

THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE EXPERIENCING COMPLEX, SERIOUS AND FAST-GROWING POLLUTION PROBLEMS

Aleti Rajashekar Reddy

Research Scholar
Shri JYT University
Rajasthan

Dr. Jaipal Reddy Battu

M.Sc, LLM, PhD
Principal, Bhaskar Law College
Hyderabad

Abstract

The effect that humanity is having on the environment is becoming ever-more important. Through our actions we are destroying habitats and endangering the lives of future generations. At this point there is no denying the fact that our environment is changing. Hundreds of studies have been conducted to demonstrate that this is happening and it is having an effect on life around us. However, many may be unaware of the specific issues that have led to these changes. Terms like “climate change” and “genetic modification” are commonplace, but without additional information it is difficult to see why they actually matter. To complicate the matter, many of these issues are linked to one another. The key is that they are all important challenges that need to be confronted. Here we examine the biggest environmental problems facing our planet today and why they should matter to you.

Introduction

Major current **environmental issues** may include climate change, pollution, **environmental** degradation, and resource depletion etc. The conservation movement lobbies for protection of endangered species and protection of any ecologically valuable natural areas, genetically modified foods and global warming.

The Biggest Environmental Problems

Genetic Modification of Crops- environmental issues caused by man-made chemicals are becoming clearer. For example, there has been a 90% reduction in the Monarch butterfly population in the United States that can be linked to weed killers that contain glyphosate. There is also some speculation that genetically-modified plants may leak chemical compounds into soil through their roots, possibly affecting communities of microorganisms.

Waste Production- The average person produces 4.3 pounds of waste per day, with the United States alone accounting for 220 million tons per year. Much of this waste ends up in landfills, which generate enormous amounts of methane. Not only does this create explosion hazards, but methane also ranks as one of the worst of the greenhouse gases because of its high global warming potential

Population Growth- Many of the issues listed here result from the massive population growth that Earth has experienced in the last century. The planet’s population grows by 1.13% per year, which works out to 80 million people. This results in a number of issues,

such as a lack of fresh water, habitat loss for wild animals, overuse of natural resources and even species extinction. The latter is particularly damaging, as the planet is now losing 30,000 species per year.

Water Pollution- Fresh water is crucial to life on Earth, yet more sources are being polluted through human activities each year. On a global scale, 2 million tons of sewage, agricultural and industrial waste enters the world's water every day. Water pollution can have harmful effects outside of contamination of the water we drink. It also disrupts marine life, sometimes altering reproductive cycles and increasing mortality rates.

Deforestation- The demands of an increasing population has resulted in increasing levels of deforestation. Current estimates state that the planet is losing 80,000 acres of tropical forests per day. This results in loss of habitat for many species, placing many at risk and leading to large-scale extinction. Furthermore, deforestation is estimated to produce 15% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

Acid Rain- Acid rain comes as a result of air pollution, mostly through chemicals released into the environment when fuel is burned. Its effects are most clearly seen in aquatic ecosystems, where increasing acidity in the water can lead to animal deaths. It also causes various issues for trees. Though it doesn't kill trees directly, acid rain does weaken them by damaging leaves, poisoning the trees and limiting their available nutrients.

Ozone Layer Depletion- Ozone depletion is caused by the release of chemicals, primarily chlorine and bromide, into the atmosphere. A single atom of either has the potential to destroy thousands of ozone molecules before leaving the stratosphere. Ozone depletion results in more UVB radiation reaching the Earth's surface. UVB has been linked to skin cancer and eye disease, plus it affects plant life and has been linked to a reduction of plankton in marine environments.

Air Pollution- Air pollution is becoming an increasingly dangerous problem, particularly in heavily-populated cities. The World Health Organization (WHO) has found that 80% of people living in urban areas are exposed to air quality levels deemed unfit by the organization. It is also directly linked to other environmental issues, such as acid rain and eutrophication. Animals and humans are also at risk of developing a number of health problems due to air pollution.

Natural Resource Use- Recent studies have shown that humanity uses so many natural resources that we would need almost 1.5 Earths to cover our needs. This is only set to increase as industrialization continues in nations like China and India. Increased resource use is linked to a number of other environmental issues, such as air pollution and population growth. Over time, the depletion of these resources will lead to an energy crisis, plus the chemicals emitted by many natural resources are strong contributors to climate change.

Transportation- An ever-growing population needs transportation, much of which is fueled by the natural resources that emit greenhouse gases, such as petroleum. In 2014, transportation accounted for 26% of all greenhouse gas emissions. Transportation also contributes to a range of other environmental issues, such as the destruction of natural habitats and increase in air pollution.

Brainstorming Ways to Solve Environmental Problems

We are currently facing the most critical environmental issues in human history. Our climate, planet, lives, and future as a civilization are all at risk. While the magnitude of that thought can be extremely overwhelming, don't allow yourself to feel helpless, not knowing where to begin. Making small steps and adjustments in your daily routine will give you a sense of success and a yearning to attempt more.

Here are 5 simple ways you can help the environment and spark others to become more environmentally aware.

Replace disposable items with reusable

Anything you use and throw away can potentially spend *centuries* in a landfill. See below for simple adjustments you can make to decrease the amount of disposable items in your daily life.

- Carry your own reusable cup or water bottle
- Use airtight, reusable food containers instead of sandwich bags and plastic wrap
- Pack a waste-free lunch: carry your utensils, cloth napkin, and containers in a reusable lunch bag
- Bring your own bags to the grocery store
- Consider buying bulk containers of your preferred beverages and refilling a reusable bottle, instead of buying individually-packaged drinks
- Use rechargeable batteries

Pass on paper

We are living in the Digital Era, but think about all the paper products you use in your daily life. These actions still align with reusing and repurposing, though may take a little more time for transition.

