



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



## Leading Article

### New migrations: a cause of desertification

"No one can deny the terrible similarities between those running from the threat of guns and those fleeing creeping desertification, water shortages, floods or hurricanes".

*Konrad Osterwalder, Rector of the United Nations University*

One of the great problems caused by environmental conflicts is the abandon of lands. This is how, all over the world, displacement because of environment-related issues is in addition of displacement due to violence (political persecutions, wars, etc.). Anyway, there is not yet consensus to consider them at the same level; not even for naming them in a way that can define them. However, it was understood that the changes produced in ecosystems —due to physical, chemical or biological reasons—, force inhabitants to abandon their lands.

A report elaborated by the Centre of Geographic Sciences of the University of Columbia, together with the United Nations University and the international humanitarian organization CARE, —during a preparatory conference of experts for December's climate summit in Copenhagen— estimated that, by 2050, the number of refugees (due to different reasons) will have risen to 700 million. In order to mitigate this problem, there are several projects that allow stop climate change and strategies that develop adaptation plans in underdeveloped countries especially.

As it can be seen, it is not easy to draw a separation line between those who migrate for different reasons, not even through words. Although terminology differentiates between refugees, displaced persons and migrants, reality helps to dilute the border that separates those who run from fear from those who leave their lands in pursuit of a better life. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (ACNUR)\*, points out: "There are now more and more people who displace themselves for other reasons. We have witnessed situations of extreme poverty, environmental degradation due to climate change, besides war, conflicts and persecution. It is more and more difficult to distinguish between these different categories of forced displacement. (...). According to Guterres, wars are often encouraged by the scarcity of natural resources, and climate change is sometimes related to this situation. "All this elements mix up more and more, and it is a great challenge for the international community to find a way of coping with all these forms of forced displacement and providing solutions to the affected people".

## AGENDA

Between the 1st and 31th of august, will take place the 7th calling of Projects that is realize for the Small Donations Programme of the Environmental World Fund.

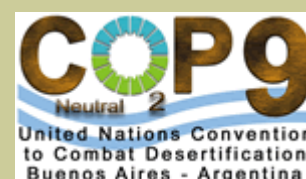
In this opportunity, they will give donations up to US\$50,000 to community organization and non-Governmental Organizations of the provinces of Jujuy, Salta, Tucuman, Catamarca and La Rioja.

For more information please visit

[www.ppdargentina.org.ar](http://www.ppdargentina.org.ar)  
o sent an email to [hugo.iza@undp.org](mailto:hugo.iza@undp.org)

### August 4th Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development, Buenos Aires

Presentation of the 4th Edition of the publication #indicators of sustainable development system#".





Thus, the number of people forcibly uprooted by conflict and persecution worldwide stood at 42 million at the end of 2008. The total includes 16 million refugees and asylum seekers and 26 million internally displaced. In 2009, although there are not official numbers yet, there have been new displacements in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Somalia, among other countries.

The Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Walter Kälin, has identified at least five movement scenarios stemming from climate change. They provide a useful starting point for analyzing the character of displacement and assessing the protection and assistance needs of those moving from their homes. One of them is environmental degradation and slow onset disaster: here is where desertification is framed.

**\* UNHCR (ACNUR, according to its acronym in Spanish),  
the UN Agency for refugees**

Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of **refugees**, that is to say, of every person that, due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, among others, has left his country of origin and is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. Likewise, UNHCR also aids **displaced people**, that is to say, those who leave their homes for the same reasons as refugees, but, unlike them, stay within the limits of their own country and do not seek for protection in a foreign country.



According to migrations due to environment-related causes, Carolina Podestá, Public Information Officer of the above-mentioned agency, tells us that, although UNHCR has not a mandate to protect people who are forced from their homes as a consequence of tragedies caused by environmental issues, it does not mean that there is not an internal rethinking about this problem and about the way of approaching it. "We cannot ignore that many of the current displacements are due to environmental reasons. Thus, UNHCR is looking for answers to a problem that still poses serious questions, not only for the United Nations, but also for governments and other organizations", Podestá explains.

### **Between nomads and migrants**

History shows human societies that have developed a nomadic life in pursuit of surviving. These tribes, most of them shepherds and farmers, displace throughout the year in search of water and food sources for their animals. These displacements prevent that the scant resources of the hostile places they live in run out. Moreover, these displacements, typical of desert places, are the only ones which are far from affecting other populations or the environment, as they are organized depending on their needs and on the sustainable use of natural resources. Forced displacement make people move to cities, where fate has overcrowding, deprivation and poverty in store. This stimulates political insecurity and plays a leading role in the triggering of armed conflicts in arid areas.

