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PRESS RELEASE- INDIA SAND WATCH, 12th June 2025

50% districts in Madhya Pradesh do not have approved District Survey Reports available: Rampant sand mining continues

Summary

- *Veditum India Foundation's India Sand Watch project has uncovered alarming gaps in environmental documents related to governance of sand mining in Madhya Pradesh.*
- *Nearly half of the state's districts do not have approved District Survey Reports (DSRs) available on their respective district websites—crucial documents meant to regulate sand extraction, and prevent illegal mining.*
- *Sand mining continues in districts that do not have approved DSRs available on their district websites.*
- *India Sand Watch found that 79.5% DSRs were not digitally readable and 23% DSRs had missing or unclear location & numeric data, making it difficult to cross verify data; and 84% DSRs are not available in Hindi, making access to the reports difficult for communities because of language barriers.*
- *There is an urgent need for transparency, citizen engagement, better governance, and stronger policy enforcement to protect rivers from unchecked exploitation.*

Availability of District Survey Reports for Madhya Pradesh

The District Survey Report (DSR) is a key document that establishes availability of sand resources in a district, and serves as a foundational document in the framework of environmental governance. These have to be prepared in accordance with the Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines 2016 (and subsequent versions), by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC). The DSR is supposed to scientifically identify available minor mineral resources at the district level. The DSR plays a critical role in streamlining the granting of mining leases (auctioning is supposed to follow details in the DSRs), preventing illegal extraction, and promoting transparency and accountability in the use of natural resources.

It is thus quite concerning that in a state like Madhya Pradesh with multiple ecologically and socially important rivers and vast mineral resources, approved DSRs are **not available for 48.9% of the state's districts**. The India Sand Watch team from Veditum India Foundation



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recently reviewed the availability of DSRs across the state of MP and found that districts like Maunanj, Maihar, and Pandhurna had **no DSRs available**, while others such as Ashoknagar, Jabalpur, Katni, Khargone, Mandla, Rajgarh, Shahjapur, Sidhi, Shahdol, Guna and Umari **only have draft DSRs on the district website**, that have not received approval of the SEIAA, as mandated. **Of the 55 districts in the state, 47 have sanctioned sand mines - however many of these (almost 49%) have not prepared DSRs, have outdated or unapproved DSRs, or have not uploaded the DSR to the district website, as required.**

In 2024, a [13 year old child drowned](#) in a sand mining pit in Maihar, where mining was allegedly taking place illegally. In 2023, a [Revenue Official was killed](#) by a tractor being used for illegal mining in Shahdol district.

In many cases, even where DSRs are available, they are not readable, cross-verifiable, or lack critical data. This is true in the case of districts such as Bhind, Dhar, and Dewas, despite troubling trends of unregulated mining, especially in ecologically sensitive regions along rivers like the Narmada and Chambal.

In January of 2025, sand miners in Bhind [attacked revenue officials](#) attempting to check illegal mining in the district. [Reports](#) (also see, [report](#)) from districts like Dhar and Bharwani indicate significant ecological impacts and threats to endangered species like the Mahseer due to the prevalence of illegal sand mining, despite interventions by courts.

Where the DSR is available (44 districts), 79.5% DSRs were not digitally readable ie. data cannot be copied or searched for, while almost 23% DSRs lacked critical data ie. locations and numbers are missing or not clearly printed. A staggering 84% of the 44 available DSRs have not been made available in Hindi or regional languages.

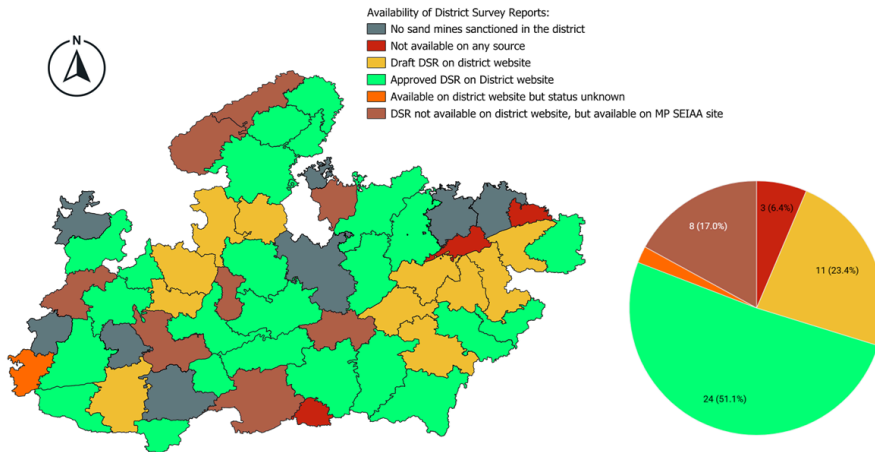
The absence of a DSR, or clearly readable and cross-verifiable DSR - which is supposed to identify sites available for legal mining - allows illegalities to go unchecked, makes monitoring violations more difficult, and reduces the public accountability of the government to stop illegal mining.



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Distribution of availability of Districts Survey Reports across districts of Madhya Pradesh

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Moving Forward: Collaborative Work for Environmental Accountability in Madhya Pradesh

The environmental accountability work for sand mining in Madhya Pradesh is a developing paradigm, and presents novel frameworks for introducing environmental accountability into an unregulated and often violent and ecologically damaging sector. Organisations, individuals, and stakeholders interested in collaborating with Veditum on this work are encouraged to reach out.

India Sand Watch is working on deepening the understanding of existing policy frameworks around sand mining in the state of MP, and an analysis of trends in reporting on sand mining in the state. The organisation will be conducting media workshops for holistic, data-driven reporting on sand mining to improve accountability in the state - interested journalists, media houses, and reporters are invited to reach out if they would like to participate!

Notes & Data:

1. The data and methodology used in this analysis have been made available openly at this link: [📄 Madhya Pradesh | State DSR report card](#)
2. The data used is updated up to the month of May 2025.
3. India Sand Watch will soon be releasing a template for anyone to use and undertake similar assessments for other states as well.
4. The map used here can be downloaded from this link [📄 MP_DSR_reportcard_forPressRelease.png](#)



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Glossary:

VEDITUM INDIA FOUNDATION | Veditum is a not-for-profit research, media and action oriented organization based out of Kolkata, India – registered as a Section 8 company.

Veditum is transforming the environmental governance landscape of India by creating evidence at scale, empowering communities to take action, and creating empathetic environmental leaders for the future. Their current work focuses on India's river ecosystems, freshwater resources and communities & biodiversity that are dependent on them, and the governance of these systems. Learn more about their work here: veditum.org

INDIA SAND WATCH | India Sand Watch is an environmental accountability project, protecting India's rivers from unsustainable and destructive sand mining. The project combines public information with outputs from advanced machine learning models to create evidence, enabling informed media reporting, research, policy making and collective action. At the heart of the project is an open data platform. This dynamic annotated archive is collaboratively built with local communities, partners and active citizens.

The 2000+ report archive is open access, informing corrective action, and being used to train machine learning models. Explore it here: sandwatch.in

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