

LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE



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LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE



TRAINING MANUAL



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Learning Local Environmental Knowledge was produced in recognition of the cross-cultural challenges faced by Volunteers during their first three months of service. Volunteers and associate Peace Corps directors identified the need for self-directed learning activities to assist and accelerate the process of community entry. This training manual responds to that need. It is intended for use by training managers and technical training coordinators.

The Peace Corps profoundly appreciates the reviews of this publication and the suggestions made by hundreds of Peace Corps staff and Volunteers worldwide during a two-year design and development phase. Nearly 100 draft copies of this training manual were requested by field staff in Africa, Central and South America, the Caribbean, the Pacific, Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean for use and testing in Pre-Service Training. The positive feedback to the draft documents during that period provided the inspiration to publish and disseminate this manual.





VOLUNTEER LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENTRY

INTRODUCTION

Newly posted Peace Corps Volunteers are usually advised to focus on learning local language and culture during their first several months of service, in addition to working themselves into their assigned jobs. One of their initial goals is to adjust to their new surroundings and become familiar with community life. This is known as “community entry.” Yet many Volunteers remain unsure of what to do in their first months in their community. Some may even feel excessively pressured to identify areas for development activity as



quickly as possible. Because Volunteers should focus first on learning about their communities, the Peace Corps has published *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge: A Volunteer’s Guide to Community Entry*. The guide facilitates the community entry process by providing Volunteers with ideas and activities for discovering practices, perceptions, beliefs, values, people, and other local resources with which development actions can be built. The guide encourages Volunteers to be observant, creative, and reflective in adapting to their individual circumstances and interests. This helps ensure that the process of becoming comfortable and functional in their communities is enlightening *and* enjoyable. As a complement to *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*, this training manual suggests ways to introduce the guide to community entry to prospective Volunteers while they are still in Pre-Service Training (PST).

Effective use of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* by Volunteers once they reach their site requires that trainees clearly understand strategic ways to learn about their community as a requisite initial step in development action. This learning process can and should begin in PST. *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* lends itself well to integration into most PST frameworks. It is not intended as an add-on training activity. Each activity in the guide is designed to build the lingual, technical, and cultural knowledge of Volunteers in training. Training managers, technical training coordinators, and associate Peace Corps directors alike should find that they are able to use *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* in language classes (by formulating and practicing questions in local and national languages), in technical training sessions (by learning about community livelihood strategies and local technical knowledge and practices), and in cross-cultural sessions (by reflecting on how culture shapes decision making and livelihood practices). These PST applications are further discussed in subsequent sections of this manual.



The following general schedule is recommended for introducing *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* to trainees during PST:

Session	Timing of Session in PST	Session Length
Local Environmental Knowledge Warm-up	Week 3	2 hours
Doing an Activity: Biophysical	Week 4	2 hours for the activity 2 hours for reflection
Doing an Activity: Economic	Week 5	2 hours for the activity 2 hours for reflection
<i>Learning Local Environmental Knowledge:</i> The Project Framework	Sometime during the last two weeks of PST	2 hours



LEARNING THROUGH DISCOVERY AND RECOGNITION

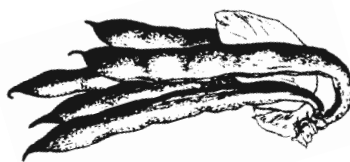
Learning Local Environmental Knowledge advocates a training strategy that helps Volunteers appreciate the value of host-community practices, perceptions, beliefs, values, and knowledge. Why this training strategy? Because, first and foremost, the role of the Volunteer in development is capacity building. Every community in the world possesses the basic building blocks for capacity building. They are people, and the resources people use to gain their livelihood. That is not to say that communities already have everything they need for development, merely that the fundamental ingredients are in place. For Volunteers to appreciate the social, economic, and biophysical wealth of communities with which local capacity can be built, they should seek to “discover and recognize” local assets before they try to “categorize and assess” them. There are basic differences between these two approaches to learning about local environmental resources:

TWO APPROACHES TO LEARNING ABOUT LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Discovery and Recognition	Categorization and Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A primary goal is improved communication between cultural “insiders” and “outsiders.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A primary goal is initiation of development actions successful in other cultural contexts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides the formulation of hypotheses that accept the rationality of current behaviors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies predetermined standards to judge which values and knowledge are relevant.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggests that “new” information needs an accommodation in traditional knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally limits learning about the local environment to biophysical information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners are encouraged to highlight useful resources already available in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners tend to focus on what communities lack in resources rather than on what they have.

Neither of these approaches to learning about community assets is necessarily better than the other. They are qualitatively different yet complementary. To practice one without the other, however, could influence the efficiency and effectiveness of development action. These are really important issues for Volunteers who have but two years of service in which to “get something done.” Much of that time is spent learning languages and adapting to new cultural contexts. Volunteers therefore need an approach to community entry that encourages them to continue their technical learning in a self-directed way after being sworn in. We would like Volunteers to learn about all facets—biophysical, economic, social—of their host- community’s technical world. For this reason we encourage Volunteers to use a *discovery and recognition* approach to learning about local environmental resources in addition to *categorization and assessment*.

As Volunteers learn about their community’s human and natural resources, they will become increasingly valuable assets to the community. This is because they will be better able to understand and communicate about the resources that community members value and use for their livelihood. Efficient and effective development action best occurs when no community assets are neglected, including those assets that Volunteers bring to their community from their own experiences and education. Indeed, the goal of teaching trainees to use *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* is that they will recognize and discover that community and Volunteer assets alike are invaluable tools and equal partners in service for development!



LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

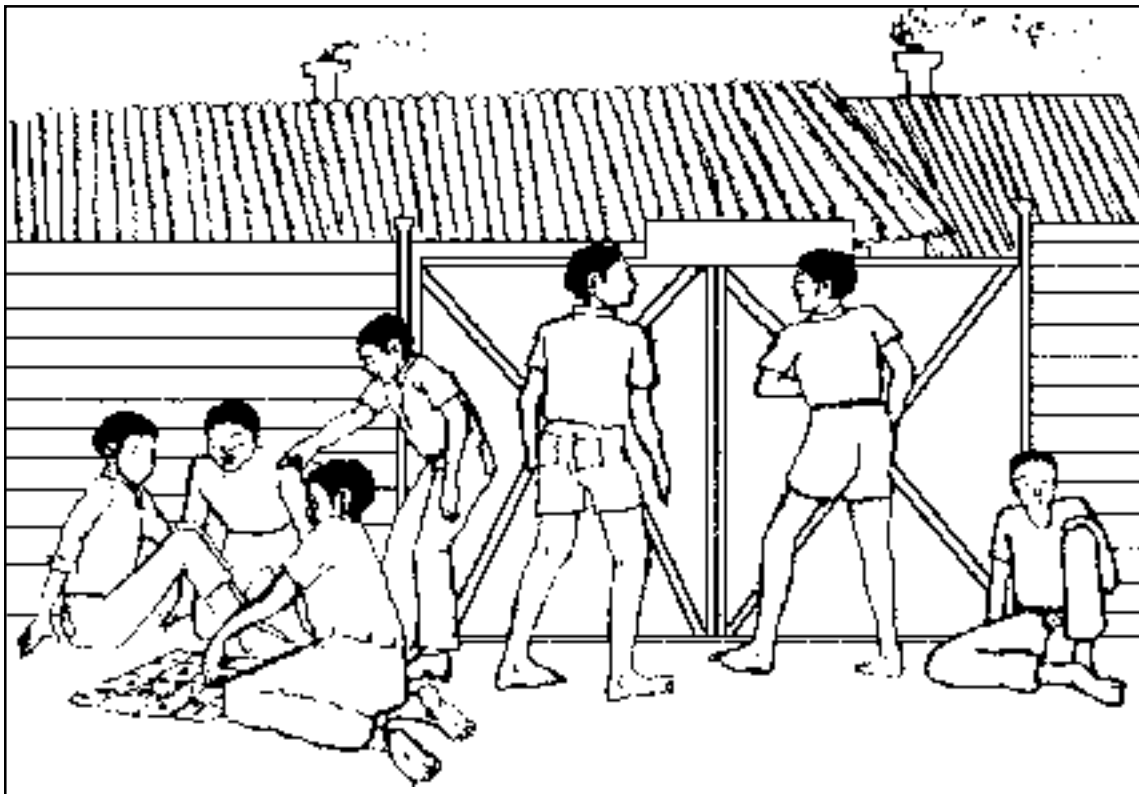
Learning Local Environmental Knowledge provides Volunteers with a self-directed method for learning about the cultural basis of livelihood in their communities. How is this possible? Practically every community in the world, including those where Volunteers live and work, creates and nurtures cultural systems that respond to and reflect the biophysical, economic, and social environment in which its people live and work. Because so many communities where Volunteers work rely on the local natural resource base for their livelihoods, trainees and Volunteers can use the environment as a starting point for learning about their community's culture. In exploring how people relate to the biophysical, social, and economic elements of their communities via the activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*, trainees and Volunteers will have many chances to see, hear, touch, feel, and talk about the key facets of a



community's culture. It is important for trainees to realize that through learning about farming practices, the use of water, market goods, sources of income, gender roles, and household decision making, they are also learning about cultural earmarks of an organized society. They are learning what colors the unique worldviews that define particular cultures.

There is also the role of language in culture and development to consider. Put simply, Volunteers must communicate well to be effective in their work. Volunteers' mastery of greetings and building a functional vocabulary in the local language are absolutely important. The most effective communication, however, relies on Volunteers' ability to understand and articulate the cultural realities unique to the communities where they live and work. The words that people select and put together to describe and make sense of their world are verbal mirrors of their culture. Volunteers cannot fully recognize local cultural realities, much less compare them to their own in a meaningful way, until they understand the words and phrases that their neighbors and colleagues use from day to day. We can think of language as a special ingredient that helps outsiders digest their cross-cultural experiences. During their first several months in a community, Volunteers will consume more than their share of cross-cultural experiences. They may even feel "culturally stuffed" at times, and not always comfortable. As their language skills improve, however, Volunteers will be better able to separate nouns from verbs, to discern the taste of jokes, to recognize what people think is important versus what is *really* important. Thanks above all to language skills, new Volunteers will be better able to savor local culture.

With these principles in mind, the activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* provide new Volunteers with guidelines and ideas on ways to discover and practice their language skills. The activities are divided into sections that build on each other as Volunteers move through the guide. Biophysical activities, presented first in the guide, are largely concerned with increasing Volunteers' awareness of local geography, ecology, and various other environmental characteristics. At this stage, the process of asking questions and engaging in activities is more important than understanding the answers. Economic activities, presented second in the guide, require Volunteers to have improved their language skills. These activities focus on how community members depend on the environment to sustain their livelihood. Social activities require greater language ability than those in the previous two sections. These activities deal with issues that might be more culturally sensitive and complex, such as social relationships and spiritual beliefs as they relate to the local environment. One might suggest that the social activities are better suited for Volunteers with improved language skills and, for this reason, should more appropriately follow implementation of the biophysical and economic activities.



USE OF LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE IN TRAINING

✓ LANGUAGE AND CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING

It is very important to involve language and cross-cultural trainers in introducing *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* to trainees. Six of the 12 hours needed in Pre-Service Training to teach trainees how to use the community entry guide directly involve practicing language skills. At least four of the 12 hours integrate cultural issues. Rather than adding these sessions to the PST design, language and cross-cultural trainers may find that the activities fit well into the existing training schedule while satisfying the training objectives. Trainees will find it beneficial to review or practice the activities with language and cross-cultural trainers. The roles of language and cross-cultural trainers is discussed further in the section on session designs.

✓ TECHNICAL TRAINING: PST AND IST

Learning Local Environmental Knowledge can be used as a reference for technical training in Pre-Service Training, particularly for environment/agriculture projects. All 12 hours of PST sessions described here can be applied to technical training and integrated with language and cross-cultural training. The guide focuses on a method for Volunteers to learn about the local biophysical, economic, and social milieu during their first few months in their community. A PST using this approach would focus on preparing trainees for community entry by strengthening their self-directed learning skills. As part of their technical training, trainees would refer to the guide to practice methods for determining what they and their work partners need to learn in order to implement specific development actions.

An In-Service Training (IST) after Volunteers spend three or four months at their sites would focus on one or two objectives: 1) application of what Volunteers and their work partners learn during the Volunteers' first several months at their sites to conceptualize development actions that build on community realities and assets; and 2) strengthening the capabilities of Volunteers and their work partners in specific technical areas—for example, small enterprise management, development of environmental education materials, and marketing of horticultural products.

✓ COMMUNITY-BASED TRAINING

Because *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* activities use communities as centers for learning, training managers and facilitators may find that the guide is a useful tool for enriching the content of community-based training (CBT). One advantage is that *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* integrates language, technical, and cultural issues.



PRE-SERVICE TRAINING SESSION DESIGNS

1

PST SESSION 1: LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE WARM-UP

OVERVIEW



In this session, trainees will practice listening to farmers share their knowledge of local practices related to farming and land use management. Three points underlie the purpose of this session:

- Trainees need to understand how farmers explain natural resource management concepts.
- Trainees need to recognize that farmers have valuable knowledge that they use in their work.
- The way farmers use language to explain their work reflects their cultural values.

