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# Where to take a dump

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## Building toilets is all well and good, but what happens to the sludge?



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Bhushan Tuladhar

June 5, 2018 (<https://www.nepalitimes.com/opinion/where-to-take-a-dump/>)

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*LOADS OF CRAP: Asmin Lama came back from the Gulf to start a septic tank emptying venture. He has been so busy servicing clients, he hasn't even got a license plate yet for his tanker truck. Pic: Bhusan Tuladhar*

**A**s Nepal marks National Sanitation Action Week, it is time for stock-taking. The statistics are dramatic: in 1990 only 6% of households had toilets, and that figure has risen to 95% today. The numbers went up sharply after the Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan 2011 was implemented.

Nepal could not meet its target of being open-defecation free by 2017, but the government is confident the goal will be attained this year, even though reaching the last 5% who either cannot afford to build toilets, or prefer not to have one, will be difficult.

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Nepal has also signed up to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which calls for safely managed sanitation services, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater, and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse by 2030.

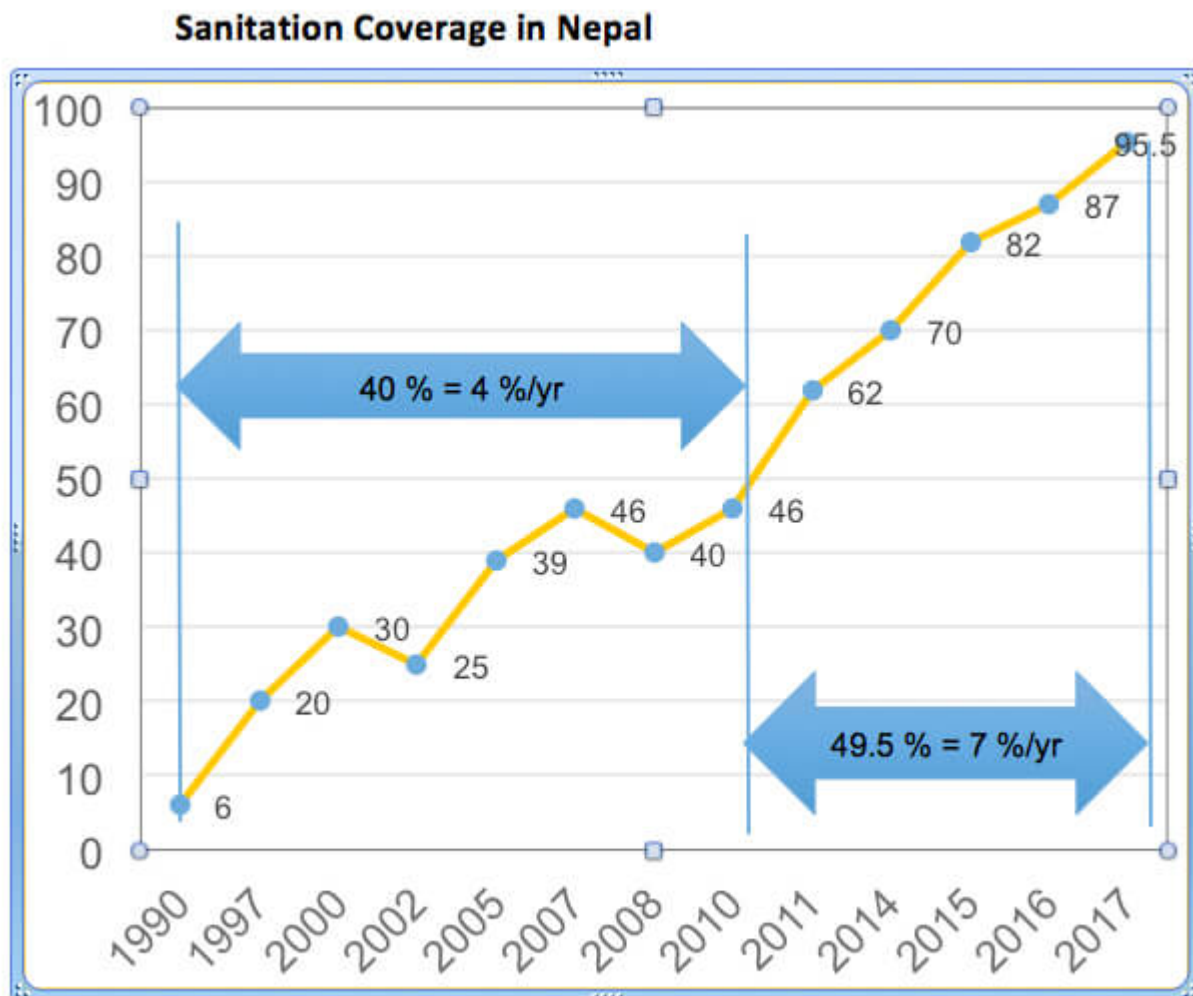
While having a toilet in every household and putting up a sign declaring a district 'open defecation free' is a major achievement, it is only the first step. Having a toilet is different from using a toilet. A recent study by the Global Sanitation Fund Programme in Nepal

showed that 3% of households in communities declared 'open defecation free' did not have toilets, and in 5% of families at least one member still defecated outside despite having a toilet at home.

