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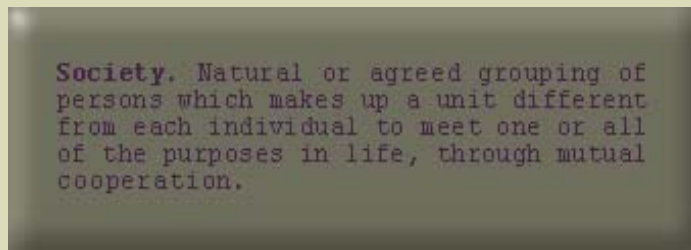
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"Building Strategic Financial Partnerships to Consolidate the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification in Argentina"



### Leading Article

## The environment and the role of civil society



**S**ociety is used as a collective term which remains indifferent to many problems. A collective that is to blame for everything and that nobody seems to be a part of. Other times, this term has a lot to offer. It has eyes, legs, hands, hearts and thoughts in common to achieve goals to favour all, and to favour the environment.

## AGENDA

**27 November: Mendoza**  
12th Meeting of the National Advisory Committee of the Argentina NAP.

**28 November: Mendoza**  
Meeting of the Inter-provincial Agreement Gran Cuyo Region.

**1 December: Buenos Aires**  
Focal Point Meeting GEF Patagonia Project.

**3 December: Buenos Aires**  
Meeting of the GEF Patagonia Project Executive Committee.

**4-5 December: Tierra del Fuego**  
Extended Workshop GEF Patagonia Project.

**9-10 December: Tierra del Fuego**  
Workshop for Provincial Authorities GEF Patagonia Project.

**14-17 December: Boqer Campus, Israel**  
2nd International Conference on Dry lands, Deserts and Desertification 2008.

**15-17 December: Bonn, Germany**  
Fourth Meeting of the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund Board.

## Civil society and the environment

**Civil society.** Non public environment, society of citizens and their relationships and private activities.

The Malmö Declaration (Malmö, Sweden, 31 May 2000) issued at the "First Global Ministerial Forum on the Environment" -sponsored by UNEP- highlighted the importance of civil society to solve environmental problems.

The Declaration sets forth the need for civil society to have access to environmental information so that it can participate in environmental decision making and in all those issues regarding justice and citizens' rights. Such participation must include all social strata and must be guaranteed by governments. On the other hand, it is essential to hear and respect the voices of local indigenous communities, silenced and marginalized communities.

Civil society plays an important role in bringing emerging environmental issues to the attention of policy makers, raising public awareness, promoting innovative ideas and approaches (...), and promoting non-corrupt activities in environmental decision-making.

The different Digital Newsletters we have posted on the Internet have shown how desertification affects the world, countries and communities. It has been made clear that not all inhabitants equally suffer the effects of this process. Everywhere on the planet, those sectors with lesser resources are the most harshly punished. So as to reverse this situation, many non-governmental organizations (NGO) and community-based organizations (CBO) have outlined plans of action to help the inhabitants of these areas, who retrieve and reinforce the knowledge about their land while conveying notions to manage resources in a sustainable manner. All tasks are based on a common identity and respect for peers. The different experiences have shown that desertification needs the most affected inhabitants to become involved. And the complexity of the subject calls for an approach which does not leave aside the economic, cultural and social aspects of those impacted by the process.

In turn, it is necessary to reinforce environmental education at schools – where several organizations collaborate- and promote specific actions to help structure the critical awareness of children, tapping their creativity and consolidating their interest in a given cause.

### Network of networks

Society is stronger than an individual. Such strength is only surpassed by a network of societies, a network of networks. The International NGO Network on Desertification and Drought (RIOD) is an example of joint work. It comprises NGOs and CBOs involved in the fight against desertification. and one of its objectives is to promote actions to combat desertification and have these organizations play an effective role in preparing, implementing and reviewing National Action Programmes. Since its foundational meeting in Burkina Faso in November 1994, RIOD has promoted the participation of organizations linked to desertification matters. In order to facilitate the exchange of information and optimize its operation, RIOD adopted a system of focal points at the national, sub-regional, regional and global scales (Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, North America, Australia).

The performance of [RIOD Argentina](#) has been considered an example for the setting up of similar networks in other Latin American countries. The Network is a member of the National Advisory Committee (NAC) within the framework of the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (NAP), coordinated by the Directorate for Soil Conservation and the Fight against Desertification, The Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat (for further information on RIOD see **Institutional Representatives** in this Issue).

