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WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES BEYOND 2015:
IMPROVING ACCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Barriers to access water and sanitation services by the urban poor in large towns of Madhya Pradesh, India: an assessment of citizens perception

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The barriers to rights and entitlements for the poor in the urban context have several dimensions which are structural, procedural or practice oriented. The Paper aims to understand barriers to access various basic municipal services in general and water and sanitation in particular by the urban poor from the citizens' perspective vis-à-vis the perspective of the providers. The Paper observes that rights and services have nested relationship and denial of some of the critical rights may affect several services and entitlements quintessential for the basic survival of any poor citizen viz. subsidized ration, social security benefit, public health and education and most important water and sanitation. The growing urban poverty in India, and particularly in states like Madhya Pradesh, underscores the importance of the analyzing barriers and finding areas for improvements.

Introduction

Political thinkers on governance in South Asia have largely seen the State as an exploitative agency that harasses the poor. Chatterjee (2004) comments that the State does not see poor people as legitimate citizens, therefore it forces them to obtain their ends through encounters with the State. Similarly, in her account 'India Working' (2003) Harriss-White opines that the formal State has been replaced by a shadow State of middle-men who exploit labour households that make up the bulk of the population. Others like Corbridge et al (2005) are of the opinion that the new technologies of rule posit the rural poor as clients of the government and enables them become active participants in their empowerment. Much literature also points to the growing importance of community involvement and the widening commitment of governments to reforms.

In India, the legitimate identity of an urban poor and a slum have never been very clearly defined in the guidelines of the State. Though there are provisions for different schemes in the rural and urban areas, however parameters to identify poor and beneficiaries for most of those schemes are more or less similar . This is the perhaps the reason that most state Governments and the Central Government are yet to have an approved and functional Slum Policy. Today, the poor in the urban agglomerations in India, deprived of access to basic amenities, legal identity and minimum social security measures, are the most vulnerable section of society and this is largely due to several practice bottlenecks compounded with inadequate policy framework and a combination of several demand side problems like poor education, awareness and poverty etc. The present paper seeks to identify the barriers the urban poor living in slums face accessing different municipal services in general and water and sanitation services in particular as citizens of Madhya Pradesh. The Paper is based on the findings of a Study conducted by Samarthan, an NGO under UK Aid supported "Madhya Pradesh Urban Services for the Poor" (MPUSP) Programme in 2011. The Study was conducted in 14 slums located in different parts of the town and focussed group discussion with larger community and Interview with the beneficiaries and duty bearers were used as Study tools. The objective of the Study was to reflect the citizens' perception of the services being provided by Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) and also to suggest some strategies to help minimize barriers preventing access to selected seven municipal

services. However, the present paper tries to bring out the critical barriers as perceived by poor citizens accessing benefits of water, sanitation and hygiene, with some elements of solid waste management.

Context

Despite, the State having a mission mode scheme of sanitation known as the Chief Minister Urban Sanitation Mission (CMUSM) and for water, the Chief Minister Urban Water Supply Schemes (CMUWS), besides other larger Programmes like Rajiv Aawas Yojana (RAY) and Madhya Pradesh Urban Infrastructural Investment Programme (MPUIIP), most slums don't have access to both these services particularly in larger towns. In case of water, there is no existing plan for those slums which are located on hillsides and those which have re-located, in the course of rehabilitation, to peripheral areas of the town. In the case of sanitation, , with the hope of implementing RAY in near future- which has its own structural and procedural barriers of Implementation- the Municipal Corporation has been postponing the implementation of sanitation services envisaged under CMUSM. According to the City Development Plan (CDP), the water supply system has only 5,000 community stand-posts, giving an average of 95 beneficiaries per public stand-post, which is twice the EIUS (e-Infrastructure Use Cases and Service Usage) recommendation. The stand-posts are un-metered and a major source of wastage. In addition, there are significant leakages in pipelines and a large number of illegal connections, which the BMC estimates at around 25,000. The rapid expansion of the city has also left the sewerage and garbage collection systems in a deplorable state, with slums bereft of solid waste management systems (80% lack access to toilets). A large area has no sewerage network, either internal or trunk, with raw sewage or septic tank outflows discharged into open drains that flow into watercourses. There is also no system for primary waste collection and no waste segregation is done, with only 20% of wastes being composted. The City Development Plan also highlights the housing shortage, the shortfall being an estimated 1.2 lakh units. Most slum houses are either semi-pucca or kutcha, the only pucca structures being on plots that have been allotted a temporary period based tenancy right locally called *Pattas*. Similarly, at one place the State Government wants to get applauded for their Mohalla Samiti (Neighbourhood Committee) Act which recognizes the local based Resident Committees with objective to make them participate in governance, at the other place, citizens particularly from poor community, express their dissatisfaction for the ignorance of their participation. Moreover, even those Committees which have been formed and accredited by the Municipal Corporation complain that they have never been considered partners in implementing Programmes like CMUSM, RAY etc. which clearly makes such provisions mandatory.

