

The Effect of Development on Environment and Natural Resources

The discussion on the effect of human development on environment and natural resources presents a dilemma. This is because human development activities such as exploration for oil and gas have been confirmed to be causing damage to the environment yet this same damage continues to provide more opportunities for the exploitation of natural resources. For instance, much of the global warming that has gotten global leaders worried about the future is caused by the burning of fossil fuels but at the same time the resultant receding ice continues to open up new exploration opportunities for oil and gas. Instead of restricting and curtailing this exploration, the global community has come up with the sustainable development goals as a means of ensuring continuity of human development under sustainable environmental conditions. This research paper argues that no matter how the world views it, human development and growth destroys the environment through overexploitation, mismanagement, and pollution of natural resources.

One facet of human development relates to the increased consumption in the number of motor vehicles on the roads. Global companies such as Toyota and GM continue to report increased profits

from the sale of motor vehicles but not a single company tries to place a value on the effect of the increased profits to Mother Nature. According to current environmental statistics, 49% of air pollution emanates from transportation; one of the human development activities. Much of this pollution comes from smoky motor vehicles which produce toxic emissions including Carbon Monoxide, Nitrogen Oxides, and other Ozone gases. When emitted into the air, these gases form a cover in the atmosphere and this cover results into extra heating which is in other words referred to as global warming.

Recent statistics on environmental pollution indicate that New Delhi is the city with the highest levels of air pollution resulting from transport activities. The article which was aired by CNN stated that the population living in this city choked in the gases emitted by old and worn out heavy trucks. During the day, the trucks are not allowed into the city in order to reduce congestion in the city. However, the trucks use the New Delhi roads at night and by morning visibility in New Delhi reduces to a few meters to high levels of the dark cloud-like smoke emissions. While the transport activities result in positive gross domestic product for a country like India, much of the GDP is eaten up by healthcare costs as the costs of treating skin and respiratory diseases spiral above the roof. Globally, the effect of these toxic emissions are seen in receding ice, rising sea levels, irregular rainfalls, and other extreme natural calamities such as hurricanes. To control the pollution from the transport sector India requested its citizens to have a day without a car. Other countries have developed standards meant to reduce the emissions from the car but so long as these laws are not

harmonized globally, the transport sector will continue to destroy the environment.

Other than transportation, scientific evidence indicates that majority of the changes in the global climates result from increase in human population and human pollution. To illustrate this phenomenon, the current population in the world is estimated to be at least 7.3 billion. In 1974 the population was estimated to be around 4 billion which means over the period between 1974 and 2015, the population increased by more than 3 billion people. It is over the same span of time that global warming became a concern. To rationalize this, increases in the population mean that more land for settlement gets required. Consequently, this means that more forested areas are cleared for human settlement, development, and growth. In areas like Japan and China, the governments are even forced to reclaim land from the sea and while this may seem like a positive thing, it leads to the death and destruction of marine life.

Demand for more land is not the only problem human expansion. This is because human expansion also creates demand for energy and more so, fossil fuels. The burning of fossils raises the levels of ozone gases released into the atmosphere. This creates a double tragedy in that the levels of carbon IV oxide gases and other carbon emissions increase as the forest cover reduces in the world. Ideally, forest and vegetation cover helps in reducing the amount of carbon in the air by utilizing carbon IV oxide in photosynthesis meaning that the carbon emissions pile up as the forest cover reduces and that global

temperatures continue to rise as the levels of carbon emissions increase.

Over the years, government in developed countries including Germany, China, Japan and several European countries managed to control the population by having good reproduction health and population pressure campaigns to which the citizens heeded. On the other hand, population has been on the rise in African countries among other developing nations. Today, the developing nations are facing labor crises in that they having aging populations and to deal with this they are encouraging more births. In future the population growth rate is expected to rise across the globe with the population in Africa set to double by 2065. To deal with this menace global leaders ought to consider creating awareness on the impact of population and human expansion on the environment by ensuring that people across the world understand that human expansion leads to overexploitation of natural resources leading to negative impacts on the environment.

The paragraphs above majorly focused on the contribution of human development and growth to air pollution and global warming. While this has been on the limelight for long, it is only one of the areas where human development and growth impacts heavily on the environment and its effect can be seen in increased cases of catastrophic hurricanes as well as rising sea levels, increased rainfall, and increased skin and respiratory health cases. Human development and growth, however, also impacts heavily on soil and water resources. About 70% of the earth is covered by water most of which is concentrated in oceans. The

shocking thing is that about half of this water is polluted and the pollution mainly emanates from sewage and waste water. As a result of this, large populations across the global find themselves suffering from lack of water and while geographical location can be partly blamed for this, the problem would have been much less were it not for the increasingly many cases of water pollution.

To have a better understanding of water pollution, human development activities have lead the construction of many industries across the world. These industries process and produce all types of products and in the process they release a lot of waste including plastics, sewage, and waste water which contains chemicals such as lead and acids. Some nations such as Australia have explicit rules for the management of waterways and water pollution but for many other, this waste finds its way into the surface water especially when it rains. Many more pollutants find their way into the ground water by seeping through the soil which also gets polluted in the process. This pollution makes the surface and ground water unfit for human consumption and not only that, the pollution also destroys marine life.

Water pollution is better understood by looking at the level of pollution in the oceans and more so, plastic pollution in oceans. Globally, most of the plastic pollution in the oceans occurs in Asia and many environmentalists have called it the greatest man-made catastrophe facing not only the Asian countries but the world as a whole. The effect of this is best explained by the decreasing numbers of various marine species and the most affected by this menace are the Asian and Far

East countries such as Japan which have large parts of the GDP tied to fishing. The menace helps explain that despite the few benefits derived from human developments, the future of the world is at risk in that the current activities are not sustainable given the level of water pollution. Government across the world are setting up rules of reducing the flow of plastics and other water pollutants into the oceans. However, water pollution has not been considered as serious as global warming is being addressed. Moving forward, governments across the world need to recognize the need to approach the issue of pollution holistically in order to avert the catastrophic impacts that human developments have on the environment and natural resources.

In conclusion, this research paper discussed the effect of human development on the environment and natural resources. The research concludes that despite the focus on sustainable development human development and growth activities destroy the environment through the overexploitation, mismanagement, and pollution of natural resources. Global leaders have however started focusing their attention on these environmental issues especially on the issues of global warming and plastic pollution. There are laws and policies put in place by individual nations to counter the impacts of human development on the environment but moving forward, the world must consider harmonizing these policies.