It is also worth highlighting the [IUCN](#) (International Union for Conservation of Nature), created in 1948, which is the world's largest global network of conservation professionals in 160 countries. Its work consists of seeking pragmatic solutions to urgently solve the planet's environmental problems, while encouraging societies to appreciate and preserve their natural resources and use them in an equitable and sustainable manner. Funding is received through governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, member organizations and corporations.

[Drynet](#) is another network which makes a difference. Drynet, comprising 14 civil organizations that combat desertification, encourages civil organizations from different countries to become involved in arid land development policies and provides them with the necessary tools –training, communication, funding options- so that they partake in the fight against desertification and follow up on government actions.



Each link in the chain of social organizations is essential. Social organizations allow the implementation of many projects which would not take place without their cooperation because of their closeness to the affected parties, a greater acceptance than some of the government agencies and their commitment. Many of them can overcome the obstacles of the prevailing system and achieve their objectives through fund-raising, a decentralized structure and respect for native culture. Furthermore, they tend to link with other organizations to reinforce their efforts. There is also a connection with State agencies at the national, provincial and local levels; with universities; with technical and scientific professionals, etc. Organizations must behave as a social ecosystem, as democratic, open debate forums, as challenging, eager agencies.

## Briefs

### Course-Workshop on the "Design of Integrated Financial Strategies to Combat Desertification and Drought"



The Director for Soil Conservation and the Fight against Desertification, The Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat of Argentina, Mr. Octavio Perez Pardo – an engineer- participated in this initiative to strengthen capacities, designed by the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which was held in the city of Michoacán, Mexico, on 13-17 October.

The meeting was coordinated by Mr. Alejandro Kilpatrick, Programme Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean, Climate Change and Environmental Services Strategic Programme of UNCCD, and by the region's consultants of the Global Mechanism.

The meeting was also attended by representatives from Central American countries and was structured into eight modules: **Integrated Financial Strategies, Analysis of the National Context, Integration of SLM into National Frameworks, Resource Mobilization: internal funding sources; Resource Mobilization: external funding sources; Resource Mobilization: innovative funding sources; Partnership Building; Plan of Action for Integrated Financial Strategies.** All these topics were addressed on the basis of prior experiences of the Global Mechanism, together with new approaches which allowed participants to enhance their prospects in resource mobilization to combat desertification and drought, promoting sustainable land management through the Design of Integrated Financial Strategies.

Within the framework of this Course-Workshop, Mr. Perez Pardo presented the Project "[Building Strategic Financial Partnerships to Consolidate the Argentina NAP](#)" and the alignment of the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification within the National Strategy of the above-mentioned Convention.

Lessons learnt and the exchange of experiences will undoubtedly contribute to strengthening the actions framed within the National Action Programmes.

From 29 September to 3 October, a similar meeting was held in Costa Rica. A Course-Workshop has been scheduled to take place in the MERCOSUR region in 2009.

## Argentina RIOD



**T**he International NGO Network on Desertification was set up in the country 12 years ago. Since the entry into force of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification it has become a reference for social participation to formulate as well as implement programmes and projects related to this problem throughout the country.

RIOD Argentina has proven to be a genuine forum for communication between social actors and intermediate organizations concerned about the deterioration of natural resources in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, and about the impact of such degradation on the living conditions of the affected population.

It has uninterruptedly carried out fora, meetings and workshops to promote training and the strengthening of member organizations. NGO members of RIOD analyze regional problems and outline proposals not only within the network but also with other networks and with provincial and national State agencies.



Over 100 NGOs have linked to one another during the different stages of their institutional life, through the many activities promoted by RIOD at zonal and regional level. At present, active members are being re-registered: over 60 organizations have sent in their data for that purpose.

As mentioned in the **Leading Article**, RIOD is an NAC member. At the international level, it participates in the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Network (RIOD-LAC), which was set up to facilitate capacity-building of Latin American and Caribbean civil society organizations, and to develop and promote associative relationships of society organizations with other relevant players of the Convention, particularly with governmental institutions at the national and local levels.

RIOD objectives are targeted to fulfilling the postulates of the Network at the international level, and particularly to regional interaction, research, environmental education, public awareness and sustainable development of the areas facing desertification problems. There is a list of successfully executed projects and of other ongoing projects that are being implemented by RIOD organizations in different provinces. RIOD's performance was underscored at the international level by the Convention's Secretariat.



