



National Action Programme to Combat Desertification

Department of Land Conservation and Combat Desertification of the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development

Digital Newsletter

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Dear Readers:

It is my pleasure to get in touch with you through the 12th Publication of this Digital Newsletter, which helps us to become aware of the environmental problems that endanger our planet and to implement actions to solve them.

I would like to inform you that this important tool created within the framework of the National Action Program against Desertification, daily increase its number of subscribers, who are willing to provide us with their documentation of interest in order to spread it and be within everybody's reach.

The scourge of desertification and the consequences it entails for rural populations are a global issue that concerns and invites us all to try twice as hard. Thus, we reiterate our support to the strengthening of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as a valid tool for fighting against poverty.

Moreover, we let you know that we are beginning a new stage defined by the creation of policies that include new financial strategies, institutional frameworks and agreements, and innovative developments in the science and technologies areas. We are carrying out projects related to sustainable, local development, which improve the life quality and the natural environment of the populations affected by this global process.

A clear compromise on behalf of the Argentine Republic has been shown when opportunely welcoming the request to host the Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which will be hold in Buenos Aires, from September 21st to October 2nd, 2009.

At the same time, we are making progress in the creation of necessary environmental rules related to natural resources, which allow generating institutional processes of resource management at national, provincial and municipal levels.

Finally, I invite you to keep on pursuing our aims in the search of Sustainable Development and human dignity.

Kind regards,

Dr. Homero Bibiloni
Secretary of Environment and Sustainable Development
Argentine Republic

AGENDA

March 30-31

Visit of GEF's CEO, Ms. Monique Barbut to the Argentine Republic.

April 15-17: Merlo, San Luis

LADA Workshop for International Assessment.

April 20-24: Uruguay

DEFI Mercosur Course Workshop: UNCCD World Mechanism.

Virtual forum for the implementation of the UNCCD Regional Coordination Mechanism.

For more information please visit:

<http://forum.global-mechanism.org> o
<http://lacforum.global-mechanism.org>

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451 San Martín St. , 4.º floor
Office 434 (1004)
Autonomous City of Buenos Aires
ARGENTINE REPUBLIC

Tel. (5411) 4348-8567/73
Fax (5411) 4348-8265

UNPD Project ARG/06/008
"Building Strategic Financial Partnerships to Consolidate The National Action Programme to Combat Desertification in Argentina"



Education and training to face desertification

The fight against desertification forces us to consider not only what is taught but also what is known. In many cases, knowledge of nature is not just limited to a Natural Science manual or to bean germination in a jar. As landscape spaces move away from big capital cities, they turn the same colour as the land and the exchange with the environment follows other rules, many of which are hostile.

March, month that marks the beginning of school activities in the Argentine Republic, is favourable for discussing education issues; in this opportunity, from a perspective that reviews educative and formal strategies.

In "Thoughts about Environmental Education II" ("Reflexiones sobre Educación Ambiental II"), Edgar González Gaudiano, PhD in Philosophy and Educational Sciences by the UNED (acronym in Spanish for the National University of Distance Learning) includes the classification made by Lucie Sauvé.

This classification deals with the different concepts according to which the environment is conceived. The first of these principles considers environment as the original and pure setting, which mankind has taken some distance from. The second of them presents environment as the matrix that generates resources for the development processes. The third one, as the damaged and threatened space which requires skill acquisition to find solutions. The fourth and fifth concepts are completely opposite: while one of them focuses on the everyday environment, the other one emphasizes the relationship with the planet, finiteness, and worldviews. The last principle follows the line of community participation. All of these concepts coexist, some stand out over others or, as it will be shown below, become a unique law.

González Gaudiano establishes the importance of including EA (Spanish acronym for Environmental Education) in the school syllabus. As he points out, the areas responsible for promoting this insertion are diverse. In the United States, EA was promoted by the primary school teachers; in Spain, by Ecology academicians and in Mexico, by biologists. In this last case, there was a clear rejection because EA incorporation had not been promoted by the education field and, from the limited environment-nature concept thought up by Sauvé, it was established that the environmental issue was part of the school syllabus thanks to the Natural Sciences contribution (fauna, flora and other old lessons we all have ever studied).



Despite objections, EA has been set off in different countries, such as Argentina. Nevertheless, in order to face this educative process successfully, it is required training, specialization, seriousness, commitment and flexibility to unlock the seized up school programs.

EA should be seen as the possibility of enjoying environment and not as another obligation or burden. Daniel Luzzi, B.S. in Education, Teacher of Environmental Management and PhD in Pedagogy thinks as follows: "EA is an ideal stage to work on the notion of environmental membership, that is to say, the early stimulation of being in contact with different environments and associated feelings. We think of vital importance to consider that each individual protects what he/she likes, appreciates, enjoys. Therefore, EA should not only be conceived in terms of environment protection, as this just contributes to increase the burden of oppression society accumulates among their multiple unsatisfied needs. On the contrary, EA strengthens the enjoyment of environment and the necessary contact between people and the natural and built environment (...)"

