

International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: www.ijirset.com

Vol. 8, Issue 9, September 2019

Environmental Challenges and Development

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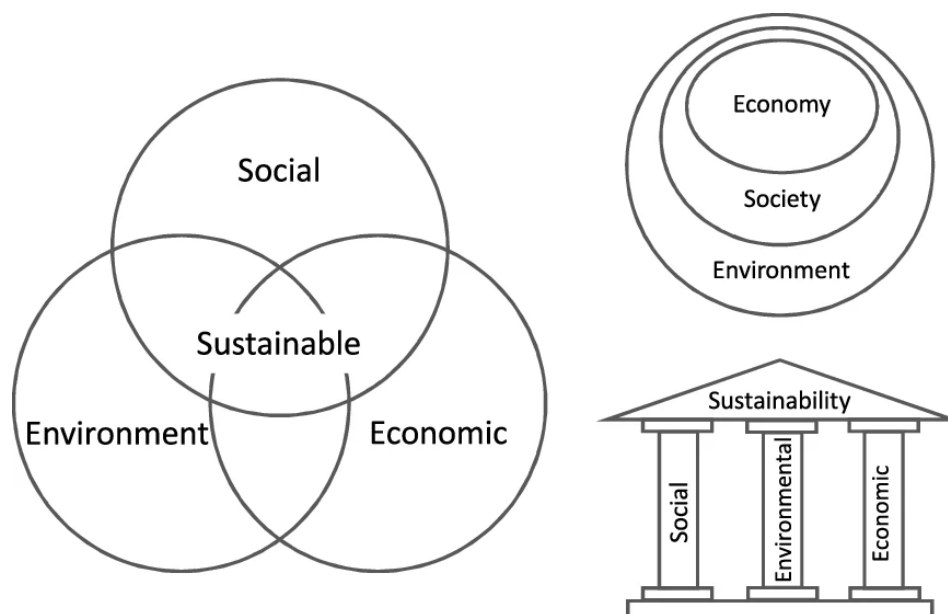
ABSTRACT: Achieving economic development is crucial for any country. But is it worth it if it comes at the cost of environmental degradation? We were made aware of the ill-effects of environmental degradation in our high schools. This article will break down the meaning & function of 'environment', the various environmental issues & concerns India is facing at the moment; and assess the alternative that sustainable development offers. The term 'environment' refers to the natural setting in which we live, which is bestowed to us by our ancestors. It encompasses the interaction between biotic (the living components, including plants, animals, birds, etc.) and abiotic components (land, air, water, etc.) that co-exist to form this natural-setting.

The four major functions served by the environment are: supply of resources, sustenance of life, providing aesthetic value, and assimilation of waste generated by various production & consumption activities.

KEYWORDS: environment, challenges, development, resources, degradation, plants

I. INTRODUCTION

In India, factors like rapid growth of population, urbanization, industrialization, and poverty, among others are responsible for harming the environment. Some of the severe environmental issues prevalent in India are



1. Degrading Air Quality Index
2. Rampant Environmental Degradation
3. Loss of Biodiversity

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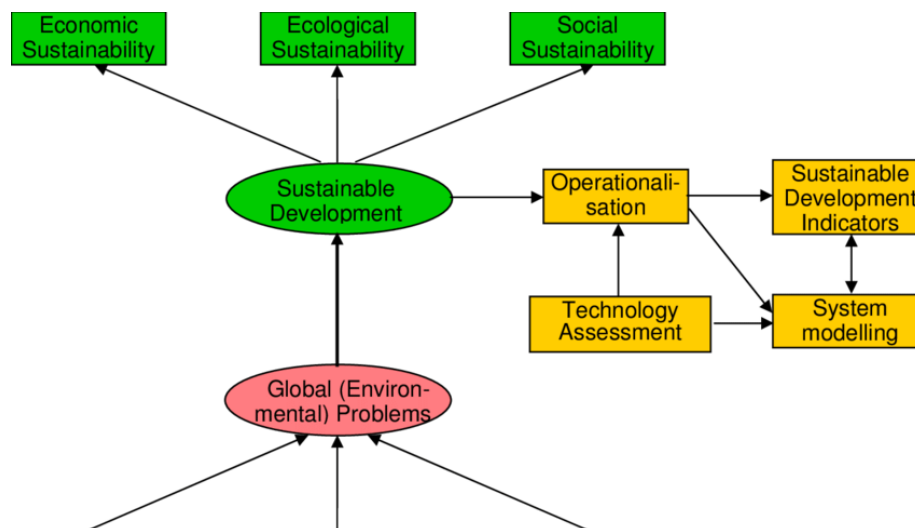
4. Urbanization in the Himalayas
5. Loss of Resilience in Ecosystems
6. Lack of Waste Management
7. Depletion of Resources (land, air, water)
8. Growing Water Scarcity[1,2]

