Voice and Response:
How can citizens demand accountability from bureaucrats?[1]

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July 31, 2024

Abstract

How can citizens demand accountability from unelected lower-level officials, who are critical gatekeepers of public resources? Existing research often cites high barriers to bureaucratic responsiveness, suggesting that appointed personnel are both capacity constrained and beholden to senior officials. We argue that citizens can lower these barriers through direct expressions of voice that elicit empathy and focus officials' attention, along with action that activates officials' reputational concerns. We illustrate our argument in rural India through qualitative fieldwork and an in-person survey of over 1200 personnel across every administrative block in Jharkhand – one of India's poorest states. Experiments developed with a community media NGO reveal that exposure to citizen testimony increases officials' observed attention, and that the prospect of citizens publicizing complaints through social media increases officials' willingness to act on an issue. These findings suggest a citizen-led pathway to bureaucratic responsiveness – even for those lacking strong political connections.

Introduction

Around the globe, many citizens encounter weakly responsive bureaucracies (Gupta 2012; Auyero 2011). Lower-level administrators are critical gatekeepers to public resources, exercising substantial discretion in interpreting rules and implementing policy (Lipsky 1980). But public personnel are frequently forced to ration their time and attention due to capacity constraints (Dasgupta and Kapur 2020; Zacka 2017), and are often beholden to senior officials (Olken 2007; Raffler, Posner, and Parkerson 2020). This creates a bureaucratic accountability gap, where the agencies directly responsible for providing essential services are often unresponsive to the citizens seeking them.

What can citizens do under such conditions to demand greater responsiveness? In procedurally democratic settings, the answer typically involves turning to elected representatives who bring political pressure to bear on bureaucratic actors through political oversight (Raffler 2022), constituency service (Bussell 2019), or clientelist brokerage (Auerbach and Thachil 2023; Toral 2023). This, however, is a troubling proposition for those who lack strong democratic representation, political ties, or other access to higher-level officials. It follows that there is growing interest in citizens' direct engagement with appointed personnel (Grossman and Slough 2021; Gallagher, Kruks-Wisner, and Taylor 2024). Non-electoral strategies of "social accountability" in the form of citizen-led initiatives have received billions of dollars in investments (Mansuri and Rao 2013). Yet, theory and evidence on the efficacy of these initiatives is limited and highly uneven (Fox 2015; Tsai et al. 2019).

This article develops a citizen-driven theory of bureaucratic responsiveness. We conceptualize responsiveness across multiple dimensions, from hearing citizens' complaints to attempting to resolve them by allocating time and resources. We argue that citizens can exact responsiveness through a combination of voice and mobilization. In capacity-constrained environments, simply capturing officials' attention is a first-order concern for citizens, while converting that attention into bureaucratic action poses additional challenges. Direct expressions of voice conveying urgent needs can elicit empathy and focus attention, while action that triggers reputational concerns can prompt officials to prioritize citizens' claims. Media, particularly digital technologies, are powerful tools in this process, enabling citizens to tell their own stories, create visibility, and trigger fears of oversight.

Our multi-method study illustrates how this works in rural India. Our research was developed in partnership with a community media organization that supports a national network of citizen journalists trained in the use of video to document and attempt to resolve local grievances. Our focus is on the Block Development Office, a middle-tier administrative office responsible for the implementation of state and central government programs – and a common port of call for citizens attempting to solve local problems.[4] Through qualitative research in block offices and interviews with citizen journalists, we explore the constraints to bureaucratic responsiveness and theorize the strategies through which citizens can overcome them.

To test our theory, we fielded an in-person survey of 1293 personnel of varied ranks and designations in a near census (258/264) of block offices across Jharkhand – one of India's poorest states. We developed two embedded experiments to measure officials' responses to citizens' demands. The first featured pairs of differently framed videos, in which officials were assigned to discuss an issue (either broken drinking water pumps or poor quality housing, depending on their designation). Officials were then shown a video about that issue featuring either a "citizen voice" frame in which residents narrated the problem in their own words, or an "official statistics" control video that presented them with government data about the same problem. After viewing the video, respondents were asked to consider how they would react if citizens from their block complained about the same problems. The video screening was then followed by a second experiment in which officials heard different vignettes about citizen action on the same issues, one describing in-person collective action at the block office and the other describing digital mobilization in the form of sharing the video on social media and with officials. The vignette was followed by questions about whether and why officials would feel pressure to resolve a problem along with actions they might take.

We find that videos featuring citizen voice produced a more empathetic reaction and were more likely to focus officials' attention, compared to the official statistics control. The citizen voice frame, however, generated no significant change in willingness to take action on the issues. Hearing the digital mobilization vignette, though, led to greater perceived pressure to respond. This was driven by fears of angering senior officials, and prompted an increased willingness to send staff to investigate an issue.

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[4] Blocks are administrative units akin to a county in the United States.

Our results suggest that bureaucrats, far from being simply uncaring, often possess a sense of empathy and social commitment, and that citizens can harness those dynamics to amplify their claims. At the same time, officials' responsiveness may be limited due to capacity constraints and top-down oversight. In hierarchical organizational settings, citizens can motivate officials to act by activating reputational concerns. Digital mobilization employing the tools of video and social media creates a pathway through which citizens can shape those concerns from the bottom up. Together, these findings reveal the potential of citizen-driven efforts to build accountability, while also provoking open questions about the implications of such efforts for local equity and government capacity in under-resourced settings.

Mobilizing bureaucrats from above and below

There are, in stylized fashion, two broad theoretical perspectives on the conditions under which non-elected officials might be responsive to citizens. The first emphasizes top-down oversight, following "within-government" channels where lower-level bureaucrats respond to scrutiny from higher-level appointed and elected officials (Tsai et al. 2019). Channels focused on appointed actors follow a Weberian logic: personnel in hierarchical organizations are monitored by senior officials and are expected to be motivated by career concerns and a sense of vocation stemming from within the agency (Honig 2021; Mangla 2024). Channels focused on elected actors follow a clientelist logic, and view local bureaucrats as responding to politicians who oversee their budgets and postings (Toral 2023; Gulzar & Pasquale 2017; Iyer & Mani 2012). In this view, politicians and political brokers can provide a pathway for citizens to make claims on bureaucratic agencies (Auyero 1999; Stokes et al. 2013; Auerbach 2019 but citizens cannot do much directly without intervention from higher levels – leaving little opportunity for those without political connections.

The second theoretical approach emphasizes a non-electoral or "social" pathway to accountability in which citizens directly monitor public officials (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2006; Mansuri and Rao 2013; Kosack and Fung 2014). There is, however, an uneven record on whether such bottom-up efforts can provoke changes in official behavior. While some studies find an impact of community monitoring on the performance of frontline personnel (Pandey et al. 2009; Pradhan et al. 2014; Bjorkman and Svensson 2009), others find null effects (Banerjee et al. 2010; Lieberman, Posner, and Tsai 2014), or suggest that top-down monitoring is more effective (Olken 2007; Raffler et al. 2020). Even when bureaucrats are specifically tasked with

responding to citizen complaints, such as in online grievance redressal platforms, actual rates of responsiveness can remain low (Kumar, Forthcoming).

Some of the most powerful critiques of social accountability stem from research on interventions that attempted to induce citizen action by making them aware of poor public performance. Numerous studies have found negligible effects of information campaigns on citizen mobilization and, by extension, on service delivery outcomes (Chong et al. 2015; Lieberman et al. 2014; Dunning et al. 2019; Raffler et al. 2020). These results, however, point to the weaknesses of external efforts to mobilize citizen voice, rather than to inherent weaknesses in citizen-led approaches. More "organic" as opposed to induced (Mansuri and Rao 2013) social accountability efforts occur when citizens turn directly to bureaucratic offices (Kruks-Wisner 2018; Grossman and Slough 2022; Gallagher et al. 2024). Scholars examining this behavior often focus on social relationships between bureaucrats and citizens, including shared identity or sense of home (Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks et al. 2017; Bhavnani and Lee 2017), or a desire to enhance social standing in the community (Tendler 1997; Tsai 2007; Paller 2019). But not all citizen-facing officials are locally embedded, particularly in agencies serving large catchments. We therefore focus on how citizens might demand responsiveness from officials who, while operating locally, may have strong local ties.

Gaining attention and prompting action: a citizen-driven theory of bureaucratic responsiveness

Bureaucratic responsiveness to citizens can take many forms, from hearing a complaint to symbolic or problem-solving action. Simply being heard is an important outcome in a context where the poor feel ignored or neglected by the state (Ahuja and Chhibber 2012; Sanyal and Rao 2018). Having a claim acknowledged or receiving "an equal hearing" (Verba 2003) is critical to political equality and procedural justice more broadly (Tyler 2003; Beramendi, Besley, and Levi 2022). Beyond attention, having an official take action of any type, such as referring the complaint to another office, providing advice, or sending staff to examine an issue, are steps towards solving a problem even if full resolution may be outside of the control of a single official or agency. In capacity-constrained settings, these steps – even when incomplete – are meaningful, signaling the prioritization of a need through the allocation of scarce resources and time.

We focus on the first two components of a citizen's experience when approaching a bureaucratic office: whether they gain *attention* (their complaints are heard), and whether an official takes *action* (their complaints are prioritized). Unelected officials frequently operate under conditions of "overload" (Dasgupta and Kapur 2020), with too few resources and too many tasks. With insufficient time and resources to process the many requests that they receive, officials are forced to ration their attention (Zacka 2017). The first barrier is thus a cognitive one: citizens must find a way to gain and hold officials' focus. To convert attention to action, citizens must further compel officials to prioritize their demands among many other tasks and requests. When forced to decide, officials in hierarchical organizations are likely to focus on those needs that are consistent with higher-level directives and provoke concerns over scrutiny from senior officials. The second barrier is therefore structural: citizens are, from below, attempting to provoke action among officials whose incentives are upwardly aligned.

Citizens must work within these constraints to demand bureaucratic responsiveness. We theorize two pathways through which this can occur: voicing narratives that gain officials' attention, and publicly sharing those narratives to trigger reputational concerns. First, we argue that direct expressions of citizen voice can capture officials' attention by provoking an emotional response. A key premise is that public officials often possess a sense of social mission (Honig 2021; Kyle and Resnick 2018; Cowley and Smith 2014; Banuri and Keefer 2013; Tendler 1997), but are constrained in their ability to pay attention to the vast numbers of citizens who approach them. Studies from psychology suggest that when faced with too many choices, emotion helps guide decision-making (Damasio 1994; Lerner et al. 2015; Galinsky et al. 2008), and that empathy can generate a greater willingness to help (Glynn and Sen 2014; Jensen and Pedersen 2017). Empathetic concern is associated with an increased likelihood of taking steps to alleviate the suffering of others (Wilhelm and Bekkers 2010; Clifford et al 2019), while taking others' perspective is associated with a psychological response similar to experiencing a situation oneself (Lamm et al. 2007). Citizens can therefore use personal testimony to convey their needs in a manner that provokes empathy and captures attention.

Second, we argue that citizens can motivate officials to act on their behalf by threatening to publicize complaints. Theoretically, gaining officials' attention could be sufficient to provoke bureaucratic action because intrinsically motivated public personnel are likely to want to help citizens in need (Banuri and Keefer 2013). In practice, however, we do not expect an automatic

conversion of attention to action given the many competing demands that lower-level officials face, including from politicians who appoint them and senior bureaucrats who monitor them. Under these constraints, citizens can attempt to create reputational costs to inaction by sharing, or threatening to share, their problems in a public manner. Digital technology and social media can play a particularly powerful role in enabling citizens to publicize their complaints (Buntaine et al. 2024) and prompt bureaucratic responsiveness (Erlich et al 2021).

