



“Environmental Degradation Increases Poverty: Socio-Environmental Analysis.”

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Abstract-

Environmental degradation is the result of the interplay of a number of socio-environmental factors and activities. Environmental changes can be driven by many factors including economic and population growth, urbanization, intensification of agriculture and the usage of natural resources.

However, poverty still remains the problem at the heart of a number of environmental problems. Environmental degradation and poverty alleviation are urgent issues that need to be addressed by the global community, as a whole, as they are issues which have a lot in common but in development rhetoric are often treated separately.

Poverty is both a cause and an effect of environmental degradation, there is a circular link between the two, as with many international development challenges, and is very complex. Issues surrounding the environment, economics and policies are all inter-related through the way human beings interact both with each other and with their immediate environment. Whilst, environmental problems are expressed in largely generic terms such as climate change, these problems are of particular concern where they are localized and are immediate issues, which are not viewed remotely by vulnerable or marginalized groups in many developing countries. These affect the poorer sectors of the population as the problems are directly related to household food security.

Key words: Environmental Degradation, Poverty, Marginalized Group, Food Security.

Introduction:

Poverty and inequality impact on environmental degradation as the poor sectors of the population in many developing countries are far more reliant on natural resources. Reversely, a degraded environment can accelerate poverty and inequality because the poor are to a larger extent dependent on directly natural resources.

To ensure food security, households often have no choice but to overuse the natural resources available to them, resulting in environmental degradation. This degradation then results in constraints resulting in the

vicious cycle of poverty and environmental degradation. That said, it is important to remind ourselves that the world's poor are both agents and victims, and that there is no inherent inclination to degrade the environment.



Impact of Climate Change on the landscape resulting in desertification Source: [Scientific American](#)

Whilst, this takes the problem down to its most simplified level, acceleration in poverty alleviation is no doubt imperative to break the link, as is more considered environmental policy and action at all levels: local, regional, national and international. However, it is also important to address the ongoing concern and belief that for less economically developed countries to continue to development that they may need to sacrifice environmental concerns or that it is a luxury to address when higher standards of living are achieved. This stems from the belief that the world's increasing population and the resultant excessive burden on the world's natural resources is the current systemic root course of environmental degradation.

It is important that lessons are learnt from the environmental damaging processes of the world's longest industrialized nations; these lessons must be learnt and applied. Sustainability is the key for a better balanced relationship between development and the environment. However, the overloaded and overused phrase sustainable development must be used by practioners to recognize the interconnectedness between human beings and the environment if true progress is to be made. There has in recent years, been somewhat of a shift in this rhetoric, with developing countries becoming more engaged in environmental issues, in particular Africa, as it is one of continents more directly experiencing the effects of climate change. The engagement of developing countries is important in ensuring the shift from this rather antiquated notion to one that actively pursues the need to tailor the velocity and blueprint of global economic growth to Earth's carrying capacity. This has to happen now to ensure that we make development sustainable and that "we can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (***Our Common Future***, also known as the **Brundtland Report**, from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was published in 1987.)

As environmental degradation has continued to worsen and in doing so has exacerbated poverty and food security, there has been a conscience development in the importance placed on environmental conservation.

However, more needs to be done in terms of transformative new strategies to combine policies and practices in the areas of poverty alleviation and environmental conservation.



Melting ice in the Arctic, an area most at risk from the impact of Climate Change Source: [Guardian](#)

There needs to be a greater appreciation in development policy by national governments and international communities for integrated poverty and environmental programs, particularly in marginalized areas, to allow for a concerted effort to promote a new perception and relationship for those living in poverty with their immediate environment. It is imperative that we remember that climate change and environmental degradation affects everyone on the planet, but to differing degrees depending on their level of economic development and consumption patterns, including their use of fossil fuels and their relationship to their immediate environment.

While this is a somewhat oversimplified view that just scratches the surface, the main principle is that we need to understand these issues more. The interconnectedness talked about above needs to have greater recognition if the environmental degradation and poverty nexus is to be sufficiently addressed through specific long-term strategies. We must analyze all parts of the whole, and in some cases, turn to the populations in marginalized areas, where people through necessity have found creative and innovative solutions to cope with their environment.

Objectives of the Study:

The major objective of study are,

- 1) Causes of Environmental Degradation.
- 2) Environmental Degradation Increased Poverty.

Data collection:

The present study is exclusively realized on secondary data sources. It is purely descriptive type of research since it describes the facts relating to the problem. The necessary secondary data has been collected from various reports of the Government of India, Research papers, Journals and other publications.

Causes of Environmental Degradation:

1) High quantity of Exhaust gases: The biggest reason by far for all kinds of environmental degradation is the exorbitant amount of gases, harmful to the environment, which is released by the various industries. Prime amongst these gases are CO₂, SO₂ and NH₃. Of course there are many more, and these are the main culprits for ozone holes and global warming.

2) Deforestation: Close second comes the deforestation all over the world, to harness forest resources, to clear land, for wood and for various other reasons. Deforestation causes major problems for one simple reason; it decreases the number of trees, which clean the environment, provide oxygen and also affect rain patterns. This is the major reason why there are calls for tree plantation; it is to make up for this loss.

