Findings from a Civil Society Mediated and Technology Assisted Grievance Redressal Model in Rural India

Dipanjan Chakraborty
Mohd Sultan Ahmad
Aaditeshwar Seth

IIT Delhi, Gram Vaani
Gram Vaani
IIT Delhi, Gram Vaani
Allocation of ~36% of annual budget to social spendings

Source: World Bank
• India had a maternal mortality rate of 174 in 2015
• In 2015, 38 of every 1000 infants born died in India.

Source: World Bank

Allocation of ~36% of annual budget to social spendings

• Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana
• Janani Surakhsha Yojana

Despite!
India had a maternal mortality rate of 174 in 2015.

In 2015, 38 of every 1000 infants born died in India.

33% population lives on less than $1.25 a day.

Source: World Bank

Allocation of ~36% of annual budget to social spendings:
- Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana
- Janani Surakhsha Yojana
- Employment Guarantee Acts
- Public Distribution System
- Food Security Act

Despite!
India had a maternal mortality rate of 174 in 2015.

In 2015, 38 of every 1000 infants born died in India.

33% population lives on less than $1.25 a day.

Mean years of schooling 4.43

Allocation of ~36% of annual budget to social spendings

- Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana
- Janani Surakhsha Yojana
- Employment Guarantee Acts
- Public Distribution System
- Food Security Act
- Integrated Child Development Scheme
- Right To Education

Source: World Bank
CAG's NREGA report reveal poor implementation, use of funds

Grim diagnosis of govt health cover
- Review shows little gains from state-funded insurance schemes
G.S. Mudur

Irregularities detected in allotment of Indira Awaas Yojana
BY PTI | UPDATED: MAY 16, 2016, 03:19 PM IST

More than 70% NREGA wages unpaid this fiscal

No electricity, doctors use mobile phone flashlights in infra-starved Jharkhand hospital
Government

NREGA, PDS, IAY/PMAY, JDY, electricity, water, roads

Citizens
Government

NREGA, PDS, IAY/PMAY, JDY, electricity, water, roads

Access challenges

Citizens
Grievance redressal helplines

Government

Access challenges

Citizens

NREGA, PDS, IAY/PMAY, JDY, electricity, water, roads
NREGA, PDS, IAY/PMAY, JDY, electricity, water, roads

Grievance redressal helplines

- Timeliness
- Effectiveness
- Assistance

Access challenges

Citizens

Government
Government

NREGA, PDS, IAY/PMAY, JDY, electricity, water, roads

Citizens

Access challenges

Grievance redressal helplines

• Timeliness
• Effectiveness
• Assistance

• Unempowered
• Marginalised
• Uninfluential
• Lack of reach

Access challenges

● Timeliness
● Effectiveness
● Assistance

● Unempowered
● Marginalised
● Uninfluential
● Lack of reach
Government

NREGA, PDS, IAY/PMAY, JDY, electricity, water, roads

Access challenges

Citizens

Grievance redressal helplines

- Timeliness
- Effectiveness
- Assistance

- Unempowered
- Marginalised
- Uninfluential
- Lack of reach

Citizens approach CSOs for access to services

Civil Society
Key Contributions

- For what kind of grievances is civil society mediation helpful
- On-ground dynamics and strategies used by civil society groups for redressal
- IVR/Android platform which formalises involvement of civil society members in grievance redressal
What is known about Grievance Redressal Systems?

- Greater horizontal accountability required among departments because many grievances are cross-department [Narayanan 2010]
- Centralised systems prevent direct engagement with officials, making the system less accessible [Mohan et al. 2013]
- Civil society has been able to help in accessing services
  - Unrecognised settlers dependent on local leaders to access services [Van Teeffelen and Baud 2011]
  - Decentralised collective action instrumental in securing public services [Srinivasan 2015]
What is known about the role of media in grievance redressal?


