

## Locating Concepts, Practices and Policies of Environmental Concern in Reports

GEETANJALI YADAV<sup>1\*</sup> and J.P. DUBEY<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Elementary Education, Miranda House, University of Delhi, Delhi.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Adult Continuing Education and Extension, University of Delhi, Delhi.

### Abstract

Environment plays a crucial role in our lives. The Anthropocene era is marked with the emergence of chronic environmental issues. These issues are spread worldwide. India is also dealing with several environmental issues. Developing 'Environmental Concern' (Individual, social, and at institutional level) is considered as one of the potential solutions to reduce the impact of environmental issues. The paper attempts to look at the conceptualization of the construct of 'Environmental Concern' limiting focus within the Environmental Policy Reports, and Environmental Performance Assessment Reports. The qualitative analysis pertains to the longitudinal period from 2015 to 2021. The findings identified seven key substantial areas of Environmental concern that can be considered in the conceptualization of the construct 'Environmental Concern' concerning India's environmental context. Along with these substantive areas of concern, some critical areas, i.e., forests and biomes, poor air quality, public health concerns, and lead poisoning, also need to be taken into immediate consideration for action. With these areas of consideration in the conceptualization of the construct 'Environmental Concern' future efforts to solve environmental problems can be formulated.



### Article History

Received: 24 January 2024

2024

Accepted: 19 June 2024

### Keywords

Environmental Concern;  
Policies; Practices;  
Qualitative Content  
Analysis.

### Introduction


Human activity impacts the environment and increased activity accelerates it, and the consequences are visible. The issues are numerous to mention here and diverse in nature i.e. use of pesticides to entering of plastic in the food

chain, climate change to depletion of the diversity, exhaustion of natural resources, and more. Efforts have been made by different agencies to prevent or to reduce the impacts but the speed of environmental deterioration is higher than the efforts made for its protection.

**CONTACT** Geetanjali Yadav ✉ [geetanjali.yadav@mirandahouse.ac.in](mailto:geetanjali.yadav@mirandahouse.ac.in) 📍 Department of Elementary Education, Miranda House, University of Delhi, Delhi.



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Enviro Research Publishers.

This is an  Open Access article licensed under a Creative Commons license: Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY).

Doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.12944/CWE.19.2.22>

Climate change has several interconnected concerns which inter alia include social, economic, gender, geographical, human movement and development, etc. To begin with, the challenge faced is the very conceptualization of the construct of 'Environmental Concern', since Environmental Concern (EC) is a highly relevant construct in the context of environmental changes and challenges. But, unfortunately, efforts to change people's environmentally destructive practices through policy interventions have typically not been met significantly. As reported by UNESCO Report<sup>1</sup> entitled 'The World in 2030-A Public Survey Report' climate change and also biodiversity loss are the biggest concerns throughout the world, while violence and conflict, along with discrimination and inequality, are the most pressing issues.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2022 Report has provided a summary of the sustainability state worldwide, the summary was data-driven. Using 40 performance indicators across 11 issue categories, the EPI ranks 180 countries on their progress toward improving environmental health, protecting ecosystem vitality, and mitigating climate change. The EPI offers a scorecard that highlights leaders and laggards in environmental performance and provides practical guidance for countries that aspire to move toward a sustainable future.<sup>2</sup> According to the report, the advancements within the EPI research strategies shed light on novel environmental issues and make us to recognize worrisome patterns — particularly in developing nations, this was possible only because of improvement in data coverage strategies in the survey. Based on the recent research findings and detailed information on environmental aspects, India ranks at the bottom of all nations within the 2022 EPI, with poor scores over an extent of environmental issues i.e. poor air quality and increasing greenhouse gas emissions which pose critical challenge to the environmental health of the country. It was also found that many bottom-tier nations confront war and other sources of turmoil as well as also in need of financial resources to contribute to environmental infrastructure. India has scored 180th rank in the 2022 Environmental Performance Index survey conducted on 180 nations.