### CRICYT Vocal Group

It was created 11 years ago when a group of colleagues from the former Regional Center for Scientific and Technological Research (CRICYT by its Spanish acronym) – currently the Scientific-Technological Center— decided to carry out different musical activities (to sing, play the *queña* –a reed flute- and hum melodies) during lunchtime. Creativity thus appeared during recess from their jobs that are closely related to research and the environment.

Then there arose the idea of rehearsing and looking for a musical guide, maestro Jorge Martin, who is their conductor and in charge of the musical arrangements.

The Group currently has 22 members divided into three or four voices since it is not easy for all of them to perform on stage at the same time because of their professional activities.

They all participate in proposing the repertoire of Latin American folk music. Each member then works on his/her part of the song individually and, finally, they rehearse as a group.

The idea of the Group is to do away with the choir structure and give rise to solos, duos, trios or instrumental music. This varying structure keeps the audience in suspense until the curtain is run along.

Members also fulfill an important social role since they are a part of the free activities offered by *La Salamanca* at España 1234, capital city of Mendoza. They perform on the first Sundays of each month. Furthermore, they invite other musicians, plastic artists, poets, researchers or any other individual



Every two years, the RIOD Argentina Assembly appoints the institutions which will become the main and alternate National Focal Points. Furthermore, it has a representation system of five Sub-national Focal Points elected by NGOs in each of the country's regions. New authorities were appointed at the Assembly held in La Cumbre city, Cordoba province, on 29 August 2008:

**.-Main National Focal Point.** *Fundación Inti Cuyum* (San Luis). Its representative to RIOD: Juan Carlos Romero Gatica, president of the above-mentioned NGO.

**.-Alternate NFP.** *Fundación para el Desarrollo Sustentable Oikos* (Salta).

**.-Main Sub-National Focal Points.** *Centro Region:* Comisión Ambientalista Xanaes (Río Segundo, Córdoba), *Cuyo Region:* Asociación Llastay (La Rioja), *Puna Region:* Fundación Ecoandina (Jujuy), *Chaco Region:* CENEPP (Quimili, Santiago del Estero), *Patagonia Region:* Fundación Universidad Nacional Patagonia Austral (Río Gallegos, Santa Cruz).

**.-Alternate Sub-national Focal Points.** *Centro Region:* Fundación Hábitat y Desarrollo (Santa Fe) and Asociación Amigos Río San Antonio, *Cuyo Region:* Fundación CRICYT (Mendoza) and Asociación Ambientalista Ecoclub San Juan (San Juan), *Puna Region:* Fundación para el Desarrollo Sustentable Oikos (Salta), *Chaco Region:* Asociación Promotores del Chaco (El Sauzalito, Chaco), *Patagonia Region:* Asociación Arte y Parte (Río Gallegos, Santa Cruz).

The Network has a blog: <http://riodargentina.zoomblog.com> and a web page hosted on the National Focal Point's site: [www.inticuyum.com.ar/riod\\_argentina1.html](http://www.inticuyum.com.ar/riod_argentina1.html).

The following e-mail addresses are available to ensure efficient communication with RIOD in Argentina: [riodargentina@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:riodargentina@yahoo.com.ar) and [inticuyum@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:inticuyum@yahoo.com.ar).

who is willing to talk to the audience about his/her job. Important works of universal, Latin American and Mendoza literature are also reviewed and unpublished works are read, written by authors who wish to have their works disseminated.

The Group frequently performs at events related to the environment.

In October they held four performances in Uruguay within the framework of the UN International Week. Recently, it performed at the 31st Meeting of the Argentine Association of Renewable Energy and the Environment (ASADES 2008).

The members of the Group are: Oscar Crisistelli, Geography graduate; Hugo Manduca, an engineer; Javier Bustos, an engineer; Graciela Balmaceda, professor and trader; Viviana Domínguez, industrial designer; Carlos Puebla, civil engineer; Mirta Ison, PhD in psychology; Susana Fopiani, UNCuyo professor; Adolfo Wessels, an architect; Ernestina "Vicky" Tapia, CONICET support staff; Carmen Sartor, biologist; Eduardo Andreu, businessman; Verónica Nannei, history of art professor; Ianina Lucero, gym teacher; María Silvina Lassa, chemistry graduate; Hernán Felipe, an accountant; Diego Vázquez, PhD in biology; Walter Beron, CONICET researcher; Miguel Sosa, CONICET researcher; Jorge Martín, musician.

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