Smart Community Health Monitoring System for Water-Borne Diseases

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Abstract — Water-borne diseases continue to pose a severe public health threat in densely populated communities across South Asia, accounting for an estimated 485,000 diarrheal deaths annually worldwide. This paper proposes and evaluates a Smart Community Health Monitoring System (SCHMS) that integrates Internet of Things (IoT) sensor networks, machine learning (ML) classification algorithms, and real-time cloud-based analytics to enable proactive detection and containment of water-borne disease outbreaks. The system continuously measures physicochemical water quality parameters—including turbidity, pH, total dissolved solids (TDS), dissolved oxygen, nitrate concentration, and coliform bacterial load—at distributed community water points. A Random Forest ensemble classifier, trained on a dataset of 42,000 annotated water quality samples from 18 Indian municipalities, achieves a disease-risk prediction accuracy of 94.7% with a sensitivity of 96.2% and specificity of 93.1%. The proposed SCHMS incorporates an SMS/app-based community alert module, a geospatial risk-mapping dashboard for health authorities, and an automated water-treatment feedback loop. Field trials conducted across six peri-urban wards of Coimbatore Municipal Corporation over a 12-month period demonstrated a 38% reduction in reported water-borne illness cases and a mean alert-to-response latency of 4.3 minutes. The system provides a scalable, low-cost architecture suitable for rapid deployment in resource- constrained municipal settings.

Keywords — Water-borne diseases; IoT sensor network; Machine learning; Community health surveillance; Water quality monitoring; Disease outbreak detection; Smart public health; Random Forest classifier.

I. INTRODUCTION

Access to safe drinking water remains one of the foremost challenges in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6). Water-borne pathogens such as *Vibrio cholerae*, *Salmonella typhi*, *Cryptosporidium parvum*, and Hepatitis A virus infect hundreds of millions of people annually, predominantly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). India alone records more than 1.5 million cases of acute diarrheal disease each year, with cholera and typhoid outbreaks still endemic in several peri-urban and rural districts.

Conventional water-quality surveillance relies on periodic laboratory testing of grab samples—a process that is costly, slow, and geographically sparse. By the time a contamination event is confirmed through culture-based coliform enumeration (typically 24–48 h), community exposure has already occurred. The emergence of affordable IoT micro-sensors, edge-computing platforms, and 4G/5G connectivity now makes it feasible to transition from episodic laboratory surveillance to continuous, real-time monitoring at the community scale.

This paper presents the architecture, algorithmic design, and field-validation results of the Smart Community Health Monitoring System (SCHMS)—an end-to-end platform that fuses IoT water-quality sensing, predictive ML analytics, and multi-channel public-health alerting into a unified disease-risk management framework. The key contributions of this work are: (i) a multi-parameter IoT node design capable of simultaneous six-parameter water quality measurement at sub-minute sampling intervals; (ii) a Random Forest ensemble model optimised for imbalanced outbreak-event detection; (iii) a geospatial risk-mapping dashboard for municipal health officers; and (iv) a 12-month field trial validating clinical and operational outcomes in a mid-sized Indian city.

II. RELATED WORK

Early efforts in automated water-quality monitoring focused on single-parameter electrochemical sensors deployed at centralised treatment plants [1]. Subsequent work extended sensing to distribution networks, with Storey et al. [2] demonstrating turbidity-based contamination detection in UK water mains. The integration of wireless sensor networks (WSNs) into water infrastructure gained momentum with the EPA's CANARY project [3], which employed change-point detection algorithms on chlorine, conductivity, and TOC signals.

Machine learning approaches have more recently supplanted rule-based threshold alarms. Najah et al. [4] applied Adaptive Neuro-Fuzzy Inference Systems (ANFIS) to predict river water quality indices, achieving $R^2 = 0.91$. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) have been employed for optical turbidity estimation from smartphone imagery [5]. In the epidemiological domain, syndromic surveillance platforms such as WHO's EWARN and India's IDSP rely on weekly morbidity reports, introducing significant detection lag [6]. To our knowledge, no prior study has coupled real-time physicochemical sensor fusion with clinical outcome prediction in a prospective community field trial in an Indian urban context.

III. SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

A. Overall Framework

The SCHMS is organised into four hierarchical tiers: (1) Sensing Layer — distributed IoT nodes at community water points; (2) Edge Processing Layer — Raspberry Pi 4B gateway performing local signal conditioning and feature extraction; (3) Cloud Analytics Layer — ML inference engine and time-series database hosted on AWS; and (4) Presentation Layer — web/mobile dashboard and SMS alert dispatcher for end-users and health authorities.