Since the data in these reports regarding environmental concern were collected from individuals as well as from institutions dealing with

environmental issues from different countries, still country like ours where there is an institutional agency formed to deal mainly with environmental issues is still subject to exploration and research. Since Environmental concerns can be realized in an unexpected way depending on components like national and additionally it is complex and multidimensional.<sup>3</sup>

The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)<sup>4</sup> is one of the apex agencies that has been largely dealing with the areas of Environmental Concerns in our country since 1980. Earlier the Ministry was known as the Department of Environment and later it became the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) in year 1985 and it is designated as the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) which acts as the nodal agency in the administrative structure of the Central Government for India's environmental and Forestry policies and programmes agendas.

This is where this study revolved around analyzing the concepts, practices, and policies contained within the period from the year 2015 to 2021 for the Annual Reports<sup>4</sup> of MoEF&CC and for the period from the year 2015 to 2022 for Reports of EPI. The Annual Reports published by the MoEF&CC, access to these reports is an open archival, which means everyone can access the document in a specific archive and the access is openly published. The first Annual Report in the archival was 1986-87. The EPI is released biennially in even-numbered years starting from the year 2006. The EPI generally centres two broad environmental protection agendas, the first one is to reduce environmental stresses on human health and the second one is to promote ecosystem vitality and efficient natural resource management. These are generally gauged using some indicators tracked in some environmental issues. The EPI Reports released by Yale University, the access to these reports is an open archival, which means everyone can access the document in a specific archive and the access is openly published.

### **Methodology**

The research aimed to identify the substantive areas of environmental concern from the Annual Reports of MoEF&CC from 2015 to 2021, To identify the approaches used to address the substantive

areas from 2015 to 2021 by the Ministry to mitigate environmental issues and to analyze the substantive areas of concern suggested by EPI reports from 2015 to 2022 with respect to India. To locate the concepts, policies and practices in National Reports, the Annual Reports of MoEF&CC from the period 2015 to 2022 as a Primary source are analyzed through Qualitative Content Analysis. Secondly, the Environmental Performance Index Reports from

the period of 2015 to 2022, are also accessed from the official website of Yale University. Finally, some common themes from both the reports are discussed and also substantial areas other than of Annual Reports found in EPI reports are brought into consideration.

### Findings

**Table 1: Concepts, Practices and Policies in Annual Reports of the MoEF& CC**

S. No.	Major Areas of Environmental Concern identified in Annual Reports of MoEF&CC	Approaches
1	Natural Resources	Explorations; Management, Maintenance, and Development of Botanical and Zoological materials; Capacity building and Human Resource Development; Advisory services; and Collaboration, working Nodal agency, Research, and studies, Developing and Reviewing policies; Regulations, Law, and Enforcements.
2	Conservation	Awareness generation, Implementation of National Action Plans and National Mission, Laws and enforcement, Programmes and Projects; Monitoring, Development, and Extension; Facilitation; Nodal agency
3	Abatement of Pollution	Assessment, Monitoring, and Operationalization of Pollution mitigation systems; Projects, and Studies; Initiatives and Programmes; Nodal agency; Regulatory role.
4	Conservation of Water Bodies	River conservation programs; and National Plans for conservation of Aquatic Eco-system, as a nodal agency
5	Climate Change	Environment conservation related Missions; Action Plans; National and International negotiations; Capacity building; e-portal; Awareness and Consultation activity
6	Regeneration and Eco-Development	Afforestation, and the sub-approach is Engagement of People
7	Environmental Impact Assessment	Awareness drives and Project Assessments. EIA is appraising projects from sectors Industry, Thermal, River Valley and Hydroelectric Projects (HEP), Mining (Coal & Non-Coal), Infrastructure, Construction, and Nuclear, Defense-related Projects

The study has identified seven substantial areas of 'environmental concern' with which the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has been engaged regularly. These substantial areas of environmental concern are 1.Natural resources, 2.Conservation, 3.Abatement of Pollution, 4.Conservation of Water Bodies, 5. Climate Change, 6.Regeneration and Eco-development, 7. Environmental Impact Assessment

In Annual reports under the area of 'Natural resources' the approaches widely used by the Ministry of Botanical Survey of India are Explorations, Management, Maintenance, and Development of Botanical materials, Capacity building and Human Resource Development; Advisory services, and Collaboration.

