February/March Double Issue

March 2023

Overfishing: a threat to clean water and sanitation

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Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Overfishing is one of the largest causes for marine life destruction, as it threatens the world's oxygen supply, as well as one of the planet's biggest carbon sinks. Basically, overfishing is unsustainable fishing, so catching too many fish at once without allowing the species to reproduce, eliminating or putting under threat of extinction a lot of those species. It endangers ocean ecosystems and the people who depend on seafood as a key source of protein.

On the one hand, one could say that modern fishing gear is quite efficient at catching specific fish and everything else in its way, right? However, around 40% of by catch ends up dead before being tossed back into the water. So, the question is: Is the gear used by most fishermen really the best it could be? According to Greenpeace, nets, lines, and traps make up more than 85% of all plastic in the sea, and most of what happens in the sea goes unregulated.

What you can do to help:

1. Lower your seafood intake & choose certified sustainable/organic seafood

   Pro tip: look out for the blue fish tick!

2. Reduce food waste
   Especially with seafood (which is known for going bad quickly), be more mindful of portion sizes, so nothing goes to waste
3. Go vegetarian or vegan
   - Currently, approx. 90% of all managed water is used to grow food
   - Livestock is the number 1 contributor to nitrogen & phosphorus pollution of streams, rivers & coastal waters worldwide

Climate Change and Conflicts Over Water

Ninad Satish

As the planet continues to warm, conflicts over water are likely to become more common and serious.

One example of a water conflict is the conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Nile Basin. The conflict began when Ethiopia began building a dam which Egypt says will reduce the share of water it receives from the Nile.

However, there are some ways to fix this on a policy level, through water agreements (SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), which enable countries to collaborate on sharing water, which can help to ensure that water is shared more equitably. More importantly, however, is the need for climate action (SDG 13), as these issues will only be exacerbated as the planet heats up.

Unfortunately, this may be difficult to come by. In many regions around the world – and especially those experiencing water shortages and water conflicts, such as Egypt - populations have more pressing issues to deal with, such as government crackdowns on free speech, human rights violations[1], economic mismanagement, and more. This can make it less likely that people will have the power to force their governments to focus on effectively regulating water.

The Issue of Dams

Pranav Satish

While dams provide many benefits in ensuring access to clean hydroelectric power and water storage, they do have some negative drawbacks. Dams have a role in water quality degradation in reservoirs, sometimes trapping sediment and pollutants. This may significantly impact the water quality of communities that are further downstream. Additionally, dams might contribute to the spread of disease. Dams create large, stagnant bodies of water, which increases their risk of people catching water-borne diseases such as cholera.

Additionally, because dams disrupt natural river flows, they have negative impacts on aquatic ecosystems. This alters habitats and disrupts nutrient cycling, causing the quality of the water downstream to degrade.

Actions you can take to help:

It is important to recognize the negative impacts of dams, especially in rural or underdeveloped areas; perhaps monitor the cleanliness of the water periodically to keep your community secure.

Works Cited

1. https://archive.internationalrivers.org/environmental-impacts-of-dams

[1] Egypt: Human rights crisis deepens one year after national human rights strategy launched - Amnesty International