



# Action-oriented' Listening: People's Voice and Policy Choice : A Report

Pratichi (India) Trust  
2021

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# 1. Introduction

**T**here is an old adage that says that ‘the king sees, as he listens’. (‘Nripaha karnena pasyati’). This word of wisdom about gaining an eye-view of ground realities by paying heed to what people say is perhaps more apt for a democracy than a monarchy. A vibrant democracy requires vigorous governance, and vigorous governance ideally draws its energy and direction from the aspirations and ambitions of and even accusations from its citizens. Good governance, therefore, is the ‘art of listening’ to people’s voices and views and the allied capacity to act upon such concerns, criticisms and complaints through appropriate policy choices. A readiness to listen to people’s predicaments that an active democracy and its administration demonstrate is thus integrally connected with an interest in their amends. Ideally, therefore, in such a political regime people’s pleas and petitions are documented, sifted and analysed for a definitive purpose of remedial action.

At a deeper level, the 2015 World Public Sector Report notes “responsiveness and accountability draw attention to the centrality of the social contract the state and citizens. That is, states need to respond to the real needs of the people and be accountable for their decisions and actions to them.

Citizens should fulfil their part of the contract by participating in democratic processes, contributing to taxes and generally participating in civic life”.

Drawing on this theoretical perspective of state-citizen social contract, this report focuses on some of the programmes that are introduced recently by the Government of West Bengal in order to facilitate recording and redress of public grievances, by arguably taking governance mechanisms to people’s door step. We also focus on the issue of their action-orientation, that is to say, their effectiveness, or otherwise, in bending the arc of policies in tune with people’s expectations, towards reform, improvement and social justice.

### **What is new in the recent governance projects?**

**T**he Programme Implementation and Grievance Cell known as Public Grievance Redressal Cell ( - henceforth PGRC), set up in 2019, under the aegis of the Chief Minister’s Office, Government of West Bengal, has emerged as a novel governance project in the country as a technology-based platform for public grievance redressal. Over a period of more than two years, the cell appears to have dealt with more than ten lakhs of grievances with a reported impressive record of 97 per cent grievance resolution rate.

In India or elsewhere in the world, the grievance Redressal system (GRS) is an essential part of public administration, addressing the grievances of the citizens. Over the decades, Many Indian states have also been implementing the grievance Redressal system, for example, In Karnataka, 'Janaspandana', e-spandana, and 'Sakala' and Bengaluru One, Common Service Centers, Karnataka One, Atalji Jana Snehi Kendra, Bapuji Kendras, Gram One, Janasevaka, Janahitha etc. These sporadic initiatives are brought under one separate directorate and launched as 'Seva Sindhu'

In November 2021, even the union government has repurposed the grievances mechanism as 'Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System' <https://pgportal.gov.in/Home/RedressMechanism>, a single window to air the grievances of the central government's various agencies. These initiatives are aimed at addressing the grievances of the citizens. A careful comparison of several of these public Grievance Redress systems indicates that these are merely aimed at recording grievances and that the success of such models is largely measured in somewhat mechanical terms of the number of grievances addressed.

Transcending beyond a routine administrative procedure of grievance recording and redressal, the initiative under review, in addition, seems to have contributed towards conceiving and implementing new corrective measures as

well as better implementing the existing schemes and programmes. This report attempts to examine closely the extent to which these stated claims have been actualised. Moreover, the project claims to have innovatively acted upon the findings of the grievance analysis in the following ways: a) Formulation of New policies: given the needs of the people the government has designed and implemented half a dozen new schemes. For example, a careful departmental scrutiny of the data on grievances has spotted deteriorating road conditions as one of the top concerns among citizens. Based on this finding and in tune with people's expectations, the Government has launched the 'Pathoshree' programme on the 1st of October, 2020. Under this initiative more than 14000 kms of roads have been reconstructed and repaired in comparatively inaccessible parts of the state. The Cell also appears to have played an active role in addressing the concerns of citizens during the covid- induced lockdown, including facilitating the return of a large number of migrants from the various states of the country. Also, the state was witness to a severe and widespread devastation caused by a super-cyclone called Amphan. Rising up to the unprecedented challenges that followed, the Cell reportedly took up prompt measures to ameliorate people's woes. About 0.3 million people in the state were given, according to official figures, assistance through this initiative; b) Responsive governance outreach programme: Responding, apparently, to the urgency of people's felt needs and concerns, the

Government has introduced a mission mode project called ‘Duare Sarkar’ to ensure the delivery of services and schemes at the doorsteps of the citizen. In a half year event, entire state machineries are put into operation to ensure that about 18 schemes and services are delivered without any hassle of travel or loss of work days on the part of the people. The rationale for selecting these services and schemes are stated to be broadly based on the analysis of the Public Grievance Redressal Cell (PGRC)’s data.

As indicated later, a significant proportion of grievances were related to schemes for women like Kanyashree, Rupashree and educational scholarships like Sikhashree and Aikyashree etc. A huge footfall of the people, especially the participation of women, as reported widely in various media platforms, suggests that ‘Duare Sarkar’ has likely enhanced people’s trust in governance. Data from the MIS of Duare Sarkar shows that about 1024735 Duare Sarkar camps have been organized with a participation of 6.69 crore citizens till September 2021.

In addition, a neighbourhood-based scheme called ‘Paray Samadhan’ was introduced aiming to address some collective concerns of the people vis-a-vis programmes, schemes and infrastructural improvement in their own localities.

To complement these initiatives and to purportedly offer a more sustainable and permanent way of ensuring service delivery of programmes, ‘Bangla Sahayata Kendras’ (BSKs) were set up across the State 'to provide online government services free of cost at the grassroots level' and also to strengthen the existing system of information dissemination about various social and development schemes. In the first week of November, the footfalls in these BSKs crossed 1 crore. We shall discuss in details how the BSK model has evolved as a corollary to the above-mentioned initiatives.

A deeper motivation that seems to animate the vision and practice of the public grievance redressal cell at CMO, West Bengal is to strive to nurture a culture of responsive, accountable and answerable governance. The initiative also closely aligns with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Section 16, for example, underlines the need to “promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies” and correlatively prescribes “effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

Several other international instruments and practices also highlight the importance of responsive and accountable governance. For example, Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights lays down the provision of people’s participation in the governance of their country. The 2015 world Public Sector Report titled Responsive

and Accountable Public Governance underscores “the need for public governance to become more responsive and accountable for the State to lead the implementation of a collective vision of sustainable development”.

### **Centering People in responsive governance**

**A**n accountable and responsive system of governance, ideally, engages people in the process of policymaking, as well as in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of welfare programmes. It is as though the government aims to identify the needs of the people by involving people in identifying those needs. In the official words, it provides “access to public information, constantly listens to the people and ensures that government and its agencies are open to people’s inputs and scrutiny”.(the 2015 World Public Sector Report)

Public scrutiny of social welfare schemes offers feedback to the government on public policy implementation. More broadly, it ensures bottom-up citizen engagement in public policy priorities whereby citizens get a foothold in the ‘decision space’ to articulate their voice in those areas of decision-making that affect their lives. This engagement contributes to an inclusive public planning process in which the concerns of a greater number of the

beneficiaries of public welfare schemes can be examined, corrective measures can be taken, and a new scheme can be planned.

Ideally speaking, this also irrigates a culture of active social citizenship by making it possible for people to participate in the process of governance on a regular and recurrent basis, extending beyond their involvement as voters in infrequent elections.

Another key aspect of responsive public governance is to build and nurture trust in governance. Public policy scholars have observed that trust is essential for maintaining the legitimacy and stability of the political system. Trust in public institutions and their policy goals and performance is a kind of ‘democratic dividend’ that consolidates both an electoral and a deliberative democracy.

Given this notion of inclusive governance in mind, the study aims to closely examine and understand the purpose of the cell, and its functions as well as their impact on people’s lives in light of the key lessons that have come out of an impact study that has been conducted.

## **The underlying motivations of the impact study**

**A**s mentioned above, the Government of West Bengal has initiated a plethora of welfare schemes over the last ten years, aiming at improving the quality of life of its citizens. Yet the sheer volume of beneficiaries and the implementation of these programmes are fraught with occasional deviations and distortions. More importantly, as economists have opined “even the most well-intended and well-thought-out policies may not have impact if they are not properly implemented. Unfortunately the gap between intention and implementation can be quite wide”( Banerjee and Duflo 2011).

As officially stated, to enhance the accountability and transparency of scheme implementation, and to address the grievances that arise in the process of implementation, the government has adopted three – pronged approaches: 1) a regular and in- built system called public grievances monitoring platform which collects and addresses the grievances, and 2) a direct outreach and campaign programme titled ‘Duare Sarkar’, to address the grievances and deliver services, reaching out to the doorstep of beneficiaries. Through ‘Parai Samadhan’, the government addresses the issues like road repairs and installation of street lights, deployment of doctors and conservancy staffs and improving drinking water and waste management, c)

settings up of physical centres to ensure the service delivery at doorsteps, like BSK.

Going by the ‘grey’ literature, these initiatives seem to have already impacted the lives of citizens across the state in terms of getting their grievances heard and possibly redressed.