We see the relationship between these two dimensions of bureaucratic responsiveness as sequential. Theoretically, each outcome could be obtained through independent channels: citizen voice might spark emotion and gain attention, while reputational concerns might separately prompt action. Yet, in constrained and overloaded bureaucratic settings, we posit that gaining attention as a necessary precursor to action. At the same time, taking seriously the constraints on appointed officials, we expect attention alone to be insufficient to provoke action.

Study context and methods

Our empirical setting is rural India, where central, state, and local governments have spearheaded ambitious welfare and development programs that have been unevenly implemented at the local level (Banerjee 2004; Kruks-Wisner 2018; Veeraraghavan 2022). We focus on the community development block (or more simply, the "block") – the middle level in a three-tier system of rural administration present in most Indian states since the 1950s. Block-level appointed personnel oversee the implementation of a wide range of state and central government programs, including policies related to rural development, poverty alleviation, education, and health. They are therefore gatekeepers in the distribution of resources and, from the perspective of rural citizens, one of the most visible and critical sites of government.

To understand the functioning of the block, we combined qualitative interviews and observations with a large-n survey and embedded experiments. We carried out four months of qualitative research in and around block offices. Working with a small team of trained Research

Associates,[5] we interviewed 53 block and district officials across three adjoining states: Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar.[6]

To gain insights into citizens' experiences with block officials, we partnered with Video Volunteers,[7] one of India's leading community media organizations, interviewing a total of 81 Community Correspondents (CCs) in their national network of citizen journalists.[8] The CCs film deficiencies in the allocation of government resources in their communities and interview residents who recount problems in their own words. They combine video-making with forms of in-person and digital mobilization, including visits to government offices and sharing videos on social media. Video Volunteers reports that the CCs have a one in five success rate, in which they can directly trace the CCs' efforts to a documented impact (e.g. repair of a water source, delivery of delayed pensions, the staffing of a health clinic). Preceding our fieldwork for this article, we carried out in-person interviews with 64 CCs with variable impact rates. Directly preceding our visits to block offices, we carried out phone or in-person interviews with an additional 17 CCs (recommended by VV as particularly active), to learn about their strategies for approaching officials.

Following the invitation of senior state officials, we narrowed our focus to Jharkhand. As one of India's poorest states, Jharkhand is a critical case – representative of other similarly resource-constrained settings in India's northern Hindi-speaking belt – in which to examine the responsiveness of bureaucracy.[9] We began with qualitative work – including shadowing both CCs and officials – in six blocks representing different geographical regions of the state. Our

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[5] We worked with two Research Associates, one woman and one man, each fluent in local languages and with substantial prior field experience. Both received intensive in-person training in qualitative methods, interviewing, and shadowing.

[6] In preliminary research in November and December 2022, we conducted in-person interviews with 23 officials in three adjoining states: Jharkhand (5), Uttar Pradesh (11), and Bihar (7). We then carried out an additional 30 interviews with officials in Jharkhand in February and March 2023.

[7] Video Volunteers has over 20 years of experience assisting local citizen journalists. We have been collaborating with VV since 2017. For more on our research partnership and research ethics, see our pre-registered study materials here (Appendix A2).

[8] The CCs are active in 19 states and 190 of India's poorest districts. CCs are both trained and paid by VV, and VV tracks the screening of the CC-made videos and officials' responses.

[9] Jharkhand placed 15 out of 19 states ranked by Human Development Index based on India's most recently available census data, putting it alongside the country scores of Ghana and Cameroon (UNDP 2011).

interviews and observations helped us to refine our understanding of the barriers to bureaucratic responsiveness and of citizens' attempts to overcome those barriers.

To systematically probe these dynamics, we designed and implemented a unique, all-state survey of block-level officials. We carried out surveys in 258 of Jharkhand's 264 block offices, excluding the 6 in which we had already carried out qualitative research and pilot surveys. In each block, we surveyed five actors, including the Block Development Officer (BDO; the most senior official in charge of the office); an administrative clerk (the lowest level employee who fields citizen complaints); the Block Panchayati Raj official, who serves as liaison to local elected village councils; the Block Coordinator Awas, who oversees implementation of a large rural housing program; and the Junior Engineer for Public Health, who is a technician focused on water. If the post for one of these five officials was vacant, we surveyed the Block Program Officer for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS, a rural work program), who manages employment and the construction of infrastructure across sectors (including both water and housing). This strategy gave us a sample of 1293 officials who were a mix of "generalists" working on a wide range of programs (BDO, clerks, and the panchayat and MGNREGS officials), and "specialists" who focus on our two issues of interest (housing and water), as well as officials of different ranks. Our aim in constructing this sample was to capture a wide array of perspectives within the block office, looking beyond just the senior officials in charge to other actors that engage citizens. To our knowledge, this is one of the first multi-actor surveys of an Indian administrative office.

The survey was fielded during Summer 2023, with support from senior officials in the Jharkhand Departments of Water and Sanitation and Rural Development – two of the key agencies that oversee the blocks. Surveys were completed in-person at the block offices. The total number of interviews by designation is shown in Table 1.[10]

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[10] Gaps between the number of surveys by designation and the block sample size (258) either represent vacant posts or an official with "multiple charges" who worked over more than one block. Note, in particular, that there are fewer interviews with Junior Engineers since these officers are frequently assigned to work in multiple blocks.

Official	Type	Surveys completed
Block Development Officer	Generalist (most senior)	241
Block Clerk	Generalist (lowest level)	241
Block Panchayati Raj Officer	Generalist	253
Block Coordinator Awas	Housing specialist	217
Junior Engineer for Public Health	Water specialist	107
Block Program Officer MGNREGS	Water & Housing responsibilities	234
Total		**1,293**

In addition to questions about their day-to-day responsibilities and experiences with citizens, we embedded pre-registered video and vignette experiments within the survey.[11] These experiments, described in detail below, were created in partnership with Video Volunteers, and reflect the strategies that the CCs most often employ when attempting to secure the responsive attention of block officials.

The bureaucratic accountability gap in rural India

Our interviews and survey reveal that block officials are overburdened, under-resourced, and feel substantial pressure to answer to higher-ups. Many report having insufficient resources to complete their tasks, with vacancies and understaffing being by far the most commonly reported reasons that officials feel they cannot work effectively (Figure 1). Seventy-two percent agreed that they were "constantly overloaded and overworked" and said that they were "tasked with an impossible amount of work." As one official remarked, "Currently, no number of working hours is enough."[12] Another BDO explained his strategies for coping with the high workload, including outsourcing work to local NGOs and ignoring "small things" like minor acts of corruption among the junior staff to keep the office working smoothly.[13]

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[11] The pre-analysis plan can be found here (Appendix A1). Deviations in the labeling of variables are noted in the appendix.

[12] BDO in Uttar Pradesh, February 2023.

[13] BDO in Jharkhand, April 2023.
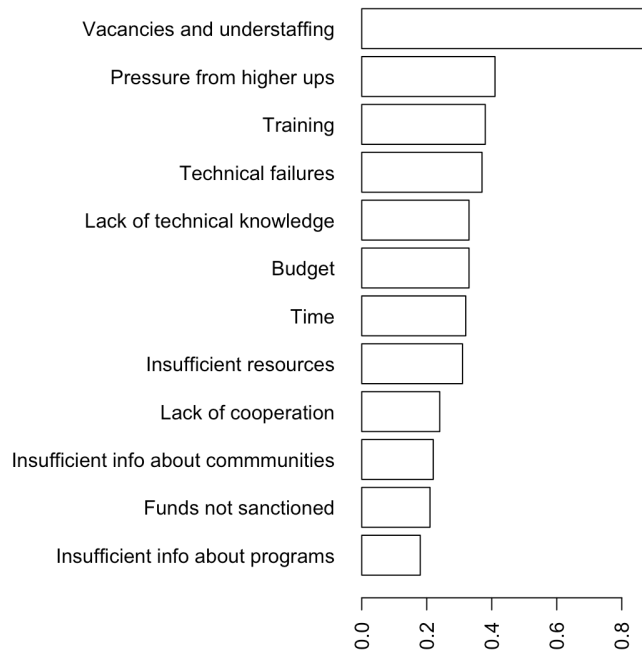
Figure 1. "Which of the following factors would you say also affect your ability to work effectively?" (Multiple choice)

Block officials are also constrained by the pressure they feel from higher-ups – the second most commonly cited barrier to effective work. One official, for example, described how state targets for program implementation are used to monitor the blocks, noting that he found the approach "too task-focused and demotivational."[14] This same dynamic extends through the block office itself, with clerks and lower-level personnel worrying about the oversight of the BDO. As stated by a clerk, "I do what the BDO tells me to do. This is my only job."[15] It follows that, when asked to select the top two types of individuals to whom they feel accountable, officials in our sample overwhelmingly chose either the district (62%) or block officials (59%) to whom they directly report.

Fewer block officials express accountability to citizens, with just over 40% stating that they feel "answerable" to citizens in their area. Most block officials are not embedded in local communities; about 5% of officials were born in the blocks where they work, and only 50% of

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[14] Revenue Sub-Inspector in Uttar Pradesh, November 2022.
[15] Head block office clerk in Jharkhand, March 2023.

officials report currently living in the blocks they serve. Officials have been working in their current blocks for only 2.44 years on average, and 54% report that they expect to be transferred within the year. These trends diminish the prospects of developing the deep community ties that might be expected to generate local accountability.

Yet, block officials do spend considerable time receiving citizens' complaints and meeting with them. On average, officials report that just under 300 citizens visit their office each week and that they spend about four hours per day engaging directly with citizens. Amid this constant stream of work, officials must decide which requests to prioritize. One BDO said, motioning to the large stack of papers on this desk, "I can't get through all of these."[16] Similarly, an officer responsible for implementing MGNREGS reported that over 8,000 citizens in his block expected the 100 days of paid work for which they are eligible, and he routinely faces a dilemma regarding which laborers should be paid first given resource constraints. Citizens also know that amid so much backlog, their complaints can get lost. According to one CC who has closely observed these dynamics, work gets stalled because "clerks bury the file in the large stack."[17]

Citizen approaches to narrowing the accountability gap

In spite of these challenges, engaging block officials is a central strategy for citizens, particularly when seeking to resolve problems of great urgency or those that cannot be solved more locally. For many rural residents, the block is a relatively distant entity – both physically and figuratively. But it also represents a way to "level hop" to higher levels of administration for those who feel blocked at the local level (Kruks-Wisner 2021). As a senior state official in Jharkhand reflected: "for ordinary citizens, the BDO is like god…. It is as close as many get to *sarkar* (the state)."[18] In an analysis of their national network, Video Volunteers found that block personnel were the most common officials cited by CCs as having "supported me in solving issues" – reported by 28.4 percent.[19] Two other studies of claim-making practices in rural India

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[16] BDO in Jharkhand, April 2023.

[17] CC in Bihar, October 2022.

[18] Author interview, Ranchi, Jharkhand, June 2023.

[19] This was followed by 24.3 percent who reported receiving support from panchayat officials, and 21.6 percent who reported assistance from district officials. Just 4.8 percent reported assistance from a state Member of Legislative Assembly or Member of Parliament.

similarly found that roughly 20 percent of citizens report directly contacting block officials (Kruks-Wisner 2018; Phillips and Prillaman 2024).

