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FLASH REPORT

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH OF CONCEPTS FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGN IN EL SALVADOR

PREPARED FOR :
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9 de Mayo de 1995

Señores
GreenCOM Project (PROMESA)
Academy for Educational Development
Presente.

Atn: Sra. Vilma de Campos

Ref: Proyecto AED No. 222429-5P-022

Estimados señores:

Por este medio me permito enviarles el documento original del Flash Report (versión en Inglés), solicitado por ustedes el Viernes 5. Este documento también fue enviado por fax a Sandy Del Prado, tal como acordamos.

Sin otro particular es propicia la ocasión para saludarles cordialmente y agradecerles nuevamente la confianza depositada en nuestra firma consultora.

Muy atentamente,

DANIEL CARR & ASSOCIATES



Lic. Daniel A. Carr
Gerente General

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FLASH REPORT
ENVIRONMENT CONCEPTS EVALUATION

I. INTRODUCTION

A Qualitative Research of the Concepts for a Campaign on the Protection of the Environment was carried out at the request of the Technical Assistance Consortium for the Environment Protection Project of El Salvador (PROMESA), with the purpose of validating five preliminary concepts, prior to the production of final campaign materials.

Considering the overall objective of the research study as defined above, Dr. Michael Cannon (Project Advisor) defined the specific objectives as follows:

1. Evaluate the level of understanding of the message conveyed by each concept design.
2. Investigate the importance of each concept for the target population groups.
3. Determine the effectiveness of the concepts in leading to a positive action.
4. Explore the changes suggested by the target groups, which could facilitate the comprehension of the messages conveyed by the concepts and provoke positive actions from the target population.

In order to fulfill the objectives of the research, the consultants selected the qualitative method, consisting of focus group interviewing that allows for depth of communication through an interactive process developed within the panels.

Eight focus groups were scheduled with parents between 25 and 40 years of age, from the metropolitan area of San Salvador, and two small semi-urban towns in the interior. Between March 8-13, a qualified psychologist/moderator carried out the focus group interviewing among panelists with the following demographic characteristics:

- Panel 1: Middle class mothers from the San Salvador metropolitan area (7 panelists).
- Panel 2: Middle class mothers from the San Salvador metropolitan area (9 panelists).
- Panel 3: Semi-urban mothers from a small town (Candelaria de la Frontera), located in the western region of the country (8 panelists).
- Panel 4: Semi-urban fathers from a small town (Candelaria de la Frontera), located in the western region of the country (8 panelists).
- Panel 5: Semi-urban mothers from a small town (Chapeltique), located in the eastern region of the country (8 panelists).
- Panel 6: Semi-urban fathers from a small town (Chapeltique), located in the eastern region of the country (7 panelists).
- Panel 7: Middle class fathers from the San Salvador metropolitan area (8 panelists).
- Panel 8: Middle class fathers from the San Salvador metropolitan area (8 panelists).

During the focus group interviewing, the panelists were shown previously prepared Concept Boards, with five preliminary concepts identified as follows:

- "Can"
- "Air"
- "Dirty Boy"
- "Sick Girl"
- "Family Drawing"

During the presentation of the material and verbal stimuli on each concept, the psychologist/moderator maintained an adequate rotation in order to avoid biases in the results.

II. MAJOR FINDINGS

The word "environment" is perceived as something complex, comprised of many aspects that are not seen as a whole at the moment of definition; rather, its definition tends to allude to one aspect. It seems that the word "environment" is related more to deforestation, possibly due to the reforestation campaigns being carried out.

It is worthwhile noting that the awareness of different aspects of the environment, shares the same level as that of the different problems that affect communities, such as unemployment and delinquency, among others.

Identification with these problems becomes more sensitive, depending on the area of the country. In the semi-urban areas, for instance, air pollution (smoke), as a result of the use of firewood stoves and the burning of foliage, and infected, trash disposal sites, are part of people's daily life.

Inhabitants of the larger urban areas, on the other hand, do not identify themselves with forest fires as much as they do with deforestation, since the latter is becoming increasingly worse due to population growth, and consequently to housing needs. Both semi-urban and urban groups are aware of these problems, and of others such as the changes affecting the environment, temperature increase, and the scarcity of water and rainfall, air pollution, and river pollution due to industrial wastes and trash.

Regarding air pollution, both groups feel anguished and impotent to solve it. They feel it is both a very serious problem which they cannot combat isolatedly, and which involves interests from large enterprises and the government. On the other hand, semi-urban inhabitants acknowledge that cooking with firewood, burning foliage and the chopping of trees, cause problems, even to themselves and their families, but that it is a matter of choosing between the latter and their survival.

Both groups admitted that the problem with trash disposal is due to the lack of education, and that people should be constantly reminded of the consequences. Lack of education is a general problem, regardless of the social and economic class a person belongs to.

Among the suggestions provided by the majority of groups regarding the concepts shown, is the fact that problems are exposed, *but the tools needed to solve or at least minimize problems are not provided*, and this left the panelists with a sense of anguish, especially when talking about children.

