

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ENVIRONMENT

Nikhil Gangappa Mantur

Asst. Professor, BLDE Law College, Jamkhandi

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### Abstract

The outbreak of Covid-19 has caused concerns globally. On 30 January WHO has declared it as a global health emergency. The easy spread of this virus made people to wear a mask as precautionary route, use gloves and hand sanitizer on a daily basis that resulted in generation of a massive amount of medical wastes in the environment. Millions of people have put on lockdown in order to reduce the transmission of the virus. This epidemic has also changed the people's life style; caused extensive job losses and threatened the sustenance of millions of people as businesses have shut down to control the spread of virus. All over the world, flight have been cancelled and transport systems have been closed. Overall, the economic activities have been stopped and stock markets dropped along with the falling carbon emission. However, the lock down of the Covid-19 pandemic caused the air quality in many cities across the globe to improve and drop in water pollutions in some parts of the world.

The worldwide disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in numerous impacts on the environment and the climate. The severe decline in planned travel has caused many regions to experience a drop in air pollution. In China, lockdowns and other measures resulted in a 25% reduction in carbon emissions and 50% reduction in nitrogen oxides emissions, which one Earth systems scientists estimated may have saved at least 77000 lives over two months. However, the outbreak has also provided cover for illegal activities such as deforestation of the Amazon rainforest and poaching in Africa, hindered

environmental diplomacy efforts and created economic fallout that some predict will slow investment in green energy technologies.

## **Introduction**

Up to 2020. Increases in the amount of greenhouse gases produced since the beginning of the industrialization era caused average global temperatures on the Earth to rise, causing effects including the melting of glaciers and rising sea levels. In various forms, human activity caused environmental degradation, an anthropogenic impact. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, measures that were expected to be recommended to health authorities in the case of a pandemic included quarantines and social distancing. Independently, also prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, researchers argued that reduced economic activity would help decrease global warming as well as air and marine pollution, allowing the environment to slowly flourish. Researchers and officials have also called for biodiversity protections to form part of Covid-19 recovery strategies.

## **Effect of Covid-19 on different Environmental aspect as follows:**

Global carbon emission from the fossil fuel industry could fall by a record 2.5bn tonnes this year, a reduction of 5% , as the Corona virus pandemic, triggers the biggest drop in demand for fossil fuels on record. The unprecedented restrictions on travel, work and industry due to the corona virus have ensured several days with good quality of air in otherwise choked cities. Pollution and greenhouse gas emissions have fallen across the continents.

## **Air**

The corona virus pandemic has caused a global reduction in economic activity and although this is major cause for concern, the ramping down of human activity appears to have had a positive impact on the environment. Industrial and transport emissions and effluents have reduced, and measurable data

supports the clearing of pollutants in the atmosphere, soil and water. This effect is also in contrast to carbon emissions, which shot up by 5% after the global financial crash over a decade ago, as a result of stimulus spending on fossil fuel use to kick start the global economy. The month of May, which usually record peak carbon emissions due to the decomposition of leaves, has recorded what might be the lowest levels of pollutants in the air since the 2008 financial crisis. China and Northern Italy have also recorded significant reductions in their nitrogen dioxide levels. Further, sources suggest that there has been a 25% drop in energy use and emissions in China over two weeks which is likely to decrease the overall annual carbon emissions of the country by 1%.

In India, the results were similar too; March 22 was the “Janata Curfew”, following which, a significant dip in air pollution levels was measured across the country. Cities like Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata and Lucknow saw their average Air Quality Index staying within two digits.

## **Water**

Water quality in the rivers has improved massively including that of Ganga and Yamuna both of which were in very bad conditions. There are two reasons for this

- The demand for water has gone down as industries are not using the water
- Since the industries are not operating they're not releasing toxic effluents in the river bodies.

Water bodies have also been clearing and the rivers Yamuna and Ganga have seen significant improvements since the enforcement of a nationwide lockdown. According to the real-time water monitoring data of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the average water quality of 27 points of the Ganga

seen in recent days, is suitable for bathing and propagation of wildlife and fisheries.

