

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Honduras ratified its adhesion to UNCCD on July 24, 1997, and was registered on September 22 of the same year. As a consequence of the acquired commitment, Honduras must communicate to the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention the reports on the measures adopted for its application. The First Country Report was sent on 2001 under the responsibility of SERNA.

Drought, soil erosion, deforestation, the loss of biodiversity and the reduction to critical levels of resources such as water, interweave and continue interacting, intervening in the lack of economic and environmental sustainability of the systems, especially on productive systems. These effects are also associated to poverty, a constant concern of the Government of Honduras and the development cooperation agencies. It is considered that 69% of the population is in a poverty level, this being the incapacity to have a minimum life level and to satisfy their food security.

For 50 years, different strategies have been tried to assist peasants and cattlemen, passing by community development, agrarian reforms, integrated rural development projects, and actually the modernization of the agrarian sector. None has achieved the desired rural development.

Prior to Hurricane Mitch, the GOH had as a thematic axle the sustainable development of natural resources, these being forest and water. After Hurricane Mitch, dialogue turns to Human Sustainable Development, with a watershed vision, the rational exploitation of forests and water use, and soon Land Use Planning with local development with decentralized actions

The selection of the watershed as crosscutting issue is based on socio-cultural and economic aspects, but also on the geomorphologic characteristics. The Country is divided in three major continental regions: the North Coast Plains, (16% of the territory), the Mountainous region of highlands and interior valleys (82% of the territory), and the Pacific Coast Plains (2% of the territory). Considering the original vegetation formations and the current economic activities, it can be affirmed that there is a contradiction between land use and vocation.

Actually, Honduras is facing a severe drought problem, provoking the generation through a multi-sector call of the necessary mechanisms and responses to prevent and reduce the negative impacts and the empowerment of the national capacities to face these phenomena.

This documents indicates the programs and projects under execution in the different institutions, that under their activities will have positive results in drought prevention and management, establishes the strategies and policies that must be followed by the institutions, organizations and entities developing plans, programs and projects, determines the principal anthropogenic causes that have an effect in the desertification and drought in the county and approaches the existing problem centered in the water resource.

Honduras does not have a diagnostic of the causes for desertification and drought, nor with a National Action Plan to combat Desertification and Drought. This conditions the actual predominant vision emphasizing the importance of climate phenomena, rather than the etiology of the desertification process.

Actually, the policy frame presents non-integrated, sectoral vision, in the frame of the fight to combat desertification.

It is important that SERNA assumes its normative role through its policy frame. The diverse existing strategies, even though are directed specifically to fighting desertification and drought, have certain elements that are:

- Strategy for Poverty Reduction,
- Biodiversity Strategy
- National Sustainable Development Strategy
- 2002 Drought Strategic Plan.

The preceding strategies and policies are designed according to the Government Plan, and the assignment of economic resources depends on the priority given in the Plan to this problem. The international cooperation policy is also important because many of their resources finance the formulation of strategies, policies and lines of action.

Given that the government periods are of four years and that program and project time frames are longer, their execution is compromised. The existing gaps can be attributed to the diverse approaches and proposed solutions for the management of drought and desertification. This is, there has not been an integration of all the actors, conditioning the formulation of solutions and sectoral measures.

There is an ample legal frame that assures the preservation and sustainability of natural resources, but there is difficulty in its application, having duplicity of functions between institutions and a legal system that does not favor concrete and timely actions.

Similarly, the different institutions in the sector have an extensive range of programs and projects that are not focused on fighting desertification, but indirectly do so when encouraging sustainable development of the resources.

However, most have been designed to fight drought, with a focus on productive irrigation.

CONCLUSIONS

The anthropogenic causes of drought can be modified through focused and coordinated interventions, recognizing the responsibility of each actor of the Honduran society. There is a consensus on the necessity to have a strategy aimed to the prevention and mitigation of drought involving the Honduran society at all levels. However, there has not been important effort in the elaboration of the National Action Plan to combat Desertification and Drought, which will provide a frame of reference for all the actions aimed to the prevention and mitigation of the problem. Not having a NAP has provoked a lack of coordination and strategic vision in the management of drought and the administration of the resource water, resulting in palliative rather than preventing measures, taking the Country to the crisis it is now facing.

The principal problems detected and that affect the prevention and mitigation of the desertification processes and drought are:

- follow up of programs and projects is difficult due to the lack of specific indicators,
- absence of studies for the declaration of areas in evident desertification process,
- low participation and support to the scientific community,
- incipient rescue and low diffusion of traditional,
- land use planning process in its initial stages,
- non-expeditious land titling program,
- and the lack of an integrating legal approach, since it privileges the resource water.

There is political will in replicating successful experiences that have re-elaborated traditional knowledge and promoted community organization for the appropriation and sustainability of these practices.

The predominant traditional agrarian production models that use yearly burning to “perpetuate”, must be overcome through systemic approaches that make understandable why to introduce changes in run-out models or their substitution for more appropriate and sustainable models.

In relation to the international cooperation, their great contribution to the development of the mandates of the Convention is recognized, through the financing of programs and projects that include activities in the prevention, mitigation, and sustainable resource development and on community organization and institutional strengthening. This is of special importance because the Country loses many opportunities and relevant initiatives that are not developed due to the lack of resources to support them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to incorporate the problem of desertification as a State policy and a national effort. The National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Drought must be elaborated soon, and must be considered as the guide for all national actions, starting from the legal and policy frames, to the portfolio of projects under execution, in negotiation or in idea, whose axle is the management of micro-watersheds, the management of the effects of drought, and the establishment of local water demands, both from a productive and human points of view.

The elaboration of reliable indicators resulting from technical-scientific studies is urgent to follow up the NAP.

The concepts of desertification and drought economics must be incorporated, with an integrated focus on losses and recovery costs of resources affected by the action of climatic phenomena as well as by the production systems.

It is necessary to identify and create an agro biodiversity integrated to the increasing food production needs for human and livestock consumption, starting from the areas currently under cultivation.

The adapted adoption of successful experiences is extremely important, especially to make a more efficient use of the financial resources available for the country. Through them, the modification of non-sustainable production systems is possible.

The technical process of land use planning must be linked and integrated to the practical process of land use that will be carried out in the communities. Also, it is of priority that the titling process in execution by the INA is integrated in the land use strategy, to establish the conditions for better land use.

Lastly, it is necessary to highlight the need to encourage the synergy between Conventions, through integration processes between programs and projects to achieve greater impact in natural resource conservation and to make the most of the opportunities of each convention.