



WHERE DO GRIEVANCES GO?

A Citizen's take on India's Redressal
Platforms

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Acknowledgments

In addition to the invaluable contributions from the wider Video Volunteers team, deepest thanks are extended to the Community Content Creators, whose insights and personal stories have enriched this report with authenticity and lived experience.

The findings and observations presented here are grounded in what was studied during a defined period, from January 2017 to July 2024, and are based solely on the data, experiences, and platforms examined within that timeframe. The report does not seek to make claims beyond this scope.

This report is not merely an exercise in data collection; it reflects a collaborative process—co-created alongside the communities themselves. The aim is to ensure that their voices are respectfully represented and central to the narrative. It is hoped that this report honours their experiences and meaningfully contributes to the broader dialogue on social justice and community-driven change.

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Introduction



Imagine a farmer hears news about a government program that would give her money to build a permanent home. She tries to gather information about it from local authorities and applies to get the benefits. After some days, her application gets rejected due to unknown reasons. She is confused and does not know what to do next, but is determined to get her due rights. How can she be helped? To address such issues, when a person is not granted what is rightfully theirs in the first place, there are certain apps or websites or toll free numbers, commonly known as **Grievance Redressal Platforms (GRPs)**, created by the government of India. They are a means for the citizens to get their problems addressed.

These apps, websites or toll free numbers are paramount in establishing the agency of citizens by giving them the right to complain and demand better services under various government schemes and programs related to civic infrastructure or poverty alleviation.

Given the large population of India, and its immense social and cultural diversity - based on caste, class, gender, religion and more, GRPs become indispensable to promote good governance and equitable development. For many citizens, especially those from historically marginalised communities who already face barriers related to language, documentation, and digital literacy, GRPs serve as a crucial window to be seen and heard. These communities are often

at the risk of having their claims discredited or ignored. In a context where procedural delays and overburdened bureaucracies are the norm, GRPs offer the hope of building a more streamlined and transparent system. By introducing and adopting relevant technology, they can help create mechanisms that work more effectively for all.

Over the past decade, there has been investment of large sums in grievance redressal systems, with the goal of making it easier for citizens to report gaps in the delivery of services. There are several government-set grievance platforms designed to accommodate the complaints of the citizens. One of the most prominent among them is the **Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)** which was inaugurated in June 2007 by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre. It is a single portal connecting the entire country's departments and state governments, allowing citizens to lodge complaints regarding service delivery of any Ministry or Department. The government of India also inaugurated **UMANG**, a mobile app to provide access to various government services and integrated it with CPGRAMS. Complaints can be filed online on their website or via the UMANG app or even by sending a letter (postcard, inland letter or plain sheet).

At the state level as well, almost all the states and Union Territories have their own grievance portals similar to CPGRAMS to address service delivery issues. There are other platforms as well, such as **MyGov, E-District, and RTI online** which cater to specific demands of the citizens.

Why Video Volunteers has earned the right to speak on Grievance Redressal Platforms



Over the years, VV has facilitated the production of more than 25,000 community videos, each serving as a catalyst for local action and advocacy.

Video Volunteers (VV) has been at the forefront of community media and citizen empowerment since 2010. Our organisation began with a focus on enabling citizens to produce community videos that addressed local issues and social concerns. This innovative approach not only gave voice to marginalised communities but also became a powerful tool for change. As VV's network of Community Content Creators (CCs) grew, so did their impact. These CCs didn't just document problems; they actively worked towards solving them in tandem with the local government officials.

Over the years, VV has facilitated the production of more than 25,000 community videos, each serving as a catalyst for local action and advocacy.

Our long-standing engagement with community issues, combined with our adaptability to new technologies, provides us with a distinctive perspective on the evolution and efficacy of different grievance redressal strategies. We have filed thousands of grievances and come in contact with thousands of citizens, providing a wealth of on-ground experience and data. This gives VV a credible standing to analyse and comment on the landscape of citizen complaints and their resolution in India.

With the advent of technology and the introduction of online Grievance Redressal Platforms (GRPs) in 2017, CCs associated with VVs expanded their toolkit, incorporating these digital platforms into their activism.

In 2017, our initial study of these platforms found that the Bihar Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS) was the most promising among those that existed at that time, primarily because it held live hearings and wasn't an entirely online process. Bihar stood out in terms of process (*explained in the later section*). Over the years, we encouraged citizen content creators to actively file complaints through the Bihar PGRS. As our experience deepened, we began expanding our use to other grievance redressal platforms. In 2018, we started engaging with the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and by 2019, we began using the Chhattisgarh Grievance Redressal Portal. By the end of 2021, we had incorporated four additional platforms into our efforts.

Especially around September 2022, when it became clear that these platforms were going to become increasingly important, we began planning a broader engagement. In June 2023, we had expanded our use of different grievance redressal platforms across the country.

VV's unique position here stems from our **comprehensive data tracking system**, which meticulously records each video produced, the issues addressed, and the outcomes of follow-up actions. This robust database, spanning from 2010 to the present, allows us to compare the effectiveness of various grievance redressal mechanisms, from traditional face-to-face lobbying to the use of community videos and online GRPs.

\One key point worth highlighting here is the **governance value** of this dataset. Not many civil society organisations in India have long-term evidence on how the state responds to citizen complaints across different platforms and regions. This kind of tracking becomes a way of **monitoring procedural citizenship in practice**. The patterns emerging from this data may be relevant for future accountability reforms, particularly around timelines, transparency, and the discretion officials hold in closing or escalating complaints.

As detailed further in the report, between January 2017 to mid-July 2024, **we filed a total of 871 grievances across 10 platforms**. Based on that experience, **this study takes a deep dive on the accessibility, usability, and procedure differences among various GRPs, and evaluates their effectiveness – consolidating in a set of recommendations**.

How We Studied the Platform: Data and Methodology



Quantitative and Qualitative Approach

We adopted a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative methodology to study the effectiveness of grievance redressal platforms (GRPs).

We analysed 871 complaints filed across various Grievance Redressal Platforms (GRPs), State or Central Ministries or Departments, between January 1st 2017 to July 23rd 2024. These complaints were related to issues raised by Community Content Creators (CCs) associated with Video Volunteers. This analysis focused on the resolutions reached, associated government actions or responses and the time taken to resolve these complaints.

Likert Scale Survey: Gauging User Experience

To assess user experience, we conducted a Likert scale-based survey with 78 participants between April 2024 to June 2024. The focus was on understanding the accessibility and ease of use of various State GRPs. Participants, spread across 11 states, were asked to file complaints on their respective state GRPs of their choice and provide feedback. All 78 participants attempted to file complaints at 23 different GRPs as mentioned below.

The participants shared details of the complaint filed, ease of using the platform, immediate response mechanism and reasons for failure (if any) to file complaints on a piece of paper. During this exercise, a total of 63 complaints were successfully filed by 55 participants across 14 platforms including, ALC Office Birpara, Assam ARIS, Bihar Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS), Chhattisgarh GRP, DM Cuttack (Odisha), Jal Nigam Department, Jharkhand CM Helpline, Maharashtra State GRP (Aaple Sarkar), MP CM Helpline, MP Education Department, MP State GRP, Odisha State GRP (Jana Sunani), Punjab GRP, Rajasthan Sampark, and WB CPGNP

Focused Interviews: Understanding Deeper Experiences

We also conducted focused interviews with 12 GRP users¹, capturing their experiences of pursuing their complaints on 10 major platforms. These users were selected from the data set described above, based on their level of engagement and experience with the platform. The interviews were conducted in 2023 and 2024, and focused on: quality and mechanisms of communication with the government officials, procedure for resolution, technology of the platform, ease in following up, user satisfaction with final resolution, any challenges encountered and recommendations for improvement, if any.

