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# **INNOVATIONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDIA AND SRI LANKA.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Environmental degradation, climate change, and loss of biodiversity have become major global issues and have brought to the fore the importance of strong environmental governance and sustainable legal systems. Although many international environmental agreements have been created, considerable differences still exist between legal commitments and their actual implementation, Mainly in developing countries. This paper analyzes the development of environmental governance by making a comparative study of India and Sri Lanka within the overall context of international environmental law. It also discusses the influence of major international agreements, like the United Nations Structure Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Basel Convention, and the Aarhus Convention, on the formation of national environmental policies and governance systems.

An analytical and comparative legal approach is used, with reliance on original legal documents, court rulings, government policies, and academic works. The research reveals that enforcement problems, capacity constraints, and governance issues are the main reasons why environmental protection has not been very effective. But, the use of courts, the involvement of people, local communities, and newly designed governance methods have become the main means for enhancing environmental responsibility and fostering sustainable development. This article claims that the combination of legal creativity, participatory governance, and well-functioning institutional structures is a must for fulfilling climate justice, environmental sustainability, and the achievement of the overall goal of ecological resilience in India and Sri Lanka.

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**Keywords:** Environmental Law, Climate Justice, International Environmental Agreements, Judicial Activism, Sustainability Governance.

## INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation has escalated into a global crisis, impacting ecosystems, human health, and economic stability. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the degradation of natural resources, climate change, and biodiversity loss threaten the sustainability of life on earth. The global community has responded through a myriad of international treaties, regional agreements, and national laws aimed at environmental protection. However, the implementation and enforcement of these policies often fall short due to conflicting economic interests, political will, and resource constraints, especially in developing countries like Sri Lanka.

The concept of Environmental Governance encompasses the processes and institutions through which societies manage their environment and natural resources, requiring effective law enforcement, stakeholder participation, and accountability mechanisms. Innovative legal approaches such as judicial activism, community involvement, and technological integration are increasingly recognized as vital to overcoming enforcement gaps.

International legal frameworks such as the Paris Agreement (2015), based on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992), aim to unite nations in climate action. The Basel Convention (1989) controls transboundary waste movement, and the Aarhus Convention (1998) enforces public rights to environmental information and participation.

This research examines the role that innovative legal strategies can play in strengthening environmental governance, especially in regions like South Asia. It compares legal frameworks across India and Sri Lanka, analyzing how judicial activism, community participation, and international cooperation can be harnessed to promote sustainable development and climate justice.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine how environmental governance has changed over time and what part international environmental law plays in dealing with the most pressing environmental issues of our time.
2. To compare the environmental governance systems of India and Sri Lanka, mainly their legal, institutional, and judicial aspects.
3. To evaluate how new governance methods, like judicial activism, increasing public involvement, and reform of institutions, can contribute to achieving sustainable development.
4. To propose recommendations on how to make environmental governance and environmental accountability more effective for a sustainable future.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a doctrinal and comparative legal research methodology. The analysis relies on the primary sources of international environmental conventions constitutions laws, courts' decisions, policy documents, etc. It also uses secondary sources like books, journals, and reports. Comparison is used to study the environmental governance systems in India and Sri Lanka. The main focus is on the legal changes, institution-based acts, and judicial orders that help with the sustainable progress of the countries.

## EVOLUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Environmental governance is the “*set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organizations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes*”. It emerged as a response to the growing environmental challenges of depletion of natural resources, loss of commons, declining biodiversity and wildlife, increasing pollution, falling water tables, and growing desertification, among others. It marked a shift away from a focus on environmental policy.<sup>1</sup>

Environmental governance refers to the framework of laws, policies, institutions, and processes that regulate human interaction with the environment and promote sustainable resource management. The international community's response to environmental challenges has evolved

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<sup>1</sup> M.C. Lemos, A. Agrawal, “Environmental governance”, ANNUAL REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES, vol.31, pp 297-325, November 2006, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.energy.31.042605.135621>

significantly over the past few decades. It appeared as a reaction to the increasing environmental problems, like pollution, loss of biodiversity, depletion of natural resources, and issues related to climate change. Initially environmental governance was largely an afterthought, addressing pollution mainly through national regulations that were put in place in the 1950s and 1960s. Gradually, environmental matters changed from being of local interest to issues of global concern, Because of this leading to more international collaboration.