In the 11th publication of the Digital Newsletter, Darfur (Africa) was set as an example of the devastating effects desertification have on the people who live in the affected lands. The humanitarian crisis Darfur is going through is the result of decades and decades of a cycle that lead to environmental collapse, ethnic and political conflicts, and displacements. Nomads from the north of Darfur, the Zaghawa tribe, were forced to move south to find water and food for their animals. This situation affected the tribes of farmers, Fur and Masalit. Rivalry between resident farmers and nomads was intensified by drought, as well as by the changes in the land property conditions, which put more pressure on land and water resources.

### **Actions taken by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**

On the occasion of the “World Desertification Day”, observed on 17 June, the United Nations secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, expressed that desertification and drought threaten countries’ and international stability. Thus, agriculture and livestock use 70% of fresh water resources and cause for 80% of deforestation. This is in addition to the unsustainable world consumption and production modalities.

Empirical evidence is beginning to give way to numerical certainties. Some studies carried out in Africa, which included countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso, have indicated that land degradation and desertification contribute to displacement of people, which make worse the lives of not only those who migrate, but also of those who stay in the abandoned lands.

An important item of the UNCCD ten-year strategic plan is desertification and migration. One of the basis to approach this problem is to raise people forced to leave their lands due to environmental reasons to the same level as refugees, so as they have the same right and protection.

In line with the Millennium Developing Goals (MDG), UNCCD is working on concrete actions that allow reducing poverty in dry lands through the promotion of sustainable development. At the same time, developing countries —where many migrants move to— are called to finance projects and form alliances to implement policies and measures to mitigate desertification. This is in addition to the use of sustainable technologies and the implementation of traditional knowledge that contribute to good practices of land. In line with this, the National Actions Programmes should spread and adopt methods that promote the participation of all society’s sectors.

### **Migrations in Argentina**

Argentina is not unconnected with the damage caused by desertification. The areas that show a degraded ecosystem cover 75% of the national territory and causes are assorted: inappropriate livestock and agricultural practices, unsuitable management of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, a fall in productivity with the consequent impoverishment of life conditions. These factors and other ones have lead Argentina to damage and desertification. The population living in dry lands which are vulnerable to desertification is about 30% of the total national territory.

In the Puna, demographic changes, such as urban concentration and depopulation of rural areas (70% of producers are women, among which shepherdesses in the Andes stand out) are factors which contribute to desertification. This is in addition to the lack of assessment of native resources and its products, the low schooling rate, the poor commitment with social and physical environment and the high rate of malnutrition. All this makes that migrations to look for a job outside the area be large. Thus, in the last years, there has been an increase in urban concentrations in head towns.

"All residents enjoy the right to a healthy, balanced environment, suitable for human development and for productive activities to meet present needs without endangering future generations and they have the duty of preserving it".

**Article N.º 41 of the National Constitution of the Argentina Republic**

In the region of the Province of Chaco, rural areas are poorly inhabited and there are migrations to populated centres. Many of the people who migrate work as harvest workforce, both in or outside the area. Health and illiteracy problems are put on a level with those of the Puna. In this area, where farming is the most important activity, the increase of stocking rate because of properly-managed stockbreeding establishments reduces the forage offer level and forest natural regeneration. This is in addition to wood extraction for beams, fuel, posts, etc. The population who stayed in the city continued with the overexploitation of degraded resources, which worsened the process of desertification.

The region of Arid Valleys also goes through a continuous migration process. In Patagonia, desertification became the most important environmental problem, although it is the area with the highest flow of information to prevent and control it.

In order to mitigate the diagnosed problems in the different regions, work is done in a differentiated way, through several strategies, such as recovery and management of native pastures, surface water handling, population's awareness raising and training activities, producers' organization, improvement and diversification of agricultural production, strengthening of rural and indigenous communities, etc.

Migrant's International Day is celebrated on 18 December. This day involves unequal destinies, many of which have nothing to celebrate. Those people who run from desertified lands are now considered migrants. However, the aspiration that gathers them all, beyond their multiple stories, is the aspiration to a better life, which, for many of them, is not longer possible in their native land.

#### Sources

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- \* United Nations News Centre.
- \* United Nations Radio.
- \* BRAUCH, Hans Günter; Úrsula Oswald Spring, Securitizing the ground, grounding security, Paper N.º 2.
- \* UNCCD, Migration and desertificación, thematic fact sheet series N.º. 3.
- \* National Action Programme to Fight against Desertification, Basis document.