OBJECTIVES



1. Trainees will be able to phrase and ask questions that elicit the specific knowledge and unique perceptions that farmers have of their environment and natural resource management.
2. Trainees will be able to cite and explain the concepts about the environment and natural resource management that farmers have using specific local terminology. (For example, farmers may describe the concept of “soil fertility” in a manner that is reflective of local practices and perceptions, rather than in a manner that is familiar to trainees.)

TIME REQUIRED



Two hours for the activity. Two hours for reflection.

PARTICIPANTS



- Trainees
- 5-15 local farmers (English fluency is not required)
- 1-3 language trainers or cross-cultural trainers for facilitation
- Technical trainer/APCD to observe the process



TRAINER/TRAINEE PREPARATION



Trainers should locate five to 15 farmers (men and women) willing to share their knowledge and expertise with trainees. Explain to the farmers that you, the technical trainer/APCD, would like the trainees to learn what farmers know about farming. It is important for the farmers to understand that, in effect, they will teach the trainees what they know, and that the trainees are to learn. Depending on your circumstances, you can invite the farmers to the training site or take trainees to the communities where the farmers live. The farmers will likely feel more comfortable in familiar surroundings and thus be more likely to talk about their work.

In conjunction with language trainers, trainees should prepare three open-ended questions in the language of their training locality that concern farmers' work and the surrounding environment. It is best if the trainees have discussed these issues in PST already, directly or indirectly. Here are some examples of the questions trainees might ask the farmers (in local languages):

- What does soil fertility mean to you? (the technical concept to discover here is *soil fertility*)
- How do you distinguish a good soil from a bad soil? (technical concept is *soil fertility*)
- What do you do to maintain soil fertility? (technical concept is *soil fertility*)
- What are the names for different soils? (technical concept is *soil classification*)
- Which soils are the best for—(maize, rice, millet, etc.)? (technical concept is *agronomy*)
- Why do farmers plant different crops in the same fields? (*seed selection, agronomy*)
- Why do farmers use different seed varieties of the same crop? (*seed selection, biodiversity*)
- How do you select the seeds you want to save? (*seed selection, agronomy, biodiversity*)



Notice that many of these questions are clearly asking for the farmers' viewpoints. Learning to say such phrases as “*What does __ (technical term) __ mean to you?*” or “*In your opinion...*” or “*What do you think about...?*” are useful to ensure that respondents offer their perspectives.

Working with their language and cross-cultural trainers, trainees should prepare for this exercise by formulating their questions precisely in the local language, even if it is not the language they will use at their community work site. Language trainers should be prepared to repeat the questions during the exercise using the exact words used by the trainees, in case the farmers do not understand what the trainees have asked. If during the course of the interviews it becomes necessary to reformulate a question, trainers should be prepared to repeat the question several times so that trainees can note the verbiage for

later analysis. Language and cross-cultural trainers should also be prepared to translate farmers' responses verbatim (i.e., without on-the-spot reinterpretation) into English for the trainees. Finally, language trainers should be prepared to translate (as best as possible) any follow-up questions trainees might think of for the farmers, and to translate verbatim the responses of the farmers to the follow-up questions as well.

ACTIVITY PROCEDURE



- 1.** Prior to the interview sessions, trainees and trainers need to think about managing the interview. An ideal scenario might be five farmers with five trainees and one facilitator. If there are 15 trainees in the PST, for example, you might think about splitting into two or three interview groups. Even an interview group of three farmers with seven to nine trainees and one trainer is not bad. In any of these cases, trainees need to coordinate among one another which questions will be asked in what order. All in all, the interview session should consist of more than 15 questions with the option of one follow-up inquiry (no more) per question.
- 2.** Language or cross-cultural trainers, as facilitators, should begin the interview session by explaining again to the farmers that the trainees are there to learn (see above). They need to emphasize that the trainees are not looking for right or wrong answers, but rather the farmers' opinions and ideas. The facilitators should also ask the farmers' permission for the trainees to take notes during the interview because they will not otherwise be able to recall everything the farmers tell them about their farming knowledge.
- 3.** Trainees should ask the farmers their questions (no translations) and listen to the farmers' responses via the language or cross-cultural trainers' translations. As the activity proceeds, trainees should note the ideas and practices that they find most interesting, and try to think of one follow-up question. They can also note the interview ambience, the farmers' expressions and mannerisms (e.g., whether or not they appear comfortable), and other non-question items.
- 4.** Trainees should understand that the activity's purpose is to practice asking questions and listening to responses. Trainees will be in a learning mode, and under no circumstances should they offer recommendations or judge the farmers' responses. Any analysis should occur after the exercise during a designated "reflection" session (see below). Again, language or cross-cultural trainers should translate the responses verbatim, not interpret them. They should formulate follow-up questions without interpretation as best they can.



REFLECTION

Ideally, language and cross-cultural trainers and APCDs should discuss the interview activity with trainees. Did trainees learn to phrase questions that elicit the specific knowledge and perceptions that farmers have about the environment? Can they explain concepts about natural resource management that farmers have? If a formal reflection session is not held, trainees should find time, no matter where or when, to reflect on the interviews. They should reflect on what they learned and on how the experience might affect their upcoming work in development:

1. Was there anything about the interviews that surprised or intrigued you in a significant way?
2. If you could conduct the interviews again, what would you change, and why?
3. What did you appreciate most about your colleagues' questions and farmers' responses?
4. How did you feel prior to and during the interviews, and how do you feel now?
5. Other questions for reflection?

NOTES



2 **PST SESSION 2: DOING AN ACTIVITY — BIOPHYSICAL**

OVERVIEW

In this session, trainees will practice the community mentor activity taken from the Biophysical Environment section of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. They will then discuss what they learned from the activity, and consider learning strategies that they think will be successful for their community entry at their sites. Two points underlie the purpose of this session:

- The activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* can and should be adapted by trainees (and Volunteers) to suit their own interests and circumstances.
- Many trainees (and Volunteers) will find the community entry activities difficult at first. They might benefit from practicing with other trainees now, thinking of how they might adapt the activity to their own interests and discussing what works for them in terms of learning.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.** Each trainee will be able to describe how his or her mentor interacts with his or her environment.
- 2.** Each trainee will be able to describe his or her own successful learning style and strategies.

TIME REQUIRED

Two hours for the activity. Two hours for reflection.

