

Mexico Assessment

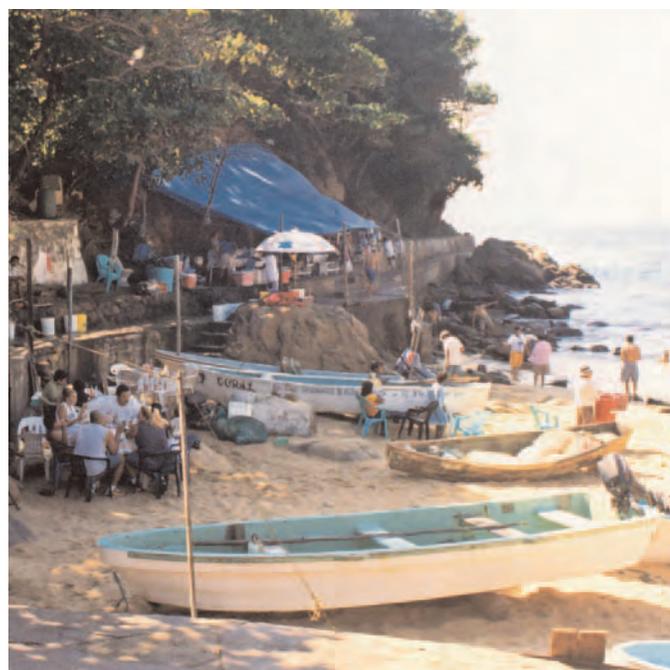
Building Environmental NGO Capacity



In 1994, USAID/Mexico asked GreenCOM to conduct a rapid assessment of fourteen NGOs working in natural resource management. The ultimate goal was to increase the impact these organizations had on the country's myriad environmental problems, especially deforestation caused by rampant tropical forest fires. The mission's initiative for institutional strengthening of NGOs was carried out as part of the Environment and Global Climate Change Program of USAID's Latin American and Caribbean Bureau.

A GreenCOM assessment specialist collected information through interviews with key staff members and volunteer leaders from the organizations surveyed, administration of in-depth written surveys, and a literature review. The assessment was designed to obtain information on four specific areas:

- Environmental education and communication capabilities
- Consideration of gender issues in project implementation
- Institutional development
- Staff training needs



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Assessing Quantity and Quality

The assessment yielded several key findings in each of the four areas listed above:

- **Environmental Education and Communication Capabilities**
Although all of the NGOs carried out education and communication activities, these

interventions were often random and unconnected to specific programmatic objectives or behavior change. Staff members lacked formal training in environmental education and communication concepts and were not aware of the need to pretest, monitor, and evaluate activities and materials.

■ **Consideration of Gender Issues in Project Implementation**

Most organizations expressed a concern for gender, particularly in terms of male-female balance in staffing and advisory boards. However, they did not make an effort to examine gender issues when designing their programs.

■ **Institutional Strengthening**

In general, the NGOs surveyed felt that lack of funding was the most pressing institutional

issue they faced. Few recognized the importance of strengthening internal management.

■ **Staff Training**

One of the NGOs' primary training needs was related to program administration, specifically financial and strategic planning and fundraising. Most of the organizations surveyed said they would be willing to conduct joint training sessions to maximize resources.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the assessment included five general recommendations to USAID/Mexico and the NGOs.

- 1. Develop a systematic NGO training plan** with clear objectives and specific audiences (instead of responding to training offers on an ad hoc basis).
- 2. Tailor all training and skill building** to specific organizational conditions and programs, taking into account existing activities, perceptions, weaknesses, and strengths.

- 3. Build on staff members' existing awareness of gender issues** to fully integrate gender considerations into the structure and program of the organization.
- 4. Increase opportunities for NGOs to work together** on common projects and to network and collaborate through shared learning opportunities.
- 5. Add a train-the-trainer component to future training events** so that new skills learned by individual staff members and volunteers are shared throughout the organization.

Selected Publications and Products

Davenport, Russell. *Institutional Assessment of Mexican Environmental NGOs*. Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, 1995.



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