

The Way Forward with Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

The concept of sustainable development was emphasised by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which defined it as: "Development that meets the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs". Sustainable development is the need of the present time not only for the survival of mankind but also for its future protection. Unlike the other great revolutions in human history the Green Revolution and the Industrial Revolution the sustainable revolution will have to take place rapidly, consciously and on many different levels and in many different spheres, simultaneously. The present paper assesses the impact of environment on development and sustainable development. The present research paper is divided into six sections. Section I deliberates the role of environment in development and sustainable development. Section II will explain research methodology and objectives of research paper. Section III explores Climate change and sustainable development initiative in India, V will explain the suggestions and Conclusion.

Keywords: Sustainability, Survival, Revolution, surroundings, Productivity, Proliferation

Introduction:

Sustainable Development is the process of economic development which aims at raising the quality of life of the present generation without impairing the quality of life of future generations, with due respect to natural endowment and environment. The concept of sustainable development was first emphasized by the United Nations Conference on Environment (UNCED). The most widely recognized definition of sustainable development, as phrased by the **Brundtland Commission** in 1987 is, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without impairing/reducing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." In the recent past, the process of economic growth has accelerated in complete disregard to the resource endowment and environment. Notably:

- Diverse crops grown on land have led to a fall in soil fertility.
- Excessive mining of iron, coal, gold, silver and extraction of crude oil has led to the depletion of their stock.

- Smoke and other injurious emissions from factories and transport vehicles has led to pollution of environment.

The competitive process of growth and development has led to environmental degradation and environmental pollution to an alarming extent. Now, environmental degradation and environmental pollution have been recognised as an emerging challenge to the quality of life (of the present and future generations). The concept of sustainable development is now being deeply appreciated and widely propagated. What the planners and the politicians are now seeking is not merely growth, but the growth that sustains the quality of life over a much longer period of time.

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The planet must shift to renewable sources of energy as compared to the regular thermal or hydropower plants that lead to climatic degradation. Solar energy is an effective alternative that we can harness using photovoltaic cells. It is less costly and environmentally friendly. A shift to wind energy is also an option. Setting up windmills in areas with high-

speed wind can help convert the natural resource into electricity for commercial or household usage. Another effective solution can come through the use of natural manure or bio-compost as a substitute for chemical fertilizers. This helps avert soil erosion and soil pollution. Subsidized LPG as a fuel in rural areas and CNG as a fuel for vehicles in urban areas could lead the way forward. The rest of the change can come majorly through increased awareness and consciousness. Only when the gravity of the situation and a moral responsibility towards forthcoming generations is realized can we pass on a healthy environment to them.

Research Methodology:

The present study is based on secondary data collected from different journal, magazine, government report, conference volume books and websites and different government report and economic survey. The present paper will explore the role of environment on sustainable development in context of India and also examine the government policy for maintain environment for sustainable development.

Objectives of Paper:

1. To examine the impact of environment on sustainable development.
2. To study that how environment degradation adversely our sustainable development.
3. To examine the cause of continuous degradation of our ecosystem
3. Results and Discussion

Environmental degradation is a result of the dynamic inter play of socio-economic, institutional and technological activities. Environmental changes may be driven by many factors including economic growth, population growth, urbanization, intensification of agriculture, rising energy use and transportation. Poverty still remains a problem at the root of several environmental problems. Following are Causes of Environmental Degradation which hinders in sustainable development:

A. Social Factors:

Population and Environment Degradation

Population is an important source of development, yet it is a major source of environmental degradation when it exceeds the threshold limits of the support systems. Unless the relationship between

the multiplying population and the life support system can be stabilized, development programmes, howsoever, innovative are not likely to yield desired results. Population impacts on the environment primarily through the use of natural resources and production of wastes and is associated with environmental stresses like loss of biodiversity, air and water pollution and increased pressure on arable land.

India supports 17 per cent of the world population on just 2.4 per cent of world land area. It's current rate of population growth at 1.85 per cent continues to pose a persistent population challenge. In view of the linkages between population and environment, a vigorous drive for population control need hardly be over emphasised.

Poverty and Environment Degradation:

Poverty is said to be both cause and effect of environmental degradation. The circular link between poverty and environment is an extremely complex phenomenon. Inequality may foster unsustainability because the poor, who rely on natural resources more than the rich, deplete natural resources faster as they have no real prospects of gaining access to other types of resources. Moreover, degraded environment can accelerate the process of impoverishment, again because the poor directly depends on natural assets. Although there has been a significant drop in the poverty ratio in the country from 55 percent in 1973 to 36 percent in 1993-94, the absolute number of poor have, however, remained constant at around 320 million over the years. An acceleration in poverty alleviation is imperative to break this link between poverty and the environment.