#### Briefs

### With Argentina as a guarantor, Paraguay and Bolivia enter into an agreement on border delimitation



On 28 April, 2009, in the city of Buenos Aires, the Presidents of Bolivia and Paraguay, Evo Morales and Fernando Lugo respectively, received from the President host, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, the Final Report of the demarcation of the international boundary between Bolivia and Paraguay. This agreement was settled after 74 years have passed since the end of the fierce Chaco War (1932-1935), regarded as the greatest American military confrontation in the last century. The contest pitted 250,000 Bolivian soldiers against 150,000 Paraguayans and left nearly 100,000 deaths.

The ceremony was held at the Office of the President, as Argentina presides over the commission in charge of delimiting borders between the two countries. In line with this agreement, three Civil Society organizations (Nativa in Bolivia, ProYungas in Argentina and Moisés Bertoni in Paraguay) visited the Biosphere Reserve of the M'Baracayú Forest. In that opportunity, they signed an Interinstitutional Cooperation Framework Agreement with the intention of establishing the *Gran Chaco Sudamericano* Biosphere Reserve, which covers territories of the three countries in the Pilcomayo river basin.

This agreement promotes the protection of biodiversity, the sustainable development of the communities in the area and the long-term strategic planning of a highly valuable region for the three countries.



### The G8 Summit expresses concern about land desertification and degradation



In the last G8 Summit, held in Italy, it was issued a statement, in which it is expressed deep concern about desertification and degradation of land in dry areas, and its causes and consequences on climate change. This accounts for the essential impacts these phenomena have on human welfare, poverty, food safety and on environment.

Likewise, G8 recognizes the efforts made by the Countries Party of the United Nations Convention of Fight against Desertification and the existence of financial mechanisms to strengthen synergies between the Conventions for the implementation of projects that allow reversing this scourge.

Furthermore, G8 engaged to help developing countries to incorporate Sustainable Land Management (MST, according to its acronym in Spanish) through projects and exchange-rate policies on climate change established nationwide, together with their respective coping strategies.

Another item in this statement refers to the sustainable use of natural resources (and to its limitations due to climate change), clean energy and to technology.

### Institucional Representatives

## Renewable Energy Programme of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of the Province of Salta

**T**he Renewable Energy Programme was created at the beginning of 2008. Its goals are to inform, train and raise awareness of both public and private organizations in the province on the benefits of using renewable energies and their applications in the area.

### What do we call renewable energies?

They are those which do not run out with use and are present in nature. The **replacement of non-renewable energies** with renewable energies, featured by being clean, is a world priority considering the environmental collapse produced by global warming.

### Which are renewable energies?

- .-Solar energy (photovoltaic and thermal).
- .-Wind energy.
- .-Minihydraulic energy.
- .-Biomass (wood, biofuel, biogas).
- .-Tidal and wave energy.



Solar energy has several advantages; for example, it is inexhaustible, highly available, non-polluting and it is distributed over most of the surface of Earth.

In the map of the global solar energy distribution, it can be noticed that the northwestern area of the Republic of Argentina is one of the six regions which has the best solar radiation levels in the planet. Therefore, solar energy is, par excellence, the renewable energy that can be exploited across the length and the width of the province of Salta.

Solar energy is available to the entire population. In the areas that are isolated from the conventional energy network, solar energy can be a solution to social and environmental problems, such as degradation of land due to unsustainable use of wood. In the industry, it can replace great amounts of pollutant fuels.

The Renewable Energy Programme was created to articulate, from the provincial state administration, the needs of use of clean energies in the entire province with the solutions that can be obtained from using new technologies. Due to the fact that solar energy is such an important resource in Salta, one of the first actions taken within the Programme framework was to enter into an agreement with the *Non-conventional Energy Research Institute* (Instituto de Investigación en Energías No Convencionales, INENCO). In its field, this is one of the most prestigious institutes in South America, with about 30-year experience in the development of technology for the exploitation of solar energy, fit for meeting the needs of the region. Therefore, the Institute's professionals' counselling and experience are, for the first time, available in the Province of Salta.

## OUR PEOPLE



**Susana Tibaldo**

Since 1989, she has been the headmistress of the Recognized Private Technical School N.º 2050 *Monseñor Vicente F. Zazpe*, in the Municipality of Emilia, in Santa Fe province. About 160 students attend this school.