One of the most significant events was the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, which not only introduced the idea of sustainable development but also enhanced global environmental governance through important international agreements. Since then, environmental governance has taken a more inclusive and multi-level approach, where states, international bodies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities work together to solve environmental problems.<sup>2</sup>

The major outcomes and agreements as:

- ✓ **Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development<sup>3</sup>**: are two important documents from the Earth Summit in 1992. They laid down the basis of sustainable development by combining environmental protection with economic and social progress. At the same time, these two documents introduced important principles such as the *precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle*.
- ✓ **CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)**: promotes the the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It also makes sure that benefits gained from genetic resources are shared fairly and equitably among stakeholders. In this way, the CBD participates in global sustainable development.<sup>4</sup>

## **INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND CONVENTIONS**

A series of global treaties designed to deal with climate change, biodiversity crisis, hazardous waste management and environmental public participation in decision-making work as the base

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<sup>2</sup> Liliana B. Andonova, Matthew J. Hoffmann, "From Rio to Rio and Beyond: Innovation in Global Environmental Governance", THE JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT, 21(1), pp. 57-61, March 2012. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26199409>

<sup>3</sup> Bily, Cynthia A, "Agenda 21", <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/outcomedocuments/agenda21>.

<sup>4</sup> "Convention on Biological Diversity, key international instrument for sustainable development", INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, May 2022, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/biological-diversity-day/convention>.

of environmental governance worldwide. Together, these instruments tackle environmental degradation at the international level.

- I. ***United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)***: One of the conventions adopted on “EARTH SUMMIT” at *Rio de Janeiro* in 1992 was the Convention on Climate Change. Which the concept of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), which acknowledges that developed and developing countries have different abilities and levels of responsibility. This lays the groundwork for later climate accords like the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. The preservation and upgradation of the country's greenhouse gas sinks and reservoirs is a committed.<sup>5</sup>

**Conference of the Parties (COP)**, a supreme decision-making body of UNFCCC, which is an annual international meeting where parties that have ratified the UNFCCC come together to discuss and negotiate actions to address climate change.<sup>6</sup>

- II. ***Kyoto Protocol***: Adopted on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1997, Kyoto Protocol operationalizes the UNFCCC into effect by making developed countries responsible for their emission reduction commitments. Also created market-based mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Joint Implementation (JI), and International Emission Trading (IET).<sup>7</sup>

- III. ***Paris Agreement***: A legally binding international agreement on climate change. It was ratified in 2016 and was the outcome of negotiations among 196 parties during the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Paris, France. Establishes a legally binding structure for worldwide climate efforts through the submission of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Encourages reduction of emissions, adjustment to climate change, funding of climate-related actions, and strengthening the abilities of various stakeholders to meet the climate objectives set for the future.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prof. SATISH C. SASTRI, ENVIRONMENTAL LAW, EBC Explorer, pp.475, (6<sup>th</sup> edn. 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Olivia Rosane, “The COP Process: What You Need to Know”, Eco watch Blog, November 8, 2022.

<https://www.ecowatch.com/cop-climate-conference-facts.html>

<sup>7</sup> Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, United Nations Treaty Collection, November 2018.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181008095709/https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY>.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Gillenwater, "The Paris Agreement is done! Let the negotiations begin?". GHG and Carbon Accounting, Auditing, Management & Training | Greenhouse Gas Management Institute. 24 February 2016. <https://web.archive.org/web/20210722120833/https://ghginstitute.org/2016/02/24>

IV. ***Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)***<sup>9</sup>: Also created by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the CBD works to help conserve biological diversity; to make sustainable use of these resources and also to address equitable sharing in benefits arising from genetic sources, the 3 main objectives of CBD are:

- a. *Conservation of Biological Diversity*
- b. *Sustainable use of the components of biological diversity.*
- c. *Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out the utilization of genetic resources.*

Supported by the **Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety** and the **Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing**.