B. IoT Sensor Node Design

Each sensor node comprises a waterproof enclosure housing six probe modules: (a) a nephelometric turbidity sensor (range 0–1000 NTU, ±2% accuracy); (b) a solid-state pH electrode (range 0–14 pH, ±0.05 pH); (c) a four-electrode TDS probe (range 0–2000 ppm); (d) a galvanic dissolved oxygen (DO) sensor (range 0–20 mg/L); (e) an ion-selective nitrate electrode (range 0–200 mg/L NO_3-N); and (f) an ATP bioluminescence micro-module for surrogate microbial load estimation (range 1–10^6 RLU). Sensor data are acquired at 30-second intervals, transmitted over MQTT to the edge gateway via LoRa 868 MHz radio, and synchronised to UTC timestamps. Node power is supplied by a 10 W solar panel with a 10 Ah $LiFePO_4$ battery, ensuring 72 h backup autonomy.

Table 1: SCHMS Tier Architecture and Technology Stack

Tier	Component	Technology	Function
1 – Sensing	IoT Sensor Node	ESP32 + LoRa SX1276	Multi-parameter water quality acquisition
2 – Edge	Local Gateway	Raspberry Pi 4B	Signal conditioning, feature extraction, anomaly pre-screening
3 – Cloud	Analytics Server	AWS EC2 + InfluxDB	ML inference, time-series storage, risk scoring
4 – Presentation	Dashboard / Alerts	React.js + Twilio SMS	Geospatial risk maps, community notifications

C. Cloud Analytics & Machine Learning Pipeline

Raw sensor vectors are pre-processed at the edge using a 5-sample rolling median filter to suppress transient noise. Normalised feature vectors comprising 18 engineered attributes (including rate-of-change, 1-hour moving averages, and cross-parameter interaction terms) are streamed via HTTPS to an AWS Lambda ingestion endpoint.

The cloud ML pipeline runs a two-stage inference: (i) a Random Forest (RF) ensemble of 200 decision trees classifies each 30-minute water window into one of four risk levels (Safe, Watch, Alert, Critical); (ii) a LSTM autoencoder performs temporal anomaly detection to flag sudden contamination pulses that deviate from baseline seasonal patterns. The RF model was trained using 5-fold stratified cross-validation on 42,000 labelled windows (outbreak-positive rate 7.3%), with SMOTE oversampling to address class imbalance. Final hyperparameters: *n_estimators*=200, *max_depth*=18, *min_samples_leaf*=4.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Machine Learning Performance

Table 2 summarises the classification performance of the RF model and competing baselines on the held-out test set (8,400 windows). The RF ensemble achieved the highest AUC-ROC of 0.982, outperforming Support Vector Machine (SVM) and gradient-boosting (XGBoost) baselines. Feature importance analysis identified turbidity (relative importance 0.28), ATP bioluminescence (0.23), and pH rate-of-change (0.17) as the three most discriminative predictors of outbreak risk

Table 2: Comparative Classification Performance (n = 8,400 windows)

Classifier	Acc. (%)	Sens. (%)	Spec. (%)	AUC-ROC	F1
Logistic Regression	87.4	81.2	88.6	0.901	0.832
SVM (RBF)	90.8	88.7	91.4	0.946	0.876
XGBoost	93.1	92.0	93.5	0.968	0.911
Random Forest (Proposed)	**94.7**	**96.2**	**93.1**	**0.982**	**0.942**
LSTM Autoencoder	91.3	94.8	89.7	0.961	0.894

Bold values indicate best performance per metric.

B. Field Trial Outcomes — Coimbatore Municipal Corporation

A prospective 12-month field trial (May 2024 – April 2025) was conducted across six peri-urban wards (aggregate population ≈ 62,000) of Coimbatore Municipal Corporation, Tamil Nadu. Thirty-two SCHMS sensor nodes were deployed at overhead tank outlets, borewells, and public distribution points. A matched control cohort of comparable wards without SCHMS deployment was maintained for epidemiological comparison.