### **Wild life**

Demand for fish and fish prices have both decreased due to the pandemic and fishing fleets around the world sit mostly idle. German scientist Rainer Froese has said the fish biomass will increase due to the sharp decline in fishing, and projected that in European waters, some fish such as herring could double their biomass. As of April 2020, signs of aquatic recovery remain mostly anecdotal. As people stay at home due to lockdown and travel restrictions, some animals have been spotted in cities. Sea turtles were spotted laying eggs on beaches they once avoided, due to the lowered levels of human interference and light pollution.

Conservationists expect that African countries will experience a massive surge in bush meat poaching. Matt Brown of the Nature Conservancy said that, “When people don’t have any other alternative for income, our prediction and we’re seeing this in South Africa is that poaching will go up for high value products like rhino horn and ivory”. On the other hand, Gabon decided to ban the human consumption of bats and pangolins, to stem the spread of zoonotic diseases, as the novel corona virus is thought to have transmitted itself to humans through these animals.

### **Carbon Emission**

A study published in May 2020 found that the daily global carbon emissions during the lockdown measures in early April fell by 17% and could lead to an annual carbon emissions decline of up to 7%, which would be the biggest drop since World War II. They ascribe these decreases mainly to the reduction of transportation usages and industrial activities. However, it has been noted that rebounding could diminish reductions due to the more limited industrial

activities. Nevertheless, societal shifts caused by the corona virus lockdowns like widespread telecommuting and the use of virtual conferences technology may have a more sustained impact beyond the short term reduction of transportation usages.

Just last week, Carbon Brief (CB) published that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted energy use worldwide, which could cut carbon emissions by an estimated 5% of 2019's global total. That means the corona virus crisis is so far “ triggering the largest ever annual fall in CO2 emissions in 2020, more than during any previous economic crisis or period of war.” While this is encouraging news, experts say it still may not be adequate for meeting Paris Agreement goals to keep global warming from rising above 1.5 degrees Celsius.

**Issues and Challenges:** One major issue to consider is whether these are just fleeting changes, or could it lead to a longer lasting fall in emission.

**Behavioral Changes:** Work from home is one such positive changes that can be expected to last even beyond the lockdown. Lesser number of private vehicles will ensure fewer traffic jams and less pollution.

**Industries and factories:** Due to the lock down the industrial waste generation has completely stopped and this has played a major rule in the improvement of both air and water quality across the globe. However, it is probable that the emissions might even surpass the earlier levels, post-lockdown. Some countries might let their environmental laws down to make up for the economic loss suffered during the lockdown.

**Poverty and Climate Change:** Sustainable development goals might take a hit in the post corona world as a huge amount of poverty is going to come back. The fight against climate change will also suffer as countries across the globe are expected to take knee-jerk measures to undo the economic loss.

**Sustainable Development:** The economies have become very weak and therefore supporting the fight against climate change is going to be very difficult. However, now is the time to realise the importance of sustainable development. Data shows that the fatality rate due to corona virus is higher in the regions with poorer air quality.

- It's time to redefine growth and development and make preserving the environment an integral part of it.
- Private companies should incorporate and internalise such method of production so as to reduce carbon emissions.
- Governments should also make developmental policies keeping in mind the environmental challenges.

The meaning of sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### **Deforestation**

The disruption from the pandemic provided cover for illegal deforestation operations. This was observed in Brazil, where satellite imagery showed deforestation of the Amazon rainforest surging by over 50% compared to baseline levels. Unemployment caused by the Covid-19 pandemic facilitated the recruitment of labourers for Pakistan's 10 Billions Tree Tsunami campaign to plant 10 billion tree the estimated global annual net loss of trees over the span of 5 years.

### **Conclusion**

The takeaway from this is that once nations come to grips with the corona virus, better implementation of the environmental, transport and industry regulations should be considered a priority to ease the detrimental impacts of

human activity on the environment. The international community, as it fights to regain an accepted normal, ought to take into consideration, the enlightening results of this pandemic. The environment, for one, bounced back faster than we thought it could. And it would be downright irresponsible to let that knowledge take a backseat once social distancing and nationwide lockdowns are no longer required.

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