

REFORESTATION AS A GLOBAL URGENCY

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THE ESSAY

American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, in a letter to his governors, wrote, "A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people." These words ring true today as much as they did back then. Forests act as a carbon sink for the whole planet. Essentially, forests are the lungs of the planet. They sequester tons of carbon dioxide and release oxygen into the atmosphere. The Amazon Forest, which is the world's biggest forest, is home to 400 billion trees. The Amazon alone is responsible for 100 billion tonnes of carbon sequestered everyday. The rise in population has also led to a rise in deforestation. This has caused a myriad of ecological and social problems. Reforestation is a global urgency to tackle climate change disasters, social issues from health to food insecurity, and to deal with the water crisis. This can be done through reforestation

drives, global cooperation and initiatives focused on protecting forests, green financing projects and community based incentives.

Reforestation is necessary to sustain life on earth. Therefore, something must be done as soon as possible to protect the planet and the species that live within it.

Before delving into what makes reforestation a global urgency, it is pertinent to define what the term means. Reforestation is the process of replanting trees in areas which previously thrived as forests. Unlike afforestation, where entirely new forests are planted, reforestation focuses on restoring the area, previously a forest, which has suffered from degradation. This is done through planting new trees in that area. Reforestation restores the natural ecosystem of a particular piece of land and contributes to a healthy environment overall. Rapid urbanization has contributed to the demise of forests. Reforestation has, therefore, emerged as a crucial necessity.

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To start with, reforestation is a global urgency due to the rising temperatures pushing global warming. Forests act as a carbon sink. This means that forests trap the CO_2 in the air and release oxygen instead. This prevents the CO_2 from reaching the earth's atmosphere and thereby protecting the ozone layer. Unfortunately, deforestation has led to excess CO_2 in the atmosphere which has destroyed the ozone layer. As a result, the world has witnessed a sharp rise in temperatures. According to the World Meteorological Organization, global temperatures have reached 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. It also recorded 2024 as the warmest year on record. There are alarming figures with deadly consequences for the life on earth. Thus, it is pertinent to make reforestation a global priority.

Secondly, the rising temperatures are part of climate change which is causing recurring natural disasters around the globe. Deforestation is one the major constituents towards climate change. It is a phenomenon which consists of erratic weather patterns followed by natural disasters.

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In the last few years, the world has seen an uptick in such kind of events. In 2025 alone, there were the catastrophic wildfires in Los Angeles that destroyed around 10,000 acres of land and displaced hundreds. Similarly, in Pakistan and India incessant rain and floods have ravaged entire communities. In Pakistan's Punjab province alone, 1 million people have been displaced according to National Disaster Management Authority data. The frequency of these events has increased with time and will continue to do so unless measures like reforestation are undertaken.

Thirdly, these events put a burden on already fragile developing economies, making reforestation an urgent need. Developing economies like that of Pakistan are particularly vulnerable to disasters. They have limited technology and funds to tackle the threat of climate change. This reality was laid bare during the 2022 floods in Pakistan. According to the UN, those floods displaced 33 million people and killed thousands. The estimated number of losses was reported to be around 40 billion dollars according to a World Bank Assess

- ment. This led to an economic crisis in Pakistan. Experts had reported a significant reduction in losses if Pakistan still retained its green cover. Therefore, reforestation must be treated as a global emergency to minimize the risks faced by vulnerable economies.

economic
Furthermore, the crisis triggered by deforestation induced climate change has exacerbated poverty and migration. Recurrent climate disasters bring with them recurrent victims who have lost everything. It also pushes swaths of people to migrate where the effects of climate change are less pronounced such as cities. The sudden influx of migrants can further worsen resource distribution problems especially in developing societies. Additionally, these contribute to pushing more people under the poverty line. A case in point is the situation after 2022 floods. In 2022, the poverty rate in Pakistan stood at 21.4%. After the catastrophic flood and grave economic turmoil that followed, the current number of people living under the poverty line stands at an alarming 44% according to a recent World Bank report. Thus,

reforestation is a global urgency to alleviate people from the cycle of poverty and migration.

Moreover, reforestation is a necessity to tackle the growing health crisis. The lack of green spaces particularly in urban centres has proved to have dire consequences. Lack of green cover and deforestation has led to urban spaces trapping heat and creating micro-climates. These micro-climates mean that the temperature of that particular area is higher than the rest of the geographical area. During the summer months, heatwaves have become more common place. The increasing global temperatures coupled with lack of forests is a recipe for disaster. In 2025, heatwaves in Spain killed 80 people. Additionally, exposure to heatwaves has been linked to promoting reproductive issues in women, a 2023 study by World Health Organised noted. Thereafter, reforestation must be made a global priority to resolve the growing health crisis.

