

Poverty – A Direct Threat to Global Environmental Degradation

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Abstract

The paper highlights that poverty has been a source of a severe threat to global environment. The earth is one but the world is not. For sustainable livelihood of human being, man is destroying the nature, without replacing it any more. Further, high mass of consumption had added fuel to fire. Certainly, majority of the populations in developing economies living within them, depend directly on natural resources. For many of these economies, primary product exports account for the vast majority of their export earnings, and one or two primary commodities make up the bulk of exports. Agricultural value added accounts for an average of 40 per cent GDP, and nearly 80 per cent of the labor force is engaged in agricultural or resources-based activities. For a sample of 76 developing economies from Africa, Asia and Latin America, the incidence of rural poverty rises as developing countries have more of their populations concentrated on fragile lands. Although the average poverty rate across all economies is 45.8 per cent, the rate falls 36.8 per cent for those countries with less than 20 per cent of their population in fragile environments. Much of developing economies are depending on natural resources. The incidence of poverty rises in these economies has been formed with population, whose livelihoods are concentrated on fragile lands. Generally, poor people are forced to overuse environmental resources. In India also all major rivers turned into polluted, one-third forest degraded into one-sixth. Too much logging, turned into loss of flora and fauna. Global countries realised that natural resources are limited, so that we have revive it by reducing population size, rejuvenation of land, reducing pollutions and support for regeneration of natural resources. Protection and promotion of environment is found as a need of the hour. Sustainable development is not as easy as we said. Renewal, recycle, reuse, reduce of resources are to be used regularly for ever green globe. Natural resources accounting, budgeting, management are to be made popular. So that poor can be elevated. Encouragement of political party on environment is badly needed.

Keywords: Poverty Treat, Global Environmental Degradation, Economic Aspects

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Introduction:

Certainly, majority of the populations in developing economies living within them, depend directly on natural resources. For many of these economies, primary product exports account for the vast majority of their export earnings, and one or two primary commodities make up the bulk of exports¹. Agricultural value added accounts for an average of 40 per cent GDP, and nearly 80 per cent of the labor force is engaged in agricultural or resources-based activities².

For a sample of 76 developing economies from Africa, Asia and Latin America, the incidence of rural poverty rises as developing countries have more of their populations concentrated on fragile lands. Although the average poverty rate across all economies is 45.8 per cent, the rate falls 36.8 per cent for those countries with less than 20 per cent of their population in fragile environments.

Poor people are forced to overuse environmental resources to survive from day to day, and their impoverishment of their environment further impoverishes them, making their survival ever more uncertain and difficult³.

Environmental Management in India has, over the years, recognised sustainable development concerns. The National Environmental Policy 2006 has attempted to mainstream environmental concerns in all our developmental activities. It underlines that while conservation of environmental resources is necessary to secure livelihoods and well being of all; the most secure basis for conservation is to ensure that people dependent on particular resources obtain better livelihoods from the fact of conservation than from degradation of the resource⁴.

2.0 Review of Literature:**2.1 Concept of Poverty:**

Poverty termed as deprivation, or a loss of access of food, shelter and safe drinking water. It is the state or condition of having little or no money, goods or means of support. It is being poor, the lack of the means of providing material needs or controls. With these definitions we can say that Poverty is the insufficiency of human's basic needs (which include money) as well as his/her needs for contentment. We may then imply that in a situation where insufficiency of resources is present people tend to do things, that they don't normally do for subsistence. In the long run, these non-normal things would possibly become usual if not be averted so soon.

2.2 Causes of Environmental Degradation:

In relation to 'non-normal' things that became normal are the harmful steps that we do the nature. Activities such as logging and construction of deadly waste producing factories are the best examples of these. They became as usual as they are for the reason that humans depend on them too much. Humans believe these things would bring them Pots of bucks in their pockets for sustaining their basic needs. They believe its product would lead them to a new world full of ease and coziness. Yes, what they believed in fortunately became true. But inspite of this, even though they realize the fact that as they head towards what deem to be a utopia, they gradually being pulled down to hell at the same time, they don't mind it and continue to do as if nothing head threatened their very existence. They disregard that what they do bear a log of negativities. The disregard the fact that logging would lead to the alarming loss of flora and fauna, which they become cures for certain diseases such as the AID's, which is incurable so far they ignore that the factories they would built would pollute the rivers and

ground water which would eventually result to the shortage of potable water. They just think of ways and means to get themselves away of the poverty they are presently experiencing.

