

Earth Hour

Protecting the Planet for future Generations



On Saturday 19 March, 2016, more than two thousand people gathered at the Independence Square in Paramaribo, Suriname to celebrate Earth Hour and recommit to taking care of our planet for future generations.

Earth Hour is a global campaign to raise awareness on the effects of climate change. This annual event has grown into a movement

that culminates in an hour of inspiration across the world. This year's event marked the tenth year of the campaign. The theme, 60+ represented the one hour of less energy being consumed to benefit the planet.

WWF in collaboration with UNICEF and other partners spearheaded this year's Earth Hour activities in Suriname. The lights around the independence square were turned off for one hour from 9:30pm, and various activities were planned to commemorate the event.

Approximately 1500 students and scouts and dozens of families and individuals participated in the Earth Hour Walk, carrying a giant Globe representing the Earth to the Independence Square together. Many others joined in along the route, and welcomed the parade onto the square. The giant Globe was placed in the centre of the square and illuminated by solar lights.

Prior to the walk, education and awareness workshops were held in schools across the country. Approximately 4000 children participated in the 'Make your World Light' workshops, where they created artistic lights from recycled water bottles. Each of the students aged 8 – 12 years, painted a used plastic water bottle and made it their own piece of art. These bottles were completed with a small light and turned into beautiful little lanterns.

Popular Surinamese artists, among them George Struikelblok, Wilgo Vijfhoven and Robbert Enfield, guided the children in making their recycled water bottles into a real



Students making their 'World Lights' from recycled plastic bottles.

works of art. This activity attracted a lot of enthusiasm not only at the participating schools, but from the public as well. There was also a special booth at the Independence Square on the evening of the main event, where children and adults could make their World Lights. The entire Square was illuminated by thousands of these lights, when the power was turned off during Earth Hour.

Students of the 4th and 5th grade at St. Bernadette Elementary School also participated in the Giant Earth Ball relay a few days before the Earth Hour event. During the relay, they carried the symbolic "Earth" on their shoulders to show that children can play a significant role in protecting the earth as well.

During her opening remarks at the relay, UNICEF Representative for Guyana and Suriname, Marianne Flach emphasized that it is a collective responsibility for people to ensure that the Earth is protected. She encouraged the children to also play their part, for example by not littering their environment with used plastic bottles.

The Earth Hour activities were a great success in raising awareness on climate change, and encouraging both adults and children to find creative ways to ensure a sustainable future for our planet.