

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH A GENERAL STUDY WITH THE SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIA

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Abstract

In Size, India is one of the most important developing Countries in the World with A Surface area of about 3.3 Million Square Km. The total population of India according to the 2001 Census was 1.025 Billion. About 72% of its population lives in rural areas. According to the 2001 census about 40 Million People Belong to the Working Population, as per the Director General of Factory Advisory Services and Labor Institutes There are 300,000 Registered Industrial Factories and More than 36500 Hazardous Factories Employing 2046092. Approximately 10 Million Persons Were employed in Various Factories. Emerging Occupational Health Problems are to be tackled along with Existing Public Health Problems like Communicable diseases, Malnutrition, Poor Environmental Sanitation, and Inadequate Medical care. Globalization and Rapid Industrial Growth (about annual economic Growth) in the Past Few Years Have added Further to the complexities of Occupational Health Related Issues. The Current Burden of Accumulated Occupational Disease in India is estimated to be at around 18 Million Cases.

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In recent years, Particularly Since the adaptation of Agenda 21 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, which drew the attention of policymakers to the Links Between Health and the Environment

Our Health is to a Large Extent Determined by the Quality of our environment, both Indoor and Outdoor. The Impact on our health not only involves the Consequences of air Ground and water Pollution, but also the other Factors, Such as Genetic Susceptibility, Food Contamination, Radiation, Lifestyle, and quality. When analyzing relations between Environment and health, it is of Vital Importance to Consider a Broader Definition of Environment not only the Quality of air, Water, and Ground, but also Indoor Air Quality, Food and the Living and Working Environment Need to be Considered.

Environment Disruptions Such as Dispersion of Dangerous Substances, Acidification, over-fertilization, Photochemical air Pollution, Climate Change, Ground Pollution and Nuisance Have Impact on Human Health. Aspects of Environmental Quality and Life Style That are not Voluntarily Chosen (e.g.: Passive Smoking, noise Nuisance, Stress) are also Important. A Basic Principal on Human Health to non-Harmful Levels. Because of the Permanent Interaction between man and his Environmental quality. As a Consequence, Environment and Health are Closely Related.

The Environment in which we live, Work, and Relax, is Determining for our Health and Well-Being. Physical, As well as Chemical and Micro (Biological)factors in the Environment can Have Repercussion on our Health, Both Physically and Mentally. The World Health Organization (W.H.O) definition of health Emphasizes the Physical, Mental and Social Well-Being and not only Merely the Absence of Disease or Infirmary, "Health is Considered as an Overall Concept Reaching beyond the Absence of Illness and Ailments.

Well-Being and quality of life are Subject to an Impressive number of Factors including Psychological, Social and Environment related aspects. In addition to Positive Influence Such as Green Belts and entertainment areas it is also Important to Identify the negative Factors, Such as Noise, Dour and Light Nuisance. However, the Relation Between Environment and Health is Extremely Complex. Although many Health Problems are tough to be Associated with Environmental Pollution.it is Difficult to Assess the Seriousness, Extent and causes of Environment related Directly or Indirectly Lead to the Same Health Problems. Moreover, A Causal Connection between health effects and for example Distribution of Specific Substances in the Environment is Often Hardly or not demonstrable. The Specific

Contribution of each of the Different Causes of health Problems is Difficult to Determine.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Estimates that 24% of the Global Disease burden and 23% of all deaths can be attributed to Environment impact on health as Compared to developed Nations and the Impact is Highest in Vulnerable Populations Such as Children and the elderly. Hence Addressing health and Environment has Become Far more Important and Should Receive greater Focus Due to the Direct and Indirect Impact on Public Health in a Number of areas Including Communicable Diseases, Non-Communicable Acute and Chronic Diseases, Natural Disasters and Injury.

For instance, an estimated 94% of the diarrheal burden of Disease is attributed to Environment and is associated with unsafe food and Drinking water and Poor Sanitation and Hygiene. There is Strong evidence of an association between lower respiratory infections and indoor air Pollution caused by the use of solid Fuels in Households, as well as An association between Similar Infections and the Passive Inhalation of tobacco Smoke.