There are many more such issues that need to be addressed to maintain a sustainable environment so as to ensure consistent economic development.

While the cooperation of every citizen of the country is essential for safeguarding the environment, governments have a huge role to play in helping find solutions to the problems. The government of India has taken various steps to safeguard the environment. Some of them are listed below:

1. Swachh Bharat Mission
2. Green Skill Development Programme
3. Namami Gange Programme
4. Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act (CAMPA)
5. National Mission for Green India
6. National River Conservation Programme
7. Conservation of Natural Resources & Eco-systems[3,4]

“Sustainable Development is the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising with the needs of future generations.” This definition was put forward by the Brundtland Commission in its report “Our Common Future” in 1987. It calls for a concerted effort to build an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient ecosystem for the people and the planet.



The main features of sustainable development include

1. Increase in per capita income
2. Judicious use of natural resources
3. Preserving the resources for future generations

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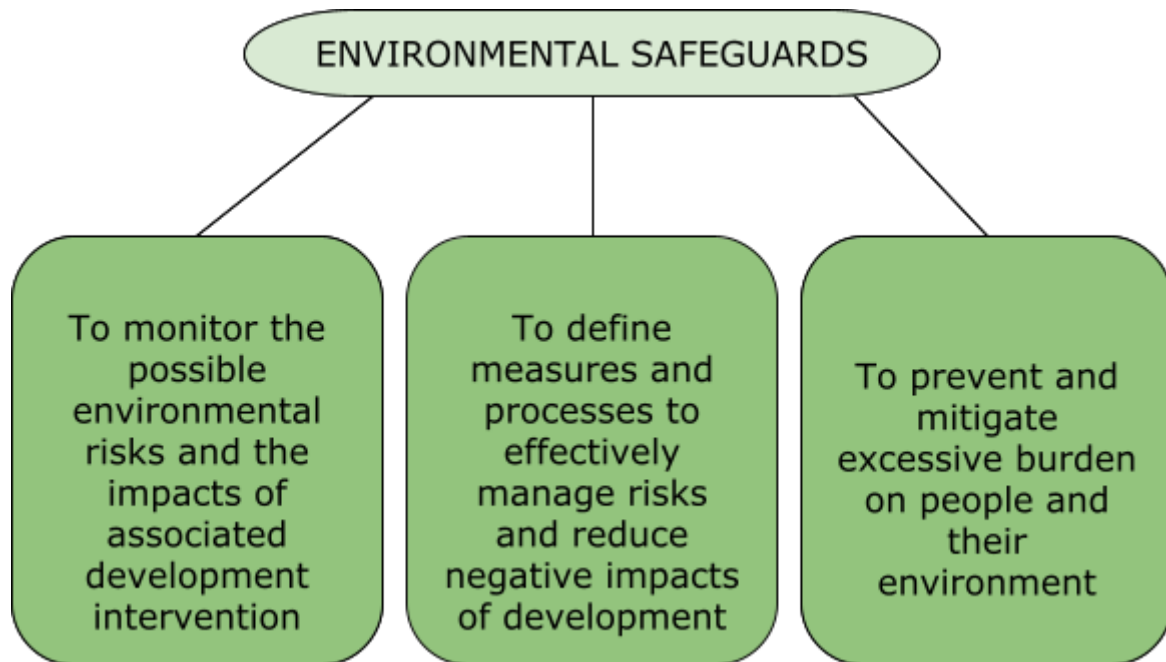
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III. DISCUSSION

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 fulfill the SDGs. [5,6]

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.



