



National Action Programme to Combat Desertification

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

Digital Newsletter

ARGENTINE REPUBLIC

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LEADING ARTICLE

The new generations and their combat against desertification



Youth's strength is more than a set phrase. The new generations lack ossified structures and have enough energy to propose changes and carry them out.

A great amount of young people are interested in environmental issues, as they are part of their lives, their communities, their realities and their future. And the interest of many of them is just not limited to an empty slogan printed on a t-shirt.

Half the world's population is under the age of 20 and 90% of these people live in developing countries. Furthermore, over 65 million young people between ages 15 and 29 live in the Mercosur countries. Due to this and many more reasons, we are able to say that youth's attitudes play a relevant role at a global level and can be the driving force for change the world needs.



AGENDA

8 - 12 february, San Roque y Rincón de los Sauces, Neuquén

Network Meeting Productive Environment GEF Project Patagonia on sustainable land management and combating desertification. It is the beginning of a year of training for producers, schools and equipment to boost local projects.

More information:
<http://gefpatagonia.ambiente.gob.ar>

10 - 12 January: City of Buenos Aires

Meeting of the Bureau of the UNCCD Ninth Meeting of the Parties (COP 9).

Within the framework of the 9th Call for Proposals, which will take place from 15 February to 26 March, the FMAM Small Donations Programme, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), calls both community-based and non-governmental organizations in the Argentine Northwest to submit proposals which contribute to preserve the environment and improve the life quality of local communities.

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LEADING ARTICLE
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ECO-GAME
3.- Order the letters of each word.

OUR PEOPLE
4.- Beatriz Teijeiro, DeHuNa Civil Association.

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Youth for chang

The population of the lands that suffer desertification goes through different stages. Thus, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) states that, in the first instance, the population trying to survive intensifies the already excessive exploitation of the most accessible natural resources. Then, they sell off all their possessions in order to meet their financial needs. In third place, there is a rapid increase in rural emigration: male adults or young people of both genders immigrate especially to the cities for a season or for several years in search of work.

In Article 5 of the final text of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought, it is stated the need of promoting awareness and facilitating the participation of local populations, particularly of women and young people, with the support of non-governmental organizations, in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

Youth's role is essential. For this reason, it is necessary to make young people part of the change and train them so as they can collaborate with their communities and mitigate the desertification process. Thus, the XXIV National and Latin American Youth Congress (whose beginnings date back to 1985), in which the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development took part, created a space for analysis and exchange of concerns between students from different Argentine provinces. During this Congress, it was promoted the participation of the young population in both the design and the development of sustainable projects. Moreover, abilities were strengthened, as regards environmental management by young people, as active promoters and participants towards the country's sustainable development.

"It is imperative that youth from all parts of the world participate actively in all relevant levels of decision-making processes because it affects their lives today and has implications for their futures. In addition to their intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilize support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account".

Agenda 21, Chapter 25 Children and Youth in Sustainable Development

In order to emphasize the importance of youth's role, as well as their action and change capacity, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) presented the 2009-2010 Mercosur Human Development Report: *Innovating for Inclusion: Youth and Human Development*. The Report views strengthening young people's capacity to act within and transform the region as a critical element in human development, and it pushes for public policies that favour this type of participation. A part of this Report, aimed at the rural youth of Mercosur, points out that one out of six young people in the region lives in the country. Furthermore, it establishes that the emigration of young people aged 15-29 is one of the main reasons for changes in rural spaces. To avoid mass migrations, it is necessary to develop youth policies that allow to slow down or, at least, to organize the migratory flow, so as to guarantee young people's satisfactory inclusion in cities. In addition to this factor, there are the exhaustion of productive resources and climate change. It is important to emphasize that the Report points out that, although the environmental demand is one of the common denominators of urban youths, ecological ideas also succeed among rural young people. These ideas aim at agroecological practices, awareness campaigns and the campaign for the proposition against deforestation, single-crop farming, etc.

One of the projects that it is worth mentioning is *Youth for change*, which was designed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The project purpose is to help educators and interested people in general to understand and communicate respectful behaviour towards the environment. Within the framework of this project, the workshop "Sustainable Consumption and Lifestyles", organized by the *Asociación Civil Red Ambiental*, was held at the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development.