Several of the interviewees – including the lead researcher Amrita Sunita Anand – have worked with citizens for years in the areas of public service delivery and civic action. Prior to the interviews, they reviewed their field notes and past experiences, ensuring the conclusions drawn were grounded in long-term practice. Thus, this study draws not only from recent digital grievance redressal experiences, but also from decades of experience with offline grievance redressal mechanisms.

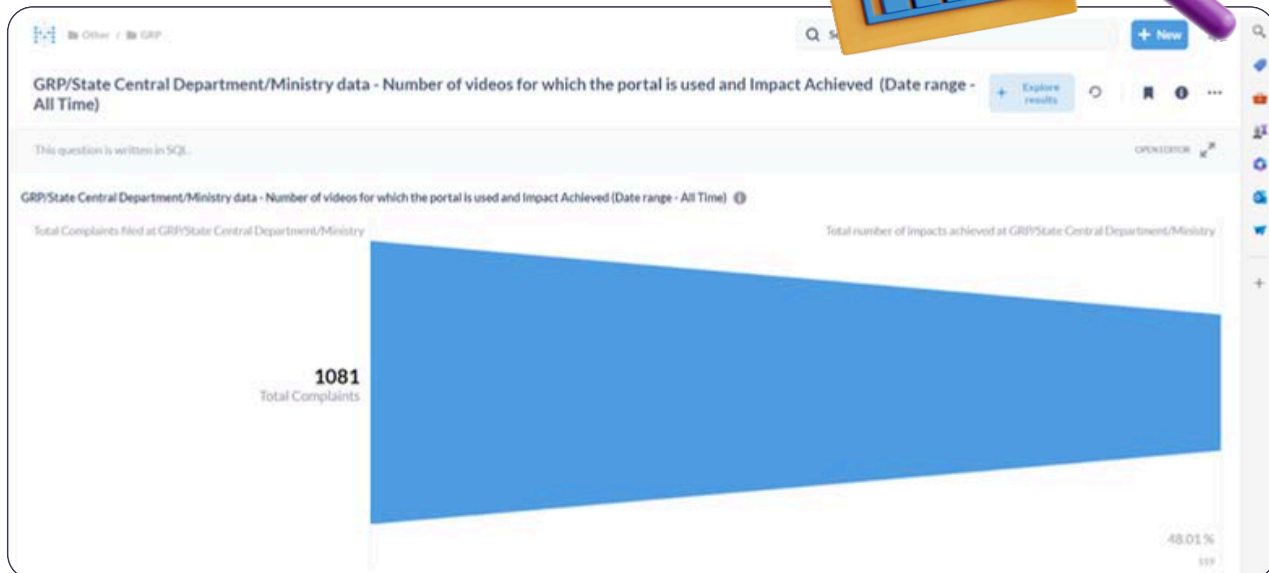
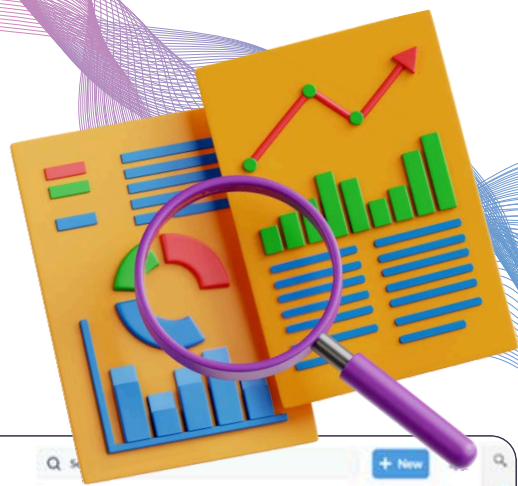
Platforms covered in the interview include: Bihar Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS), Chhattisgarh State GRP, CPGRAMS, Jharkhand State GRP, Jharkhand CM Helpline, JK GRP (Awaz A Awam), Maharashtra State GRP (Aaple Sarkar), MP State GRP, Odisha State Old GRP (eAbhijoga), Odisha State Current GRP (Jana Sunani) and Rajasthan Sampark.

Refer to Appendix 1 for a detailed list of all GRPs studied and their background.

¹ The 12 GRPs users were Pankaj, Nilankur, Zaffar, Avijit, approx one person per platform. These were heavy users of the platforms.

What We Found: Findings

A total of 871 complaints were filed on various Grievance Redressal Platforms (GRPs) over the five year period. Of these, 519 were solved – that is, a resolution rate of 48%.



Filing complaints through GRPs is just one of several strategies available to citizens for getting their issues resolved. Other commonly used approaches include in-person visits to government offices, working through intermediaries such as 'dalaals' (brokers), agents or community leaders, or even raising issues through social media.

A key strength of this study is that it allows us to compare resolution rates across two different grievance redressal strategies. One, which involves filing complaints through GRPs and the other, which revolves around the production of community videos on social issues by citizens, which are later shown to officials to stimulate empathy and focus attention. Community video has been Video Volunteers' primary tool of engagement. Over the past 14 years, we have produced over 25,000 community videos, of which about 4500 have resulted in a resolution. This data enables us to ask: How do the resolution rates compare between these two distinct strategies?

The rate of resolution using GRPs is significantly higher than the impact achieved by CCs using conventional methods of physical meetings and ad-hoc petitioning of government officials at block and district levels, ministries and national commissions. For comparison, in the same time period, CCs were able to resolve 2,388 matters out of the 11,590

community issues using conventional methods – a resolution rate of around 20%..

The findings also indicate that many of the issues resolved through GRPs would likely have remained unsolved otherwise. The complaints filed with the GRPs were after the conventional attempts did not yield any results. These cases typically required intervention of higher-authorities or multiple departments – an outcome that would have been difficult to achieve through the conventional approach of local level engagement alone.

What kind of issues are citizens raising

Video Volunteers addresses 27 critical issues within its broader body of work. These issues largely align with those covered by various grievance redressal platforms.

Over the past two years, the majority of complaints filed have been related to education, followed closely by infrastructure, water, and anti-poverty programs. The prominence of education-related grievances highlights the critical importance of accessible, quality education for community members. Issues such as lack of facilities, teacher absenteeism, and inadequate educational resources reflect systemic problems that need urgent attention. It also highlights that many education-related issues require budget sanctions that fall outside the purview of local authorities.

Infrastructure-related complaints underscore the necessity for reliable public amenities such as roads, public buildings, and transportation systems, which are essential for both daily life and economic activities. Water-related grievances reveal the ongoing struggle for access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation, which are fundamental human needs that remain unmet for many. Complaints related to anti-poverty programs indicate the challenges citizens face in accessing government schemes designed to alleviate poverty, pointing to gaps in implementation, information dissemination and administrative follow-through.