V. ***Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal:*** Adopted unanimously in 1989 by the 116 States participating in the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, which was convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Basel Convention is first and foremost a global environmental treaty that strictly regulates the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and provides an obligation for Parties to ensure their **ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND MANAGEMENT (ESM)** and their disposal.<sup>10</sup> The main objective is to minimize the generation of waste and to stop illegal trafficking of waste.

The Major principles of the Convention:

- a. To reduce the amount of hazardous waste being generated at the source.
- b. To ban the shipment of hazardous or other types of wastes to countries which either have banned the import of such wastes or have not given their written consent, and
- c. To make sure that there are adequate disposal facilities for waste and no import or export of waste from non-party countries<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Elisa Morgera, Graham Hamley et.al. "Chapter 16: Climate Change and Biodiversity" in Fred Perron-Welch, Jorge Cabrera Medaglia and Alex Goodman (eds), **LEGAL ASPECTS OF IMPLEMENTING THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**, June 2023

<https://ssrn.com/abstract=4480824>

<sup>10</sup> Iwona Rummel-Bulska, "Chapter II.2 - The Basel Convention and its implementation", **WASTE MANAGEMENT SERIES**, Vol 4, pp. 133-169, 2004. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0713-2743\(04\)80009-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0713-2743(04)80009-6).

<sup>11</sup> Prof. SATISH C. SASTRI, **ENVIRONMENTAL LAW**, EBC Explorer, pp.467, (6<sup>th</sup> edn. 2017).

VI. *Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters*: Adopted on 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus during the Fourth Ministerial Conference under the “Environment for Europe” process, the *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention (UNECE)*. The primary objectives of the convention are that it should contribute to environmental decision-making becoming more open, visible, and responsible while at the same time ensuring public participation.

One of the Convention's major provisions is to recognize and protect the right of the public to obtain environmental information that is in the possession of public authorities. Also, the Aarhus Convention places the public at the center of environmental decisions and the law-making process. Besides granting public participation, the Convention also gives a way to the public to have their cases with violations of environmental rights addressed through legal and administrative channels. By the implementation of these fundamental rights, the Convention acts as a fundamental tool to the realization and deepening of the democratic and participatory features of environmental governance at the local, national as well as international levels.<sup>12</sup>

The subject of the Convention goes to the heart of the relationship between people and governments. The Convention is not only an environmental agreement, it is also a Convention about government accountability, transparency and responsiveness.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES**

Environmental governance differs from one jurisdiction to another and is influenced by constitutional arrangements, legal institutions, and the extent of judicial interventions. A comparative study of India and Sri Lanka reveals their unique and at the same time changing ways of handling environmental issues through legal, policy, and institutional measures. Even with their different structures, both countries have made sustainable development, environmental conservation, and climate resilience major goals of their governance.

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<sup>12</sup> Vera Rodenhoff (2003). "The Aarhus convention and its implications for the 'Institutions' of the European Community". REVIEW OF EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW. 11 (3): 343–357. doi:10.1111/1467-9388.00332.

## 1. Constitutional and Statutory Frameworks

The constitutional and statutory foundations of environmental governance provide the legal basis for environmental protection in both jurisdictions.

**In India**, environmental governance derives support from Articles 21, 48A, and 51A(g) of the Constitution, acknowledges environmental protection as a “Constitutional Obligation” of both the states and the individuals.<sup>13</sup>

These are highly supported by the enactment of some environmental laws like the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974 Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1981 Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.

Furthermore, **Sri Lanka's regime** about environmental governance is based on Articles 27(14) and 28(f) of the Constitution which respectively set the obligations of the State and citizens towards the protection and conservation of the environment.<sup>14</sup>

The legislations that follow-up the same constituents are the National Environmental Act 1980 the Forest Ordinance, the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance, and the Sustainable Development Act, 2017. Collectively, these constitutional and statutory elements set out the legal structure for environmental regulation, conservation, and sustainable resource management.

## 2. Policy and Institutional Mechanisms

Beyond legal regulation, the successful environmental governance entails the development of consistent policies and the establishment of powerful institutions.

When it comes to **India**, the *Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)* heads environmental policymaking efforts, backed by key documents like the National Environment Policy (2006) and the National Action Plan on Climate Change (2008).

