

Innovation in Every Drop: Israel's Strategies from Scarcity to Sustainability

Dr. Monica Daniel Penkar

Associate Professor

St. Gonsalo College of Arts & Commerce Vasai

Abstract

The water crisis in India is an exigent issue that has been enhanced by factors such as rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and population growth. The country is suffering from acute water scarcity accompanied by droughts and water shortages in several parts. The lack of clean and safe water has led to multifarious health issues besides waterborne diseases. Pollution from industries and agriculture has diminished water quality, rendering it unsafe for consumption. Israel, a country that has effectively overcome its water crisis, can serve as a valuable model for India and other countries facing this issue. The various pioneering technologies used for tiding water crisis have ensured the country a sustainable water supply for its population. Against this backdrop, the paper is an attempt to examine the notable successes of Israel in implementing innovative water management strategies that played a crucial role in addressing and overcoming its water crisis. The paper concludes that by adopting similar initiatives, India and other countries can improve their water management practices and mitigate the water crisis.

Keywords: water crisis, challenges, Israel

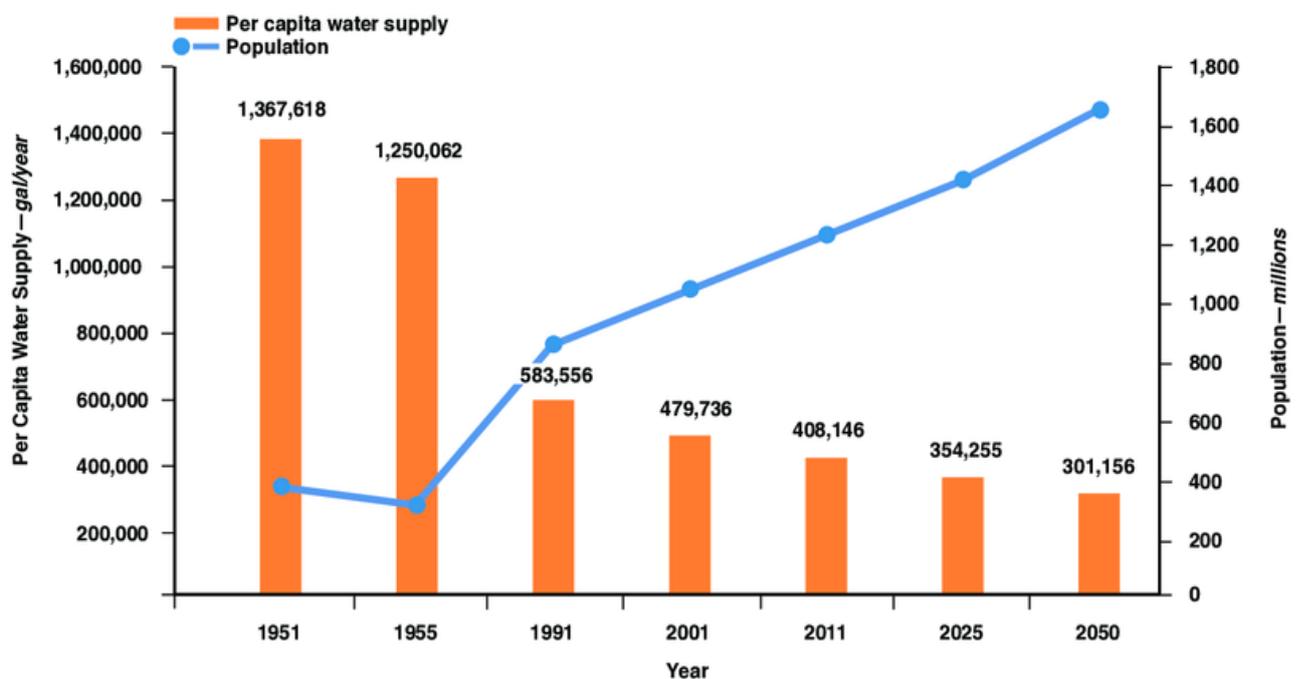
Introduction

India is facing a severe water crisis that is only worsening with time. With a population exceeding a billion, India ranks as one of the most densely populated countries globally. With such a large population, the demand for water is increasing constantly, putting immense pressure on India's already strained water resources. One of the crucial reasons for the water crisis in India is the mismanagement of water resources. The rapid urbanization and industrialization have led to the depletion of groundwater levels and pollution of rivers and lakes. In many parts of the country, groundwater is over-extracted for agricultural, industrial, and domestic use, leading to a drastic decline in water tables. Climate change is also exacerbating the water crisis in India. Irregular rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, and extreme weather events are becoming more frequent, further stressing the already fragile water resources in the country. The lack of proper water management infrastructure and policies is another contributing factor to the water crisis in India. In many parts of the country, water gets wasted due to leaky pipelines, inefficient irrigation practices, and inadequate water storage facilities. The lack of proper sanitation facilities and the contamination of water sources with industrial effluents and sewage further compound the problem. The water crisis in India is not just a problem of scarcity but also of inequity. While urban areas face water shortages and water quality issues, rural areas often lack access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities. Women and children, especially in rural areas, endure most of the water crisis as they are often

responsible for fetching water from long distances. There is an urgent need for sustainable water management practices to address the water crisis, . It is essential for the government to enforce policies and regulations that promote fair distribution of water resources and prevent their overuse. Promoting awareness campaigns on water conservation and encouraging individuals and communities to engage in rainwater harvesting is crucial in addressing the water crisis.

The water crisis in India is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires immediate attention and concerted efforts from all stakeholders. Failure to address this crisis will have devastating consequences for the country's environment, economy, and public health. Taking immediate action is essential to ensure a sustainable water future for India.

Figure 1: Population and Per Capita water supply per year in India



Source: KPMG International 2010: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India