What are citizens' strategies to ensure their complaints are addressed when approaching the block? To develop our theory, we draw directly on the experiences of the CCs who, while in some respects are particular to Video Volunteers as an organization, are representative of a broader class of actors pursuing bottom-up channels to accountability in India and beyond.[20]

If one of the main constraints officials face is administrative and cognitive overload, citizens must find a way, in the words of a VV staff member, to "cut through the noise." The CCs' central strategy is to record videos of local problems including "face to camera" footage in which residents narrate the issue and its impact on their lives. The videos are designed to prompt an emotional response, and seeing citizens' faces, the CCs argue, helps officials to "focus."[21] As one CC reported, when videos capture officials' attention, they then "talk seriously" about completing the work. These accounts suggest that exposure to citizen testimony has the potential to make officials pay attention to complaints by making problems harder to ignore and by provoking an empathetic response.

Yet even if an official pays attention, a request may still be difficult to prioritize among many other demands. Here, CCs rely on the implicit threat that a video represents once it is created: that it might be shared. As one reports, "One easy way to get things done is social media. My videos go viral because I share them on social media with groups of social workers and journalists, who circulate it further or tag officials on Facebook. In this way, I am able to get the attention of the officials even without following up much."[22] Another Community Correspondent believes that once officials see a video, they are pressured to work "to save their own reputations."[23]

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[20] Some, like the CCs, are embedded in civic organizations or government initiatives that work facilitate and amplify citizen claim-making (Barrientos 2010; Buntaine et al. 2024), while others pursue more "organic" forms of citizen action (Mansuri and Rao 2014) that are not supported by an external organization (Krishna 2002; Kruks-Wisner 2018; Dunning 2009).

[21] CC in Bihar, October 2022.

[22] CC in Madhya Pradesh, November 2022.

[23] CC in Bihar, November 2022.

Our interactions with officials support the CCs' observations. When we shared a video filmed by a CC with a block official in Jharkhand, he felt that any officer who saw the video would have to take action "because they are afraid of the video being spread on social media. If some senior officer sees the video then it could be disastrous for the local officers."[24] Similarly, 73% of block survey respondents agreed (strongly or mostly) with the statement "social media makes officials' jobs harder because it makes it easy to cast blame and create bad publicity."

The CCs' experiences suggest that videos featuring citizen testimony can be used to focus attention and generate empathy. When followed by action that suggests visibility and publicity, citizens may also be able to activate officials' reputational concerns. These strategies serve to highlight two key aspects of social accountability: the harnessing of citizen voice from the bottom up, and the threat of public scrutiny.

Voice + digital mobilization: Embedded experiments

Informed by the CCs' strategies, we used video and vignette experiments that aimed to isolate the impact of citizen voice and mobilization on bureaucratic responsiveness. We began by selecting two issues with high local salience: broken water hand pumps and delays in construction under a central government housing program (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin, PMAY-G). The block has dedicated personnel for the implementation of PMAY-G, the Block Coordinator - Awas. While no block official is singularly responsible for water, it remains a key issue for the BDO, who coordinates with a network of "junior engineers" (technicians) from the Public Health and Engineering Department who are charged with maintaining water systems.

We assigned each official in our sample to one issue: housing or water. "Generalists" were randomly assigned to see a video related to either housing or water, while "specialists" saw the video on the issue relevant to them (Table 2).

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Table 2. Issue assignment for experiments

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Randomized	Broken handpumps	Delayed housing

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[24] Block Panchayati Raj Officer in Jharkhand, February 2022.

Generalists	Water specialist	Housing specialist
▪ Block development officer ▪ Clerk ▪ Block Coordinator (Panchayat) ▪ Block Program Officer MGNREGA	Junior Engineer Public Health	Block Coordinator Awas

Once an official was assigned to an issue, we carried out two experiments, administered sequentially in the survey, to test our hypotheses about the ability of citizens to capture officials' attention and generate action.

Capturing attention through empathy

Our first experiment used videos, varying how they framed information about either water or housing to elicit an emotional response. We see videos as particularly good tools for operationalizing citizen voice, as they include both auditory and visual components offering contextual information and cues. They also enable us to directly observe the moment at which an official hears and sees complaints from citizens – dynamics that often remain elusive in other studies of social accountability (Grossman and Slough 2022). We held the medium of video constant across all treatments since we were most interested in isolating the effects of the framing of the message, as opposed to the technology by which it was delivered. We also held the messenger constant by embedding the videos in the survey, where they were screened on tablets by trained enumerators.

The videos drew upon real footage from Video Volunteers' archive, made and publicly published by CCs in Jharkhand active in blocks that were not included in the survey sample.[25] This ensured that the video footage looked and sounded real to officials, but that particular places and people were not recognizable to them.[26] The videos were of similar length (approximately

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[25] This full archive is available on [YouTube](#).

[26] We chose not to provide footage from the blocks in which officers worked to avoid the potential for backlash or interfering with existing patterns of complaint-making and service delivery within a

three minutes) and about the same underlying issues, but with different presentations. Each pair started with the same video montage of images (broken hand pumps or incomplete housing) with the same voiceover in Hindi (spoken by the same female narrator, selected for having a "neutral" accent) who described the problem following an identical script. Following that introduction, the videos diverged as follows.

Citizen voice vs. official statistics

One video had a "citizen voice" framing, featuring both footage of a problem in local context and the testimony of local residents describing its impact on their lives. For example, as one man explains, due to late payments under PMAY-G, he and his family have "been living in huts and *kutcha* houses." As another woman explains, these *kutcha*, or impermanent, houses "might collapse at any time," while footage shows rain water pouring in. In the case of broken handpumps, a citizen shares that to find water, members of the household have to "walk long distances" to fetch drinking water, often from streams, which are "polluted with trash," with footage of women and children carrying water from a river.[27] Each video featured two women and one man, and the footage was all drawn from villages with predominantly Adivasi (tribal) or Scheduled Caste residents. The speakers are (by speech and dress) identifiable as coming from traditionally marginalized communities.

A control video featured an "official statistics" framing that highlighted the same water- and housing-related problems, but without any citizen testimony or footage of residents. Instead, the video presented figures with government statistics on the issue in a manner designed to reflect how senior officials would likely describe the problem. This presentation of official data, in addition to the placement of government program logos throughout the video, was intended to prime block officials to think about government targets for implementation.

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community. The videos were all introduced by enumerators as being from "not here in your area, but in another block."

[27] The full text of the script of each video is available in Appendix B.

Figure 2. Screenshots from water videos with citizen voice frame (top row)
and official statistics frame (bottom row)

We do not include a pure control without any video, nor a placebo video that provides no information or offers no framing. This is because we are interested in learning about how citizen voice affects responsiveness in light of the status quo, where officials receive a constant flow of information and are under intense organizational pressure. The comparison therefore assesses two frames that each seek to prompt responsiveness from officials, but through different channels: one calling attention downward to residents and their lived experiences and the other upward to senior officials and program targets. This offers a hard test of whether citizen voice

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can shape responsiveness when competing with a condition that might activate reminders of organizational and career concerns.

Officials were randomized into seeing either one of the video types (citizen voice or official statistics) on the issue (water or housing) to which they were assigned. The randomization was stratified within issues and officer type. As pre-specified, we find balance on issue, officer type, official characteristics (e.g. gender, length of tenure) and block characteristics (Table C1, Appendix).

Measuring effects

Enumerators first introduced the videos based on a script that varied slightly depending on the issue and treatment. Officials then watched the videos, after which they were told to think about [if **citizen voice** frame] the "people you saw in the video," or [if **officials statistics** control] "citizens facing the kinds of issues … you saw in the video." They were then told:

> "I'd like you to imagine – just for the sake of example – that [If **citizen voice** frame: the people from the video]//[If **official statistics** control: people facing those same problems] live here in your block, and that they are requesting help from your office."

These scripts served to call respondents' attention to their own locality, regardless of video type. Enumerators then observed officials' reactions and asked them a series of follow-up questions. Our pre-registered dependent variables are emotional responses, particularly feelings of empathetic concern and taking the perspective of affected citizens, and attention paid to the video. We also examined the actions officials state they would take should citizens come to their office with the same problem, and the level of effort they think should be expended in responding. The answer choices for actions officials might take to resolve a problem represent those we observed officials taking in our qualitative fieldwork. These variables, measures, and summary statistics are presented in Table 3.[28]

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[28] For the survey questions related to these variables, see our pre-registered study materials <u>here</u> (also Appendix A3). In our pre-analysis plan, we also include measures of the "perceived value of citizen voice" and "sense of social mission." We show effects on these measures in the appendix.

Table 3. Summary statistics: dependent variables for video experiment

Dependent variable	Measures	Mean	SD
Attention	Maintained eye contact throughout video (enumerator observation, binary)	0.94	0.25
	Had response when asked if something from the video stood out (binary)	1.00	0.05
	Asked a question (binary)	0.35	0.48
Emotional reaction	Felt sad (on a scale of 0-10)	7.88	2.63
	Felt angry (on a scale of 0-10)	5.88	3.81
	Felt frustrated (on a scale of 0-10)	3.80	3.81
	Able to name the emotions affected citizens might feel (binary)	0.96	0.20
	Personally knew individuals affected by similar problems (binary)	0.61	0.49
	Able to name consequences for citizens if problem unresolved (binary)	0.78	0.41

Action (hypothetical)	Taking any action from the following list (binary):
	  A. Listening to citizens and hearing them out
	  B. Registering or recording their complaints
	  C. Advising them on how to solve the problem themselves
	  D. Advising them on where else to seek help
	  E. Investigating and gathering more information on the problem
	  F. Making a call or contacting someone on the citizens' behalf
	  G. Trying to raise funds to assist with the problem
		0.99	0.09

	Total number of responses from above list	2.88	1.45
Effort	Taking high effort action (choosing any of item E-G, binary)	0.72	0.77
	Perception of the appropriate level of effort expended to resolve (1-10)	9.08	1.82
	Would respond immediately (as opposed to "never" or "after dealing with other complaints," binary)	0.86	0.35
	Time allocated to issue assessed through an allocation game where they are asked to spread 10 hours of working time over different issues	2.48	2.37

We estimate the effects of the treatment frames on these dependent variables through an ordinary least squares regression, with heteroskedasticity-robust (HC2) standard errors:

Equation 1: $Y = \alpha + \beta_1 \, Frame_{CV} + \sum \theta Stratum \times Frame_{CV}$

Our coefficient of interest is β_1, which measures the effect of seeing the citizen voice video ($Frame_{CV}$) relative to the official statistics control video. Because randomization occurs in official type-issue type strata (10 strata in total), we include an interaction with the treatment indicator and a centered indicator for these strata ($Stratum$), following Lin (2013). Effects should be interpreted as averages across the different block-level actors.[29]

As pre-specified, for all the sets of dependent variables other than "Action," we construct a mean effects index across the multiple measures by standardizing each variable within the set and taking the mean. While these indices should be viewed as the main outcomes of interest, we also report effects on index components separately to allow for the interpretation of effects.

Results

The results can be seen in Figure 3, which shows both point estimates and 95% confidence intervals estimated using the procedures described above.