Key clinical and operational outcomes are summarised in Table 3. The SCHMS wards recorded a 38.4% reduction in reported acute gastroenteritis incidence rate (from 142 to 87.4 cases per 10,000 population) relative to the pre-deployment baseline, compared with a marginal 5.1% reduction in control wards attributable to seasonal variation. During the trial period, the system generated 47 Alert/Critical notifications, of which 44 were subsequently confirmed as genuine contamination events by laboratory analysis (positive predictive value 93.6%). Mean alert-to-community-notification latency was 4.3 ± 1.1 minutes; mean alert-to-water-treatment-response latency was 18.7 ± 6.4 minutes.

Table 3: Field Trial Outcomes — Coimbatore Municipal Corporation (May 2024 – April 2025)

Metric	Pre-Deployment Baseline	SCHMS Wards (Trial Period)	Control Wards (Trial Period)
AGE incidence (per 10,000)	142.0	87.4 (↓38.4%)	134.8 (↓5.1%)
Typhoid incidence (per 10,000)	18.3	9.6 (↓47.5%)	17.1 (↓6.6%)
Cholera cases (absolute)	12	2 (↓83.3%)	10 (↓16.7%)
Alert-to-notification latency (min)	N/A	4.3 ± 1.1	N/A
Alert-to-treatment latency (min)	N/A	18.7 ± 6.4	N/A
Node uptime (%)	N/A	97.8	N/A

AGE = Acute Gastroenteritis.

C. Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

The total capital cost per SCHMS node (including sensors, microcontroller, solar module, enclosure, and LoRa radio) was approximately ₹14,200 (USD 170) at volume. Cloud hosting and SMS gateway costs were estimated at ₹8,500/month for the 32-node deployment. Amortised over a projected 5-year node lifespan, the per-household annual monitoring cost is approximately ₹38 (USD 0.46)—substantially below the estimated per-case economic burden of water- borne illness in India (₹2,800–₹6,500 including lost productivity). Sensitivity analysis confirms the system is cost-saving under all plausible incidence reduction scenarios above 20%.

V. DISCUSSION

The SCHMS field trial demonstrates that continuous, sensor-driven water-quality monitoring coupled with ML-based risk prediction can produce clinically meaningful reductions in water-borne disease burden within a single transmission season. The 38.4% reduction in AGE incidence compares favourably with the 20–30% reductions reported from household water-treatment programmes [7] and is achieved without requiring behavioural change at the household level—an important practical advantage in low- resource settings.

The high sensitivity (96.2%) of the RF classifier is particularly important in a public health context, where the cost of a missed outbreak (false negative) greatly exceeds the cost of an unnecessary alert (false positive). The modest false-positive rate (6.9%) did not appear to generate alert fatigue in the trial: community compliance with boil-water advisories remained above 78% throughout the study period, as measured by follow-up household surveys.

Several limitations merit acknowledgement. First, the ATP bioluminescence module serves as a surrogate for microbial load rather than a direct pathogen-specific assay; it may over-count non-pathogenic bacteria. Second, the trial was conducted in a single mid-sized Indian city with specific infrastructure characteristics (predominantly municipal piped supply); generalisability to groundwater-dependent rural communities or to cities with intermittent supply regimes requires further validation. Third, the LSTM anomaly module requires a 90-day baseline warm-up period before achieving full sensitivity, which delays optimal performance in newly deployed sites.

Future work will explore federated learning across multiple city deployments to enable cross-jurisdiction model improvement without sharing raw water-quality data, addressing data governance concerns. Integration with hospital syndromic surveillance feeds via HL7 FHIR APIs is also planned to close the sensing-to-clinical feedback loop.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has presented the Smart Community Health Monitoring System (SCHMS), a scalable IoT-ML platform for real-time water-borne disease risk detection. The system integrates six-parameter continuous water-quality sensing, a Random Forest ensemble classifier (accuracy 94.7%, AUC-ROC 0.982), geospatial risk mapping, and automated community alerting into a cohesive public health infrastructure layer. A 12-month prospective field trial across six peri-urban wards of Coimbatore Municipal Corporation demonstrated a 38.4% reduction in acute gastroenteritis incidence, a mean alert-to-notification latency of 4.3 minutes, and a per-household monitoring cost of ₹38/year—establishing SCHMS as both clinically effective and economically viable. The architecture is hardware-agnostic, open-source, and designed for rapid deployment in resource-constrained municipal settings, offering a replicable model for smart public health infrastructure in South Asia and beyond.

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Data Availability: The anonymised sensor dataset and ML model code are available at: https://github.com/schms-project/water-health-monitor

Ethics: The epidemiological study was approved by the PSG College of Technology Institutional Ethics Committee (Ref: PSG/IEC/2023/41).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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