3) High number of industries such as mining: Mining creates a lot of pollution, mainly because it releases particulate matter, which qualifies as Respirable Particulate Matter (RPM); the particulate matter which can enter our lungs and can harm the entire respiratory system. This form causes the most direct harm to humans, also particulate matter can come from indoor pollution, as can be seen in cooking on traditional 'hookahs' and cottage industries like 'bangle-making'.

4) Chemical effluents: Effluents are another by-product of industries which poses threat to the environment, leather and tanning industries, petroleum industries and chemical manufacturing industries create major waste products which are released directly into nearby streams without treatment, creating river pollution and causing harm to aquatic life.

5) Transport: As the spending power of the population increases and as cars become available more, the number of vehicles on the road increases. The amount has grown exponentially in countries like India, Brazil and China and this is a point form of pollution which directly affects humans. Smog is a nuisance that is created because of vehicular pollution, and Hydro-Carbons released from engines are the cause of creation of lower level ozone that is harmful to humans.

6) Unprecedented Construction: Urban Heat Island is a direct cause of the unprecedented construction activities that are being carried out right now, and urban heat island causes trapping of pollutants. Urban Heat island is an effect caused due to trapping of solar radiation by concrete and cement which are materials which trap heat extremely well. Construction causes removal of vegetative cover which usually allows for better exchange of heat. This heat island effect causes constricted circulation of air, which traps pollutants released in urban areas and does not allow for mixing of the air, thus decreasing the air quality.

7) Secondary Pollutants: Secondary pollutants are ones that are not directly emitted; however they get created when primary pollutants react amongst themselves. Major amongst them is the creation of ozone from reaction between non-burnt Hydrocarbons and Nitrous Oxides. There are various other secondary pollutants and the reaction between these pollutants cause reactions that lead to formation of ozone holes. Stratospheric clouds are the main reaction sites for such pollutants.

8) Ruinous agricultural policies: Overloading the land with fertilizers, overgrazing and shifting agriculture are ruinous agricultural policies that degrade land, creating soil erosion that leads to silting in major rivers and

reservoirs. Soil degradation is a continuous cycle and it ultimately leads to desertification and degradation of land quality by allowing the direct action of eroding agents on cultivable land.

9) The Population Explosion: The increasing population creates a load that the entire environment has to support, not only in terms of food and lodging, but also in terms of the amount of waste that it generates and the ability of the environment to sustain this growth. All major activities are carried out to support this growing population, and whilst this is unavoidable, what is required is the proper planning that should come with this explosion.

10) Unplanned Land-use policies: Land models are available these days which help in proper planning and use of land resources. However, failure to use these models and land management policies can lead to land pollution and degradation of the worst kind. Extraction from mines renders them unusable for habitation and if rehabilitation work is not carried out, the piece of land is sure to lose all its value and become unusable. Land classification is one of the major activities that help in proper land use, and it should be followed with utmost care.

Environmental Degradation Increases Poverty:

On 25th September 2015, 193 countries of the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development which contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The first and the foremost Sustainable Development goal is to “End Poverty in all forms everywhere”. Each and every country of the world is looking forward to eradicate poverty so that even the poor and vulnerable people also enjoy equal rights to economic resources, healthy living conditions as well as access to basic infrastructure and technology. Moreover, there should not be any doubt that poor nations and poor people are more severely vulnerable to effects of environmental damage than the rich.

Over the past few decades, average living standards have risen and the gap between the very rich and the very poor has broadened. But the question here arises “Why is poverty still prevailing in the world?”

There can be many reasons but I think two biggest factors contributing to poverty are: Lack of education and improper implementation of poverty eradication policies at the grass-root level. More often than not, many international reports claim that poverty contributes to environmental degradation. Due to lack of sufficient resources and improper knowledge poverty stricken people tend to overuse every resource available to them when their survival is at stake. But generally, we tend to forget that poor people are the most undefended ones when it comes to effects of environmental pollution, climate change and global warming.

Conclusion Remark-

In my viewpoint, it is very important for everyone to recognize that poverty and environmental issues are interrelated. Poverty among people puts stress on the environment whereas environmental problems cause severe suffering to the poor. People, whether they be rich or poor, consume water, food, and natural resources in order to remain alive. All economic activities are directly, indirectly or remotely based on natural resources and any pressure on natural resources can cause environmental stress. Environmental damage can prevent people, especially the poor, from having good and hygienic living standards. As poor people rely more directly on the environment than the rich for their survival, they are mostly on the receiving end of environmental problems. Poverty often causes people to put relatively more pressure on the environment which results in larger families (due to high death rates and insecurity), improper human waste disposal

leading to more rigorous efforts should be undertaken by the governments of all countries to eradicate poverty and in turn, to save deprived people from the dreadful implications of environmental damage. There should be more collaborative partnerships among all sections of the society so that even the people living in poverty are linked to the world through their participation in social, political, and economical spheres along with their active participation in environmental regeneration.

I strongly believe that there has been no solution on poverty without improvement health of environment.

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