

Environment Protection and Poverty

For decades have been presented a relation between poverty, inequity, and environmental degradation. Understanding this nexus is important to guide intervention on environment protection but shouldn't be an determining factor.

The 90`s were a time strongly driven by the Brundtland Report of 1987, regarded as a plant for environmental conservation, where it is clearly expressed that poverty causes environmental degradation, with statements such as: "poverty is one of the main effects of global environmental problems. Consequently, it is pointless to try to deal with environmental problems without a broader perspective that encompasses the factors underlying global poverty and international inequalities". Is essential to understand where aforesaid connections came from but more importantly is to understand how they are in place.

The issue focuses on the direct dependence of low-income families of natural resources for their survival, which consequently leads to greater exhaustion and environmental degradation. For example, the unsustainable deforestation, land degradation during farming activities, water pollution and contamination by the lack of provision of proper sanitation and drinking water facilities by governmental agencies and finally the case of indoor pollution, that low-income groups driven by the lack of access to fuel substitutes are forced to rely on highly polluting biomass fuels for heating and cooking.

In fact, there´s in place a "complex web of factors", involving the institutions and markets as well. The institutional way is presented as the solution to environmental degradation instead of targeting poverty. How government policies can create or strengthen a vicious circle, including the lack of response to market failures, which impose negative externalities with particularly severe impacts on the poor, continue to contribute to feedback relations that increase environment degradation.

There is no denying that poverty causes environmental degradation, there`s disagreement rather on how to stop the degradation of natural resources, whether by direct intervention in poverty reduction or in the reduction of institutional failures, that not only "push" low-income groups into poverty but as well allow for more environmental degradation.

Sources:

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