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[29] Subgroup effects by official type are available in Figures G1-G2 (Appendix) and are discussed further below.
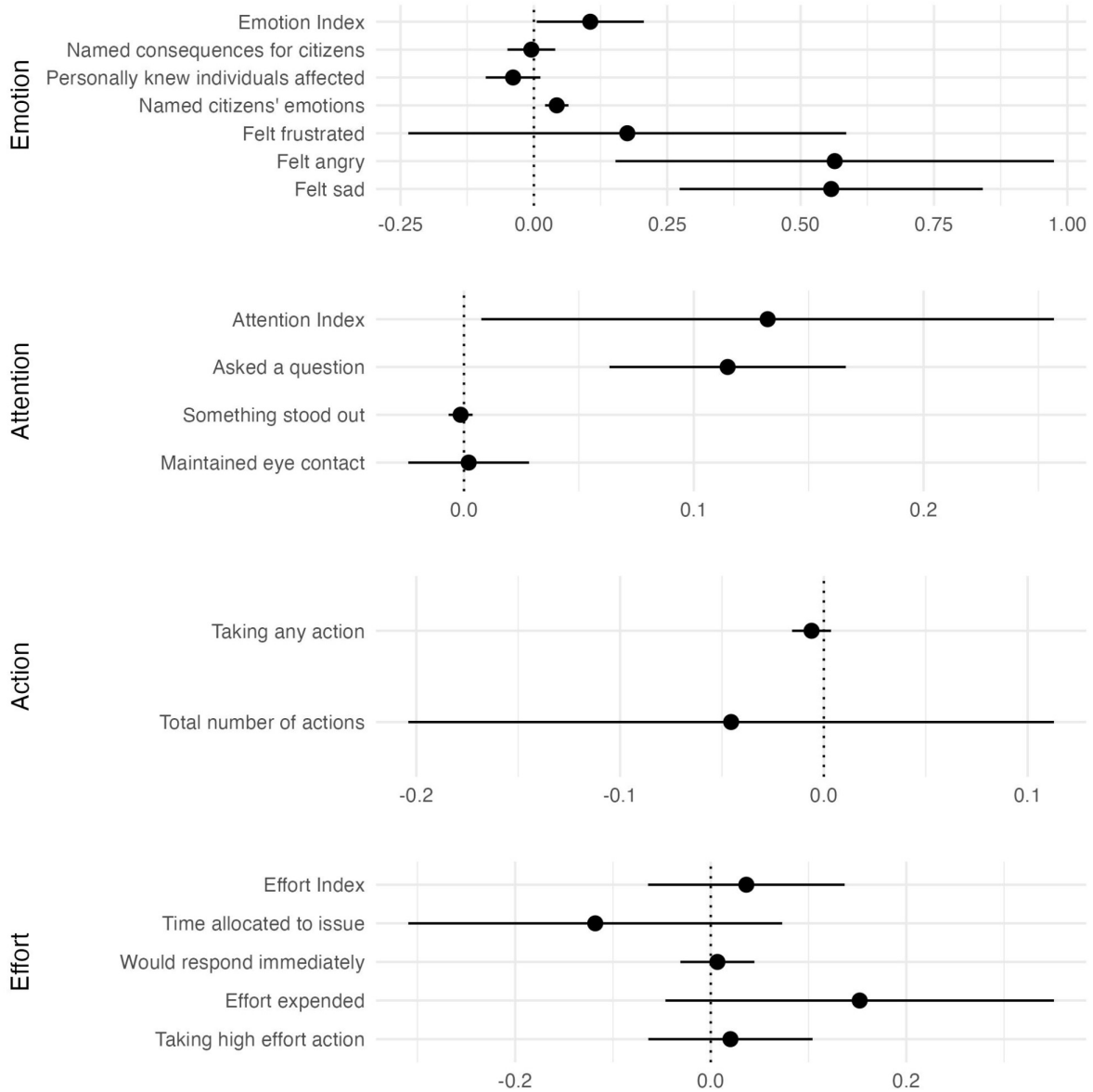
Figure 3. Effects of the citizen voice treatment
(point estimates and 95% confidence intervals)

Figure 3 shows that the citizen voice video generated a stronger emotional reaction among officials than the official statistics video, visible in a 0.105 standard deviation effect in the overall emotion index. Examining the index components indicates that this was driven by feelings of sadness and anger upon seeing the video, with effect sizes of roughly a half point on a ten-point scale. Officials were also five percentage points more likely to be able to name the

emotions that affected citizens likely face, suggesting that the citizen voice video prompted officials to take citizens' perspectives. These results suggest that the video prompted empathetic concern among officials.

This empathetic reaction is accompanied by increased attention to the problem at hand. The overall index for attention shows a 0.132 standard deviation effect. This effect was driven by officials being 11.5 percentage points more likely to ask a follow-up question about the problem, which we interpret as a strong behaviorally observable indicator of attention paid to the issue.

Figure 3 also depicts the effects of the video treatment on the actions that officials state that they would hypothetically take in response to the issue shown in the video. We see no effect of the citizen voice treatment on the total number of actions chosen, nor on the likelihood of an official choosing any action at all.[30] Similarly, we see no effect on the level of effort that officials deemed appropriate in response to the issue presented in the video.

Overall, the video experiment suggests that citizen voice elicits an emotional reaction from officials and leads them to pay more attention to the issues presented. But as far as we can measure, citizen voice on its own did not yield additional action over that generated by the official statistics control framing. These null effects could be the result of true constraints to responsiveness, but could also reflect ceiling effects due to social desirability bias, or the effectiveness of the official statistics control in also generating responsiveness.

Prompting action through reputational concerns

Our theory suggests that eliciting an emotional response, while important in capturing attention, may not be sufficient to prompt action unless citizens can also activate officials' reputational concerns, particularly among the higher levels to whom they report. Publicity – using increasingly accessible tools of digital media – is a key mechanism through which citizens may be able to activate these concerns by provoking fear of organizational and political scrutiny. This, in turn, may increase the likelihood that an official will prioritize their claims and needs.

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[30] Table E1 (Appendix) presents effects on each of the individual types of responses.

Digital vs. in-person mobilization

To investigate these dynamics, we employed a vignette directly after the video screening. Respondents were told a short story about affected citizens taking action to resolve the problem. The treatment condition recounted digital mobilization by citizens intended to convey to officials that the description of the problem at hand could be widely publicized, mentioning that citizens were sharing the video and working with a local media NGO. The comparison condition was a story about in-person mobilization by a group of citizens visiting a block office – a localized activity that is less likely to be seen beyond the area surrounding the office. The in-person action condition was designed to hold constant certain aspects of the information conveyed to officials – namely that affected citizens were mobilizing around the problem and the problem holds some level of urgency. As in the video experiment, this creates a hard test of the impact of each kind of citizen action, since each is directly compared to the other rather than to a placebo or pure control.

To present the vignette, respondents were told, "Imagine again the video you just saw. This time, imagine that residents who are facing those same kinds of issues have been…"

> [if **digital mobilization**] "…trying to raise awareness in the community about it. They worked with a **local media NGO to draw attention to the issue by filming a   video documenting the problem. They shared that video with their friends and   neighbors and others in the area using WhatsApp, and they also sent the video   to the BDO through WhatsApp**. They are now asking or help in   resolving the issue.

> [if **in-person mobilization**] "…working together to try to solve the problem. They have held community meetings, and have hand **written a petition asking government officials for help.** Many members of the community signed that petition, or marked it with their thumbprints. The community then pooled their resources for a **delegation of residents to travel to the block office.** They are now asking for help in resolving the issue.

Officials were randomized into hearing either of the vignette conditions. Assignment was blocked within issue, officer type, and the video type assigned in the previous round of randomization. As in the video experiment, Table C2 (Appendix) shows that officials who saw either type of vignette are similar across a number of variables.

Measuring effects

After hearing these vignettes, we measured effects on reputational concerns and hypothetical action. In order to measure different kinds of reputational effects, we included questions on the sources of pressure that officials might feel to respond – whether from people in the local surrounding area or from senior officials. We also measured whether this pressure was driven by a fear that others would be angry about the issue, or that others would be inspired by the mobilizing citizens and emulate or support them. To measure action, we asked respondents to consider officials in the imagined block, and to reflect on how they think they would respond in the face of either in-person or digital mobilization. These variables, measures, and summary statistics are presented in Table 4.[31]

Table 4. Summary statistics: dependent variables for vignette experiment

Dependent variables	Measures	Mean	SD
Reputational concerns	Overall pressure felt to resolve problem (scale of 1-3)	2.03	0.80
	Think people in the surrounding local area would be angry about issue (binary)	0.25	0.43
	Think people in the surrounding local area would be inspired by the citizen mobilization (binary)	0.81	0.40
	Think senior officials would be angry about issue (binary)	0.28	0.45
	Think senior officials would be inspired by the citizen mobilization (binary)	0.77	0.42
Action	Likelihood of sending staff to look at problem (1-3)	2.85	0.41
	Likelihood of sending contractor to look at problem (1-3)	2.41	0.75
	Likelihood of calling elected official about problem (1-3)	2.32	0.73
	Likelihood of fundraising to solve problem (1-3)	2.17	0.83

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[31] For the survey questions related to these variables, see our pre-analysis plan here (also Appendix A3). In our pre-analysis plan, we also include a measure of the "perceived value of citizen voice." We show effects on this measure in the appendix.

We estimate the effects of the vignettes on our outcomes and mechanisms of interest through an ordinary least squares regression, with heteroskedasticity-robust (HC2) standard errors:

Equation 2: $Y = \alpha + \beta_1 Vignette_{DM} + \sum \theta Stratum \times Vignette_{DM}$

Our coefficient of interest is β_1, which measures the effect of hearing the digital mobilization vignette ($Vignette_{DM}$) relative to the in-person mobilization vignette. Because randomization occurs in Official type-Issue type-Video type strata (20 strata in total), we include an interaction with the treatment indicator and a centered indicator for these strata ($Stratum$). Effects should be interpreted as averages across the multiple types of actors, while subgroup effects are discussed below.

In line with our pre-analysis plan, for our dependent variable related to "Action," we construct a mean effects index across the multiple measures by standardizing each variable within the set and taking the mean. We also report effects on index components separately to allow the interpretation of effects.

Results

Figure 4 shows that hearing the digital mobilization treatment significantly increases officials' overall perceived pressure to respond to the issue (a 0.27 treatment effect on a 3-point scale). This is driven by the fact that they are seven percentage points more likely to be worried that senior officials would be angry if they hear of the issue. Importantly, while the digital mobilization vignette also indicates that videos may be shared with community members, we find no treatment effects on worries that citizens would be angry. In other words, the digital mobilization treatment appears to be generating pressure to respond by activating reputational concerns with particular regard to senior officials. This is consistent with our interviews, in which officials expressed a fear of videos reaching higher levels.
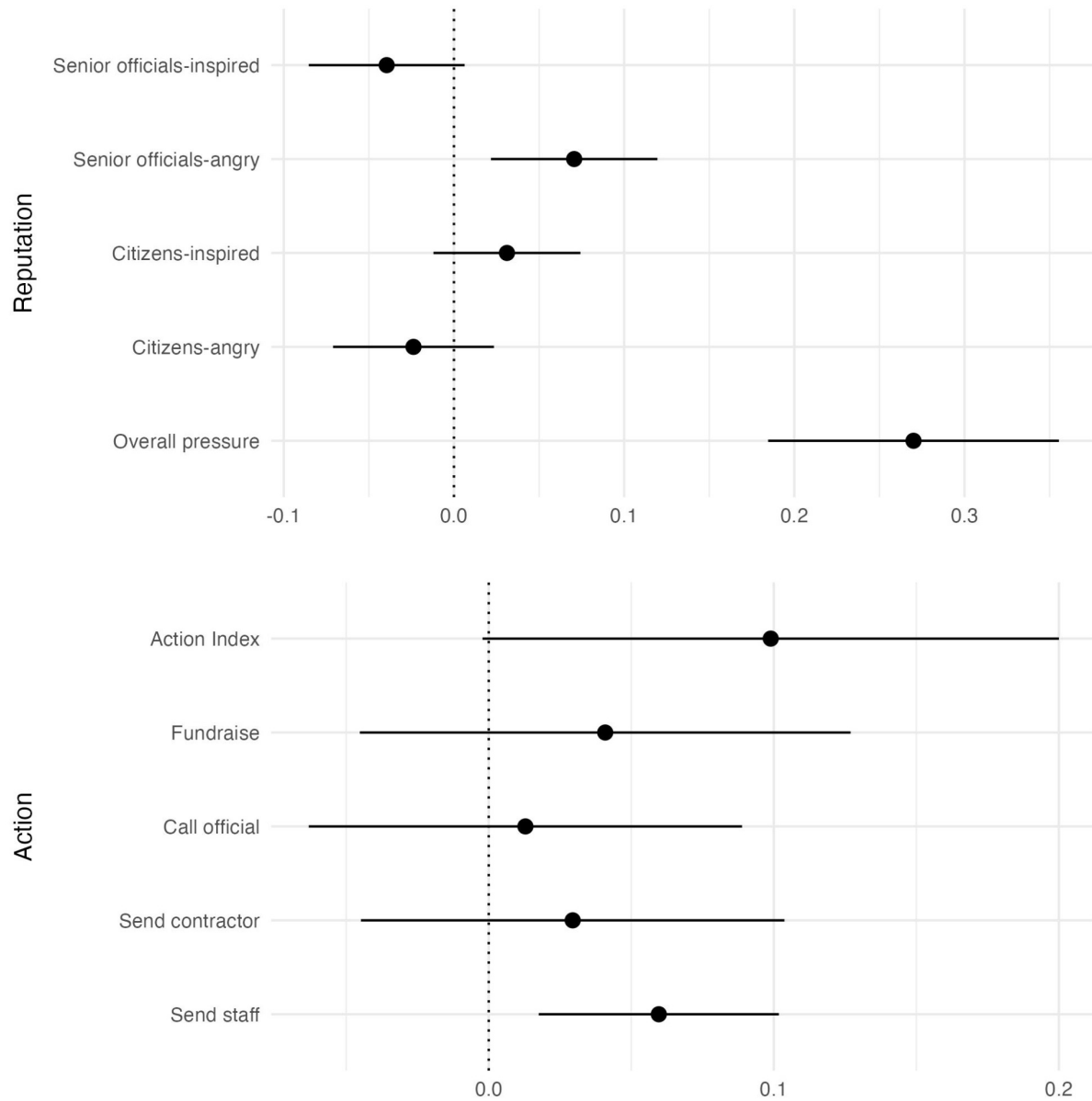
Figure 4. Effects of the digital mobilization treatment
(point estimates and 95% confidence intervals)