Before we go ahead, there is need to look at the administrative structure of Municipal Corporation which helps it function. This comprises of a Political Wing (Deliberative) and an Executive Wing. The Deliberative Wing is an elected body of Ward Councillors from different wards and is headed by a Mayor. The Executive Wing, which looks after the day-to-day functioning of the corporation, is headed by a Municipal commissioner. It assists the Deliberative Wing in decision-making. This further has area based administrative zones for delivery of services to the public. Each zone office is headed by a zone officer, who reports directly to the commissioner. There are fourteen Zonal Offices, each heading 5-6 Wards within.

It is also important to understand that different schemes and services provisioned for the poor have a nested relationship. Being deprived of one entitlement makes the poor deprived of many others. It is revealed that Voter Card and Public Distribution Card though issued for different purposes, proves to be a critical document and relevant to access other services such as water and sanitation as these documents are used by Administration as proof for identity. The Ration Card issued for accessing subsidized food supply is used as an identity proof and legitimizes access to all services applicable at subsidized rates to the poor. Now, let's discuss the following issues to understand the reasons why the poor do not demand services and the constraints they face in accessing them:

Land entitlement and location of Counter/multiple windows as major barriers

MPUSP (Guidelines, 2011) prepared an informative document 'Note on land tenure regularization of the urban poor in Madhya Pradesh" that highlights the relationship of land entitlements with the access of various basic services and amenities. Information on total area occupied by urban poor households without tenure security is yet to be compiled from primary records.

Bhopal has the largest number of such households; 90% of households without secure tenure in City are located on central government land. This consists of about 120 hectares of land belonging to Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), which still has a large reserve of unutilized land. In Bhopal 85671 huts were surveyed and 22030 huts got 30 years *Patta* along with 6821 huts getting one year *Patta*. *Pattas* could not be given for 33 settlements located on central government land (BHEL), Forest, private and disputed land; 4400 huts larger than 50 sq m; incomplete documentation, unwillingness to accept 1 year *Patta*

Pattas are extremely important for the poor not only because they assure a legal leasehold rights on the same or alternate land, but also because they make the *Patta* holder eligible for accessing benefits of other schemes like housing loan, Individual water connection, Individual toilet under CMUSM and metered power connection. There is a possibility that low access to services like water, individual toilets as appeared in the study has correlation with the land entitlements. According to the Study, the location of counters/service centres is another major barrier across services. Currently, many counters are centralized at one location which is far away from the residences of applicants. The cost of reaching these centres from the perspective of the poor is high in terms of expense as well as time, given the efficiency of public transport in a city like Bhopal. Moreover, people have to make several trips because there is no mechanism to know the status of their applications closer to where they live. As a result, many families just do not apply for the service after seeing the experiences of their neighbours or relatives, or they throw up their hands in despair and give up in the middle of the process. The ones who are generally successful are those who can afford to pay for the services of a middleman or agent.

This is evident when people entering the Municipal Corporation Offices encounter a long line of advocates sitting in front of the main lane. Most of them work as agents, providing the required forms and information for services and persuasively advocating their services for a fee. There are no signposts to direct applicants to the relevant counter. Most of the people end up, taking the services of agents or of the Municipal staff, after negotiating a deal with them. This large network of agents has a detrimental effect on socially vulnerable groups. The non-transparent system and ineffective and unsupportive attitude of the staff encourages people to find indirect ways of accessing benefits. In the process, genuine and deserving poor are marginalized and persuasive and relatively better off get the advantage. Simpler procedures, accessible windows, transparent systems and efficiency in processing cases have a significant bearing on access to benefits of water and sanitation schemes by the poor, illiterate and socially disadvantaged living in the fringe areas of the city. The degree of such causes and their effects can be seen in the adjoining figure however detailed discussions have been made with respective services.

