Environmental Governance for achieving the goals of Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Global Environmental Governance (GEG) refers to the collection of organisations, policy instruments, finance methods, rules, procedures, and standards that govern global environmental protection processes. Global environmental politics and policies have evolved swiftly since environmental issues first appeared on the international agenda in the early 1970s. The current system of environmental governance reflects both the accomplishments and shortcomings of this evolution. The GEG system, as we know it, has outgrown its original design and intent, which has become increasingly evident. This research paper identifies a practical step that can promote more efficient and effective global environmental governance by better utilising available resources and designing in a way that will aid in the implementation of international environmental agreements for both developing and developed countries. It also aids in the analysis of environmental decision-making through a knowledge and interpretation of the relationship between good environmental governance and long-term development.

Keywords: environmental governance, sustainable development, environmental decision-making, good governance decision-making

Introduction- Environmental Governance

The process of decision-making involved in the control and management of the environment and natural resources is referred to as environmental governance. Environmental governance is defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as "multi-level interactions (i.e., local, national, international/global) among, but not limited to, three main actors, i.e., state, market, and civil society, which interact with one another, whether in formal or informal ways; in formulating and implementing policies in response to environment-related demands and inputs from society; bound by rules, procedures, processes, and a set of rules, procedures, and (IUCN 2014).

Embedding the environment in all levels of decision-making and activity is one of the key principles of environmental governance.

• Viewing cities and communities, as well as economic and political activity, as part of the ecosystem.

• Emphasizing people's interdependence with the ecosystems in which they live.

• Promoting the switch from open-loop/cradle-to-grave systems (such as rubbish disposal without recycling) to closed-loop/cradle-to-cradle systems (like permaculture and zero waste strategies).

The concept of environmental governance has been the subject of countless academic papers, and it is now well-established in both international and domestic law. Administrators' environmental judgments are often questioned, implying that their decisions are not necessarily sound environmental governance. Opposition to choices on projects or activities that may have an environmental impact is becoming more common. This is evidenced not only through non-governmental organisations' public protests, but also through the growing number of court actions challenging environmental decisions.

These environmental decision-making challenges have the potential to contribute to good governance imperatives such as transparency and accountability, as they highlight not only the substance of decisions, but also the process and procedures followed, particularly the issue of consultation with interested and affected parties. At the same time, these problems create a larger concern since they reveal the value judgments that authorities make when making decisions. These are frequently choices that appear to prioritise economic or larger developmental reasons over environmental concerns. This article examines good governance decision-making by delving into and interpreting the relationship between excellent environmental governance and long-term development.

Governance for the Environment

The employment of managerial, political, and legal ideas and processes to fulfil legislative, executive, and judicial governmental mandates for the performance of regulatory and service functions for the society as a whole or for particular portions of it has been defined as governance.

It has alternatively been defined as all processes, organisations, and personnel (the latter in official positions and functions) involved in enforcing laws and other policy measures passed by the legislature or the executive and interpreted by the courts. It is fundamentally a decision-making process that encompasses management, political, and legal processes, as well as decisions that grant privileges and authorities. How these decisions are made, implemented, and executed determines good governance. In this sense, **Section 195** of the Constitution is relevant. It stipulates that public administration be guided by the Constitution's democratic principles and ideals, and that it be accountable, transparent, and efficient, as well as involving public engagement. Section 195 establishes a standard for decision-making in terms of good governance.

Transparency, accountability, public engagement in decision-making, and freedom of association are all ideals that should guide environmental governance. These are principles that are essential in the implementation and enforcement of substantive environmental law because they ensure that citizens are aware of and participate in the decision-making processes outlined above, as well as having the ability to effectively advocate for environmental protection.

A social component should be included in environmental governance. The desire to create a society that is founded on social justice. The Constitution's goal is to "heal the divisions of the past and construct a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights," according to the Preamble. Keeping in mind that "environmental problems are also social problems, both in their causes and effects," and that "the effects of environmental degradation are felt most acutely by people who are already subject to socioeconomic disadvantage," environmental governance should be responsive to equity and justice concerns, particularly in the face of deep-seated socioeconomic disadvantage. Environmental justice must be pursued so that negative environmental consequences are not dispersed in an unfairly discriminatory manner.

The clearest mandate for environmental governance, however, may be found in section 24 of the Constitution, which refers to the right to the environment. Everyone has the right - says Section 24.

(a) to a healthy and well-being-promoting environment; and

(b) to ensure that the environment is protected for present and future generations by reasonable legislation and other measures that -

- ➢ avoid pollution and environmental degradation
- ➢ encourage environmental protection; and
- ➢ promote legitimate economic and social development while ensuring ecologically sustainable development and usage of natural resources.

Kotzé explains the connection between environmental governance and sustainable development as follows:- "*A management process executed by institutions and individuals in the public and private sector to holistically regulate human activities and the effects of human activities on the total environment (including all*

environmental media, and biological, chemical, aesthetic and socio-economic processes and conditions) at international, regional, national and local levels; by means of formal and informal institutions, processes and mechanisms embedded in and mandated by law, so as to promote the present and future interests human beings hold in the environment".