Figure 4 also shows that hearing the digital mobilization treatment increases the index of overall action by 0.099 standard deviations – a result with a 0.06 p-value. This effect is driven by officials being more likely to report that they would send their staff to examine an issue. As shown in Table 4, this is the most likely action taken by officials in response to either video type, suggesting it is the most relevant initial action taken when investigating an issue.

Together, the results from this second experiment suggest that reputational concerns triggered by a fear of angering senior officials motivate action. Both in-person and digital mobilization can carry reputational costs for officials but, as presented in our vignettes, one is locally-bounded while the other suggests the potential of viral information that could reach the broader public and higher levels of government.

Discussion

Our fieldwork highlighted real-world constraints upon block officials in responding to citizens, and strategies through which they might be overcome. Our experiments, while necessarily stylized, were designed to explore the effectiveness of those strategies. The video experiment shows that exposure to direct testimony from citizens can provoke empathetic responses and focus attention. Yet we also find, at least in our experimental context, that empathy and attention are insufficient to generate bureaucratic *action* to resolve an issue – particularly when compared to other frames that might prime accountability to higher levels of government. Barriers to action are overcome when citizens activate officials' reputational concerns. This occurs as the digital mobilization vignette provokes concerns about higher-level oversight – specifically over angering senior officials.

There are, however, features of our experimental design that may prevent us from detecting the full effects of citizen voice. Given social desirability bias, the lack of true constraints on reported action, and the fact that our comparison groups are not pure controls but other forms of issue presentation or mobilization that might also generate responsiveness, it is likely that we observe ceiling effects for our main outcomes of interest. Additionally, our use of hypothetical scenarios may not evoke the same emotional or reputational responses as real-life situations, potentially diminishing the effectiveness of our treatments. Yet despite a design that potentially biases against the treatments, we see evidence of citizen voice's emotional and (when digitally shared) reputational effects.

Notably, we observe an effect of digital mobilization on the pressure officials feel to respond, regardless of which video type the vignette follows (Tables F2-F3, Appendix).[32] While this might suggest that it is digital action alone that is driving responsiveness, our qualitative interviews with CCs caution against that interpretation. One, for example, explained: "with video it would be easy to capture the situation in which people were living, and ...the official would come to empathize. [The] scenes moved the officials to think about the difficulty people were facing."[33] Only once their attention is captured can the CCs then apply pressure, including "post[ing] the video in all my social groups like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and other media groups,"[34] and telling the official "if he does not give me a hearing, I will approach higher officials to tell them about the problem and the lack of assistance."[35] This suggests that citizen voice plays an important role in accomplishing the first-order task of getting officials to focus on a particular need, which is an important precursor to any action that follows.

It is likely that effects vary by an official's designation within the block office. We estimate these subgroup effects for attention and action in the video and vignette experiments, respectively, but are unable to detect significant differences, likely due to limited sample size (Figure G1, Appendix). To learn more about how effects might vary by official type, we measure subgroup effects conditional on other variables that might shape their incentives and ability to respond. Those with shorter tenures or higher expectations of being transferred, for example, might be more sensitive to higher-level reputational concerns (Iyer and Mani 2012). Existing literature also suggests that bureaucrats' career concerns may be strongest in settings where political constituencies are aligned (Velasco Rivera, forthcoming), and that top-down monitoring is more likely in areas that fall under a single constituency (Gulzar and Pasquale 2017). We first test for these dynamics by examining those who do *not* expect to be transferred within the next year – among whom the effects of the vignette experiment on official pressure and action persist (Tables G11- G12, Appendix). We then assess whether effects hold among blocks that fall within constituencies not aligned with the state's ruling party at the time of

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[32] Although the cross-randomized nature of our design technically allows us to estimate the interaction between video type and vignette type, our sample size leaves us unable to detect it (Table F1, Appendix). Detecting interaction effects could require sample sizes up to 16 times that needed to be able to detect the main effect. See a discussion here.

[33] CC interview, Uttar Pradesh, September 2018.

[34] CC interview, Uttar Pradesh, September 2018.

[35] Ibid.

research (the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, or JMM) or split between two parties. We find that the digital mobilization treatment still creates a sense of pressure to respond linked to worries of angering higher-level officials. We do not, however, detect effects on action taken (Tables G13-G14, Appendix). This may simply be a false negative, but it is also possible that the strongest effects of the digital mobilization vignette emerge from blocks in political constituencies aligned with the ruling party, where officials can both be more easily monitored and rewarded by the administration. The effects of citizen voice and action, in other words, may be interpreted differently by officials operating in different political contexts – dynamics that merit greater future research.

It is also possible that our results could be driven by officials of certain identities or backgrounds. A shared identity with citizens, for example, might increase the salience of the emotional mechanisms (Pepinsky et al. 2017;Tendler 1997; Tsai 2007), while those who are more locally embedded might be more concerned about local reputation (Paller 2019; Bhavnani and Lee 2017). However, subgroup analysis finds that the effects of our treatments persist across differently situated officials. As the narrator's voice in our videos is identifiably female and the residents featured in the water and housing videos are identifiable as *Adivasis* (Scheduled Tribe, ST) or members of Scheduled Castes (SC), we measure effects of the citizen voice video treatment among male respondents (Tables G1-G2, Appendix) and among those who do *not* identify as ST (Tables G3-G4, Appendix) or SC (Tables G5-G6, Appendix). In all cases, we find that there is still a measurable increase in empathy and attention. We similarly find that effects persist on emotion and attention (video experiment), pressure to respond (vignette experiment), and action (vignette experiment) among the respondents who do not live in the blocks that they serve (Tables G7-G10, Appendix). While we do not rule out that there may be important differences across officials,[36] the main effects of citizen voice and action hold conditional on identity and embeddedness.

There are several scope conditions to consider when extending the theory beyond rural Jharkhand's block offices. First, for citizens to be able to demand responsiveness, they must target citizen-facing public agencies where there are spaces for direct contact with officials. The level at which this contact occurs may shape how officials respond; those who are more locally

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[36] We further investigate differences in engagement with citizens by official type and characteristics in a separate paper.

embedded, for example, might be more sensitive to local reputation, whereas those in middle-level institutions (like the block office) may be more driven by higher-level career concerns. Second, Jharkhand is a poor and capacity-constrained state. In better-resourced and less overburdened settings, citizens may have less need to activate the emotional and reputational drivers of bureaucratic responsiveness that we have identified. Third, for the reputational mechanism to hold, personnel must face top-down pressure. Our theory is therefore conditional on the specific career trajectories and incentives that public personnel face.

Further, to make and share videos, citizens must have access to a smartphone or other device, reliable connection to the internet, the technical ability to create and disseminate content, and an online social network with whom to share. The CCs are supported by an NGO and given resources and training that help to amplify their voices. It is less clear whether individuals, without the support of such an organization, can employ the same techniques to the same effect. Yet, as of 2021, almost 67% of rural India's population had access to a smartphone (Iftikhar, 2021), and training programs suggest that technical skills can be taught.[37] Thus, while we do not suggest that these practices are universally accessible, there is reason to think they could be widely adopted.

Conclusion

Our study demonstrates the existence of citizen-led pathways to bureaucratic responsiveness under conditions – politicized, hierarchical, and unequal – where they might seem least likely. Through our observations and interviews with CCs, we developed an understanding of the strategies citizens might employ from the bottom up. Through our interviews with officials in block offices, we learned about constraints that inhibit their responsiveness to citizens. We combined those two perspectives to develop and test a citizen-driven but bureaucrat-centered theory of how citizen voice and mobilization can overcome these barriers. In short: under conditions where overload and upward accountability inhibit bureaucratic responsiveness, citizens must work to elicit empathy and evoke reputational concerns to command attention and mobilize action by officials.

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[37] Video Volunteers, for example, has recently begun to offer free media training to local volunteers, and to date supports a network of more than 2500 individuals who engage in video-making to document local grievances. See, https://www.videovolunteers.org/buland-bol-free-media-training/.

From a policy perspective, our study highlights three sets of questions with implications for social accountability actors as well as public agencies. First, what can be done to amplify the spaces in and tools with which citizens exercise voice? Video Volunteers offers one video-based model. But other forms of media (digital and traditional) as well as other platforms for grievance articulation can also provide citizens with the means to make demands on public officials. The dynamics of storytelling and whether citizens can share their narratives on their own terms are particularly important for the politics of recognition and dignity (Sanyal and Rao 2018). Yet narrative forms of claim-making may be hard to process at scale. If policymakers and civil society organizations are successful in creating new spaces to foster citizen voice, could officials become more overwhelmed or over time become desensitized to appeals from citizens? Or might the groundswell of citizen voice provoke an institutionalized change in how lower-level public agencies receive, listen, and respond to citizens? The answer hinges on the "state's institutional capacity to respond to citizen voice" (Fox 2015: 347). Efforts to invest in citizen-driven accountability must therefore be coupled with investments in public agencies and personnel. In particular, the study opens questions about the importance of not just increasing officials' time and resources, but developing a staff with a commitment to social issues and interpersonal skills, such as the ability to empathize with citizens.

Second, and directly related, what might encourage lower-level officials to allocate their time and energy to citizens' appeals? In the context of our experiment, digital mobilization had a greater effect on responsiveness compared to in-person collective action, but this does not mean that in-person action will not have an impact. Investigating the full array of strategies that citizens employ – both in-person and online – is an agenda ripe for further research. A key feature of any strategy, we argue, is the degree to which the claim-making process is visible to different audiences and creates pressure to respond. At the same time, our study demonstrates the power of emotion: bureaucrats do not simply respond to top-down directives and pressure but are also frequently motivated by empathetic and social concerns.