Now, here it would be meaningful to see each of these services related to WASH separately and discuss different barriers to access benefits.
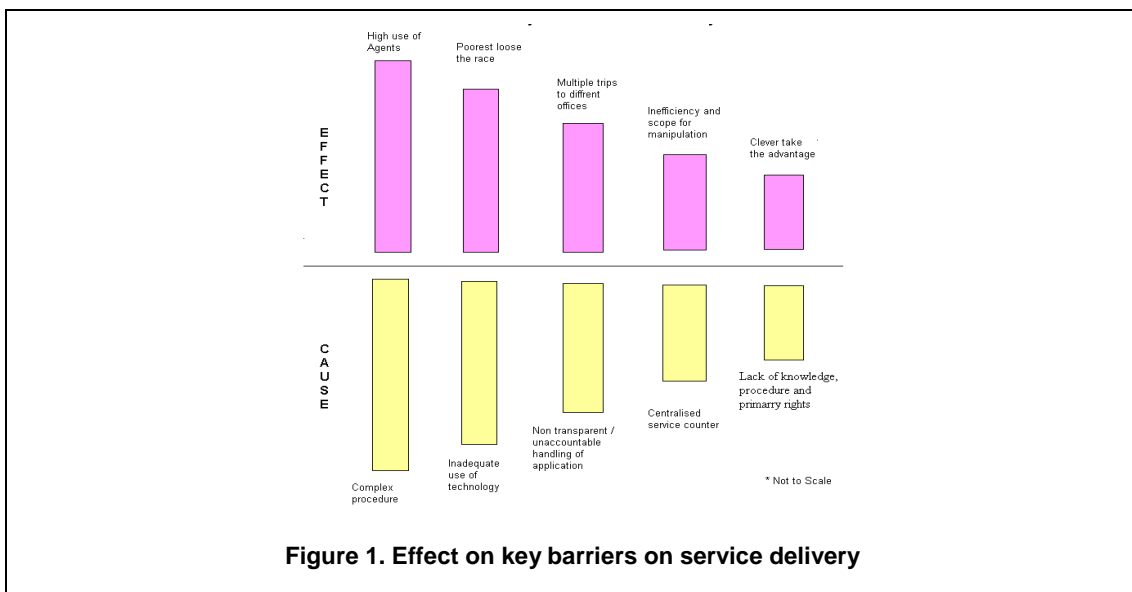

Figure 1. Effect on key barriers on service delivery

Water supply services and barriers in accessing the services

Bhopal is currently experiencing a serious scarcity of water. However, water supply is a key right and basic service for the poor living in slums. Most slum dwellers depend on public stand posts for water supply and very few families have authorized residential water connections. In some areas, hand pumps serve as the main source of water. As per provision, applications for residential water connections are submitted to the zonal offices of Municipal Corporation and approvals are given at the zonal committee meetings held once every month. A notarized certificate for consumption of water along with a map of the existing pipelines is also mandatory. If a pipeline is not available in a particular area, the executive engineer makes a request to the zonal committee and ward corporate. It costs approximately Rs. 2,000 to get a water connection at one's residence and the process involves about 2-3 trips to the zonal office, depending on the availability of a pipeline in the area.

First of all there is huge lack of awareness and knowledge of the entitlement among the masses. The study reveals that slum dwellers first approach their ward Councillor to demand a public water stand post in their locality without having any clarity on, who is eligible and can apply for a residential connection, where the application is to be submitted, the application fee and documents required, the cost of the connection and where the money is to be deposited. In the case of repairs of stand posts and pipelines, they again see the Ward Councilor as the correct person to approach, followed by the ward office. This reflects the importance of the Councilor as an information provider and interlocutor with the service providers. Secondly, there are socio-cultural barriers. Water supply is a political issue and location of water points depend on how organized families and neighborhoods are within a slum. Most sub-localities, locally called *Mohallas* in slums have families of a particular caste, religion or region staying together. Their socio-cultural affinity and collective strength becomes a strong vote bank and bargaining point with the Ward Councillor. *Mohallas* with greater collective strength and bargaining power are better served in terms of water supply and other vital service amenities since the Ward Councillor is more likely to listen to demands emanating from such *Mohallas*. Generally, Ward Councillor spend their available resources on water supply or road construction in these areas. Such political mobilization and Network can result in the exclusion of many deserving groups who are in a minority or are economically weaker and cannot demand their rights vociferously. There is lack of city wide Information dissemination mechanism which could communicate the information on the Scheme and this makes local networks stronger. Thirdly, there are procedural barriers. A basic requirement to get a residential water connection is a land deed or *patta.* But slum dwellers who posses *pattas* are unable to get a connection because there is no clarity in the ward office whether they are eligible for a connection. The water scarcity in Bhopal over the last few years has also sent a signal to the staff not to entertain applications for private individual connections in slum areas. They see authorized connections as further legalizing the occupancy of land slum dwellers have settled on and they fear they will have to face questions from higher officials in case there are any problems. Due to the restrictive policy on authorized water connections, many influential slum families - educated slum leaders, opinion makers, those with government and good-paid private sector jobs - get illegal connections by bribing the linemen and junior-level staff. Ward-Councillors are aware of such unauthorized connections but do not raise this as an issue because of the influence of these families and also because they realize water is a vital, primary requirement.

