Forum: World Health Assembly

Issue: The question of mitigating poor irrigation systems to avoid rapid spread of disease

Student Officer: Varsha Bharadwaj

Position: Deputy Head Chair of the World Health Assembly

Introduction

Water is a vital resource for life and agriculture since it promotes the growth of the crops needed to feed the world's population. However, irrigation systems might start illnesses that could quickly spread and kill all crops if not adequately managed. It is crucial to investigate how to mitigate inadequate irrigation systems to prevent the rapid spread of disease. Many water-borne, vector-borne, and foodborne illnesses, like typhoid, dengue, and gastroenteritis, could be spread, especially in light of global agriculture, environmental sustainability, and public health. The foundation of all agriculture is irrigation systems, which provide farmers control over water distribution and guarantee that all crops will flourish even when there is a shortage of rain in some places. However, if these systems are poorly planned, they may aid in spreading illness and pose a risk to public health and food security.

The phrase "The question of mitigating poor irrigation systems to avoid rapid spread of disease" refers to addressing and finding possible solutions to issues caused by inefficient irrigation techniques and systems, focusing mainly on how these poor systems can further lead to the rapid spread of diseases.

When dealing with this question, it is essential to remember global issues such as population growth, climate change, and a rise in the need for agricultural products, which is crucial to the topic. Water resources are becoming increasingly limited and

unpredictable in today's society because of climate change, increasing the need for the irrigation system's efficiency. A rise in waterborne infections and waterlogging due to poorly managed planning might severely influence agriculture's productivity.

The reasons for the rapid spread of diseases from contaminated irrigation systems could range from inadequate water treatment, low-quality infrastructure, and unprofessional waste disposal training. In areas with limited resources and technical support, these issues can carry on and aggravate the crisis in health and agriculture.

Definition of Key Terms

Irrigation Systems

Irrigation is where controlled amounts of water are added to the soil to grow plants, landscape plants, and grasses. Irrigation systems include drip irrigation, irrigation sprinklers, and the construction of artificial canals and ditches.

Inadequate

Lack of required quality or quantity; insufficient to achieve the goal. In the context relating to irrigation systems, "inadequate" refers to when systems are insufficient or not suitable for their intended purpose. Signs of inadequate irrigation systems include uneven water distribution, water wastage, low crop yields, and soil erosion.

Incentivize

To make somebody need to do something, such as to purchase something or to do work, particularly by advertising prizes or rewards.

Vector - borne illnesses

Vector-borne diseases are diseases spread to humans and animals by the biting of infected arthropods such as mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, and sandflies. Examples of vector-borne illnesses are Malaria, Dengue, Zika, and Chikugunya.

Extensive Financial Aid

"Extensive financial aid" describes any financial assistance provided to a person or organization through a grant, scholarship, loan, or other financial aid. Examples of this type of financial assistance include full-tuition college scholarships, government-sponsored small business loans, disaster relief funds, and philanthropic organization grants.

Equity Issues

Irrigation equity refers to the inequalities in access to water for agriculture. These include unfair access, imbalances in water rights, technology gaps, disparities in gender, fair policies, supporting marginalized farmers, and equitable and sustainable irrigation practices.

Illness reconnaissance

Illness reconnaissance, sometimes known as illness surveillance, is the systematic collection and analysis of data on disease occurrence and dissemination. It aids in the detection of epidemics, the assessment of risks, and the direction of public health actions. Case reporting, laboratory surveillance, syndromic surveillance, and environmental monitoring are some of the methods used. Data analysis aids in the development of prompt reactions and preventative measures to safeguard public health.

Key Issues

Water quality and contamination

Viruses, bacteria, and parasites are common pathogens found in contaminated water. Pathogens can interfere with plants and enter the food chain when water is polluted in irrigation systems. This may endanger people's and animals' safety. When contaminated water affects the food chain, it can lead to the development of foodborne illnesses and food contamination, which results in the spread of multiple diseases with high levels of

severity. Examples of foodborne illnesses that could be produced are E. coil, Salmonella, and Listeria. Pathogen transmission can also be the reason for numerous economic losses, as the spread of foodborne diseases will increase medical costs, decrease productivity due to illnesses, and cause potential legal action to be taken against producers.

Waterborne infections can develop and spread if people consume contaminated water. Healthcare systems are negatively impacted by waterborne conditions, which also have long-term effects on public health. With high healthcare costs, decreased productivity, and lower agricultural land, poverty among low-income communities can rise and intervene with socioeconomic development.