## **Methods**

**T**he study adopted a mixed methods approach: both quantitative and qualitative. The study was conducted between February and November 2021. The first phase of the research was a rigorous analysis of state level data on the implementation of the Public Grievances Monitoring Platform. The data set contains key components for analysis including name of the applicants, the districts they come from, their gender and age profile, as well as the nature of their complaints etc. A data set with over 1 million complaints was cleaned and a few variables were re-constructed out of the existing variables for analysis; for example, a variable called ‘age group’ was created and the nature of grievances was standardized. This fairly voluminous data was analysed with the help of a standard statistical software called R. The findings of the official data have helped us to design the questionnaire for both the quantitative primary survey and qualitative interactions with the applicants that we have subsequently undertaken. The research team has collated all the

important notifications concerning the programmes and schemes under review, drawing on the inputs from the Grievances Monitoring Platform. These include the Standard Operating Procedures for ‘Duare Sakar’ and Paray Samadhan’ , notifications concerning ‘Pathoshree’, and important official circulars on the evaluation of ‘Bangla Sahayata Kendra’ etc.

The second phase of the study was focused on a primary sample survey with a selected set of the complainants to understand their level of awareness about the public grievances system, the duration of grievance disposal on an average, their level of satisfaction, the nature of their complaints, and the participation, in particular, of women in the grievances redressal process, and finally the extent of participation in ‘Duare Sarkar’ camps.

At a COVID- 19 and lockdown-constrained time when standard methodological tools such as face-to-face field survey, ethnographic enquiries or case study methods have been rendered unavailable or unpredictable, the team has considered it fit to follow the instinct of opportunism in its choice of investigative strategies and has drawn on multiple methods, including, telephone surveys. The interview was conducted in Kobo tool box- a WHO certified data collection toolkit. The research team took much care to clean the data and analysed same using R software.

Taking into consideration the reality of rural –urban divide and spatial differences in general, a total of 20 districts were covered through both quantitative and qualitative methods. To get a deeper understanding from the field, special efforts were made to elicit the voices from the margin. The following districts were selected for the quantitative study: 1. Birbhum 2. Malda 3. Kolkata 4. South 24 Parganas 5. Howrah 6. Coochbehar 7. Jalpaiguri 8. Nadia 9. Jhargram 10. Purulia. A sample of 15 respondents was selected from the official Grievance Cell data set by a random sampling method for each of the 10 districts. For qualitative information about the initiative, a set of 100 respondents were drawn from Darjeeling, East Bardhaman, West Bardhaman, Murshidabad, North 24 Parganas, East Medinipur, West Medinipur, Bankura, Hooghly and North Dinajpur districts.

The report is structured as follows: The introductory section deals with a conceptual understanding of the notion of public grievance redressal and of how recorded complaints likely help to formulate public policies. The second section notes the methods of this research. The third section deals with the key findings from the analysis of the data, the fourth section focuses on the findings from the fields, and finally the conclusion and a set of recommendations are presented.

## **2. . An overview of findings from the MIS data**

This section presents an analysis of the data from the MIS of the CMO's grievances Redressal system. The unit has painstakingly converted the raw application into a data set. As we have discussed in the section on methods, managing a data set of 1 million citizens is a herculean task, since compiling and collation from myriad formats require special attention. The unit has transformed this scattered information into a data set. This data set reveals in a more precise and accessible manner the location of complainants, their gender, and age group. And, the nature of complaints provides the most vital information for policy formulation.

### **Reach of the initiative**

**W**ithin a short period of time, CMO's grievances Redressal system has addressed more than 11 lakhs of grievances, and 6.69 crore people through Duare Sarkar, covering every district of the state. Paschim Medinipur(17 percent) tops in the list of number of recorded complaints, followed by Purba Medinipur(11 percent) and South 24 Parganas.

## Districts wise distribution of complainants 1,107,372

ALIPURDUAR	22,194 (2.0%)
BANKURA	49,931 (4.5%)
BIRBHUM	29,841 (2.7%)
COOCH BIHAR	23,118 (2.1%)
DAKSHIN DINAJPUR	23,118 (2.1%)
DARJILING	7,311 (0.7%)
HAORA	66,877 (6.0%)
HOOGHLY	39,865 (3.6%)
JALPAIGURI	13,862 (1.3%)
JHARGRAM	31,397 (2.8%)
KALIMPONG	1,231 (0.1%)
KOLKATA	8,058 (0.7%)
MALDA	29,793 (2.7%)
MURSHIDABAD	62,732 (5.7%)
NADIA	42,082 (3.8%)
NORTH TWENTY FOUR PARGANAS	64,552 (5.8%)
PASCHIM BARDHAMAN	56,440 (5.1%)
PASCHIM MEDINIPUR	191,979 (17%)
PURBA BARDHAMAN	51,243 (4.6%)
PURBA MEDINIPUR	120,069 (11%)
PURULIA	26,086 (2.4%)
SOUTH TWENTY FOUR PARGANAS	126,853 (11%)
UTTAR DINAJPUR	18,740 (1.7%)

**Table I**

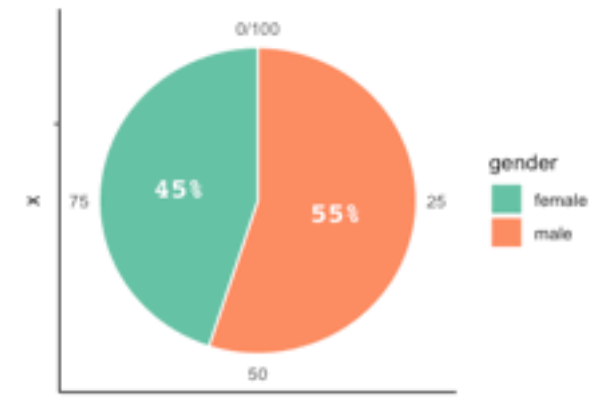
## Profile of the Complainants

The age profile of the complainants reveals that mostly (63 percent) the people of matured age, i.e., persons aged above 50 have registered their grievances, possibly indicating the role of head of the household in the family. About 16 percent youth had registered their complaint using phone calls and emails. The grievances about various educational schemes are palpable in the category of the grievances. The impact study has taken a look into details of their grievances, and the quality of grievance redressal, their level of satisfaction and also the level of their trust in governance.

agegroup distribution of complainants 1,105,898	
above50	694,836 (63%)
Below20	21,794 (2.0%)
between21&35	172,572 (16%)
Between36&50	216,696 (20%)
Unknown	2,888
† Statistics presented: n (%)	

**Table 2**

## Gender Parity in Complaints



**Graph I**

It is encouraging to note that participation of women in airing their grievances is almost 45 percent despite the fact that most of the households are headed by men. The

figure indicates women's interest in claiming their rights and entitlements. A close analysis of the categories of grievances also reveals that a large proportion of women respond and react to a plethora of schemes specially designed for women including programmes such as 'Kanyashree', 'Rupreshree', and educational scholarships for specific social groups and widow pension schemes etc. Speedy redressal of such grievances will likely improve girl's educational attainment and other core capabilities. We have also observed that a sizeable percentage of women have registered their grievances during the covid-induced humanitarian crisis and the devastation caused by the natural disaster like Amaphan..

## Categories of Grievances



The MIS has 182 broad categories of grievances which include a wide array of complaints ranging from poor road condition to those related to functioning of several social pension schemes, and educational scholarships for the disadvantaged communities. The nature of complaints, in a way, also gives inkling about the ambitions and

aspirations of communities and individuals, the diminution of which agitates them and gets them exercised. Their anxieties regarding educational scholarships, for example, signal their rising educational ambitions about their children. A complaint, therefore, is a potent indicator of what people value. The data also shows that there has been a surge in complaints during the Covid induced lock down period and Amphan.

There is an absence of data on the social categories of complainants, but a close look at the data shows that their participation is also high as evident from the categories of grievances which includes ST pension and other schemes primarily meant for the SCs, STs, and Minorities.

### **3. Findings from the Primary Survey**

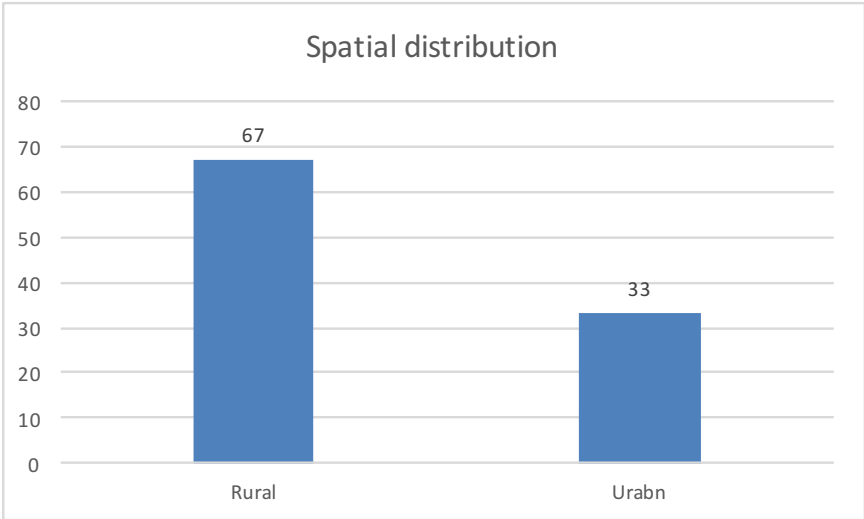
**T**his section presents the key findings from the primary survey conducted between July and September 2021. As indicated in the introductory section, interviews were conducted amidst the peak of the second wave; large sections of the populace were undergoing through the most challenging time in the recent history. We could feel the anxiety of the people during the interviews. Many of our selected respondents turned down our request for telephonic interviews; another section of selected respondents could not recall much about the about the complaints that they had apparently registered. This was not expected as the pandemic was more than a health emergency, it was a severe economic blow to the people. Despite these methodological challenges, our research team could complete the survey; what is more the results from this smaller sample survey appear to have been consistent with the general trend displayed by the larger MIS data set available with the Public Grievance Redressal Cell (PGRC). This section also combines our findings from our qualitative interactions with 150 respondents.

