

Environmental Issues in Developed and Developing Countries

During 1950's and 60's developed countries give emphasis for economic growth. In the process of achieving high economic growth rate they followed resource intensive development activities.

Due to such development activities led to increase in environmental degradation and ecological stress in the economy. Scientists found that such development activity of developed countries resulted global environmental problems (e.g green house gas, ozone depletion, bio diversity loss, acid rain, etc.). These findings raised the concern regarding the environmental problem during 1970's and 1980's.

Environmental Issues in Developed Countries:

Unsustainable consumption Pattern

Developed countries consume over 70% of the earth's resources and is the major cause of environmental degradation. They can contribute for the improvement in global environment by changing their consumption pattern. The following table shows per capita consumption of various goods in selected high middle and low income countries.

Annual per capita consumption in selected high - medium and low income nations

Country	Priv.Cons(US\$)	Fish (kg)	Meat(kg)	Cereals	Paper (kg)	Fossil Fuels(kg)	Cars (per '000 people)
USA	21680	21.0	122.0	975	293.0	6902	489
Sing	16340	34.0	77.0	159.0	168.0	7825	120
Japan	15554	66.0	42.0	334.0	239.0	3277	373
Germ	15229	13.0	87.0	496.0	205.0	3625	500
Poland	5087	12.0	73.0	696.0	54.0	2585	209
Trinid	4864	12.0	28.0	237.0	41.0	6394	94
Turkey	4377	7.2	19.0	502.0	32.0	952	94.0
Indone	1808	18.0	9.0	311.0	17.0	450	12.2
China	1410	26.0	47.0	360.0	30.0	700	3.2
India	1166	4.7	4.3	234.0	3.7	268	4.4
Bangla	780	11.0	3.4	250.0	1.3	67	0.5
Nigeria	692	5.8	12.0	228.0	1.9	186	6.7
Zambia	625	8.2	12.0	144.0	1.6	77	17.0

Source: World Resource Institute, 2001 World Resource Report (Washington D.C) P.27

Globally, the 20 % of the world's people in the highest income countries account for **86%** of total *private consumption* expenditure. and the poorest 20 % account for only **1.3%**.

Rich 20 % consume **45 %** of all *meat and fish* and the poor 20 % consume only **5%**.

Rich 20 % consume **58%** of total energy the poorest 20 % consume less than **4 %**

Rich 20 % have **74 %** of total telephone line and the poorer 20 % have **1.5 %**

Rich 20 % consume **84 %** of all paper and poorest 20 % consume only **1.1%**

Rich 20 % own **87 %** of the total vehicle fleet, the poorest 20 % own less than **1 %**

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A substantial part of the consumption of developed countries is wasteful. Ever increasing consumption puts strains on the environment -emissions and waste that pollute the earth and destroy ecosystems and growing depletion and degradation of renewable resources that undermines livelihoods.

Thus it is urgent to change the consumption pattern, towards responsible consumption, of the developed countries for the sustainable use of the resources

Emission control

The developed countries have to adopt cleaner environment as per their commitment. Since they are the most polluters of air and sea, developed countries must lead the way to global change in current and future patterns of production. If wealthy nations do not achieve significant and sustained reductions in the production of green house gases and ozone depleting substances there will be little reason for the developing countries to do so, since their percapita emission is very low to that of developed countries.

Research and Development:

The developed countries must take a leading role in research and development efforts.

The technologies should be equally applicable in case of developing countries context.

Currently many clean technologies are expensive for developing world production unit.

Due to which it is almost impossible for developing countries to attain the standards set in developed countries.

Thus, adopting cleaner abatement technologies and making accessible to developing countries at cheaper prices can help to reduce the source of global emissions.

Environmentally sustainable trade policy:

Developed countries may impose restriction for the import of skin or hides of endangered species. In the mean time if the whole economy of the some of the developing countries depend on natural resources they should not impose restriction on import of such goods. Otherwise developing countries have to face trade deficit and hurdle for their economic development.

The main issues related to developing countries

a The concept of sustainable development and linkage between environment

Sustainability refers to meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. For economists a development path is sustainable if and only if the stock of overall capital (natural + man made) remains constant or rises over time. In light of rising consumption levels worldwide, combined with high rate of population growth, the realization of sustainable development is major challenge. From present information concerning the destruction of many of the world's resources, it is clear that meeting the needs of world's population that is expected to grow by 3 billion in the next 50 years will require a radical change in consumption and production patterns.

.Population growth and Resource and Environment protection

Rapid growing populations have led to land, water and fuel wood shortage in rural areas and to urban health crisis due to lack of sanitation and clean water. Present path of environmental degradation would severely compromise the ability of present and future generation to meet their needs.

In developing countries the population growth is very high and the impact of population growth on the environmental degradation would be high in these countries. We know that as population increases per capita resource use also increases and there will be scarcity of resource and cleaner environment. Sustainable use of environmental resources with growing population is a major challenge for developing countries.

.Poverty and Environment

There is always controversy regarding poverty and environmental degradation. Some economist blame poverty for environmental degradation. According to them poor people depend basically on the natural resources as they don't have other resources as such poverty will contribute for environmental degradation. For them the environmental policy to success the developing countries must address the issue of landlessness, poverty and lack of access to institutional resource, insecure land tenure rights, lack of credit and inputs.

But there is also another school of thought for which degradation in environment is not from the poverty but from the greedyness of the rich people. Poor people who live for a long time in the nearby of resource area and they know that if the resource is depleted they will be the sufferer. Thus, they are utilizing the resources since long time in a sustainable manner. The consumerism of the rich and greedy people is the major reason of environmental degradation.

Whatever may be the case it is necessary to address the problem of landlessness and poverty for proper implementation of environmental protection policy. Thus, improving the condition of poor and landless people and preserve the natural resources is major issue for developing countries. Some of the basic needs of the people may arise from the natural resources and if we want to preserve such resource we have to sacrifice our present basic needs.

.Growth vs. Environment

One of the problem of developing countries is to maintain the high rate of growth to feed the growing population. For economic growth it needs to utilize the natural resource along with man made resources. Studies show that richest 1 billion and poorest 1 billion are contributing more for the degradation of environment. Thus, improving the condition of these poorest people may contribute for the reduction in the rate of environmental degradation. However, it is most challenging task for developing countries.

.Rural Development and Environment

Rural development is one of the challenges for developing countries. To meet the increasing food needs of rapidly growing population food production should be increased tremendously. For the protection of environment it is necessary to adopt the sustainable methods of farming. The problem of developing countries is to choose either to increase agricultural production through the use of chemical fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides or the preservation of the eco system from the adverse effect of such inputs. This implies a choice between present survival and future wellbeing.

Again rural development needs more investment for infrastructure development which may degrade the environment. Thus, rural development without degrading the environmental quality is one of the issues of developing countries.

.Urban Development and Environment

Urban centers are increasing in developing countries. There is a problem of extreme health hazards, congestion, vehicular and industrial emissions, indoor air pollution due to poorly ventilated household stoves etc in the urban centers of developing countries. The people residing in such urban centers will be ill and diseased and their productivity will be low. Thus, reducing pollution in urban centers and meeting basic needs of the urban people is another major issue of developing nations.

.International trade and environmental protection:

Developing countries are also facing difficult choice in international trade due to various kinds of trade disruptions that arise from environmental action of developed countries. A large number of low and lower middle income countries are directly dependent on natural resources for the majority of their exports. Thus they should promote efficient use of resources for current development and encourage at the same time sustainable resource use, so that the resource base of the economy will not be depleted.