Besides that, the National Green Tribunal has been a pivotal institutional mechanism to reinforce environmental responsibility via specialized adjudication.

However, **Sri Lanka's environmental governance** revolves around policies like the National Environmental Action Plan (2022-2030), the National Climate Change Policy (2012), and the Haritha Lanka Programme. The Central Environmental Authority is the main executing body of environmental legislation and also supervises the Environmental Impact Assessment procedures. Such policy and institutional setups stand as indicators of the two countries' resolve to mainstream environmental sustainability in their development agendas.

<sup>13</sup> INDIAN CONST. art 21 1950, 48A & 51A(g).1976

<sup>14</sup> Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka art.27(14) and 28(f), 1978.

### 3. Judicial Recognition and Environmental Jurisprudence

To ensure effective environmental adjudication, India established the National Green Tribunal (NGT) as a specialized environmental judicial forum in 2010 to handle the environmental litigation with fast manner. Whereas in Sri Lanka, environmental issues are mostly dealt with by the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, and other courts, with the backing of the Central Environmental Authority (CEA) and the mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) provisions. All of these tools work together to enhance environmental responsibility and the implementation of environmental laws in both countries.

Indian courts have broadly interpreted the protection of the environment, on one hand; However, their Sri Lankan counterparts also use their judicial powers extensively here.

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court in the *Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra v. State of Uttar Pradesh*<sup>15</sup> recognized environmental rights as a part of the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. Furthermore, *the Vardhaman Kaushik v. Union of India case*<sup>16</sup> further strengthened measures against air pollution; while in the *M. K. Ranjitsinh v Union of India*,<sup>17</sup> the Court linked the protection of environment with climate justice and human rights.

Moreover, the Sri Lankan judiciary has taken significant ant steps in eco-protection. It has ordered the Government to commit to sustainable development in the *Bulankulama vs. Secretary, Ministry of Industrial Development* (Eppawala Case)<sup>18</sup> and even in the *Centre for Environmental Justice vs. Anura Satharasinghe* (WilpattuCase)<sup>19</sup>, it confirmed that the State is a trustee of the environment and must That means protect and preserve it.

Despite the comparative experiences of India and Sri Lanka demonstrates that good environmental governance through strong laws and institutions alone is not enough; active involvement of courts and creative policies also matter. While their constitutional make-ups and institutional strengths differ mostly, these countries have moved forward with the idea of involving the public, respecting environmental rights, and caring for the environment overall, offering valuable lessons for achieving long-term environmental sustainability.

<sup>15</sup> *Rural Litigation and Enlightenment Kender and Ors v State of Uttar Pradesh*, AIR 1987 SC 395.

<sup>16</sup> *Vardhaman Kaushik v. Union of India*, O.A. No. 21/2014, NGT.

<sup>17</sup> *M.K. Ranjitsinh & Ors. V. Union of India*, 2024 SCC OnLine SC 805.

<sup>18</sup> *Bulankulama v. Secretary, Ministry of Industrial Development*, [2000] 3 Sri L.R. 243.

<sup>19</sup> *Centre for Environmental Justice (Guarantee) Ltd., v Anura Satharasinghe and others* CA (Writ) 291/2015.

## INNOVATIONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Modern environmental governance has progressively outgrown the use of traditional regulatory methods alone. It now makes use of technological breakthroughs, public participation methods, and new policy structures to tackle newly surfaced environmental challenges. Recently, India and Sri Lanka have introduced various governance innovations intending to increase environmental accountability, enhance climate resilience, and promote sustainable development. Such changes indicate a move to more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainability-focused ways of environmental governance.

1. **Technological Innovation:** Integrated as a key thing in environmental governance to, among other things, improve environmental monitoring, regulatory compliance, and climate-risk management.