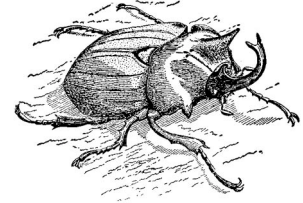
PARTICIPANTS

- Trainees
- 1-3 language trainers or cross-cultural trainers for facilitation, to help with question formulation prior to the activity and at the reflection session
- Trainer/APCD to facilitate the reflection session



TRAINER/TRAINEE PREPARATION

On their own, trainees should identify two or three people in the local community near or within (in the case of CBT) the training site whose work they find interesting. For example, these people could be a blacksmith, an onion grower, a traditional healer, a religious leader, or a school director. Prior to the day of the practice activity, trainees should introduce themselves to these people (one trainee per person) and arrange to spend a couple of hours with them as they work.



Similar to PST Session 1, trainees and language or cross-cultural trainers should work together in advance of this activity to prepare a set of questions that trainees, without translation, can ask their mentor. The questions should be relevant to the work of the people with whom they will spend time. Trainers should ask the trainees to refer to and use the community mentor activity in the Biophysical section of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* as a resource to guide this activity. Trainees may worry that they do not have sufficient language skills for this activity. They should understand that observation and spending time with their key informants are valid and valuable learning strategies too. Trainees should understand that they are in a learning mode, and should not offer recommendations or judge the work of their key informants.

ACTIVITY PROCEDURE



1. This session follows the method described as the “community mentors” activity in the Biophysical Environment section of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. Trainees should have 15 questions ready to ask their mentor during a two-hour period. The questions asked by trainees of their key informant (mentor) will likely be different from the examples given in that guide. The questions should be relevant to their mentor’s work. If the questions will be asked in a language other than English, the language trainers or cross-cultural trainers will need to assist the trainees in formulating them correctly. If trainees are in an English-speaking country and their mentor does not speak English, they should not use a translator. Rather, they need to communicate with their mentor in his or her language.
2. Trainees will spend time (two hours) with their individual key informant or mentor. They should use whichever language they can in order to learn about the work of their mentor, but no one should translate. Trainees do not need to stick to their script of prepared questions. It may be better to hold those questions in reserve for moments when asking them seems appropriate or timely. For this reason, it is important to learn phrases in local or national languages like “What is that?” or “How does this help you?” or “How do you use this?” or “How does that work?” There are many other simple questions that trainees should be able to come up with to evoke a significant response and yield a great deal of information.

- 3.** During the time with their mentor, trainees should pay close attention to the sights, sounds, and smells they encounter. They might also note the people who stop by to greet their mentor, and try to obtain a sense of what those particular interactions are about. Are they about work? Are they about family? It is best if trainees make mental notes of what they find interesting or confusing rather than take notes in a notebook, as that might make people uncomfortable.

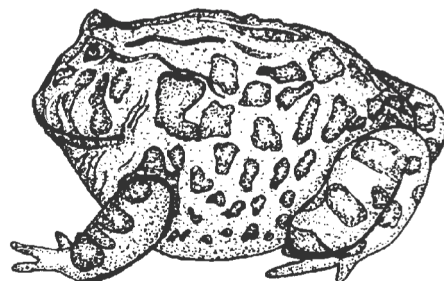
REFLECTION



Soon after their return from the community mentor activity, trainees should reflect on what happened, what they learned, and how they learned. Trainees should think about how their mentors interact with their environment in their work. Trainees should also think about the learning strategies they used (and enjoyed) to learn about their mentor. Trainers and APCDs can use these and other questions to guide the reflection process in small or large groups:

- How did you feel prior to, during, and right after the activity? How do you feel now?
- What did you learn about the work of your key informant?
- In what ways does your mentor interact with his or her environment?
- Which natural resources does your mentor use in his or her work?
- What do you admire in your key informant? What do you appreciate?
- What did you learn about your mentor (or anything else) through observation?
- What did you learn through language?
- What learning strategies worked best for you? Why?
- What didn't seem to work as well as you wanted? Why not?
- What do you think you would do differently with your next mentor experience?

NOTES



3

PST SESSION 3: DOING AN ACTIVITY — ECONOMIC

OVERVIEW

In this session, trainees will practice the market survey activity taken from the Economic Environment section of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. They will then discuss what they learned from the activity, and consider learning strategies that they think will be successful for their community entry at their sites. Two points underlie the purpose of this session:

- Local markets are a key environmental locus of most communities' economic and social life and thus can serve new Volunteers well as a “living classroom” for community entry.
- By spending time in markets and building relationships with merchants and others, trainees can learn much about community livelihoods, social relationships, and what people value.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.** Trainees will be able to describe and characterize a local market environment and develop an informed hypothesis about the value of this market to various local livelihoods.
- 2.** Trainees will be able to describe their own successful learning style and strategies with particular respect to informing themselves about a local economic environment.

TIME REQUIRED

Two hours for the activity. Two hours for reflection.

PARTICIPANTS

- Trainees
- 1-3 language trainers or cross-cultural trainers for facilitation, to help with question formulation prior to the activity and at the reflection session
- Trainer/APCD to facilitate the reflection session



TRAINER/TRAINEE PREPARATION

Be sure that trainees understand the objectives of this activity (see above). As in PST Sessions 1 and 2, trainees and language or cross-cultural trainers should work together to prepare a set of questions that trainees can challenge themselves to answer. It is worthwhile in terms of language and cross-cultural learning to phrase these questions in languages other than English. Trainees should plan to pose some of the questions to various people in the market as a way for them to cross-check their own observations. Generally speaking, the questions should be based on the trainees' particular interests with respect to markets. To guide the formulation of their questions, trainees can refer to the market survey activity in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. This will also help trainees determine how to proceed with the activity. Trainees may worry that they do not speak the market language well enough to conduct the activity, so it is important for them to understand that observation is a valid learning strategy.

ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

1. Trainees will spend time (two hours) in the market on their own. It is important that the trainees make every effort to work individually, however difficult that may seem. During the exercise, they should use whichever language they can in order to learn about the market, but no one should translate. Trainees should not stick to a script of prepared questions, but rather refer to their questions for moments when asking them seems appropriate or timely. For this reason, it is important to learn phrases in local or national languages like “What is that?” or “What is that used for?” or “Where does that come from?” or “How much does that cost?” Trainees need to be aware of being drawn into negotiations for products in the market that they have no desire at all to purchase! There are many other simple questions that trainees can think of to elicit a great deal of information from market people.
2. Encourage trainees to think about and focus on what interests them. Work with them to suggest ways to engage in the activity. For example, trainees might wish to discover:
 - Particular products that they have never seen before.
 - Sights, sounds, and smells that are provocative.
 - Interactions among people, behaviors, or events that are confusing or compelling.
 - Who is in the market? Who sells what? Where are they from?
 - Various natural resources for sale, their purpose, and where they come from.
 - Items that replace local products or services, such as plastic bowls, soap, fertilizers, pesticides, and what people used before these were available.
 - Sections of the market where particular ethnic groups or products predominate.