What has emerged as a significant idea is that the citizens value the importance and usefulness of a centralized mechanism through which their grievances can be registered for possible rectification, without having to

spend money or time. . The primary survey also indicates that grievances related women’s issues figure occupy a prominent place. Of the ten respondents approached from among the pool of those who had made complaints to the Public Grievance Redressal cell (PGRC), seven said they were satisfied with the redressal. One challenge that the researchers encountered was that often the phone numbers available in the MIS data set were not matching with those of the recorded respondents

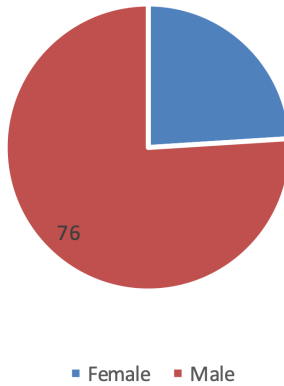
### Profile of the Respondents

**D**espite the methodological limitations, the respondents were carefully drawn from both rural and urban area. As the graph below indicates, an overwhelming percentage of the respondents were from the rural areas (67 percent).



Source: Pratichi Primary Survey 2021

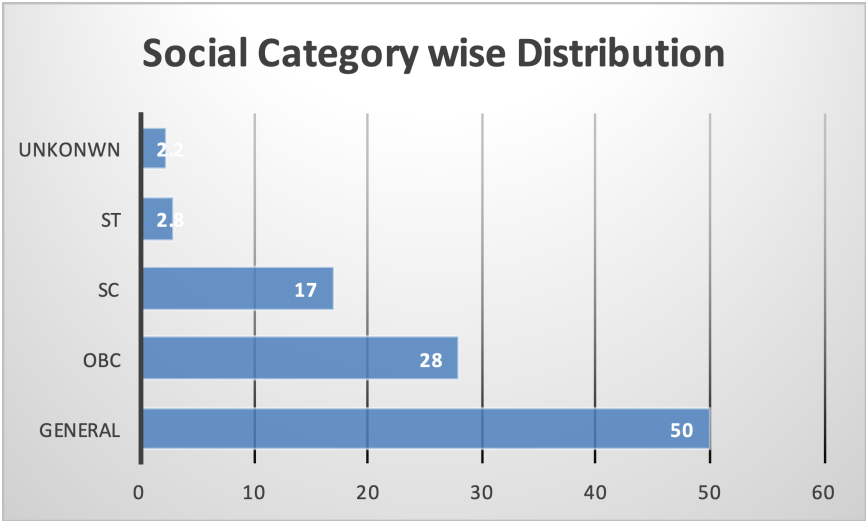
Genderwise distribution of the respondents



Source: Pratichi Primary Survey 2021

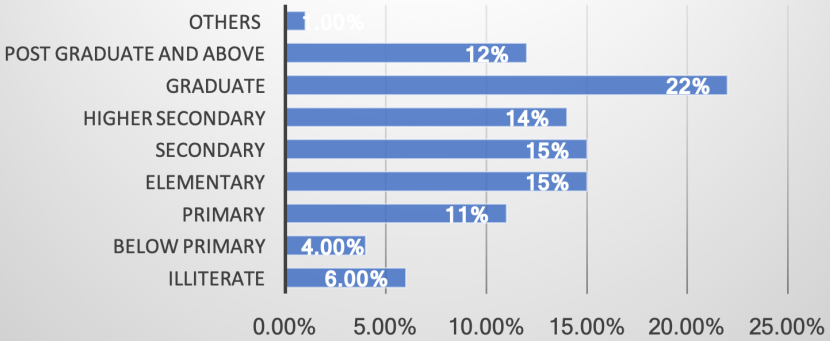
Another challenge that we faced during the interview was that although we tried to reach out to the women respondents, we could speak mostly to male members among the sample respondents; hence the percentage of male respondents in the quantitative survey is comparatively higher. Scholars have experienced similar fate elsewhere also as Bina Agarwal noted 'Telephone surveys carry a built-in gender bias, since women respondents often lack personal mobile phones or privacy'. (Alvi et al. 2020)' Bina Agarwal, 2021, p248

Fortunately, the participation of social groups in the survey process matches with their share in the population. Despite the limited base of the sample, about 2 percent of the STs appear to have accessed the Public Grievance Redressal Cell (PGRC), followed by 17 percent of SCs and 28 percent of OBCs, reflecting a fair amount of diversity in participation across the spectrum of citizenship. Also, it indicates that a significant section of disadvantaged communities could articulate their voices and concerns.



Source: Pratchi Primary Survey 2021

## Educational Qualification of the Respondent



Source: Pratichi Primary Survey 2021

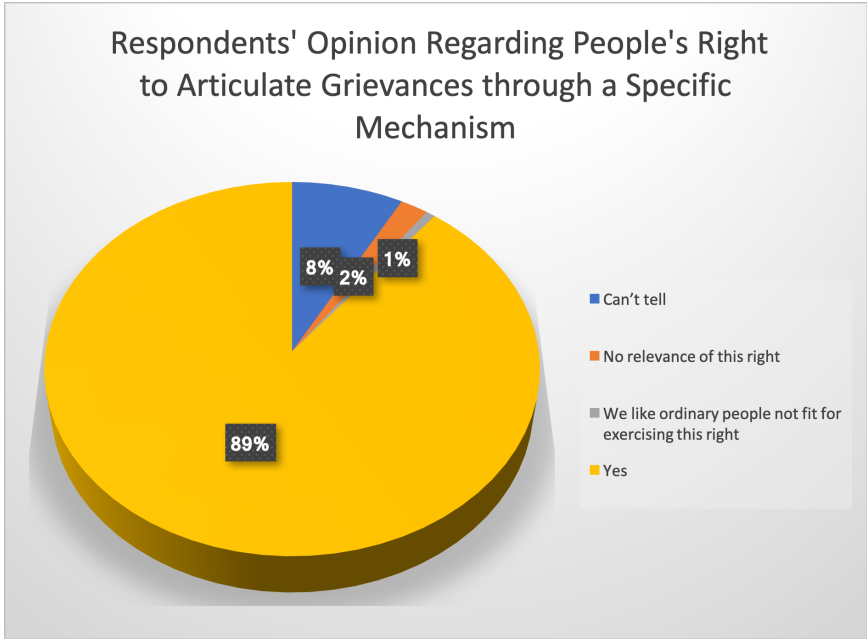
About 34 percent of the respondents who had accessed the services of the grievance cell were graduate and above, followed by 29 percent having a school or high school completion degree. This points to the fact that there are some connections between this kind of citizen activism and their level of literacy and ability to lodge complaints using helpline and other digital platforms.

## **Conceptual Clarity and Awareness about Public Grievance:**

“It is a serious need for the public, because unless people get the opportunity to lodge their grievance, it would not be solved ever – how will people get out of their distress and how will we live a peaceful life?” --  
A respondent

**A** significant section of respondents shared that a grievance cell must be run by the Government, as it is a serious need of public, because unless people get the opportunity to lodge their grievances, it would not be solved ever – how will people get out of their distress and how will we live a peaceful life then – was the question asked by one of the respondents! The “personal” problems can be considered as “social” issues, only if people have a provision to make the Government aware of the real picture of how people are surviving with their everyday struggles. The Government must know and realise the problems people facing. In this context, some stated that, they live in a democratic country. They elect their Government, so they have every right to lodge their grievances to the Government. It is the duty of the Government to address the grievances to ensure the right of citizens to live with dignity. According

to them the viability of the Government’s work could also be reconfirmed through this kind of programmes. Our primary survey has also confirmed that respondents have underscored the importance of Government run grievance redressal mechanism. About nine out of ten respondents shared that citizens should have right to articulate their grievances through such specific mechanism .



Source: Pratichi Primary Survey 2021

One of the respondents from Murshidabad expressed that “Bharatborshe durniti konodin shesh hobe na. Tai roj gas hole, ekdin gas-er tablet khele to hobe na. Serokomi edeshe somosya hobei, hole obhijog janatei hobe.” – In a country like India, where corruption is almost an endless problem, people will face problems every day, so we need to lodge our complaints as well; if I am a patient of chronic Gastritis, it would not be solved with a single tablet for once.

Some have expressed that, in a democratic country like India, where the state is bound to enforce the law to ensure the fundamental and constitutional rights of its citizens, if the Government is unaware of the problems of people, it would not be able to ensure said rights. Therefore the issue of lodging grievances in a public cell must also be considered as a fundamental right. Some said that lodging complaints should be put forward as citizens’ freedom of expression.

One of the respondents from West Medinipur was overwhelmed that someone (interviewer) called him up to ask ‘HIS OPINION AND SUGGESTIONS’. He said that – “We have small demands. If those demands are fulfilled, we will be happy. We get really upset when local level party leaders and mass representatives do not give us the minimum patient hearing. I am very happy that you called me up to hear from me.”- “Amar katha

bolar apni sujog dilen, amar sab katha shunlen, etatei amar khub bhalo laglo. Moner kathagulo bolte khub ichchha kore” According to his opinion, “the ruling party leaders must have understood that there were some serious “mistake” from their end, that is why people are getting apathetic to them, and so they had started this Didike Bolo and Duare Sarkar to satisfy public.” Many other respondents from Bankura, and Murshidabad had stated similarly regarding Government’s change in outlook.

On the other hand a 35 year old young respondent said that “Chokher samne Jodi durniti dekhi tahole obhijog to janatei hobe.” – if we come to know about corruption, we have to lodge complaints against it.