The workshop gathered different Latin American representatives, who discussed about education for sustainable consumption and analyzed the *Youth for Change* guide. This publication supports the idea that youth people play a relevant role in consumption societies and, therefore, their current habits will become future patterns. Due to this reason, UNEP highlights the importance and the need of changing those consumption patterns and attitudes that can damage the environment. To achieve it, UNESCO promotes the importance of education as a basis for a change in attitudes and values, while capacities, abilities and commitment are developed to build a sustainable future. Thus, Sustainable Consumption (SC) is about finding workable solutions to imbalances –social and environmental – through more responsible behaviour from everyone.

Another project adopted by UNEP in Latin America and the Caribbean is *TUNZA*, aimed at the Children and Youth group. For this group in particular, the *TUNZA* global strategy was designed and launched in February, 2003. *TUNZA* means "to care for" or "to nurture" in Kiswahili, subregional language spoken in East Africa.

"When we talk about future generations, we should bear in mind that we should now act in the territory and defend the sovereignty of our environmental goods, so as not to mortgage the next generation and prevent youth from inheriting the problems we have caused".

Dr. Homero M. Bibiloni, Secretary of Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina, Youth for Change Conference, 2009

TUNZA is an initiative aimed at carrying out activities in the areas of capacity building, environmental awareness and information exchange, in order to foster a generation of environmentally-conscious citizens capable of positive action. Some of the important subproducts of this strategy include the Youth and Children's International Conference, the Annual Children's Painting Competition, the Advisory Council for young people and *TUNZA* magazine, in which updated information and support resources are provided for youth all over the world.

Youth volunteering and participation

Innumerable times it has been mentioned the importance of education as the unique choice to build the future. And it is as essential to make everybody have access to it, no matter where they live, as it is to make those who are already professionals or are on their way to become so strengthen and share their knowledge and their willingness to participate.

In this last line, there is the University Volunteering Programme of the Secretariat of University Policies of the Ministry of Education. The Programme is framed within a state policy aimed at strengthening the University's social function, and it also integrates both the theoretical and practical knowledge learnt in its senates with Argentina's most urgent problems. "The University Volunteering Programme is an opportunity for the students of our public universities to contribute to improve the population's life quality, working together with the community in the search of alternative solutions to the problems that arise every day. Therefore, both the University's social function and the extension role of the university community are strengthened so as they, together with teaching and research, can continue reasserting the reason of existing of the Argentine Public University", Fernando Grosso, member of the Programme's Technical Team, expressed to the Digital Newsletter.

The participating volunteer students are those who study and transfer acquired knowledge, and those who acquire knowledge and practice in the themes and fields of specialization (which are not included in the career courses of study) which apply in the elaboration, execution, monitoring and evaluation of social projects

Projects can last from 6 months to 1 year, and they are presented by teams made up of regular students from national and provincial universities, and national university institutes. These projects should aim at community development and can be framed in different central themes. One of these themes refers to both the environment and natural resources.

Some of the initiatives related to this last central theme are connected with desertification and the improvement of the life quality of the inhabitants of the dryland areas. One of the projects that can be framed here is that entitled *Productive forest recovery for a better quality of life* (National University of Santiago del Estero). This project is aimed at those volunteers working with smallholder producers from Guampacha, Guasayán department, Santiago del Estero. Some of the activities that will be carried out are as follows: producers' training to carry out the experience of managing and enriching the native forest, trial installation, technical and financial assessment, information of the results to the producers and spreading of experiences to the community. The training will be in charge of teachers, with the participation of students and in collaboration with an extension technician of the National Institute for Agricultural Technology (INTA, for its name in Spanish).

The environmental situation of the Mountain Range of Guasayán reflects the reality of the pioneer areas in forest resource supply in Santiago del Estero province. This resulted in impoverished forests, with little presence of the main wood species (red quebracho, white quebracho). In addition to this, there is the forest clearing carried out for agricultural purposes, using inappropriate technology for the region.

The negative impact of these activities has caused a significant loss of forest resources and of land productive capacity, which resulted in an important social impact. According to the National Statistics and Censuses Institute (INDEC, for its name in Spanish), almost 40% of the families in Guasayán do not have a decent home, and there are children between 6 and 12 years old who do not attend school, as many of them have become workforce for productive tasks.

Furthermore, the main activity is goat stockbreeding, which is carried out inappropriately and has at least two consequences: an increase in the negative impact of livestock on resources due to overgrazing and the impossibility of improving performance to generate surplus for trade.

Due to this situation, the project intends to provide a solution through a productive capacity recovery proposal by means of forest grazing management and forest enrichment to give it biodiversity and wood value back. Thus, strategies are based on a joint work between producers and volunteers for the installation of demonstrative trials, and on the producers' training to carry out the proposals.

