

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the most serious environmental problems faced by our planet and its population, is the deterioration of the land resources in dry zones, endangering the processes of sustainable agricultural production, this problem is not a menace for the future, but, it is a devastating reality.

Bolivia does not escape this reality, specially when Desertification affects 41 % of its territory, where millions of tons of arable soil get lost every year, causing great losses in land productivity, and a severe diminution of food, that endangers the national food security, and increases the levels of malnutrition and poverty.

The Bolivian Government worried about this problem has assumed with responsibility, the duty of consolidating the National Dry Zones Development Program (PRONALDES) in the framework of its environmental policies and General Economic and Social Development Plan (PGDES)

A real sample about this, is the inclusion of different considerations about Desertification on the main national strategies, policies, plans and programs, at national, regional and municipal levels. Among these, it is important to stand out the Agro Technological Transformation Strategy, the Socio Economic Development Plans and Land Use Plans in those regions affected by this phenomenon. Also, it is important to note specific programs, such us the Irrigation National Program, the Emergency Program against “El Niño” phenomenon and others.

The policies and strategies above mentioned were promoted from an institutional basis, that has changed continuously in relation to modifications in the governmental structure and interventions of the civil society in favor of more participation.

The consolidation of this institutional basis in charged of planning and operation of the National Program to Fight against the Desertification and Drought (PRONALDES) has two main phases. The first one, characterized by a dynamic institutional framework, conformed by a National Commission at national level, that has consolidated the legal status of the Program; a Focal Point localized at the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Environment / Secretariat of Natural Resources and Environment, that promoted the participative planning activities; and Regional Committees that invested their human and economic resources to promote the participation of civil society at regional, municipal and community level.

This institutional framework was in force till June 1998, when the pre investment funds given by USAID /PL 480 concluded, and the Focal Point initiated a process of renovation of PRONALDES, with a new denomination - "National Dry Zones Development Program (PRONALDES II)", changing the policies against Desertification towards improvements on living and environmental conditions of those people settled in areas affected by this problem.

In the second phase, this institutional framework disappears due to changes in the Governmental structure, and it is initiated a process of institutional building capacity, to make it more dynamic, participative and adequate to the new goals of PRONALDES II.

In this sense, are promoted improvements on the previous structure, by giving more participation to the civil society in all the institutional instances and by operating a new strategy to run the PRONALDES II.

About improvements on the existing structure, there is an emphasis on consolidating the Focal Point, as a instance shared by the public and private sectors capable of promoting changes on the governmental policies and coordinating activities among the National Commission and the Regional Committees.

Actually, the Focal Point it is represented by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Planning, that confers the responsibility to the General Direction of Land and Basin Classification, that accounts four specialized professionals, basic equipment (computers and furniture), bibliographic material and a small data base.

Among those measures adopted to strengthen the building capacity of the Focal Point, it is important to mention training of the personnel; introduction of the program in the political agenda of the Ministry and the positive influence of the International Cooperation towards the institutional stability.

An institutional stability needed to promote real changes in the actual situation, however, the stability on the program was unstable due to permanent changes on the governmental structure, that leads to the discontinuity of activities among different periods. The implementation process is divided in three main periods. A first one (1994-97), very dynamic, characterized by a wide participation of several actors in workshops, meetings and other participative activities, which finally were reflected in a Document PRONALDES; 26 projects at pre feasibility level; and a national presence in the international agenda (COP 1 and COP 2).

A second period (1997-98), characterized by the ending of all processes started on the previous period; disappearance of the CNO; and small advances on the PRONALDES consolidation.

A third period (1998-2000), characterized by an active participation of the Focal Point in the international agenda promoted by the UNCCD; fundraising for those projects and programs made in the first period; and lobbying at national level to compromise the political support to the program.

In these three periods, which have characterized the historic process of PRONALDES, the international counterparts were diverse and participated discontinuously. On the first period, existed an effective participation of several

cooperation agencies (PNUMA, FAO, Embassy of Netherlands, USAID/PL 480, UNCCD).

In the second period, the Focal Point started negotiations with the Paris Club, specifically with the governments of Denmark and United Kingdom, without positive results; finally, in the third period, it is remarkable the participation of the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), and the renewed confidence given by the UNCCD and UNDP/UNSO.

It is clear that the process of implementation of the UNCCD in Bolivia was very dynamic, little bit disorder, but each one of those periods mentioned previously has contributed with several activities, that are remarked below:

- A National Action Program (PRONALDES) legally recognized at national or international level.
- One document PRONALDES, written and published at national level, conformed by 63 investment projects and 39 for pre investment.
- 26 projects at pre feasibility level.
- Methodologies for identification and selection of prioritized areas for intervention against Desertification.
- Rules of functioning at CNO (National Commission and Regional Committees)
- Preliminar Erosion y Desertificación maps.
- A strategy for PRONALDES II implementation.
- Different materials for publicity.

On the other hand, in this period were established links with different ministries, specially with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Rural Development (MAGDR). In the mean time, the internal Directions of the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Planning such as: Biodiversity, Environmental Quality, Spatial Planning, Sustainable Forest Development, Strategic Planning and Popular Participation exchanged information and executed joint activities around biodiversity protection, monitor the environmental contamination, forestry management and social control over natural resources in zones affected by drought and desertification.

At regional level, exists an exchange of information with the Regional Directions of Natural Resources and Environment. At municipal level, there are some approaches to touch this subject, but without formality and order.

The relations with the civil society are trough the Interinstitutional Network of Organizations working against Desertification (RIOD), with whom were organized several joint activities to debate the PRONALDES and nowadays, they are operating some of those projects included in the Program. Some remarkable examples are KURMI and SEMTA in the Altiplano and Ceibo in the valleys.

At subregional level, there are tight relations with the Subregional Action Programs (SAP) in the Chaco and Puna, with whom the Focal Point maintains permanent contacts and meetings in order to operate joint activities.

The National contribution from the National General Treasure to PRONALDES from 1994 to the present is approximately 419.414 \$US, these resources were brought regularly for the functioning of the National Focal Point, considering that only a part of it was effectively used for the purposes of the Program.

The PRONALDES financial strategy to operate actions at municipal and community level, was to canalize resources through the existing mechanisms (Development Funds), before thinking about creating new mechanisms.

In this sense, all the efforts around fundraising were devoted to strengthen the national capacity to attract more resources to the Campesino Development Fund (FDC) and National Environmental Fund (FONAMA), considering that these Funds were the real ones who funded projects and programs related to goals of the PRONALDES.

The resources invested in the affected region by this phenomenon in the period 1994 – 2000 are approximately 12'458.000 \$US by the FDC and 1'456.000 \$US by

FONAMA. It is important to note the contribution of other programs working in the region, such as PASA, PRODIZAVAT, PERTT, PROVEDAT, PRONAR, with an approximate contribution of 8'000.000 \$US.

About the information system for monitoring the advances of PRONALDES, there is only a project about this, nevertheless there are some systems available in the Ministry that might help to find the required information, such as the system on Global Changes, Hydrological and Meteorological information system, and SINSAT.

The implementation of the UNCCD in Bolivia was very dynamic, it has a period of planning very active and participative, accompanied by a favorable institutional framework, that attract the attention of the international cooperation, however, the operation of PRONALDES II has stumbled by changes in the program political priority and changes on the governmental structure at the beginning of this governmental period. Fortunately these changes have been consolidated and the Focal Point has started the operation with renewed forces.