

World Environment Day: Food Insecurity - Real or Fake?

Five teenagers, attired in grubby clothes, were scavenging through garbage for food when they caught sight of a heap of eatables, including Biryani, chicken pieces and bread slices disposed off just beside a wedding hall. They heaved a sigh of relief, for their wish was granted.

Such sights are not uncommon in the largest metropolis of the country. As Society for Protection of Rights of Child (SPARC) states; there are more than 25,000 street children in the city. However, the United Nations Children's Fund estimated the presence of around 10,000 street children, while an independent source estimated some 23,000 homeless people in Karachi including 14,000 street children along city streets. Every year, on June 5, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) marks World Environment Day, to increase awareness about key environmental issues, which are affecting natural resources, livelihoods and the future of humanity. He said some times when there is a strike in the city, or law and order situation deteriorates, hotels and wedding halls are closed, and we spend the night on an empty stomach.

Every year 1.3 billion tonnes, which is equal to the amount of food produced in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, is wasted, according to UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)'s study, which further states that one in every seven people in the world sleeps hungry, and more than 20,000 children under the age of 5 die every day from hunger. In Karachi, there is no official data available about the total number of wedding halls and the number of hotels, nor any details about the quantity of food they dispose at garbage dumps. Disposing garbage causes pollution, adding his department could not do anything to stop the hotels or wedding hall managements from throwing food at garbage dumps. However, Muhammad Moazzam Khan, Technical Advisor (Marine Fisheries) WWF-Pakistan said Pakistan is comparatively better in terms of saving food, except what is wasted in marriages and other mass gatherings, otherwise at homes we are not a food-wasting nation.

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Environmental Protection Linked To Food Security

Saving environment would help the society in sustaining food security and saving population from poverty and hunger, said speakers of a moot here organized by Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) in collaboration with Food Science and Technology Department (FSTD), University of Karachi. The participants of the seminar emphasized the importance of food security and the challenges faced as a consequence of climate change. Statistics indicated poverty, water and environment in addition to disasters and conflicts as the reasons behind food insecurity. Pesticide resistance leading to increase in insects, mites, plant diseases and weeds were mentioned as growing problems faced by agricultural workers. Geography Department's Jamil Kazmi gave a presentation on "land degradation and food security", discussing Karachi, pointing towards increasing number of mouths to be fed as a result of land use mishandling. Assistant Director SEPA Azhar in his presentation "How to utilize Food waste" focused on the various categories of municipal waste. The integrated food waste management hierarchy was discussed, mentioning the

"4 R's", that is "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle, Recovery". Secretary Environment and Alternate Energy Inamullah Dharejo was the chief guest, and other speakers included Director General SEPA Naeem Ahmed Mughal and Chairman FSTD Dr Abida Hasnain.

Dawn - June 07, 2013

World Bank Report: Rise in Temperature Threatens South Asia

A World Bank (WB) report released cautioned the South Asian states that an expected 2°C rise in the world's average temperatures in the next decades threatens South Asia's dense urban populations with extreme heat, flooding, and disease and could trap millions of people in poverty across the region. Droughts will especially affect north-western India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The WB has said that South Asia is already experiencing a warming climate, which can be seen in warmer periods in India, increasing variability of the monsoon rainfall, more heavy rain falls in short period and an increase in the number of droughts. WB's South Asia Regional Vice President Isabel Guerrero. "In a 4°C rise of the world temperature the impact would be even higher in the region." It has been predicted that a hugely disruptive monsoon that happened every 100 years would happen every decade. However it has been estimated that the increase in global temperatures by an average of 4° C would be by 2090. A warming climate will contribute to slowing the reduction in poverty, while the lives of everyone in the region will be altered by climate change, the impacts of progressive global warming will fall hardest on the poor.

Low crop yields and associated income loss from agriculture will continue the trend toward migration from rural to urban centers. In cities, the poor will suffer with temperatures magnified by the so-called 'heat island effect' of the built environments. Safe drinking water will become increasingly constrained and alternatives, especially during and after flooding, are likely to contribute to greater water-borne diseases such as cholera and diarrhea. The report cited Bangladesh, already threatened by frequent floods and extreme weather, as just one of more 'potential impact hotspots' threatened by extreme river floods, more intense tropical cyclones, rising sea levels and very high temperatures. India's two largest coastal cities, Kolkata and Mumbai, face a similar fate. With South Asia close to the equator, the sub-continent would see much higher rises in sea levels than higher latitudes, with the Maldives confronting the biggest increases of between 100-115 centimeters. Pakistan would suffer the most extreme increases in heat.

Many of the worst climate impacts could still be avoided by holding warming below 2°C, but the window for action is narrowing rapidly. Urgent action is needed to build resilience through economic development to risks to agriculture, water resources, coastal infrastructure, and human health. It has been highlighted that some farmers were already growing vegetables that are adapted to water. In Pakistan the WB is working with federal and provincial governments to create better understanding and raise awareness of climate change risks and mitigation actions. At the policy level, it has provided advisory services to the Ministry of Climate Change towards the preparation of a National Climate Change Action Plan. It is currently supporting the Federal Flood Commission in updating its National Flood Management Plan in the wake of floods of 2010 and 2011.

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