

Environment Justice through Governance: Policies and Amendments for a Fair Future

A safe and healthy environment is not a privilege, it is a fundamental right of every human being. Across the world, the most vulnerable communities - often defined by poverty, caste, race or gender - bear the highest burden of pollution, climate disasters and resource exploitation. This unequal burden demands not only amendments in governance laws but also amendments in policymaking that place justice at the core of policy direction. This article outlines the necessary policy directions and innovativ...

Environmental Hazards

A safe and healthy environment is the birthright of every individual regardless of race, caste, gender, economic status. Yet, environmental hazards and the impacts of climate change fall most heavily on those with the least resources to cope. Factories, mining sites & waste disposal units are disproportionately located near poor communities. Climate disasters push millions into poverty & food & energy needs remain unequal.

Policy / Amendments Needed are:

- 1) Establishment of environment concerned offices at district levels or hazard prone areas so citizens can directly file complaints.
- 2) These offices can also assist in the task of mandatory impact review that study how the projects affect marginalized groups.
- 3) Government should provide trainings and education to vulnerable communities living in hazard prone areas.
- 4) SHGs can help government to run eradication programmes by monitoring unsafe practices.

Equitable Access to Healthy Environment

Food Security

Food is more than sustenance, it is dignity. Ensuring equitable access means tackling land rights, agricultural sustainability & fair distribution.

Government Policies / Amendments that are needed:

- 1) Government should strengthen land and water rights of small farmers & indigenous communities.
- 2) Redirect subsidies towards sustainable farming methods such as agro-ecology & organic cultivation.
- 3) Expand crop insurance & buffer stock programs to shield poor farmers from climate shocks.
- 4) Regularly verify that subsidized ration cards under BPL or AAY schemes are issued

only to genuinely eligible families.

Renewable Energy

The shift from fossil fuels to clean energy is essential, but it must be fair. Workers' communities dependent on coal, oil & gas should not be abandoned.

Policy / Amendments that are needed:

- 1) Government should enact a law for the fossil fuel workers ensuring job security.
- 2) Government should mandate community benefit sharing in renewable projects.
- 3) Encourage biomass projects to reduce stubble burning & rural energy poverty.
- 4) Encourage community ownership models in renewable energy through subsidies.
- 5) Promote smoke-free kitchens & reduced dependency on wood.
- 6) Encourage green jobs by training & employing vulnerable communities in solar installation, biogas maintenance etc.

Climate Change

Climate change is not just an environmental challenge, it is a justice issue. Vulnerable populations often face the greatest losses.

Policy / Amendments that are needed:

- 1) Government should fund and build flood- & cyclone-resistant housing.
- 2) Encourage development of parks, rain-water harvesting systems & rooftop gardens.
- 3) Include marginalized groups in climate planning decisions & post-disaster funds.
- 4) Encourage & train youth/citizens to collaborate with government in tackling disasters (warnings, evacuation, relief distribution).

Resource Extraction

Mining, deforestation & large-scale resource extraction have historically caused displacement & ecological destruction.

Policy / Amendments that are needed:

- 1) Government should enact or strengthen laws that protect rights of native communities ensuring proper rehabilitation, legal funding rights & fair compensation.
- 2) Enact laws that mandate companies to contribute a fixed share of profits to local development & environmental restoration.