Urbanisation and Environment Degradation:

Lack of opportunities for gainful employment in villages and the ecological stresses is leading to an ever-increasing movement of poor families to towns. Mega cities are emerging and urban slums are expanding. There has been an eightfold increase in urban population over 1901-1991. During the past two decades of 1971-91, India's urban population has doubled from 109 million to 218 million and is estimated to reach 300 million by 2000 AD.

Such rapid and unplanned expansion of cities has resulted in degradation of urban environment. It has widened the gap between demand and supply of infrastructural services such as energy, housing,

transport, communication, education, water supply and sewerage and recreational amenities, thus depleting the precious environmental resource base of the cities. The result is the growing trend in deterioration of air and water quality, generation of wastes, the proliferation of slums and undesirable land use changes, all of which contribute to urban poverty.

B. Economic Factors:

To a large extent, environmental degradation is the result of market failure, that is, the non-existent or poorly functioning markets for environmental goods and services. In this context, environmental degradation is a particular case of consumption or production externalities reflected by divergence between private and social costs (or benefits). Lack of well-defined property rights may be one of the reasons for such market failure. On the other hand, Market distortions created by price controls and subsidies may aggravate the achievement of environmental objectives.

The level and pattern of economic development also affect the nature of environmental problems. India's development objectives have consistently emphasized the promotion of policies and programmes for economic growth and social welfare. Between 1994-95 and 1997-98, the Indian economy has grown a little over 7 per cent per annum: the growth of industrial production and manufacturing averaging higher at 8.4 per cent and 8.9 per cent respectively during these years. The manufacturing technology adopted by most of the industries has placed a heavy load on environment especially through intensive resource and energy use, as is evident in natural resource depletion (fossil fuel, minerals, timber), water, air and land contamination, health hazards and degradation of natural eco-systems. With high proportion fossil fuel as the main source of industrial energy and major air polluting industries such as iron and steel, fertilizers and cement growing, industrial sources have contributed to a relatively high share in air pollution. Large quantities of industrial and hazardous wastes brought about by expansion of chemical-based industry has compounded the wastes management problem with serious environmental health implications.

Direct impacts of agricultural development on the environment arise from farming activities which contribute to soil erosion, land salination and loss of nutrients. The spread of green revolution has been accompanied by over exploitation of land and water resources, and use of fertilizers and pesticides have increased many folds. Shifting cultivation has also been an important cause of land degradation. Leaching from extensive use of pesticides and fertilizers is an important source of contamination of water bodies. Intensive agriculture and irrigation contribute to land degradation particularly salination, alkalization and water logging.

C. Institutional Factors:

The Ministry of Environment & Forests (MOEF) in the Government is responsible for protection, conservation and development of environment. The Ministry works in close collaboration with other Ministries, State Governments, Pollution Control Boards and a number of scientific and technical institutions, universities, non-Governmental organisations etc. Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 is the key legislation governing environment management. Other important legislations in the area include the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The weakness of the existing system lies in the enforcement capabilities of environmental institutions, both at the centre and the state. There is no effective coordination amongst various Ministries/Institutions regarding integration of environmental concerns at the inception/planning stage of the project. Current policies are also fragmented across several Government agencies with differing policy mandates. Lack of trained personnel and comprehensive database delay many projects. Most of the State Government institutions are relatively small suffering from inadequacy of technical staff and resources. Although overall quality of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies and the effective implementation of the EIA process have improved over the years, institutional strengthening measures such as training of key professionals and staffing with proper technical persons are needed to make the EIA procedure a more effective instrument for environment protection and sustainable development.

Climate change and sustainable development initiative in India

Climate change has gained considerable importance in international discussions at appropriate forums. The year 2015 witnessed two landmark international events related to climate change. The historic climate change agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted by 195 nations in Paris in December 2015, with the aim of keeping the rise in global temperature well below 2°C, which will set the world towards a low carbon, resilient and sustainable future. The world also witnessed the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015 which replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and set the development agenda for the next 15 years with the aim of guiding the international community and national governments on a path of sustainable development.