- Join a library instead of buying books or buy a Kindle
- Print as little as possible; and if you must, print on both sides
- Wrap gifts in fabric and tie with ribbon; both are reusable and prettier than paper and sticky-tape
- Stop using paper towels and incorporate washable cloths
- Look at labels to make sure you only use FSC-certified wood and paper products
- Cut out products made by palm oil companies that contribute to deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia

Conserve water & electricity

The tips you see below will seem like no-brainers; however, it may take to become more aware of your unconscious habits.

- Turn the sink water off when brushing your teeth
- Water the lawn in the morning or evening; cooler air causes less evaporation
- Switch off anything that uses electricity when not in use (lights, televisions, computers, printers, etc.)
- Unplug devices when possible; even when an appliance is turned off, it may still use power
- Remove chemicals inside of the house; research companies that use plant-derived ingredients for their household cleaning products

- Remove chemicals outside of the house; use eco-friendly pesticides and herbicides that won't contaminate groundwater
- Consider signing up for a renewable energy producer that uses 100% renewable energy to power homes

Support local & environmentally friendly

Here are a few reasons to start buying local:

- Reduces plastic and paper waste
- Boosts cost efficiency
- Enables bulk purchasing
- Helps support your neighbors
- Retains farmland within the community
- Builds up the local economy
- Uses fewer chemicals for both for growing and transporting

Recycle (& then recycle properly)

Implementing recycling habits into your daily life is one of the most effective ways to help lessen landfill waste, conserve natural resources, save habitats, reduce pollution, cut down on energy consumption, and slow down global warming.

- Confirm you are using the proper separation containers for your household per the local recycling services
- Remember to make sure your trash bags are recycled or biodegradable, and always cut up the plastic rings from packs of beer or soda to prevent wildlife from getting caught
- Educate yourself about what can and cannot be recycled, as not all plastic and cardboard is acceptable (like pizza boxes for example, due to the grease)
- Learn how to identify and dispose of hazardous waste properly

Taking the time to simply read this article for **ways to solve environmental problems** is a step forward to becoming more aware of the needs of your environment. You are now taking action, and every change—big or small—will create an impact.

If you're already taking action on the suggestions above, see below for additional tips and ideas:

- Add these simple lists to your digital checklist and pick one at a time to tackle. After a week or so, check it off the list and move on to the next. Remember to pat yourself on the back! You just created a change in your lifestyle!
- Find a comfortable compromise for your life. Purchase a pack of affordable, reusable rags and give them a specific purpose. For example, perhaps you always clean your countertops with paper towels; try wiping them down with cloth towels instead.
- Remember to highlight your successes and share with others! #savetheplanet
- Calculate your environmental footprint to see how much impact just one person has on the world's resources and adjust accordingly.

Solutions to Environmental Pollution

- Gas emission pollution is being mitigated in a variety of ways with car emission control, **electric and hybrid vehicles and public transportation systems**. Not all major cities have successful implementation and decent public transportation in

place, but the world is working on this issue constantly and we have managed to reduce emissions profoundly over the last decade. There is much catching up to do.

- The cost of radioactive power plants is becoming apparent and the days of coal power plants are nearly dead. The radiation is a serious issue. Radioactive leakage from power plants and nuclear testing have already contaminated oceanic life to such a degree that it will take hundreds of years to return to normal. More radiation solutions are in the works with various **ecologically friendly power technologies** being built every day.
- **Solar power is a fantastic solution.** Now that solar radiation is at a climactic peak, we can reap power from the sun using solar panel systems. These range from home systems to larger scale systems powering entire communities and cities.
- **Wind power is coming into play.** This may not seem like much at first, but when you get about 100 feet off the ground, there is a great deal of wind up there. By building wind turbines to harvest natural wind energy, electricity is produced. Wind turbine power and solar power are both powerful forces against fossil fuel power and radioactive power. The one problem here is power companies. They want to stay with radioactive power plants because they actually can't be removed. It has become the crusades of many individuals and small corporations to make the switch and there are plenty of people following this as populations cry out for help.
- **Electromagnetic radiation (ER) reduction.** Once major manufacturers of computers and electronic devices realized the blatant potential for huge ER emissions directly into the eyes and brains of users, they started to implement hardware protocols to minimize risks and reduce ER production significantly. Newer devices are in the lead to knock this problem out and, fortunately, this is working.

Also, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is well aware of all leaks and tricks industries are using to dump wastes. This agency now has extremely strict protocols and testing procedures implemented against such facilities so populations are not affected. Additionally, the EPA is measuring air pollution and implementing regulatory procedures for vehicle emissions. They also monitor pollen issues and, with the help of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), they implement solutions to reduce pollen in the air.

Dropping pollen counts is a major focus for EPA and CDC activities. Asthma and other allergic conditions are flooding medical care facilities and pharmaceutical companies with serious public health problems. The response has been swift and various methods to control emissions and reduce pollen counts are in the works. Children and elderly people are at the highest risk for environmental pollution related health problems. The good news is we are directly on the horizon to cut down the causes and risks while providing practical health solutions for the general public throughout the world.

Conclusion

The impact that human activities have on the environment around us is undeniable and more studies are being conducted each year to show the extent of the issue. Climate change and the many factors that contribute to emissions could lead to catastrophic issues in the future. More needs to be done to remedy the major environmental issues that affect us today. If this doesn't happen, the possibility exists that great swathes of the planet will become uninhabitable in the future. The good news is that many of these issues can be controlled. By making adjustments, humanity can have a direct and positive impact on the environment. Please feel free to join the conversation in the comments section below or engage your friends in discussion about the environment on social media.

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