



## **KEEPING THE DROUGHT AT A DISTANCE, OR WE'RE WRONG AGAIN!**

Sandra Megens, 2024

Many issues concerning the effects and uncertainties surrounding the drought in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region were raised at the launch of UNCCD Communities of Learning and Practice (CLP) for the LAC region held on 30th January 2024. There are several voices regarding this phenomenon. Especially the varied perspectives and understandings of drought that are prevalent in the area. Only two major drought types are known to many at this time—the hydrological drought and the meteorological drought. In light of this brief meditation and the setting of a people that is so spread and diverse in terms of culture in the LAC region. The diversity of views of on how to guide, manage, and regulate this new UNCCD Platform considering the indigenous knowledge and cultural background is another important observation.

The participants of the webinar debated about it was appropriateness to come up with the phrase "anthropogenic drought." I apologize because I confirm that human choices and actions are always the source of disasters. Now is the right time to use the metaphor of the "half-empty" or "half-full glass". It relies on when a situation turns into an unmanageable problem, or how much will it cost us to fix this issue... Nothing new, but the same question for everyone in the region towards the governments in power. I rescued the idea that free water should be a cultural asset in our region from "Water Governance in a Cultural Context" because it speaks to our values and beliefs about the cost of water. In real life, however, this is not the case, and we are in no way comparable to a just and equitable democracy in operation (too much political thinking, I believe, but a valid argument finally).

*The right to be different is also the right to keep being the same..!*

Maintaining cultural tradition, a using the (machete) to cut the grass to produce new crops, perhaps could be abominable. Because it produces a high risk of starting a wildfire. However, we should be cautioned to pretend that everybody will understand and follow the rules to prevent fires during a drought-prone period. If we want to pursue a bottom-up approach to be used in this initiative, we have to agree that water is an important social function in Latin American culture. That Drought is not the new enemy, it is and was already there. We, the water professionals, the academics, the policymakers, and the individuals, can learn how the societies in these regions have evolved to survive without water in different environments.

It matters little whether the "evidence" comes from observation or experimentation in general. We propose that active engagement with critical social science can help to further theorize drought risk by focusing on the social aspects of drought. El Niño/La Niña ends, but drought exposes deeper problems for the region. Despite efforts to minimize losses caused by drought, it is clear that Latin America and the Caribbean cannot do it all, highlighting the need for more comprehensive solutions. For this, the CCD Learning and Practice Community in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC CLP) - Is an opportunity to reduce this knowledge gap.

I conclude with the need for more collaborative arrangements, how policy design and implementation are traditionally top-down, and the need for bottom-up perspectives. By collecting viewpoints and narratives from affected populations, we were able to interpret how climate change influences the region's political agenda and mitigate the drought that leads, irreversibly, to water scarcity.