EA in Argentina

In 2006, the National Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development (Secretaría de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable de la Nación) created the Coordination Unit of Environmental Education (Unidad de Coordinación de Educación Ambiental). This Coordination Unit aims at discussing the sense of educational-environmental processes undertaken from the different provincial and municipal areas, as well as promoting the educational-environmental practices as critical discussion spaces, in order to encourage and support change processes aimed at sustainable development.

This Unit intends to get involved with all the SAYDS (Spanish acronym for National Secretariats of Environment and Sustainable Development) departments in order to be part of the national strategy of environmental education. Moreover, there is a need of defining an EA policy that articulates with the formal education system at all levels and forms, while, at the same time, EA is included in the offer of training, education, improvement and update programmes. EA has been stated as a constitutional right:

Every inhabitant has the right to a healthy, well-balanced environment, suitable for human development and for productive activities to meet present needs without endangering future generations; and it is his/her duty to preserve it. Environmental damage shall generate the obligation to recompose it, as stated by law.

Authorities shall ensure this right protection, the rational use of natural resources, the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage and of biological diversity, and the environmental information and education.

It is the Nation's duty to enact laws that contain the basic protection premises, and it is the Provinces' duty to make all the necessary laws that complement the Nation's, as long as the former shall not alter local jurisdictions.

The inflow of current or potential hazardous as well as of radioactive waste into the national territory is hereby prohibited.

Article 41 of the National Constitution of the Argentine Republic

During the interview given to the Digital Newsletter, Professor Graciela Ostroski, member of the Coordination Unit of the National Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development, established the foundations on which EA should be built: "Environmental Education plays a relevant role: to reeducate us in other values and principles. This means to improve our relationship with the people around us, paying attention to the essential values that are mainly related to a mechanistic opinion of the world, which has to do with a very simple way of thinking".

Through both her experience and teacher training programmes organized by the Coordination Unit (for the example, the programme related to the Matanza-Riachuelo Basin), Graciela Ostroski knows teachers' difficulties in communicating environmental issues to students. These difficulties are due to social reality, to the few resources available to teachers and to the fact that, besides their teaching role, they have to assume social workers' or psychologists' functions. "If teachers do not have a clear understanding of the social problems or they are not interested in them, it becomes obvious that they are not able to explain or transmit them", Ostroski states. Moreover, it is important to adapt language and technical terms to students, besides establishing a parameter with their everyday experiences: "We should go step by step and take small actions; for example, we could ask students: "How can the climate change problem be solved?". It can be solved with small local projects, learning first to remove the rubbish dump out of the school corner and contributing in a serious way; because if we present students a megaproject, they will not be able to witness the results. We try to show them results in the daily routine and students' families are welcomed to join us".

The [Coordination Unit of Environmental Education](#) of the National Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development has organized a seven-module [Training Virtual Course for Provincial Officers](#).

Furthermore, the Coordination Unit has a [Virtual Library on Environmental Education](#), a space on the Internet to spread computerized publications. The purpose of this Library is to make teachers, communicators, students and the community in general have an easier access to reference reading material on Environmental Education.

PAN's role

One of the areas of the National Action Program against Desertification (PAN, according to its acronym in Spanish) is the Public Education, Training and Awareness Area. It is aimed at public awareness, education and training. Moreover, it allowed some actions to be carried out: to make presentations on desertification and soil conservation, adapted to the different educational levels, to distribute, together with the Ministry of Education of the Nation, 25,000 copies of the Argentine Atlas, to elaborate the wall chart "Let's fight against desertification" and the Teacher's Guide (together with two NGOs: Yacurmana from La Rioja province and GADE from Santiago del Estero province), to collaborate on the making of the Didactic Briefcase for the Great American Chaco and of the Atlas of this region (both developed by the German Agency of Technical Cooperation (GTZ)), to give photographic material to be included in school manuals, etc.

In order to fight against desertification, it is necessary to know about this issue, understand it and make it our own. For many individuals, desertification is an unknown term and they are unable to imagine how it is related to and gets involved in many of the pieces of news they read every day. Therefore, it is pursued to make the problem known in order to create a critical conscience, a change, a solution, a salvation; through different ways, actors and forms.

Ing. Octavio Perez Pardo, Director of the Department of Land Conservation and Fight against Desertification of the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development, points out that, since the [National Action Program against Desertification \(PAN\)](#) has been implemented in the Argentine Republic, informative lectures for teachers and students at all educational levels have been offered all around the country. These lectures are aimed at making the causes and consequences of desertification known and sharing experiences with the different local actors.

At the same time, it is distributed dissemination material which has been elaborated within the framework of the [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#).

Furthermore, Octavio Perez Pardo expressed that the experiences with students are very important and enriching, as it is possible to get to know children's environmental concerns as well as to observe their different reactions when attending each lecture. Youngest children are those who are most interested in environment care and they have great expectations related to a change in habits for a better land care.

