

Hindustan becoming Registan?

Poverty and environmental degradation are major problems in dry lands, where forests and trees contribute significantly to rural livelihoods. In order to eradicate poverty in the dry lands, it is important to protect the land from deforestation, fragmentation, degradation and drought.

About 228 mha (69%) of India's total geographical area (about 328 mha) is under dry lands (arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid). These areas incidentally are highly populated which makes the people vulnerable to environmental stress and impacts livelihoods directly.

In order to tackle the issues of desertification, land degradation and droughts, 22 major programmes are being implemented in the country, including, the "Mission for Green India", one of the Missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change, which will address dry land forests, in addition to other ecosystems.

The 4th national report submitted to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Secretariat not only encompasses the Government of India's initiatives but also Civil Society's contribution in addressing the issues of desertification, land degradation and drought.

Highlights of the Report

- About 69 percent of India is dry land – arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid
 - These areas are heavily populated
 - Degradation has severe implications for livelihood and food security for millions of people living in these areas
- An estimated 32 percent of India's total land area is affected by land degradation (of which desertification is a major component)
- 81.45 million hectares, or 24.8 percent of the country's geographic area is undergoing desertification
- Water and soil erosion are major causes of land degradation; water erosion is most prominent in agricultural regions
- The key anthropogenic factors resulting in degradation are unsustainable agricultural practices; diversion of land to development programmes; industrial effluents; mining and deforestation
- Unsustainable resource management practices drive desertification, and accentuate the poverty of people affected by desertification (India Current Affairs, 3-10-11).