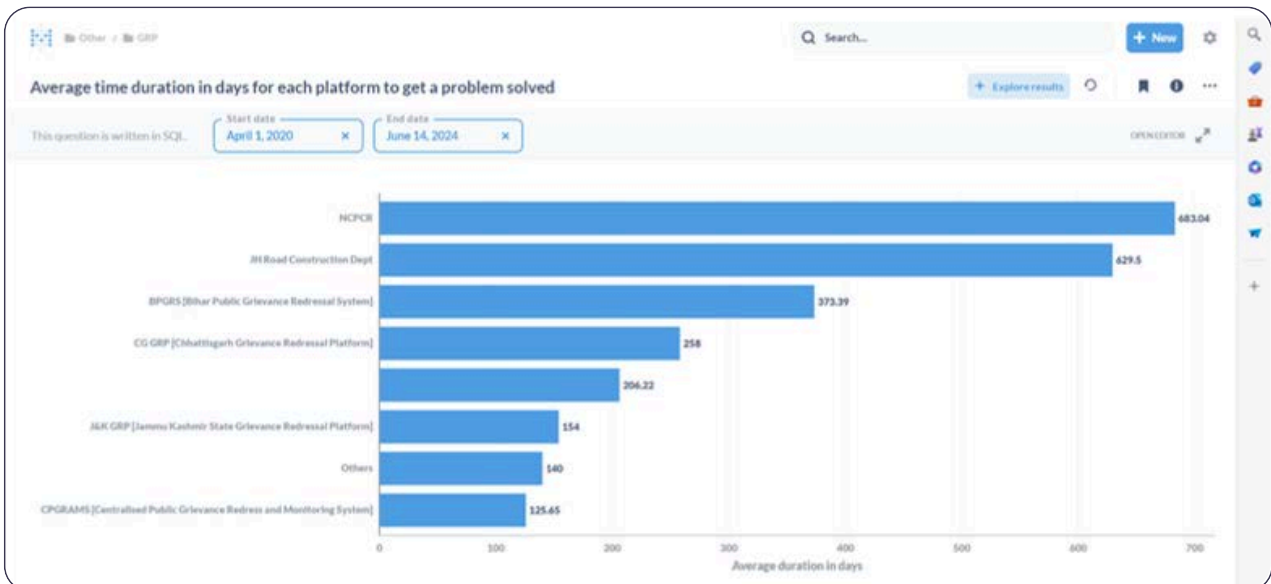
For all 871 complaints filed, CCs had already produced a community video and, in many cases, conducted in-person meetings. Reaching out to the local authorities is the first step in complaint resolution or getting access to a certain service, hence, filing GRPs was an additional step undertaken. Based on this pattern, we conclude that while some GRPs are effective in accelerating grievance resolution, in-person follow-up still remains necessary. Even with fully digital platforms, many citizens continue to rely on local

intermediaries or informal actors to navigate filing, follow-ups and timelines, which shows that technology alone does not replace the older patterns of influence and access. Resolution rates vary significantly across different grievance redressal strategies. These differences raise an important question: what factors contribute to the higher success rate of GRPs? To answer this, we examined the usability and procedural aspects of various platforms through our survey of users. Understanding the step-by-step processes, ease of use, and accessibility of each platform provides insight into why certain methods may be more effective in resolving grievances. The following section looks at these procedural aspects in greater detail, shedding light on how design and implementation can significantly impact resolution outcomes.

Which Platforms Actually Work? Comparing Resolution Rates Across Platforms

To compare resolution rates across platforms, we used data from 1 January 2017 to 20 July 2024.

Overall, **the most resolutions came through the Bihar Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS), Jammu & Kashmir's Awaz A Awam, and a good portion were resolved through CPGRAMS.** These platforms took relatively less time to resolve issues when compared to the method of sending letters or emails to commissions and departments.



Jammu & Kashmir's Grievance platform popularly called, Awaz A Awam, demonstrated impressive efficacy, resolving 67% of grievances in an average processing time of 154 days. This marks a significant progress for the platform. From our interviews with the citizen content creators, we learnt that

Findings

the complaints filed when the platform was launched in 2018 did not yield any response or resolutions which discouraged citizens from using it further. This has changed as demonstrated by experiences from 2022 onwards.

The improvements seem to reflect the changes introduced under the Lieutenant Governor's leadership since 2020 including targeted allocation of resources, extensive training of staff, and a proactive approach to resolving grievances. In most cases, we observed nearly a full callback rate after filing of grievance, a visit by a local official and a report filed within 2-3 working days. All of these reports and replies were reflected on the platform by tracking the complaint. In one case, we did find that a local official claimed the complaint to be false more than once, but the complainant was still able to reopen the grievance. Despite this one instance, we encourage citizens to use this platform more often.

We also came across a village receiving water after citizens appealed to the local officials at the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) for about 10 years. The turning point was filing a complaint through Awaz A Awam in September 2022. This resulted in release of funds amounting to 390 lakhs (3 crore 90 lakhs) and work started by November 2022. In another case, we observed that an issue of five years was resolved. Again this was possible due to release of funds, 281.68 lacs (2 crore 81 lakhs and 68

jkgrievance.in/AwazAAwam/index.aspx			
SNo.	Submitted By	Remarks	Submitted On
1.	Applicant	Application Submitted in System and sent to Designated Officer	10/01/2023
2.	JKGCC	Esteemed Sir/Mam. I am directed to request you to kindly redress the grievance of the complainant at an earliest. Regards, Aleem, Lt. GGC, J&K, Srinagar.	11/01/2023
3.	PULWAMA-ADMIN	Sir, I am directed to request you to kindly redress the grievance of the complainant at the earliest. Yours faithfully, District Grievance Cell Pulwama.	12/01/2023
4.	Ex. Engineer PHE Awantipora, Pulwama	The water supply scheme for the said village has been proposed under JJM with the name as WSS Aghanjipora (Lift scheme with a Bore well as source) for which the tenders has already been floated. The work on the said scheme will be started shortly after the end of this winter season as there is a sub zero temperature prevailing at this time.	27/01/2023
5.	Applicant	Dear Sir, Thanks for floating the tender under JJM. Please confirm if the tender has been given. Will the work start in Feb 2023? Also, how much budget is sanctioned. Thank you!	09/02/2023
6.	Applicant	Dear Sir, Thanks for floating the tender under JJM. Please confirm if the tender has been given. Will the work start in Feb 2023? Also, how much budget is sanctioned. Thank you!	09/02/2023
7.	PULWAMA-ADMIN	Sir, kindly go through the feedback of the complainant and redress the grievance at an earliest on merits. Regards, District Grievance Cell Pulwama.	09/02/2023
8.	Ex. Engineer PHE Awantipora, Pulwama	The tender for the said scheme has been allotted for pipeline as well as Over Head Tank and the work will be started in the first week of March. The scheme is accorded for an amount of Rs 211.34 lacs	09/02/2023

Image: copy of the track complaints on J&K grievance portal

thousand). In many responses, the budget released was clearly stated upfront. If not, the details were provided upon asking. The design of the platform enables conversation virtually. This enables ease of use, something we found missing in other platforms. It allows re-opening of complaints or feedback for a limited period of 21 days of closure. However, we were unable to identify consistent criteria which guided these escalations or resolutions. It was difficult to ascertain the parameters in which the Lieutenant Governor directly supervises a case or meets the complainant, though we did find one case which definitely accelerated the resolution process. .

