

Effects of desertification on sub-saharan africa



The region of Sub-Saharan Africa has many issues like the political unrest that affects society and governments or issue in the environment like droughts and famine, both natural disasters, that not only affect the land but also threaten food security. The land in the region also suffers from many problems like soil erosion, deforestation, and degradation. However, Sub-Saharan's main issue is desertification which is when the arid or semi-arid lands of the region become less productive and worn down to the that it gets into desert-like conditions; land degradation and constant droughts is what triggers the process of degradation to occur. Many regions in Sub-Saharan Africa are being extremely being affected and are facing the consequences of desertification. Not only is the region itself being affected, but also the society of Sub-Saharan Africa is changing as a result of the issue and as it slowly keeps growing, it is becoming an issue in not only Sub-Saharan Africa but also a main issue in all of Africa mainly because of the " tropical climate with temperatures that are higher than 70 Fahrenheit" (World Regions in Global Context) and the negligence of the people and the way they work the land.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the main area where desertification is occurring most and it is happening because of the overuse of the land and the population's irresponsibility of not taking care of the land well. Using the land without knowledge or good understanding on the subject causes the deterioration of the land. There are many causes of desertification some of them include overcultivation, unskilled irrigation, and overgrazing. However, there are also many natural causes that cause desertification as well. One of the most common natural causes of desertification that makes the land deteriorate is

soil erosion which is “ the wearing away of a field’s topsoil by the natural physical forces of water and wind” (Soil Erosion – Causes and Effects). The process is something that occurs every year throughout the world and when it occurs, the good soil is washed away and what is left is the hard and poor quality soil which is what the farmer unfortunately has to use. It also takes soil erosion a short amount of time to completely destroy the good quality soil in which farmers need and take a large amount of time to make. Another natural cause of desertification are droughts which happens every year in Sub-Saharan Africa. “ The Sudano-Sahel region, for instance, has experienced unpredictable and severe drought, the most recent of which lasted almost 20 years” (Lilian Ahianga). When droughts occur, it could last for a large amount of time and when that happens, it puts the society in great danger. “ Over 25 countries in the continent have faced shortage of food over a decade ago due to the long lasting of drought” (Lilian Ahianga). In long periods without rain, it can be difficult to cultivate and farm which results in the land being unusable and an increase in dry land degradation.

Natural disasters like soil erosion and droughts are not the only causes of desertification as it can also occur due to it being degraded by humans. Overgrazing, overcultivation, and the overuse of the land are many ways in which humans are degrading the land. Many farmers and cultivators of the region are using the land over and over again without letting the land to rest and grow back as well as not letting the land grow back after animals have grazed on them because animals keep on grazing until the land is no longer able to grow. Another problem is the overpopulation of inhabitants in one area, there are too many people living in a small area in which things are

being consistently used every day and are not giving the land enough time to grow back. Trees and other resources are not given sufficient time to grow back and when they are regenerating, many animals will stop by and eat them. A huge problem in the region is that there are more people who cut down trees than those who plant them; the majority of the population will cut down a tree without giving it enough time to grow. Not only are they not allowing trees to grow but are also letting the animals graze on them. “ About 30, 000 kilometer square per year of trees is cut down” (Aldo Bonincontro). Destroying trees and not letting them grow through the ways of cutting them down or letting animals graze on them is what increases the growth of desertification. As a result of human degrading the land being one of the main causes of desertification, in return it brings negative consequence to them as well since desertification plays a huge role in the region’s poverty. Some other negative effects include deaths, diseases, and starvation which kills thousands of people in the region. Since desertification decreases farming and produces a minimal amount of resources, it results in hunger and poverty to increase as well as the decrease of crop production.

Although desertification causes many negative effects, there are preventions and solutions that can stop the issue. Many governments and organizations have been reaching out and started to take action. There are many methods like redressing of vegetation cover and controlling soil erosion that have been implemented and been used to stop land degradation. “ The problem appears to be a lack of knowledge and probably also the economic constraints that prevent the optimum utilization of these valuable resources” (Jorn Laxen). One of the best solutions to stop desertification is also

education; it is important for the government and many organizations to inform and educate the population and many workers like farmers and cultivators on desertification and its consequences as well as the proper way to use the land to prevent it from degrading. Another way to prevent land degradation is to protect the resources that are already available. If it is used carelessly and being destroyed by the people, it will take a difficult and long time for it to grow back. Also being able to maintain soil fertility is extremely important and helpful.

Desertification is a serious problem that is affecting the region of Sub-Saharan Africa and bringing negative effects not only to the land but also to its people through ways like death, poverty, diseases, and starvation. Even though there many causes of desertification, some being natural causes like droughts and soil erosion, the main problem that causes this issue is the way humans are using the land and degrading it. However, it can be prevented through the increase of awareness and education on desertification that needs to be provide to the inhabitants of the region as well as teaching them on how to use the land properly to prevent it from degrading. Teaching the population is the first step to solve issue of desertification in the region of Sub-Saharan Africa and if the environment is maintained cleaned and well taken care of, the society will also be benefited and in healthier conditions.

Citations:

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