According to a few of the respondents, the Government continues working with its policies on the basis of some preconceived notions and social constructs about peoples’ needs, but as a matter of fact there must be more, big and small, needs of people, which are related to the fundamental or constitutional or legal rights. Unless people have the scope to lodge complaints to a Government system, the problems related to those complaints will not be taken into consideration for the development and improvement of Government policies, they will not be addressed and the process of ensuring those rights will not be initiated ever.

Along with the views justifying the grievance redressal as a right of citizens, a few have also expressed that the Government is “Master of the State” with an expression of “Sarkar holo Rajyer Karta, Sadharon Manusher Karta” (the Master of the common people), so people should have the direct access to the “Master of the State” to communicate their needs. One of the respondents said that “*Sabai mile Didike enechhi, egulo to amader samosya, mitte hobe, noile banchbo ki kore?*”(We have elected the Chief Minister, these are our problems, they need to be resolved, otherwise how will we survive?)

One of the respondents said that “*Ekjon obhibhaboker moto thaka to bhalo. Office-gulo kaj na korle sedike najar dite parbe*”, meaning, although there are provisions to lodge complaints to concerned departments and offices, but a centralized system may act as the ‘guardian’ to all those decentralized offices to look into the matters that are pending.

Many of the respondents said that, the local political leaders do not listen to people’s problems or do not communicate the problems to the Government, because they may be found themselves as the offenders. A direct access to the Government to express their distress, and helplessness could be useful. According to them, the work that are supposed to be done without much effort, are not attended to or remain pending for no reason, hence complaints must be lodged for fairness.

The respondents opined very firmly that, it is very important to solve the problems that are communicated by lodging complaints in a timely manner, because if they are not solved within a reasonable time period, the problems may become graver; moreover, secondary problems related to the lodged complaint may arise. One of the respondents explained the significance of promptness of resolving problems by citing his own experience as an example - he described that due to an eight-year delay in issuance of his caste certificate, he kept on losing a number of state sponsored entitlements for himself. However, his sisters had the benefit of same entitlements due to timely issuance of their caste certificates.

Some said that prompt action helps the complainants plan for their follow-up steps and course correction in their future strategies.

Another respondent, who complained about delay in issuance of a new ration card, from West Bardhaman, said that “We are buying rice worth Rs. 2, at Rs. 13. The more time it will take to get the demand resolved, the more will we have to fight with our financial stress . This is the significance of solving problem timely.”

A respondent from Darjeeling district said that, it is very important to solve the problems in time, because if the problems are not solved within a reasonable time the whole exercise of registering a complaint will lose its value, and the grievance redressal system will also not have any utility value – “agar hum dhobi ko kapre dhone ke liye dete hain, to us kapro ko to dhul kar laut ke ana hai. Wo kapre dhulne ke baad dhobike pas rahe jayga to hum pahnenge kya?” he said (If we do not get back our clothes from the laundry after wash, then what will we wear – therefore promptness of redressal is similarly significant)

A respondent from West Medinipur, a Sociology Honours graduate, completed her one-year Diploma course in computer as well. She has been going through severe economic hardship since her childhood, still she has struggled hard to complete her higher education. During the interview session she was staying with her husband, who was a construction worker by profession He was suffering from cancer and the family was facing serious economic crisis. She has twin sons – one of them has his disability card for his special hearing need. Coping with these kinds of distress and vulnerability, she was repeatedly requesting the interviewer to bring her case to the notice of the authorities so that she could get a job and ensure food for her family and treatment for her husband.

With all her feelings of helplessness, she communicated to usher dependence on the Governmental system. She said “I do not have any option other than depending on the Government. My son received his disability card, my mother-in-law gets the Widow Allowances from this system, but my problems are so vast that I am unable to get rid of them.”

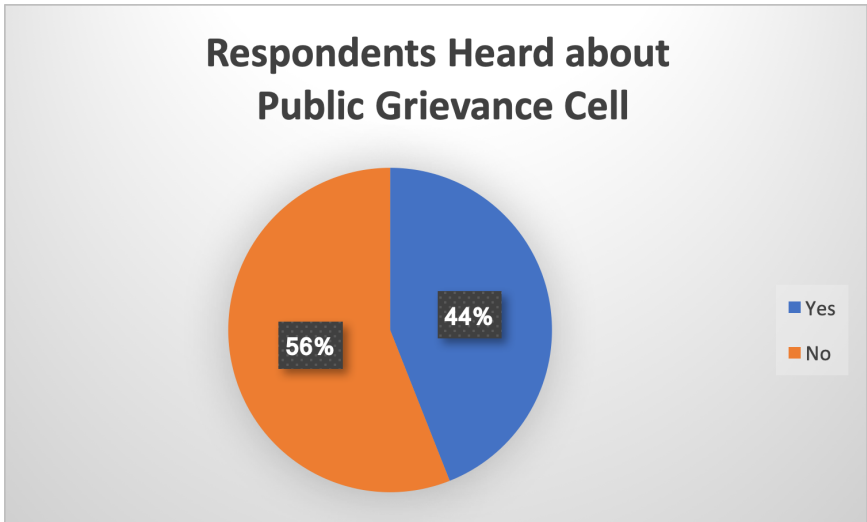
When the interviewer called her, she was in the hospital with one of her children who was going through a minor surgery. She was alone there, still she insisted that the interviewer continued the interview, hoping that at least her case will be reported to the Government.

No doubt, life may remain difficult even with an opportunity to be heard, but without this there is hardly any hope.

### **Awareness about PGRC**

**I**n many of the cases the respondents came to know about the ‘DKB ’ and ‘Duare Sarkar’ programme from the community. It was found that either the neighbours or family members and relatives shared their knowledge with each other, or some sorts of community level campaign programme – such as, auto-rickshaw, or cycle-rickshaw campaign - had been organised by the local authorities or political parties. Many had come to know from the hoardings and posters as well. Other than

the community level communication, campaign advertisements from the Government of West Bengal had been published in daily newspapers and news channels. Advertisements and news coverage of print and electronic media had played a significant role in this process of dissemination of information. Other than the print and electronic media, people in a huge number had come to know about these programmes through social media. The quantitative survey confirms that more than half of the respondents heard about the public grievance cell.



Source: Pratichi Primary Survey 2021

According to one of the respondents from Hooghly district, “Khide pele jemon khabar khunje nite hoy, somosya thakle temon nalish jananor jaygao khunje nite

hoy” – the way we find out our food when we are hungry, we find out the way to find out where to complain to solve our problems.

As stated by the respondents it was found that they got informed about the DKB . - the information about Public Grievance Cell was found very feebly disseminated However, very few knew about Public Grievance Cell – some said that they have heard about an e-mail id to lodge complaints regarding different entitlements of people, some said about that they have come to know about a toll free number, DKB numbers was more successful in terms of campaign and accessibility than the Governmental service provided through Public Grievance Cell.

As per one of the respondents, people need to know how to utilize the facilities of any sort of grievance redressal system and the system must run at its best – then only it will be termed as a useful mechanism.

He with other migrant workers had been helped by a local leader of Goa for getting step by step information to avail special train services for migrant labourers, who were planning to come back to West Bengal from Goa during the first lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic. They were first taken from their residential units to a stadium by bus arranged by Goa Government, then the Goa Government arranged for the special train to West Bengal.

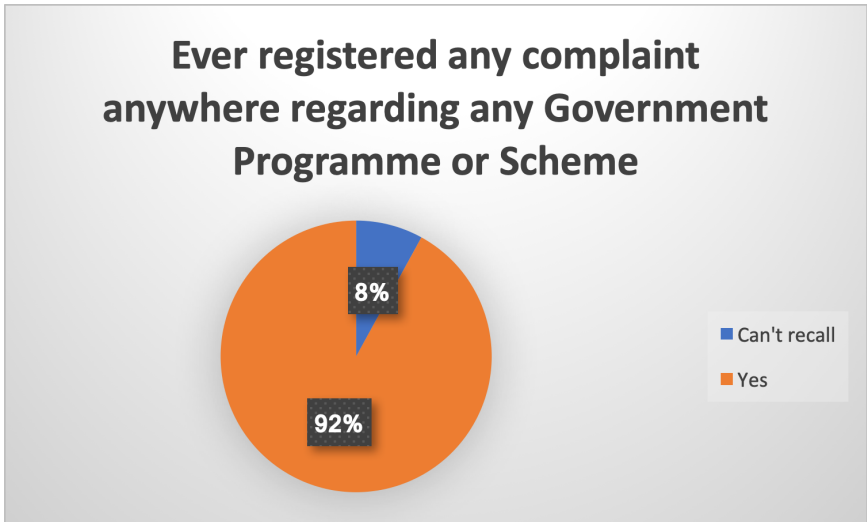
While communicating with the respondents, it was found that most of them were not aware of the Public Grievance Cell, but had knowledge about the “popular helpline number” programme. Out of 100 respondents 98 were aware of the ‘Didike Bolo’ programme and 22 were aware of the Public Grievance Cell. A few among the said 22 respondents, who were aware of both the programmes, highlighted that the PGRC lacks less publicity as compared to ‘Didike Bolo’. The Government must pay attention to this problem – the Government must take more serious initiative to sensitise the masses about its own programme.

### **Process of Registering Grievances**

**I**n most of the cases the complainants, after getting the information about ‘Didike Bolo’ toll free number, had given calls to it and lodged their complaints. In a very few cases it was found that the respondents had written an e-mail to the Public Grievance Cell. In some cases children of the complainants lodged the complaints on their behalf.

While talking to the respondents it was found that in most of the cases they had initially gone to concerned offices, such as to a local branch of a bank, to the Block Development Office, to the police station with their complaints, but no positive action had been taken from those ends, and eventually, with a feeling of frustration due to the lack of any follow-up action, they lodged their

complaints either to ‘DKB’ or to the Public Grievance Cell.