In comparing the resolution rates across the platforms, Bihar PGRS exhibited one of the highest rates of satisfactory grievance resolution – an impressive 62%. This could be attributed to the portal's streamlined processes and efficiency (explained in detail in the next section). However, some citizens expressed dissatisfaction due to partial resolutions or closures citing resource constraints. In these cases, the complaint was closed by Bihar PGRS. Most citizens were not keen to proceed with escalating the matter and re-opening as detailed in Bihar PGRS as it would have required more in-person visits to the hearings and the corresponding travel was the deterrent. In such cases, we recommend sending letters to the departments or ministries to release funds. To the Bihar PGRS, a viable solution could be online hearings from a secured location as in case of J&K Awaz A Awam.

Despite these challenges, we highly recommend using the platform. Our review of 100+ complaints showed that a hearing was initiated in each case, SMS updates were sent in a timely manner, which gave us confidence about the uniformity of the process and that all complaints received a fair chance of hearing. On average, complaints were resolved in 278 days.

We have a mixed report on the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) popularly called PG portal, which is the single portal that connects all the GRPs of states, departments or ministries. It is overseen or managed by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).

CPGRAMS resolved 44% of grievances, with an average processing time of 137 days. This indicates a need for improvements in resolution rate. Although appeal options exist, authorities have the power to close cases without any explanation. There appears to be a degree of variability in the effectiveness of CPGRAMS depending on the processing of the complaints. After a grievance is filed at CPGRAMS, it is

forwarded to the relevant state department or administration or GRP. A closer analysis of the unresolved grievances indicate that issues related to state subjects, which are primarily addressed by state departments, have higher probability of force closure (disposed without resolution). On the other hand, grievances related to union subjects tend to receive more prompt and positive responses from the respective departments.

Across various platforms, we observed varying degrees of success in resolutions, with many platforms failing to resolve any grievances. At Chhattisgarh GRP, only one out of six grievances we studied were resolved, a resolution rate of mere 17%. While the sample size is small, this could be indicative of a low efficacy of the system in addressing complaints.



Some platforms like Maharashtra's Aaple Sarkar, Odisha's Old GRP (eAbhijoga) and current GRP (Jana Sunani), Jharkhand CM helpline, MP State GRP and Rajasthan Sampark showed no resolutions in our studied sample. Notably, we observed that Maharashtra's Aaple Sarkar, rejected most complaints. In the case of Odisha's old GRP (eAbhijoga), it lacked complaint tracking features whereas Jharkhand CM Helpline did not provide complaint numbers, making tracking and follow-up nearly impossible.

How Complaint procedures differ across GRPs

This section offers a simplified overview of how complaints are filed across the various platforms we tested. While the basic process is similar – file a complaint and wait for a response – the actual user experience varies significantly. Some platforms are straightforward and user-friendly, while others can be confusing or difficult to navigate.

CPGRAMS, for instance, functions as a centralised system for filing complaints related to central government departments or for escalating unresolved issues across states/ However, even with CPGRAMS and its integrations, procedural clarity and responsiveness differ widely.

Looking at some of the state grievance portals, we found that in Jammu & Kashmir's Awaaz A Awam, a mobile number is required to initiate a complaint. The grievance is first reviewed online by the J&K Government Cell (JKGGC) and then forwarded to the respective district grievance cell. An acknowledgment with a tracking number is provided immediately upon filing. If there are any errors or queries, the complainant is contacted directly via a phone call.

Once accepted, the concerned department head official assigns the complaint mostly to a field block official for a ground report, a process that includes contacting the complainant and visiting the site. The findings are then uploaded to the website as a formal reply by the government official, and the complainant receives an SMS alert. If the case is escalated, higher authorities, including the Governor's office, may intervene.

In Maharashtra, filing a complaint on the Aaple Sarkar platform requires creating an account and password using a mobile number, email ID, and OTP. The complaint is processed by the Maharashtra State Commission for Right to Services offices. After submission, an acknowledgment with a tracking number is generated, and the complainant may be contacted for further clarification. However, no SMS updates are sent. The platform is accessible only in English and Marathi, posing language barriers for many users. It also requires users to securely remember or store login credentials, which creates an additional hurdle for digitally less-literate complainants.

Similar processes are followed in the state GRPs of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, where complaints necessitate a mobile number and typically result in an acknowledgment and a tracking number. While calls may be made to the complainant for clarification, updates via SMS are inconsistent. When reviewing the Chhattisgarh GRP, we couldn't find any detailed documents on the standard process, unlike other platforms.

Odisha's former platform, eAbhijoga, now defunct since December 2022, has transitioned to a new GRP website where complaints can be filed without requiring a login, although a mobile number for OTP is necessary. Physical visits to relatively new Mobile Seva Kendras and filing through a WhatsApp chatbot are alternative methods, albeit

with some accessibility barriers. Acknowledgments with tracking numbers are given upon filing the complaint, but no updates are sent via calls or SMS.

Among all the platforms analysed, Bihar Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS) stood out for its interesting approach of handling the complaints. Unlike other systems where complaints are often redirected back to the same local officials who may have ignored them previously during an in-person visit or might have been inefficient to solve them, Bihar PGRS brings both the complainant and the government representative face-to-face in a formal hearing. It is a quasi-judicial process, presided over by a Public Grievance Redressal Officer who conducts the hearing, ensuring transparency and fairness. The government officer must come prepared with answers, and each hearing concludes with a specific order from the presiding officer. Once a complaint is registered, the complainant receives an acknowledgment with a registration ID and hearing date. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the order, they have the option to appeal further, making the system notably more accountable and transparent.

Why many citizens still can't use GRPs

The Government of India's Grievance Redressal Platforms (GRPs), such as CRPGRAMS and their state equivalents, aim to improve the grievance redressal experience by making it citizen-centric. However, our analysis based on user surveys and interviews shows that multiple barriers continue to hinder access and use, especially for marginalised communities. Below, we unpack six major categories of barriers: technology access, language, trust, awareness, platform complexity, and overall platform efficiency.



No Access to Technology

Access to digital grievance redressal systems remain highly unequal across caste, gender, and religion. [The India Inequality Report 2022: Digital Divide](#) released by Oxfam reveals that during the pandemic, 70% of the population had poor or no digital connectivity, and only 38% of households were digitally literate. The situation is even worse for marginalised groups: just 4% of students from ST and SC communities had access to computers and the internet. In terms of gender, men use 40.4% more internet than women, according to the report.

To address connectivity barriers, several state governments have introduced toll-free grievance helplines. For example, Bihar, Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir offer toll-free

numbers that work very well and make their platforms easily available for the masses. From the conversations with the users of the platform, we found that the citizens prefer toll free numbers and foresee more of their village members using them. While Maharashtra GRP provides a toll-free number for complaint resolution but not for filing. In contrast, eAbhijoga Odisha, Odisha Jan Sunani, Chhattisgarh GRP, Jharkhand GRP, and Jharkhand CM Helpline lack toll-free numbers, with some like Chhattisgarh GRP and Jharkhand platforms facing severe technical issues. Additionally, Rajasthan Sampark features an app for filing complaints but lacks a WhatsApp chatbot. Bihar, MP, and Maharashtra also have apps but no WhatsApp chatbots. Odisha Jan Sunani includes a WhatsApp chatbot, though it occasionally sends incorrect OTPs. On the other hand, platforms like Chhattisgarh GRP, Jharkhand GRP, and Jharkhand CM Helpline are hindered by outdated technology, with issues such as unreliable logins, OTP failures, and complaints not registering immediately, highlighting a significant need for technological upgrades and better support mechanisms.



