>. Wangari Maathai, winner of Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, said, "When we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and the seeds of hope."