GreenCOM Update

A quarterly report from USAID's Environmental Education & Communication Project ◆ August 1999

El Salvador Interview

GreenCOM Boosts Mission Impacts

In 1994 USAID/El Salvador hired GreenCOM to provide a three-year, nationwide environmental education and communication (EE&C) effort to support the Mission's environmental objectives. The EE&C program, extended to five years, became central to the Mission's entire portfolio. Now that the project is closing down, the Update asked Peter Gore, Team Leader for the Water Environment Program (SO4), to talk about how the GreenCOM/El Salvador effort enhanced the Mission's effectiveness.

How did you decide to make EE&C central to the Mission's portfolio?

In 1990, the Mission designed a four-part environmental program, PROMESA (Protection del Medio Ambiente de El Salvador). PROMESA included strengthening of NGOs; demonstrating how proper management of agricultural and protected areas really works; environmental policy support for the government–and the EE&C component.

We recognized from the beginning that unless the general public became aware of environmental problems and solutions, none of the other components of our environmental strategy could be successful. We saw that EE&C would be key to our entire environmental program.

El Cantarito (center) of the water campaign in El Salvador poses with a group of school children.

What are some of GreenCOM's achievements?

First, in terms of environmental awareness: Through GreenCOM's efforts, environmental consciousness in this nation has gone from 15 percent in 1993 to greater than 70 percent today. We measured that on the basis of how many people in a random sample could name at least three major environmental problems. The percentage of people who could name solutions is lower, but shows a similar increase in knowledge.

We can also measure GreenCOM's impact in terms of policy achievements: public awareness helped prompt the creation of the Ministry of Environment two years ago. And public awareness supported the passing of a relatively strict environmental law last year.

Other collateral measures of the impact of GreenCOM include the number of newspaper articles written about the environment. In 1994, there were virtually none. Now, in 1999, we see more than an article a day on average on some environmental topic or other.

This report uses a tabloid format and cost-minimizing production methods. It is printed on recycled, post-consumer waste paper and was produced entirely in-house at AED using desktop-publishing software and photocopying equipment.

What accounts for these varied successes?

The quality of the work: the materials in formal education sector, the teacher trainings, the materials they helped the NGOs prepare. GreenCOM spent a lot of time working with the newspapers. Jose Ignacio Mata, the project's resident advisor, spent a lot of Saturdays training journalists.

Other tangible results?

There was a presidential election in March. The successful candidate made the issue of water and water resources central to his campaign–and those were the themes GreenCOM was working on last year. In fact, he used the delivery of water in rural areas as an example to demonstrate that his administration would be marked by decentralization.

Water promoters train community leaders to keep their water supply clean.

This was a success for both the policy side of AID's efforts– democracy, participation, decentralization–and the environmental side, since it centered around the major problems of water in general, and delivery of clean water in rural areas is specific. The candidate was saying, *We improve water delivery in rural areas through decentralization*. Now this man is president–so we've got acknowledgment at the highest level.

What advice do you have for other Missions from this experience?

Get your Strategic Objective Teams to work together around a unifying theme. In El Salvador's case, this was water resources. There's a value in having it be an environmental theme, since people can identify with that, and in most places, environment is a pressing issue but doesn't get the attention it deserves. If you can unite your program around an environmental theme, the individual objectives can achieve their own goal, while at the same time achieving a larger, greater good.

So, for instance, in the economic growth portfolio the improved hillside agricultural component contributes to better management of water resources. In the democracy portfolio, the municipal development program partly concentrates on the delivery of water services. In the health portfolio, water and sanitation program links to better health in the countryside. It links in with us as we combine water supplies with watershed protection and continued access to water.

Can GreenCOM/El Salvador serve as a model?

The real is that the neighboring Central American countries–Nicaragua and Panama particularly, have requested and received not only GreenCOM's superb materials but also GreenCOM's technical assistance– They now have their own GreenCOM program. So, in fact the impact of GreenCOM/El Salvador activity is far broader than just the success in El Salvador.

New GreenCOM Mission to Uganda

Peter Spain

USAID/Kampala has asked GreenCOM to help the Wildlife Clubs of Uganda (WCU) encourage environmentally friendly behaviors and attitudes. A non-profit NGO affiliated with the Ugandan Wildlife Authority, the WCU has since 1975 worked to foster environmental awareness among Ugandans, promote scientific study of the local environment, and encourage sustainable use of natural resources.

In early June, GreenCOM consultant Albert Ndayitwayeko began a six-week residency in Uganda to help the WCU prepare a strategic plan for environmental education, including fundraising and capacity building. In late June, GreenCOM Director Brian Day joined him to work on media outreach strategy issues.

Through extensive document reviews, interviews with WCU staff and collaborators, and field visits, Ndayitwayeko and Day will draft a five-year strategic plan for the WCU.

Voices From the Coast

Anna Kashaija, GreenCOM/Tanzania

"We are at a point where fishing in itself cannot sustain our lives," explains the chairperson of a women's group on the Tanzanian coast.