Limited language options

Language barriers significantly impact the accessibility of grievance redressal platforms. Many platforms are limited to two languages - the regional language of the state/hindi and english. In our user survey, the majority (62%) of the complaints were filed in Hindi, because most of our survey respondents were from the Hindi belt, followed by English and other Indian languages specific to certain regions.

Here are some experiences shared about the option of languages in these portals - Odisha's Abhijoga and Jan Sunani platforms only support Odia and English, making them inaccessible to users who do not know these languages. Similarly, Maharashtra's platform Aaple Sarkar only accommodates Marathi and English, rejecting complaints in other languages, a user shared. This excludes a large segment of the migrant population who may not speak or write either of these two languages. At the time of writing, we also found that J&K's platform Awaaz A Awam is only available in English. It lacks support for even Kashmiri, the main language of the region, as well as Hindi. Though complaints can also be sent by post or filed through the toll free number, giving options to citizens who may not be comfortable in writing or reading in English.



Lack of trust in the system

We found that many of those interviewed distrust the bureaucratic system due to past experiences with corruption and inefficiencies. The follow-up mechanisms confuse and deter citizens because they are lengthy. Citizens lack intrinsic

motivation to pursue governance issues due to the slow resolution of grievances, which wastes time, money, and energy. Consequently, citizens often avoid using these platforms, believing they will not resolve their issues.

Another psychological barrier we encountered is the perception of these platforms. Many have a reputation for being non-functional. Some citizens from J&K shared with us that they had tried filing grievances a few years back at the J&K Old GRP (JK-IGRAMS), though it did not work so they were reluctant to try again. Data from the complaints filed since 2022 show that the J&K portal now works well.

Proactive feedback gathering around revamping these portals has been largely absent. As a result, many citizens told us they felt unheard, once they submitted a complaint, they rarely received updates or meaningful responses, making the process feel like it ended at their submission.



Low Public Awareness

Public awareness campaigns are required in remotest parts to ensure more citizen participation. Most citizens we have interacted with while filing grievances were not aware of the grievance redressal portals until someone with expertise suggested it to them. Furthermore the CCs who assisted citizens in filing grievances continued to follow up with their local panchayat members for the applications filed, believing that merely filing the grievance would not be sufficient, while some went to the block and eventually district offices.



Complicated and confusing platforms

Our findings collectively highlight that less complex, more user-friendly and reliable grievance redressal systems, supports and facilitate user engagements.

In this respect, Bihar PGRS and J&K Awaaz A Awam set a good example. Both users interviewed and surveyed expressed the ease of filing and processing the complaints. Having several options for filing, including website, toll free number and even in-person, makes it hassle free. In the case of J&K, a user shared with us her positive experience: she got a call upon filing a complaint mistakenly with the wrong district. In just one call, they went on to further correct it at their end. The user further details that such a service is needed to make it simpler for the citizens. Compared to this, Maharashtra's Aaple Sarkar rejected the complaints without giving any reason.

We also found that some grievance platforms suffer from poorly maintained UI/UX designs, which deter users from engaging with them. Platforms that are information-heavy overwhelm the users and make navigation difficult,

underscoring the need for streamlined processes with clear, essential information. Another deterrent for users is slow apps or websites. One user was dissuaded from using one of the platforms when the platform failed to generate a complaint number so he could follow up later.

For instance, we found that users surveyed complained about Chhattisgarh Jan shikayat struggling with slow loading times and it appears unable to handle high traffic volumes effectively. Jharkhand GRP faces frequent outages, making it unreliable for tracking complaints. Similarly, the Jharkhand CM Helpline fails to provide a complaint number, reflecting a lack of genuine implementation beyond merely meeting regulatory requirements as mandated by the CPGRAMS order. The citizens who used the Jharkhand CM Helpline were not keen to use it again; four of them didn't even take the survey and only spoke to us.

In UP over 90% of the users surveyed felt very confident using the state platform without needing much prior learning. Comparing these platforms, despite technical glitches in the UP mobile app users showed one of the highest confidence and success rate in filing of complaints. On further enquiring we found that the users found the mobile app very intuitive thus making it easy to use. While Chhattisgarh, MP faced the most technical issues. Both Bihar and Maharashtra had 100% success rates in filing complaints.

Though the Maharashtra grievance portal Aaple Sarkar, has a very complex two step system of selecting departments for the concerned issue, that was difficult for citizens to manoeuvre. A user shared that citizens are not aware of the departments that their issue falls under. Upon selecting the wrong department, the complaints are rejected. It goes directly to the department assigned by the user. There is no cross-checking. We did find users sharing instances of multiple complaints rejected due to this.

In the case of Chhattisgarh, based on user feedback, the platform has several strengths and weaknesses. Users generally agree that the platform is relatively easy to use and does not require technical support to navigate. However, it has been noted by some users that the platform lacks consistency and integration, making it difficult for community members to use it effectively. The platform's interface is not optimised for mobile phones, which further hampers its usability. Despite these issues, the platform does provide adequate information to help users file grievances, although citizens' confidence in the platform's ability to resolve complaints is low.



Filing Success Rate

78 users across 11 states attempted to file complaints across 23 platforms. To aid the users, they were given details of their respective state GRPs. When the state had multiple GRP platforms, the choice of which GRP to use was left to the user. One common confusion is between the CM helpline and State GRP. The criteria or parameters to decide which platform to use, when there were multiple to choose from, was unclear to the users.

Overall, 80.76% of the complaints were successfully filed, which is a significant number. Though some platforms performed significantly better than others. In total 78 users attempted to file complaints on 23 platforms, only 14 platforms successfully registered 63 complaints from 55 users. Those who were not able to file complaints faced issues such as non-working phone applications, non-functional toll-free numbers, and other technical barriers. The complaints were filed through different mediums. 48.72% of complaints were filed through mobile apps, 29.49% were filed via the platform's website, 11.54% were registered using toll-free numbers, and a mere 8.97% were filed via email.

We learnt through use and focused interviews that Bihar and Maharashtra platforms were 100% reliable in filing of complaints and generating / sending sms with complaint numbers. This step is crucial for online follow ups later.

In Uttar Pradesh (UP), 18 CCs attempted to file complaints, with 94.4% succeeding, with few after multiple attempts and one facing a technical issue. In Madhya Pradesh (MP), complaints were filed through both the CM helpline and MP GRP, with 10 attempts made and an 80% success rate; the remaining 20% faced technical issues. For Maharashtra's GRP, all 4 CCs who attempted to file complaints did so successfully, utilising both the website and app equally. In Chhattisgarh, all 8 CCs managed to file their complaints after a few attempts though one did not receive sms. Similarly, on the Jharkhand CM Helpline, all 5 CCs successfully filed complaints in Hindi, using the website. Though, no complaint numbers were generated or sms sent. Leaving the follow up in the dark.

Digging deeper into each platform

7 attempts were successful by five users to file complaints on Bihar PGRS. It's notable that all users preferred a toll free number to do so. In focused interviews the users have expressed the ease and comfort of doing so. They also find it efficient as they don't have to write it themselves that can have a chance of error.

In the case of eight users from Chhattisgarh, all were able to file one complaint each. Though, they shared making multiple attempts to do so and only 50% of them received an SMS with the acknowledgement/complaint number. In longer interviews, each shared facing technical issues like no OTP received, slow website, poor functioning even in areas with decent internet coverage, or taking too long to confirm filing of complaints. The tech of this platform definitely needed more patience than any other.

