

Environmental Degradation by Arsenic Contamination in Bangladesh: Physical and Social Implications for Women

Executive Summary:

Environmental degradation resulting from poverty, population growth, unplanned industrial development, and pressure on land affect both men and women in Bangladesh. The most alarming situation in recent years, however, has been created by the contamination of natural ground water sources by arsenic.

It has been reported that more than 25 million people are suffering from the social, economic and physiological effects of arsenic poisoning resulting from contamination of the aquifer that feeds the tube-wells sunk to provide essential drinking water for the population.

As elsewhere, women and children suffer disproportionately both physically and socially from the effects of arsenic contamination, but environmental policies lack gender perspectives and fail to take account of this or of women's role and contribution to environmental sustainability.

Recommendations. Short-term: All tube-wells must be tested for arsenic.

Long-term: Arsenic contamination is a multi-dimensional problem. Scientists, researchers, planners, medical professionals, engineers and the media need to work together to guide the nation. In order to prevent and control this menace we have to create awareness, particularly among women. BFUW should undertake a project to create awareness among women.

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