In developing countries an estimated 42% of a cute Lower respiratory infection are attributable to Environmental Factors as Compared to an estimated 20% in Developed Countries. There are also Clear Links between Environment and Vector Borne Infectious Diseases Such As Malaria, Dengue and Kalazar. Policies and practices Regarding land use, Deforestation, migration of People From rural to urban Setting, Water resources and drainage are important factors in Transmission of these infectious diseases. Finally, 44% of Injuries arising from workplace Hazards, Radiation and industrial Accidents have their origin in Environmental factors. Environment and human health are interconnected and a Significant change in Environment impacts transmission and intensity of diseases Similarly, there is Proven Association between Flooding and an Increase in the burden of water borne and vector borne Disease, due to contaminated food and water and increase in vector Populations. An Association between temperature extremes and a number of health condition has been documented, Particularly among Vulnerable Populations Such as Children, the elderly and the Poor. Floods, droughts, Killer Storms and Millions of People Displaced. These are horrors usually associated with the most dire predictions of the consequences of climate change. Fair enough, these are catastrophic events but no less catastrophic is the Potential impact on human health Global warming bring in the form of increases in vector borne Diseases, food borne disease, temperature extremes and water borne disease.

The Debate on Whether Overall Global Temperatures are rising is Essentially over, as the Temperature measurements Taken over the last 150 Years Speak for themselves. But the argument over the impact of Global Warming, Particularly on Human Health, Continues to Rage with a Great Deal of Uncertainty and Speculation fueling the debate. So what is a Conscientious environmentalist to do? You can't believe everybody because they Disagree with each Other.

Air Pollution is one Obvious environmentalist health threat in OECD Countries, Contributing to a Number of illnesses, Such as Asthma and in Some Cases Leading to Premature death. Of Particular Concern is the fact that children are More Vulnerable to air Pollution than the adults, and Increased rates of Infant Mortality have been Recorded in Highly Polluted areas. Concerns about the impact of air pollution on health and the economy have resulted in measures to Mitigate Emission of the most harmful pollutants, such as particle pollution (acids, Organic Chemicals, Metals and solid or dust Particles) and Ozone, Which affects the Respiratory System. Despite National and International Interventions and decrease in major Pollutants Emissions, the Health Impacts of air Pollution are not Likely to Decrease in the Years ahead, Unless appropriate action is taken.

Outdoor air Pollution is a Major Environmental Problem in OECD Countries. It can have acute health effects Resulting from Short Term exposure or chronic health Impacts resulting from long term exposure.

Health Problems Linked to air Pollution range from minor eye irritation to Upper respiratory Symptoms, Chronic Respiratory Such as Asthma, Cardiovascular Diseases and Lung Cancer, Some of These Require Hospital Treatment and may be Fatal.

How badly air Pollution affects Individual will Depend on the Pollutant's Chemicals Composition, Its Concentration in the air, the Length of exposure, the synergy with Other air Pollutants, as well as Individual Susceptibility, Although environmental risk Factors can Affect the Health of the Whole Population, Some Groups are Particularly Vulnerable to environmental Pollution, Including Children, Pregnant Women, The elderly and Person with Pre-existing Diseases.

Although the direct effects of exposure to chemicals are complex and Sometimes Open to Debate, Health Problems due to harmful exposure to some chemicals are well documented. For Instance, Concerns have been raised about the Link between exposure to chemicals such as alkylphenols (used in Detergents and Pesticides) and Disruption of the Hormonal System that regulates many of the Body's Functions. Effects on sperm mobility, foetal growth rate and neurological

Functions of Offspring have been Observed from humn exposure to PCBs, and epidemiological studies suggest exposure related increases in Cancers of the digestive System. PCBs, were used in Coolants insulating fluids, PVC and other products until their production was banned in most Countries the 1970s even so they are Still Found in the Environment.

Poor Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene is another Environmental Source of ill Health. Inadequate Sewage Treatment and Poor Sanitation Result in Diarrheal diseases Caused by Bacteria, Such as Cholera by Viruses as Norovirus or Rotovirus or Protozoan Parasites Such as Cryptosporidiosis or Giardiasis. the Greatest Health Risk in this Area Comes From Unsafe Drinking Water.

In developing Countries, Health and Environmental Problems are often related to Poverty and Arise Largely as a result of such Factors as Rapid, Uncontrolled Urbanization and Agricultural and Land use Practies, In addition to Hazards related to Pollution, Vector borne Environmental Diseases may be Prevalent as well as Health and Environmental Problems associated with a lack pf Proper Shelter, Water and Sanitation or Poor Food Hygiene. Developing Countries thus Have to deal Simultaneously with Problems due to a Lack of Basic Services and facilities, With the Impact on health of Large Scale, Rapid Industrialization, Urbanization and Technological Development. Indeed, It is Often difficult to disitinguish traditional risks from new and emerging ones, For example, pestiides and Faeces May Contaminate the same Water Supplines and Air Pollution may Stem Simultaneously From Burning Dirty Households Fuels and industrial use of Fossil Fuels, Rapid Population Growth Makes Household Fuels and industrial use of Fossil Fuels, Rapid Population Growth Makes it More Difficult to slove this Load of Problems, Which outstrips a Country's Economic Development, Retards Social Development and makes excessive Demands on Service, resources and the Capacity of the Increasingly fragile environment.

