

Pollution of Air, Water and land Resources in South Asia



Apart from land on which we live and depend for food, shelter and other goods, air and water are the other important resources essential for life on earth. Pollution of these natural resources is on the rise and it has become increasingly important to figure out ways to reduce the ever increasing environmental pollutants. We pollute our

environment primarily for ensuring supply of food and shelter but recent modern life style demand has exacerbated the pressure factor on the mother earth. Increased construction of buildings for living and businesses, growing more crops to feed the rising population on earth, use of fossil fuel in vehicles, ships and planes to move, establishment of factories and power plants to produce goods and power from fossil fuel has greatly increased the level of pollution in environment. South Asia having a total population of 1.721 billion in 2014 constitutes almost a quarter of the world population. Over 32% of the people live in cities and thus create a great deal of environmental pollution in air, water and land. The ambient air quality of urban centers in South Asia is mostly not safe for human health, untreated sewage finds its way into water bodies, solid waste is not recycled and dumped in open.



The institutional arrangements for controlling environmental pollution exists in all the countries in South Asia and they have ratified almost all Multilateral Environment Agreement (MEAs) and also made national and sub-national laws aiming at controlling environmental pollution. However, the existing level of such pollutions depicts either poor enforcement of these laws or weakness of the institutions responsible for enforcement. Comprising of developing countries South Asia faces acute institutional capacity for adequately addressing the emerging environmental pollution problems. Some

countries are ahead of others in terms of capacity in some areas but broadly speaking capacity is the single most important environmental institutional weakness that South Asia is facing today. In

addition public sector institutions have got all the responsibility for fixing environmental problem and there are no institutional arrangements for bringing on board the polluting individuals, community, private and civil society. Unless and until an integrated approach is adopted for controlling environmental pollution and individuals, community, private sector and civil society actors are not on board for controlling pollution, environmental pollution challenges will continue increasing in South Asia.



South Asia has got a very rich cultural and traditional society in different forms in various countries that encourage community participation in almost all social activities. This great strength has never been effectively exploited in the past for cleaning the pollution and therefore the stand alone interventions by the public sector institutions failed to yield positive results. Community involvement and establishing partnership with the relevant stakeholders is highly important for initiating any pollution control institutional initiatives. Experience show that

community involvement has always led to sustainability of the intervention especially in the cross-cutting environment sector. It is therefore imperative to involve community and other relevant stakeholders at all levels of institutional arrangements for pollution control aiming at sustainability of the intervention. Capacity development must also be initiated on priority basis enabling the institutions to effectively address the environmental challenges in a professional and sustainable manner in the future.

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