

# **UP Sludge Management Systems - CSE Study**

#### What is the issue?

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The Centre for Science and Environment recently released a report on its analysis of sludge management systems in 30 cities in Uttar Pradesh.

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#### What are the highlights?

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- Waterbodies Urban Uttar Pradesh has an 80% coverage of toilets, but inefficient sanitation systems.
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- So almost 87% of faecal sludge expelled from toilets in urban areas is untreated.

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- This, in turn, is being dumped in waterbodies or agricultural lands.  $\space{1mm}\spa$
- It is eventually leading to polluting the Ganga and other rivers.  $\ensuremath{\sc vn}$
- Systems The number of toilets and onsite sanitation systems being built in the state are all set to increase exponentially.  $\n$
- But the effluent from the septic tank, along with greywater from other uses flows out into stormwater drains and open drains.  $\n$
- If not managed scientifically and sustainably, the amount of faecal sludge that new toilets will generate will swamp the State.  $\n$
- It will only worsen the environmental, sanitation and manual scavenging situation.

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• Manual scavengers - The faecal sludge has to be periodically emptied from

the septic tank, either manually or mechanically.

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- But half of all emptying work in the studied cities is done manually.
- This is despite the legal prohibition of the employment of manual scavengers.  $\ensuremath{\sc vn}$

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## What are the other drawbacks?

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• State support for improved housing and planned development has never been strong.

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- The National Urban Sanitation Policy of 2008 has not changed this condition significantly.  $\gamma_n$
- At the national scale, a UN report of 2015 estimates that 65,000 tonnes of untreated faeces is introduced into the environment in India annually. n
- The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan promised a major shift, but the focus is more on the basic requirement of household and community toilets in rural and urban areas.

- So the problem of waste not being contained, collected without manual labour, transported and treated safely remains.  $\n$ 

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## What lies ahead?

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- India aims to achieve clean water and sanitation for all, under the UN Sustainable Development Agenda, by 2030.
- Given this, decentralised sludge management systems are vital to achieve the clean water goals.

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- Investments at this end would improve the environment and reduce the disease burden with insanitary conditions.  $\n$
- The strategy for the Ganga relies on large sewage treatment plants for riverside cities and towns.
- The CSE study is being followed up with a mapping exercise on the flow of faecal waste streams in individual cities, which is welcome.  $\n$
- One immediate intervention needed is the creation of an inter-departmental task force.

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- This has to identify land to build small treatment systems for sludge.  $\slash n$
- It should also provide easily accessible solutions to houses that are currently discharging waste into open drains.  $\n$
- The business of emptying faecal material using tanker trucks needs to be professionalised and de-stigmatised.  $\n$
- Caste factors still play out in the recruitment of workers even in the mechanised operations. (Click here to know more)  $_{\n}$
- So all aspects of the business of sanitation need reforms in India.  $\space{\space{1.5}n}$

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## Source: The Hindu

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