

**TITLE:** Population and environment: a growing challenge.

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**SOURCE:** DEMOGRAPHY INDIA. 1990 Jan-Jun; 19(1):71-8.

**ABSTRACT:** The land area of India makes up only 2.4% of the Earth's surface, yet India is home to 15% of the world's population. Between 1980-88, its population rose from 685 to 800 million and, at the current rate (17 million additional infants/year), will reach 1 billion by 2000 and 2 billion by 2035. The human-to-arable-land ratio for India is only .27 hectares and most likely will decrease in the future. The population density of India is twice that of China which illustrates the stress population size is putting on the environment, infrastructure, and basic services. For example, 20% of the urban population and 50% of the rural population already experience a chronic shortage of safe drinking water. Further, this rapid population growth negates any headway in economic development. In 1952, India planned for no less than 33% of the land area to remain as forests, yet, according to official records, forests make up only 23% of the land area (other estimates 10-12%). Deforestation has increased greatly since independence at a rate of 1.3 million hectares/year. Dependence on wood as fuel and overgrazing by cattle causes much of this forest destruction. Reduction in forests increases soil erosion which in turn increases flooding. Large scale habitat destruction by rapidly increasing human and bovine populations threatens the existence of many wild plant and animal species. Further, due to widespread poverty, India exhibits a circle of poverty and environmental destruction. In India's haste to bring about economic development, it does not always consider environmental aspects. Thus, with rapid population growth, environmental pollution proliferates, especially in the rapidly growing urban areas. The human impact on the biosphere, including global warming, acid rain, and ozone depletions is also discussed.

**YEAR:** 1990