
Consumption Pattern: Environmental Stress in India

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ABSTRACT

Increases in consumption and production over the past decade were largely responsible for the worsening environmental and social trends. Unfortunately, the negotiators of the Plan paid insufficient attention to the lessons from ten years of discussions about the concepts, the available policies and tools and their effectiveness, the impacts of those policies on developing countries, and the political commitment of countries in an era of globalization. Despite a promising proposal for a new ten-year work programme aimed at bridging the gap implementing the Agenda 21 commitments. In the ten-year review of progress to achieve sustainable production and consumption, governments quickly skipped past the critical work of examining why things are getting worse, avoiding the task of identifying the obstacles and in turn avoiding the commitment to time-bound measurable targets. This paper deal s in how consumption pattern affects the environmental stress.

Key words: consumption pattern, Environment stress, unsustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

While populations no doubt are large in many countries, and demands on resources are obviously large, it is only one of many other causes and some of those other issues such as over-consumption based, unsustainable development may have an even larger impact. This paper has the following sub-sections:

1. Consumption

Existing consumption patterns as seen in India can put strain on the environment and natural resources, which can have serious impacts on society. But, how much of the environmental degradation we see today is as a result of over-population and how much is due to over-exploitation due to consumerism and geopolitical interests?

Though most societies were efficient for the time in which they were formed, powerful nations disintegrated when too large a share of their labor was diverted to unnecessary tasks. Some societies structures, expended labor, resources, and capital to support militaristic elite bent on plundering neighbors and their own workers. Each of these societies became locked into a wasteful system of production and distribution.

The real issue is not consumption itself but its patterns and effects.. Inequalities in consumption

are stark. Globally, the 20% of the world's people in the highest-income countries account for 86% of total private consumption expenditures - the poorest 20% a minuscule 1.3%. that is not to say that there are no problems in developing countries! In India for example, Delhi is a good example of a growing city. However, with this development come serious growing pains, such as pollution and unsustainable resource management.

Consumption patterns driven by current growth-based economics promote production and purchase of more and more material wealth and satisfaction. The impact on the environment from the increased need to obtain inputs such as raw materials and use of the environment, as well as increased waste, is considerable. The consumption levels of all people around the world are not the same. Take the following for example that compares consumption levels:

Changing Consumption Patterns

This contains the following programme areas:

- (a) Focusing on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption;
- (b) Developing national policies and strategies to encourage changes in unsustainable consumption patterns.

PROGRAMME AREAS

A. Focusing on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption

1. Poverty and environmental degradation are closely interrelated. While poverty results in certain kinds of environmental stress, the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances.
2. Measures to be undertaken at the international level for the protection and enhancement of the environment must take fully into account the current imbalances in the global patterns of consumption and production.
3. Special attention should be paid to the demand for natural resources generated by unsustainable consumption and to the efficient use of those resources consistent with the goal of minimizing depletion and reducing pollution. Although consumption patterns are very high in certain parts of the world, the basic consumer needs of a large section of humanity are not being met. This results in excessive demands and unsustainable lifestyles among the richer segments, which place immense stress on the environment. The poorer segments, meanwhile, are unable to meet food, health care, shelter and educational needs. Changing consumption patterns will require a multipronged strategy focusing on demand, meeting the basic needs of the poor, and reducing wastage and the use of finite resources in the production process.
4. Growing recognition of the importance of addressing consumption has also not yet been matched by an understanding of its implications. Some economists are questioning traditional concepts of economic growth and underlining the importance of pursuing economic objectives

that take account of the full value of natural resource capital. More needs to be known about the role of consumption in relation to economic growth and population dynamics in order to formulate coherent international and national policies.

B Developing National policies and strategies to encourage changes in unsustainable consumption patterns

Achieving the goals of environmental quality and sustainable development will require efficiency in production and changes in consumption patterns in order to emphasize optimization of resource use and minimization of waste. In many instances, this will require reorientation of existing production and consumption patterns that have developed in industrial societies and are in turn emulated in much of the world.

. Progress can be made by strengthening positive trends and directions that are emerging, as part of a process aimed at achieving significant changes in the consumption patterns of industries, Governments, households and individuals.

Misuse of land and resources

While populations can burden the environment, it is the relative impact of population numbers alone versus why and how resource are used that we wish to consider here.) Take the following as an example:

Junk-food chains, including KFC and Pizza Hut, are under attack from major environmental groups in the United States and other developed countries because of their environmental impact. Intensive breeding of livestock and poultry for such restaurants leads to deforestation, land degradation, and contamination of water sources and other natural resources. For every pound of red meat, poultry, eggs, and milk produced, farm fields lose about five pounds of irreplaceable top soil. The water necessary for meat breeding comes to about 190 gallons per animal per day, or ten times what a normal Indian family is supposed to use in one day, if it gets water at all. Overall, animal farms use nearly 40 percent of the world's total grain production. In the United States, nearly 70 percent of grain production is fed to livestock.

Because industrial agriculture is using more monocultures, rather than a diversity of crops, the loss of biodiversity is leading to more resource usage, as described above. This as well as other political situations such as the motives for dumping surplus food on to developing countries to undersell the local farmers, leads to further hunger around the world.

Consumption patterns in wealthier countries increase demands for various foods, flowers, textiles, coffee, etc. Combined with commercial interests in things like tobacco, largely grown by corporations from wealthy nations, and with input-intensive agricultural practices (including using herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers, even if their use is becoming more technically efficient) the diversion, and misuse of land and the associated environmental damage in unsustainable methods adds up..