- Publishing stats on unresolved municipal complaints effective in drawing attention [Seth et al. 2012]

- Mass media can play important role of raising issues timely [Voltmer 2009]
• Grievance Redressal Systems running
• Socio-economically backward
• Presence of Gram Vaani’s Community media platform: Mobile Vaani
Baseline Findings

Beneficiaries → Government

Government → Grievance Redressal Systems

Grievance Redressal Systems → Beneficiaries
Baseline Findings

Grievance registration
- Low awareness (37%)
- Low utilisation (51%)

Government

Beneficiaries

Grievance Redressal Systems
Baseline Findings

Grievance registration
- Low awareness (37%)
- Low utilisation (51%)

Grievance resolution
- Low resolutions (48%)
- Ineffective resolutions

Beneficiaries

Government

Grievance Redressal Systems
Baseline Findings

Civil Society

Government

Beneficiaries

Grievance Redressal Systems

Grievance registration
- Low awareness (37%)
- Low utilisation (51%)

Grievance resolution
- Low resolutions (48%)
- Ineffective resolutions

Low awareness (37%)
- Low utilisation (51%)

Low resolutions (48%)
- Ineffective resolutions
Baseline Findings

• “. . . officers try to resolve grievances from their offices and hardly visit the ground…”

• “I had filed a grievance that there is no toilet in the primary school. The complaint was escalated twice… was informed that the grievance has been resolved and we are closing it. But the toilet has not yet been built”
Offline Civil Society Systems Already Exist

• Organisations like the NREGA Sahayata Kendra undertake grievance redressal

• Decentralised systems operating under local conditions

• Beneficiaries able to talk face to face with the volunteers

• Grievances followed-up on consistently

• Beneficiaries trained so that they can help others
Community

...Civil Society leaders...

...Beneficiaries...
...Community... 

...Beneficiaries... 

...Civil Society leaders... 

Personal Networks 

...Local Officers...
Community media and mainstream media

Associated with

...Local Officers...

Personal Networks

...Civil Society leaders...

...Beneficiaries...

Community
Community media and mainstream media

Accountability

...District Level Officers...

Accountability

...Local Officers...

Personal Networks

...Civil Society leaders...

Associated with

...Beneficiaries...

Community
Beneficiaries

Record Grievance

Communicate through IVR

IVR + Android

Access grievance, Communicate with beneficiary, Record updates

Civil Society Volunteers
Beneficiaries

Record Grievance

Communicate through IVR

Grievance

Access grievance, Communicate with beneficiary, Record updates

Civil Society Volunteers

Push for resolutions

Media

IVR + Android

Government

Volunteers

Android
Call lands

Prompt asking participant to record their name and location before the grievance. Examples are provided in the prompt

Participant records their name, location and grievance

Beneficiary IVR flow

Unassigned grievances are played out one by one

Assign the grievance to oneself

Go to previous or next grievance

Jump to a sub-menu to access the grievances assigned to oneself. Call the beneficiary through this menu or record and update on a grievance that he/she is pursuing

Flag invalid grievances

Volunteer IVR flow
Android App for Volunteers

**List of grievances**

- **Grievance, 22:14, 12 Jun'17**
  - 919523205043  2017-06-12T22:14:45
- **Grievance, 19:07, 07 Jun'17**
  - 918969734049  2017-06-07T19:07:33
- **Grievance, 19:10, 06 Jun'17**
  - 918969734049  2017-06-06T19:10:36
- **Grievance, 17:39, 28 May'17**
  - 919155612218  2017-05-28T17:39:48
- **Grievance, 11:25, 28 May'17**
  - 919155612218  2017-05-28T11:25:56
- **Grievance, 11:20, 28 May'17**
  - 919155612218  2017-05-28T11:20:07
- **Grievance, 20:23, 08 May'17**
  - 919552248698  2017-05-08T20:23:32
- **Grievance, 11:25, 03 May'17**
  - 919546120082  2017-05-03T11:25:24
- **Grievance, 23:15, 14 Apr'17**
  - 91981323711  2017-04-14T23:15:55
- **Grievance, 09:13, 13 Apr'17**
  - 919546120082  2017-04-13T09:13:53

**Grievance details**

- **Shikayat Number:** 6305
- **Shikayat Department:** Testing, don't arcl
- **Phone Number:** 918130715047

