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<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Samy, R. R.</td>
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Mass Media Campaign On Environment

By

R R Samy
MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGN ON ENVIRONMENT
Prof. R.R. Swamy, D.Sc.

Our country with an area of 3208825 Kilometres, 75 crore population occupies second in the world in the population. The Density of population for square kilometre is around 200 persons. The female population is less when compared with males. The literacy rate is very low especially among the women. The birth rate is 33 for 1000 where as the death rate is 14, less for thousand 19 people are increasing every year.

India's population is more than the entire population of Africa more than the South and North America population.
Equal to the Population of Europe.

OUR COUNTRY'S ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION IS:

1) LAND:
As fodder becomes scarce, people and their animals turn to forests. Violent clashes between graziers and foresters follow as corrupt foresters exploit permits for grazing. Four million hectares have already been swallowed up by ravines. In the famous Chambel Valley more than 10 percent of the villages are completely depopulated.

While mineral production (in rupees) has increased nearly 50 fold in the last 30 years, several million hectares of good crop and forest lands have been destroyed by mining operations and hundreds of villages depopulated.

2) WATER:
India's ground water resources are almost 10 times its annual rainfall. But with over 1,70,000 tubewells added every year during the 1970s, the water table is declining in many years, leaving the dugwells of the poor high and dry.

Increasingly polluted rivers and lakes and large dams are seriously affecting riverine fisheries. The migratory hills, a much sought after delicacy, is being damned to death.

Dam waters now cover nearly one percent of India's land Area, but produce little fish and provide little employment for the impoverished fisherfolk, the highest annual yield of a reservoir is only 190 Kg. a hectare annually, but some fish ponds record 8,000 Kg. a hectare.

3) FORESTS:
The latest satellite date confirm that India is loosing 1.3 million hectare of forests a year, nearly eight times the annual rate put by forest departments.

Prof. R.R. Swamy, D.Sc., Chairman, Population and Environmental Education Centre, Velgode - 518 533 (Post), Kurnool (District), Andhra Pradesh State.
Social Forestry may even be exacerbating the energy crisis for landless labourers. When 4 farmers in Punjab switch from cotton to eucalyptus, workers lost their main fuel, cotton stalks.

4) DAMS:

Large Dams are today India's most controversial issue. Silent valley has already been given up. Groups are protesting against another half a dozen.

The key issue is not nature but people. Energy and water planners are stressing hydro-power and canal irrigation but have made no study of how many people will be displaced.

Government Officials argue that "Some one has to suffer for Progress". Usually these "Some 'ones" are tribals, the poorest and the most powerless.

5) ATMOSPHERE:

The world's worst air pollution problem could be the woodsmoke inhaled by poor rural women while cooking. A tonne of particulates from household woodstoves may actually lead to more than 500 times the human exposure than a tonne of particulates from coal-fired power station.

As wood becomes scarce, women turn to cowdung, which generates even more pollution. Many new cooking fuels like crop wastes and woods have never been tested for pollution hazard.

Environmental Air Pollution is also increasing steadily. In 15 years, the quantity of sulphar dioxide, released into the air has tripled. Acid rain, the scourge of forests and lakes in Europe and North America, is now found industrialised areas, Bombay, Delhi, Pune.

Of the 48 thermal Power Stations officially surveyed in 1984, 31 had taken no pollution control measure and only six had their pollution control equipment functioning properly.

6) PEOPLE:

India can feed 2.5 times the projected population at the turn of the century. But more than family planning, the answer lies in proper soil and water management.

The destruction of forests and reduced access to biomass like bamboo, grasses and wood play havoc with millions of the crafts people. While the Uttar Pradesh Government provides cheap bhabhar grass to paper mills, 40,000 baon making families face starvation.

An average family in an average Karnataka village walks 1,400 Km. a year fetching fuelwood, equivalent to walking from Delhi to Bombay every year. In deforested hills and deserts, the treks are longer and more difficult.
7) HEALTH:

India uses a nearly 1,00,000 tonnes of pesticides annually. At least 70 percent were of this tonnage is contributed by pesticides banned or severally restricted in Western nations.

A WHO study, which analysed food samples across India, found that 50 percent were contaminated with pesticide residues, with 30 percent exceeding permissible limits.

Thousands of workers die every year because of occupational diseases, the gravest being caused by various types of dust. There is hardly a man alive over 40 years and hardly a house without a widow in Multanpur, in Madhya Pradesh, where the entire population is employed in slate, pencil factories.

Mosquito borne diseases are rapidly growing and are grossly under reported. Malaria Researchers believe that incidence of malaria may be as high as 20 million, whereas official statistics claim only to 2.16 million.

8) ENERGY:

Falling of trees for urban fuel wood consumption is a major source of the forest destruction. 3/4 of firewoods used in towns and cities is in the shape of logs. From an installed nuclear capacity of 1100 MW, India plans to reach 10,000 MW, by the end of the century at a whooping cost of Rs.14,000 crores.

9) LIVING RESOURCES:

India's natural diversity, one of the richest in the world, is under attack, from disappearing varieties of wheat and rice to disappear in varieties of trees, cattle, buffalos, goats, pigs, camels, ducks and fishes.

With the country's original forests and grasslands steadily destroyed, four weeds - Lantana, Farthenium, Eupatorium and water Hycinth are set to take over the land.

OUTLINE OF COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN:

Information of conservation and environmental protection has to be designated as under:

a) The need to cost minimum ecological disturbance.

b) The natural environment is irreplaceable.

c) Living things are interdependent of one another.

d) More population disturbs the environment.

e) The need to conserve the maximum quantity of natural resources.

f) Recycling of waste products.

The target group may consist of school-going children, youth, employees engaged in developmental organisations and industrial workers.

Media mix approach suitable to target group may be adopted for creating environmental awareness in the society.