Eight users from Jharkhand filed a complaint on their CM helpline website. The State GRP was not known to most of them. Only one person had used it, though claimed that now it's not available. We found the same from our research. Only two users received a pop up acknowledgment message. None of them received a complaint number on the website post submission or an sms with acknowledgement /complaint number. They felt that this platform left citizens in the dark, with no mechanism to follow up their matter.

All four users from Maharashtra successfully filed complaints on the state GRP popularly called Aaple Sarkar. Half of them used the website while the other preferred the mobile app. One of the people who used the website reported not receiving an acknowledgement/complaint number as a website pop up or sms.

In MP users chose three GRP platforms in the state, CM helpline, MP GRP and MP education dept to file the complaints.

Only one user among 8 could not file a complaint at the MP CM helpline. This user made attempts via the mobile app. Five others who used the mobile app were successful in filing a complaint. Though, one of the users who filed a complaint via mobile app reported not receiving an sms with acknowledgement/ complaint number. While another one used the app and filed 3 complaints. One user preferred the website, and another preferred the toll-free number also succeeded in filing a complaint and received details via sms.

One user failed to file a complaint via the MP GRP mobile app, reporting that the app did not open. The other user successfully filed two complaints using the website. Only two used the MP GRP.

Among 5 users in Odisha 4 used the state GRP, Jana Sunani. Only one used the website, others chose the mobile app. Though, no one was able to successfully file a complaint. No one preferred the WhatsApp Chat Bot, they shared issues in the conversation flow, but there was no option to go back and edit details. One person used the website and

successfully filed a complaint with the District Magistrate of Cuttack.

Of the 18 users from Uttar Pradesh, 17 successfully filed a complaint on the state's Samadhan GRP portal. Most of the attempts occurred via the mobile app, with one user utilizing the toll-free number, and another accessing the website. All users reported receiving an SMS confirmation with an acknowledgment/complaint number.

Sixteen users who employed the mobile app encountered substantial wait times at various stages. The majority encountered a technical issue wherein the app failed to submit the complaint after the "Submit" button was pressed. Though after multiple attempts 15 of them were able to successfully file a complaint.

Sorasori Mukhyamantri, leaving none unheard, was launched in June 2023 by the West Bengal government operating under Grievance Cell, Chief Minister's Office. The Telegraph reported that, within three months (July-September 2023) 2.2 lakhs complaints were filed. In September a govt order passed directed all DMs to popularise the social media page of Sorasori Mukhyamantri. Our user survey was done just before this launch and shows the abysmal condition of the then WB Public Grievance System.

User experience surveys from West Bengal showed very low faith in the State GRP, same as the CM helpline. Complaints could be filed only by sending an email. We collected 18 user experiences, of whom only one sent a complaint using the CM helpline email. Others who tried the toll free number and reported that complaint cannot be filed by using this toll free number.

The West Bengal CCs further shared that, despite using various methods such as, visiting websites, using apps, and dialling toll-free numbers, none of the 16 CCs were able to successfully file a complaint on the WB State GRP also referred as CMO Grievance Redressal Project (Comprehensive Public Grievances Monitoring Platform). [Note: this website does not look the same, it has been revamped as Sorasori Mukhyamantri] The website had details of a toll-free number, sms number and email id. Reaching the said toll free number took several attempts and while speaking to the operator the citizens were informed to send an email. Most citizens don't have emails or the knowledge of writing formal complaints. Hence, all other GRPs we studied offered specific introductory questions, multiple choices for other details and queries designed to take in all details of the complaint.

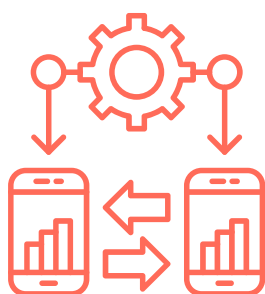
Another major issue that was faced is the presence of different apps for each district, which added to the confusion and difficulty in finding the right place to file a complaint. Nine of them attempted to file complaints via their respective district-specific app (e-district). Though, all seven of them faced issues while downloading the app. They were from 9 different districts. Eight users choose to file complaints via email incurred mail technical barriers. Please note the e-district is still operational.

The technology behind these platforms was not user-friendly, and downloading the necessary apps proved to be slow and cumbersome. Additionally, the frequent migration of users between districts or issues impacting various districts further complicated the process, as the apps were not designed to handle such mobility. In a few other platforms we found the option of checking if the said issue impacts more than one district.

The Sorasori Mukhyamantri website was visited while finalising this report in July 2024 and it showed much better technology. With options to file complaints via its own website portal, email, Bangala Sahayata Kendra (BSK) and letter to the Chief Ministers Office. Though we cannot comment on the user experience.

One user experience was shared from Punjab and Rajasthan. Whereas in Punjab email was sent, in Rajasthan the website was used. Both users shared that they use this medium quite often and have not faced much technical issues.

Recommendations From our Findings



Recommendations for the Builders of the Platforms

Digital India's government-led large scale awareness campaigns can truly revolutionise the use of grievance redressal platforms. They could not only reach vast numbers of people, but also effectively educate them on the benefits of using grievance redressal portals. Additionally, these campaigns could help break down the social and technological barriers that are preventing citizens from engaging with these platforms, as found in our study. With a unified and comprehensive strategy for promoting these portals, the government could make them accessible and widely-used across all sections of the society.

To enhance the effectiveness and accountability of grievance redressal platforms, there needs to be greater transparency in their operations. The MNREGA website exemplifies this transparency by allowing users to easily download data on fund allocation, expenditures, and remaining balances. Most of the current grievance platforms provide comprehensive data on their effectiveness, such as the number of grievances disposed, resolved, rejected, or still outstanding, however they are not downloadable.

DARPG needs to timely publish its reports of GRPs. While we found a page dedicated to public grievances that lists its duties, reforms made to CPGRAMS, it does not have a detailed report. We recommend that detailed reports of DARPG detailing recommendations on any platforms be linked here. We found a few such reports on the website via google smart search.

Civil society can significantly enhance the impact of grievance redressal platforms by actively engaging and empowering community members. Through comprehensive awareness campaigns, civil society organisations can educate individuals about the existence and functionality of these

platforms. Training sessions and workshops on digital literacy and rights awareness can equip community members with the necessary skills to navigate the platforms effectively. Establishing support centres or help desks like in the case of Bihar, it ensures that even those with limited literacy or digital skills can access and use these platforms. Additionally, CSOs can facilitate the submission of grievances, assist with follow-ups, and provide continuous support throughout the process, making it easier for individuals to seek redress and ensuring that their voices are heard. Though we believe that training and empowering the community to execute each step should be the long term vision. We also urge civil society to regularly provide recommendations for improvements of these platforms by advocating for the inclusion of local languages in them.

The frontline officials face pressure to file a report within days. To improve the resolution of grievances, it is crucial to train and educate frontline officials who handle complaints at the village or block level. Many officials lack financial decision-making power or the ability to generate resource/finance requests. To enhance the effectiveness of grievance redressal mechanisms, frontline officials at the village or block level should be equipped with the necessary skills, authority, and communication channels to identify and report financial constraints and resource needs that prevent the resolution of complaints. Training already adds value to the system, and in some cases the resolution may require involvement from different administrative levels. Providing clearer guidance on escalation pathways could make the process smoother for both citizens and officials.

During the course of our study, we also found that most of the Grievance Redressal Platforms do not have separate space to record the address of the complainant and where the complaint is from. It is assumed that the complainant is from where the complaint is made. This creates easily avoidable confusion. We recommend separate spaces for these. Having separate fields can also strengthen data quality for future analysis. It helps in mapping service delivery gaps accurately and may support more informed administrative improvements over time.