A bigger challenge is what to do with the excreta in toilets built in the last few years that have pits or septic tanks that are starting to fill up. Cleaning services for septic tanks are now a booming business, particularly in the Tarai.

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After coming back from the Gulf, Asmin Lama of Itahari invested Rs3 million in a truck, which still doesn't have a license plate since he has been too busy responding to clients who want their septic tanks emptied. Lama's challenge is where to dump the contaminated faecal sludge.



Source: DWSS, 2018

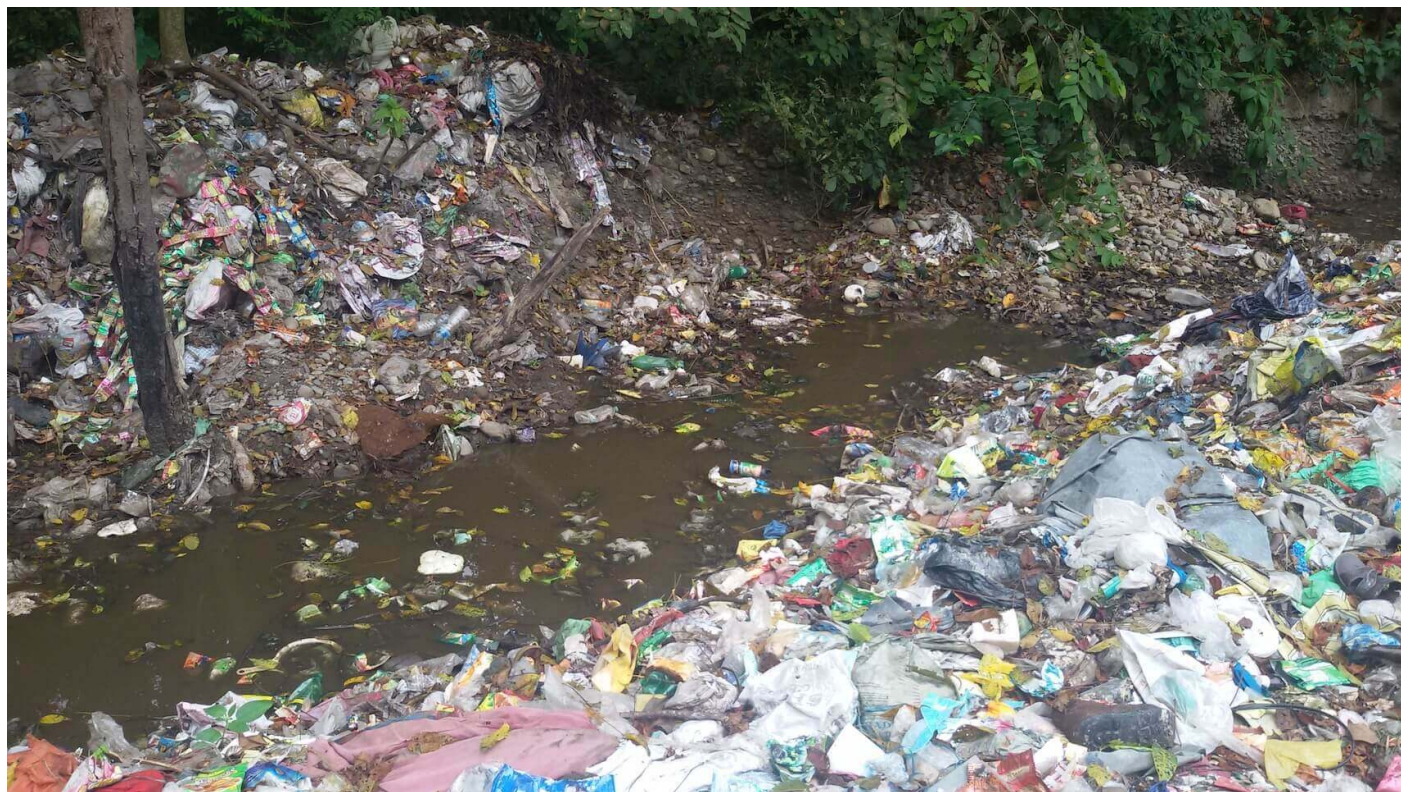


At present, there are only three effluent treatment facilities in Nepal: in Pokhara, Gulariya, and Mahalaxmi Municipality east of Lalitpur. Human waste collected in Kathmandu by the 25 or so private trucks in operation just dump the liquid waste into the Bagmati.