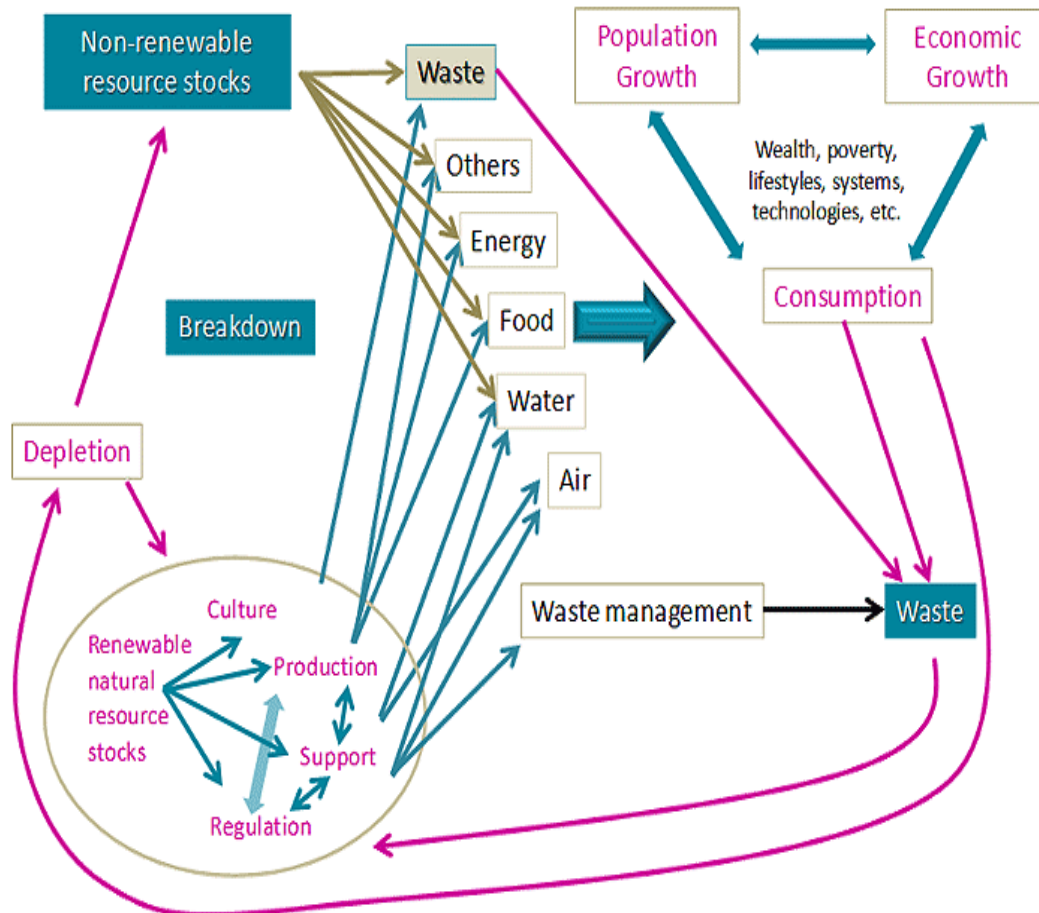
Since 2015 (when the United Nations, along with other countries, adopted the SDGs) the Indian government has launched several flagship programs that are at the heart of SDGs. Some of these include Swachh Bharat Mission, Skill India, Make In India [7,8], Digital India, etc.