The Agreement provided banded obligation for developed countries for providing financial resources to developing countries for both mitigation and adaptation while encouraging other countries to provide support on voluntary basis. It also re-affirms that developed countries will come forward and take the lead in mobilising climate finance from a wide variety of sources, instruments and channels, noting the significant role of public funds for this same purpose. The Agreement also called upon developed countries to raise their level of financial support with a complete road map for achieving the goal to provide jointly US \$ 100 billion by 2020 for mitigation and adaptation, by increasing the adaptation finance significantly from current levels and also for providing appropriate technology and support for capacity building.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA): in its 17th session in September 2015 announced a set of 17 SDGs and 169 targets which will stimulate action over the next 15 years. This set of goals replaces the MDGs which were coming to an end in 2015 and aims to work on the areas which could not be completed earlier. The agenda highlights poverty eradication, combating inequalities, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the ambient goal and has at its core the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This also calls for an invigorated global partnership for sustainable

development, including multi-stakeholder partnerships, in addition to enhancing capacities of stakeholders in better quality measurement and compilation of data or information on sustainable development.

In India, many initiatives have been taken on climate change and for attaining sustainable development. Accordingly, India has submitted ambitious targets in its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) in the renewable energy sector, mainly from solar and wind energy. With a potential of more than 100 GW, the aim is to achieve a target of 60 GW of wind power as well as 100 GW of solar power installed capacity by 2022. India's INDC is comprehensive and covers all elements, *i.e.*, adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology and capacity building. The country's goal is to reduce overall emission intensity and improve energy efficiency of its economy over time, as the same time protecting the vulnerable sectors and segments of the economy and society. The principle of equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, (CBDR), historical responsibilities and India's development imperatives, enhanced adaptation requirements, etc. have been a recurring theme in the INDC document. India's INDC has been welcomed as fair and ambitious specifically on renewable energy and forestry sector.

India has also taken the initiative of setting up an International Solar Alliance (ISA), an alliance of 121 solar-resource-rich countries, laying fully or partially between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn. This alliance was jointly launched by the Prime Minister of India and President of France on 30th November 2015 at Paris, on the side-lines of the 21st Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC.

However, for a country like India, successful implementation of the Paris Agreement, SDGs and ambitious targets set out in INDCs would require huge amount of fund which is difficult to manage from budgetary sources alone. Thus, under the present context, it is important for a country like India that the issue of mobilization and attracting of finance be given due importance with increased importance towards adaptation and the provision of clean technology be addressed adequately.

Measures taken by Government of India to implement Sustainable Development :

NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog, the newly-formed commission that replaced the 65-year-old Planning Commission in India, is entrusted with the task of coordinating SDGs in India. States are also advised to undertake similar mapping, including visioning, planning, budgeting, and developing implementation & monitoring systems for the state-sponsored schemes that are being implemented to fulfil the SDGs. In addition to that, the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation is engaged in the process of building key indicators to monitor the implementation of SDGs. Since 2015 (when the United Nations, along with other countries, adopted the SDGs) the Indian government has launched several flagship programs that are at the heart of SDGs. Some of these include Swachh Bharat Mission, Skill India, Make in India, Digital India, etc.

Challenges in Attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) For India

The four major challenges for attaining SDGs in India are discussed below:

Defining the Key Indicators:

One of the major challenges for India is to devise suitable indicators to effectively assess the progress of SDGs. The key definitions for areas, such as poverty, hunger, safe drinking water, education need to be revised in order to effectively implement the SDGs.

Financing Sustainable Development Goals:

Despite India's best efforts and making poverty alleviation a priority since the Fourth 5-year Plan, India has the highest number of people living below the poverty line. At today's level of investment, there is a huge funding shortfall that hinders the progress of attaining SDGs.

Monitoring & Ownership of Implementation Process: Although NITI Aayog is expected to play an important role in taking ownership of the implementation process, the members of the Aayog have expressed their concerns time and again about the limited manpower they have to handle such a Herculean task.

Measuring the Progress:

The government of India has admitted the non-availability of data, especially from the sub-national areas. Incomplete coverage of administrative data is yet another factor that has hampered the measurement

of progress for even the Millennial Development Goals (MDGs) that were the precursor to SDGs.

Conclusion:

The primary causes of environmental degradation in India are attributed to the rapid growth of population in combination with economic development and overuse of natural resources. Major environmental calamities in India include land degradation, Environmental Degradation in India: Causes and Consequences 1601 deforestation, soil erosion, habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity. Economic growth and changing consumption patterns have led to a rising demand for energy and increasing transport activities. Air, water and noise pollution together with water scarcity dominate the environmental issues in India. Six interdependent capacities are deemed to be necessary for the successful pursuit of sustainable development. These are the capacities to measure progress towards sustainable development; promote equity within and between generations; adapt to shocks and surprises; transform the system onto more sustainable development pathways; link knowledge with action for sustainability; and to devise governance arrangements that allow people to work together.

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