

90% of India's 102 city clean air plans have no budgetary allocation

- *75% of city clean air plans do not contain information on emission sources.*
- *Less than 30% of the interventions call for on-ground pollution control measures*
- *Lack of monitoring, execution, accountability despite multiple agencies afflict city administrations*

New Delhi, June 10: About 90% of India's 102 approved city-specific clean air plans do not have a budget outlined for the execution of the proposed air pollution mitigation activities, according to a new independent study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and Urban Emissions. Over 75% of the plans do not contain crucial information on emission from different polluting sources, leading to replication of action points and timelines across many highly polluted cities across the country. Apart from Delhi's clean air plan, other city-specific clean air plans also do not have a legal mandate for implementation. As India gradually emerges from a lockdown, air pollution in its cities is again on the rise. The CEEW-Urban Emissions study 'How Robust are Urban India's Clean Air Plans?: An Assessment of 102 cities' was released today.

Tanushree Ganguly, a researcher at CEEW and a co-author of the study, said, "The clampdown on all non-essential activities because of the pandemic and the resultant decline in pollution levels have made the environmental footprint of economic activity in our cities extremely evident. In order to ensure that blue skies become permanent, cities should be absolutely certain of their short, medium, and long-term air pollution reduction goals. State and municipal budgets also need to reflect planned expenditure on air pollution mitigation. Finally, to meet the democratic demand for clean air, pollution control boards and city authorities should create trackable indicators to oversee the progress of implementation of these plans."

The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), launched in January 2019, has listed the preparation and implementation of city-specific air quality management plans as a primary mitigation measure for reducing PM 2.5 concentration by 20% to 30% by 2024. However, the CEEW-Urban Emissions study finds that 14 of Uttar Pradesh's 15 non-attainment cities have identical plans. So do multiple cities in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir (now a Union Territory), Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand. Moreover, over 70% of the actions mentioned involve overseeing, planning, proposing, preparing, investigating, identifying, ensuring, strengthening, training, studying, and engaging. Meanwhile, less than 30% of the interventions call for on-ground pollution control measures. Transport is the most discussed sector in most plans, accounting for 38% of the total mitigation measures.

"Based on the review of the plans, the areas that need immediate attention include, i) an emissions database representative of spatial and temporal variation and ii) a coordinating agency to act on the policies and monitor progress," Dr Sarath Guttikunda, one of the co-authors of the study and the founder of Urban Emissions said.

The CEEW-Urban Emissions study also reveals that pollution control boards are in charge of only 24% of the mitigation activities listed in the plans, while 37% comes under the ambit of municipal corporations and urban local bodies (ULBs). Over 40% of the action points listed fall under the purview of multiple agencies. Besides, none of the plans propose a regional coordination mechanism, although about 30% of the pollution is from sources outside the city boundaries.

“Execution of mitigation measures calls for cross-departmental coordination. For instance, action plans of 15 non-attainment cities in Uttar Pradesh list 56 measures across 17 different agencies. Of these, about 30% of actions fall under multiple agencies and this could fragment the accountability. Hence, for each action point, it is crucial to delineate specific tasks among participating agencies,” Kurinji Selvaraj, a researcher at CEEW and a co-author of the study, said.

In the Union Budget for 2020-21, Finance Minister Nirmala Situraman had allocated INR 4,400 crore “to encourage such states that are formulating and implementing plans for ensuring cleaner air in cities (with population) above one million”. However, only nine cities have listed budgetary requirements for executing the action points listed.

Overall, the study states that the plans stand as a collection of measures without specified goals and priorities. Besides, the lack of a national emission inventory and the absence of a standard protocol for air pollution emission reporting across states hinder the setting of emission reduction targets.

Methodology

The CEEW-Urban Emissions study reviewed existing global literature on clean air planning to identify the key components of a clean air plan. The key components of a plan include the presence of a legal framework, source information, responsibility delineation, and the cost-effectiveness of proposed solutions. The 102 approved clean air plans for Indian non-attainment cities were then examined for the presence or absence of these elements. Further, descriptive statistics were used to explain and compare the plans across states and analyse the state-level variations in approaches towards clean air planning.

About CEEW

The [Council on Energy, Environment and Water](#) is one of South Asia’s leading not-for-profit policy research institutions. The Council uses data, integrated analysis, and strategic outreach to explain—and change—the use, reuse, and misuse of resources. It prides itself on its independent, high-quality research; develops partnerships with public and private institutions; and engages with the wider public. In 2020, CEEW was once again featured across nine categories in the *2019 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*. It has also been consistently ranked among the world’s top climate change think tanks. Follow us on Twitter [@CEEWIndia](#) for the latest updates.

About Urban Emissions

[Urban Emissions](#) (UEinfo) is an independent research institution that was founded with the vision to be a repository of air pollution-related information, research, and analysis. UEinfo hosts the only India-wide air quality forecasts dissemination platform, including a finer resolution platform specifically for Delhi. UEinfo also anchors the air pollution knowledge assessments (APnA) city programme, showcasing emissions, pollution, and source contribution information for 50 airsheds in India and 10 airsheds in Asia and Africa. Follow us on Twitter [@urbanemissions](#) for the latest updates.

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