Last, there are also open questions concerning the social and distributional implications of strategies centered on citizen claim-making, which can both challenge and reinforce patterns of inequality (Gallagher et al. 2024; Kumar, Forthcoming). In settings where officials are overburdened, time allocated to responding to citizens could diminish time spent on other tasks or in meeting other needs. To the extent that it diminishes shirking or serving officials' private

interests, increased responsiveness to citizens' claims might be unequivocally beneficial for a community. However, responsiveness to certain demands could crowd out demands from others. The equity implications depend on context, particularly whether citizens approaching bureaucrats are otherwise underserved by the status quo. Video Volunteers and other social accountability organizations explicitly aim to serve marginalized citizens who have trouble making their voices heard. In the absence of such organizations, it is possible that more elite local actors become the "squeaky wheels" who are heard at a cost to those who are less well-positioned to make claims. Yet, where access to claim-making is widespread, it represents a potential pathway to more inclusive bureaucracies. Citizen-led efforts to build bureaucratic responsiveness, in sum, can deepen democracy by creating spaces in which to demand both distribution and recognition in the eyes of the state.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Pre-analysis Plan and study materials (filed with OSF, July 2023)

A1: The pre-analysis plan can be found here:

https://osf.io/gshfa/?view_only=d915eb9bb62e4ebe8808338ac62e5f0f

Note: In the pre-analysis plan that follows, the dependent variable called "responsiveness" is referred to as "action" in our paper, and the set of dependent variables called "pressure" are referred to as "reputational concerns".

A2: Research Ethics

The file above contains a discussion of our research ethics and research partnerships.

A3: Dependent variables

The file above also contains the survey questions for measuring the dependent variables.

Appendix B: Scripts for video experiment

A common problem in many villages in Jharkhand is that [(**water**) handpumps, which are a primary source of drinking water, fall into disrepair – often due to normal wear and tear over time // (**housing**) residents, even after being selected as housing beneficiaries, continue to live in kutcha houses because they are unable to complete construction of a pucca house – at times due to delayed dispersal of PMAY-G (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) funds]. [(**Testimony**) Our team visited some villages – not here in your area, but in another block – where people explained the [**drinking water** // **housing**] issues they face// (Officials statistics) Our team gathered some information on **drinking water**//**housing** issues.]. I'd like to show you a video. It's only a couple of minutes in length.

B1: Water treatment video (testimony)

B1.1: Video script (English translation)

Short montage (~15 seconds) of footage of broken handpumps – no audio, no humans.

Voice-over narration: In many villages in Jharkhand, residents struggle without reliable access to clean water. Often, the problem is that existing sources, provided by the government, have fallen into disrepair, such as when a handpump is broken.

B1.1a: Testimony 1

Woman: There is water in the well but it is infested with insects. We drink the same water and feed it to our kids. And then fall sick. The water that we fetch from the stream is also full of impurities. The nearest chapakal [handpump] that we can fetch water from is also far. There is a well but it is infested. Children drink this water and fall sick. Water that we fetch from the stream is also impure. And then we fall sick - catch cold and cough. Especially, the kids fall sick. We adults do too.

B1.1b: Testimony 2

Man : The hand-pump has been defunct and is still defunct.
Interviewer - where do you fetch water from then?
Man: we fetch water from that run down well and a nearby stream.
Interviewer - What is the problem with consuming the water from the well or the stream?
Man - there are obviously problems we face due to consumption of well/ stream water. The water from the steam is infested with insects etc. Same is the case with the water from the well. When we take the kids to the doctor, they ask us to drink boiled water or water from hand-pumps. And we have two hand-pumps – except that both are out of order.
Interviewer: What do you want?
Man - It will be nice if these things are fixed. We will get a stable source of water.

B1.1c: Testimony 3

Woman: There are a lot of difficulties. We catch cold, cough. The same water is consumed by young kids. The water from the stream is polluted with trash. These are the problems we face.
Interviewer: But there is a hand-pump in your village.
Woman: There is a hand-pump but it is out of order.
Interviewer: I have been told that it is defunct since six months.
Woman: Yes.
Interviewer: In these six months, has no one turned up to fix it?
Woman: Someone came to fix it. We even collected money to pay for fixing the hand- pump. We are poor people. Where will we get so much money from. We even paid for the fixing of the hand-pump but it is still not working.
Interviewer: What do you want?
Woman: I want that proper arrangements should be made for our drinking water. Young children have to walk long distances to fetch drinking water. It is the rainy season still, so there is water in the streams. Soon the rainy season will be over and then we keep wandering around, looking for drinking water.

B2: Water control video (official statistics)

B2.1: Video script (English translation)

Short montage (~15 seconds) of footage of broken handpumps – no audio, no humans.

Voice-over narration: Access to water is essential for the health and livelihoods of citizens of Jharkhand for drinking, cooking, and cleaning. India has faced a huge challenge of providing safe drinking water to its rural population – over 900 million people in more than 1 million villages.

B2.1a: Slide 1: Title slide with logos of government water schemes
Voice-over narration: Both the Government of India and the Government of Jharkhand have been making many efforts, with schemes pursued at multiple levels, a few of which you see here on the screen. We have seen the fruits of these efforts. According to the 2011 Census, 95% of the rural population has access to some form of water supply infrastructure.

B2.1b: Slide 2: Figure showing how Indian households get their water – shows heavy reliance on handpumps
Voice-over narration: One of the main strategies to achieve this progress is to rely on groundwater through the use of wells and pumps. As you can see from this graph, looking at the dark blue areas, about one-third of households across all of India rely on handpumps. This is even greater if we look just at rural areas, as in the right-most graph, where you can see that about 43% of households get their water from handpumps.

B2.1c: Slide 3: Figure showing sources of water in Jharkhand
Voice-over narration: We see even higher use of handpumps in Jharkhand. By far the most common source of water for citizens of Jharkhand is a handpump. Based on a survey conducted by the government of Jharkhand, over half of all households rely on these hand pumps for their drinking water.

B2.1d: Slide 4: Figure showing about ⅓ of handpumps in JH are not working
Voice-over narration: Yet not all of these pumps work. In a survey of handpumps across the state, about 30% were found to be non functional. Many of these problems occur just through normal wear and tear of a pump and are expected over its lifetime. As a result, communities have frequent need for repairs, without which they struggle without reliable access to clean water

B3: Housing treatment video (testimony)

B3.1: Video script (English translation)
Short montage of mix of incomplete construction of pucca housing + footage of katcha housing/housing in bad repair. No audio, no humans.
Voice over narration: In many villages in Jharkhand, residents continue to live in katcha houses, even when they have been selected as beneficiaries under programs like Pradhan Mantri Avas Yojana. Often, the problem is that they have not received the necessary installments of funds from the government to finance their construction in full. As a result, their houses remain incomplete.

B3.1a: Testimony 1
Woman: Our entire house is broken and the roof is damaged. We live in these kutcha houses. So the rain water pours in all the time. That's why sometimes we have to take our kids and sleep outside the house.

B3.1b: Testimony 2
Man: Issue is that the Indira Awas that we had been allotted in 2016 is still incomplete.
Interviewer: How many beneficiaries was it constructed for?
Man: Four beneficiaries
Interviewer: Has anyone come to inspect this place?
Man: No one does.
Interviewer: What do you want?
Man: We want that the construction that is incomplete should be complete. That would be nice. That would make it easy for us to live, otherwise so far we have been living in huts and kutcha houses.

B3.1c: Testimony 3

Woman: our entire settlement is in shambles. How can our families and kids live in such homes? How can we live like this? These houses might collapse anytime, at night. And kill our families and kids. Who will come to visit us if such an incident takes place? If anyone survives that collapse here, only then will they try to save/ revive others. Our houses are completely damaged and no one is trying to make any arrangements for us. No government is doing so. How should we go on living?

B4: Housing control video (official statistics)

B4.1: Video script (English translation)

Short montage of mix of incomplete construction of pucca housing + footage of katcha housing/housing in bad repair. No audio, no humans
Voice-over narration: In many villages in Jharkhand, residents continue to live in katcha houses, even when they have been selected as beneficiaries under programs like Pradhan Mantri Avas Yojana. Often, the problem is that they have not received the necessary installments of funds from the government to finance their construction in full. As a result, their houses remain incomplete.

B4.1a: Slide 1: Title slide with logos of government housing schemes

Voice-over narration: Both the Government of India and the Government of Jharkhand have been making many efforts, with schemes pursued at multiple levels, a few of which you see here on the screen. We have seen the fruits of these efforts. According to the 2011 Census, just over half of all Indian households had homes with pucca walls and a pucca roof. This number has grown rapidly, to more over 75 percent in recent years.

B4.1b: Slide 2: Housing status across India – figure shows rural gap and katcha housing

Voice-over narration: You can see that progress here, where nationally the share of 'pucca' houses rose from 55% in 2011 to 71% in 2015-16, with upward trends continuing. The 2018 National Sample Survey estimates that almost 77 percent of Indian homes qualify as pucca. But you can also see here that rural areas still lag behind – still hovering around 50%. And almost a third of rural homes are in very poor – or katcha – condition.

B4.1c: Slide 3: Figure showing PMAY-G completion across India – shows big push, but also gap in completion

Voice-over narration: Across India, there has been a big push to address this gap through programs like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – although you can also see the gaps between the targets and homes actually completed. This is sometimes due to beneficiaries who start but then fail to complete their homes. But in some cases, the problem is gaps in program implementation, such as delays in receiving funds from the government. In all, about 70 percent of registered beneficiaries have had their homes completed till now.

B4.1d: Slide 4: Figure showing PMAY-G implementation in Jharkhand

Voice-over narration: Jharkhand has done quite well under PMAY. You can see here the numbers of houses built each month. But Jharkhand also has the problem of incomplete houses. Here you see the drop off between beneficiaries who are registered, the geo-tagging process, getting a house sanctioned, and actual completion rates. While most houses do eventually get built, the delays in construction – at times due to delays in dispersal of funds – create a lot of difficulties for rural households.

Appendix C: Balance Tests

Following our pre-analysis plan, we conduct balance tests on the issue covered, official characteristics, and block characteristics. We estimate our main specification for our fixed and pretreatment characteristics of interest. Because no variables are considered imbalanced at the 0.05 level, we do not control for any of these, nor do we test for whether balance occurs by chance.

Table C1. Balance table for video experiment

	Issue	Officer Type			Official characteristics				Block characteristics			
	Housing	Generalist	Water	Housing + water	Female	Lives in block	Born in block	Years of service	PESA[1]	Distance nearest town[2]	JMM block[3]	Split block[4]
Intercept	0.543***	0.568***	0.083***	0.181***	0.110***	0.484***	0.049***	14.419***	0.417***	34.579***	0.371***	0.070***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.012)	(0.019)	(0.009)	(0.284)	(0.020)	(0.756)	(0.019)	(0.010)
Testimony	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.008	0.027	-0.007	-0.047	0.037	1.122	0.008	-0.012
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.017)	(0.026)	(0.012)	(0.405)	(0.027)	(1.031)	(0.027)	(0.014)
N	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293	1291	1293	1269	1293	1293

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

[1] Predominantly tribal areas that are categorized as Scheduled Areas under the Indian Constitution come under the Panchayat Extension in Scheduled Area (PESA) Act, which makes provisions for tribal self-governance. The Act applies to 16 of 24 districts.

[2] Village-level averages taken from the 2011 Census and averaged at the block level. Information for 5 blocks is missing in the census. We have dropped these blocks from this balance test.