With reference to teachers, Ing. Perez Pardo stated that great responsibility on their part is observed when it comes to understanding environmental problems and attempting to look for different alternatives to solve them.

Sources

* Luzzi, Daniel, *Formal environmental education in the Argentine primary general education*.

* González Gaudiano, Edgar, "The cross-cutting issue of Environmental Education in primary education curriculum", in AA.VV, *Thoughts about Environmental Education II*, articles published in the CENEAM Information Folder 2000-2006.

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Institutional Representatives

Innovation on Higher Education Public Lecture on Education for Sustainable Development

Education for Sustainable Development is considered an essential tool to improve environment conditions as well as to lead into a change of attitude and behaviour based on knowledge and critical spirit. Within this framework, the [Northeastern National University](#) (Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, UNNE) supported the UN Declaration on the "Education Decade for Sustainable Development 2005-2014". The purpose of this Ten-year Period is to incorporate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning.

The Argentine Northeast (NEA, according to its acronym in Spanish) area, where the previously-mentioned University is located, is not apart from the environmental problems that profoundly impact on the planet and directly affect our life quality. In Argentina, National Education Act No 26,206 promotes the Environmental Education to be incorporated into all levels and forms of the National Education System. Common course contents and main curricular core should be aimed "at promoting values, behaviours and attitudes appropriate not only to a well-balanced environment but also to biological diversity. Thereby, preservation of natural resources and their sustainable use are fostered in pursuit of improving the population's quality of life" ¹.



In view of this situation, the [Environmental Management and Ecology Centre](#) (CEGAE, according to its acronym in Spanish), which depends on the UNNE Rectorate, considered the necessity of creating a Public Lecture for Education on Sustainable Development with the purpose of opening up a space

OUR PEOPLE



José Morales

He lives in Nacuñán, Santa Rosa district, 200 km southeast of Mendoza city.

In Ñacuñán, there is a reserve that protects 12,600 hectares of a carob native forest and was added to UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 1986. It is an arid-semi-arid area in which it is really hard to find ancient trees, since it has been through

for carrying out *training and extension activities*. These activities allow dealing with all the issues that arise in the current world from a cross point of view.

As regards higher education, cross-cutting issues are up to the different university curricular spaces and include the creation of a community- construction participative field. This field allows approaching environmental integrity, economic viability and a fair and equal society for present and future generations. The Public Lecture on Education for Sustainable Development also enables to contribute, in the short term, with the Curricular Environment-Making Process that CEGAE is carrying out in different UNNE academic units.

Within the Lecture framework, the "Training and Continuing-education Course: Environmental Education" will begin on April 2009. The main purpose of this course is to provide students with the necessary tools to understand the complexity of the physical-social environment in order to act over them. It is intended for university graduates and non-graduate individuals who desire to achieve quality training in this field.



Contents are organized into two modules. The first of them includes the general conceptualization of the subject matter and it is compulsory for all attendees. The second one covers the development of specific subjects related to the following areas: Technical, Social, Educational and Economic. At this stage, attendees will be able to choose among one of the before-mentioned areas, according to their field of training, professional profile, skills, expectations, etc. The different course fields are given by an outstanding national and foreign teaching staff.

By means of this academic offer, UNNE expects to include this subject matter into students', graduates' and interested people's training and to strengthen the relationship between the University and the community for the joint treatment of environmental issues.

During 2008, several activities were carried out together with the German Agency of Technical Cooperation (GTZ) within the framework of the Great American Chaco Sub regional Action Programme (PAS Chaco), which was implemented by the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development. Examples of these activities are training in environmental education for university teachers, municipalities and communities, and the distance E-learning course offered together with other universities of the area through UNNE virtual platform.

1. National Education Act No 26,206. Title VI. Section II. Article 89.

Contact person: **Mg. Nora Indiana Basterra (CEGAE Headmaster)**
cegae@unne.edu.ar

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indiscriminate deforestation with the purpose of providing posts for vineyards and firewood for the inhabitants and the railway.

Thanks to a community project aimed at the solar kitchen building, José was able to learn to design and build solar ovens. This project was carried out in his town ten years ago by the Regional Centre of Scientific and Technological Research (CRYCYT, according to its acronym in Spanish), which depends on the National Council of Scientific and Technological Researches (CONICET, according to its acronym in Spanish).

At present, José builds three different types of solar ovens: a small one, a big one and a third one that has an additional window on the lower part and mirrors to recover heat faster.

These solar ovens are built with wood, which makes them more lasting. Due to the fact they are covered with glass wool and expanded polythene foam, they are thermal, so that food is kept warm up to 3 hours after having been cooked. In normal weather conditions, these ovens can reach a maximum temperature of 160°C.

In this area, solar food cooking is presented as an alternative to reduce the magnitude of environmental problems, such as deforestation, desertification and the fumes that are released from firewood combustion.