Land ownership has become more concentrated in the hands of larger companies, larger

agribusinesses and so on. In addition, things like food dumping, mentioned above, increases hunger and drives rural workers out of jobs. Such effects combine and lead to an increase in urban migration as people move to the cities in hope for a better chance. These economic policies that are based less on people's sharing and development, but more on acquiring wealth and profit lead to additional stress on the larger cities to provide for more people. It also results in more slum areas, health problems and so on. Many easily conclude that by just looking at the cities that we have overpopulation in the world. While the cities are no doubt facing problems of over population, a variety of political and economic circumstances are leading to such conditions and looking only at cities to determine if the planet is over populated misses out these factors.

But cities aren't the only places that the landless move to. Some, being pushed off their own lands, will move to less arable land and forest frontiers in the hope to farm that, which may conflict with wildlife. In other cases, many may try to immigrate to other parts of the world if they feel there is no choice left in their own country. In yet other situations, economic growth can also lead to more urban migration. Sometimes this growth of cities can go in hand with decline in the rural areas.

Due to these and a multitude of other complex socioeconomic and political factors, in different parts of the world, there are different proportions of people in urban and rural areas. Land ownership for the poor provides mechanisms to ensure sustainable and efficient use, because of the need to care for it for their survival.

Economic policies of the wealthier nations and their consumption demands mean that more land is often used for less than ideal purposes, such as Growing cash crops (bananas, sugar, coffee, tea etc) for export to wealthier countries (primarily);Diverting productive land for non-productive uses (tobacco, growing flowers for export markets, etc);Clearing land and used to grow things like cattle for beef exports. (Parts of the Amazon for example, are cleared for cattle ranches so the beef can be exported for use in fast food restaurants. Smaller parts are cleared by the poor who are forced onto marginal lands, or frontier areas due to poverty.

These economic policies are often imposed on the poorer nations, through things like Structural Adjustment .And because food is a *commodity*, then it is those who can afford to pay, that will get food. The following is worth quoting at length:

To understand why people go hungry you must stop thinking about food as something farmers grow for others to eat, and begin thinking about it as something companies produce for other people to buy.Much of the best agricultural land in the world is used to grow commodities such as cotton, sisal, tea, tobacco, sugar cane, and cocoa, items which are non-food products or are marginally nutritious, but for which there is a large market.

Millions of acres of potentially productive farmland is used to pasture cattle, an extremely inefficient use of land, water and energy, but one for which there is a market in wealthy countries.More than half the grain grown in the India is fed to livestock, grain that would feed far more people than would the livestock to which it is fed.

The problem, of course, is that people who don't have enough money to buy food (and more than one billion people earn less than \$1.00 a day), simply don't count in the food equation.

Put yet another way, you would not expect The Gap to manufacture clothes, Adidas to manufacture sneakers, or IBM to provide computers for those people earning \$1.00 a day or less; likewise, you would not expect ADM (“Supermarket to the World”) to produce food for them.

What this means is that ending hunger requires doing away with poverty, or, at the very least, ensuring that people have enough money or the means to acquire it, to buy, and hence create a market demand for food.

When the best agricultural land is used up as described as above, more marginal land has to be used for food and subsistence farming, which may require clearing more rainforest, or other forms of encroachment on other ecosystems.

.Unsustainable Development

In many regions of the world, ecosystem stress can be seen due to human-intensive activities such as unsustainable resource extraction and exploitation via large corporations and international trading agreements that open these sources up for excessive extraction and consumerism. This could lead to numerous future global security issues. At the same time, many businesses and individuals try to calm fears claiming that nothing is wrong

That the resources are abundant enough to not cause a problem and even if they do, we will adapt; And that history shows that we have always come out for the better.

Some parts of the criticism itself has come under scrutiny because of anti-immigrant and racist sentiments in some of the environmentalists who argue against the cornucopian views and is therefore part of a continuing debate on the causes and effects of population growth and if current population growths are even a problem.

It has been noted however, that in developing countries large cities are increasing in population at a rate that is very difficult to sustain and provide for without better economic growth. This could lead to various social problems such as an increase in hunger and crime. However, note that there is often a distinction between population explosions or growth, and cities increasing in population density. Economic and other social and political conditions may lead to many people from rural areas moving to the larger cities in search for jobs. If unmanaged, or root causes for these movements are not addressed, this can place a burden on the ability for a large city to provide in a sustainable manner.

Poverty can lead to environmental degradation, no doubt. It can also lead to a decreasing availability of land and water in some areas. Having then suggested it is not always large populations that are ultimately the main cause of environmental stress etc, larger populations, global warming, industrial pollution, high-tech agriculture, even misplaced development priorities as well as over-consumption and non-sustainable development can all put increased pressure on the environment to provide the resources such as enough arable land and fresh water.

.Better management of natural resources, improved education in the area of reproduction-related issues as well as fairer economic and social and political environments etc., would help ensure “prophesies of doom” are averted. But, given the current set of dynamics affecting the world, as

presented in the rest of this web site, the will to get started and do something is often affected by political interests and the need to be assured that current practices are ok and can continue without accepting accountability.

Conclusion

If every country made a commitment to population stabilization and resource conservation, the world would be better able to meet the challenges of sustainable development. Practicing sustainable development requires a combination of wise public investment, effective natural resource management, cleaner agricultural and industrial technologies, less pollution, and slower population growth. We risk destroying our standard of living if we don't control population growth. Worries about a "population bomb" may have lessened as fertility rates have fallen, but the world's population is projected to continue expanding until the middle of the century. Just when it stabilizes and thus the level at which it stabilizes will have a powerful effect on living standards and the global environment. As population size continues to reach levels never before experienced and per capita consumption rises, the environment hangs in the balance.

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