

Review of: "Women In Slum Risking Their Safety To Access And Usage Of Basic Water And Sanitation Facilities"

Javier Santiago Ortiz-Correa

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The paper is very relevant as this is a very important issue. Lack of access to improved water and sanitation is a barrier for human development. Water borne diseases are still a leading cause of mortality, especially, among children and the elderly. Lack of proper water and sanitation represents also a cost for the society as households have to pay more for water, have to reallocate the use of the time and puts a pressure on the gender dynamics in the household. Therefore, this paper is very important and it is very relevant. Even more, as it takes a primary focus on the issues of gender-based differential impacts and gender-based violence.

I do have some suggestions for the authors to consider.

First, it would be important to focus the paper on India, as it seems this is the case-study the authors want to address. This has to be made more explicit right from the beginning of the paper. Additionally, more evidence and more figures on the access to sanitation in the slums areas of India can be included to strengthen the case for the relevance of this paper.

Second, it is not clear if the paper is addressing the case of India or if it is a paper addressing this phenomenon all over the world, a sentence like this needs more context: "In coastal slums, women face a high rate of sexual assault when using the restrooms". It would be relevant to make more specific mention of India as it seems this is the case study. This has to be made clear in the introduction and in the methodology.

The reference "International, 2010" may refer to Amnesty International. Please, revise this reference.

Third, lack of access to improved water and sanitation is, overall, a more general access to improved infrastructure and services. In that sense, it would not be realistic to propose improving lighting as the same technical and financial barriers may be interplaying for lighting. What it would be more realistic, as you rightly say, is to explore the use of loans for point-of use solutions that can be easily installed in the houses or huts. Along the same lines, slums may have a problem of access to government provided services. In this case, it may not be realistic to call for an increase in policing. Perhaps, what can be realistic is to call for an integration of services. For instance: build Public Toilets in places where other government services are provided (such as schools or health centers), partner with non-state service providers for the provision of sanitation services for women. And of course, involve local organizations. Are there cases in India of successful local involvement solving this problem. It would be worth referencing some of those examples.

