

Environmental poverty and human development : The case of South Asian countries

■ B. NAGARAJA

Received : 04.02.2013; Revised : 03.03.2013; Accepted : 28.03.2013

ABSTRACT

The people in the world today are moving towards “economic growth” by engaged in carbon-intensive activities and are becoming the primary source of emitting pollutions into the environment. This fast run towards economic growth is associated with carbon dioxide emissions particularly and deterioration of key environmental indicators such as soil, water and air quality and forest cover. These deteriorations have adverse repercussions for human development especially for the millions of people, who depend directly on natural resources of their livelihoods. Human development represents the process of expanding the freedoms and capabilities to lead a ‘good life’ and the environmental threats, that result from the economic activities impeding the freedoms and capabilities of the people in general and in developing countries in particular and driving them towards the vicious circle of multidimensional poverty. Land degradation, air and water pollution, deforestation, decreasing land productivity and desertification are all affecting the freedoms and capabilities of the people living in medium and low human development countries. Consequently, the physical and social environments, knowledge, assets, production and consumption patterns are adversely affected leading to low achievements in human development. This paper particularly focuses on this theme and aims at an analysis of symbiosis between environmental degradation and level of human development. Women and children are the worst affected by the environmental threats. At this juncture, the practical ways to redress these environmental imbalances, risks and threats and forming the strategies for tackling environmental problems in such a way that expand people’s choices, enrich capabilities, promote human development and protect our environment, are necessary for opening doors to a better future.

KEY WORDS : Human development, Environment, Resources deprivation, Multidimensional, Poverty, Good life

How to cite this paper : Nagaraja, B. (2013). Environmental poverty and human development : The case of South Asian countries. *Internat. J. Com. & Bus. Manage*, 6(1) : 96-102.

In recent years, economic progress, guided by “capability approach”, is defined as the “expansion of people’s freedoms to live long, healthy and creative lives to achieve other goals they have reason to value” and to engage actively in shaping development equally and sustainably on our shared planet, earth. As a result, many economists argued that the objectives of development are to sustain freedoms and capabilities that allow people to lead meaningful lives. If we consider economic growth as synonymous with consumption, the experiences of the developed high income countries

indicate that the growth in consumption among the best off people in the world is putting unprecedented pressure on the environment, from which the resources for the consumption are drawn. It is today recognized that many problems of resource depletion and environmental stress are arising due to heavy consumption of environmental resources and as a result the climate is changing, stocks of greenhouse gases are trapping the heat in the atmosphere and causing the average global temperatures to increase by more than 5⁰ C (Human Development Report, 2011). These environmental threats are hampering the efforts to deliver the millennium development promises. The recent research on environmental resources deprivation tells us that we are overloading our ecological interdependence. In brief, we are moving from a “full world” into an “empty world” and our generation is

AUTHOR FOR CORRESPONDENCE

B. NAGARAJA, Department of Economics, Sri Venkateswara University College of Arts, Sri Venkateswara University, TIRUPATI (A.P.) INDIA
Email: nagaraja_svupgc@yahoo.co.in