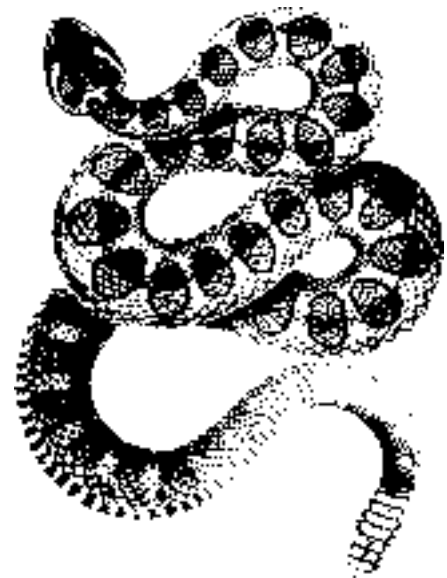
Tell trainees that they can engage in the activity in any way that is comfortable for them, but they should spend the entire two hours in the market. They may sit for the entire time with one person, walk around, accompany a host family member, etc. Trainees should refrain from taking notes in a notebook, but instead record their thoughts and learning afterward. They can try to make a mental map of the market and return home to draw the map from memory. Remind trainees that, above all, they can document their learning in any way they would like, and that they will be sharing this with the group during the reflection session.

REFLECTION

Trainees should reconvene for the reflection session shortly after the activity, ideally the same day. Trainees should exchange strategies and ideas that worked for them. They should be encouraged to think about their own learning styles. This session should be a dialogue between participants and everyone should get a chance to speak about his or her experiences. Provide trainees with the following questions that they can use to guide their reflection process.

- How did you feel during the activity? How did you feel afterward? How do you feel now?
- What did you learn about what people value?
- What did you learn about the local economy?
- What did you learn about social relationships?
- What did you find interesting or confusing?
- What did you learn through observation?
- What did you learn through language?
- What learning strategies worked for you? What didn't seem to work?
- What do you think you would do differently with your next market experience?

NOTES



QUARTERLY REPORTS, IN-SERVICE TRAINING, AND THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

QUARTERLY REPORTS AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The reflection questions at the end of each section in the community entry guide *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* are designed to help Volunteers clarify and direct their learning at their sites. Some of the questions are complex and require extensive thought by Volunteers about community dynamics and practices. To ensure that Volunteers devote sufficient attention to the reflection process, APCDs may want to use these questions as the basis for Volunteers' first quarterly reports. This idea is further addressed in the PST session plan designs.

PROJECT FRAMEWORKS

APCDs will be able to review what new Volunteers have learned through the use of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* and make suggestions for development activities based on:

- The goals and objectives of the project plan.
- The interests and strengths of a Volunteer.
- The characteristics of a Volunteer's host community.

By reviewing together what Volunteers have learned during their first several months at site, APCDs and Volunteers can determine how Volunteers' understanding of their communities relates to the goals of the project framework. More specifically, APCDs can help clarify the link among project framework objectives, community realities, and possible Volunteer activities with reference to the Volunteers' learning that has occurred thus far. An example of how this might work can be found in the IST session plan designs.

IST AND MUTUAL LEARNING

Asking Volunteers to present during IST what they have learned as a result of using the community entry guide will help to ensure that Volunteers have engaged in some of the activities suggested in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. Additionally, Volunteers will be able to enhance their learning and discuss development activity options by sharing their insights and experiences with other Volunteers, Peace Corps staff, and other IST participants. While all Volunteers should present their learning during IST, the presentation methods can vary among Volunteers. These presentations should reflect Volunteers' interests, creativity, and personality. Some Volunteers may want to present their findings orally; others may be comfortable doing a poster presentation. This idea is further discussed in the sections on PST and IST that follow.



4 **PST SESSION 4: LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK**

OVERVIEW

At some point in their service, Volunteers are likely to ask themselves, or their APCDs, “What are we doing here?” One answer, especially applicable to the first several months of service, is that Volunteers are “here to learn.” Two goals of the Peace Corps experience relate to cultural exchange. It is no coincidence that cross-cultural understanding is enhanced by practicing the community entry activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. The more Volunteers learn about the biophysical, economic, and social environment of their communities, and their cultural values, the more effectively they will be able to participate in local development action. It is also important that Volunteers grasp how their community entry learning relates to the objectives outlined in their project framework. The contribution that Volunteers make toward achieving those objectives is a primary reason “why they are there.” The PST session described as follows is thus intended to help Volunteers map out their role in the development process.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.** Trainees will be able to explain the goals and objectives described in the project framework.
- 2.** Trainees will be able to explain their APCD’s expectations for the initial quarterly report.
- 3.** Trainees will explain how they will prepare for their initial IST, to occur within four months.
- 4.** Trainees will explain how they will link certain activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* to effective implementation of one or more objectives in the project framework.



TIME REQUIRED

2 hours

PARTICIPANTS

- Trainees
- 1-3 language trainers or cross-cultural trainers for facilitation
- Trainer/APCD to facilitate the reflection session

TRAINER/TRAINEE PREPARATION

APCDs should prepare their project framework and provide each trainee with a copy. The standard example in this training manual (see below) includes questions that Volunteers should consider in learning about their community's cultural values and livelihoods. These cultural and livelihood considerations should not be included in the framework that you give to the trainees. They will be asked to suggest considerations of their own related to their own forthcoming work.

ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

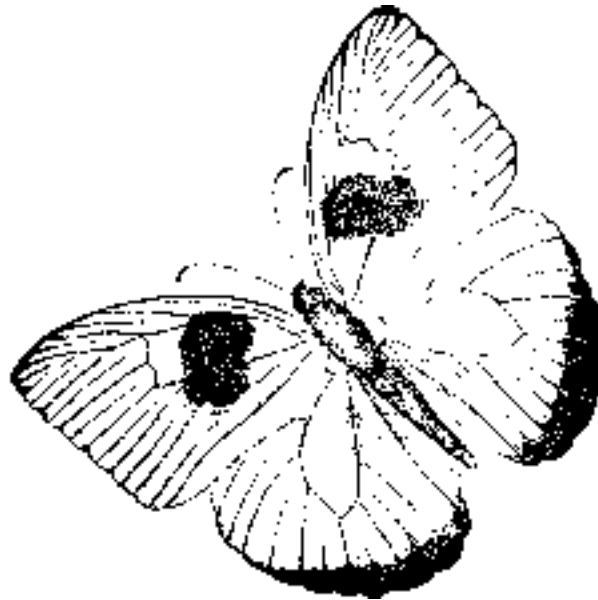
- 1.** After the APCD or technical trainer distributes to each trainee a copy of his or her project framework (not the example shown here), ask the trainees to read and study it for five to 10 minutes. Explain to the trainees that their work in their communities is expected to consist of implementing the activities outlined in the framework that they now have in their hands.
- 2.** Tell trainees that the activities in their project framework may seem clear, but if they try to implement them right after entering the community based on what they learned in PST, their time may not be efficiently spent. Why not? Perhaps the trainees will offer reasons. Note these. The generally correct response, which some trainees offer, is that all communities will already be using practices and possess knowledge that will facilitate their work as Volunteers. Therefore, as new Volunteers, they need to engage themselves in learning about these practices and knowledge before trying to conduct the activities described in the framework.
- 3.** Divide the trainees into small groups (three to five per group) and assign them several project plan activities to discuss. Ask the trainees to think about what they may need to know before trying to implement the project plan activities. Tell them to write down their ideas about this.
- 4.** Also ask the trainees to imagine (and write down) the knowledge that might already exist in the community that would help them conduct their activities. The APCD/trainer should monitor the groups and provide guidance, if necessary, with reference to the questions attached in the sample project framework as needed.
- 5.** Each small group should work on exercises #3 and #4 (above) for about 45 minutes, and then present their ideas in a plenary session. Include time for questions and discussion.



ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

- Before this session ends, make sure trainees understand that, at the IST in three to four months, they will present what they learn at their sites from using the community entry guide, *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. At that IST, new Volunteers can present their learning in any way they prefer (written, visual, artistic, oral) based on their own interests. The trainees should also understand that, in these IST presentations, they will be asked to focus on their community's biophysical, economic, and social environments, and how these are linked to local cultural values, and prospective development actions within the project framework.
- APCDs may wish to use the reflection questions located at the end of each section in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* as the basis for the first quarterly report. If so, APCDs need to be sure to prepare the trainees to write that report, and remind them periodically during their first couple of months of service.

NOTES



TIPS AND TOOLS

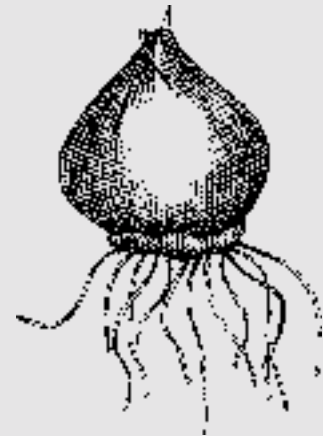
INTRODUCING THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK TO TRAINEES IN PST AND VOLUNTEERS IN IST

INTRODUCTION

The project framework is the heart and soul of a project plan. It succinctly spells out the purpose, goals, and objectives of Volunteers' service in a particular country within a specific program sector. It articulates the types of activities that Volunteers should undertake and the desired results of those activities. Most important, the project framework is a living document that can be reviewed, discussed, and adjusted based on input from Volunteers and Counterparts in accordance with current circumstances and realities within the program sector and the host country. The final two or three weeks of Pre-Service Training is an ideal time to introduce the project framework to trainees. The initial In-Service Training, usually held three or four months after swearing in, is an opportune time to solicit ideas about modifying the project framework.

BENEFITS: WHY INTRODUCE YOUR PROJECT FRAMEWORK TO TRAINEES AND VOLUNTEERS?

- Because Goal 1 of the Peace Corps suggests that Volunteers serve the needs of their host countries for a common purpose that we call *development*, which implies a process of *change*. The project framework is a plan to nurture change in the communities where Volunteers serve through collaborative activities that lead to observable or tangible results.
- Because the development results that Volunteers and their Counterparts work to achieve center on building human capacity at four levels: individual, service provider, organizational, and community. The goals articulated in a project framework reflect the plan to address the capacity of people at some or all of these levels to improve their lives.
- Because the work of Volunteers and their Counterparts to build capacity is strategic in nature. The goals that define a project framework are grounded in national strategies for long-term progress. While Volunteers serve for two or three years, the project framework helps them see how they contribute to the “big picture” of ongoing national development.



ISSUES AND METHODS TO CONSIDER

Pre-Service Training (PST)	In-Service Training (IST)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project framework can be largely theoretical when discussed out of context. Testimonies given at the PST by first- and second-year Volunteers about their work with reference to project objectives can add a measure of reality to the framework. • Trainees will perceive the project framework in different ways, finding it complex, boring, oversimplified, limiting, too expansive, etc. Discussion that centers on project activities may help trainees focus on work they could undertake in their communities. After their return from a visit to their future site, or another site, ask trainees to brainstorm some daily tasks they might undertake in support of the activities. • Trainees do not tolerate lecture formats well, so anything interactive to introduce the project framework will be appreciated. You might give each trainee two or three cards with an activity, desired change, goal, or purpose statement written on them. Ask them to work in small teams to assemble the project framework in a competitive yet cooperative way. Advise the trainees that some of the statements may be “dummies” and should not be used. • Most Volunteers will work on one or two project objectives and therefore, during training, trainees should consider the unique skills and interests they bring to their Peace Corps service, and try to match these with at least one project activity presented in the framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers at the initial IST can formulate plans of action based on community needs, assets, project objectives, and their own skills and interests. This information and the data obtained from conducting the exercises in PACA or <i>Learning Local Environmental Knowledge: A Volunteer’s Guide to Community Entry</i>, can constitute the Volunteers’ first report. • Present the periodic report form to Volunteers at the reconnect IST, noting how the questions asked relate to the project framework. Ask Volunteers to do their first report right there at the IST based on the experiences they have had thus far at site. The Volunteers can share this information in small and large groups at the IST. Point out that subsequent reports should contain information about the project activities the Volunteers undertake, as well as the effects the activities are having on changes in people’s behavior, skills, and knowledge. • Use project design and management (PDM) sessions at the reconnect IST to guide Volunteers and their counterparts in fashioning a community-specific project that will contribute to the larger effort outlined in the project framework. • Spice the PDM sessions with project management exercises to give Volunteers and their Counterparts the skills, confidence, and self-identity of being project guides (Volunteers) and managers (Counterparts). This makes the design exercises less tedious and frustrating, and more meaningful.

PROJECT FRAMEWORK EXAMPLE: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Project Purpose

Individuals and families in urban and rural areas will lead healthier lifestyles because of their knowledge and use of new skills and best practices in local environmental resource management.

Project Goal

Community members, young people in particular, will change their behavior in positive ways to conserve and regenerate their local, regional, and national environment.

Activities

What major activities will Volunteers and their community partners do?

Desired Change

What knowledge, attitudes, skills, or behaviors are expected to change because of these activities?

1.1 By (YEAR), Volunteers and their Counterparts will design and implement environmental education activities for 5,000 young people in formal and informal settings.

