



Mains Practice Question

Q. How can ethical considerations be incorporated into environmental policy-making? (150 words)

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Approach

- Start your answer by briefly introducing about environmental policy making.
- Discuss various ethical considerations that can be incorporated in environmental policy-making.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction

- Environmental policy-making is the **process of creating laws, regulations, and guidelines to protect the environment** and promote sustainable development.
 - Ethical considerations play a crucial role in shaping environmental policy-making, as policies are intended to promote the common good of society and future generations.
- Further, India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, but its rapid industrialization has led to severe environmental degradation. The country is facing a range of environmental challenges, including air and water pollution, deforestation, and climate change.
 - Environmental policy-making in India has been historically weak, with a lack of political will to implement and enforce policies. However, in recent years, there has been a **growing recognition of the importance of environmental protection**, and India has made some strides in environmental policy-making.

Body

- **Incorporating Ethical Considerations into Environmental Policy-making:**
 - Ethical considerations should be an integral part of environmental policy-making, as policies are intended to promote the well-being of society and the environment. There are several ways in which ethical considerations can be incorporated into environmental policy-making, as follows:
 - **Stakeholder Engagement:** One of the most effective ways to incorporate ethical considerations into environmental policy-making is by engaging with stakeholders.
 - Stakeholders can include **local communities, civil society organizations, and industry representatives**. Stakeholder engagement ensures that the concerns and values of all parties are taken into account, and policies are designed to promote the common good.
 - For example, in 2019, the Indian government launched the **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)**, which aims to reduce air pollution in 102 cities.
 - It was developed through a **participatory approach, involving stakeholders from various sectors**, including government, civil society, and academia.
 - The engagement of stakeholders ensured that the policy was designed to address the concerns and values **of all parties**.
 - **Precautionary Principle:** The Precautionary Principle is a key ethical principle

that should be incorporated into environmental policy-making.

- The principle **states that in the absence of scientific certainty, precautionary measures should be taken to prevent harm to the environment and public health.**
- This principle ensures that policies are designed to protect the environment and public health, even in the face of uncertainty.
 - For example, in 2017, the Indian government implemented a **ban on the sale and use of firecrackers in the National Capital Region (NCR) during the Diwali festival**, due to concerns over air pollution.
 - The ban was implemented based on the precautionary principle, as there was scientific evidence linking firecrackers to air pollution and public health impacts.
- **Sustainable Development Goals:** The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework for incorporating ethical considerations into environmental policy-making.
 - The SDGs are a **set of 17 goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015**, aimed at promoting sustainable development and addressing global challenges, including climate change and environmental degradation.
 - For example, the Indian government has incorporated the SDGs into its policy-making, with a focus on sustainable development.
 - In 2018, the **government launched the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**, which includes measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote renewable energy, and promote sustainable agriculture.
- **Environmental impact assessments:** Environmental impact assessments (EIAs) can be used to **assess the potential environmental impacts of policies before they are implemented.**
 - This ensures that policymakers are aware of the potential environmental consequences of their policies and can take steps to mitigate them.
- **Environmental Justice:** Environmental justice is the **fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people** regardless of race, color, national origin, or income in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.
 - Environmental justice **ensures that the benefits and burdens of environmental protection are shared fairly** among all members of society.

Conclusion

- Incorporating ethical considerations into environmental policy-making is essential for promoting sustainable development and protecting the environment are effective ways to ensure that policies are designed to promote the common good. The government has made some strides in environmental policy-making, but more needs to be done to ensure that policies are implemented and enforced effectively.