

Africa Environmental Education Assessment I

The Gambia, Guinea, Madagascar, Namibia, and Uganda



In 1994, two USAID bureaus—the Africa Bureau and the Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research—commissioned GreenCOM to conduct rapid assessments of existing environmental education efforts in five African countries: The Gambia, Guinea, Madagascar, Namibia, and Uganda. All five of these countries had written (or were in the process of writing) national environmental action plans that would drive policy development on specific environmental and natural resource issues.

One such issue was environmental education. With the exception of Guinea, the countries involved in these assessments had made national commitments to support environmental education. GreenCOM's assessments were designed to take stock of current efforts so that policymakers, donor agencies, and environmental educators could plan future environmental education initiatives for the individual countries and for joint, multi-country programs.



Assessing Quantity and Quality

Each assessment utilized two methodologies: in-person interviews with individuals and groups working in environmental education and literature reviews of materials produced by the interviewees.

The specialists who conducted the assessments were charged with investigating five key issues:

- 1. The extent and quality of environmental education** efforts in each country
- 2. The skills and abilities of individuals and organizations** involved in environmental education
- 3. The country's capacity for important communications activities** such as conducting research, publishing curricula and training materials, and creating audiovisual and electronic media products
- 4. The degree to which gender objectives were incorporated** in design, implementation, and evaluation of current programs
- 5. USAID's environmental education capacity**, including delivery of services, constraints to achieving agency objectives, and ways to provide more support to partners

Three types of environmental education were covered by the assessments:

- **Formal**, or environmental education delivered through schools
- **Nonformal**, or activities offered by organizations other than schools (such as extension services or women's organizations)
- **Informal**, or interventions not delivered through organized groups (such as radio or television programs or community mobilization campaigns)



A report called *People and Their Environment* describes these assessments in detail. (Available online, <http://www.greencom.org>)

Findings and Recommendations

In general, the assessment specialists found a wide array of environmental education activities in place throughout all five countries. Overall, they concluded that the initial groundwork had been laid for environmental education programs that would support larger national and regional sustainability objectives.

Nevertheless, the assessments yielded ten specific observations on issues that warranted further attention by national governments, donor agencies, and environmental education practitioners. Assessment results and the following recommendations were distributed in English and French to policymakers, NGOs, environmental education practitioners, and donor agencies.

- **Scale**
Although the overall number of individual environmental education initiatives was large, the assessment revealed a lack of knowledge about the need to coordinate efforts, strategize for the future, and “go to scale.”
Recommendation: Environmental educators should work to strengthen their networks and seek ways to integrate environmental education in larger economic, environmental, governance, and social systems.
- **Comprehensiveness**
Most interventions consisted of implementing an activity only. There was no formative research, pretesting, or monitoring and

evaluation—all of which would provide valuable feedback that educators could use to improve the quality of their interventions.

Recommendation: Offer training on how to incorporate these quality control mechanisms into environmental education programs.

■ **National Will**

Despite the stated commitment of these five countries' governments (except Guinea) to promote environmental education, there was no momentum to translate policy into reality on the ground.

Recommendation: High-level government officials should engage the general public in a national dialogue on environmental issues through public meetings and national communication campaigns.

■ **Relevance**

Materials used in environmental education programs often failed to address issues of importance to the people who were using them.

Recommendation: Environmental educators need to abandon a one-size-fits-all approach to materials development in favor of a more targeted approach.

■ **School-Home-Community Linkages**

Assessment findings revealed the need for a stronger link between schools and students' families and communities.

Recommendation: Environmental education in schools needed to be reinforced through family- and community-supported extracurricular activities.

■ **Out-of-School Youth**

The inventory of environmental education initiatives found that environmental education programs were not available for out-of-school youth, many of whom were young women.

Recommendation: Environmental education should be covered in continuing education classes and out-of-school youth should be employed in conservation corps programs.

Environmental educators should work to integrate their subject in larger economic, environmental, governance, and social systems.

■ **Extension Programs**

Although each of the five countries had established agricultural extension services, extension workers had not been trained to use environmental education and communication interventions in their work.

Recommendation: Direct funding toward training for extension workers and creating better networks among extension service providers to improve coordination of education and communication initiatives.

■ **Site-Based Interpretation**

National parks and other important sites lacked strong interpretive facilities to provide environmental education to national and international visitors and schoolchildren who visit on field trips.

Recommendation: Offer interpretation training for staff members of parks and other sites and for teachers, who could use site visits to teach students about specific environmental issues.

■ **Informal Activities**

The assessment showed that there were few informal interventions such as communication campaigns or the use of indigenous people's communication channels to impart environmental messages, and that there was a strong potential market for this kind of education.

Recommendation: NGOs and other interested parties could study the experience of other sectors, such as health, to learn more about using targeted communication tools to generate behavior change.

■ Gender

Environmental educators were not consistently accounting for gender-related issues when designing their programs, which should address the needs and concerns of both women and men.

Recommendation: Conduct qualitative research in all programs to discern how men's and women's perspectives on environmental issues differ.

Several positive results were reported after the assessment findings had been disseminated and reviewed. In The Gambia, for example, government officials used GreenCOM's assessment in drafting their national environmental education strategy. In Madagascar, the USAID mission decided to carve out a larger role for education and communication interventions in all of its environmental projects. And in Namibia, the Namibia Environmental Network found the assessment to be a useful tool as it developed its work plan.

Selected Publications and Products

Allen, Irma. *Organizations and Resources for Environmental Education in The Gambia*. Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development (AED), 1994.

Field, Ralph Ted. *Environmental Education and Communications in Uganda: Organizations and Resources*. Washington, DC: AED, 1994.

GreenCOM Project. *People and Their Environment: Environmental Education and Communication in Five African Countries* (also in French: *Populations et environnement: l'éducation et la communication environnementale dans cinq pays d'Afrique*). Washington, DC: AED, 1996.

Grieser, Mona, and Barbara Rawlins. *Issues in Urban and Rural Environments: GreenCOM Gender Reports*. Washington, DC: AED, 1996.

Grieser, Richard. *Environmental Education and Communication Assessment for Madagascar*. Washington, DC: AED, 1994.

Maubrey, Regis. *Environmental Education and Communication Inventory in Guinea*. Washington, DC: AED, 1994.

Monroe, Martha. *Environmental Education and Communication Inventory in Namibia*. Washington, DC: AED, 1994.



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