Sanitation and barriers in accessing the services

Sanitation has remained a neglected subject in India until in 2008 when Government of India has brought a National Urban Sanitation Policy (NUSP). Madhya Pradesh Government was one of the State that surfaced a pilot Programme in consonance with NUSP earlier in 2008, a Pilot Programme called Integrated Urban Sanitation Programme and later in 2012 a full-fledged Mission mode Programme called Chief Minister Urban Sanitation Mission. The conceived aim was to design and implement city wide sanitation plan with active participation of community and other stake holders at all levels. After four years of implementation of the Programme, situation has improved a bit in smaller town though even there the Programme has moved with Infrastructure mind set without taking account of hygiene and behavioural change, however in larger city like Bhopal the progress is very dismal. Across sixteen slums taken for the study, open defecation was almost 60% in each Slum. These slum dwellers defecate in open spaces, nearby farms or by railway tracks close to their dwellings. Such public defecation creates unsanitary conditions in slums with few open areas. First of all there is big procedural and institutional barrier as despite programme being launched in mission mode, there has no administrative mechanism been set up for the Implementation which is mandatory in such kind of programme. Secondly, there is lack of awareness among community of the Mission.

Community are unaware of the Application form, procedure to be followed, offices to be visited for making a follow up of demand they have submitted to the Municipal Corporation Office. Thirdly, there is attitudinal barrier. Though with such programme government want to reflect a message of making universal access to sanitation yet demand of almost 70% of slums have been forwarded to Building Construction and Public Work department for their approval, and 80% of slums have been denied the permission to build toilet for the land ownership right. For slums where community have Patta, have been denied with the reason that they will get a toilet with implementation of RAY, an ambitious slum-free programme of Government of India. Thirdly, there is natural problem of space in slums and that's why in slums where permission has been given, due to lack of individual space and no Municipal land for Community Toilet, the decision gets postponed. However, the condition of community toilets that have been constructed 8-9 years back under some Programme are very bad due to O&M issue as community groups have not been structurally made partners in the Programme. Lastly, Ward Councillor has always been seen as a barrier as well access for the services due to one's biasness towards certain group and community. Interestingly progress on construction of Public Toilet in commercial under the programme has been very good. In-fact allotted find has been over-utilized in this area.

Solid waste management and barriers in accessing the services

There is no system for collecting and disposing solid waste in slums. In the absence of dustbins, people throw garbage on the streets or into drains and open spaces. Where public dustbins are available, they are under-utilised. Municipal vans collect only the top layer from the rubbish heap, leaving the rest of the garbage behind. Slum dwellers often have to pay money to have dead animals lifted. Many drains have been encroached upon, affecting the drainage of waste water and giving rise to extremely unhygienic conditions. Even otherwise, drains are not cleaned for months because very few sanitation workers are allotted to slum areas compared to other wards. Many drains do not even exist in municipal records so there is no provision to clean them.

In this case, again there are the same kind of barriers. Firstly, there is lack of awareness on provision of solid waste management as entitlement among slum dwellers. Although Slum dwellers expect Municipal Sanitary Workers to clean their localities regularly but they are unaware of the norms set by the Corporation for cleaning streets and collecting garbage so they seldom complain about the unsanitary conditions. According to Corporation line Officials though sanitary Inspectors and workers are allotted to different Wards, but there is no mechanism which could inform the larger citizens particularly slum dwellers about the details. Moreover, lack of cohesiveness at slum level prevent them to act collectively as pressure group for the Issue. Secondly, there are procedural barriers due to which Slum dwellers are unfamiliar with the procedures framed for the solid waste management process, moreover there is big gap between procedure framed and practices followed by the Corporation. Thirdly, there is lack of human resource dedicated for the purpose due to which existing team of sanitary workers get overburdened preventing their reach to larger areas and slums are most often neglected as they are not in priority. Twenty wards of the city are allotted to a private party and door to door garbage collection is being done. Bigger gap in wage and perks for same kind of work between the staff of the private firm and the Corporation workers demotivates the workers and that affect the work of larger area of the City. Fourthly, there is lack of provision of making complaints and seeking redressal – in fact, many don't even know they have the right to register a complaint. So when an immediate need arises – like festivals or a wedding – they usually collect money and get the drains and roads cleaned; else as last option they approach their Ward Councillor who is their key link to help them receive these basic service. Fifthly, attitudinal constraints as it was revealed that the attitude of ward officials, water and sanitation staff is non-supportive and they pay little attention to the needs of slums. This is interesting to note that the Ward Councillor, often seen as a vital facilitator also remains indifferent in this case if he considers a particular locality has not voted for him. While interacting with Corporation Officials, ironically most of them perceive slums as 'illegal' with no right to demand this service. For them, slums are 'dirty' places beyond improvement and feel resources and efforts should be diverted to clean such areas when the Corporation is under-staffed for such tasks. Even dustbins are not allocated to slums despite repeated requests from residents. Some technological barriers were also observed in larger number of slums. Though residents are comfortable using telephones and most of them possess mobiles. In fact, many of them even know the toll-free helpline number of the Corporation, yet they call up infrequently because there is generally no positive response to their complaints. Women and youth say the person who answers their calls

