

# Lebanon

## Participatory Environmental Rapid Assessment



**In 1997**, USAID/Lebanon's primary focus was rural reconstruction and livelihood improvement through participatory and environmentally sound development. The mission awarded contracts to several private voluntary organizations (PVOs) to carry out infrastructural improvement projects in selected rural areas. Some of the issues the projects addressed were repair and reconstruction of roads and irrigation canals, food processing, sewage treatment, and waste disposal.

The mission asked GreenCOM to collaborate with the PVOs on a rapid assessment of environmental conditions in the four target areas of Akkar, East Sidon-Nabatiyeh, Shouf, and Baalbek-Hermel. Based on the needs and opportunities identified in the assessment, GreenCOM and representatives from the PVOs developed an assessment methodology toolkit for use by the PVOs and target communities as the projects progressed. The goal was to build the project implementers' capacity to engage a broad cross-section of stakeholders in the target communities in assessing environmental conditions and developing action plans.



### *Assessment Capacity Building*

In November 1997, GreenCOM convened a three-day workshop in Beirut for 19 PVO representatives on using participatory environmental rapid assessments (PERAs) in their projects. PERA is a research methodology used at the community level to help residents identify local environmental problems and work collaboratively with a variety of partners (funders, government agencies, technical specialists, etc.) to solve them.

The workshop emphasized the value of using a participatory approach, how to prioritize environmental problems, and how to use indicators to measure progress. Small group work gave participants an opportunity to hypothesize about situations they might encounter when using PERA in the field. In addition, ideas generated by the small groups were used in the first draft of the toolkit.

After the workshop, GreenCOM consultants visited selected villages in each of the four regions where the PVOs were implementing projects. This allowed the individuals who had participated in the workshop to field test the draft toolkit and practice their new assessment skills with experienced technical specialists. At a second workshop in early 1998, the same PVO representatives revised the draft toolkit based on the assessments they had carried out with GreenCOM.

*GreenCOM helped to lay a strong foundation for USAID's program of participatory environmental management in rural Lebanon.*

## PERA Toolkit

The PERA toolkit produced by GreenCOM and the workshop participants covered a variety of topics related to the PVO projects, including:

- Initiating and implementing PERA in a community
- Typical environmental problems in Lebanese villages (for example, water pollution, waste disposal, agricultural land degradation)
- Data gathering and ranking
- Ranking of problems and opportunities
- Developing a village resource management plan
- Evaluation, monitoring, and follow-up activities

Printed in Arabic and English, the toolkit was highly practical, providing step-by-step implementation guidelines for each phase of an assessment. Through the workshops, guided field experience, and toolkit,

## Selected Publications and Products

Habib, Mona, ed. *Guide to Participatory Environmental Rapid Assessment: Lebanon*. Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development (AED), 1998.



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