[3] We placed blocks in ACs by asking District Program Officers (DPO) of MGNREGA. To cross-check their data, we approached the District Election Officers. In cases where the DPOs were not able to provide accurate information about block to AC mapping we directly contacted the Block Program Officers of MGNREGA or the Block Development Officer within the blocks for the AC mapping.

[4] Whether the block lies in multiple assembly constituencies controlled by more than one party based on the same electoral data as described in note 3.

Table C2. Balance table for vignette experiment

	Issue	Officer Type			Official characteristics				Block characteristics			
	Housing	Generalist	Water	Housing + water	Female	Lives in block	Born in block	Years of service	PESA[1]	Distance nearest town[2]	JMM block[3]	Split block[4]
Intercept	0.543***	0.568***	0.083***	0.181***	0.097***	0.499***	0.041***	14.334***	0.440***	35.171***	0.363***	0.067***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.011)	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.290)	(0.019)	(0.731)	(0.019)	(0.010)
Digital Mobili- zation	0.000	0.000	0.000+	0.000	0.018	-0.003	0.010	0.139	-0.007	-0.097	0.026	-0.005
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.017)	(0.026)	(0.012)	(0.408)	(0.028)	(1.026)	(0.027)	(0.014)
N	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293	1291	1293	1269	1293	1293

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators. + p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

[1] Predominantly tribal areas that are categorized as Scheduled Areas under the Indian Constitution come under the Panchayat Extension in Scheduled Area (PESA) Act, which makes provisions for tribal self-governance. The Act applies to 16 of 24 districts.

[2] Village-level averages taken from the 2011 Census and averaged at the block level. Information for 5 blocks is missing in the census. We have dropped these blocks from this balance test.

[3] We placed blocks in ACs by asking District Program Officers (DPO) of MGNREGA. To cross-check their data, we approached the District Election Officers. In cases where the DPOs were not able to provide accurate information about block to AC mapping we directly contacted the Block Program Officers of MGNREGA or the Block Development Officer within the blocks for the AC mapping.

[4] Whether the block lies in multiple assembly constituencies controlled by more than one party based on the same electoral data as described in note 3.

Appendix D: Regressions for treatment effects

Table D1. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Emotional Reaction

	Index components						
	Emotion Index	Felt sad	Felt angry	Felt frustrated	Named citizens' emotions	Personally knew individuals affected	Named consequences for citizens
Intercept (Control mean)	-0.053	7.595***	5.595***	3.713***	0.936***	0.626***	0.783***
	(0.038)	(0.104)	(0.149)	(0.148)	(0.010)	(0.018)	(0.016)
Testimony Treatment	0.106*	0.557***	0.564**	0.175	0.043***	-0.039	-0.005
	(0.051)	(0.145)	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.011)	(0.026)	(0.023)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293
R2	0.062	0.036	0.039	0.037	0.040	0.090	0.031

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table D2. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Attention

	Interest Index	Maintained eye contact	Something stood out	Asked a question
Intercept (Control mean)	-0.067+	0.935***	0.998***	0.292***
	(0.039)	(0.010)	(0.002)	(0.018)
Testimony Treatment	0.132*	0.002	-0.001	0.115***
	(0.064)	(0.013)	(0.003)	(0.026)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293	1293	1293
R2	0.035	0.051	0.015	0.037

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table D3. Effects of Testimony treatment on the hypothetical action.

	Total number of responses	Taking any action
Intercept (Control mean)	2.906***	0.995***
	(0.057)	(0.003)
Testimony Treatment	-0.046	-0.006
	(0.081)	(0.005)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293
R2	0.019	0.013
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators. $+ p < 0.1$, $* p < 0.05$, $** p < 0.01$, $*** p < 0.001$		

Table D4. Effects of Testimony treatment on hypothetical effort taken in response to a video

	Effort Index	Taking high effort action	Effort expended (1-10)	Would respond immediately	Time allocated
Intercept (Control mean)	-0.019	0.712***	8.998***	0.855***	2.542***
	(0.038)	(0.031)	(0.076)	(0.014)	(0.069)
Testimony Treatment	0.036	0.020	0.152	0.007	-0.118
	(0.051)	(0.043)	(0.101)	(0.019)	(0.097)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293
R2	0.131	0.021	0.016	0.027	0.459
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators. $+ p < 0.1$, $* p < 0.05$, $** p < 0.01$, $*** p < 0.001$					

Table D5. Treatment effects of digital mobilization vignette on officials' pressure to respond to a problem

	Overall pressure	Citizens-angry	Citizens-inspired	Senior officials-angry	Senior officials-inspired
Intercept (In-person action mean)	1.896***	0.263***	0.790***	0.247***	0.792***
	(0.032)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.016)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.270***	-0.024	0.031	0.071**	-0.040+
	(0.044)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.023)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293

R2	0.079	0.036	0.033	0.041	0.033

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table D6. Treatment effects of digital mobilization vignette on hypothetical action

	Send staff	Send contractor	Call official	Fundraise	Action Index
Intercept (Control mean)	2.821***	2.396***	2.317***	2.147***	-0.051
	(0.017)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.033)	(0.039)
Digital Action Treatment	0.060**	0.029	0.013	0.041	0.099+
	(0.022)	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.046)	(0.054)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293
R2	0.052	0.123	0.051	0.050	0.057

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Appendix E: Additional outcomes

Here we present effects for each of the individual hypothetical responses an official can take in response to the videos they see. These are not pre-registered.

Table E1. Treatment effects on individual possible responses in video experiment

	Listen	Register	Advise-solve themselves	Advise-seek help	Investigate	Call someone	Fundraise
Intercept (Control mean)	0.840***	0.439***	0.325***	0.595***	0.441***	0.205***	0.066***
	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.010)
Testimony Treatment	-0.003	0.029	-0.055*	-0.024	0.027	-0.010	0.007
	(0.020)	(0.028)	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.022)	(0.014)
Num.Obs.	1287	1287	1287	1287	1287	1287	1287
R2	0.020	0.019	0.037	0.030	0.034	0.023	0.020

In our pre-analysis plan, we include additional outcomes for both the video and vignette experiment. We report summary statistics and effects on these variables here.

Table E2. Summary statistics for additional pre-specified measures

Dependent variable	Measures	Mean	SD	Video or vignette experiment?
Perceived value of citizen voice	The importance an official assigns within their work to "taking action to help resolve citizens' grievances (1-10)	9.09	1.96	Video
	Would share video with others, including new staff, senior officers, or community members (binary)	0.95	0.21	Video
	The importance an official assigns within their work to "listening to citizens," (1-10)	9.07	1.94	Video
	Whether officials provide phone numbers to receive community-generated video content over WhatsApp (binary)	0.85	0.35	Both
	Express interest in collaboration with through scanning QR code to sign up (binary)	0.50	0.50	Both
Sense of social mission	Felt "motivated-inspired to try to make a positive difference" (on a scale of 0-10)	8.15	2.55	Video
	Whether officials agreed that "it's important to try to go the extra mile whenever we can to help people, even if it means going above and beyond our formal duties" (binary)	0.17	0.37	Video

Table E3. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Perceived Value of Citizen Voice

	Value of Voice Index	Would share video	Importance of listening (1-10)	Importance of taking action	Gave WhatsApp number	Scanned code for collaboration
Intercept (Control mean)	0.001	0.942***	9.139***	9.144***	0.852***	0.495***
	(0.039)	(0.009)	(0.075)	(0.073)	(0.014)	(0.020)
Testimony Treatment	-0.003	0.024*	-0.136	-0.109	0.006	0.017
	(0.056)	(0.012)	(0.108)	(0.107)	(0.019)	(0.028)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293
R2	0.031	0.026	0.022	0.042	0.032	0.030

Table E4: Effects of Testimony Treatment on Sense of Social Mission

	Social Mission Index	Felt motivated	Said going extra mile is important
Intercept (Control mean)	0.005	8.153***	0.167***
	(0.039)	(0.098)	(0.015)
Testimony Treatment	-0.012	-0.014	-0.004
	(0.054)	(0.142)	(0.021)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293	1293
R2	0.031	0.019	0.023
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators			
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001			

Table E5. Treatment effects of digital mobilization vignette on behavioral measures of the perceived value of citizen voice

	Gave WhatsApp number	Scanned code for collaboration
Intercept (In-person action mean)	0.842***	0.528***
	(0.014)	(0.020)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.026	-0.050+
	(0.019)	(0.028)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293
R2	0.046	0.049
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators.		
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001		

Appendix F: Video X Vignette interactions

Table F1. Effect of digital mobilization vignette on action, interaction with video type

	Action Index	Send staff	Send contractor	Call official	Fundraise
Intercept (Control mean)	-0.126	2.797***	2.450***	2.291***	2.010***
	(0.138)	(0.060)	(0.087)	(0.102)	(0.124)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.185	-0.003	0.162	-0.132	0.352*
	(0.189)	(0.093)	(0.112)	(0.146)	(0.173)
Testimony Video	0.148	0.048	-0.107	0.052	0.271
	(0.257)	(0.115)	(0.164)	(0.189)	(0.235)
Digital Mobilization X Testimony Video	-0.170	0.123	-0.261	0.287	-0.613+
	(0.357)	(0.173)	(0.215)	(0.275)	(0.330)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293
R2	0.057	0.052	0.123	0.051	0.050
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators + p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001					

Table F2. Effect of digital mobilization vignette on action, conditional on seeing a testimony video

	Action Index	Send staff	Send contractor	Call official	Fundraise
Intercept (Control mean)	-0.035	2.823***	2.395***	2.328***	2.174***
	(0.054)	(0.025)	(0.040)	(0.039)	(0.046)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.042	0.066*	0.015	0.004	-0.039
	(0.076)	(0.032)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.065)
Num.Obs.	655	638	655	655	655
R2	0.041	0.044	0.101	0.050	0.040
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators + p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001					

Table F3. Effect of digital mobilization vignette on action, conditional on seeing an information video

	Action Index	Send staff	Send contractor	Call official	Fundraise
Intercept (Control mean)	-0.067	2.823***	2.397***	2.307***	2.120***
	(0.056)	(0.025)	(0.039)	(0.041)	(0.046)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.158*	0.066*	0.044	0.022	0.123+
	(0.076)	(0.032)	(0.055)	(0.058)	(0.064)
Num.Obs.	638	638	638	638	638
R2	0.072	0.044	0.146	0.051	0.059
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators + p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001					

Table F4. Effect of digital mobilization vignette on pressure, interaction with video type

	Overall pressure	Citizens-angry	Citizens-inspired	Politicians-angry	Politicians-inspired
Intercept (Control mean)	2.060***	0.288***	0.834***	0.235***	0.786***
	(0.117)	(0.060)	(0.058)	(0.052)	(0.054)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.425**	-0.024	0.028	0.093	-0.036
	(0.163)	(0.091)	(0.081)	(0.088)	(0.085)
Testimony Video	-0.324	-0.050	-0.088	0.024	0.012
	(0.216)	(0.112)	(0.110)	(0.097)	(0.101)
Digital Mobilization X Testimony Video	-0.305	0.000	0.007	-0.044	-0.008
	(0.307)	(0.172)	(0.156)	(0.167)	(0.160)
Num.Obs.	1293	1293	1293	1293	1293
R2	0.079	0.036	0.033	0.041	0.033
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators + p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001					

Table F5. Effect of digital mobilization vignette on pressure, conditional on seeing a testimony video