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The river also receives raw sewage from the 1,200km of sewer lines in the Valley. Four of the five sewage treatment plants in Kathmandu are unserviceable because of poor management, though the government has a \$137million ADB loan to renovate and upgrade these plants and the sewer network.

The Bagmati Clean-up Campaign marked five years recently. Every Saturday morning hundreds of volunteers waded into the river's fetid banks to remove tons of trash. Although the river looks cleaner, the water is still smelly from all the raw sewage draining into it. The government occasionally pretends to do something about this problem, fining private sludge collectors, but in the absence of a treatment facility this is just an eyewash.



Treating faecal sludge is not necessarily rocket science. There are a range of technologies from simply drying the sludge to more advanced systems. Last week, experts from 30 countries were in Kathmandu to discuss and finalise ISO standards for non-sewered sanitation systems, which would include treatment of faecal sludge.

Doulaye Kone from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation who chairs the ISO committee says he is willing to help Nepal come up with systems for managing its fecal sludge. But for this the federal and local governments need to look beyond toilets to establish appropriate systems for collection, treatment and reuse of faecal sludge. This can be done in partnership with the private sector, which is already engaged in the business.

Nepal has a history of reusing human excreta. Gopal Singh Nepali in his 1965 book *The Newars* mentions that nightsoil as fertiliser cost 50 paisa per tin in Kathmandu Valley. People traditionally understood the value of waste, they realised it needed to be recycled, and had developed a system in which the private sector and waste generators worked hand in hand to manage this resource.

Urine was collected separately in brass *kopra* containers and emptied in *naugaa*, the ash pit. Our ancestors understood that nitrogen-rich urine when mixed with ash or farm residue with high carbohydrate content made excellent compost.

The challenge now is to revive such traditional knowhow in treating waste as a resource, and re-establish waste management as a business. Nepal is ready to take the next step beyond building toilets.

***Bhusan Tuladhar is UN-Habitat's Chief Technical Adviser for South Asia.***

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## Karnali Province to ban Facebook during working hours

**NAGENDRA UPADHYAY**  
SURKHET, March 25

As the officials of various ministries of the provincial government seemed too busy using Facebook instead of development works, Karnali Province has announced to ban Facebook during the working hours from Tuesday onward.

No officer working in any ministry of the province will be allowed to browse Facebook from Tuesday. "As of now, we have banned Facebook at ministries during working hours," said

Chief Minister (CM) Mahendra Bahadur Shahi, adding, "We will soon implement this decision in the whole province."

Once the decision is implemented, CM Shahi hopes that officials will dedicate their time and energy working for the welfare of people and the province.

"This was necessary," added Shahi. On Sunday, CM Shahi held discussions with the internet service providers to ban Facebook at the workstations of provincial government. In Surkhet, Nepal Telecom, WorldLink, Subisu, Tech-

mind and Surkhet Cable Net are providing internet service.

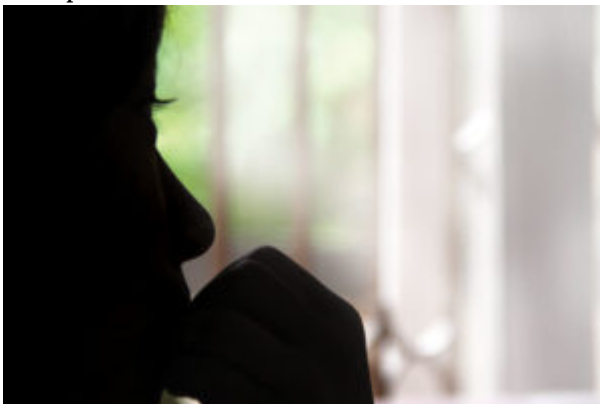
"The chief minister talked to us regarding banning Facebook," said Nawraj Pangali, chief of WorldLink, Surkhet, adding, "We have assured to help him implement his decision."

The provincial government will be sending an official letter to the ministries on Monday informing that Facebook will be banned from Tuesday. Reportedly, Facebook will be banned in the offices from 10 am till 5 pm.

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