

## Sustainable Development in India: Problems, Mitigations and Environment Conservations

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### Abstract

*This paper emphasizes the fact that there is an increased focus on economic growth and development in India but this development must be made environmentally sustainable, along with the conservation and management of resources, sustainable and environment friendly livelihood. Few decades ago there is a debate over development that is also sustainable. On the one hand there are those who argue that urbanization, concrete buildings, and expanding roadways is the parameter of development, but on the other is the group that argues that this expansion is the king for destroying the world. Sustainable development is the balancing act between these two thought processes. The paper will discuss in detail various problems that are faced during adopting of these “Sustainable Development goals 15” including the imbalance between environmental conservation and construction of various infrastructural projects, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystem, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt, and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. Further the paper will discuss in detail various measures that have been taken by the government and role of Judiciary in mitigation of these problems in order to achieve SDG 15.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable, Parameter, Conservation, Mitigation

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### INTRODUCTION

Controversy has surrounded many major development and infrastructural projects in India, such as dams in earthquake sensitive hills of Uttarakhand, Sardar Sarovar dam on the river Narmada proposed interlinking of rivers. The Konkan Railways, the Aarey Forest in Mumbai has been chopped down despite a sustained and widespread campaign etc. Objections to these projects pertain to the extent of environmental

destructions and uprooting of human settlement such projects may cause. But these environmental and social costs have been justified by the government and the other protagonists as essential for any kind of development. This dichotomy reflects the essence of the debate around sustainable development. Not only in India but almost everywhere in the world “Sustainable Development” has become buzz-word. Every international agency from the World Bank to the UNICEF and almost every country is talking of it. “Sustainable Development is the development that needs the need of present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs.” This definition has been offered by the world commission on environment and development (WCED). In its report “Our Common Future” and widely accepted. Economists defined it as an economic progress in which the quantity and quality of our stocks of natural resources (like forests) and the integrity of bio-geochemical cycles (like climate) are sustained and passes on, unimpaired, to the future generations.

The concept assumed immense importance against the backdrop of the growth of human population and modern man’s indiscriminate and unbridled exploitation of environmental resources to gratify his ever-growing hunger for prosperity. People and planners must accept this fact that there is finite amount of habitable land and water on this earth. The most widely acclaimed concern is that those who enjoy the fruits of economic development today may be making the future generation worse by over-exploiting the natural resources and polluting the natural environment. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, world economy has expended twenty times and the rapid industrialization has caused economic explosion which depleted stocks of ecological capital (fuel, forests, soils, fisheries water, environment etc.) faster than such stocks replenished.

### **SDG-15 AND PROBLEMS FACED WHILE ADOPTING IT**

**The Sustainable Development Goal -15** deals with the life on Land. Human Life depends on the Mother Earth as well as Oceans for their sustenance and their livelihood. Human beings depend on plant species and 80% of their diet comes from plants, significantly linked to agriculture, as a main economic activity. Forest cover which accounts for 30% of the earth’s surface, provide important habitats for millions of species and important source of clean air which is helpful in combating climate

change. Every year 13 million hectares of forest are lost while the continuous degradation of dry land has led to desertification of 3.6 billion hectares affecting poor communities. The 2020 target of Sustainable Development Goal 15 are unlikely to be met, land degradation continuous, biodiversity loss is occurring at faster rate, illicit poaching and trafficking of wildlife continue to thwart efforts to protect and restore vital ecosystem and species. The following problems which are faced while adopting SDG-15 in India are discussed below:

### **Desertification and India**

Desertification refers to the process that leads to the degradation of arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas due to natural or human induced factors such as deforestation, mining etc. It does not refer to the expansion of existing deserts. In India, the problem of desertification is severe in the state of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab adjoining areas of Thar Desert in spite of various measures taken by the Government, the civil society and local communities. Desertification enters into Delhi with the erosion of Aravali forested area.