In 1994, there were open-air pits of accumulated waste in the entering road to Emilia. Consequently, inhabitants were worried about environment health and, thus, those attending the school Workshop on Ecology carried out a community project called "Eradication of Pits of Accumulated Domestic Waste in Emilia".

Within the framework of this project, both students and the population in general have been working for years in raising awareness of this problem, so as to eradicate the source of contamination. Therefore, it arose the possibility of processing and separating solid domestic waste out of the biological breakdown of organic remainings. The latter allow to feed a biodigester that generates methane gas, which is used as fuel. Furthermore, the stabilized organic waste is made profitable to improve the soil of the school's small farm.

The biodigester was built thanks to the contribution of the *Rotary Club Internacional* and the work was made together with the Technical Department of the School of Chemical Engineering of the *Universidad Nacional del Litoral*. Due to its characteristics, this biodigester is the first one built in Argentina.

## Awareness Raising Activities

During the last year, several meetings were held with members of different institutions in Salta as well as with national and international organizations.

Moreover, it was created the Electronic Newsletter of the Renewable Energy Program, which is received by over 500 recipients every two months. These newsletters contain information about the existing technologies for the sustainable energy development, the applications renewable energies can have in Salta and the benefits implied by its use.

The Renewable Energy Programme joined proactively the Binational Network on Climate Change, formed by the National Universities of Salta and Jujuy; the Autonomous University Juan Misael Saracho of Tarija, Bolivia; the *Ministry of Production and Environment* of Jujuy; the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Salta; and the Tarija Government. The Programme organized and took part in different activities carried out by this Network.

Once installed, the biodigester allows to process all the organic waste of both the school and the inside city, which has a steady population of 800 inhabitants. The only input it requires is some cow-dung to provide the bacteria that make the process.

The production capacity of this machine is enough to produce 10 kg of gas daily. With this alternative fuel, it is possible to make candies, jams and other foods to supply the school dining hall.

## Projects and proposals

The Programme elaborated projects and proposals that were submitted to different national and international funders. Some of them are as follows:

.-Proposal of including the use of solar energy in public housing projects of the Salta Provincial Housing Institute (Instituto Provincial de la Vivienda de Salta).

.-Project called "Mini Autonomous Solar Power Plant for the Municipality of Tolar Grande, Province of Salta", submitted to the corporation Recursos Energéticos y Mineros Sociedad Anónima (REMSA).

.-Project called "Sustainable Use of Wood in Populations living in Protected Natural Areas in the Province of Salta".

Furthermore, a Proposal for the Strengthening of the Binational Network on Climate Change was submitted to the Master Plan of Integration and *Border Development between Argentina and Bolivia, and the Department of Climate Change of the National Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development.*

## Technology Transfer

In the course of a year, the Programme, together with the INENCO and the National University of Salta (U.N.Sa., according to its acronym in Spanish), exhibited samples and carried out several activities on technology transfer. Among them, it is worth mentioning the supply of solar cookers and water-heaters to schools-shelters of isolated communities of the Province of Salta.



## Training and counselling

In November, 2008, it was organized the course "Bioclimatic Architecture: Introduction to *Passive Solar Design of Buildings*", in which members of the Association of Architects of Salta were raised awareness of and trained about the exploitation of solar energy for building conditioning and about the rational use of energy.

Moreover, counselling was provided to the Ministry of Human Development in the use of efficient wood-burning cookers in Floresta neighbourhood, in the city of Salta.

Several meetings were held with members of the Provincial Housing Institute in order to evaluate the possibility of incorporating renewable energies in houses in Santa Victoria Oeste.

A private company was advised on the wind resource existing in the Municipality of Tolar Grande.

Furthermore, a request was made to the Renewable Energy Programme for the Rural Market (Programa Energía Renovables para el Mercado Rural, PERMER) as regards the installation of Photovoltaic Panels in Indigenous Communities in Santa Victoria Oeste. Also, this kind of panels was installed in a Park Ranger booth of the Protected Areas Programme of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.

The consulting tasks were carried out as follows:

.-To companies, together with the *Cleaner Production Plan of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, for the possible incorporation of renewable energies in its productive circuit.*

.-To the National Park of the Province of Formosa for the purchase of efficient wood-burning cookers.

.-To the *Rural Education Improvement National Project (Programa Mejoramiento de Escuelas Rurales de la Nación, PROMER)* for the exploitation of solar energy in these institutions through the installation of solar cookers and water-heaters.

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