Source: Pratichi Primary Survey 2021

### **Nature of Grievances and level of satisfaction**

**O**ur study found, primarily through analysis of secondary data and its quantitative survey, that a large proportion of women responded and reacted to a plethora of schemes such as Kanyashree, Rupashree and educational scholarships for meant for specific social groups and widow pension schemes.

Mostly, complaints were lodged for not getting Bidhaba Bhata (widow pension), Bardhakya Bhata (old age pension), funds under Bangla Awas Yojana, funds from

the financial assistance scheme for the unemployed youth of West Bengal, Yuvasree, and for delay in getting funds under Rupashree Prakalpa, aimed at mitigating the difficulties that poor families face in financing their daughter's marriage, and against misplacement of cheques of the Krishak Bandhu death benefit scheme.

Drawing on our qualitative enquiry, out of 100 respondents 4 had lodged their complaints to the Public Grievance Cell and 68 had lodged their complaints to 'Didike Bolo'. It was found that most of the grievances that were lodged were personal or individual in nature. In some cases the researchers found that collective grievances were lodged.

In some cases it was found that the complainants lodged their grievances addressing collective problems; for example, a private tutor lodged complaint on behalf of his students who did not receive bicycles under the Sabooj Sathi scheme. As a result they received the bicycles even after getting promoted to class X, as recompense.

In another case a lawyer was found lodging complaints in favour of poor families pleading for no-refusal of hospital admission on submission of Swastha Sathi card. He lodged a collective grievance against the practice of refusal of Swastha Sathi provision in private health institutions – especially in case of poor people. To address this issue, the Government system has to be more strict and the monitoring system must be operative at the

micro level, he said. In his complaint he demanded more coverage of diseases in the said scheme – especially those diseases that are very common for elderly people – such as ophthalmological treatment. He stated that the reimbursement of expenses from the Government should be more efficient and prompt – as he assumed that the delay in reimbursement of expenditure from the Government end is likely one of the causes for refusal or non-compliance on part of the private health institutions. Another respondent from East Bardhaman district said that he and his family and most of the households of his village were dependent on woodcraft – “*Amra shilpimanush. Kashtho khodai kore banchi. Ami besorkari school-e bachhader kaaTher kaaj shekhatam. Lockdown-e kaj bondho. Shudhu nijer jonyo na. E gramer 50 ghor ache jara ei kaje jukto. Sokoler jonyoi abedon korechi*” – This was a collective appeal, made by an individual, for 50 households of his village who had no earning due to the pandemic, and needed financial support from the Government.

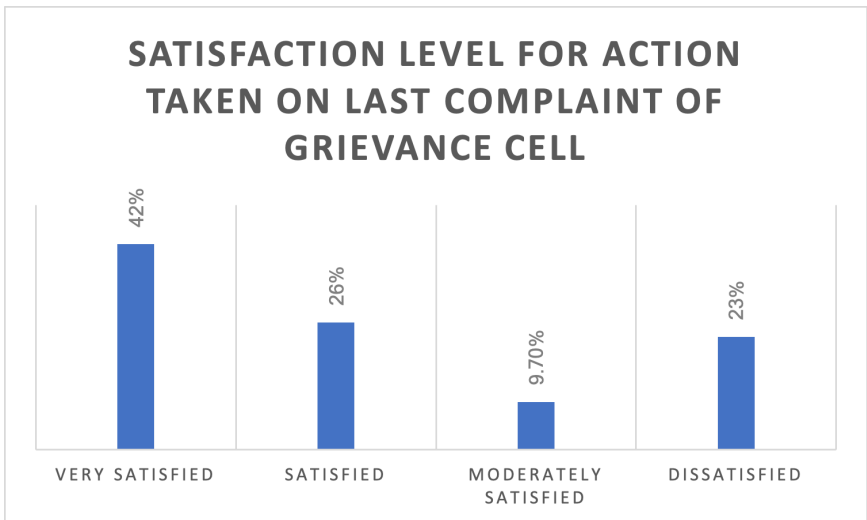
One of the respondents lodged his complaint against the running of an unlicensed liquor shop adjacent to a primary school in a residential area. As per his version, local powerful, dishonest hooligans with their political power and influence kept on creating chaos after drinking in the locality. They, themselves, are the political faces of the area. There was no scope of collective agitation or protest by the local residents , because everyone knew

that once he/she gets involved in the protest activities, he/she will be boycotted in the locality, or will be framed in false cases and will face continuous harassment.

Women of the locality are keen to be organised and to protest collectively, but there seems to be no one to lead them. Their spouses themselves drink and create this chaotic situation.

### **Experiences of Redressal**

**W**e tried to understand the experiences of grievance redressal both from the primary survey and qualitative interaction. The quantitative survey suggests that of those who had approached the grievance cell, about 70 percent were satisfied with the grievance redressal process.



Source: Pratichi Primary Survey 2021

The qualitative survey reveals that 21 out of 71 complainants among 100 respondents had experienced positive results in terms of redressal; however most of them were not sure if the problems had been resolved subsequent to their suo motu initiative, or if the regular follow-up procedure of concerned departments prevailed.

Certain sections of the respondents have received no remedial response after more than one year since lodging complaints with ‘Didike Bolo’, or with the Public Grievance Cell.

However, almost everyone received an acknowledgement of ‘inquiry’ about their complaint from ‘Didike Bolo’.

On several occasions, we have found that while an individual may have lodged the complaint, the redressal had societal and collective benefits , for example:

- 1) A private tutor lodged complaints in favour of his students who did not receive bicycles under the Sabooj Sathi scheme. As a result, they received the bicycles even after being promoted to higher classes.
- 2) Poor families pleading for no refusal of hospital admission on submission of the Swastha Sathi card. An advocate lodged a collective grievance against such refusals in private health institutions – which were common especially in case of poor people.

With no redressal in sight, one of the respondents from East Medinipur stated that since he is not affiliated to any political party, his complaints would not be considered or resolved ever. The Panchayat Pradhan once said that “Tumi Party-r kono kaje thako na, tomake soi dewa hobe na” – since he had never participated in any party programme he would not get the required signature.

### **Experiences of Impediments**

**I**n most of the cases no specific impediments, after lodging complaints, were mentioned by the respondents when asked about the same.

However, one of the respondents shared that he experienced threats from local hooligans who are connected to the bank official; although the bank official was transferred later on. According to him, in his locality two banks were there - both the banks have a few officials who were connected to these kinds of local people who have criminal records and they were deployed to threaten people in bank related issues.

Some respondents from East Medinipur said that they might not have experienced political or bureaucratic pressure, they knew about this kind of pressure. This pressure is one of the causes for not lodging complaints to a grievance cell.

One of the respondents from North 24 Parganas faced humiliation from the BDO office as she had lodged her complaints to Didike Bolo.

In this regard one of the respondents expressed his discontent somewhat differently by saying that the time that the redressal system had taken to resolve his problem was itself an impediment.

### **Alternative Idea and Practices of Redressal**

**A**ll respondents said that they would prefer that the grievances are resolved by the community, in case of failure they might go to the Government offices, such as BDO , SPO, DM offices etc., or to any department specific grievance cell, commissions, or Public Grievance Cell or Didike Bolo or to the police station.

In favour of this kind of decisions many said that a community is the best place to solve people's problems. Some said if people start ignoring their community, different sorts of misunderstanding or de-socialisation may occur.

Albeit many opined that if the problems are not solved within the community the victim must make sure that he/she goes to the appropriate State system, rather than sitting idle.

Differences between the Old and the New Public Grievance Redressal System:

During the interview session most of the respondents stated that, they found the single-number system to register complaints, both Didike Bolo and Public Grievance Cell, much more convenient rather than going to different offices or departments over and over again for the same. According to their version it is a system that saves their time and travel expenses, as well as the working days of the complainants. Many had found it convenient because it is a modern system due to its online mode of action that is superior to the old conventional method of receiving complaints by concerned departments.

One of the respondents of West Medinipur gave details about his travel and food expenses, Rs. 200 a day, as and when he used to go to the concerned office at the district headquarters for lodging complaints. According to him this telephonic mechanism maintained in Didike Bolo or the Public Grievance Cell has saved his money to a major extent.

Another respondent from Darjeeling district, a widow, with five children, four out of whom have been studying in school and the eldest daughter has been working in a small store earning Rs. 2500 per month, started receiving her widow pension. She said that ***“Daftar se daftar dourna main kabhi bhulungi nehi. Mere pati ke guzarne ke baad, paancho bachcho ko lekar kya khau, kaha rahu samajh mein nehi ata tha. Ekdin bahut roi***

*DM office mein. Phir jaake mera pension chalu hua is February se. Kaunse daftar jana parega hum logo ko thik tarah se pata bhi nehi hai. Ek jagah hone se bhugatna kam parta hai.”*( we had to run from one dept to another dept. We are not aware where to lodge. If it is in one place, our suffering would be less)

Since one of the respondents from West Medinipur was physically not fit due to orthopedic problems and her spouse was illiterate, she requested a local fellow to submit the Rupasree scheme form to the BDO. He charged Rs. 500 for the work, confirmed that he had submitted it. But as per BDO no form had been submitted from her end. She assumed that the local fellow was a cheat, who did not submit the form to the BDO, even after receiving Rs. 500.

Neither her husband, due to his illiteracy and some sort of lack of self-confidence, nor she herself, due to her fragile physical condition, could go to different

### **Government offices to resolve their problems**

**S**ome of the respondents clearly said that by this centralized online system they do not need to face repeated misbehavior or lack of cooperation from Government officials. While detailing on this issue one of the respondents from Uttar Dinajpur said that “Aami BDO office-e katha bolte giyechhilaam, amake okhane gaali diyechhe”.

