Environment Audit Report

Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, No. 17 of 2010-11
Plan of the presentation

• About the Report
• About Ministry of Environment and Forests
• Theme: Afforestation
• Theme: Biodiversity
• Theme: Pollution Control
• Theme Environment Education
• Response to audit
About the report

• Degradation of environment in India due to
  – Overutilization of natural resources for meeting development needs
  – Rapid industrialization and urbanization
  – Dumping of wastes on land and water bodies

• Trends towards degradation can be slowed and even reversed by active governmental interventions

• The objective of this report is to create awareness and urgency about conservation and protection of the environment which needs to be addressed by the government
About the report

• This is the first time that CAG has brought out a separate Audit Report on MoEF... provides a holistic picture of the performance of MoEF

• Audit findings have been discussed under 4 major activities:
  – afforestation, biodiversity, pollution control & environment education

• Report also contains 37 specific recommendations
  – to enable the executive to improve environmental governance in India
About Ministry of Environment & Forests

• The objectives of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) are:
  – Conservation and survey of flora, fauna, forests and wildlife
  – Prevention and control of pollution
  – Afforestation and regeneration of degraded areas
  – Protection of the environment &
  – Ensuring the welfare of animals
• MoEF is headquartered in Delhi & has 77 units across the country
• Expenditure of MoEF was ₹1711.29 crore in 2008-09 against ₹1036.19 in 2003-04
About MoEF

• MoEF plans, promotes, coordinates and oversees the implementation of environmental/forestry programmes

• MoEF also implements rules/regulations like:
  – The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act (1981)
  – The Environment (Protection) Act (1986)
  – Wildlife (Protection) Act (1972)
  – The Forest Conservation Act (1980) etc.,
General areas of concern

• Non-achievement of objectives
  – There were many programmes which were undertaken by MoEF which could not achieve the objectives for which they were undertaken
  – Pointed out on paragraphs on pollution control, afforestation, biodiversity & environmental education

• Lack of monitoring by MoEF
  – Monitoring of projects was inadequate and this hampered the overall effectiveness of implementation of projects/schemes
  – Brought out in Paragraphs on afforestation and pollution control
  – Pendency of Utilisation Certificates worth ₹597 crore from upto 1981-82 also points to weaknesses in monitoring
General areas of concern

• Lack of manpower
  – We also observed that lack of trained manpower, scientists etc., was a major constraint in implementation of programs and fulfillment of objectives
  – This has been specially brought out on the paragraph on BSI

• Delay in framing regulations
  – Environmental regulation is essential to conserve natural resources and prevent their depletion. However, it has been noticed, specially in the case of NBA, that MoEF has been delaying framing of regulation, which will result in adverse impact on the environment
Forests are critically important habitats due to the ecological functions they serve and the biodiversity they contain. The total forest cover of the country is 21.02% which is planned to be increased to 33%
Failure of a scheme for increasing tree cover (Paragraph 2.1)

• National Afforestation & Eco-development Board (NAEB) released ₹47.03 crore to Voluntary Agencies (NGOs etc), etc during 2003-08 for implementing 647 afforestation projects
  – Only 3.6 % of the projects sanctioned to NGOs were completed
  – Possibility of misutilisation/fraud cannot be ruled out as most NGOs took the 1st installment and did not come back for the 2nd and 3rd installments
    • MoEF stated that they had filed FIRs against only some defaulting NGOs
Failure of a scheme for increasing tree cover (Paragraph 2.1)

- Mid term evaluation of the scheme by another agency reported misappropriation of funds by many NGOs
- More than 93% of the projects for tree planting and production of quality planting material did not achieve their targeted objectives
  - thereby seriously impacting the efforts to increase tree cover in India
Biodiversity is the degree of variation of life forms within a given ecosystem. India with 2.4% of land area of the world...but contributes 8% of global biodiversity. At least 10% of the country's wild flora & fauna are on the threatened list and many on the verge of extinction.
Regulation of Biodiversity in India

• National Biodiversity Authority set up in Chennai in 2003 for the regulation & conservation and sustainable use of bio-resources of India

• Even 6 years after its formation, NBA could not notify important regulations for conservation of biodiversity like:
  – access to biodiversity
  – transfer of results of research
  – intellectual property rights
Regulation of Biodiversity in India

- Lists of endangered medicinal plants in India and measures for their conservation not drawn up
- List of endangered species prepared for only 7 out of 28 states
- Biodiversity Management Committees created in only 12% local bodies
- No information on grant of IPRs outside India on any biological resource/knowledge obtained from India
Role of BSI in meeting India’s commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity

• To implement provisions of CBD which was ratified by India in 1994, objectives of Botanical Survey of India were remodelled
  – There was inadequate identification/ documentation & monitoring of endangered/threatened plant species
  – Very few surveys & explorations carried out to identify/ document endangered species in protected areas, hotspots, fragile ecosystems and sacred groves
Role of BSI in meeting India’s commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity

– The Red Data Book (having list of threatened species) last updated only in 2003

• Thus, BSI could not effectively fulfil its role in meeting India's commitment to CBD
While artificial chemicals have improved the quality of life around the world, their disposal has also posed a threat to the health of humans and wildlife. Pollution control is regulated by various environmental agencies that establish limits for the discharge of pollutants into the air, water and land.
Non-achievement of objectives of Ecocity Programme

- CPCB started Ecocity Programme at cost of ₹30 crore under X Plan for implementation in 6 cities of cultural/tourism importance
  - Objectives was to improve environment through environmental improvement projects
  - Cities selected in 1st phase were Ujjain, Puri, Tirupati, Kottayam, Vrindavan & Thanjavur
Non-achievement of objectives of Ecocity Programme

- Works undertaken remained incomplete in all 6 cities and ₹1.88 crore was lying unspent with SPCB for over 7 years
- 2nd phase of the project, which was to be built on successes of 1st phase, not yet initiated
Non-achievement of objectives of control of pollution caused by leather tanneries

NRCD sanctioned loan of ₹67.72 crore to Government of West Bengal for construction of Common Effluent Treatment Plant at Bantala, Kolkata

- NRCD has sanctioned only 4 out of 7 components of the project till end of 2009
- The project was targeted for completion by November 1997 but could not be completed as of June 2010; a delay of more than 12 years
- Only 15 out of 30 mld waste water was reaching the CETP from around 250 tanneries operating in CLC
- Major portion of the effluent either percolating to the ground water or creating cesspools of polluted water
Non-achievement of objectives of control of pollution caused by leather tanneries

- Analysis report revealed that levels of TSS (total suspended solids), COD (Chemical Oxygen Demand), BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand), Cr (hexavalent chromium, a carcinogen) were much higher than the prescribed limits
- The solid wastes which were chromium bearing residue & sludge, might also leach & contaminate the ground water & create water pollution

Thus the project failed to achieve the objective of safe disposal of waste from tanneries causing immense damage to environment
In India, environment education is imparted through methods like infusion of environmental concepts in the textbooks at the school/college level, Natural History Museums, programmes like National Environment Awareness Campaign, National Green Corps etc.
Activities of National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi

- Former Prime Minister Smt Indira Gandhi, in 1972 decided that India needed a museum of Natural History to depict:
  - flora, fauna & mineral wealth
  - to provide an out of school facility for education of children
  - to promote environmental awareness for masses
- NMNH opened temporarily in the FICCI building in 1978 in Delhi and still continues there
Activities of National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi

• Audit observed that:
  – NMNH had old & archaic collections and galleries/exhibits had not changed/updated in the last 20 years
  – Galleries not maintained according to good standards and visitors had a very poor comments about NMNH
  – Efforts to reach out to children to educate them about environment/conservation extremely limited
Activities of National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi

- No guides/multimedia devices to enrich experience of visitors
- Museum was not disabled-friendly and was still functioning from the rented building even after 32 years

• Did not justify status of being a ‘national museum’ due to poor quality of exhibits and amateurish efforts in the field of promoting environmental education……did not fulfill the vision of the former PM
Response to audit

• Widely reported in press
• Discussed in Public Accounts Committee
  – Committee anguished to note that indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources for meeting ever increasing developmental needs coupled with the uncontrolled growth of urbanization, industrialization and population explosion is adversely impacting our environment
  – Dumping of industrial wastes into our rivers and lakes, clearing forest lands for agricultural activities along with the increased emission of harmful pollutants into the atmosphere, have all contributed to the environmental degradation.
Response to audit

– It is in this context that Government of India put in place institutional measures and schemes for promotion of afforestation, conservation of biodiversity, pollution control and environmental awareness/education.

– Committee notes serious deficiencies and inadequacies as pointed out by the C&AG in the implementation of environmental programmes and in the functioning of various institutions working under MoEF
  
  • recommendations made by PAC
Thank you