Our experience of primarily with videos, we believe that attaching videos to complaints or mentioning them in the text of submissions can highlight the tangible impact of various issues, evidence and the urgency of addressing them. However, we found that merely attaching videos to complaints or referencing them often went unnoticed. Watching such videos could give officials valuable insights into the complaints filed and may speed up the process. It is also in-line with the growing digital accessibility and

governments focus on Digital India. When we followed up on complaints by speaking directly to officials over the phone, we made it a point to forward them the relevant videos. This approach proved to be much more effective and the officials were eager to watch the videos, posing relevant and specific questions thereafter.

We also have platform specific recommendations depending on the usability by the citizens. CPGRAMS can significantly improve by using a more structured complaint-filing mechanism. First, it can be used to escalate complaints when the state Grievance Redressal Platform (GRP) has not resolved issues, integrating a process to deal with such complaints differently. Instead of forwarding all to the state. Secondly, have phone correspondence where it warrants.

To enhance fairness and mitigate potential conflicts of interest in grievance redressal, all platforms could consider adopting completely or partially Bihar PGRS process, which includes appointing a presiding officer to oversee the resolution of complaints through virtual quasi-judicial hearings between the complainant and the concerned representative of the government department. This not only adds a layer of transparency and accountability but also ensures a higher level of impartiality and regulation in the grievance resolution process.

We suggest for all state grievance redressal platforms or state websites to include all official languages for filing complaints. In the age of easy internet translations this will make it accessible to all citizens. One potential enhancement could be recognising voice notes or video formats as legitimate complaint submissions. Not every citizen is equally confident with written forms, typing or formal language, and alternative formats may help reduce that entry barrier. VV's own experience shows that video and voice-based evidence can be structured, verifiable and useful for follow-up, so there is already a practical reference model for this approach.

Jharkhand GRP has outdated technology and inconsistencies in loading websites; hence we do not recommend this platform from our experience. Similarly, we also do not endorse using Jharkhand CM Helpline as it does not provide complaint numbers, follow-ups, or status updates, making it ineffective for users. Instead, CPGRAMS can be used to file and follow up the complaints. Chattisgarh GRP is also outdated and lacks tools to facilitate citizen access. Response time, loading of the website is slow.

We recommend collaborations with tech starters/companies to revive and renovate these platforms.



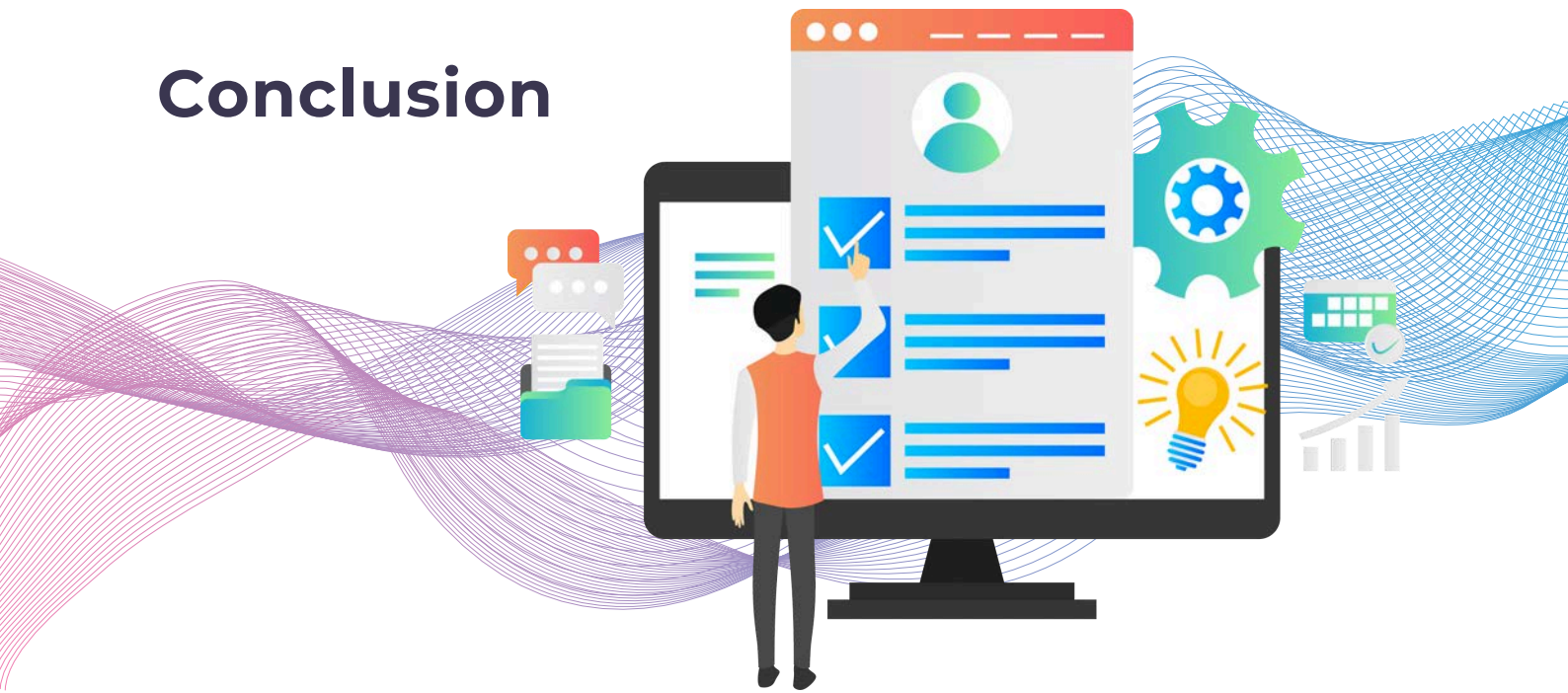
Recommendations for the Users for the Platform

Our recommendation for rural and urban citizens is to initially do the process to secure a certain entitlement or service via UMANG app or the local offices and on non-adherence; file complaints on their state or scheme/department specific platforms. If there is no correspondence within two months or satisfactory resolution, then escalate the complaints to CPGRAMS. Despite some platforms not showing adequate resolutions, it is important to use all the platforms to hold accountability of better performance.

We suggest the use of J&K GRP for resolving old standing issues when local departments have failed. Notably, the platform has successfully resolved a case from up to 10 years ago, which resulted in the whole village finally receiving water (as mentioned earlier).

In the case of Odisha, due to its current dysfunction and inability to track old complaints, we do not recommend eAbhijoga platform. For Jana Sunani, we would urge more citizens to file complaints in Oriya to evaluate the platform's effectiveness. In the case of Maharashtra Aaple Sarkar, we recommend that more citizens file complaints in Marathi to assess the platform's effectiveness.

Conclusion



With investment in this direction the future does seem promising. The grievance redressal platform is an encouraging step forward. Offering escalating issues on their finger tips when citizens have reached a dead end.

As the digital world continues to evolve at fast speed, so too does our ability to hold grievance platforms and governments accountable for their services. Digital grievance redressal portals, with their capacity for mass participation, broad reach, and fast-paperless digital response, have the potential to transform the way we demand and deliver services. In this new era of technology, we stand on the cusp of a new age of transparency and accountability, where a citizen's voice can be heard with unprecedented power.

