GLOBALIZATION AND URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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An Introduction to Globalization:

Globalization is a set of economic processes in which production, marketing and investment are integrated across the borders of nations. The liberalization and opening up of markets to the global economy is leading to the emergence of a single market for goods, capital, technology, services, information and to some extent labour.

Globalization is also a socio – political process because of its impact on culture, governance and domestic policy. The process of globalization is a convergence, though at differing speeds, of many institutional, legal, economic, social and cultural practices and processes across the borders of nations. Globalization as an idea is how we looking at the world and reducing cultural diversity in terms of perceptions and products.

The logic of globalization is the expansion of trade and investment in search of new markets and more competitive production sites. Companies can choose where they want to locate and people where they want to work and live, in a global market. The current tendency of Multi-National Companies (MNC's) or Trans National Companies (TNC's) to relocate geographically and set up production units in other areas of the world with cheaper labour, more lenient health and safety requirements, lower environmental protection standards and favourable tax laws in order to maximize profits. The rising power of MNC's is skewing the distribution of gains towards the corporations, undermining the authority of national government and civil society, eroding human rights and environmental protection and also influencing the proliferating laws governing trade and investment.

Globalization trends create challenges on a scale and scope and speed unprecedented in World History. Particularly for developing countries, the challenges are increasingly complex to negotiate because they impact across the sectors and at many levels of society.

The challenge for policy makers at the different levels of government is to articulate with the global economy so as to harness the potential benefits for national development and minimize the negative effects, as the global trade system has led to increased environmental damage and violation of human rights.

For the development planners, the challenge is to address the effects of rapid expansion of corporate interests. Measures to protect ecological stability for local communities against the benefits of corporate operation i.e. measures that promote the sustainable use of the environment.

The process of globalization and the global changes affects the development of the cities. Cities comprise a paradox. They embody the leading centers of development, but they are also a fertile soil for social exclusions and environmental problems.

Environmental challenges under Globalization:

Globalization generates new challenges in preparing strategies for urban development because globalization threatens to exacerbate urban environmental pollution and natural resource degradation. The strategy is to make cities livable, provide environmental services for the urban people and protect urban people against environmental hazards.
1. The concept of the livable city is defined in terms of a healthy and dignified living environment i.e. addressing the sources of environmental degradation.
2. The environmental services for the urban people are to provide cleaner air, cleaner water and healthier cities.
3. Protect urban people against urban environmental insults and hazards like global warming, ozone depletion etc.

An Introduction to Urban Environment:

Urban environment encompasses the interaction of population, growth, city management and the built environment with the natural environment or ecological system in which city is located. Urban environment also links other parameters of the urban puzzle like health, energy, infrastructure and land use. A fundamental dimension of sustainable development is sustaining the growth and development of the city while balancing the benefits with complex ecological systems and the global environment.

Urban Environmental Issues:

Urban environmental problems are threats to people's present or future well-being, resulting in human induced damage to the physical environment in or borne into urban areas. Urban environmental issues are raised by urban development initiatives and are related to environmental problems. They are:
1. Localized environmental health problems like inadequate potable water and sanitation facilities, indoor air pollution and excessive crowding

2. City regional environmental problems like ambient air pollution, inadequate and inefficient waste disposal management, pollution of water bodies and loss of green areas.
3. Extra urban impacts of urban activities like ecological disruption and resource depletion and emission of chemicals and green house gases.
4. The urban impacts of regional or global environmental burden that may arise from activities outside the city's geographical boundaries, but will affect people living in the city.

The following table presents a wide range of urban environmental problems. Better urban practices and governance could help to reduce these environmental problems.

Urban Environmental challenges:

There is a number of emerging environmental challenges that cities will need to address. They are as follows:
1. Providing basic environmental services in a way that most effectively protects health
   a) Access to safe potable water, sanitation and drainage facilities.
   b) Proper management of solid waste collection and disposal.
   c) Reduction of pollution within the households by providing cleaner fuel for cooking and improved household ventilation.
2. Identification and implementing integrated approaches to urban environment to prevent and abate the impacts of pollution and degradation.
   a. Ambient air pollution.
   b. Surface water pollution.
   c. Ground water pollution and depletion.
   d. Land use and ecosystem degradation.
3. Proper dealing with accidents and environmental disasters deriving from both natural and man made efforts. Some of the worst sites of ecological disaster are found in and around cities.
4. Urban poverty and environmental conditions are interrelated. This poverty is exacerbated by environmental threats that account for a large share of ill health, early death and hardships to human beings.
5. Urban environmental factors are affecting human health, particularly in the field of fertility. In some countries, sperm counts are drastically reduced.
6. Understanding the influence of urbanization on food system i.e. food supply, marketing and distribution. Because of adulterated food supply in urban areas.
7. Urban sprawl. The population is increasing in urban areas, leading to the decline in the amount of open space available and urban poor will take up illegal residence on the periphery of the city. These settlements become slums of the most appalling nature and adversely affect the environment.
8. Urban consumption and production patterns are the root cause or main culprit of environmental deterioration. Therefore better urban environmental management is required.

With this backdrop of urban environmental issues and challenges, globalization generates new challenges in preparing strategies for urban development. The effects of globalization will profoundly affect the future development of the urban centers and cities.

Therefore:
1. Use the forces of globalization constructively by assessing the local potential and integrating this into strategies for urban development.
2. Co-ordinate strategies for urban development and support partnership between public, private and NGO's.
3. Use regional and urban identities in adapting to global change.
4. Develop innovative and sustainable long-term perspectives in which cities potential strength's are linked to regional competence and culture.
5. Use the global trends to shape the urban environment.
6. Good urban governance and management is required in view of globalization.

Urban Governance and Management:

The silver lining is that the increased pace of urbanization and its linkages to economic globalization have reinvigorated interest in good urban governance and management and its links to economic growth. Good urban governance and management is one of the main pillars of sustainable cities. Good governance is primarily through community participation, private sector involvement & NGO's action. Appropriate policy design, decision making, prompt monitoring and evaluation have all relied on networking among the various stakeholders in the urban environment field.

The combined efforts of economic, social, political, cultural and ethical factors to define the fundamental of good governance i.e. fiscal discipline, fair and transparent resource allocation, effective and predictable regulatory system, independent and just mechanism for conflict resolution, strategic planning, fiduciary responsibility, participatory decision making, safety and security for all, open information flows and ethical behaviour.

The good governance in the backdrop of effects of globalization on urban environmental involves:
1. Provision for basic environmental services like sanitation, solid waste collection and disposal management.
2. Provision for better environmental management like preventing ecosystem degradation, ozone depletion.
3. Improving environmental quality – by imposing emission charges on pollution.
4. Provision for environmental justice like access to clean air & water.
5. Specific laws to deal with environmental deterioration.
6. Effective tools to protect urban poor against global market hazards.
7. Community involvement becomes more critical to effectively deal with environmental problems.

8. Capacity building initiatives to enable all levels of government and other stakeholders to implement responsive and sustainable programmes.

   Conclude by stating that world is urbanizing and will continue to do so and preventing urbanization is neither possible nor desirable. So what is required is better urban environmental governance and management in view of globalization.

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