It is becoming readily apparent that the capacity of the environment to meetgrowing human needs is limited. This makes it crucial to improve our Understanding of the Complex relationship between the development process, environment capacity and human health.

Virtually Every aspect of the environment may affect Physical or Mental health in Some way either Positively or negatively. This is true regardless of the level of Development at which Problems manifest themselves. Problem may be related to both the direct Pathological effects on health and well-being of the broad Physical and Social environment which Includes urban Development, land use, transports, industry and agriculture.

Problems may differ in urban, as opposed to rural environments, with massive urbanization occurring on a global scale, international interest and concern has centered increasingly on the state of the environment and human health in cities. It is estimated that by the year 2025 over five thousand million

people will be living in the cities. In the developing countries of the world, already more than 200 cities have a population of 1 million or more, it has become evident that, although living in cities has many benefits, related for example, to increase job opportunities and the provision of essential services and facilities, many environmental, health and development problems have reached near crisis dimensions, in cities all over the world. Urban growth has exposed population to serious environmental hazards and has outstripped the capacity of municipal and local governments to provide even basic health services. In 1990, at least 600 million people in the urban areas of developing countries were living under life and health threatening conditions.

Despite the unprecedented creation of wealth world wide in the past two decades, the number of people living in absolute poverty is growing steadily. Poverty remains the number one killer, with the poor bearing a disproportionate share of the global burden of ill-health, the poor live in unsafe and overcrowded housing, often in underserved rural areas or peri-urban slums which lack access to safe water or to sewerage. They are also more likely than the wealthy to be

excessively exposed to pollution, traffic and industrial and other risks at home, at work or in their communities. They are more likely to consume insufficient food or food of poor quality. Even in rich countries the poor suffer worse health than do the better off. Poor children are particularly affected in the poorest region of the world, one in five children dies before his/her first birthday, mostly from environment related diseases such as acute respiratory infection, diarrhea and malaria. Not only are children more heavily and frequently exposed to threats to their health in the environment, but they are also more vulnerable to the ill-effects on health.

Although much progress has been made in recent years in the development of comprehensive health and environmental policies and strategies, it is also true that many countries throughout the world have been relatively slow to develop these. This has been due partly to the fact that there are many gaps in knowledge and perceptions of insufficient evidence on which to act. It is also due to very real challenges to the health sector of addressing policy need with respect to new and expanded areas such as energy, agriculture, industrialization and advanced

technology. Nevertheless, there is a growing appreciation of the key role that the health sector can play in Helping to ensure that the policies and strategies of Various Sectors and Organization contribute positively to health protection and Promotion.

The emergence of Complex environmental and Health systems has made it Necessary to define More Clearly the responsibility of the health sector in Helping to ensure that the activities of all sectors and Organizations Contribute Positively to health protection and Promotion, although environment, health and development Concerns should form part of the responsibilities of all sectors, the Health sector has special responsibilities in this context.

Conclusion

The above discussion demonstrates an increasing need to form partnership ,to work across Sectors such as the environment, transport, energy, and Housing to involve communities more closely in decision-making and to develop decision-making to the lowest Possible level, inter-Sectoral efforts are particularly important for addressing complex, interrelated problems, the determinants or solutions of which may lie beyond the direct control of the health sector. Optimal use must be made of limited resources and the expertise, Knowledge and experiences of all relevant sectors of society must be used in order to develop solutions that are sustainable and implementable.

The WHO commission on health and the environment was convened in 1990 and provided key input for the subsequent Earth Summit. The central relevance of human factor to the concept of sustainable development was stressed in the preamble to the Rio Declaration as Follows: “ *Human being are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.* Thus is growing recognition that economic development, management of the environment and protection of public health must be addressed together in an integrated way. While the environment movements has Highlighted the aspects of sustainability, the health movement has laid special stress on the issues of social Justice, equality, and human development not only our healthy People needed to ensure development, but also health is not Possible without development.

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