The concepts related to children have the greatest emotional impact, according to the evaluation.

Among the different texts shown, the ones that impacted the most were: the boy wearing a dirty shirt, which states: "If his clothes look like this, imagine what his lungs look like"; and the text on air pollution which states "It feeds you, you sleep with it and you breath it. Don't you think it's time you took care of it?"

The texts which concerned panelists the most are the ones that involve them directly, but also indicate that they are to blame to a certain extent, as the one that states: "You work so hard for them, but why don't you work for your environment? THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO DO." People ask themselves, "what can I do, and how?".

The same reaction is obtained with the text that shows a sick girl and says: "You do everything you can to improve her health, BUT YOU FORGOT SOMETHING." This sentence captures the attention, and the participants ask themselves, "what have I forgotten?". Besides, this phrase provokes a feeling of guilt for something one is not even aware of.

The "can" is the least attractive; the panelists felt it is too simple. The group of men from the metropolitan area thought that at first glance, a big company such as Coca Cola could be behind the campaign. Furthermore, this same group thought that the text could create a conflict between different communities (people disposing garbage in other neighborhoods).

This text lends itself to many interpretations, such as the recycling of trash in the urban areas, or the problems of disposing cans. In the semi-urban area, the panel members mentioned it was better to bury cans.

It was also perceived that the can alone does not represent the problem of trash.

The drawing of the family and house brings forth two messages: to protect forests by planting trees, and to work on behalf of the environment in our neighborhoods, as well as to keep our houses and children clean.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The concept of "Environment" as such, is quite ambiguous for semi-urban and urban panelists, although there is general awareness of the elements that affect it:
 - deforestation
 - trash
 - river pollution
 - air pollution
2. Many of the semi-urban and urban panelists were clearly aware of the need to educate people from all social and economic classes on how to take care of our environment.
3. Panel members were aware of the contamination of the environment, but this was manifested in an attitude of impotence to solve problems such as exhaust fumes from trucks and buses, littering, etc. When there is no government control the question seems to be: "what can a citizen do as an individual?". In the semi-urban areas, impotence is expressed by the affirmation "one does not know what to do".
4. In the semi-urban areas, factors affecting the environment, such as deforestation (firewood cutting), trash, air and river pollution (smoke and dust), are all seen as a "necessary evil", due to the social and economic status of its inhabitants. Among these we can mention the following:
 - Deforestation - necessary to obtain firewood, the main fuel for cooking. There is no substitute for firewood.
 - Trash - it is a problem which mainly concerns local municipal government, and is aggravated by the lack of adequate garbage collection services.
 - River pollution - it is also a problem concerning local municipal government and the national government, and is due to the lack of an adequate sewage system design and maintenance, as well as to the lack of proper trash disposal areas.
 - Air pollution - the cut and burn custom of the inhabitants in small semi-urban communities is necessary to prepare agricultural land for cultivation, and dirt roads cause the excess of dust, since there is a lack of paved roads in the semi-urban and rural areas. In general, it seems that semi-urban populations feel that air pollution in the countryside is less than that in the cities.
 - In general, there is the awareness that the semi-urban and rural populations have a lower cultural level, and that the lack of education determines their bad habits. The general feeling is that the protection of the environment is a job that concerns us all, that "everybody has to cooperate", and that "it is not a task for one individual alone", "it is useless unless everybody works together".
5. The concepts conveyed by the "dirty boy" and the "sick girl" and to a lesser degree the "family drawing", provoke certain positive affective reactions; nevertheless, certain frustration can be detected as far as the actions to be taken are concerned. The question is: "What to do and how to do it?"

Among urban fathers, the fact that the dirty boy is barefoot while his father wears shoes provokes reactions of disapproval.

6. The "can" provokes mixed feelings. Some panelists show positive awareness attitudes, although the message conveyed is not very clear. Urban area The panel members from the San Salvador metropolitan area associated the can with "recycling". Some male panelists identified the can with Coca Cola, and expressed that this association could "harm" that enterprise's "image".

In general, the concept of trash could be effective in making people aware of the problem and stimulating action, but not in the manner it is currently stated.

7. The concept of air pollution caused by smoke is effective in making people aware of the problem, but loses effectiveness since it is mainly related to buses, trucks and factories. In the semi-urban areas, the problem is immediately identified with the cut and burn method of preparing land for cultivation.
8. The "family drawing" could become the best means of communication; it expresses an ideal situation, desired by everyone: family, union, cleanliness. It requires a design that projects action on behalf of the family, such as planting a tree or cleaning the garden.

In general terms, it can be appreciated that appeal and affective reactions are higher for the concepts of "girl" and "boy", where environment contamination effects are evident. On the other hand, the concept conveyed by the "drawing/family" shows the positive results of working on behalf of the environment. The concepts of "air/smoke" and the "can", in turn, are effective in conveying the problem or factors that affect the environmental.

To finalize, the media campaign should convey concrete actions to avoid attitudes of frustration and anguish, and to combat a possible negative response process among the target population:

knowledge > awareness > concern > frustration > rationalization > blame others.