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LOCAL ACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO IMPROVE AND
SUSTAIN WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES

**Landlords/Compound Managers: change makers to
improve and sustain communal latrine use and
maintenance**

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Shared latrines are the most common primary means of sanitation in the high-density slums in Dhaka city where maintaining cleanliness and functionality is difficult. We developed a cleanliness and maintenance intervention package that included behaviour change materials and interpersonal communication sessions with slum residents, landlords/compound managers, waste bin emptiers regarding flushing, latrine waste disposal in waste bins and safe child feces disposal. We evaluated the role of landlord/compound managers and explored the mechanism by which they contributed to this intervention. We conducted focus group discussions with landlords/compound managers, community health promoters (CHPs) and tenants, group discussions with CHP supervisors and key informant interviews with the staff member of implementing agency. CHPs and their supervisors said landlords/compound managers supported their efforts to implement this intervention. We found landlords/compound managers play a reinforcing role in the intervention.

Background

Nearly 14 million of Bangladesh's inhabitants live in the capital city (1), Dhaka, of whom approximately six million reside in urban slums and 4.3 million use communal latrines (latrines shared by compounds which include multiple households) as their primary means of sanitation (2) . Given the acute space shortage in crowded slum areas, shared sanitation facilities are the most practical option (3). Landlords/compound managers often reside within these compounds (5,6). We focused on household compounds where maintaining cleanliness and functionality of communal latrines is difficult (4). We identified factors that affected cleanliness and functionality and developed an intervention package (7), which was delivered by community health promoters (CHPs) managed by an implementation agency.

Method

The audience for the intervention package was primarily household compound residents; additionally we delivered intervention behavior change communication to landlords and/or compound managers. The intervention included behavior change materials and interpersonal communication sessions with slum residents, landlords/compound managers, and waste bin emptiers regarding flushing, latrine waste disposal in waste bins and safe child faeces disposal. The hardware included latrine waste bins, 4L buckets for flushing and 70L buckets as a water reservoir to aid flushing (7). We implemented the intervention in 610 compounds of 13 slums from three different areas of Dhaka city. After three months of monitoring we detected that 94% of waste bins were being used and that water was present in 83% of water reservoirs (8). The current study aimed to explore in detail the mechanisms by which landlords/compound managers contributed to intervention uptake.

From the intervention slums of three different areas we conducted nine focus group discussions with community health promoters (CHPs) who were responsible to deliver the intervention hardware and the behavior change communication component, landlords/compound managers and the tenants who were the primary audience of the intervention. We also conducted two group discussions with CHPs' supervisors and two key informant interviews with the implementing agency staff members who managed intervention delivery. These methods were employed to learn about the role of landlords/compound managers in the intervention.

Results

CHPs reported that landlords/compound managers played important roles in promoting interventions in household compounds. CHPs stated that they could not have successfully promoted the intervention if landlords were not supportive enabling them to reach the tenants and carry out activities in the compounds they own. Landlords encouraged and facilitated tenant participation in compound intervention meetings, motivated tenants to practice recommended behaviors, and informed CHPs when residents were reluctant to use new hardware. The opposite occurred where the landlords were not motivated and were resistant to CHPs entering their compounds resulting in household member refusals to participate and intervention uptake was low in those particular compounds.

Landlords considered that their role was vital for hardware maintenance. They either maintained hardware themselves or assigned tenants by rotation to clean and maintain the hardware provided by the study. CHPs and their supervisors mentioned that landlords/compound managers monitored latrine cleanliness and functionality. As the landlord/compound managers live in the same compound and using the same latrine, it was easy for him/her to check latrine cleanliness frequently. Female landlords/compound managers, consistently present in the compounds, encouraged tenants to clean latrines and refill water reservoirs. They also reported that landlords were actively engaged in intervention delivery by motivating tenants to follow the intervention and orienting new tenants on intervention messages. They also played an important leadership role to create a supportive environment for optimal intervention uptake. Sometimes landlords described the behavior change recommendations to tenants who missed CHP sessions. Key informants from the implementation agency reported that when they encountered problems related to promoting new hardware and behaviours among the compound households, landlords/compound managers sometimes applied their proprietorship as landowner to facilitate intervention adoption among the tenants.

According to the tenants, some landlords participated in the intervention by disposing waste from study provided bins into waste collector vans on behalf of tenants when they were not present in the compound. They said that the tenants obeyed the instruction comes from landlord/compound managers. Therefore, whenever their landlords instructed them to clean latrines and not to through waste into the pan, they followed it.

In focus group discussions, the landlords/compound managers reported that the intervention benefited them in many ways. They expressed their commitment to continue the recommended intervention behaviors and maintain all hardware provided to them.

Conclusion and recommendations

In urban slums, the landlords/compound managers were key to providing a supportive environment, to ensure sanitation facilities were maintained by influencing residents within their compounds. Effective engagement of this group in future WASH programmes can reduce barriers to promoting interventions and thereby facilitate uptake. To achieve sustainability, WASH programming in urban slums should target landlords/compound managers and utilize their leadership.

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Note

Latrine waste: The solid waste which the compound residents usually dispose in the pan like, rags, sanitary pads, condoms and sachets which create blockages.

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