As contaminated water can foster mosquito breeding grounds, it can also be the cause of vector-borne illnesses. These insects increase the danger of vector-borne conditions by carrying diseases like dengue fever and malaria. Contaminated irrigation water also harms the environment because it can pollute nearby water sources and cause soil contamination. This impacts the ecosystem and the neighborhoods adjacent to these tainted water sources.

Resource Constraints

When resources are limited in supply or availability, it can be challenging to implement effective policies and measures to improve irrigation systems and address health risks. Resource constraints can affect this issue with its role in infrastructure investment. Resource constraints can affect the availability of funding for developing and maintaining irrigation infrastructure. It can lead to a financial burden, as large-scale infrastructure will require extensive financial aid. Paying so much maintenance can divert funds from agricultural and irrigation systems.

Monitoring, regulating, and enforcing regulations to improve safe water irrigation requires a considerable amount of resources for testing and equipment. Resource constraints will reduce their availability, making them harder to find and more complex to afford. It can also start equity issues, as poor farmers find it challenging to comply with regulations due to limited resources and capacity.

Water scarcity

In rural regions or communities where water is scarce, there is intense competition for water availability and resources. This competition occurs in agriculture, industry, environmental conservation, and domestic use. Water is used for crop irrigation, as it helps grow the plants healthy and flourishing. Sufficient water is vital for plant growth, development, and yield. Water is also crucial to livestock watering, as it provides hydration to the plant, aids digestion, and supports milk production. A sufficient water supply is essential to farm animals' health and productivity. Lastly, water is vital in food processing as it is included in almost every step. It is utilized when washing and cleaning dishes and for processes for the preservation of foods. Water scarcity can result in prioritizing water for domestic use and industry rather than agricultural irrigation. This can reduce water availability for irrigation procedures, putting stress on farmers to increase the efficiency of irrigation techniques.

It can also lead to the increased reliability of poor irrigation techniques. Water scarcity will pressure farmers to rely upon poor irrigation due to the lack of water they are provided with to care for the plants. Because of this, farmers will have to resort to irrigation techniques that could potentially lead to the contamination of crops, such as using recycled or untreated water. This contamination will further spread diseases as poor irrigation techniques have been practiced, increasing the chances of contamination. This can lead to the development of waterborne pathogens.

Water scarcity can lead to health and sanitation problems. In areas where water availability is a challenge, water scarcity can significantly impact one's hygiene. People may use contaminated water for personal hygiene, which can further result in the transmission and spread of waterborne diseases.

Socioeconomic Factors

These factors can lead to social and economic conditions that can influence disease development and spread. Poverty is a worldwide issue; however, poverty can limit access to clean water, healthcare facilities, and sanitation services, increasing the spread of waterborne diseases. Poverty can lead to limited healthcare facility availability, including treatments, diagnosis, and preventive measures. Food insecurity can also be a result of poverty, which leads to the weakening of immune systems and inadequate nutrition, making people more vulnerable to infections.

The availability and distribution of economic resources can significantly impact the communities' ability to improve irrigation systems. With the unavailability of financial resources, the access to modern irrigation systems decreases. Proper access to economic resources helps a community invest in developing, maintaining, and improving agricultural infrastructure. It allows the construction of canals, pumps, and water distribution systems to enable plants to grow to their full potential and be healthy. It also affects the adoption of sustainable farming practices; with an unavailability of economic resources, farmers cannot invest in sustainable alternatives, such as precision agriculture and organic farming. Farmers can improve crop conditions and reduce resource waste with the proper resources, but the unavailability of economic resources restricts all this.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

India

India's agricultural terrain is diversified and it has a substantial agricultural economy. It has put in place a solution to address the problems connected with inadequate irrigation systems and to avoid the rapid spread of illnesses caused by waterborne pathogens. The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), a government-led effort, is in charge of this. The organization's primary goal is to extend and update irrigation infrastructure, including constructing new dams, reservoirs, and canals and maintaining and upgrading existing systems. This group also encourages farmers to use water-efficient irrigation

methods, such as drip and sprinkler irrigation, by providing cash incentives and implementation assistance.

Programs like the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) and the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) emphasize sustainable approaches like proper irrigation, which help India's agricultural business. To maximize water use, the country invests in R&D to enhance irrigation technologies, produce drought-resistant crop varieties, and promote precision agriculture practices.