India's environmental governance framework has increasingly incorporated innovative and technology-driven approaches to address climate and sustainability challenges. The **Green Credit Programme (2024)** represents its significant policy innovative market-based approach, and the emerging incorporation of technology within India's climate governance via increased use of satellites, remote sensing, GIS/GPS, and digital monitoring reflects a more locally responsive, adaptive application of environmental policy. Overall, India's new climate change strategy is favoring a more decentralized and participatory environment, creating an environment geared toward sustainable development and climate change adaptation.<sup>20</sup>

Sri Lanka has included climate information systems and digital early warning tools in its environmental governance structure for enhanced disaster preparedness and climate adaptation. Sri Lanka's **Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) (2026 - 2035)** marks a great step forward in climate governance by the country deciding to look at the whole economy for greenhouse gas mitigation and fixing a target of carbon neutrality by 2050. The plan combines mitigation, adaptation, and loss-and-damage measures in major sectors and at the same time highlights climate resilience, gender-responsive governance, social inclusion, and nature-based solutions. By ensuring the policies of climate change, biodiversity conservation, and land management are consistent with each other, the NDC proves comprehensive and

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<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, *Green Credit Programme Implementation Guidelines* (2024), 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026  
<https://www.moefcc-gcp.in/about/aboutGCP>

integrated approach to sustainable environmental governance.<sup>21</sup>

- 2. Community and Citizen Innovation:** Community participation has emerged as a transformative element of contemporary environmental governance by fostering shared responsibility and enhancing public accountability.

In India, **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)** is a pioneering citizen-focused method to environmental management that via behavioural changes in energy saving, waste reduction and responsible consumption promotes sustainability. It is an India-led worldwide initiative which a linear "use-and-dispose" model into a circular and environmentally conscious lifestyle through the Pro-Planet People (P<sup>2</sup>) structure. By motivating personal action, backing eco-friendly market practices, and bringing about policy transformation, Mission LiFE not only enhances participatory governance but also embeds sustainability in daily decision-making.<sup>22</sup>

Sri Lanka has taken a step forward in environmental governance by linking the preservation of biodiversity with the **development of local livelihood and the engagement of youth**. Programmes driven by conservation at the community level, in particular in mangrove and wetland ecosystems, provide local people with the means and the opportunity to guide the environment, on one hand, and on the other, create sustainable economic opportunities. Besides that, young people's initiatives for climate and conservation have raised environmental consciousness, advocacy, and community participation, which support the development of governance systems that are more inclusive, participatory and sustainability-oriented.<sup>23</sup>

- 3. Policy and Institutional Innovation:** Policy and institutional innovation have become essential for addressing increasingly complex environmental challenges.

India's environmental governance framework has gradually changed from a traditional regulatory approach to a system that is more adaptable, incentive-driven, and climate-

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<sup>21</sup> Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, "Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 2026–2035", ISBN 978-624-5817-59-7, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025. <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/202509/Sri%20Lanka%20Nationally%20Determined%20Contributions%203.0%20%282026-2035%29%20submitted%2022.09.2025%20%281%29.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, *Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)* (2024), <https://missionlife-moefcc.nic.in>

<sup>23</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Community-Based Ecosystem Conservation and Climate Resilience Initiatives in Sri Lanka* (2024). 6<sup>th</sup> November 2025 <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/press-releases/our-future-not-negotiable-sri-lanka-youth-statement-climate-ahead-global-climate>

responsive. One of the major institutional innovations is the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**, formed under the National Green Tribunal Act of 2010, which offers a specialized and fast track legal solution of environmental problems through a multidisciplinary approach by combining the knowledge of law and science. In addition, the **Green Credit Programme (2024)** is a major policy innovation that introduces a market-based mechanism to financially reward voluntary environmental activities such as afforestation, water conservation, and ecosystem restoration. These, and the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**, which is essentially a roadmap to climate change mitigation, climate adaptation, renewable energy promotion, and sustainable development, have been crucial in demonstrating India's gradual commitment towards a more environmentally conscious governance model.<sup>24</sup>

Sri Lanka has pursued major policy and institutional changes to improve environmental sustainability and climate resiliency. Passing the **Sri Lanka Electricity Act, 2024** is a significant step forward in governance as it modernizes the electricity sector, makes it easier to connect renewable energy, and at the same time, opens up sustainable energy development for more private-sector participation. In support of these steps, **the Sustainable Finance Roadmap 2.0 (2025)** is aimed at raising climate-related funds and making it part of the national financial system to consider environmental and social risks. Altogether, these changes embody Sri Lanka's determination to pursue low carbon development, increase climate resilience, and integrate environmental sustainability with long-term economic growth.

