

SWACCHATA PAKHWADA (10/07/2021)
National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR)

KOVALAM BEACH CLEANUP – 2021

Summary

As a part of “Swachhata Pakhwada” observance during 1-15 July 2021, a beach cleanup activity was conducted by National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), at Kovalam Beach on 10th July, 2021. A team of 27 members from NCCR enthusiastically participated in the clean-up drive. The team was equipped with all the necessary cleaning tools like gloves, rakes and sacks. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, social distance was maintained; masks were worn throughout the cleaning activity and strictly adhered to other Covid guidelines. A total of 150 kg of litter was collected within an area of 3000 m² after a two-hour vigorous clean-up. From the quantitative observations, the litter comprised of 2061 items from different categories like Plastic (62%), Cloths (17%), Paper (10%), Rubber (9%), Glass (1%), and Traditional waste (1%), Metal (0.05%). This report highlights the details of activities of the beach clean-up.



Introduction

Swachhata Pakhwada was initiated in April 2016, with the objective of bringing a fortnight of intense focus on the issues and practices of cleaning. In this regard, every year NCCR would involve in beach cleaning activities in collaboration with other research and educational institutes. Due to Covid 19 pandemic and to avoid mass gathering in the public, beach clean-up involving student and other volunteers were not indulged this year. Thus, a team of 27 members from NCCR participated in the beach clean-up at Kovalam.

The Kovalam (Covelong) is a fishing and tourist beach in the south of Chennai. The Union Environment Ministry has announced a programme for Blue Flag certification for 13 beaches in the country, and Kovalam beach

from Tamil Nadu is one among them. Blue Flag certification for beaches and marinas is run by the international agency Foundation for Environment Education (FEE). The beach must comply with 33 Blue Flag criteria in order to get the recognition, which is an indicator of high environmental and quality standards.

Beach clean-up details

- ✓ **Area:** Kovalam Beach, Chennai
- ✓ **Date:** 10-07-2021
- ✓ **Area Covered:** 3000 Square meters
- ✓ **Litter collected (in terms of weight) :** 150g
- ✓ **Litter collected (in terms of number):** 2061
- ✓ **Volunteers:** 27
- ✓ **Duration:** 10 am -12.30 pm

Participants were provided with cleaning material such as hand gloves, gunny bags and rakes. Everyone was wearing masks and gloves throughout the cleanup activity. The study area was measured using measuring tapes, and the markings are done using a stick tied with a red cloth. Then the participants were split into a team of 3 members each, for picking up the litter. Each team was provided with a sack for collecting the waste. The collected waste was placed at two points, where sorting of the waste based on the type of the litter was done after the clean-up.

From the statistics, it was found that Plastic (62%) was the dominant litter. The other categories included Cloths (17%); Paper (10%); Rubber (9%); Glass (1%); Traditional waste (1%); metal (0.05%) as shown in Fig.1. Approximately, 2061 items of litter were recorded, weighing for about 150Kg.

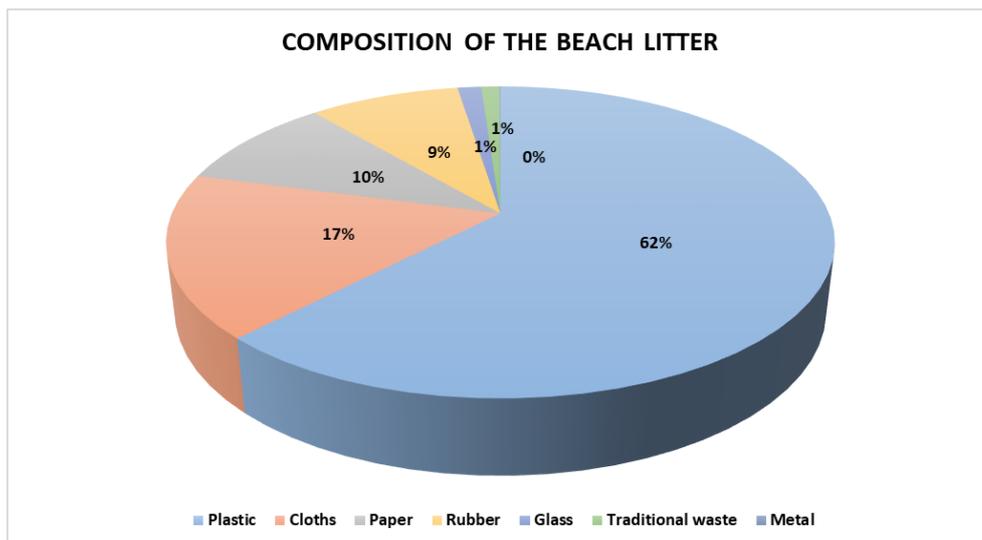


Fig.1. Composition of the Beach Litter

In comparison with our earlier observations on this beach, during 2019, a greater number of baby Diapers were observed whereas Plastic straws, spoons, Cigarette butts and balloons were found in very smaller quantities. Among the plastic litters, food wrappers topped the list followed by plastic covers. Food packages and containers were also observed during the beach cleanup.