In Annual reports under the area of 'Natural resources' the approaches widely used by

the Ministry of Zoological Survey of India are Explorations, Management, Maintenance, and Development of Zoological materials, Capacity building & Human Resource Development; Advisory services; Collaborations.

In Annual reports under the area of 'Natural resources' the approaches widely used by the Ministry of Forest Survey of India are Explorations, Assessment and Monitoring, Nodal Agency, Capacity building, Research, and studies, Developing and Reviewing policies; Regulations, Law, and Enforcements.

In the Annual Reports under the substantial area for environmental concern 'Biodiversity conservation' the approaches identified are Awareness generation, Implementation of National Action Plans and National Mission, Laws and enforcement, Programmes and Projects, Monitoring, Development, and Extension; Facilitation, Nodal agency.

In the Annual Reports under the substantive area of concern 'Pollution Abatement' the identified approaches are: Assessment, Monitoring, and Operationalization of Pollution mitigation systems, Projects, and Studies, Initiatives and Programmes; Nodal agency; Regulatory role.

In the Annual Reports under the substantive area of concern 'Conservation of Water Bodies' the identified approaches are River conservation programs; and National Plans for conservation of Aquatic Eco-system, as a nodal agency.

In the Annual Reports under the substantive area of concern 'Climate Change' the identified approaches are Missions, Action Plans, National and International negotiations, Capacity building, e-portal; Awareness and Consultation activity.

In the Annual Reports the substantive area of concern under the approach 'Regeneration and Eco-development' is mainly Afforestation, and the sub-approach is Engagement of People.

In the Annual Reports under the approach 'Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)' the sub-approaches identified are Awareness drives and Project Assessments. EIA is appraising projects from sectors Industry, Thermal, River Valley and

Hydroelectric Projects (HEP), Mining (Coal & Non-Coal), Infrastructure, Construction, and Nuclear, Defense-related Projects. From 2015 to 2021 a total of 2,307 projects were granted, in these Infrastructure and Construction sector projects were of the highest count.

### **EPI Reports related to Environmental Concerns in the context of India**

In the 2022 EPI report 'The Indian Ocean was identified as one of the hotspots of concern with respect to fish stock biomass declining and some fish species overfished.

In 2020 and 2022 EPI Reports 'Tropical and Subtropical coniferous forests' and biomes- 'Tropical and Subtropical dry Broadleaf Forests, Tropical & Subtropical Coniferous Forests, Temperate Coniferous forests, Desserts & Xeric Shrubland' were identified as areas of 'Environmental concern', respectively.

In all the four reports of EPI viz 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022 'Poor air quality emerges as the most important environmental threat to human health in India and remains an urgent concern and need for action. Nitrogen oxides and Sulphur oxides are identified as chief air pollutants and 'Lead poisoning' was also expressed as a critical area of concern in India.

In 2016 and 2022 EPI reports the substantive areas of concern expressed as elevating carbon emissions in India and India as the largest emitter of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) respectively.

### **Discussion**

Since the construct 'Environmental Concern' is a dynamic construct and subject to research explorations as per the changes in environmental conditions. To deal with the prevailing and emerging environmental conditions approaches must be planned with substantial environmental issues. The prevailing and emerging issues found in the study are Population, environmental resource depletion and exploitations, Plastic manufacturing, management, and menace related to it, Ocean health, circular economy, Lead poisoning, public health issues, and more must also be included and addressed in the context of India. Environmental

issues as multifaceted equations that involve many factors, including values, politics, technology and science, public policy formulation, and organizational management.<sup>5</sup>

The UNESCO report entitled 'The World in 2030-A Public Survey Report'<sup>1</sup> (2021) as 'education' is a significant way to deal with the biggest environmental concerns, the Ministry of Education and MoEF&CC should work in collaboration to deal with the prevailing environmental challenges of the country.