Interest Links

www.pnuma.org

www.unep.org/tunza

www.youthxchange.net/main/home.asp

www.ozzyozone.org

www.eclac.org/publicaciones

www.pnuma.org/geojuvenil/pdf/GEO%20Juvenil%20ALC%20esp.pdf

Participation and Commitment

GEO for Youth in Argentina is a participative process of environmental assessment in which young people have the possibility of expressing their opinions about environment, analyzing their communities' problems, proposing alternative solutions and spreading their projects. GEO for Youth is institutionally managed by an association made up of UNEP, the *Asociación Civil Red Ambiental* and the National Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development.



GEO for Youth in Argentina —which is structured into Focal Points— has been designed and implemented by young people who work in their communities promoting environmental protection and sustainable development, through learning, articulation, action and impact on decision-taking processes. The key work strategies of GEO for Youth in Argentina are: learning, articulation, action and impact.

There are hundreds of projects and programmes that approach young people with the purpose of involving them in the combat against desertification, among other important problems in their environment. Therefore, it is essential to make these projects and programmes known and spread their activities, as well as youth's willingness to participate. Some of them give up, but others keep on trying. What is important is to work, so as there are always new people capable of mitigating the devastating effects of mitigation.

Sources

* University Volunteering Programme of the Secretariat of University Policies of the Ministry of Education, Coordinator: Laura V. Alonso. Technical Team: Fernanda Aimar, Valeria Di Croce, Prof. Agustín Ergueta, Fernando Figueira Lemos, Fernando Grosso, Prof. Miguel Petrabissi. For further information please visit www.me.gov.ar/voluntariado. Contact e-mail address: voluntariado@me.gov.ar.

* for Youth in Argentina. National Focal Point: Juan Ignacio González Mazziotti. For further information please visit www.geojuvenil.org.ar. Contact e-mail address: nacho@geojuvenil.org.ar.

* United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2009-2010 Mercosur Human Development Report, *Innovating for Inclusion: Youth and Human Development*. December, 2009.

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BRIEFS

Latin Youth at COP 15 on Climate Change

During the **United Nations** Climate Change Conference (COP 15), held between 7 – 18 December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark, a delegation made up of six Latin American young people participated in it to reflect their views on actions related to the climate change policy at international level.

This delegation, integrated by youth from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru analyzed this event, which can be checked out at <http://juventudlatinacop15.wordpress.com>. In this blog, you will also find different news and insights.

Order the letters of each word.

1.- Sum total of all living species (animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms) that are part of an ecosystem.

D Y B E R I V I T I O S

2.- Land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, due to different factors, such as climate changes and human activities.

T E R I D E C O S I N I T A F

3.- Set of living organisms whose vital processes relate to each other and develop according to the physical and chemical factors in which they evolve.

T E S O Y S M C E

4.- Form of farming based on animal extensive and itinerant animal breeding.

R A S M O T L S I P A

5.- Activity that consists in planting trees in deforested areas.

T A S O F E R O R T E I N

ANSWERS
 1. BIODIVERSITY
 2. DESERTIFICATION
 3. ECOSYSTEM
 4. PASTORALISM
 5. REFORESTATION



Beatriz Teijeiro
DeHuNa Civil Association

She is the Director of the Civil Association Human Development on Nature (DeHuNa, for its name in Spanish). This organization is located in Capilla del Monte, a township in Córdoba province which has a 10,000-inhabitant population.

Among other activities, DeHuNa has implemented the programme "Water, a resource of everyone for everyone", through which the population is encouraged to make responsible use of water, as a contribution to find efficient and possible solutions to the serious problems of desertification and drought.

The main themes of this programme are: reduction in the daily water consumption; greywater treatment through the implementation of home filters; implementation of dry baths (they reduce water consumption by 30 to 45% and, therefore, liquid volumes that enter water treatment plants are also significantly reduced); rainwater collection and the reforestation of the low mountain environment, as a way of preserving both water basins and climate regulation.

Purified as well as collected water are used for watering orchards, parks and gardens in the area.

At the same time, inhabitants are trained so as they can have alternative employment opportunities by the implementation of the before-mentioned systems. Therefore, an educational campaign, aimed at all levels, is developed to raise the community's environmental awareness.

Within the framework of this programme, five work commissions were formed: Education and spreading, Regulations, Economy, Technique and Project incubator; and the proposal for 2010 is to keep on with the activities initiated in their specific themes.