The image illustrates the growing challenge of managing water resources in the face of population growth. As the population continues to increase, the gap between available water supply and the rising demand is widening. If left unchecked, projections suggest that by 2050, the situation could reach a critical state. This underscores the importance of taking immediate action to address the escalating imbalance between water availability and the needs of a growing population to prevent a potential water crisis in the coming years.

Review of Literature

According to Keller (2000), with the worsening of global warming, the importance of freshwater storage will increase significantly. It is crucial to enhance groundwater storage, especially in monsoonal Asia and countries in the tropics and semi-tropics, to meet the water demands of the 21st century. Assessing water productivity can help determine if higher

requirements for irrigated agriculture can be met through increased productivity or greater water usage.

According to Kumu and Guillaume (2016), the issue of water scarcity is rapidly becoming a global concern, yet there is limited understanding of how it has evolved over time. Their research offers the initial evaluation of ongoing sub-national trends in blue water consumption, renewable freshwater availability, and water deficits throughout the twentieth century.

Singh and Kaur's (2019) research support the importance of implementing adequate mechanisms and policies to manage the continuous decrease in water supply amidst a significant increase in demand. India is currently grappling with a severe water crisis that is projected to worsen without immediate action. In recent decades, there has been a strong emphasis in India on the implementation of integrated and sustainable water policies by experts, institutions, and policymakers. This article highlights policy alternatives that address challenges on both the demand and supply sides, although obstacles hinder the implementation of progressive initiatives.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows,

- 1) To understand the water crisis in India
- 2) To explore the innovative water management strategies implemented by Israel to overcome its water crisis.

Research Methodology

The study is an attempt at exploratory research which is based on required secondary data. Secondary data was collected from journals, magazines, newspapers, media reports, and government and other websites keeping into consideration the objectives of the study.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the water crisis in India and explores Israel's successful water management strategies as a potential model for addressing similar challenges in India and other countries. The research will delve into the innovative technologies and initiatives adopted by Israel to secure a sustainable water supply and effectively combat its own water crisis.

Rationale of the Study

The global community is grappling with persistent environmental issues, including the water crisis, which poses significant challenges such as water scarcity, pollution, and unsustainable water management practices. The urgency for sustainable water practices is more critical than ever. Failure to address this critical issue could lead to destructive aftermath for ecosystems, communities, and economies worldwide. The rationale for studying the water crisis lies in the paramount need to address the severe environmental, social, and economic repercussions stemming from water scarcity and pollution. Studying Israel's water crisis management approach can offer researchers and policymakers valuable insights into effective water

conservation practices. The lessons and best practices derived from Israel's experience can be tailored and applied in regions confronting comparable water scarcity challenges.

Limitations of the Study

This paper intends to give valuable insights and advantageous lessons from Israel, but it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. Tactics and solutions developed by a small country like Israel may not apply to other countries due to varying socio-political, economic, geographical, size and population factors. Though these limitations should be considered, they do not diminish the value of studying Israel's water-sustainable initiatives. Secondary data was used for an in-depth understanding which has its drawbacks. A further detailed study, understanding other countries' hurdles in adopting green initiatives, can be undertaken.

