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Title: Why do urban slums coordinate around water but not toilets? Link between the types of public service and collective action in New Delhi’s urban slums

When and how do urban slum communities mobilize around public services? Previous literature explains how collective action varies across cities and even across slums within the same city but it ignores the patterns that recur around specific services. In New Delhi, though most slums face deficiencies around access to public water as well as public toilets, yet communities tend to take more concerted action around water rather than toilets. Most studies miss this variation because they lump together different types of services (health, water, toilets, garbage, and sewage/drains) under the broad rubric of sanitation. This study makes a novel contribution by disaggregating "sanitation" to explain why collective action varies by service. While unique service-specific characteristics affect community-level strategies, macro institutional context within which the service is embedded also influence incentives to mobilize. I argue that slum communities tend to act collectively: 1) when service specific characteristics prevent freeriding and allow for enforcement of reciprocal commitments, and 2) when the bureaucratic institutional context incentivizes residents to act as well as politicians to respond favorably. Based on an in-depth ethnographic study of four urban slums in Delhi, I find that slum communities are able to strategically convert piped water into a club good, which allows for easier cooperation. Public toilets, a purer public good, discourage collective action. The complex and fragmented bureaucratic structure governing public toilets disincentivizes bureaucrats and politicians, and therefore communities, from taking action. This study provides a nuanced picture of collective action around public service provision among slums. It offers insights into why participatory governance initiatives fail to produce the desired level of citizen mobilization in these communities. What incentivizes participation? Instead of drawing a stark distinction between structure and agency, community-level collective action around locally provided public services needs to be understood within a framework of political, economic and social factors both internal and external to the community. While factors such as social heterogeneity, cohesion, leadership, presence of NGOs do play a role in influencing collective action, but service characteristics and structural constraints acting in conjunction mediate this effect.