China

China features an expansive rural scene and is well-known for its commitment to worldwide nourishment generation since it has taken an assorted approach to handling troubles related to wasteful water system frameworks and the fast spread of infections caused by waterborne contaminants. Large-scale water system projects, such as the South-North Water Exchange Venture, illustrate the government's endeavors to transport water assets from the water-rich south to the water-scarce north, supporting rural locales within the last mentioned. Also, China has been modernizing its water system foundation by executing progressed advances such as electronic frameworks, soil dampness screens, and further detection to improve water utilization and diminish wastage. Drip and splash water systems, for case, have been solidly prescribed, especially in ranges of dry spells and amid dry spells. Agriculturists are empowered to utilize natural cultivating, proactive bug control, and turn of crops to protect soil wellbeing and constrain harmful impacts on the environment. Illness reconnaissance and administration strategies include:

- Water security.
- Observing interior water system structures.
- Quick activity to contain breakouts.

China contributes to inquiry about and advancement, collaborating with education and colleges to pioneer advances, edit varieties, and water system strategies that are water-efficient and disease-resistant. Worldwide participation is additionally a

cornerstone of China's approach, taking an interest in transboundary water administration endeavors and locking in with worldwide organizations such as the Joined Together Countries Nourishment and Agribusiness Organization (FAO) and the World Bank.

Government activities, counting arrangements just like the "Zero Development of Chemical Fertilizer and Pesticide Utilize by 2020," emphasize China's commitment to diminishing rural chemical inputs, emphatically influencing water quality.

United States

The United States encompasses a cutting-edge water system foundation, counting canals, supplies, and progressed water system frameworks, empowering effective water utilization and preventing infection by minimizing water defilement. Government offices such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and land-grant colleges give fundamental inquiries about expansion administrations, creating and spreading the best homes for water systems, counting water administration, and malady anticipation measures.

Water quality directions upheld by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guarantee that water system water meets security guidelines, specifically on utilizing recovered water for water systems and anticipating waterborne infections. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) holds infection observation and control, which collaborates with state and neighborhood well-being offices to reply to and control episodes related to destitute water quality.

Conservation programs advertised by the USDA incentivize ranchers to receive maintainable water systems, advancing water preservation, lessening runoff, and defending water quality. Climate adjustment is another primary thought, with government organizations investigating education and ranchers working on techniques to address climate change's effect on farming, counting alterations in water system practices.

The private division is noteworthy in creating and receiving progressed water system advances and hones, giving ranchers instruments and administrations to optimize water

use and avoid illnesses. Instruction and preparing activities guarantee ranchers are well-informed about water systems and illness anticipation, spreading information and best practices.

Brazil

Various irrigation methods are used in Brazil, from traditional surface irrigation to more efficient spin and drip systems, and the choice of method is influenced by factors such as crop type, climatic conditions, and water availability. In recent years, a significant shift has been towards adopting modern water-saving irrigation systems to improve productivity and conserve natural resources. The Brazilian government is crucial in regulating and managing agricultural water resources, mainly through the National Water Agency (ANA). This includes monitoring water allocation and implementing policies that promote responsible and efficient water use. In addition, sustainability and environmental considerations are paramount, which is why Brazil supports initiatives that minimize the environmental impact of irrigation, limit soil erosion, and protect water quality. Sustainable agricultural practices are actively encouraged to maintain soil health and reduce the risk of waterborne diseases.

Research institutions such as the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) are at the forefront of advancing agricultural knowledge. They extensively research agriculture's irrigation techniques, crop varieties, and disease prevention to improve productivity and sustainability. In addition to addressing agricultural issues, Brazil is committed to improving public health, combating waterborne diseases, and improving sanitation infrastructure, especially in insufficient clean water sources. Additionally, as Brazil struggles with climate change and an increase in extreme weather events, farmers and policymakers are emphasizing climate-resilient practices and crop varieties to adapt to these changing conditions. Training and extension services for farmers provide valuable information on best irrigation practices, disease prevention measures, and sustainable farming techniques, facilitating the dissemination of knowledge and adoption of efficient irrigation methods.