Leading the Way: Israel's Impactful Contributions to Sustainable Solutions

Israel, a country in the Middle East with a population of 9 million citizens speaking 35 different languages, is in a hot and arid region in the southern part of West Asia. Since gaining independence, Israel has absorbed over 3.2 million new immigrants, many of whom are refugees. The country has an average population density of 400 people per square kilometre and a land area of 22,072 square kilometres, with 90% of its population residing in urban areas. Israel has long battled with water scarcity and faced a severe water crisis due to its geographical location in a hot and arid region with limited freshwater resources. The country's natural water sources, such as rivers and lakes, were deficient to meet the needs of its growing population and expanding economy. In addition, Israel experiences irregular rainfall patterns and persistent droughts, further compounding its water challenges. The increasing water demand, combined with limited natural resources, had put significant pressure on Israel's water supply. In the past, the country relied profoundly on groundwater extraction, leading to overexploitation of aquifers and depletion of underground water reserves. This unsustainable water management approach resulted in descending water levels, land subsidence, and deteriorating water quality in certain areas. In the face of these water challenges, Israel recognized the urgent need to address its water crisis through innovative solutions and sustainable water management practices. The country embarked on a comprehensive water management strategy that focused on water conservation, water recycling, desalination, and efficient water use in agriculture, industry, and households.

From Roots to Harvest: Maximizing Yields with Drip Irrigation Innovation

Simcha Blass, a student engineer, in the 1930s, noticed a tree had grown and flourished more than the other trees in the same row. Curious to find the reason, he dug to find that its roots were nourished, fed by a minor leak from an irrigation nearby. This observation led to the development of drip irrigation, a groundbreaking technology that revolutionized agriculture in Israel. In 1959, Simcha and his son Yeshayahu founded Netafim, the first company to introduce drip irrigation systems. This innovative method efficiently delivers precise amounts of water to the plant roots, promoting optimal growth. Drip irrigation has revolutionized agriculture in countries like Israel, where water shortage is a significant issue. By using drippers—small

valves that release water directly above plant roots—the technology ensures that every drop of water is utilized effectively. In rice cultivation, a drip irrigation system can save up to 70% of water compared to traditional flooding methods, which require significantly more water. Unlike conventional flooding techniques that consume vast amounts of water and contribute to environmental issues like methane emissions, drip irrigation offers a sustainable solution. By using significantly less water per kilogram of rice harvested, this method not only boosts crop yields but also allows for multiple planting cycles on the same land, reducing water wastage and environmental impact. Overall, drip irrigation has not only transformed agricultural practices but also addressed critical water challenges, offering a more efficient and environmentally friendly approach to crop cultivation.

From Desert to Oasis: The Impact of Desalination on Israel's Water Landscape

Israel's desalination efforts have been nothing short of revolutionary, propelling the country to the forefront of water technology and sustainability. Through strategic investments in desalination technology, Israel has succeeded in turning the tide on its water woes.

Israel's journey into desalination began in the early 2000s with the construction of large-scale desalination plants along its Mediterranean coast. These plants utilize advanced reverse osmosis technology to convert seawater into fresh, potable water, providing a reliable and sustainable source of water for the country. Today, Israel boasts some of the largest and most efficient desalination plants, which produce millions of cubic meters of water annually. The benefits of Israel's desalination efforts are manifold. Desalination has reduced Israel's dependency on traditional water sources like aquifers and rivers, which were drained at an alarming rate. By tapping into the unlimited Seawater supply, Israel has successfully secured its water supply for the future. Desalination had a transformative impact on Israel's agriculture sector, enabling farmers to upsurge their operations and grow crops in previously arid regions. It has not only boosted food production in the country but has also helped to mitigate the effects of droughts and climate change. It has also enhanced the overall quality of life for Israelis, safeguarding a constant supply of clean water for households, businesses, and industries.