### **Loss of Biodiversity and India**

Biodiversity is the variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat and India is recognized as one of the mega-diverse country which is rich in its biodiversity with just 2.4% of its land area accounts for 7% of species. Many threats are faced by biodiversity such as direct threat: Desertification, Hunting, Poaching, Over- exploitation. Indirect threat: Loss or modification of natural habitats, introduction of exotic species, pollution etc. Illegal poaching of tigers led to declining of their numbers and they come in the category of endangered species. *Lantana Camara* which is a flowering plant and acts as an invasive species led to the reduction of biodiversity and cause problems in agriculture fields and if got unchecked it can reduce farm productivity. The Gangetic Dolphins threatened by the water pollution, removal of river water and siltation arising from deforestation acts as the barrier in their smooth run in the river water and thus their number got decreased. The recent illegal introduction of African Catfish *Clarias Gariepinus* for aquaculture purposes is posing a threat to the indigenous catfishes in Indian rivers.

## **Deforestation in India**

Deforestation is a human process of reducing forests to obtain clear land for various purposes. Deforestation has great impact on India and its economy, which largely depends on the Agriculture and Monsoon. Greater pollution or carbon emission with no carbon capture increased the health burden of the country. Greater amount of funds will be diverted for the climate change, resilient crops which otherwise help in rise of incomes. It also leads to the encroachment to natural resources like wetlands which causes disasters like Deluge in Uttarakhand and in Kashmir valley. It causes change in rainfall, crop failure, pushing farmers to migrate to burdened cities thereby causes slums, prostitution, crimes, poor hygiene, social inequalities etc. In longer term health consequences, more frequent floods, increase in man-animal conflicts, less fertility of land. Depleting the Nature's wealth also depletes the human and economic health.

## **MITIGATION MEASURES**

The following measures that have been taken for mitigating various problems while adopting SDG-15 are as under:

- The Supreme Court and High Courts of various States have taken numerous measures to protect environment by various landmark judgments. Several civil societies N.G.O's have filed P.I.L in Supreme Court in order to protect the environment. Even the Supreme Court of India and High Courts of many States, Under Article 32 and Article 226, come forward and paying special attention for the protection of environment by giving effective directions. Apex Court has exercised its writ jurisdiction when there was leakage of chlorine from the Sri Ram Industries, throwing of waste material of alcohol plants into the adjoining drainage, discharge of highly toxics affluent by the tanneries, to entertain public grievances relating to environment in the nature of public interest litigation for banning of harmful drugs, pollution of Holy Ganga by municipal sewage and industrial affluent.
- The National Green Tribunal was established under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010 for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

- Several Articles of the Indian Constitution Part III, IV and IV-A, deals with the protection and improvement of natural environment. A lot of acts like Biodiversity Conservation Act, Environment Protection Act, Wild life Preservation Act, Water Pollution Prevention Act etc. are enacted from time to time for environment conservation.
- Setting of Intergovernmental panel on land and soil will helpful in speeding up efforts to check desertification. India should learn lesson from the World. In Africa many countries have come together to develop ‘**GREAT GREEN WALL**’ which extend from Senegal to Djibouti with participation of local communities. The Govt. of India has taken it as an example to combat desertification by building large green belts, prioritize forestry programs and launch of projects of fixing and stabilizing sands. People’s participation is crucial in reclaiming lands. China’s “Great Green wall” project is on massive scale and is now starting to show results.
- India is signatory of various conventions such as convention of Biological diversity, CITES, Ramsar convention, convention on the conservation of Migratory species of wild animal etc. We should have to work hard and cooperate with the international society to protect the Biodiversity loss.

## **CONCLUSION**

Strong public institutions and environmental protection policies seem to be essential. Policy reforms must focus on changing agricultural and industrial practices, so as to reduce the amount of pollution, wastes and other environmental damage. There can't be development unless it is sustainable because otherwise it just become uni-centered or a linear growth. A Linear Growth always has damage for environment and also for the people who are associated with it. Without good environment, good development is impossible. For good development, one of the first requirements is the healthy environment. We should opt for Sustainable Transport and leap towards solar energy for sustainable growth keeping in mind we use only natural resources that can be replenished. Early action to prevent degradation will usually be much cheaper than attempting to reverse it later.

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