



WWF®

IMPACT REPORT

SEPTEMBER

2017



# GANGES LEATHER BUYERS PLATFORM

Interim Impact Report – September 2017

## BACKGROUND

Leather production in Kanpur tanneries and surrounding tannery clusters is complex; large tanneries are those directly linked with suppliers, but there are also small and medium tanneries which sell to large tanneries. While operations within larger tanneries are causing a negative impact on water quality within the Ganges, it is the small and medium tanneries that cause the biggest problems. One strand of WWF India's work funded by HSBC and linked to the [Ganges Leather Buyers Platform](#) is to improve practices within these tanneries to prevent pollution from tanneries. Work started in 2016 and is still underway. This briefing aims to set out the current situation within tanneries and any improvements seen to date.

## WORK SO FAR

In late 2016, clean technology and water management practices assessments were carried out in 40 tanneries in Kanpur, with combined production capacity of 40-45% of the entire cluster. The aim of these assessments was to build awareness and relationships with tanneries and to get a comprehensive picture of the baseline situation within the cluster. The assessments showed that **on an average only about 57% of basic water management practices were being followed by the tanneries.**

Institutionalized Environmental Management Systems (EMS), process and effluent control in Beam House Operations, Mass Balance of Resources (including management of hazardous chemicals) and compliance of Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETP) were the major improvement areas identified for most of the tanneries.

Of the 40 tanneries assessed, 12 were suppliers to the members of the Ganges Leather Buyers Platform (GBP). The influence of the members was substantial in getting the 40 tanneries on board the assessment; anecdotal information from **most tannery owners suggested that the GBP buyer visit and workshop conducted in Kanpur in October 2016 was instrumental in motivating them to be part of the initiative.**

Based on the findings of this initial assessment and subsequent commitments by tannery management, in 2017 WWF started work with ten tanneries to provide bespoke handholding support through full Leather Working Group protocol. Three of the ten tanneries selected are direct suppliers to GBP members. After two months of this one to one engagement with WWF from the initial gap analysis and subsequent progress assessment the ten tanneries showed significant improvement in practices:

- 45% of tanneries had either achieved or had made substantial progress towards achievement of high priority actions (as opposed to 25% before intervention);
- 53% had achieved or made progress on medium priority actions (as opposed to 35% at the start of the initiative);
- In one of the tanneries which has direct linkages to the GBP, there was a **20% improvement in energy efficiency** and **35% improvement in water efficiency** achieved through the handholding intervention. Similar results are expected in other tanneries and bespoke handholding work is continuing.

The Ganges Leather Buyers Platform has been the most important lever for WWF-India to get access to and start the conversations with the tanneries in Kanpur. WWF intervention has continued to make progress in the cluster despite the uncertainty surrounding on-going judicial action in the cluster and political nature of the environmental issues of Ganga.

The Ganges Leather Buyers Platform is a unique and pioneering approach that has the potential to become a substantial advocacy tool for improved sustainability of the leather sector in Kanpur and India.

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION OR TO JOIN THE PLATFORM**

Please feel free to contact  
[WaterStewardship@wwf.org.uk](mailto:WaterStewardship@wwf.org.uk)



**Why we are here**

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.  
[wwf.org.uk](http://wwf.org.uk)