Appendix 1: Introduction to the Grievance Redressal Platforms

This appendix is based on our study of government grievance redressal platforms as they existed during the specific period of analysis. Since the time of study, some platforms may have become non operational, merged with other systems, or undergone name and functional changes. All observations and references are intended to reflect the status and functioning of these platforms within that defined time frame.

As per the availability of data from the complaints filed and detailed interviews, we studied these 11 platforms.

1. CPGRAMS

It is a single portal that integrates all the grievance redress mechanisms across various states, departments, and ministries in India.

Citizens can lodge their grievances online through CPGRAMS portal or Mobile app, which then forwards these to the relevant ministry or department. The concerned department/ ministry examines the grievance and takes necessary action. Once resolved, the resolution is communicated to the complainant, who can provide feedback on the process. If the grievance remains unresolved, the complainant can appeal further.

More information: <https://pgportal.gov.in/>

2. Jammu and Kashmir State Grievance Redressal Platform

The Jammu and Kashmir Grievance Redressal Platform (GRP), also known as Awaz E Awam, was initially launched in 2018 and significantly revamped in September 2020 under the Lieutenant Governor's office. Originally serving three districts, it now covers all districts and is linked to 1,500 offices. The platform includes a new website, a toll-free number, and integration with CPGRAMS, allowing complaints filed on CPGRAMS to be directly forwarded to J&K GRP. Our experience with the platform since 2022 revealed that it is user-friendly, featuring an intuitive interface that simplifies filing and following up on grievances. Complaints typically receive resolution orders or final responses within 2-4 months, with on-the-ground implementation work completed in 4-12 months.

More information: Officially known as JK Samadhan, the portal can be accessed here: <https://samadhan.jk.gov.in/login>

3. Aaple Sarkar – Maharashtra GRP

Aaple Sarkar, launched in December 2014 and revamped multiple times since, serves as Maharashtra's flagship platform for filing grievances and feedback. Designed to streamline citizen-government interactions, it primarily facilitates complaint submissions via its app, aiming to address issues within the state. The complaints that are filed in Marathi appear to yield better outcomes compared to Hindi or English submissions, which often get disposed of without resolution.

More Information: <https://aaplesarkar.mahaonline.gov.in/en>

4. eAbhijoga- OD GRP

The eAbhijoga platform, launched on July 31, 2010, was initially a key project under the Chief Minister and aimed at streamlining grievance redressal for the citizens of Odisha. However, the platform has since become obsolete and has been merged with Jana Sunani under the Department of General Administration and Public Grievance as of November 1, 2021. The website mostly fails to load, and users are greeted with a message directing them to the new Jana Sunani Odisha portal for unresolved grievances predating April 30, 2021.

More Information: The platform is now non operational. However, this is the Official Website of General Administration, Govt. of Odisha detailing E-Abhijoga <https://www.bpspaorissa.gov.in/node/727>
https://informatics.nic.in/uploads/pdfs/b3f481dd_e-Abhijoga.pdf

5. Jana Sunani - OD GRP

The Odisha Jana Sunani platform, launched in early 2021, is the new iteration of the state's grievance redressal system, absorbing the functions of the previous e-Abhijoga website. Despite its modern interface and integration with various tech features like a WhatsApp chatbot and a website chat function, the platform has several shortcomings such as it is predominantly in Oriya or English and does not support Hindi, excluding a significant portion of the state's Hindi-speaking population.

More information: <https://janasunani.odisha.gov.in/>

6. Chhattisgarh GRP

The Janshikayat portal (janshikayat.cg.nic.in) is an online portal of the Chhattisgarh government where citizens can register their complaints and track their status; it is managed by the Raj Bhavan Secretariat and allows access to updated complaint information using a 15-digit token number, facilitating the grievance redressal process against government departments.

More Information: <https://janshikayat.cg.nic.in/>

7. Jharkhand GRP

The Jharkhand Public Grievance Redressal System is an online platform that empowers citizens to express their concerns and grievances related to various government services. The system enables residents to easily lodge grievance about issues such as housing life, property disputes, water supply problems, waste management, road conditions, and noise pollution. Citizens can also monitor the progress of their grievance and receive updates about the actions taken by the authorities.

More information: <https://jharkhandgovernance.com/grievance/main>

8. Jharkhand CM Helpline

The Jan Samvad portal (181 Helpline) and helpdesk were officially inaugurated by then-CM Raghubar Das on May 1, 2015. The goal was to provide a "single-window" for all public grievances, ensuring that citizens didn't have to travel to the capital (Ranchi)

or run from office to office for simple issues like ration cards, pensions, or local corruption. The government introduced the "Seedhi Baat" (Direct Talk) program shortly after the launch. It was one of the first times a state in eastern India integrated a 24/7 call center with a back-end tracking system. Following the change in government in late 2019, the Hemant Soren administration maintained the 181 helpline but shifted the focus toward a more proactive "outreach" model. The Jan Samvad is now integrated with the Jharkhand CM Helpline and Public Grievance Redressal System (JKPGRS).

More information: <https://cm.jharkhand.gov.in/contact-us>

9. Madhya Pradesh Grievance Redressal Platform (GRP)

The main grievance MP CM helpline directs users to a suspicious link, and is unsafe to explore.

MP e-Nagar Palika (For Urban Issues) is for grievances that are specifically related to Municipal/Urban services (e.g., street lights, garbage collection, water supply, or sewage), this platform is the most direct route. For grievances related to e-governance services (like problems with an application form, payment failures on government portals, or issues at an e-Mitra/Kiosk), the MPOnline portal has a dedicated redressal wing.

However, apart from that there is a one stop platform for accessing all government related services called MP eSewa.

More information: <https://helpdesk.mponline.gov.in/>
<https://www.mpenagarpalika.gov.in/irj/portal/anonymous>
<https://services.mp.gov.in/eservice/Default?Page=224844>

10. Rajasthan Sampark

Rajasthan Sampark is an e-governance initiative that became operational in June 2014. It aims to provide citizens with a centralised platform to lodge grievances with respective government departments. The platform consists of a state-level call centre integrated with a web portal, acting as a single point of contact for addressing and redressing citizen-centric queries and grievances related to government services. Between September 2022 and June 30, 2023, we filed a total of 21 complaints on the Rajasthan Sampark platform in English. Unfortunately, none of these complaints were resolved satisfactorily as of July 12, 2024. Despite this, the platform claims a disposal rate of 98.99%, with 1.59 crore grievances registered and 1.57 crores disposed of as per their website. Though, speaking to local citizens we found that this platform has helped them solve several issues in the past.

More information: <https://sampark.rajasthan.gov.in/>

11. Bihar Public Grievance Redressal System

The Bihar Right to Public Grievance Redressal Act, implemented on June 5, 2016, provides a legal framework for citizens to have their grievances formally addressed. This Act ensures that all grievances are received and given an opportunity for redressal. As per the information on the website, over the last two years, more than 3,00,000 people have resolved issues related to drinking water, sanitation, education, health, and other welfare programs through this Act. The platform is user-friendly, allowing complaints to be filed online, via a toll-free number, or directly at local counters. This variety of mediums makes it accessible to a broader range of users.

More information: <https://lokshikayat.bihar.gov.in/>



Video Volunteers is a global organization dedicated to advancing the right to voice. VV amplifies marginalized voices to ensure social change and policymaking are grounded in community-led, participatory insights from the ground up.

