

Focus of the Governing Sustainability in India ICAR subseries

Deep transformations of interconnected social, ecological and technical systems are taking place in many regions of the world, requiring complex processes of institutional change. In India, such processes of transformation are particularly intense. As in many other countries, the main drivers there can be found in population growth associated with demographic change and economic growth, closely interlinked with technological change. Especially in Indian society, this often occurs in contexts of high population density, extreme resource scarcity, weak carrying capacity of ecosystems and harmful pollution. The growing economy calls for reliable energy provision and increased energy efficiency while, at the same time, also needing to cope with climate change.

The ICAR subseries Governing Sustainability in India provides a collection of studies on such action situations in both rural and urban areas. Rural areas are increasingly affected by the above-mentioned problems, as people's livelihoods there often depend directly on well-functioning bio-physical systems. They suffer from soil erosion, declining water tables, loss of biodiversity, impacts of climate change and other crucial problems. In Indian cities meanwhile, particularly its emerging megacities, urbanization is proceeding rapidly, leading to increased demand on natural resources. Changing lifestyles and economic growth are increasing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change impacts, worsened by such urban developments, are already causing extreme weather events such as floods, heat waves and droughts.

In such action situations, crafting institutions can be the key to achieving sustainable development. The young researchers presenting their analyses in this subseries have accepted this challenge and engaged in excellent, in-depth studies. A variety of related issues were analysed, including enhanced energy efficiency, power-generation efficiency, policies for renewable energy, political discourses for promoting biofuels, sustainable traffic solutions, sustainable food chains, localized food systems, food accessibility for the urban poor, electricity provision for irrigation, microcredit organisations to combat poverty, governance of water allocation, industrial water pollution abatement, collective action in watershed management, rehabilitation of displaced farmers, and local service delivery. We are very grateful to the authors for having employed well-developed analytical frameworks, enlightening theoretical approaches and multiple methods to contribute to our common knowledge base. They have been working together with many partners in India and elsewhere, to whom we also want to express our special gratitude.

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