Almost all respondents expressed that lodging complaints in the new centralized system seems to be more convenient, but if the redressal is not prompt, then this convenience is of no use. Unless it is delivering a resolution, there is no point in calling it an effective programme.

Some said that, having awareness about each and every department and its concerned area of service and grievance redressal cell, is a tedious task. Therefore this single-number centralized system is much more citizen-friendly, where people do not need to memorize several numbers of several departments and offices.

Some of the respondents replied in the opposite, supporting the online system but not getting enthusiastic about the centralized system. They apprehended that in an overpopulated country like India this kind of centralized system may receive complaints, but the redressal system would not be able to function efficiently for long. Moreover it does not give any assurance to the complainants regarding the confirmation of transfer of their complaints to concerned departments or offices. The complainants remain ignorant about the process of grievance redressal; once the complaints are lodged they do not have any means to track the process anymore. In contrast, in the old decentralised system the complainants knew that their complaints had been lodged in the appropriate office and they could track the process of redressal.

One of the respondents from Murshidabad said that a tiny fraction of the intermediaries demands some share from the beneficiaries. The cell has provided the opportunity to air their grievances. From the Bangla Awas Yojana fund the local political leaders are allegedly claiming Rs. 20000 from each beneficiary.

One of the respondents expressed that, unless he experiences some positive result of lodging complaints to helpline, how will he say that this is a good system or efficient system? He concluded saying that “as you have called me up to know my case of grievance and my opinion, now it is your duty to pursue our salary hike. If you can do that then the system will be called a ‘successful system’, else your work is also meaningless. Convenience in lodging complaints does not make a system successful. It will become a successful programme only if it becomes successful in resolving people’s problems”

### **Often hassle free system, yet some concerns**

**A**n overwhelming percentage of respondents shared that there had been no immediate harassment from political parties or locally powerful people.

However, one of the respondents shared that he experienced threats from local hooligans who are connected to the bank official; the bank official was transferred later on. According to him, in his locality there were two banks, both had a few officials who were

connected to such local goons with criminal records and they were used to threaten people in bank related issues. Some respondents from East Medinipur said that they might not have experienced political or bureaucratic pressure, but they knew about such pressure. One of the respondents from North 24 Parganas faced humiliation from the BDO office as she lodged her complaints to DKB.

## **4 . New polices and programmes**

**T**his section presents a brief analysis on how the information generated through the grievances mechanism system has fed into formulating some new policy initiatives, ensuring the delivery of services and schemes at people's doorsteps. The following schemes have drawn on the insights gained through the grievances cell's initiatives. With proper implementation of the outreach programmes detailed below, there is a possibility that the volume of grievances will decrease in the future.

One of the significant initiatives from The Public Grievance Redressal Cell (PGRC) is the formulation of a programme designed to ensure the delivery of services and schemes at the doorsteps of the citizens called 'Duare Sarkar'.

According to the Government notification dated 4 August 2021, the following services and schemes are to be made available at officially organized camps: 1. KhadyaSathi- digital online ration card, 2. SwasthyaSathi, 3. Caste Certificates, 4. Sikshashree, 5. TaposhiliBandhu, 6 Jai Jhohar, 7, Kanyshree , 8. Rupreshree , 9. Manabik, 10. LakshmirBhandar, 11. KrishakBondhu , 12. 100

days’ work, 13. Students credit card, 14. Aikayshree, 15 Banking related ( opening of the bank account) 16. AADHAAR related, 17. Land Record correction and mutation of records of agricultural land, 18. Bina Mulya Samajik SurukhaYojana.

Under the ‘Duare Sarkar’ scheme, the state government has periodically set up camps at various parts of the state, wherein government officials have taken part and provided information to the people about the benefits available under various social welfare schemes.

‘Duare Sarkar’ was kicked off in December 2020, and the list of services available in the camps has expanded from 12 to 18 services and schemes. Over merely one year, the camps have witnessed a phenomenal increase in the participation of citizens to avail the prompt services at the camps. The official statistics show that till November 2021 about 1,04,435 camps were conducted with a footfall of 3,69,15,535 citizens. The following table shows the district wise participation of citizens in the ‘Duare Sarkar’ Camps

Sl No	District	Cumulative Camp held till date	Cumulative Footprint
1	ALIPURDU AR	2258	683914
2	BANKURA	4057	15,45,277
3	BIRBHUM	3326	15,29,773
4	COOCHBIH AR	4324	14,31,120

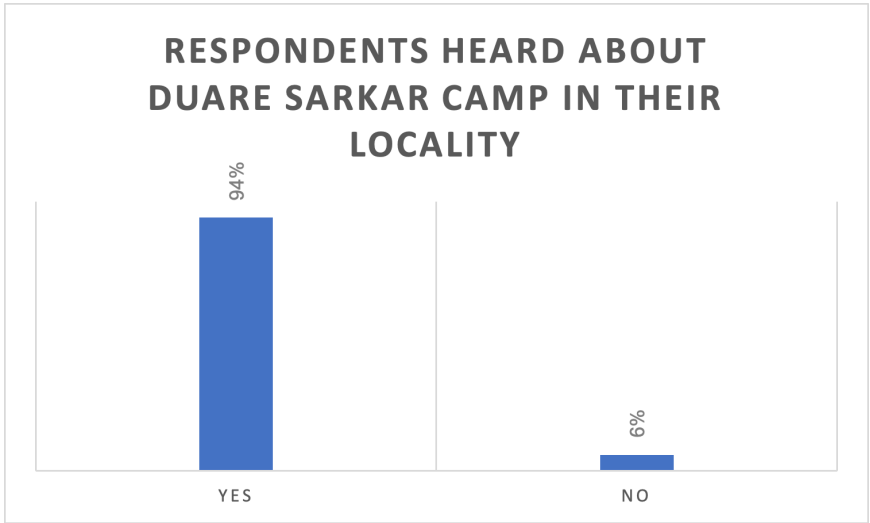
	DAKSHIN 2 4		
5	PARGANA	8396	43,03,760
6	DAKSHIN DINAJPUR	4646	7,41,089
7	DARJEELIN G	1741	6,95,322
8	HOOGLY	7903	22,52,709
9	HOWRAH	5010	14,33,418
10	JALPAIGUR I	3744	9,44,898
11	JHARGRAM	2787	4,53,133
12	KALIMPON G	245	95327
13	KOLKATA	1030	8,80,998
14	MALDA	3781	1534926
15	MURSHIDA BAD	7640	30,59,224
16	NADIA	6897	20,55,443
17	PASCHIM BARDHAM AN	2557	13,73,297
18	PASCHIM MEDINIPUR	4227	20,74,402
19	PURBA BARDHHA MAN	6162	20,75,047
20	PURBA MEDINIPUR	4327	22,85,769
21	PURULIA	5069	12,06,675

22	UTTAR 24 PARGANA	11031	31,22,251
23	U T T A R DINAJPUR	3277	11,37,763
	Totals	1,04,435	3,69,15,535

Source : MIS of Duare Sarkar, 2021, Government of West Bengal

We have observed in our survey that both SwasthyaS athi and Lakshmir Bhandar scheme have been the two most attractive crowd pullers. This outreach programme has raised a certain amount of awareness about the schemes and services launched by the government.

On the issue of the level of public awareness about the camps, our primary survey confirms that an overwhelming percentage ( 94 percent) of the respondents have heard about the ‘Duare Sarkar Camps’ in their neighbourhoods. This high level of awareness is attributed to a concerted effort on the part of concerned officials to step up the level of publicity and campaigns. The SOP on ‘Duare Sarkar’ dated 4 August 2021 has underlined the importance of adequate publicity. Specific guidelines were given to the District Magistrates and the Heads of the civic bodies across the state in this regard.

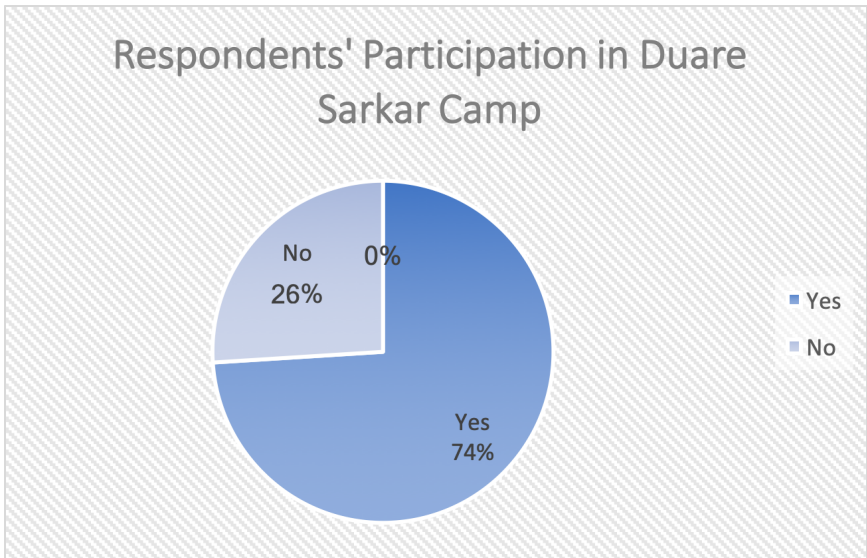


Source: Pratchi Primary Survey 2021

Source: Pratchi Primary Survey 2021

The primary survey finds that about 74 percent of the respondents participated in the Duare Sarkar camp at least for more than one occasion. The reason for their participation in the last round of DS camps held in August and September 2021 was primarily to avail the facilities of Laximir Bhandar. The scheme mandates a monthly assistance of Rs 1,000 for women of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families and Rs 500 each to women of general categories. The scheme aims to reduce household economic hardship caused by the corona –induced lockdown. As we have explained in the first section of this report, the grievances cell received a large number of requests and appeals for support from the public during the lockdown and in the aftermath of the devastating cyclone called Amphan. The scheme is primarily

geared to address cases of economic distress as reported to the grievances cell.



