

70% TOWNS ALONG GANGA LET OUT GARBAGE DIRECTLY INTO THE RIVER: STUDY

Relevant for: Environment & Disaster Management | Topic: Environmental Pollution - Air, Water, Soil & E-waste

A nullah dumps sewage into the Ganga at Shivala Ghat in Varanasi. File | Photo Credit: [The Hindu](#)

Four-and-a-half years after the Centre launched its flagship Namami Gange programme to clean up the Ganga, a government-commissioned assessment has found that 66 towns and cities along the river still have *nullahs* or drains flowing directly into the Ganga. Almost 85% of these *nullahs* do not even have screens set up to stop garbage from entering the river.

Of the 92 towns surveyed, 72 still have old or legacy dump sites on the ghats. Only 19 towns have a municipal solid waste plant, according to an assessment done by the Quality Council of India (QCI).

The third party assessment, which was conducted over a 6-week period in November and December 2018, was commissioned by the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD). It covered 92 of the 97 towns along the river, located in five States: Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. Of the remaining five towns, three had no ghats along the river, while two were shut due to extreme weather conditions during the period of the survey.

Of the 242 *nullahs* that discharge directly into the Ganga, only 37 had installed screens, some of which are already choked with garbage. Of the 205 *nullahs* allowing solid waste to flow freely into the river without any screens, 100 are in the towns of West Bengal. In fact, only two *nullahs* in that State had any screens at all, the assessment found. Bihar also fared very poorly, with none of the 30 *nullahs* in the State having any screens.

While much of the focus of Namami Gange over the last four years has been on liquid waste management and sewage treatment plants, the Centre is now turning its focus to solid waste management as well, under the aegis of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).

However, a workshop held on the issue last week saw participation from less than half the towns along the Ganga, with West Bengal — where 39 of the towns are located — having the smallest presence, with less than five officials attending. The MoUD warned municipal officials that another assessment would be done in March to check their progress on these measures. The ongoing nationwide Swachh Survekshan survey will also include a special award for the Ganga towns, said Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra.

The QCI assessment graded the towns on four parameters: overall cleanliness, which involved the dump sites and garbage vulnerable points present near the ghats, as well as the presence of solid waste floating on the river's surface; the availability of a municipal solid waste plant; the installation and maintenance of screens placed over *nullahs*; and solid waste management services such as sweeping and cleaning arrangements, litter bins and anti-littering signs and a trash cleaner to trap solid waste floating on the river.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most of the 12 towns that achieved an 'A' grade had populations of less than 1 lakh people. Most were located in the upstream States of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. A notable exception was the West Bengal town of Maheshtala, with a population of 4.5 lakh. Large cities such as Kolkata, Varanasi, Kanpur and Patna all achieved low scores.

Residents didn't cook food for the day

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