From Waste to Resource: The Benefits of Water Recycling in Israel

Water recycling in Israel is a crucial component of the country's water management strategy. It has supported to fight water paucity issues and ensured a sustainable water supply for its population. The water recycling process in Israel involves treating wastewater from various sources, including households, industries, and agriculture, to a high standard that allows it to be reused for multiple purposes. The first step in water recycling is the collection and treatment of wastewater in advanced treatment plants. These plants employ a blend of physical, chemical, and biological processes to remove impurities, pathogens, and contaminants from the wastewater, producing high-quality treated water known as reclaimed water. After the wastewater has been processed, the reclaimed water is distributed for various non-drinking purposes, including irrigation, industrial applications, and replenishing groundwater. In Israel, reclaimed water is extensively used for agricultural irrigation, aiding in reducing the pressure on freshwater sources and preserving precious water resources. The benefits of water recycling

in Israel are diverse. Water recycling helps to alleviate pressure on traditional water sources, such as rivers and aquifers, which are often overexploited and drained. By reusing treated wastewater, Israel can conserve its freshwater resources for essential uses and reduce the need for costly imports of water. Water recycling is essential to improve water security and resilience amid climate change and population growth. By incorporating recycled water into its water sources, Israel is better prepared to withstand droughts, water scarcity, and other water-related issues. It has promoted environmental sustainability by decreasing pollution and limiting the release of untreated wastewater into natural water sources. This practice helps preserve ecosystems, enhance water quality, and protect public health.

From Awareness to Action: Strategies for Sustainable Water Use in Israel

In Israel, public awareness measures and policies promoting water conservation are crucial elements of the country's water management strategy. The Israeli government, alongside various organizations and institutions has implemented a variety of initiatives to raise awareness about water conservation and encourage sustainable water use among the population. The Israeli government has initiated public education campaigns to educate citizens about the significance of water conservation and offer practical suggestions for reducing water consumption in daily routines. These campaigns leverage diverse platforms, including television, radio, social media, and educational materials, to reach a broad audience and encourage water-saving practices. To encourage citizens to invest in water-saving technologies and appliances, such as low-flow fixtures, water-efficient washing machines, and drought-resistant plants, the government provides financial incentives and rebates. These incentives help offset the costs of water-saving measures and motivate households to embrace more sustainable water practices. Israel has implemented progressive water pricing policies that impose higher rates for excessive water consumption. These policies incentivize households to use water more efficiently and reduce wastage. By linking water pricing to consumption levels, the government encourages citizens to be more mindful of their water use and adopt water-saving habits. The Israeli government has implemented water conservation regulations that establish standards for water use across different sectors, including agriculture, industry, and households. These regulations include restrictions on activities like watering gardens, washing cars, and filling swimming pools during drought periods. Additionally, they mandate water-efficient practices in commercial and industrial operations. Community-based initiatives, such as water conservation workshops, neighbourhood campaigns, and school programs, engage citizens at the local level and empower communities to take collective action to reduce water consumption. These programs foster a sense of shared responsibility for water conservation and encourage grassroots participation in sustainable water management.

Conclusion

By implementing innovative technologies and strategic water management approaches, Israel has successfully established a sustainable water supply for its population. Replicating these effective measures could empower India and other nations to elevate their water management strategies and address their water challenges more effectively. Governments and stakeholders must prioritize water conservation, pollution mitigation, and sustainable water practices to

guarantee a dependable water source for present and future generations. Israel's accomplishments highlight the possibilities of conquering water scarcity through meticulous planning and cooperative endeavours, paving the way for a more sustainable water future.

References

1. Keller, A., Sakthivadivel, R., & Seckler, D. (2000). *Research report water scarcity and the role of storage in ...* <https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/>. Retrieved on October 14, 2022, from https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/Publications/IWMI_Research_Reports/PDF/Pub039/Report39.pdf.
2. Kummu, M., Guillaume, J. H. A., & de Moel, H. et.al. (2016). *The world's road to water scarcity: shortage and stress in the 20th century and pathways towards sustainability*. Retrieved on October 14, 2022, from <https://www.nature.com/>. <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep38495>.
3. Singh, J., & Kaur, J. (2019, April). *India's Water Crisis - Challenges, Solutions and Barriers*. Retrieved on October 18, 2022, from <http://www.rgics.org/>. http://www.rgics.org/wp-content/uploads/Working-Paper_Indias-Water-Crisis.pdf
4. Israeli Foreign Ministry. (n.d.). *Israel's chronic water problem*. Retrieved on October 18, 2022, from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/>. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/israel-s-chronic-water-problem>
5. Biswas, A. K., & Tortajada, C. (2019). Water crisis and water wars: Myths and realities. *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, 35(5), 727–731. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07900627.2019.1636502>