Source: Pratichi Primary Survey 2021

In addition to the mission-mode outreach campaign of governance at doorsteps, the Government has launched a programme of setting up ‘Bangla Sahayata Kendras (BSKs)’ across the state. The scheme was launched in 2020 but detailed revised guidelines for setting up of the BSKs were notified on 30.10.2021. The aim of inaugurating these centres is to provide scheme-related services from sites that are accessible to the people. The approach in this case is slightly different from that of the mission mode outreach programme of ‘Duare Sarkar’. The BSK model is meant to

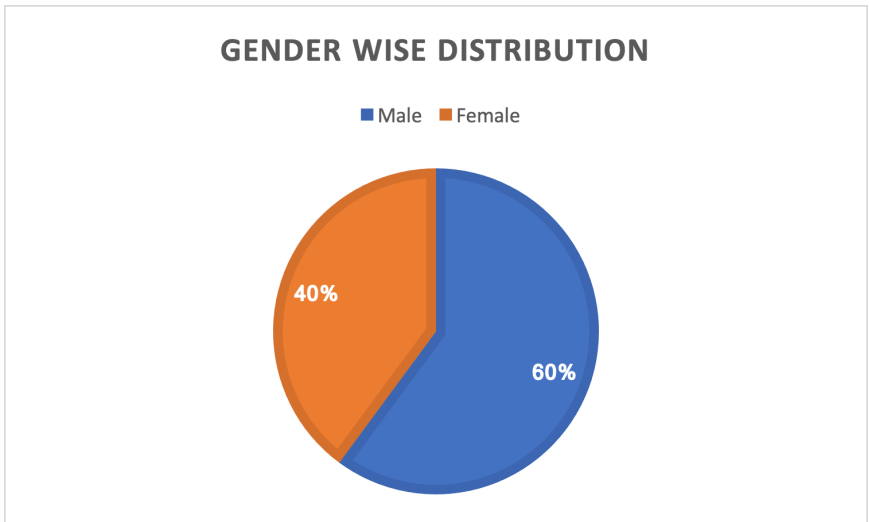
provide services throughout the year on a sustained basis. These centres are ideally to be housed at BDO offices, SDO offices, DM offices, Sub-Centres ( Sashstya Kendra), Libraries and at boroughs in Civic bodies. A digitally-abled centre managed by digitally equipped personnel is also a feature of this initiative in order to provide support to the citizens. Till November about 1 core citizens have accessed services from 3561 BSKs across the state. As a part of the present study, we have analysed the MIS data on BSKs, suggesting an exponential increase in footfalls at BSKs (Figure#).



Source: MIS of BSK, Govt. of West Bengal 2021

There has been a consistency in the participation of women in the service delivery outreach programme, the participation rate revolving around 40 – to 45 percent. The recent data shows that of

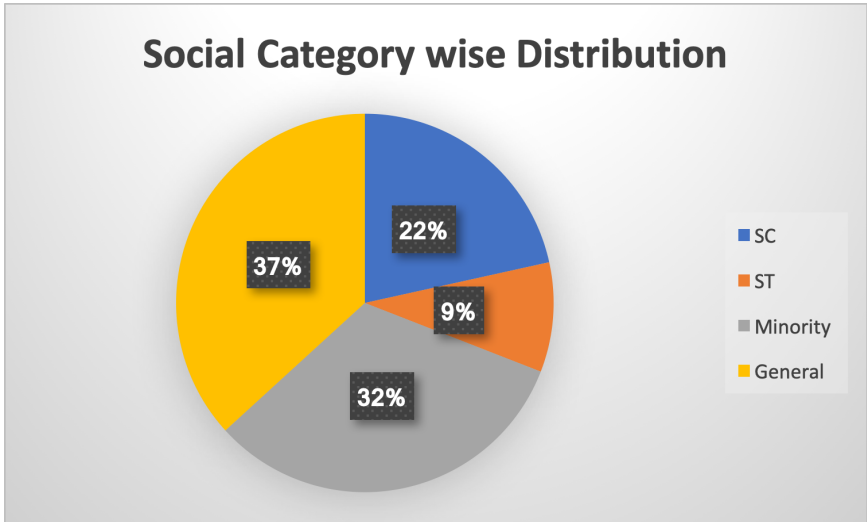
those who have availed services at BSKs, 40 percent are women (). Applications for any services and schemes require uploading of the documents, and there were reported cases of misuse of these documents causing income losses in some cases. Unlike privately managed cyber centres, our qualitative interactions with the women reveal that, women consider these centres as safe as they appear to protect the privacy of their documents.



Source: MIS of BSK, Govt. of West Bengal 2021

In a similar vein, the participation of disadvantaged social groups in availing the services at BSKs seems satisfactory, as on many

occasions their proportion at these centres exceeds their share in the population .



MIS of BSK, Govt. of West Bengal 2021

## 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

Reaching out to the most marginalized communities perhaps needs a more carefully designed communication strategy, since due to their spatial disadvantages they are often denied their entitlement and rights. On the other hand, they can't

articulate their voices because of the myriad barriers including their languages and lack of access to ICT tools. The study found that public awareness about the cell was created largely through the newspaper reports.

To fill the gaps in reaching out to the hitherto unreachable sections of the people, household- and neighbourhood-centred programmes such as “Duare sarkar” and ‘Parai Samadhan’ were launched, aiming to reach out to the last person.

'The Grievance - redressal at a phone call away' is likely to modify and strengthen the older mechanism of grievance mitigation. The traditional systems included repeated physical visits to public institutions, and submission of letters to public authorities which more often than not remained unacknowledged and unanswered for a long period. A visit to the Block office or District Headquarters often evoked a typical answer : ‘come tomorrow’. And tomorrow often ended up in months and years. The old system of addressing the public grievances was both time-consuming and resource- intensive, causing a 'trust deficit' in governance. The setting up of the BSKs are meant to be prompt and free of investment on travel and other logistics from the citizens.

In contrast, a portal based platform has significantly reduced the cost and time of the citizens who are availing

of this mechanism. Once the basic connectivity of the phone is assured, an aggrieved citizen can lodge a complaint using a mobile phone, emails and other social media platforms. The gestation period of resolving grievance has drastically improved as the present system, as indicated previously, seems to have connected with over 4000 administrative units. The system entails a time-bound response on ‘action taken’ to address the grievances.

Beyond addressing the immediate grievances, the grievance mechanism cell has also expanded as a window to understand the efficiency of public service delivery. The citizens’ response, including its collective content, is taken as a valuable suggestion and feedback both for corrective measures and for formulation of new policies.

Our study found that the CMO’s led online Grievance Redressal Project is contributing towards the meeting of the various provisions of SDGs, more specifically indicators under SDG16. The project has helped in building transparency and accountability in governance; the voices of the citizens have been given patent hearing and in several cases prompt actions have been taken to address the grievances. Over the years, the administration appeared to have been beset with high level of inefficacy, corruption, red-tapisim, bribery, and consequently the disprivileged sections of the society

disproportionally suffered. As the newly initiated project is led by the office of the highest authority in the provincial state, it has the potential (as well as actual emergent indications) to efficiently tackle the age-old tradition of inefficiency in administration, there by ensuring transparency and accountability.

The evaluation confirmed sustainable social and institutional impact of the initiative in a number of ways, like:

1. Reducing bureaucratic inertia in service delivery.
2. Reducing the need of multiple visits to public offices and consequent harassment of citizen.
3. Benefit of large-scale data analysis through integrated ICT-enabled system: it can accurately pinpoint implementation level gaps, compared to traditional MIS in the conventional grievance redressal system.
4. 45% of the complainants come from women and 63% of complainants are from the adult members of the family. It endorses the initiative as acceptance and trust of people. Women's vibrant participation in confirming their rights to a plethora of schemes such as 'Kanyashree, 'Rupashree', widow pensions and educational scholarships goes in line with the democratic spirit of the country.
5. Massive public response in the micro schemes and outreach programmes formulated on the basis of policy

prescriptions of this Cell endorses the credibility and efficacy of this initiative.

6. The study recommends the Cell's existing framework of using grievance inputs for policy re-engineering and transformation of governance to make the project effective and sustainable in the long run.

7. It highlighted the popularity and effectiveness of BSKs at grassroots as citizen interface.

8. The evaluation also indicates few challenges like over dependence of citizen on the system alone and with rising expectations, people's tendency to lodge grievances on very simple or personal issues.

Despite its impressive headway in improving the quality of lodging grievances in the state, the study team finds that there is scope of improvement on the following aspects:

1. The MIS system of the cell deals with data of a large number of citizens and has been providing vital information on formulating policies and programmes. The existing MIS draws information from the applications received from the citizens but the MIS captures quite limited information pertaining to socio-economic variables about the applicants. The MIS may include sociological variables including spatial locations like gram panchyats, information about social groups,

occupation profile of applicants, their income and educational level etc. Such information will help us to understand more comprehensively to what extent this system is accessed by diverse groups and whether its reach is extended to the last mile of the population.

2. MIS of the projects provides vital information to address grievances and formulate policies. We have found some data discrepancies, in the identity of complainants (such as, incorrect contact numbers and residential details), the nature of grievances and complaints. This process needs to be strengthened in terms of accuracy.