1.1 This will result in 4,000 young people who are able to demonstrate knowledge about local, national, and international environmental issues and who are able to make better decisions about managing their local environment.

1.2 By (YEAR), Volunteers and their Counterparts will provide training in environmental education (content, techniques, and methodology) to 1,000 youth leaders, teachers, and nongovernment organization professionals.

1.2 This will result in 500 of these participants actively implementing applied environmental education programs (learning plus action) in their communities.

1.3 By (YEAR), Volunteers and their Counterparts will develop applied environmental education training materials.

1.3 This will result in the use of improved training materials by 200 formal and nonformal organizations.

1.4 By (YEAR), Volunteers and their Counterparts will design and implement two environmental education projects, geared to involve the entire community, in 100 communities.

1.4 This will result in 75 communities modifying their local infrastructure for managing natural resources in a systematic and constructive way.

1.5 By (YEAR), Volunteers and their Counterparts will provide training in technical practices in natural resource conservation and environmental health to 200 environmental organizations.

1.5 This will result in the incorporation of these technical practices into the natural resource management and environmental health programs of 100 environmental organizations.

EXAMPLES OF CULTURAL AND LIVELIHOOD CONSIDERATIONS

Biophysical

- What geographic characteristics do community members identify to determine the best site for various land uses?
- What local natural resource management sites can be used in trainings to illustrate successful conservation action?
- What tree seed species do men and women farmers prefer to collect, store, and use? Why these species?

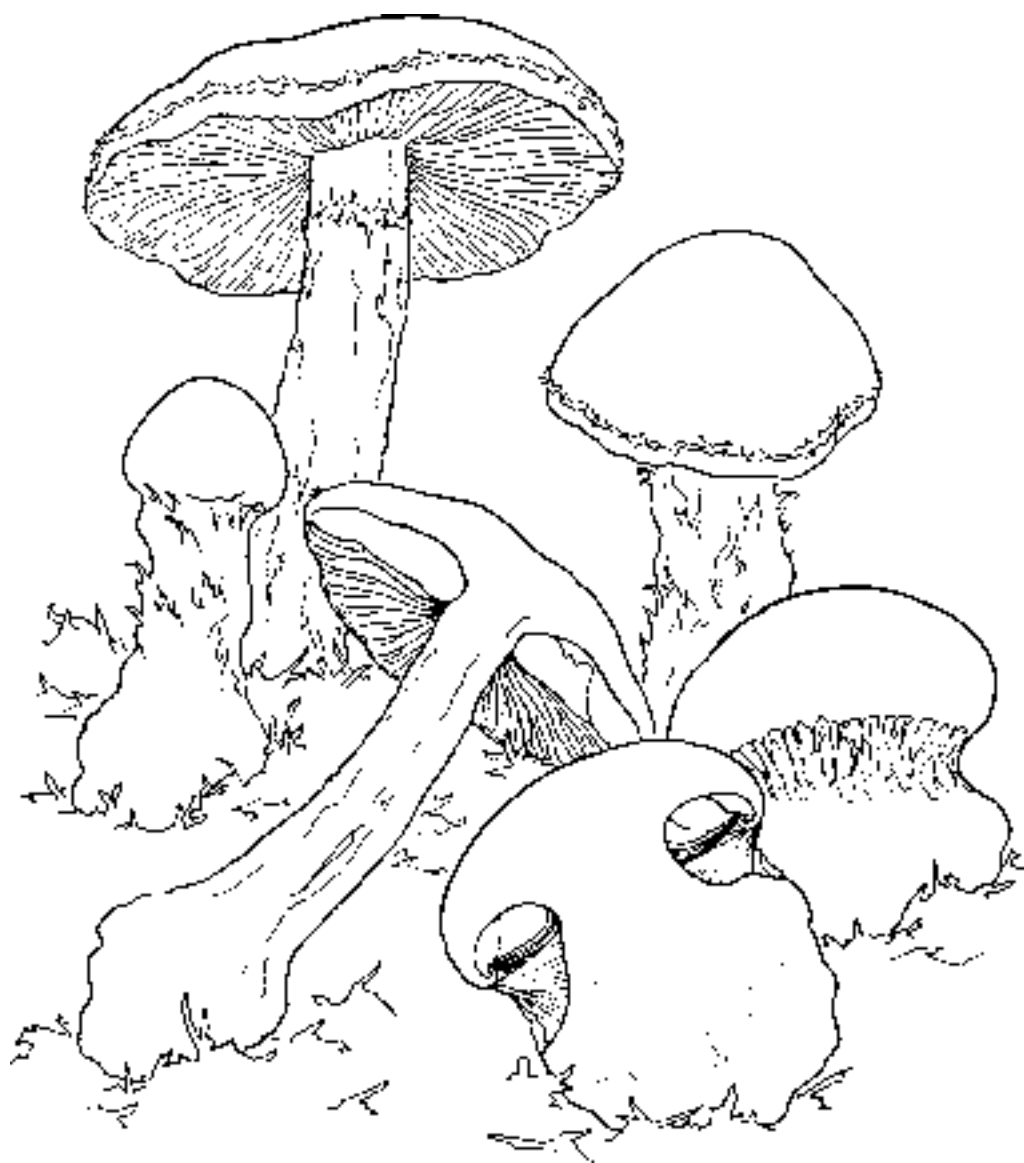
Economic

- How do workshop participants relate environmental conservation to livelihood security?
- What do local people feel are the benefits of and constraints to adopting environmental conservation practices?
- How can the community build on what local people already do to conserve natural resources, e.g. water?

Social

- What traditional beliefs do people have that serve the goals of environmental conservation?
- Are water harvesting techniques perceived to be a communitywide or individual family responsibility?
- Which men and women are advocates for conservation in the community; how can they contribute to the trainings?







IN-SERVICE TRAINING SESSION DESIGNS

The overall purpose of these particular IST sessions is to discuss how the learning experiences that new Volunteers gained during their community entry phase of service can be applied to the formulation of individualized plans of action. These plans should be based on the use and availability of community assets, the expression of community needs and visions for the future, the project framework objectives, and the interests of Volunteers, Counterparts, and community members and groups. These IST session plans, which are linked directly to Volunteers' use of the community entry guide *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*, are designed to stimulate a discussion of how Volunteer learning can contribute to development activities in the community. Ideally, some community partners should be present to observe, comment, and advise Volunteers on their action plans. The following two sessions require five to six hours.



1

1ST SESSION 1: VOLUNTEER PRESENTATIONS AND REVIEWS

OVERVIEW

In this session, Volunteers will organize and present what they learned about their community through use of the community entry guide, and review what the other Volunteers learned. Volunteers will make presentations on the activities they did and select a few reflection questions that highlight what they learned. Trainers and APCDs may want to advise trainees/Volunteers in advance of IST of the content of these presentations, perhaps when details of the IST are sent to them.