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Sustainable Development and Environmental Governance

When considering the relationship between sustainable development and environmental governance, one must analyse how the idea would be incorporated into decision-making in practise. The Brundlandt Report's definition of sustainable development, "development that meets the requirements of the present generation without jeopardising future generations' ability to meet their own needs," is a good place to start. This might be considered the goal of sustainable development, or what we wish to accomplish. This goal recognises that, while human beings are motivated by their developmental requirements to utilise, exploit, and even exhaust natural resources, this cannot and will not always be the case. As Field points out, "a varied spectrum of players chose sustainable development as the conceptual vehicle to navigate the tensions deriving from the necessity for social and economic progress on a planet with finite resources." It expresses the goal of decision-makers in terms of environmental governance, i.e., making decisions now that will not impose undue environmental burdens on future generations. Sustainable natural resource use, pursuit of equality in natural resource use and allocation, and integration of environmental preservation and economic development would all be examples of these methods. These aspects aim to provide concrete form to a notion that may appear difficult and impracticable, owing to the concept's several competing considerations or normative implications.

India needs Environmental Governance

In its Vision 2030, the government's interim budget included several major environmental objectives. Its 10-point plan included living comfortably, a pollution-free India, and clean rivers. The government's clear inclusion of environmental goals is both necessary and desirable. However, in the absence of specific actions — of which there were nearly none in this interim budget - setting lofty goals is insufficient.

It's critical to comprehend how bad India's environmental situation is. Three out of every five monitored rivers in the United States are contaminated. Even in wealthier areas of the country, such as Maharashtra and Delhi, much of our solid waste remains unprocessed. Three-quarters of India's population lives in locations where air pollution (PM2.5, the most damaging particle) is four times greater than the Indian national threshold. In fact, 72 of the northern belt's 640 districts have emissions that are more than ten times higher than the world threshold. India was placed 177th out of 180 countries in a recent *Global Environmental Quality Performance Index*.

This alarming scenario is primarily a health issue. The health of India's inhabitants, particularly its children, is harmed by poor air, water, and solid waste management. According to a WHO report, air pollution is responsible for 10% of children dying before reaching the age of five.Part of the reason for our current state is a misunderstanding that environmental quality is a luxury and pollution is an unavoidable, albeit unpleasant, side effect of progress. The oft-quoted phrase by Indira Gandhi that "poor is the biggest polluter" has been used to advocate for a trade-off between poverty alleviation and environmental protection, with India focusing on the former. For various reasons, growing now and cleaning up afterwards is a bad strategy.

First and foremost, the poor are the ones who suffer the most from environmental degradation. Farmers, fishers, and forest dwellers all have their livelihoods directly impacted by a degraded environment, and the poor have considerably less ability to protect themselves from unclean water and air than the wealthy. Pollution exacerbates the effects of poverty.

Second, waiting until we are wealthy to clean up is impossible: India already has more cities with chronic air pollution than China, while having a per capita GDP one-third that of China. Do we really want to be hundreds of times more polluted than China when we attain their GDP, let alone that of affluent countries? Furthermore, many of the effects of pollution are irreversible; ecosystems that have been destabilised cannot be restored.

Third, thinking of environmental safeguards solely as a growth constraint is simplistic. Pollution increases public health burdens; devastated habitats are unable to perform ecosystem functions such as trash filtration and storm buffering; and degraded resources wreak havoc on the poor's livelihoods. Furthermore, as we transition to a knowledge economy, high-skilled talent will reject to reside in polluted cities. The expense of doing business will rise as the environment deteriorates.

Finally, in a world where the oceans, climate, and forests are receiving increased attention, turning green can truly be a path to growth. The world is witnessing a renewable energy revolution, with the best-positioned countries gaining a competitive advantage. The circular economy's concepts, in which waste streams from one industrial operation become inputs for another, offer efficiency gains with environmental and economic benefits. There is increasingly greater room for growth by improving the environment rather than destroying it.

To get beyond broad vision statements to actual action, a larger political mobilisation around environmental objectives is required. There are pockets of mobilisation – resource-dependent villages being pushed aside by industrial growth, and certain urban elites learning to value environmental sustainability above consumption — but these are isolated voices. Finally, smarter environmental governance is required for long-term growth. Every environmental issue is currently a nail ready to be hammered by judicial or administrative enforcement. To fulfil many social and ecological goals, we need to combine effective regulation, behavioural change, and technical solutions. An important first step is to abandon the outdated concept of an environment-development trade-off.

High level political forum for Environmental Governance

- ❖ Provide high-level political leadership and guidance for sustainable development while avoiding overlap and duplication.
- ❖ Implementation of a focused, dynamic agenda that can also consider emerging challenges.
- ❖ Agenda-setting with multiple sources of input through dialogue and stocktaking with governments, Major groups, and stakeholders.
- ❖ Enhance integration and coherence of the three dimensions of sustainable development at all levels and across global governance.
- ❖ Allow a variety of modes of participation by Major groups and other relevant stakeholders.
- ❖ Follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments "of all the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as the respective means of implementation.
- ❖ Strengthen the science-policy interface "by examining documentation, bringing together dispersed information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report.