The Ministry should also encourage those individuals and institutions (NGOs, small businesses) that are concerned about the environmental crisis and develop innovative approaches to boost environmental health and prevent its exploitation and deterioration. For example, in 2018 the innovative idea of Ganga Ram Paikra of Chaupal, India to plant trees in forest and nearby areas.<sup>6</sup> In this initiative of Paikra understanding the importance (ecological as well as sociological) of local flora was the basis which was a huge contribution to environment conservation. Other sort of innovative approaches for Environmental concerns were also adopted, such as for communicating a message to people through Music, since understanding and interpreting the ideas and problems behind scientific data and information, music and art go deeper in people's hearts<sup>7</sup> as its ability to influence our identity, behavior, thoughts, moods, and emotions. For example, Aditi Veena aka Ditty is a singer, songwriter and environmental conservationist, her concerns for the environment are reflected in her music work in her songs like Eulogy for a Sparrow, On an Island, and so on. And institutions coming up with some budding environment-friendly ideas i.e. construction of green buildings in urban set-ups, manufacturing eco-friendly crockery in celebrations rather than made up of plastic, and more. The Ministry should also provide the space for individuals, groups, or institutions who bring and explore alternative futures for sustainability.

### Conclusion

The seven substantial areas identified on which MoEF &CC has been working, these seven substantial areas: Natural Resources, Conservation, Abatement of Pollution, Conservation of Water Bodies, Climate

Change, Regeneration, and Eco-development, Environmental Impact Assessment, can be considered quintessential while conceptualizing the construct 'environmental concern'<sup>8</sup> in his book mentioned some zones that need immediate attention under the broad area of Informed Citizenship. The zones are upsurge in human population growth, destitution, and disparity; Nourishment and farming; Tropical woodlands; biological diversity (diversity extinction); desertification and dry season (main issue: anthropological activities causing damage to a land which results in increasing destitution and starvation); the issue of unavailability of freshwater due to an increase in demand as well as poor quality; Oceans and coasts (main issue: corruption of marine assets); Vitality (major issue: developing vitality request, unsustainable utilization, contamination of the environment); climate and atmosphere (major issue: air pollution, acid deposition, ozone depletion, and climatic change); Sewage and Solid waste management issues; hazardous substances i.e. nuclear wastes; the issue of global security; development and environment (a major issue with this is unsustainable development). With this list of the extent of 'environmental concerns, the author had also focused on the issue of 'development and environment' ought to be consolidated into the overall list, or maybe it ought to have come first. Certainly, the issue of 'Development and the Environment is fundamental to and maybe a common connection between all the issues related to the environment',<sup>8</sup> so distantly portrayed. Since environmental issues are diverse and integrated into various ecosystems, the seriousness of approaches for addressing these issues should be interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary to mitigate the harmful impacts. Networking and collaborating with other ministries (i.e. Ministry of Human Resources and Development, Ministry of Mines, Ministry of Labour and Employment, and more) will also be helpful.

### Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the Department of Adult Continuing Education and Extension, University of Delhi.

### Funding Sources

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors doesn't have any conflict of interest in the article of research 'Locating Concepts, Practices and Policies of Environmental Concern.

**Authors' Contribution**

Both the authors have worked in collaboration on the manuscript, the research work is conducted by Ms. Geetanjali Yadav under the guidance of Professor J.P. Dubey

**Data Availability Statement**

This statement does not apply to this article.

**Ethics Statement**

This research did not involve human participants, animal subjects, or any material that requires ethical approval.

**References**

1. UNESCO Report (2021) *The World in 2030: public survey report*, English, 68 pages, ISBN: 978-231-00439-1
2. EPI (2022), *Environmental Performance Index 2022, Ranking country performance on sustainability issues*, Yale University, Retrieved from <https://epi.yale.edu/downloads/epi2022report06062022.pdf>
3. Sandra T. Marquart-Pyatt (2013). *Editor's Introduction: Environmental Concern in International and Cross-National Context: Insights and Challenges for Future Research*: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43301216>
4. MoEF&CC, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, GoI, *Annual Reports 2020-21*, Retrieved from <https://moef.gov.in/moef/resource/annual-reports/index.html>
5. Cohen S. (2006). *Understanding Environmental Policy*. Columbia University Press.
6. Panwar S. (2019), 'Seeds of Change', *Down to Earth*, Volume 27, No. 14, 1-15 December 2019.
7. Palicha D. (2021). 'The message songs give stick with us', *Down to Earth*, 16-30 September 2021.
8. Palmer J., (2018) *Environmental Education in the 21st Century*. Reprint 2018. Routledge.