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

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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. [9,10]

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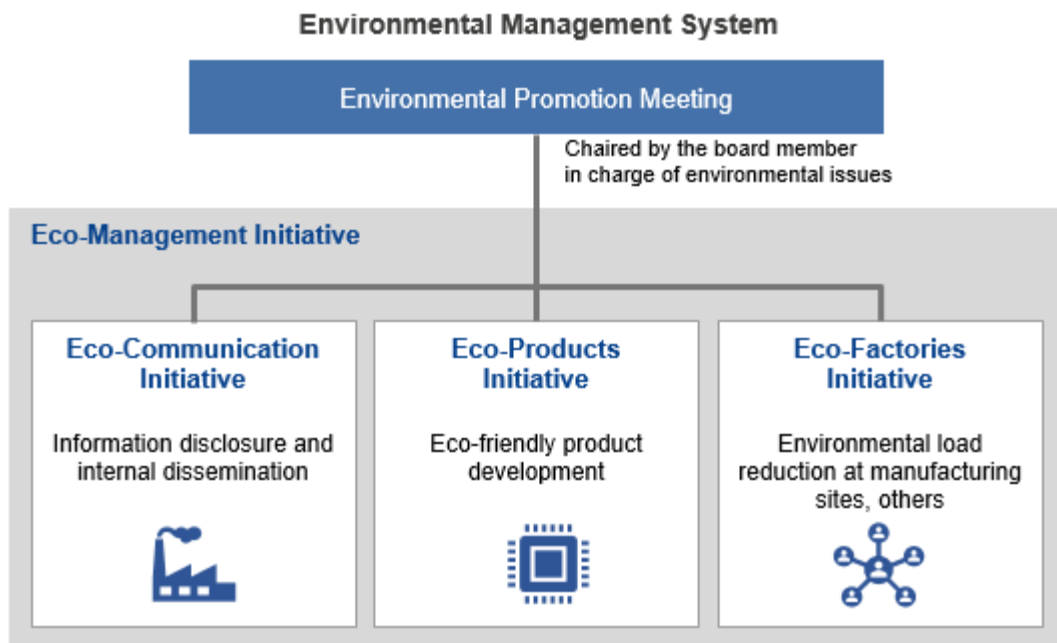
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IV. RESULTS

In 2016, the Netherlands launched strategic partnerships with 25 consortia of NGOs.



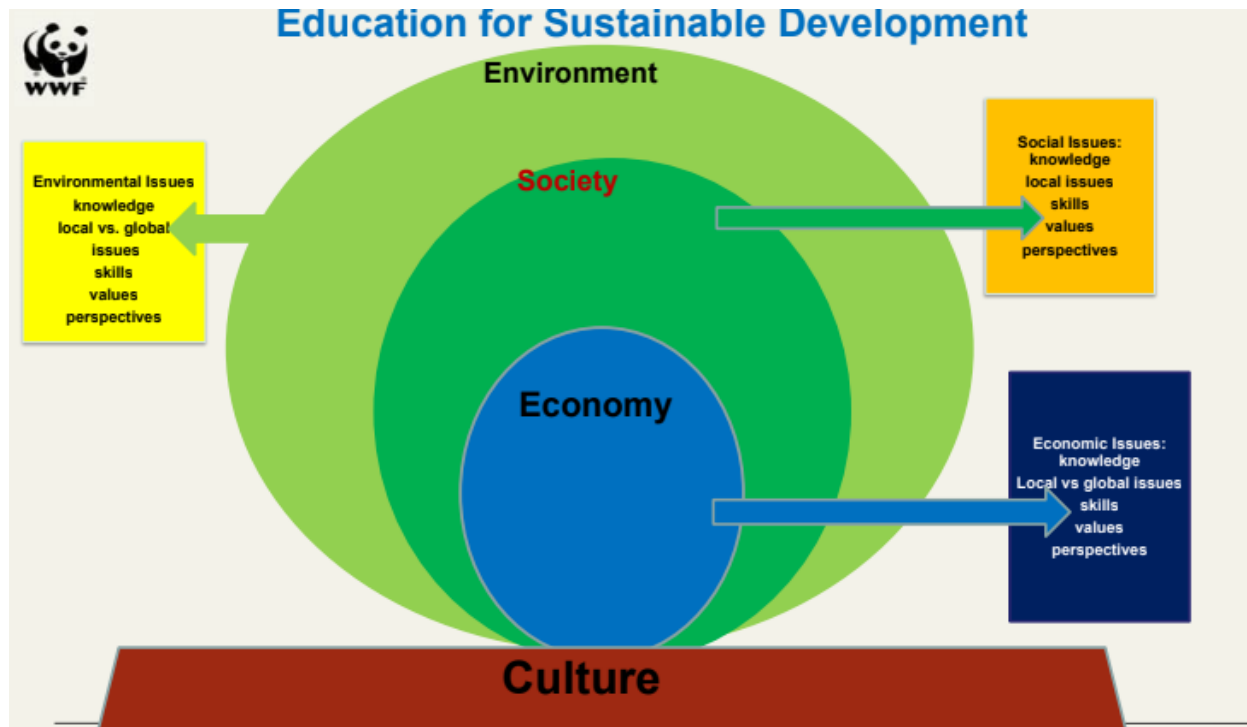
These partnerships, which aim to develop lobbying and advocacy capacity in various areas including sustainable use of natural resources, are supported through our “Dialogue and Dissent” policy framework. NGOs can create links to government and society by communicating information, and can strengthen the voices of communities and influence policymakers. They can also facilitate cooperation by bringing together and mediating between the various actors. Given the shrinking space for NGOs and civil society as a whole in a number of countries, this support is vitally important. National governments also have a major responsibility in ensuring that NGOs and human rights defenders can make themselves heard. For instance, we worked with NGOs in Paraguay to end illegal deforestation. This has resulted in real impact: through the lobby efforts of NGOs, a decree proposed last year that allowed large areas of Paraguay’s native forest to be deforested has now been withdrawn. Northern organisations in these consortia help enhance the advocacy capacity of NGOs in low- and lower-middle-income countries, helping them to make their voices heard by governments, businesses and other groups in their country. For example, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has supported NGOs in Benin and Togo in engaging with local subsidiaries of the building materials company Heidelberg Cement to better take into account biodiversity and communities in their operations.[11,12]