"After all, the fishing methods that we were using, like dynamite fishing, have caused the lack of fish. That is why our group of women decided to garden to produce

alternate foods, and also to employ ourselves".

The views and experience of women and men who depend on coastal resources have been captured in the video, Voices from the Coast. The video is a production of the Tanzania Coastal Management Partnership (TCMP), in collaboration with GreenCOM Tanzania, under the sponsorship of USAID.

Women planting mangroves in the Tanzanian coast.

Voices from the Coast will be shown to policy makers as well as local people to create awareness of the status of ocean resources, needs, and options for coastal management.

It features fishermen, local leaders, villagers, and business people discussing issues they face in their daily lives, including environmental destruction and a lack of infrastructure, social services, alternative economic opportunities, sustainable resource use strategies.

Again and again, those captured in the video speak of the need for economic activities that take pressure off the fish stocks. Mariculture, seaweed farming, gardening, bee keeping and livestock are some of the ideas, and some are being tried now. A strong message for policy makers is to give coastal areas priority in development plans.

Panama: Watershed Knowledge

Orlando Hernandez

The results are now in of GreenCOM's baseline survey of knowledge, attitudes and practices of residents in the Panama Canal watershed. The study will help GreenCOM design a campaign to promote the conservation of natural resources in the watershed.

GreenCOM hired a local research company last December to survey residents on protection and management of both the watershed and canal. Respondents included many farmers and cattle ranchers, since these are the vast majority of natural resources users in the watershed.

Results show that residents have only vague knowledge of the watershed: most do not know where it is located, how big it is, what it contains or what functions it performs. When prompted, though, many correctly associate it with the sources that feed the canal: Lake Gatún, Lake Alhajuela and the Chagres River. While more than half the residents know that the watershed contains protected areas, only about a third could name one of them.

Respondents expressed concerned with deforestation and forest fires close to the lakes' shores–but do not consider their own slash and burn farming a problem. Despite the fact that the watershed gives them water and electricity, most residents do not think that they personally benefit from it. Furthermore, few are familiar with the legal or institutional framework supporting the protection and management of the canal and watershed. Respondents remain skeptical about the ability of Panama to take care of the canal and watershed after the transfer December 31, 1999.

Based on these results, GreenCOM suggested that the upcoming educational campaign should:

- ✦ make residents aware of what the watershed is and how it functions;
- ✦ explain that deforestation and forest fires are a threat throughout the watershed, not just near the major lakes;
- ✦ establish a clear relationship between the canal, its water sources and other natural resources, particularly forests;
- ✦ raise awareness of the personal and national benefits from the protection and appropriate management of the watershed.
- ✦ explain eco-friendly farming practices, including agro-forestry, intensive livestock raising, erosion, and water quality control.
- ✦ Finally, the campaign should make residents aware of the institutions responsible for watershed and canal management now and after the New Year, promoting trust in these institutions.

A ship on the Panama Canal.

Environmental Educators of the Future

Denise Mortimer

Do you ever throw away a can rather than recycle it? Do you ever litter? How about leaving the light on when you leave a room?

A dozen girls answered these questions and learned about the importance of EE&C on their visit to GreenCOM as part of AED's "Take Our Daughters to Work Day," April 22.

Staff members Paulina Puig, Denise Mortimer, and Peter Templeton invited the girls to create their own EE&C campaign on environmental issues of relevance in their daily lives.

One group of girls created a poster to place in their school cafeteria promoting recycling. Another acted out a commercial encouraging each other to turn off the tap while they brush their teeth. A third group created light switch covers reminding people to turn off the light before leaving a room.

After demonstrating their campaigns to the group, the girls expressed a commitment to adopt more environmentally friendly habits, as well as a desire to teach their peers to become more eco-conscious. In an AED evaluation survey, the majority of the girls who came to GreenCOM rated that session as the highlight of their visit to AED.

Home Office News

In May GreenCOM welcomed **Dee Bennett**, senior environmental social marketer. Bennett formerly worked as communications director for SOMARC, the USAID's contraceptive social marketing project. Her business, management, and communications background includes vice presidencies at two Washington-based public affairs and marketing agencies, and work on the personal staffs of two U.S. Senators.

In June, **Summer Gibbs** arrived as the GreenCOM intern. Summer, a student at the college of William and Mary, has one year left in her pursuit of a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies and Psychology.

In mid-June, **Mary Sebold** left the GreenCOM Project to become the Director of an arts and social program for the homeless in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area.

In July, GreenCOM says farewell to **Carole Douglis**, resource director and editor of Human Nature. Douglis will join the African Wildlife Foundation as Communications and Marketing Officer for Africa; she will be based in Nairobi.

On June 23rd, an Egyptian Delegation toured the GreenCOM Resource Library. The visitors included Dr. Hesham Ali, Ms. Heba Ahmed Farouk Ismail, Mr. Atef Abdel Reheem Ahmed, Ms. Dina Mohamed, Ms. Iman Mohamed Abdu Alla, and Mr. Ismail Bahgat Rady.

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