**New grievance**

- **New grievance form**
  - Enter details
  - Submit grievance

---

**List of grievances**

**Grievance details**

**New grievance**

Pilot

- 4 districts; Mobile Vaani Community Media channels operating in these districts
- Enrolled Mobile Vaani community reporters as Volunteers for our system
  - Social workers, school teachers, businessmen, farmers, school teachers
- Over 6 months:
  - ~450 valid grievances
  - ~40 grievances taken up
  - ~30 grievances resolved (70% of grievances taken up)
- +180 grievances resolved by community volunteers over time
## Categorisation of Resolved Grievances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative inaction</td>
<td>48.39</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public infrastructure</td>
<td>26.88</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local corruption</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community demands</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Corruption</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relief</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* C = Personal influence of civil society volunteers, H = Government Helplines, M = Mobilisation of public opinion through the media

30 (resolved through this pilot) + 180 (resolved through Mobile Vaani over time) grievances used to generate this analysis
## Categorisation of Resolved Grievances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative inaction</td>
<td>48.39</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public infrastructure</td>
<td>26.88</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local corruption</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community demands</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Corruption</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relief</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Largest Category
- Reported through different channels but not resolved
  - Hand-pumps not functional
  - Burnt power transformer
  - Irregular pension, NREGA and scholarship payments, mid-day meals
- Can be handled through helplines if accountability in place
- Follow-ups by the volunteers and airing on community media helped resolve them

* C = Personal influence of civil society volunteers,
  H = Government Helplines,
  M = Mobilisation of public opinion through the media

30 (resolved through this pilot) + 180 (resolved through Mobile Vaani over time) grievances used to generate this analysis.
### Categorisation of Resolved Grievances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>U</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative inaction</td>
<td>48.39</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public infrastructure</td>
<td>26.88</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local corruption</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community demands</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Corruption</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relief</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* C = Personal influence of civil society volunteers,
H = Government Helplines,
M = Mobilisation of public opinion through the media

30 (resolved through this pilot) + 180 (resolved through Mobile Vaani over time) grievances used to generate this analysis

- **Demand for new facilities**
  - Roads, bridges, passenger sheds, hand-pumps
- **Harder because sanctioning of funds required**
- **Volunteers used community media and personal contacts to resolve several of them**
## Categorisation of Resolved Grievances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative inaction</td>
<td>48.39</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public infrastructure</td>
<td>26.88</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local corruption</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community demands</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Corruption</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relief</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* C = Personal influence of civil society volunteers,
  H = Government Helplines,
  M = Mobilisation of public opinion through the media

30 (resolved through this pilot) + 180 (resolved through Mobile Vaani over time) grievances used to generate this analysis

### Widespread but not part of organised corruption
- Hospital charging money for free medicines and tests
- PDS dealer cutting quotas
- Money for household toilets and NREGA embezzled
- School headmaster demanding bribe

### Redressal requires inspection by higher officials and prompt action
Categorisation of Resolved Grievances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative inaction</td>
<td>48.39</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public infrastructure</td>
<td>26.88</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local corruption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community demands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Corruption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* C = Personal influence of civil society volunteers, H = Government Helplines, M = Mobilisation of public opinion through the media

30 (resolved through this pilot) + 180 (resolved through Mobile Vaani over time) grievances used to generate this analysis

- No policy or public scheme for these issues
  - Textbooks in private schools
  - Relief for fire accident
  - Development of tourism
- One-time steps by the government
- Community journalists instrumental in highlighting and following-up
# Categorisation of Resolved Grievances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative inaction</td>
<td>48.39</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public infrastructure</td>
<td>26.88</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local corruption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community demand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Corruption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* C = Personal influence of civil society volunteers,
  H = Government Helplines,
  M = Mobilisation of public opinion through the media

30 (resolved through this pilot) + 180 (resolved through Mobile Vaani over time) grievances used to generate this analysis.