is not supportive when he/she learns it is made from a slum area. According to them, responses are, however, more positive if the caller is educated and influential.

The way forward: key suggestions for improvements

The Slum dwellers and multi-stakeholders including front line workers involved in the service delivery provided few key suggestions. Among long and medium term suggestion, firstly, it was suggested to make a legalized provision of individual water connection delinking with *Patta*,a temporary land lease right. Most of respondents were willing to pay for the services, and they suggested for a need to have better linkages between ward and zone offices with strong institutional mechanisms to provide the community residential water connections. According to them, this shall ensure optimum use of water. Secondly, it was suggested to conduct water mapping of poverty pockets at the City level using the GIS technology and special allocations from the Ward Councillor, Mayor and even Member of Legislative Assembly fund to be made for providing water connections to such areas on a priority basis. Same in the case of Sanitation i.e. delinking with Patta which is a major barrier for building Individual Toilet, which came up as most prioritized need and demand. For Solid waste management, it was suggested to have decentralized mechanism of dumping and recycling the waste. For all the three services, it was strongly suggested to involve *Mohalla Samitis* and Resident Welfare Associations; and encourage them to formulate demand and prepare plans for making their Slums and Wards with all basic services with O & M ownership. These Committees should be entrusted for managing solid waste, cleaning streets and drains and accessing resources for their neighborhoods. Allocations in the budgets of the zonal committees could be routed to them to undertake these tasks, along with locally generated contributions. Fourthly, promotion of authorized residential water connections in slums with better tariff collection mechanisms. This will reduce illegal connections. The fear that payment of water tariffs may appear to be a step in legalizing slum residences is largely unfounded because it is clear that payment does not represent a legal right to ownership, as evident in the case of residents currently paying house/holding tax. Fifthly, formally recognize the vital role of the Ward Councillor as a critical link by allocating resources to them to set up their own teams of volunteers/secretarial staff to deal with requests/demands/ complaints from residents and serve as an interface with the service providers.

Among short-term measures, a few measures were suggested to be brought into force immediately, like, first to publicize the toll free helpline Municipal number and include all basic services rather just for solid waste management and to increase its use by writing it on the walls of prominent houses, preferring government building such as Anganwadi,(Nutritional Centre) School, SHG Meeting Place in slums, Ward Office for wide outreach of the Information of different Schemes and their provisions with the budget. Secondly, Self Help Groups formed under National Livelihood Mission and Groups formed by different Micro-finance Institutions along with the ones formed under Health and Nutrition Programme should be integrated with WASH schemes and if utilized properly, they can be wonderful chain working as Catalyst for hygiene management as well as Community Monitoring Committees which so far has been ignored. Mothers Committees formed at every Anganwadi Centre could play a big role on Menstrual Hygiene Management as issues overlap. They can also be harnessed for O&M for created infrastructures in slums.

Conclusions

As the Country prepares for Swachha Bharat Mission, which aims to end to open defecation and have sanitized cities by 2019, this is high time for state government to look into these barriers and have suitable plan in place before execution. The delivery of water and sanitation in diverse and dynamic urban domains suggests a need to bring together all the ministries and departments and their different Programmes whose mandates relate to urban sanitation and environmental health: urban agencies, environment, education, health, housing, slums and human welfare. For coordination mechanisms to be effective in guiding policy-making, implementation and monitoring, they need to be coordinated to have clear roles and responsibilities. Integrated approach taking all grass root level community based Organizations formed under different Programmes and making them partner in planning and implementation can result into a sustenance model of running any Programme like WASH to universalize the access.

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