Further, the lack of forests plays a direct role in perpetuating

food insecurity globally. Forests and trees play a key role in sustaining the soil. They also prevent soil erosion during the monsoon season. With deforestation and increasingly erratic monsoon patterns, the soil becomes prone to landslides and is unable to prevent deluges. The floods in turn destroy all yields and subsequently affect soil quality. This leads to decreased and subpar quality yields. Consequently, food prices are raised and the scarcity of produce pushes more people into food insecurity. The number of people suffering from acute food insecurity globally already stands at 345 million people according to a 2025 World Bank Report. This disturbing figure will continue to rise if the current state of affairs is to proceed unabated. Hence, reforestation is a global urgency for the sustenance of earth and its people.

Lastly, reforestation is crucially linked to resolving water scarcity. One of the most pressing issues the earth faces at present is the worsening water scarcity. This is fueled by increasing droughts

due to lack of forests. Lack of forests means the lack of green water infrastructure. Green water infrastructure refers to the natural systems that move, store and manage water. When rainfall is generated, forests recycle it by feeding rivers and downstream agricultural lands. Pakistan is one of the most water scarce nations in the world. According to **United Nations**, 2 billion people worldwide suffer from high water stress in 2025. By 2050, half of **humanity** could face **severe water shortages**, the **UN** notes. Therefore, **reforestation** is a global urgency to effectively deal with the threat of water shortages.

The preceding section of the essay highlighted why reforestation is a global urgency. The next section of this essay will focus on the way forward.

Firstly, states should promote reforestation drives. Forests are the lungs of the earth. They also offer protection in face of climate disasters and mitigate the risks of disasters. Mangrove forests specifically are effective against tsunamis, floods

and hurricanes. Japan's "Great Forest Wall" is a great example of one such initiative. After the deadly 2011 tsunami, Japan sprang into action and planted a great wall of trees on its shores. The forest wall has 9 million along the coasts of Japan. This has saved thousands of lives and billions of dollars in losses in subsequent disasters in Japan. Hence, this instance of reforestation could be imitated globally to minimize the prevailing threats to life on earth.

Secondly, there should be global cooperation regarding initiatives to protect forests. As deforestation is a global issue, to tackle it efforts must be made by cooperating on a global level. Initiatives like the Amazon Fund, which is primarily funded by the Norway and Germany to preserve the Amazon forest, should be followed by other developed countries. Another model which could be imitated is the Great Green Wall of Sahel project. The initiative aims to

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restore the degraded land of the Sahel Desert, Africa with trees and vegetation. This project would enhance life in eleven African countries. Thereby, global cooperation to restore fertile and green lands could significantly resolve the crisis of deforestation and climate change.

Thirdly, the developed nations could also spearhead green financing projects to pursue reforestation efforts. Developing countries often bear the brunt deforestation and increasing carbon emissions. Whereas, it is the wealthier and developed nations that are responsible for 90% of the carbon emissions. The developed nations have a responsibility to contribute in efforts to restore forests. Projects like the UN REDD 2022, should be imitated worldwide. It offers financial incentives to developing countries to conserve their forests. Similarly, LEAF Coalition project is another model initiative that lowers emissions by accelerating forest finance. The project collects funds to pay tropical forest countries

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that reduce emissions. This is a verified way to protect, conserve and restore forests all around the world and should be followed through with immediate urgency.

Lastly, restoration efforts should be led from the community level. Reforestation efforts should not be confined to state level. Rather local communities should also be mobilized to get the best results. These efforts could be incentivized for better efficiency. Governments could introduce **payment for ecosystem services**. This would ensure preservation of forests in return for money. Another initiative could be **eco-certifications** for businesses. This would provide subsidies for responsibly sourced wood and paper and ultimately promote sustainability. Thus, communities can play an essential role in leading the reforestation movement.

To conclude, reforestation has emerged as the globally

need of the hour. It has provided the solution to the multifaceted challenges faced by the global community. The world is boiling at an alarming pace. There are recurrent disasters which bring loss and destruction. They have torpedoed budding economies. All of these factors then subsequently push people under the poverty line, perpetuate food insecurity and water scarcity. The world needs to act together and act fast in its efforts to restore degraded forests to their original shape. Forests are the lifeline of the earth and the life that it sustains. Therefore, restoring them should be the utmost priority. As the president of France, Francois Hollande, noted :
"We have a single mission ; to protect and hand on the planet to the next generation"