2.3 Reaching extreme level on nature:

On the other hand excessive hunting, using of inorganic pesticides, burning of forests, dynamite fishing and the like, bear possibilities of becoming normal if intensively patronized. These are some how the results as well as poverty and the things that greatly shape our environment in a distorted figure. If humans would continue doing these acts for the reason that these are the lone solutions of uplifting their social statuses, then the world would turn into its ugliest form. Extinction of plant and animal species would happen, soils, air and water would be severely contaminated, and global warming would be a serious threat to each and every one of us. The number of threatened plant and animal species, known as red list species, has more then doubled from 459 in 2000 to 928 in 2005.⁵

Stating these points would let us conclude that poverty is the root of the prime activities that cause detriment to the environment. It has been the greatest contributor of our nature's deterioration and the agent that terribly distracts the once quiet and harmonious cycle of mother earth. It seems like in our attempt to heal the wounds of our natural would, the first step to take must be the "evaporation" of poverty. That is the heart of all harm, hence, it must be the one to be shut down first. However, knowing the fact that our natural resources are limited and that we, human beings are competitive in nature striving to satisfy ourselves, this easy-to=say solution is undeniably an impossible to do thing.

4.0 Consequences of Environmental problems:

The main environmental issues today are wide ranging and all encompassing, deforestation, biodiversity, soil erosion, climate change, pesticide build up, industrial and municipal pollution. All has been caused by anthropogenic interventions in the natural and self sustaining cycles. The human ambition for a higher living standard has hammered "consumerism", ignoring the lasting and adverse impact of this hammer on earth's limited resources. All these problems can be categorised into four main issues.

4.1 Population explosion:

World population is growing by 92 million people adding annually, roughly equal to another Mexico every year; of this total 88 million are being added in the developing world due to which ecological demands are exponentially, growing in the greater degradation of Natural resources in this region. India shares 16 per cent of the world population, where as its land is only 2 per cent of the total geographical areas of the world. At present, approximately 68.35 million hectares of land are laying as wasteland. Of these, approximately 50 per cent are non-forests lands which can be made fertile again if treated properly.⁶

4.2 Land degradation:

The most urgent environmental problems facing the developing countries are those relating to the use of land. Of particular concern are deforestation, de-vegetation and desertification. All these are outcomes of many interrelated activities. Overgrazing and land clearing and commercial logging rob the soil of its cover and fertility and reduce agricultural yields. They also increase flooding, sedimentation and silting up of dams and reservoirs. Resources that are in principle renewable, are rapidly disappearing as a result of over exploitation. Every year nearly 6000 million tonnes of topsoil are lost by erosion,

which contain over 5 million tonnes of critical plant nutrients, whose replacement value via fertiliser has been calculated to be Rs.2,500 crores of rupees. Nearly one-third of land is eroded, salined or water logged. Almost, three quarters of dry land farmers have holding below 2 hectares which are at present level of productivity, inadequate for self-sufficiency.

4.3 Environmental Pollution:

Environmental Pollution although typically associated with industrialisation, is a great and growing concern in developing countries, Air and Water pollution in such large cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai etc are growing to critical level unsanitary living conditions due to inadequate water supply and improper waste disposal. Throughout the developing world, water polluted by pesticide, by municipal and industrial wastes cause diseases, malnutrition and death. Not only industry, but agriculture likewise contributes to pollutions.

The use of chemical fertilisers for example, pollutes the environment in various ways. Unabsorbed fertilisers and pesticides are washed away by water contaminates the rivers. Many agriculture activities led to generate the green house gases. Air pollution in some Indian cities is rising alarmingly. No major Indian city is free from the threat of chemical accidents. Acid rain may fall to earth thousands of miles away from the places of emission of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide. The protective ozone shield in heavily populated latitudes of the Northern hemisphere is thinning twice as fast as scientists predicted just a few years ago. Atmospheric levels of heat-trapping carbon dioxide are now 26 per cent higher than the pre - industrial concentration and continue to rise higher and higher. The earth's surface was warmer in 1990 than in any years. It is estimated that 70 per cent of the surface water resources are polluted. Polluted water is the source of most of the diseases. Forests are vanishing at a rate of some 17 million hectares per year, an area about half the size of Finland. A minimum of 140 plants and animal species are condemned to extinction each day. 58.8% of Indian forests have no or inadequate regeneration, mainly because of degradation.⁷

4.4 Gradual extinction of Natural Resources:

Inadequate availability of natural resources led to poverty for a larger section of population, of the means to fulfill the basic human needs. The un-intended side effects of efforts made to achieve rapid economic growth and development. This distorts natural resources from ecologically unsound development projects and programmes as well as from lack of attention to long term public interests by commercial and vested interests.

