



Spain facing DLDD: a solution can be based on training, education and raising awareness for good practices

Message of Celia Barbero Sierra that works in the Education for Development Area of the IPADE:

“Desertification is still a problem fairly unknown to the Spanish citizens; most people associate it only to developing countries and poverty”.

The IPADE (Instituto de Promoción y Apoyo al Desarrollo) Foundation is a Spanish non-governmental organization which concerns itself with matters of environment, international cooperation and education for development. Since 1987, IPADE is active in development cooperation projects in Africa, Latin America and Asia, helping vulnerable populations in disadvantaged rural areas to improve their societies, making them socially just, economically viable and environmentally sustainable. To date, they have successfully executed over 192 projects in 26 countries. They truly believe that raising awareness within the Spanish society on the effects caused by climate change, desertification and loss of biodiversity is an effective way to get people involved.

More than two thirds of Spanish territory belongs to the categories of arid, semiarid and dry sub-humid areas

People suffering from poverty are precisely those most dependent on ecosystem services and with greater vulnerability to negative impacts of environmental problems. Urban expansion in recent decades and unsustainable forms of tourism are increasing desertification, leading to an irreversible loss of soil and ecosystems of high natural value, as well as an abandonment of rural areas through migration to the cities. This means that those people whose livelihoods depend on the ground/soil will be dealing with the worst effects of DLDD.

“Semillas para la acción (2010- 2012)” is one of the projects that show the commitment of this NGO with education for development. “We intend to mobilize the population and generate a change in attitudes about access, use, control and distribution of natural resources”, says Barbero. This project aims to foster participatory environmental education, promoting knowledge of agroecology. The educational proposition is to recover the traditional roles of rural areas and involve different actors in the conservation of biodiversity and introduce them to the benefits of organic agriculture.

Training, research and setting up conferences on the causes and effects of desertification, paying special attention to the link between local and global issues and their implications in the fight against poverty, can make people aware of the important role that they can play in the battle against DLDD. There is a need to expose and highlight to them the importance of sustainable management of water and soil resources in the medium and long term, because none other than the populations will face the consequences of land degradation.

In her relations with the UNCCD, Celia Barbero Sierra has gained the following experience: “Getting involved, with UNCCD or other MEA programmes, allows CSOs access to several networks and organizations which are related to DLDD and work on this issue from different perspectives”.

Good advice:

“We need to commit ourselves to approach the subject from a perspective of integration with other global issues (not just environmental but also social) and promote training and citizen participation”.

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IPADE Foundation’s website: <http://www.fundacion-ipade.org/>