
EL SALVADOR'S EXPERIENCE IN THE DESIGN OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

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SUMMARY

El Salvador is located in Central America, and is the smallest country of the region, with a high demographic pressure and many environmental problems, which are attributed to the lack of environmental education, lack of environmental policies and natural resources use, inadequate practices for profiting of resources, as well as a weak and fragile framework of legislation. Viable instruments for environmental matters are being designed, whose application it is hoped will lead to compliance and citizen participation in harmony with development.

1 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, AS AN ELEMENT FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUBJECT

In El Salvador, the manifestations of society and some dissatisfied persons from nongovernmental ecological organizations, gave the impetus for the governmental authorities to start including some actions towards solving the problem of natural resource and environmental degradation. As a first intent of environmental authority, in the mid 1980s the Environmental Recuperation Committee (CREMA) was created.

This committee was made up of governmental, private enterprises, entrepreneurial groups and nongovernmental ecological organizations institutions, what allowed it to have national presence, since it was the first institution created specifically for protection and conservation of natural resources and the environment conservation. It developed informative environmental education programs (TV, radio and press campaigns) and the execution of projects and reforestation campaigns, especially with school children.

Later and as a consequence of the covenant of the Central American Commission of the Environment and Development, where presidents of the central American region seek to assure a better quality of life to Central American peoples and promote respect for the environment within a framework of a sustainable development model. The strengthening of the national agencies in charge of the subject of environment and natural resources is promoted. And to have an organization of greater capabilities in its actions and attributions for the protection, conservation, restoration and profiting from natural resources and the environment. The National Council for the Environment (CONAMA) was created, made up of all ministers and chaired by the minister of agriculture, besides the inclusion of a representative from private enterprise and from the Salvadorean Institute for Municipal development (ISDEM), an autonomous body.

Under the protection of the National Council of the Environment a research process starts, related to the environmental subject, establishing as a first national document "The Environmental Agenda and its Action Plan", which was presented during the Rio Conference

“ECO 92”. This document collected basically the environmental problem and guidelines to put to work actions to stop the accelerated degradable process of natural resources and the environment.

As one more action the decree for the formation of National Council of the Environment is revoked and the Executive Secretariat for the Environment (SEMA) is created, a ruling body with the main objective to be the coordination and follow up for environmental matters, understood as the integration within a single focus of all sectorial actions related to the environmental and natural resources, as well as the preparation, development and compliance with the national environmental strategy. Additionally, it is the political authority on environmental matters.

2 ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS ELEMENTS

2.1 National environmental strategy

In El Salvador, through a participation process, the national environmental strategy has been developed, containing the directives for increased development towards sustainability.

The strategic objective is to propose solutions for the main environmental problems derived from development and to present a system for environmental matters which promotes the analysis of decisions on development activities and adopt the same as an element of compliance and environmental application. This document has been structured in three important sections:

- Development and Environmental experience, referring to the economic, social and institutional context, serving as reference of the presentation of problems and solution proposals,
- Main problems and strategies of intervention proposed. The main problems identified are described, an estimate of the economic, social and environmental impact are made, as well as an analysis of the causes, to present briefly but as comprehensive as possible, the presentation of the strategies towards solving problems presented.
- Environmental matters and participation mechanisms; instruments designed to develop strategies reviewed in the previous section.

2.2 From environmental matters to participation mechanisms

2.2.1 Legal and institutional reforms

Legal and institutional changes are most important to the promotion of the environmental matters. According to the proposal of the national strategy of the environment, are:

- approval of the law for the protection of the environment, congruent with the same strategy (at present in a participation and consultation process with the population);
- approval and reform of sectorial laws related to the management of renewable natural resources, as well as its corresponding regulations; and
- establishment and functioning of the national system of negotiation for the environment and changes in the structure and function of the Executive Secretariat for the environment.

2.2.2 Environmental negotiation instruments

- evaluation system for impacts on the environment;
- ecological-economic ordering;
- national system of environmental information;
- environmental monitoring; and
- environmental fund for El Salvador.

2.2.3 Participation mechanisms

- women's role; and
- promotion of civilian participation.

2.3 Legislation

The subject of instruments for environmental matters has already been mentioned, and for this paragraph the proposal of environmental law in El Salvador will be quoted. At present we are developing a participatory consultation process with all social sector to validate that mentioned pre-project, considering in this manner civilian participation mechanisms. This basically strengthens national agencies which have the responsibility of natural resources and the environment, and promotes in the country a participative, democratic and decentralized environmental administration.

2.3.1 On the environmental administration in the proposal of environmental law

The environmental bill in El Salvador is divided in three sections: a) general, containing concepts, principles and rights which would sustain the law and be oriented to seek complete respect for the right of a healthy environment for all inhabitants. This section establishes the standards for environmental administration; b) the special section includes standards and precepts which assure the sustainability and rationality in the use of natural resources; c) section of procedures, the law to be applied requires procedures. In the case of environmental standards regulating highly hazardous processes and trying to prevent contamination, makes necessary that these processes be agile and assure public participation.

2.3.2 From the instruments for environmental administration

According to the environmental bill in El Salvador, the following is proposed:

- the aforementioned law and all environmental standards of sectorial or casual relevance;
- environmental ordering of space and national or regional plans, as well as territorial development;
- the evaluation system of environmental impact;
- citizen participation;
- environmental incentives system;
- national program of environmental science and technology; and
- environmental education.

2.4 Policies related to natural resources and environment

In El Salvador there is an incorporation process of environmental dimension in the different sectors, on natural resources and the environment, and these activities are developed under the premise of an institutional coordination and citizen participation and with the basic concept that politics is: "A guideline to orient behaviors in the achievement of an objective." As an example of the actions being taken, we have enclosed a proposed scheme for the design of the policy for territorial ordering and similar schemes for the other policies being proposed. (See Chart 1).

After having prepared the specific policy, we proceed to design a general framework which promotes the legislative bill under study, in order to later be able to define standards and regulations according to national reality.

METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL TO APPLY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL INCORPORATION IN PROPOSAL FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND TERRITORIAL ORDERING

