

Bolivia Assessment

Achieving USAID Environmental Objectives



Bolivia's natural resources are globally significant. In addition to 53 million hectares of forest, Conservation International has identified the country's tropical Andes region as a global "hotspot"* of biodiversity.

In 2001, USAID/Bolivia requested GreenCOM's assistance in assessing the role that environmental communication could play in helping the mission achieve its Environmental Strategic Objective to manage forest, water, and biodiversity resources for sustained economic growth. The Intermediate Results (IR) needed to achieve that objective were:

- IR1: Sustainable management of natural forests in Bolivian lowlands
- IR2: Adequate management of protected areas
- IR3: Improved environmental management of urban and industrial pollution



* Conservation International (CI) defines a hotspot as a region with 1,500 or more endemic species of vascular plants. In addition the region must have lost at least 70 percent of its original habitat. (CI, "Hotspots Defined," *Biodiversity Hotspots*. http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/Hotspots/hotspotsScience/hotspots_defined.xml. Accessed February 17, 2005.)

A Multisectoral Assessment

A four-member assessment team visited Bolivia for three weeks in the spring of 2001. The team's mandate was to:

1. Conduct a **participatory assessment of environmental communication needs** and opportunities within several sectors (Bolivian NGOs, governmental institutions, mass media, private sector, donor projects, and universities).
2. Produce a **conceptual framework for using environmental communication** to achieve USAID objectives.
3. Recommend **options for implementing environmental education and communication interventions** in programs administered by USAID and its partners.

GreenCOM's participatory assessment strategy included an extensive review of literature on the country's environmental, governance, education, and social systems. Team members also studied the activities of more than 50 projects and organizations administered by USAID and its Bolivian and international counterparts. A significant part of this investigation consisted of in-depth interviews with about 150 people in La Paz, Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, and Tarija. The interviewees were drawn from a wide variety of institutions including the Bolivian government, the international donor/development community, environmental organizations, and universities.

After compiling a draft of the assessment findings and recommendations, one member of the assessment team took part in a meeting organized by USAID/Bolivia's Environment Team. More than 70 representatives from the institutions studied in the assessment participated in this meeting. They had an opportunity to review findings and recommendations and provide their own observations and feedback, which were incorporated in the final assessment report.

Findings and Recommendations for Collaborative Action

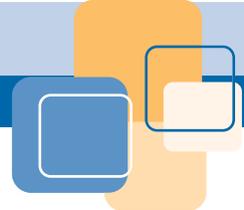
The participatory workshop mentioned above helped all of the parties involved to engage in reflective observation on their activities. It also enabled them to brainstorm ways to strengthen the environmental communication components of their programs for mutual gain. Finally, the workshop yielded a conceptual framework and list of recommended options.

Participants used four major findings from the assessment to develop a set of common recommendations:

1. Environmental communication initiatives were directed toward changing knowledge and attitudes rather than behavior.

The assessment recommended that partners implement activities with the goal of changing people's actual behavior, not just their cognitive understanding of environmental issues.





2. Education and communication activities lacked pre-implementation assessments and monitoring and evaluation components.

The report recommended that interventions be more comprehensive in scope, incorporating an assessment phase at the start and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms during and after implementation. Assessments ensure that activities meet the specific needs of the people involved. Monitoring and evaluation keep activities on track and help program managers identify the results of the intervention.

3. There was an erroneous assumption that “anyone can do environmental education and communication.”

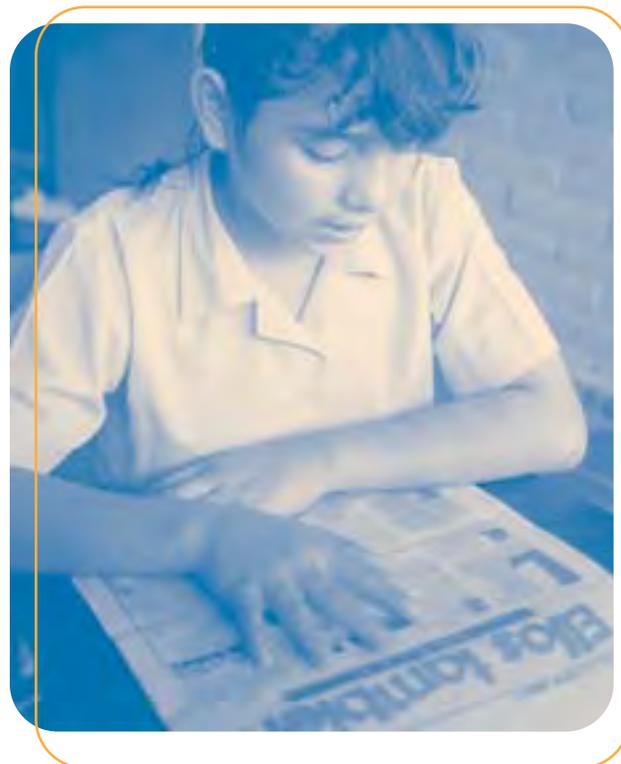
Recognizing the need to disabuse people of this notion and promote professional standards for environmental education and communication, the assessment called for more formal training of individuals who administer education and communication projects.

4. Activities usually focus on one project and are conducted unilaterally.

USAID/Bolivia’s partners needed to develop a unified communication strategy that would help them coordinate their efforts for greater impact nationwide. The assessment also advocated greater use of mass communication tools to generate a national dialogue on environmental issues and commitment to adopt positive behaviors.

USAID Environment Team members reported that the assessment’s greatest value was in giving them a concrete model. It was also important that the model was shared with and discussed by their partners during the workshop.

The assessment recommended activities that would help change people’s actual behavior, not just their understanding of environmental issues.



The team immediately implemented some of the assessment recommendations. For instance, they decided that future funding for environmental communication activities would go only to projects that were committed to behavior change. In addition, the team funded a survey to determine core national environmental values and knowledge, another recommendation of the assessment.

They also used GreenCOM's assessment as a model for other assessments, including one for tropical forestry and biodiversity. The work plan for a subsequent mission-funded forestry project incorporated many specific communication concepts that GreenCOM recommended in the original assessment.

Selected Publications and Products

Booth, Elizabeth Mills, Irma Allen, Marco Encalada, and Richard Bossi. *Environmental Education and Communication (EE&C) for Behavior Change: Its Role in Forest, Water, and Biodiversity Resource Management for Sustained Economic Growth in Bolivia* (also in Spanish: *Educación y comunicación ambiental (EyCA) para lograr un cambio de comportamiento: su función en el manejo de los recursos forestales e hídricos y de la biodiversidad para un crecimiento económico sostenido en Bolivia*). Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development (AED), 2001.

———. *Using Strategic Environmental Communication for Behavior Change to Achieve USAID/Bolivia's Strategic Objectives and Intermediate Results*. Washington, DC: AED, 2001.



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