OBJECTIVES

1. Volunteers will be able to describe how their Volunteer colleagues used the activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* to facilitate their community entry.
2. Volunteers will be able to cite at least three examples of environmental knowledge that other Volunteers acquired from use of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*.
3. Volunteers will be able to explain how other Volunteers recognized local community assets that will contribute to realization of the project framework objectives.

TIME REQUIRED

1/2 day (3-4 hours)

PARTICIPANTS

Volunteers; training staff/APCD; community partners (not necessarily limited to Counterparts)

TRAINER/VOLUNTEER PREPARATION

Volunteers will prepare for this IST session by using the activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* during their first several months of service (prior to the IST). APCDs should have told trainees that their presentations should illustrate through words or pictures:

1. The activities they conducted.

2. The environmental knowledge they acquired. **NOTE:** Tell Volunteers to choose three examples of knowledge they learned from conducting activities suggested in any of the three sections of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*.
3. Local assets they discovered useful to implementing project plan objectives.

Volunteers should be encouraged to be as creative as they would like in their presentations, utilizing oral and visual methods of presentation.

ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

Divide Volunteers into small discussion groups to present and review their learning. If community partners are present, they should participate in these discussions. Volunteers, however, should facilitate the presentations. No group should be larger than six people (e.g., three Volunteers, three partners) but could be as small as three Volunteers if no partners are present.

REFLECTION

Ask Volunteers to reflect on the following questions:

- How has your understanding of local environmental knowledge changed based on what you have seen and heard in the presentations of other Volunteers?
- Is there anything that you thought you had understood about local environmental knowledge that you are now less certain about?
- What other biophysical, economic, or social elements of environmental knowledge do you think you would like to further explore when you return to your site?
- What did you learn today from other Volunteers or community partners that is particularly extraordinary and inspiring?

NOTES



2

1ST SESSION 2: REVIEW OF QUARTERLY REPORTS

OVERVIEW

In this session, Volunteers will discuss the content of their first quarterly reports. Volunteers who have used the reflection questions in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* as the basis for their first quarterly report should, for their part in the discussion, pick one or two issues that emerged from the biophysical, economic, or social activities that they conducted. Their selection of which issues to focus on should be based on how their new knowledge will influence their contribution to development activities in their communities. All of the discussion should ensue with reference to the objectives in their project framework. Volunteers who did not use the community entry guide can participate in the discussion by reacting to and reflecting on what their colleagues have learned. If none or the vast majority of the new Volunteers did not use the community entry guide, of course, this IST session will not likely be an effective training tool.

OBJECTIVES

1. Volunteers will be able to explain what their colleagues have learned about which biophysical, social, and economic issues are likely keys to effective and efficient development action in their respective communities.
2. Volunteers will be able to cite which elements of each quarterly report submitted by their colleagues are similar and different (i.e., a compare and contrast exercise), and how the common elements that Volunteers share can contribute in a broad way to realization of the objectives written in the project framework. **NOTE:** One possible outcome related to this objective is suggested modifications by Volunteers to the project framework.

TIME REQUIRED

2 hours

PARTICIPANTS

Volunteers; trainer/APCD



TRAINER/VOLUNTEER PREPARATION

Volunteers will prepare for this session by completing their initial quarterly reports based on the reflection questions *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. Trainers and APCDs need to remind the trainees/Volunteers near the end of PST and again during their first month at their sites that the IST will be based in part on their use of the community entry guide and completion of the first quarterly report. Trainers and the APCD should prepare by thoroughly reviewing the quarterly reports prior to this session.

ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

Divide Volunteers into small discussion groups of three to six people. Each Volunteer should choose at least one but not more than three important observations related to biophysical, social, or economic environmental knowledge they made when considering the reflection questions. These observations should have been included in their first quarterly report as well. Volunteers should explain how these observations led to which conclusions about how the environment and people's livelihood are linked, and how this will affect their own contribution to community development action, relative to the project framework. The trainer or APCD should visit the groups to offer guidance or clarification as needed. This exercise should take no more than one hour. The Volunteers can present their findings in plenary during the session's second hour.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



To further stimulate thought and discussion, ask Volunteers to consider the following questions:

- What conclusions made by other Volunteers had you not considered, but now will?
- What are the major biophysical, economic, and social issues that appear to be common to most if not all Volunteers and their partners working within the project framework?
- As compared to other Volunteers, what is largely different or unique about the issues faced by your community with regard to implementing the project framework?



NOTE: THE LINK TO PACA



Although the publication *Participatory Analysis for Community Action* (PACA) has been used as a community entry tool in the past, it may be better used as a tool for identifying areas for development intervention at about the fourth month of Volunteer service. PACA activities may make more sense and be more valuable to Volunteers after they have engaged in the activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. Thus, depending on the program strategy of the APCD, PACA can be introduced during the IST sessions, rather than during PST, as a way for Volunteers to further clarify the direction of the development action to which they will contribute. Because *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* focuses on general learning throughout the community, rather than assessment, Volunteers will gain a broader base of community knowledge by using the community entry guide, and will thus be better able to understand the information that emerges from the PACA activities. There are already Peace Corps PACA training materials readily available to Volunteers, so they are not covered in this training manual.





VOLUNTEER EVALUATION OF *LEARNING LOCAL* ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

To be completed by Volunteers at IST

- 1.** Which activities did you use in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*?
- 2.** Which activities were your favorites? Why?
- 3.** Which activities were your least favorites? Why?
- 4.** How did the guide help you learn about the community?
- 5.** How did the guide help you learn language?
- 6.** Was the guide adaptable to your circumstances? If not, why not?
- 7.** How would you change the guide?
- 8.** Would you recommend that future Volunteers use the guide? If not, why not?





APCD/TRAINER EVALUATION OF *LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE*

VOLUNTEER GUIDE

- 1.** Do you think that the learning activities helped Volunteers adjust to their communities more quickly than they might have otherwise? Why or why not?
- 2.** Do you think that use of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* promotes a good foundation for subsequent development activities? Why or why not?
- 3.** Have the reflection questions served as a good basis for quarterly reports? Why or why not?
- 4.** Do you think that *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* promotes language learning? Why or why not?
- 5.** How would you like to change *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*?

TRAINING MANUAL

- 1.** Did you find the training manual helpful in introducing *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* to Volunteers? Why or why not?
- 2.** Were you able to integrate some of the training sessions into the already existing framework of PST and IST? How?
- 3.** Were the sessions helpful to increasing trainee/Volunteer understanding of the project framework?
- 4.** How would you change the training manual to make it more effective?