5.0 Measures for Protection of Environment:

Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (1985), Government of India and Department of Environment and Forest of each State Government have been deeply engaged in the protection, preservation and conservation of environment. Several possible policies, programmes and implementation strategies have been evolved from time to time by these Governmental organisations towards their effort for better environmental Management.

The programmes and activities are directed towards all aspects of environment and ecology with the purpose of protection and conservation of environment and ecology, their mission include sustainable development, restoration of the ecology heritage, development of eco-friendly technologies,

involving NGO's and women, help government to formulate laws and regulations, undertake afforestation and harnessing waste lands and extending environmental education.

5.1 Environmental Laws:

Government of India had enacted two dozen acts have been enacted exclusively for environmental development. Central Pollution Control Board, State Pollution Central Boards, Pollution Control Committee of the Union Territories have filed Government of India 6624 cases as on October 31, 1997 under the Water and Air acts. 3677 cases are still pending in various courts. The loopholes in environmental laws make it easier for the lawyer to support the cause of the polluter. Environmental management covers environment and enterprise objectives scope and structure of the environment, interaction of nature society and the enterprise, environmental impact assessment, economics of pollution prevention etc; such project areas as projected development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and such production areas as production management and the environmental product design, technology choice, waste management and production systems.

5.2 Environmental Education:

Education has a very important role to play in dealing with this global-issue. Education has been used by mankind not only as a conserving agency and a mechanism of social control but also as a creative and regenerative influence to bring about positive changes in existing modes of thinking and living in beliefs, values, attitudes and customs. In a crisis of the kind we are witnessing vis-a-vis environmental problems, there are greater demands on education to take a more active part and make purposeful contributions in the form of developing an awareness and sensitizing in the first place, of the challenges and consequences of manhandling of the environment, a proper understanding and appreciation of the phenomenon of better living and the formation and sustaining of desired values and attitudes through it.

The Constitution in its articles 51(g) states that "it shall be the duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, include forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have the compassion of living creatures". Environment consciousness generation should be included from School and College levels. The Supreme Court directed all National Organisations like U.G.C to offer Environmental Education as a paper in curricula of various degree courses.

5.3 Public Awareness:

About 80% of natural water resources are highly polluted like Ganga, Yamuna, Cavvery, Godavari, and Krishna. People have lost their livelihood due to fish kills from pollution. Industrial pollution in Patancheru near Hyderabad has seriously affected to public health, fishing and agricultural operations. Automobile pollution forms 60% of the air pollution in urban areas. Three-fourth of the traffic constables in Almedabad are reported to face serious problems of respiratory disorders and cancer due to continued exposure to automobile and industrial pollution. Citizens of Mumbai are paying Rs.500 crores per year towards medical for air pollution related diseases. The fast growing incidence of cancer, AIDs and other debilitating sickness are posing threats to the survival of man.

6.0 Strategies for Sustainable Development and reducing Poverty:

The following are some action strategies for achieving sustainable development. Control of population growth, conserve natural resources, reduce the waste of matter, energy resources, prevent pollution and wastes, recycle and reuse 60% of existing resources make things that last longer and are easier to reuse, recycle and repair, shift for renewable energies like sun, wind, water, biomass, help to sustain earth's biodiversity and use judiciously the renewable resources. We cite an illustration that improvements to the upper watersheds in Karnataka, India through Afforestation and construction of tanks, artificial, Ponds, Check dams and other reclamation structures leads to significant benefits-to downstream farmers through improving ground water recharge and availability, thus reducing the cost of irrigation and the need for developing new wells or extending existing wells.⁸

It is the time to modify the Socio-economic and political system to develop a mix of economic incentives like taxes and regulations that reward Earth-sustaining behaviour and that discourage Earth-degrading behaviour. Day to day, evaluate the natural resources budget and environment problems are the best reduced or solved through market place approaches (free marked environmental), government subsidies and taxes and government regulations. Need of new political parties are to support environment, like in France.

Conclusion:

Much of developing economies are depending on natural resources. The incidence of poverty rises in these economies has been formed with population, whose livelihoods are concentrated on fragile lands. Generally, poor people are forced to overuse environmental resources. In India also all major rivers turned into polluted, one-third forest degraded into one-sixth. Too much logging, turned into loss of flora and fauna. Global countries realised that natural resources are limited, so that we have revive it by reducing population size, rejuvenation of land, reducing pollutions and support for regeneration of natural resources.

Protection and promotion of environment is found as a need of the hour. Sustainable development is not as easy as we said. Renewal, recycle, reuse, reduce of resources are to be used regularly for ever green globe. Natural resources accounting, budgeting, management are to be made popular. So that poor can be elevated. Encouragement of political party on environment is badly needed.

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