

# FEW VILLAGES RECEIVED WASTE DISPOSAL INFRASTRUCTURE: PANEL

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Only 12% of the villages that were supposed to get infrastructure for liquid waste management this year have achieved their goal under the second phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission, according to the parliamentary standing committee report on water resources presented in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. The implementation of solid waste management infrastructure also lagged behind, with only 22% of target villages covered during 2021-22 until February 7.

In its first phase, the Swachh Bharat Mission aimed to provide a toilet in every rural household and claimed to have achieved its goal in 2019. However, the second phase, which involves more complex community-level infrastructure — including facilities for collection and segregation of solid waste, compost pits and biogas plants for biodegradable waste, greywater management, soak pits, and treatment of faecal sludge — has not been able to meet targets, with the pandemic also slowing down progress.

The panel sought answers from the Jal Shakti Ministry regarding what it described as a “dismal performance” for one of the Centre’s flagship schemes, but the Ministry’s response put the onus on the States instead, saying they had projected their own targets. “However, as revealed by the States in various review meetings that due to complexity involved in taking up SLWM activities and also due to recurrence of COVID-19 pandemic, implementation of the programme hampered at ground level and progress has been low,” it said.

The panel, headed by BJP MP Sanjay Jaiswal, asked to be kept informed about such “complexities” and also about “remedial measures” taken to remove bottlenecks. It urged the Ministry to launch awareness campaigns to motivate people to demand solid and liquid waste management facilities in their villages.

## Low fund utilisation

With regard to the Ministry’s other flagship scheme, the Jal Jeevan Mission, which aims to bring potable tap water to all rural homes by 2024, the committee slammed the government for low fund utilisation. While Rs. 50,011 crore was allocated in the Budget, the revised estimates for the scheme was reduced to Rs. 45,011 and the actual expenditure incurred so far is only Rs. 28,238 crore. In fact, only three States — Himachal Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya — have fully used their allocation from the Centre. Some of the largest States have the poorest performances, with Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu all using less than 25% of their funds from the Centre, the panel noted.

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