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Through the Shared Resources, Joint Solutions initiative, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has formed a strategic partnership with IUCN National Committee of The Netherlands and WWF Netherlands to strengthen the capacity of NGOs advocating climate resilience and food and water security. It works in 16 low- and middle-income countries to strengthen NGOs so that they can join forces with the public and private sector to protect natural ecosystems that are essential for climate resilience, water supply and food security. Among other activities, Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) are performed in several countries. This has proven to be a good tool for direct engagement with the private sector, leading to international exchange and collaboration in areas like mining and finance. The partnership's efforts are aligned with other IUCN programmes, such as SUSTAIN AFRICA, an initiative which aims to facilitate inclusive and climate-resilient economic growth in African growth corridors.

We make the case for NGO involvement time and again. We want stakeholders in the private sector and in government to see NGOs as partners in achieving common aims, rather than as adversaries. In the long run, business and government can only be effective if they work with local people, preserve the environment and respect environmental and social standards. It should be clear to everyone that we have only one planet and that we're all trying to achieve the same goals.

We make this case not only at national level, but also internationally through our climate finance contributions to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other instruments. We encourage NGOs to be involved in decision-making, and in creating and implementing projects, as laid out in the GEF Policy on Stakeholder Engagement. The Netherlands will continue to contribute to policy development at these international institutions to enable NGOs to be part of the policy-making process.[13,14]

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V. CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays environmental destruction directly affects the economic process of world countries. Erosion, ozone layer's becoming thin, pollution, increasing the number of dangerous flooding due to the destruction of settlements and climate changes altogether have a bad effect on people's lives. While reserving environment and natural resources is among the most important human challenges in the turn of the new century, the necessity of improving the level of life standards in the developing countries still keeps its importance.[15] Environmental sustainability and development are two essential elements in development planning, and in order to enjoy sustainable development we should firm industrial development based on the concept of environmental sustainability. Some parts of environmental consequences and damages are the results of unclear regulations and their lack of administrative guarantee, so rereading legal considerations and making arrangement in this area seem to be necessary. The process of globalization due to the lack of preparing essential provisions for compensating the results of its avarice at last leads to destroying environment and earth's natural resources and increasing poverty under the yoke of the world capitalism.[16,17]

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