

Chapter 1

From Policy to Practice: Environmental Governance Framework for Sustainable Future in India

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ABSTRACT

India faces significant environmental challenges i.e. air and water pollution, bio-diversity loss, and impacts of climate change. A robust environmental governance framework that translates policy goals into tangible actions is needed to address these issues. It explores the current state of environmental governance in India. The study focuses on three objectives:(i) to understand the environmental problems and challenges faced by India, (ii) to evaluate environmental policy and its implementation process of SDGs in India, and (iii) to propose an environmental governance framework with practical strategies to tackle future environmental challenges. It adopts a doctrinal methodology, relying on secondary data sources. It covers various aspects of India's environmental governance structure, focusing on environmental concerns, policy analysis, and implementation gaps. It emphasizes bridging the gaps between policy and practices in environmental governance to achieve sustainable development.

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I. INTRODUCTION

“We won’t have a society if we destroy the environment” – Margaret Mead

India, a booming economy of over a billion people, faces significant environmental challenges that could destroy many parts of its natural ecosystems and negatively impact healthcare in India. Many of these include pollution, which has become a global problem affecting the quality of air, water, and soil from rural to urban landscapes (Dandona, 2020). Hence, the World Health Organization (WHO) identified several Indian cities, including India’s capital city (Delhi), as having the most polluted air. It has become a challenge for India because of the increased burden on chronic disease management, influencing urgency requirements beyond any regulations that need regulation without allowing collateral health damage. Climate change is recognized as a rapidly growing threat, coupled with ever-changing weather patterns, rising temperatures, and increased occurrences of extreme events such as cyclones and floods that have engulfed the country. These phenomena undermine agricultural productivity and food security and heighten socioeconomic risks, especially for resource-based livelihoods of poor communities (Woodhill et al., 2022).

This is further compounded by the immense threat to biodiversity that India’s diverse habitats, from glaciers of the Himalayas to the Western Ghats, which harbor a third of species listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list and half of the worldwide threatened species, are facing due to habitat conversions for housing or economic growth. Increasing large-scale infrastructure projects, industrial activities, and agricultural intensification threaten other organisms endemic to the region already on their way to the endangered list (Perrings & Halkos, 2015). Fragmented regulatory frameworks and poor enforcement of environmental laws are two obstacles to these conservation efforts, leading to biodiversity loss and ecosystem instability. Establishing a resilient environmental governance framework is essential, given the layered environmental challenges. Indeed, good governance is not about passing laws and policies but mainly about effective law enforcement (Mostafavi et al., 2021). Good governance is crucial to ensuring that environmental policies lead to action on the ground and help transitional economies realize their potential for sustainable development in a manner compatible with future resource conservation. It requires a whole-of-government response that combines regulators, civil society organizations, and private sector stakeholders to tackle the complex problems holistically (Bansard & Schroder, 2021). In addition, a robust environmental governance system in India is needed within the borders of this country. India has the global significance of its population, which is second only to China in size and economic development level; therefore, Indian environmental issues relate directly or indirectly to biodiversity conservation and sustainability measures of climate change mitigation programs worldwide. By the global direction of aligning itself to

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