Face masks contributed for about 5% of the total waste. Solid waste includes clothing, plastic and liquor bottles are reaching to the site most probably that is being dumped by the neighbourhood indicated very poor solid waste management.

From the interaction with the Ice cream vendor at the beach, it is informed that even though her shop maintains separate litter box, the visitors buying the ice creams usually do not use the dustbin and throw the wrappers on the beach, shows the attitude shift is need of the hour. The regular cleaning of beaches in that area is also not taken care of. When the beach becomes very dirty, sometimes the villagers form groups and clean the beaches. The main source of beach litter is originating from tourism and lack of regular monitoring by the local authority.

Apparently, tourism and fishing activity are the major sources of litter on this beach. On the day of clean-up, beach was visited by a number of visitors from nearby areas (Fig.2).



Fig.2. Kovalam Beach brimming with tourist and litter

Awareness campaign

After the Beach Clean-up, the Volunteers interacted with the public to spread awareness on the ill effects of Beach littering and its harmful impact to the environment. Few tourists actively took part in taking oath for protecting the beaches by saying “NO to the Beach litter”. (**Fig.3**).



Fig 3. Awareness spread among the Tourist people

A volunteer group with local schoolchildren was formed to monitor beach cleanliness and to advise the adults on the ill-effects of littering. (Fig. 4). The children assured the team that they will form a small volunteer group and try to teach the local visitors to use the dust bins.



Fig 4. Kids from the fishermen village taking oath to keep the beach clean

A rally was conducted by exhibiting placards with different messages related to clean environment to raise awareness among the localshopkeepers, tourists and fishermen (**Fig 5**). The amount of garbage that had piled up was displayed on the beach for a while for the understanding of common people about the level of pollution being created due to the carelessness attitude of the beach goers.Finally, all the collected wastes were kept at the allocated dump yard site of the local municipal corporation in charge of waste collection.



Fig 5. NCCR Staffs and Volunteers at the end of the cleaning session

Outreach through media

To ensure better outreach and elucidate the corollaries of dumping to common people and future generation with a vision of cleaner Ocean, the Pakhwada activities were communicated through print media (**Fig.6**) and social media viz., twitter

Haul of the day: 150kg waste from Chennai's Kovalam beach

TNN | Jul 11, 2021, 04.24 AM IST



CHENNAI: More than 150kg of waste were picked up from the sands of Kovalam beach off East Coast Road within a span of two hours during a beach cleanup on Saturday morning. Researchers from National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), who conducted the awareness campaign along with local volunteers, rated Kovalam beach, which was earlier pushed by the state for the international Blue Flag certification as 'dirty' in the Clean Coast Index.

NCCR scientist Pravakar Mishra, who coordinated the cleanup as part of 'Swachhata Pakhwada', said 10% of the waste were face masks and 15% were items used in religious rituals — items they had not found in previous beach cleanup activities at the location.

"Compared to our previous cleanup here, Kovalam beach is slowly turning bad. But we were surprised we did not find plastic spoons, straws and cigarette buds which we usually collect in big quantities during our beach clean-ups," he said. "We cannot say it is because of the ban on entry to beaches because we saw more than 500 people in the beach while we were involved in the clean-up activity. The absence of straws and spoons could be because of the ban on plastics," he said.

Fig.6 Outreach of Pakhwada activity

Recommendations:

1. Installation of dustbins in the beach for the usage of beach-goers.
2. Placing awareness boards such as "DON'T LITTER" at the beaches.
3. Monitoring the local shops and hotels from preventing the dumping of waste into the beach.
4. Educating the importance of a cleaner beach and ocean to the local school children and involving them in awareness programs.
5. Making a provision of incentives to local volunteers i.e., village youth group, self-help group, MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) workers involved in generating awareness and beach cleaning.
6. Regular monitoring and enforcing the strict rules for littering the beaches by local authority.

Picture says it all.....



(A) At the start of clean up



(B) During the clean up



(C) Segregation of waste



(D) After the beach clean-up



(E) Towards sustainable ocean