**4. Emerging Sustainable Governance Approaches:** Environmental governance in India and Sri Lanka increasingly embraces integrated and sustainability-oriented approaches that combine scientific methodologies with traditional ecological knowledge.

These emerging governance models emphasize climate resilience, intergenerational equity, ecosystem-based management, and nature-based solutions as essential components of long-term environmental sustainability. By recognizing the interconnected relationship between ecological integrity, social well-being, and economic development, both countries have adopted more adaptive and inclusive

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<sup>24</sup> Mizanur Rahman, Rishikesh Singh Faujdar et.al.,” The Function of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation: An Analysis of the Recent Intervention in the Geleky Reserve Forest of Sivsagar and Charaideo Districts of Assam”, Atlantis Press, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2026, pp 264-276 <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/icdesgd-25/126023965>

strategies for environmental management. Furthermore, the incorporation of indigenous and community knowledge into contemporary governance frameworks has strengthened biodiversity conservation, resource management, and community resilience. Collectively, these approaches reflect a transition from reactive environmental regulation towards proactive, holistic, and sustainable governance systems capable of addressing complex environmental challenges.

## **CHALLENGES IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE**

- **Implementation and Capacity Gaps:** Comprehensive environmental laws are in place but limited institutional capabilities, scarce financial resources, and administrative hurdles stand in the way of effective implementation of these laws, mainly in developing nations.
- **Weak Enforcement and Accountability Mechanisms:** Insufficient monitoring, regulatory enforcement, and accountability measures often undermine compliance with environmental regulations, reducing the overall effectiveness of governance frameworks.
- **Regulatory Fragmentation and Institutional Inefficiencies:** Multiple authorities with overlapping functions, fragmented governance systems, and lack of proper coordination among governmental institutions are common causes of inconsistent environmental decision-making and policy implementation.
- **Complex and Interconnected Environmental Challenges:** Climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and overexploitation of natural resources are some of the major environmental issues that require governance systems capable of delivering integrated and adaptive policy responses.
- **Technological, Infrastructure, and Financial Constraints:** Few countries have limited access to environmental technologies, lack of technological infrastructure, little climate finance, and face barriers to green technology adoption, all of which hamper their ability to offer innovative and sustainable environmental solutions.
- **Limited Public Participation and Social Inclusion:** Weak environmental knowledge, little stakeholder involvement, and preventing vulnerable and marginalized groups from participating in decision-making processes are some of the reasons why participatory governance is weak and lead to environmental outcomes that are not equitable.

- **Balancing Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience:** Economic growth, urbanization, industrial expansion, and rising energy requirements need to be brought in line with environmental conservation targets; this is a major challenge and is further complicated by transboundary environmental issues and the uncertainties of long-term climate resilience.

## CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The growing environmental problems of the twenty-first century call for governance systems that not only rely on the classic regulatory practices but also incorporate innovation, inclusiveness, and sustainability. This paper reveals that environmental governance has been transformed in many ways through the creation of international legal structures, national laws and regulations, technological innovations, participatory mechanisms, and policies aimed at sustainability. By comparing the experiences of India and Sri Lanka, we see how new methods of environmental governance can enhance environmental responsibility, climate resilience, and sustainable management of natural resources through the Green Credit Programme, Mission LiFE, climate-responsive governance models, community-based conservation programmes, and sustainable finance mechanisms.

However, persistent challenges like implementation gaps, lack of institutional capacity, fragmented regulations, insufficient climate finance, and limited public participation continue to hamper the effectiveness of environmental governance. Tackling these issues means making institutions more accountable, improving cooperation among different agencies, encouraging more public involvement, and increasing the level of investment in technological innovation, climate-resilient infrastructure, and digital environmental monitoring systems. Besides, the combination of traditional ecological knowledge with scientific methods, the use of nature-based solutions, and the reinforcement of international collaboration through climate finance and technology transfer will support more effective and fair environmental governance.

Ultimately, the leading environmental governance innovations are the very core of sustainable development, ecological conservation, and the promotion of fairness across generations. Only a complete, changeable, and engaging governance system will be able to make sure that environmental protection and economic development go hand in hand and that this delivers a more sustainable and resilient future.