Development of Issue/Timeline

Date	Event	Outcome
Pre-20th Century	Limited knowledge on irrigation system lead to disease transmission	Many cultures and societies depended on inferior irrigation systems and practices before to the twentieth century due to a lack of information about disease transmission. As a result, numerous waterborne illnesses, such as cholera, emerged in places with low water quality.
Late 19th Century	Water treatment methods were introduced	The importance of aquatic infections and their impact on public health were recognized by communities. Early water treatment procedures were used to enhance water quality.
Early to Mid 20th Century	Advancements in technology and improvements in understanding of disease transmission	Irrigation technological advancements, such as the use of better pumps and water delivery systems, resulted in more effective irrigation methods. Increased knowledge of the relationship between

		irrigation and disease transmission prompted attempts to identify and resolve pollution hazards.
1950-1970	Introduced modern farming practices and expanded irrigation infrastructure.	The Green Revolution brought farmers high-yielding crop varieties and sophisticated farming methods, improving agricultural production. Expand irrigation infrastructure, but poor water management practices persisted.
1980-1990	Waterborne disease outbreak and increase in research	Concerns regarding public health and potential health concerns arose as a result of waterborne illness epidemics (Cryptosporidiosis Outbreak, Walkerton E. coli Outbreak, and Milwaukee Cryptosporidiosis Outbreak) connected to irrigation systems. Safe irrigation methods and water treatment became the subject of research and public awareness efforts.

2000-2010	Governments promoted safe irrigation techniques.	Projects were developed by international organizations, governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote safe irrigation practices and water management. Climate change challenges emphasized the need for climate-resilient agriculture and water resource management.
2010–Present	Prominence increased for sustainable agriculture increased as advancements in water treatment took place	Prominence for sustainable agriculture and water management practices increased, emphasizing efficient irrigation systems, soil health, and environmental conservation. Advances in water treatment, distribution, and monitoring technologies improved water quality and reduced disease risks. Climate change adaptation strategies were incorporated into irrigation planning and infrastructure development.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Green Revolution

As mentioned in the timeline, the Green Revolution was a period of significant change and technological advancement from 1950 - 1970. They are known for bringing farmers high-yielding crop varieties and sophisticated farming methods, improving agricultural production. They achieved this through the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

They increased agricultural productivity, as farmers could produce more food on the same land. This reduces the pressure on expanding agricultural land with poor irrigation systems. The Green Revolution also reduced food insecurity. Higher-yield crops were donated to reduce food insecurity in several regions. Because of this, there was improved access to food and improvement in the health of people. They also allowed for a lot of economic development to take place. They increased agricultural output in many areas to generate more economic growth. This helped a lot as an investment in infrastructure can help develop irrigation systems that can mitigate disease risks.

Advances in water treatment during the 2000s and present day

As noted in the timeline, these advancements increased the safety and quality of irrigation water and reduced the spread of waterborne infections and illnesses.

The critical issue that needed to be addressed was finding measures to improve water quality. However, in today's world, numerous water treatment technologies, including UV disinfection, are available to assist in successfully destroying or eliminating waterborne pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Monitoring systems can also detect pollution occurrences early, allowing for quick response and mitigation steps. Rapidly recognizing water quality concerns aids in disease prevention in agricultural contexts. Finally, monitoring technology has advanced, allowing for real-time or regular measurement of water quality indicators, assuring compliance with regulatory criteria.

This is critical since monitoring data may help determine if water is safe for irrigation or has to be treated.

Possible Solutions

Implementing alternative effective irrigation strategies

Promoting effective irrigation strategies such as drip and sprinkler systems to decrease water waste while maximizing water utilization through precision agricultural techniques are critical answers. It is critical to ensure water quality management through the installation of treatment technologies and regular monitoring of irrigation water.

Educating agricultural workers and communities and implementing new strategies

By providing clean water and sanitation facilities in farm settings, agricultural workers and communities may reduce disease transmission concerns. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) solutions, focused on biological controls and organic farming, should be supported to decrease pesticide use and its influence on water quality.

Empowerment of local communities on water management

Local communities should be empowered to manage their water resources, while research and innovation should contribute to the development of sustainable irrigation and treatment technology. Public health monitoring systems, capacity-building activities, and international collaboration are critical for tracking and responding to disease outbreaks associated with irrigation, as well as sharing best practices throughout the world. Incentives, environmental conservation practices, data-sharing platforms, and economic development initiatives can also help to reduce the impact of poor irrigation systems on disease spread while improving agricultural productivity and public health outcomes.

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