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SOLO WOMAN WALK-BATAPADY BEACH TO KANYAKUMARI-850+ KM-OCTOBER 5TH 2019 TO DECEMBER 6TH 2019-K2K THE COASTAL WALK

# Solid Waste Across the Coastline of Kerala

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On October 5th, 2019, Janet Orlene set out on a solo coastline walk from Batapady beach near the border of Kerala to Kanyakumari. Backed by a team of 2, Pradeep Rajendran and Meghana Basavaraju, Janet covered the entire strip of coast meeting the unique terrains, people and solid waste patterns of Kerala.

*\*This report has not been formally edited.\* | 4th July 2020 | Authored by Janet Orlene  
Report on Solid Waste along the coastline of Kerala -Ernakulam*

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# Introduction

What I expected to see was completely different from what I saw. I expected to find a lot more sanitary napkins, thin plastic bags, more obvious chemical pollution and other textbook things that I've learnt all my life. Instead, the largest quantities of solid waste turned out to be in the form of slippers and shoes, plastic water bottles, diapers, medical waste and household waste. The chemicals I saw polluting the ocean were in the form of thin oily surfaces (often near ferries and the shipbreaking yards), mining wastes, sewage, etc.

This journey through all of the most beautiful coastal landscapes Kerala had to offer was an eyeopener in terms of human activity caused destruction. The coastline is one of the most powerful indicators of the human-caused environmental crisis.

What this report aims to show are the observations I made during the walk down the coastline of Kerala.

## **Note:**

*\*Although not mentioned otherwise, one of the largest polluters across Kerala shore are diapers.*

*\*Slippers, Shoes, Medical Waste are the other surprising but largely occurring pollutants.*

*\*Household wastes, Plastic bottles and other forms of plastic pollutants are mainly found in areas with a higher density of population.*

*\*Several areas showed biosphere damage with symptoms such as washing up of several species, jellyfish bloom, invasive flora and oft-spoken about, unseasonal weather changes and damage to the fish population.*

## **Intent and purposes**

This report intends to look at the visual observation of solid waste made while walking continuously down the coastline of Kerala over 2 months as a district basis as well as one area that stood out in terms of the intensity of solid waste on the coastline or effort to curb the same in each.

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# Ernakulam

Moving across Vypin, I wandered down the coast to find the ferry. The large scale destruction of homes and the mounds of sand deposited into and over homes was a stark reminder of the recurring destruction of the environment. Children played on the mounds of sand and a few people were trying to remove it with a shovel. I could notice no solid waste in these areas. However, on all public beaches of Vypin were packaging materials, broken spoons, food remains buried into the sand, etc. A peppered version of this continued across the areas populated by groves of trees.

Moving into a more crowded and populated area of Vypin while walking to the ferry only had more plastics and other dirt. Walking down to the lighthouse revealed areas covered with oils, plastics, shoes and slippers, and a large number of **hyacinth** that had been washed to the sea. Bits of fishing nets and ropes knotted up with other trash formed balls of rubbish that littered the beach. There were also broken thermocol and fine fishing lines that had been abandoned on the beach as well.

Mararikulam had plastic wastes and slippers where the records did not abound.

## Kochi

The mouth of Vembanad Lake that we crossed on the ferry was covered with large amounts of slow-moving pollution. **Hyacinth and plastics** were a common sight. The same was seen at Mahatma Gandhi Beach and Fort Kochi beach as I walked down. Large piles of rubble that consisted of footpaths that had been washed away along which had plastics along the cracks were seen. Plastics consisting of thermocol, slippers and chiefly packaging materials (plastic cups, spoons, wooden spoons, paper plates, plastic plates, paper cups, biscuit/chips/other food packaging, toys, plastic pinwheels, etc) littered the commercial beaches. The walk beyond the land that belonged to the Armed Forces revealed unused, rusted and dangerous playgrounds (the pieces lying dangerously around when I came across them), Homes that had been built right to the sea wall and a lot of household plastic wastes and rubble.



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# DATA OF VISUALLY NOTED SOLID WASTE THROUGH THE COASTLINE OF ERNAKULAM



## Visual Data based Key:

- 1 - almost nil/nil
- 2 - Scattered
- 3 - Scattered with points of rubbish heaps
- 4 - Heavily distributed / stepping in it often
- 5 - unable to avoid waste without stepping on it

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## Ernakulam

Name of Village / City	Chemical Pollutants (Oils/ Industrial pollutants)	Household Waste (Plastic/Paper/ Packaging)	Biological (Flora and Fauna parts or Whole)	Medical Waste (Tablets / Bottles / Syringes)	Tourism industry based (Plastic or Paper based solid waste)	Sewage
Kuzhupilly	1	2	1	1	2	3
Vypin	1	3	1	2	3	4
Fort Kochi	3	4	3	2	4	5
Kochi	1	3	2	1	4	4
Chellanam	1	3	1	2	1	3

### Visual Data based Key:

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR ERNAKULAM:

1. A **clean up of Vembanad Lake** with a large scale harvesting of hyacinth will help curb the entanglement of solid waste and the deoxygenation of water due to the invasive nature of the plant. Possible income generators include making disposable plates from the pulp.
  2. The areas most dependent on coastal tourism often seem to have larger quantities of solid waste, sewage and other issues that impact both the tourists as well as the locals. Cleanups, while ongoing, often are hindered by the sheer volume of waste generated by people. **Resorts / stays close to the coastline taking responsibility for the cleanliness of the area nearest to them has worked in several areas that I crossed with minimum effort.**
  3. The fisherfolk of Ernakulam are open to **training and clean up based programs.** They collect quite a bit of plastic in their nets while fishing every day. This is often dumped on the shore. If it isn't picked up by the sanitation workers, it gets washed back into the ocean.
1. Around Fort Kochi is a constant **oil film** on the sands and the waters. This requires **immediate curbing and cleaning up.**
  2. Chellanum is highly affected by environmental destruction. Even the most recently added sea walls are already being eroded. **Relocation of people** is highly anticipated as the ocean is right across homes.

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## Conclusion

Solid waste is one of the largest factors in the dip in the number of fishes over the years. People are knowledgeable about the impacts of solid waste dumping. The largest issues in coastal waste dumping include:

- Medical waste
- Slippers
- Diapers
- Household Waste
- Bottles (glass and plastic)
- Fishing industry waste - nets, fishing lines, thermocol

There seem to be two major forms of solid waste dumping on the coastline in accordance to the conversations we had:

- 1) Despite solid waste management programs- Where one finds it easier to dump solid waste due to lack of education about the negative impacts of pollution, lack of concern, a belief that plastic “melts” in the ocean and degrades, cheaper (in terms of medical waste dumping or another industrial dumping), or apathy.
- 2) Lack of solid waste management programs - Good examples of these are Anchuthengu and South Thiruvananthapuram (The Valiathope, Vallakadavu, Valiyathura, Beemapally cluster) who have had no choice but to turn their homes into a large dumping ground. It is also much harder for the solid waste programs to be practised as easily as other areas due to the maze-like paths and roads, perhaps, this discourages implementation.

But, there is still hope. The coastal community is impacted deeply by environmental crises regularly whether it comes to their livelihood, their futures or their very existence. They are aware of erosion, overfishing, solid waste issues and how it ties back to the activities of people. They are also aware of how their household wastes, bottles do not allow effective breeding or movement of fish in their areas. There are often local people making an active effort in their villages to make an impact in any way and are welcome to both change and help.