- Well organised corruption
- Possible collusion of government employees and representatives
  - Illegal sand-mining
  - Boot-legged liquor
  - Illegal land dealings
- Mass media and community media build pressure to take action
### Categorisation of Resolved Grievances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative inaction</td>
<td>48.39</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public infrastructure</td>
<td>26.88</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local corruption</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community demands</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Corruption</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relief</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>±</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* C = Personal influence of civil society volunteers,
  H = Government Helplines,
  M = Mobilisation of public opinion through the media

- Related to individual citizens
  - Damaged health insurance card
  - Pending amount for housing scheme
  - Wrong crediting of insurance payout
  - Exclusion from BPL (Below Poverty Line) category

30 (resolved through this pilot) + 180 (resolved through Mobile Vaani over time) grievances used to generate this analysis
## Categorisation of Resolved Grievances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative inaction</td>
<td>48.39</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public infrastructure</td>
<td>26.88</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local corruption</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community demands</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Corruption</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relief</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* C = Personal influence of civil society volunteers, H = Government Helplines, M = Mobilisation of public opinion through the media

30 (resolved through this pilot) + 180 (resolved through Mobile Vaani over time) grievances used to generate this analysis
Incorrect Grievances

- Grievances filed because beneficiaries did not have the correct information
  - Eligibility for housing scheme
  - Entitlement under PDS
- Volunteers provided correct information to the beneficiaries
- Can be handled by centralised grievance helplines if operators are trained to provide these information
Factors Affecting Resolution

Community media and mainstream media

Associated with

Accountability

District Level Officers

Personal Networks

Local Officers

Civil Society leaders

Beneficiaries

Community
Factors Affecting Resolution

Community media and mainstream media

Accountability

...District Level Officers...

Associated with

...Local Officers...

Personal Networks

...Civil Society leaders...

...Beneficiaries...

Community
Factors Affecting Resolution

- Community media and mainstream media
  - Accountability
  - Personal Networks of volunteers
  - Media Pressure
  
  Accountability
  
  - District Level Officers...
  - Local Officers...
  - Civil Society leaders...
  - Beneficiaries...

Community
Factors Affecting Resolution

- Accountability
  - ...District Level Officers...
  - ...Local Officers...
  - Personal Networks
    - ...Civil Society leaders...
    - ...Beneficiaries...

- Community media and mainstream media

- Personal Networks of volunteers
- Media Pressure
- Influence of volunteer within the community
Challenges for Resolution

- District Level Officers
- Local Officers
- Volunteers
- Beneficiaries

Personal Networks

Community media and mainstream media

Accountability

Associated with
Challenges for Resolution

Some grievances require sanctioning of funds
Challenges for Resolution

Community media and mainstream media

Accountability

Personal Networks

...District Level Officers...

...Local Officers...

...Volunteers...

...Beneficiaries...

Community

Some grievances require sanctioning of funds

How do volunteers approach the beneficiaries for more information?
Challenges for Resolution

- Community media and mainstream media
- Accountability
- Personal Networks
- Community

Some grievances require sanctioning of funds
How do volunteers approach the beneficiaries for more information?
Limited time of volunteers
Costs incurred by volunteers
Institutionalising and Scaling

- Civil society groups are able to augment centralised helplines
- 10 of 40 volunteers we trained actively participated
  - Cover costs of volunteers: crowdfunding and community-funding
  - Limited time of volunteers: only 40 – 45 grievances taken up
- Why did volunteers participate? Social incentives
  - Resolve issues besides highlighting
  - Enhancement of community media channel
- Government is supportive of CSOs like NREGA Sahayata Kendra, Nehru Yuva Kendra
- Government already has pools of volunteers:
  - Bharat Nirman Volunteers, RSBY Mitras, Para-legal volunteers
Current and Future Work

- Working with UNDP and NIC-Chhattisgarh on training a cadre of government volunteers to augment grievance redressal system
- Institutionalising Civil Society assisted service delivery
  - Designing social and monetary incentives
  - Exploring crowd and community funding
  - Using triggers like media reports and government data to find issues which Civil Society Volunteers can pro-actively investigate
Summary

- Beneficiaries need assistance to access services
- Civil Society Volunteers are able to augment the centralised grievance redressal systems
- Volunteers able to resolve certain difficult grievances which are ignored by helplines
- Scalability and tracking ability of technology + decentralisation of CSOs