Main drivers of Environmental Degradation

a) **Economic growth** – The development-centric mindset that pervades most countries and international organisations calls for a hasty increase in economic growth. Environmental economists, on the other hand, argue that there is a strong link between economic growth and environmental deterioration, and that quality development should be prioritised over growth. As a result, there has been a significant trend in recent decades toward sustainable development as an alternative to neoliberal economics. Some people, particularly in the alternative globalisation movement, believe that transitioning to a degrowth phase can be done without sacrificing societal efficiency or diminishing quality of life.

b) **Consumption** - The major source of economic growth is the growth of consumption and the cult of consumption, or consumerist ideology. Overdevelopment has become an objective in itself, seen as the only way out of poverty. Because the phenomenon is not limited to a growing middle class in developing countries, but also includes the development of irresponsible lifestyles, particularly in northern countries, such as the increase in the size and number of homes and cars per person, the means for slowing it down are inadequate.

c) **Biodiversity destruction** — Due to the complexity of the planet's ecosystems, the extinction of any species has unanticipated repercussions. The greater the damage on biodiversity, the more likely a chain reaction with unforeseen negative consequences will occur. Despite the damage done, certain ecosystems have shown to be resilient. Environmentalists support the precautionary principle, which states that all potentially harmful actions should be assessed for their environmental impact.

d) **Population rise** - By 2050, the world's population is expected to reach 8.9 billion people. This is a topic that mostly affects developing countries, but it also impacts northern countries; despite their lower population increase, their environmental impact per person is significantly greater.

Demographic increase must be slowed by expanding education and family planning programmes, as well as increasing women's standing in general.

e) **"Pollution**" - Another driver of environmental damage is pollution induced by the usage of fossil fuels. Carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere when carbon-based fossil fuels like coal and oil are burned. One of the most significant consequences is the current climate change on the world, in which the earth's temperature is gradually rising. Given that coal and oil are the most widely used fuels, this is a major source of concern for many environmentalists.

f) **"Agricultural methods**" - Land degradation is caused by destructive agricultural practises such as overuse of fertilisers and overgrazing. Erosion of the soil causes silting in rivers and reservoirs. Soil erosion is a continual cycle that eventually leads to land desertification.

Challenges

The problem caused by human activities on environment need government. This includes reactions from international institutions, governments, and citizens, who should address the problem by combining the expertise and knowledge of all parties involved. The environmental safeguards in place are insufficient. Time, energy, money, and diplomatic negotiations are all required for the essential improvements. The scenario has elicited differing reactions. Persistent schisms stymie progress on global environmental governance.

The crisis' global nature restricts the impact of national or sectoral responses. In international trade, sustainable development, and peace, collaboration between players and institutions is essential. Environmental governance has been approached in a variety of ways by global, continental, national, and municipal governments. The impact of significant positive and negative spill overs is limited**.**

Challenges facing environmental governance include: -

- Inadequate continental and international treaties.
- Unresolved tensions between maximum development, sustainable development, and maximum protection, limiting funding, hurting economic ties, and limiting the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
- Environmental money is non-renewable, diverting resources away from problem-solving and toward financing conflicts.
- There is a lack of coordination between sector policies.
- Insufficient institutional capabilities.
- No clear priorities.
- Ambiguous goals.
- There is a lack of coordination among the United Nations, governments, the commercial sector, and civil society.
- A lack of a common vision.
- Interconnections between development/sustained economic growth, trade, agriculture, health, peace, and security.

- International misalignment between environmental governance with trade and financing programmes, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- Limited credit for organisations working on Global Environment Facility initiatives (GEF).
- Creating a link between UNEP, UNDP, and the World Bank and MEAs.
- Insufficient government capacity to meet MEA duties.
- In environmental governance, there is no gender viewpoint or equity.
- The inability to sway public opinion.
- A generation or more of time lag between human behaviour and environmental effect.
- Environmental issues are embedded in extremely complicated systems, which we still don't fully comprehend.
- All of these issues have governance consequences, but international environmental governance is required. According to the IDDRI, rejection of multilateralism

Conclusion

The management of the natural environment has probably become one of humanity's most difficult concerns. As a result, environmental issues are increasingly being addressed at all levels of government, in both developed and developing countries. Environmental governance is a critical component of achieving long-term development. Good decision-making processes, effective institutions, policies, regulations, standards, and norms are all necessary for the environment's undivided nature and inextricable ties with the social and economic components of sustainable development. This article aimed to examine the relationship between good environmental governance and sustainable development, with a focus on how decision-makers incorporate sustainable development considerations into their daily decision-making processes and the extent to which their actions are consistent with their intentions.

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