

# Environmental Information System

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Today, degradation of environment has become a serious problem all over the world. Various countries are now concerned with the adverse consequences of destruction of their natural resources. Problems like unusual weather, floods, drought, ozone depletion and glass house-effect are being attributed to pollution in air and water combined with mismanagement of solid waste and spread of other pollutants. Environmental information, education, awareness and training play a significant role in encouraging and enhancing people's participation in activities aimed at conservation, protection and management of the environment, essential for achieving sustainable development. The Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt of India, therefore, accords priority for the promotion of formal as well as non-formal environment information education and creation of awareness among all sections of the society through diverse activities using traditional and modern media of communication.

To meet the above requirement, Environmental Information System (ENVIS), is a decentralised network information system consisting of a Focal Point in the Ministry for co-ordinating the activities of a chain of 24 subject specific centres (known as ENVIS Centres) located in various prestigious institutions/organisations all over the country.

A quarterly Newsletter titled 'ENVIRO NEWS' is being published to disseminate information about the various policies, programmes, rules and regulations announced by the Ministry from time to time. The ENVIS Centre at 'Development Alternatives' is publishing this Newsletter on behalf of the Ministry.

A Website and home page of the Ministry have been created and can be browsed at <http://www.nic.in/envfor>.

It is necessary to develop CDs for easy exchange of information to its several network partners and to other national Information Systems. To familiarise with the modern information technologies, it is proposed to promote, support and assist educational and professional training programmes to enhance environmental information processing and utilisation capabilities and to promote exchange of information amongst developing countries during the Ninth Plan period.

In my paper, the objectives of ENVIS are defined along with the description of the responsibilities and activities of ENVIS Focal Point and Centres. The ENVIS Centres' activities are related to collection, collation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information in their respective subject areas.

Under the UNDP and IDRC assisted, **Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SNDP)**, SNDP Secretariat has started functioning in the Ministry during the year 1998. The ENVIS consists of

24 network partners. It responded to a total number of 10,302 queries during the year 1998, of which 9497 were national and 805 were international.

Shri HCR Siddappa in his paper highlights the genesis of Information Systems on Environmentally Sound and Appropriate Technologies at Society of Development Alternatives, New Delhi, and mentions its objectives, potential users and use of new information technologies being used there. He also mentions its future plans that may include new technologies adopted from field of electronics, telecommunication and global networking for creation and updating of databases sharing resources, human resources development, dissemination to information through internet and DELNET.

Prof L Kannan and Prof R Kannan in their paper on Information Systems on Marine Biology describe the sources and services provided by ENVIS Centre at the Centre of Advanced Study in Marine Biology.

I hope, this special issue will generate awareness among users towards environmental issues and importance of information services and information systems in the subject.

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