3. The project may aim to develop detailed case studies of successes, wherein grievances were addressed.

4. A people-friendly communication strategy needs to be developed, as there is still a low level of awareness about the CMO's initiative on public grievances

5. A thorough tracking mechanism in favour of the complainants after lodging grievances needs to be developed starting from acknowledgement of grievances by concerned departmental offices, to the progress of action taken, so that the complainants can realise the status of their lodged complaints on their own either by following a website or making phone calls to a specific number

6 The CMO grievances may help the respective departments to reflect on the nature of grievances and how these can be addressed at the level implementation.

The respective departments may take a course correction measure during implementation.

7. The project may recommend setting up of additional BSKs at the remotest part of the state to ensure the participation of the last person.

Annexure -1

## **Quantitative Survey Tool**

***Introduction:*** Hello, My name is [name] and I am calling from Pratichi Institute, Kolkata. We are conducting a study on the working of the system and mechanisms of registering Public Grievances and taking up appropriate follow-up actions, which have been put in place by the Government of West Bengal. Your response on this subject will be very valuable to us in order to understand the effectiveness of this programme. We therefore would be very grateful to you if you kindly spare for us a little of your precious time to answer our queries. I will just read out how the information that you give us in this conversation will be used. The information you share will be used only by my team, and solely used for research purposes. Your identity and the information you share with us will be kept as anonymous and confidential.

Do you have a little time to talk to me now?	Yes	Call me at a later time	No
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Demographics			
Name: Contact Number:			
Sex of respondent	Male	Female	Others
What is your age?			
Relation with head of the Household	Self	Spouse	Child
	Child's spouse	Grandchild	Parent/in-laws
	Brother/sister/in-laws	Others	
Till which class have you studied?	Illiterate	Below primary	Primary
	Elementary	Secondary	H.S.
	Graduate	Post graduate & above	Others (specify)
Highest educational qualification among household members	Illiterate	Below primary	Primary

	Elementary	Secondary	H. S.		
	Graduate	Post graduate & above	Others (specify)		
Which social category does your household belong to?	SC	ST	OB C	G e n e r a l	N o t d e f i n e d (s p e c i f y)
Which religion does your household follow?	Hinduism	Islam	Others (specify)		
What is your Occupation?	Agri labour	Non-agri labour	Cul t i v a t o r		
	Salaried employee	Self employment (mainly own labour)			

	Independent profession (lawyer, private tutor etc)	Others (specify)			
Household's principal source of income	Agri labour	Non-agri labour	Cultivator		
	Salaried employee	Self employment (mainly own labour)			
	Independent profession (lawyer, private tutor etc)	Others (specify)			
What is the name of your village/town?					
Location	Rural	Urban			
Which block/municipality does that fall in?					
Which district does that fall in?					

Public Grievances Related				
1. Have you ever registered any complaint anywhere regarding any government programme or scheme?	Yes	Can't recall		
If yes, 1.1.a. How many months ago have you made the last complaint?				
1.1.b. Where did you make the last complaint?	Panchayat	BDO office	Municipality	Police station
	Grievance cell	Duare Sarkar 'camp	Others (specify)	

If last complaint made at places other than 'Grievance Cell' or 'Duare Sarkar' camp, 1.1.c. What was the nature of your last complaint?	Old age pension	Widow pension	SC/ST/OBC/Minority student stipend	
	Kanyashree	Caste certificate	Housing	Job card
	NREGA job	Ration card	PDS foodgrain	Swasthyaosathiservice

	Health care	Police complaint	Travel assistance (pandemic)	Others (specify)
1.1.d. Was any action been taken on your last complaint?	Yes	No		
1.1.e. Satisfaction level for action taken on last complaint	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Modestly satisfied	
	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied		
2. Have you heard about the <b>Public Grievance Cell</b> that has been set up by the government to receive complaints from ordinary people?	Yes	No		

If yes, 2.1. How did you come to know about the Grievance Cell?	From local educated person	From NGO	From local political leader	
	From Municipal Councilor/ Panchayat member	Others (specify)		
2.2. Do you have any knowledge of how to register such a public grievance or any complaint to the Grievance Cell?	Yes	No		
If yes, 2.2.a. From where have you got this knowledge?	From local educated person	From NGO	From local political leader	
	From Municipal Councilor/ Panchayat member	Others (specify)		

2.2.b. Knowledge of phone number etc for registering complaint. [Multiple response]	Toll free phone no.	Portal	e-mail id	Others (specify)
2.3. Have you ever registered any complaint with the Grievance cell?	Yes	Can't recall		
If yes, 2.3.1.a. What was the nature of your complaints with the Grievance cell? [Multiple response]	Old age pension	Widow pension	SC/ST/OBC/Minority student stipend	
	Kanyashree	Caste certificate	Housing	Job card

	NREGA job	Ration card	PDS foodgrain	Swasthyos at his service
	Health care	Police complain	Travel assistance (pandemic)	Others (specify)
2.3.1.a.1. What was the nature of your last complaint with the Grievance cell?	Same code as 2.3.1.a			
2.3.1.b. How did you register the last complaint with the Grievance cell?	Written complaint	Telephone	e-mail	Others (specify)

2.3.1.c. Who had helped to register you the last complaint?	Local educated person	NGO	Local political leader	
	Municipal Councillor/ Panchayat member	None	Others (specify)	
For written complaint, 2.3.1.d. Where did you submit your written complaint?				
2.3.1.e. Did you receive any acknowledgement proof for your last complaint?	Yes	No		
2.3.1.f. How did you track your complaint status?	Following official updates through message etc	Contacting the person helped to register	Others (specify)	
2.3.1.g. Has any action been taken on your last complaint?	Yes	No	Can't tell	Others (specify)

If yes, 2.3.1.g.1. How much time (in weeks) did it take to address and/or resolve your last complaint?				
2.3.1.g.2. Satisfaction level for action taken on last complaint.	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Moderately satisfied	
	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied		
2.3.1.g.3. Reason for satisfaction [Multiple response]	Resolved in time	Problem resolved	Others (specify)	
2.3.1.g.4. Reason for dissatisfaction [Multiple response]	Addressed but not resolved	Resolved but not as expected		
	Resolved but not in time	Partially resolved	Others (specify)	
2.3.1.g.5. By the time action was taken, was it still relevant?	Yes	No		

3. Did you hear of any camp of 'Duare Sarkar' in your locality?	Yes	No		
If yes, 3.1. How did you come to know about the camp?	From local educated person	From NGO	From local political leader	
	From Municipal Councillor/ Panchayat member	From local club	Others (specify)	
3.2. Did you participate in the camp?	Yes	No		
If yes, 3.2.1.a. Why did you participate in the camp?	For application form of Old age pension	For application form of Widow pension		
	For application form of Caste certificate	For application form of Ration card		

	For application form of Swasthyosathi card	For registering complaints	Others (specify)	
3.2.1.b. Did you register any complaint there?	Yes	No		
If yes, 3.2.1.b.1. What was the nature of your complaints? [Multiple response]	Old age pension	Widow pension	SC/ST/OBC/Minority student stipend	
	Kanyashree	Caste certificate	Housing	Job card

	NREGA job	Ration card	PDS foodgrain	Swasthyosathiservice
	Health care	Police complain	Travel assistance (pandemic)	Others (specify)
3.2.1.c. What was the outcome of your participation in the camp?	Application form received	Application form submitted	Ration card received	
[Multiple response]	Caste certificate received	Swasthyosathi card received	Job card received	

	Old age pension received	Widow pension received	No outcome	
	Action taken against complaints	Others (specify)		
3.2.1.d. How much time (in weeks) did it take to address and/or resolve your problems?				
3.2.1.e. Satisfaction level for action taken on complaints.	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Modestly satisfied	
	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied		
3.2.1.f. Reason for satisfaction [Multiple response]	Resolved in time	Problem resolved	Others (specify)	
3.2.1.g. Reason for dissatisfaction [Multiple response]	Addressed but not resolved	Resolved but not as expected		
	Resolved but not in time	Partially resolved	Others (specify)	

3.2.1.h. By the time action was taken, was it still relevant?	Yes	No		
If did not participate in the camp, 3.2.2. Reason for avoiding the camp?	Nothing to claim or to complain	No possibility of outcome		
	Essentially Political program	Others (specify)		
4.1. Do you think ordinary people like us need to register complaints or grievances that we may have with regard to the functioning of various governmental programmes or schemes?	Yes	We like ordinary people not fit for registering complaint	Can't tell	
	Political leader addresses it	No meaning of complaint	Others (specify)	

4.2. Do you think that people should have a right to articulate such public grievances through a specific mechanism?	Yes	We like ordinary people not fit for exercising this right	Can't tell	
	No relevance of this right	Others (specify)		
5. Investigator's Note:				

Investigator's name:

Date of survey:

## **About Pratichi ( India) Trust**

Chaired by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and established with his Nobel honorarium, the Pratichi (India) Trust was instituted in New Delhi in 1999 to pursue its research and advocacy goals in public education, public health, child development and nutrition, gender equity and people's democratic rights. Pratichi (India) Trust, has been working since then towards combating illiteracy and lack of schooling in India, the lack of basic health care, and the special disadvantages from which women and young girls suffer.

It pursues research and advocacy goals in public education, public health, child development and nutrition, gender equity and people's democratic rights.

It is committed to take up 'research for action' that aims to enhance human capabilities, expand social opportunities, and enliven people's agency to improve their own well-being as well as to make a difference to other people's lives

In 2001 with the growing scope of both its social interventions and research, the Trust established a core research team. Between 2001 and 2010 this core team undertook several projects and published its findings in a number of notable reports and papers. In 2012 Pratichi (India) Trust initiated an innovative education project involving tribal children in Himachal Pradesh to preserve and promote the local Himachali cultural and linguistic diversities.