	Overall pressure	Citizens-angry	Citizens-inspired	Politicians-angry	Politicians-inspired
Intercept (Control mean)	1.890***	0.297***	0.763***	0.252***	0.787***
	(0.045)	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.023)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.306***	-0.035	0.030	0.070*	-0.034
	(0.061)	(0.035)	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.033)
Num.Obs.	655	655	655	655	655
R2	0.081	0.035	0.031	0.031	0.031
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators + p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001					

Table F6. Effect of digital mobilization vignette on pressure, conditional on seeing an informational video

	Overall pressure	Citizens-angry	Citizens-inspired	Politicians-angry	Politicians-inspired
Intercept (Control mean)	1.902***	0.229***	0.818***	0.241***	0.796***
	(0.046)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.023)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.233***	-0.013	0.032	0.071*	-0.045
	(0.062)	(0.033)	(0.030)	(0.035)	(0.033)
Num.Obs.	638	638	638	638	638
R2	0.077	0.030	0.023	0.051	0.036
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators + p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001					

Appendix G: Subgroup effects

G1: Effects by designation

Figure G1. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Attention Index (left) and Action Index (right), subgroup effects by designation
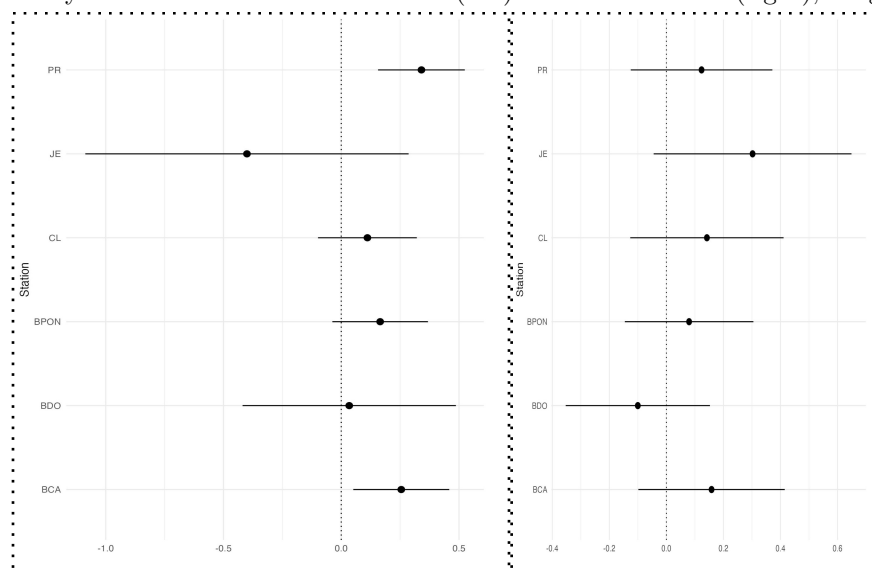
Note: block indicators removed, as blocking was done by station

G2: Male respondents

Table G1. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Emotional Reaction, male respondents

	Felt sad	Felt angry	Felt frustrated	Named citizens' emotions	Personally knew individuals affected	Named consequences for citizens	Emotion Index
Intercept (Control mean)	7.565***	5.623***	3.677***	0.934***	0.619***	0.781***	-0.069+
	(0.110)	(0.156)	(0.157)	(0.010)	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.041)
Testimony Treatment	0.610***	0.574**	0.188	0.045***	-0.040	-0.005	0.113*
	(0.151)	(0.219)	(0.221)	(0.012)	(0.028)	(0.024)	(0.055)
Num.Obs.	1156	1156	1156	1156	1156	1156	1156
R2	0.042	0.047	0.038	0.053	0.085	0.037	0.059

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table G2. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Attention, male respondents

	Maintained eye contact	Something stood out	Asked a question	Attention Index
Intercept (Control mean)	0.933***	1.000***	0.296***	-0.042
	(0.010)	(0.000)	(0.019)	(0.033)
Testimony Treatment	0.006	-0.003	0.112***	0.111+
	(0.014)	(0.002)	(0.028)	(0.062)
Num.Obs.	1156	1156	1156	1156
R2	0.062	0.017	0.036	0.041

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

G3: Non-ST respondents

Table G3. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Emotional Reaction, Non-ST respondents

	Felt sad	Felt angry	Felt frustrated	Named citizens' emotions	Personally knew individuals affected	Named consequences for citizens	Emotion Index
Intercept (Control mean)	7.490***	5.670***	3.699***	0.929***	0.606***	0.793***	-0.074+
	(0.122)	(0.169)	(0.168)	(0.011)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.044)
Testimony Treatment	0.556**	0.488*	0.032	0.048***	-0.057+	-0.009	0.072
	(0.171)	(0.242)	(0.240)	(0.013)	(0.030)	(0.026)	(0.059)
Num.Obs.	979	979	979	979	979	979	979
R2	0.041	0.047	0.041	0.050	0.090	0.044	0.057

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table G4. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Attention, Non-ST respondents

	Maintained eye contact	Something stood out	Asked a question	Attention Index
Intercept (Control mean)	0.927***	0.998***	0.289***	-0.096*
	(0.012)	(0.002)	(0.020)	(0.048)
Testimony Treatment	0.004	0.000	0.104***	0.145*
	(0.016)	(0.003)	(0.030)	(0.070)
Num.Obs.	979	979	979	979
R2	0.056	0.023	0.037	0.043
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators				
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001				

G4: Non-SC respondents

Table G5. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Emotional Reaction, Non-SC respondents

	Felt sad	Felt angry	Felt frustrated	Named citizens' emotions	Personally knew individuals affected	Named consequences for citizens	Emotion Index
Intercept (Control mean)	7.610***	5.573***	3.706***	0.940***	0.648***	0.786***	-0.025
	(0.110)	(0.161)	(0.161)	(0.010)	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.042)
Testimony Treatment	0.580***	0.550*	0.249	0.034**	-0.049+	-0.012	0.087
	(0.155)	(0.226)	(0.228)	(0.012)	(0.028)	(0.025)	(0.056)
Num.Obs.	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100
R2	0.036	0.036	0.037	0.031	0.090	0.035	0.051
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators.							
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001							

Table G6. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Attention, Non-SC respondents

	Maintained eye contact	Something stood out	Asked a question	Attention Index
Intercept (Control mean)	0.930***	0.998***	0.283***	-0.092*
	(0.011)	(0.002)	(0.019)	(0.044)
Testimony Treatment	0.001	-0.002	0.115***	0.125+
	(0.015)	(0.003)	(0.028)	(0.072)

Num.Obs.	1100	1100	1100	1100
R2	0.071	0.017	0.043	0.043

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

G5: Non-embedded respondents (those who do not live in the block)

Table G7. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Emotional Reaction, non-embedded respondents

	Felt sad	Felt angry	Felt frustrated	Named citizens' emotions	Personally knew individuals affected	Named consequences for citizens	Emotion Index
Intercept (Control mean)	7.427***	5.300***	3.819***	0.935***	0.607***	0.780***	-0.077
	(0.151)	(0.213)	(0.203)	(0.013)	(0.026)	(0.023)	(0.054)
Testimony Treatment	0.804***	0.948**	0.320	0.050**	-0.036	-0.033	0.138+
	(0.207)	(0.299)	(0.295)	(0.015)	(0.037)	(0.033)	(0.075)
Num.Obs.	649	649	649	649	649	649	649
R2	0.078	0.060	0.052	0.055	0.117	0.050	0.069

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table G8. Effects of Testimony Treatment on Attention, non-embedded respondents

	Maintained eye contact	Something stood out	Asked a question	Attention Index
Intercept (Control mean)	0.942***	1.000***	0.282***	-0.039
	(0.013)	(0.000)	(0.025)	(0.044)
Testimony Treatment	0.001	-0.003	0.135***	0.130
	(0.019)	(0.003)	(0.037)	(0.086)
Num.Obs.	649	649	649	649
R2	0.053	0.025	0.055	0.043

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table G9. Treatment effects of digital mobilization vignette on officials' pressure to respond to a problem, non-embedded respondents

	Overall pressure	Citizens-angry	Citizens-inspired	Senior officials-angry	Senior officials-inspired
Intercept (Control mean)	1.924***	0.263***	0.776***	0.224***	0.804***
	(0.045)	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.296***	-0.006	0.037	0.069*	-0.027
	(0.060)	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.032)
Num.Obs.	649	649	649	649	649
R2	0.112	0.076	0.063	0.076	0.055

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table G10. Treatment effects of hearing the digital mobilization vignette on action, non-embedded respondents

	Send staff	Send contractor	Call official	Fundraise	Action Index
Intercept (Control mean)	2.800***	2.412***	2.254***	2.146***	-0.098+
	(0.025)	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.045)	(0.058)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.060+	-0.012	0.049	0.088	0.119
	(0.033)	(0.056)	(0.058)	(0.064)	(0.077)
Num.Obs.	649	649	649	649	649
R2	0.066	0.140	0.068	0.093	0.070

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

G6: Respondents who do not expect to be transferred in the next year

Table G11. Treatment effects of digital mobilization vignette on officials' pressure to respond to a problem, respondents not expecting transfer

	Send staff	Send contractor	Call official	Fundraise	Action Index
Intercept (Control mean)	2.866***	2.309***	2.293***	2.080***	-0.103+
	(0.024)	(0.047)	(0.050)	(0.054)	(0.062)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	-0.004	0.063	0.005	0.148*	0.107

	(0.035)	(0.066)	(0.069)	(0.075)	(0.087)
Num.Obs.	479	479	479	479	479
R2	0.101	0.175	0.102	0.108	0.113
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators + p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001					

Table G12. Treatment effects of hearing the digital mobilization vignette on action, respondents not expecting transfer

	Overall pressure	Citizens-angry	Citizens-inspired	Senior officials-angry	Senior officials-inspired
Intercept (Control mean)	1.889***	0.258***	0.796***	0.246***	0.800***
	(0.056)	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.030)	(0.028)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.240**	-0.029	0.033	0.050	-0.035
	(0.075)	(0.040)	(0.036)	(0.042)	(0.039)
Num.Obs.	479	479	479	479	479
R2	0.095	0.090	0.078	0.075	0.090
All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators + p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001					

G7: Respondents from blocks not aligned with the state-legislature ruling party (JMM)

We placed blocks in ACs by asking District Program Officers (DPO) of MGNREGA. To cross-check their data, we approached the District Election Officers. In cases where the DPOs were not able to provide accurate information about block to AC mapping we directly contacted the Block Program Officers of MGNREGA or the Block Development Officer within the blocks for the AC mapping.

Table G13. Treatment effects of digital mobilization vignette on officials' pressure to respond, blocks not aligned with the state ruling party (JMM)

	Overall pressure	Citizens-angry	Citizens-inspired	Senior officials-angry	Senior officials-inspired
Intercept (Control mean)	1.795***	0.243***	0.784***	0.203***	0.811***
	(0.039)	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Digital Mobilization Treatment	0.382***	-0.012	0.026	0.116***	-0.055+
	(0.054)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.031)	(0.029)
Num.Obs.	807	807	807	807	807
R2	0.117	0.057	0.042	0.052	0.039

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table G14. Treatment effects of hearing the digital mobilization vignette on action, blocks not aligned with the state ruling party (JMM)

	Send staff	Send contractor	Call official	Fundraise	Responsiveness Index
Intercept (Control mean)	2.819***	2.387***	2.281***	2.137***	-0.082+
	(0.021)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.041)	(0.047)
Digital Action Treatment	0.042	0.040	0.038	0.049	0.107
	(0.029)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.058)	(0.067)
Num.Obs.	807	807	807	807	807
R2	0.077	0.135	0.084	0.069	0.088

All models include heteroskedasticity-consistent (HC2) standard errors. Following Lin (2013) we also include interactions between the treatment indicator and the centered block indicators

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001