

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Environmental degradation is the alternation of nature, where its state and quality is destroyed or reduced in value. There are various causes of environmental degradation, which are usually classified into social and economic causes. The main cause of environmental degradation is pollution which includes sound, water, air, and land pollutions. In all the cases, human activities initiate and accelerate the rate at of environment degrades. This paper seeks to explain the causes and effects of environmental degradation particularly as categorized into social and economic.

There are three social factors which are responsible for environmental degradation including population, poverty, and urbanization. The world population growth rate has been increasing though at a reducing rate. This is one of the major sources of environmental degradation particularly when its density reaches the required and acceptable levels. People in such a populated area try to improve their living standard, through exploitation of available resources.

Population increases the rate of environmental degradation in two ways. First, the increased use of natural resources such as land for agriculture, wood for energy and construction, oil for transport and industries, etc. On the other hand, the increased use of the natural resources increases the amount of waste products, finding their ways into the air, land and water populating them.

Poverty, in relation to the environment, is said to be both the cause and effect of degradation. According to environmental institutions research poor people are said to degrade the environment at a higher rate than the rich. The rich are said to be less dependant to the natural environment than the poor, who must exploit it as they try to improve their living standards. States and regions where majority are poor, the rate of degradation is high, as they may not have an access to other sources of resources like the rich do.

As employment and other opportunities slim at rural areas, more people and families move to urban centers in such for opportunities. As a result, urban centers have expanded into cities, as well as slums. These have caused unplanned and unregulated expansion, which have caused increased rate of environmental degradation in urban centers. The available facilities and infrastructure such as energy, housing, transport, education, water, and sewerage, cannot support the population. This will eventually increase the urban centre environmental degradation in the attempt to support the population. The trend results into deterioration of water, air and land resources, as well as generation of waste products.

Economic factors include the consumption of natural resources, as well as externalities, as a result of market failure. In the process of production of economic goods and services, there are chances that the social cost of the process may overcome the benefits in terms of environmental destruction and the utility created in the process. This results into distortions which bring about alteration of environmental state of nature.

There are three main economic issues, which results into environmental degradation including, manufacturing, transport, and agricultural activities. Most industries all over the world have been using technologies which are not environmental friendly. This has resulted into over utilization of energy such as fossil fuel, minerals, and timber. It has led to water, air, and land contamination. With the high proportion of fossil fuel been put into usage in industries, the air pollution have to a great extent increased. On the other hand, the increased number of industries has also increased the amount of waste products destroying land and water services.

Transport is one of the main pollutants of air and related environmental hazards. A part from air pollution, transport activities, has increased it hazards on land and water services. There are three forms of transport including the air, land and water, contributes to the environmental degradation in various ways. Most of the vessels used in transport activities use petroleum products as the source of fuel. The combustion of these fuels emits hazardous gases in the atmosphere, polluting air, as well as alteration atmospheric, natural composition, and portions.

Hazardous gases emitted from these vessels include the oxides of nitrogen and carbon dioxide, which causes oxides of nitrogen dissolve in atmospheric moisture and rain water, to form acids of nitrogen. These acids are responsible for the rusting of iron sheets roof and other structures made of the same, particularly along the coastal regions. It is also responsible for destruction of vegetation in the sense that it burns leaves and other soft tissues of plants. This has caused to the reduced productivity of the affected plants. The carbon dioxide is one of the hazardous gases emitted from the transport sector all over the world.

This gas is extremely dangerous in that it is responsible for global warming. The gas affects the Ozone layer developing the green house effect, which is responsible for changing the world climate and weather conditions.

On the other hand, transport activities are responsible for oil spills. The spills affect land and water services to an immense extent. There are devastating effects of the spills on vegetation, insects, and fish. For example, the Gulf of Mexico oil spill's effects will be experienced for an unforeseeable future.

Agricultural activities, particularly farming contributes to various environmental degradations. This includes soil erosion, land salinations and loss of soil nutrients. The use of pesticides and fertilizers increases the rate of soil composition alternations, and reduces the quality and value of soil in an increasing rate. Activities such as irrigation have been an increase the intensive use of land causing degradation, salination, and water logging.

There are various effects of environmental degradation. Land pollution has resulted into a reduction of its productivity. As a result, food security, particularly in the developing countries, has been a dream to realize. As a result, people suffer during prolonged famine sessions is evidenced in the recent horn Africa disaster. On the other hand, the destruction of productive land has increased demand for fertile and productive land, eventually bringing about conflict in the society. This have lend to displacement of some communities, death and tribal wars, particularly in African countries. There is also increased conflict between human beings and wild animals, where human beings, after

destroying land they first occupied, and move into wild forests and wild reserves for farming and settlement. The animals severally attack human beings in these areas, destroying their crops, eating domestic animals, and killing several individuals.

Air pollution has caused several negative effects to the human beings and state of nature. First, pollutant gases such as oxides of nitrogen and Sulphur Dioxide, forms acids, which are responsible for destruction of buildings, clothing, and structures. The acids formed destroy vegetation, where they burn leaves and plant issues. Carbon dioxide emitted, particularly from industries and transport activities, have been the main cause of unfavorable climatic changes as a result of global warming. This has been costing billions of dollars, particularly among the developed countries, in the attempt to compensate developing countries.

Another negative effect of air pollution includes the health effect on human beings. Inhaling gases such as Sulphur Oxide and carbon monoxide is extremely dangerous to respiratory system of human beings. When inhaled beyond a certain amount, they disorient the system leading to breathing problem, and eventually issues such as lung cancer may arise. These respiratory problems have resulted into deaths and financial problems, among the affected people and their families.

Among other factors, environmental degradation has increased to the level of poverty in developing countries. Such countries lack technological knowledge on how to mitigate the effects of environmental degradation. As a result, they face the full face of the

effects. For example, as a result of climatic change, prolonged famine turns into malnutrition, and eventually deaths.

Water pollution has several negative effects. It reduces the amount of water available for domestic and industrial consumption. In this case, there are several states and countries where quite a good fraction of the population goes with clean drinking and cooking water. As a result, they consume contaminated water, and hence, they are affected by water borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid. On the other hand, the ecosystem in sea bodies is negatively affected. It has led to the death of fish, insects and other living organisms such ecosystems.

In conclusion, it is clear that environmental degradation rate has increased over the last few decades. The effects of this unfortunate concept on human and other living organism cannot be ignored by rational thinking human beings. They are beyond what one can imagine, and they can not be quantified. Governments and other stakeholders particularly the united nation agency on environmental issues, should come up with policies and regulations to mitigate the effects.

There are several attempts by some individuals and organizations to mitigate the effects of these problems, but they are not enough. Technologies involved in environmental issues such as the use of natural sources of fuel, for instance, electric and sun should be embraced in transport and industrial fuel engines. Proper disposal of waste products, and where possible recycling, should be upheld to reducing the amount of substance and element disposed to the environment.