

Chapter 16

From Grey to Green: Sustainable Development Perspectives From India–EU Partnerships

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ABSTRACT

Environmental sustainability is regarded as the key to the achievement of all other developmental goals. Environmental issues and the effects of environmental degradation have drawn the attention of policy makers and the wider community in developing countries like India to impending environmental hazards and encouraged efforts at the local level by creating awareness and action on green initiatives. These initiatives have been supported by civil society organizations and international agencies. Local communities have also assumed custodianship of their environment and natural resources which previously was the sole responsibility of the government. This chapter focuses on some of India's efforts to communicate the green path to sustainable development and the experiences of India-EU partnerships to build mutual understanding on global environmental issues including climate change. This chapter also analyzes the growth of development paradigms shaped by community needs and environmental activism for sustainable development in India.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the agrarian countries of the developing world including India concentrated on economic issues, leading to the neglect of the social, political and cultural context of development (Bottomore, 1975). Developing countries including India adopted western conceptions of modernization and development that have eroded indigenous ways of life and ecological traditions. India has the world's largest rural population (857 million) and is home to the largest rural-urban disparities leading to skewed development. The United Nations Human Development Report (2010) has calculated that South Asia is home to half of the world's multi-dimensionally poor population of 844 million people. Eight States of India are home to 421 million multi-dimensionally poor people. It is estimated that India will be among the

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2458-8.ch016

least urbanized countries in 2050 and will account for a quarter of the world's rural population in 2050, as it does now (UN, 2014).

In the race among nations for fast economic growth and prosperity, there has begun a serious introspection where development ends and destruction begins in the context of the natural environment. India is in the middle of a historical movement exploring alternative paths of development through democratic and participatory processes. The realization that action on the environment is the key to sustainable development has led people in the developing countries to work within a participatory framework of decision making and action. A judicious combination of indigenous environmental protection with international action is needed to sustain cooperation on the environment.

India and the European Union have a longstanding relationship from the early 1960s. The Joint Political Statement of 1993 and the 1994 Co-operation Agreement, which is the current legislative framework for cooperation, has led to a broad political dialogue, which has evolved through annual Summits, regular ministerial and senior-officials meetings as well as expert gatherings. India became one of the EU's strategic partners in 2004 and since 2005, a Joint Action Plan which was revised in 2008, has been the basis to partnerships in key areas of interest for India and the European Union.

Ensuring environmental sustainability is regarded as the key to the achievement of all other developmental goals in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which sought to achieve by 2015, eight goals include reducing poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality (especially in education) and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating major diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and strengthening partnership between rich and poor countries.. Global concerns on environmental issues are shared by countries across the world, but there is a complex interlinking of the environment with development in different countries.

India and the EU have experienced the effects of climate change and governments have begun to emphasize on adapting and preparing for climate change. This is evident in the implementation of the Joint Work Programme on Energy, Clean Development and Climate Change adopted at the 2008 Summit and reaffirmed by a Joint Declaration for Enhanced Cooperation on Energy in 2012. This chapter focuses on some of India's efforts to communicate the green path to sustainable development and the benefits of India-EU partnerships to build mutual understanding on global environmental issues including climate change. This chapter also analyzes the growth of development paradigms shaped by community needs and environmental activism for sustainable development in India.

GROWTH WITHOUT EQUALITY

India has been a welfare state since Independence and government policies and programmes were designed with the aim of alleviation of rural poverty. India recorded a high economic growth of 9 per cent per annum during 2005-06 to 2008-09. Despite rapid economic growth in the post-reform period, India has over 250 million below the poverty line and lags behind in providing access to food and drinking water to all people, the most basic goals of development. The UNICEF estimates in 2011 show that 55 million out of 102 million underweight children under five in the world, which is 54 per cent of the global total live in India. The dismal status of women at present is reflected in the Gender Inequality Index which ranks India at 132 out of 146 countries. In 2014, India's Human Development Index was 135 out of 187 countries (UNDP, 2014).

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