



Reimagining Citizen-Government Interactions: Digital Grievance Redressals in Local Governments

An RCT Proposal from Odisha, India

Nishita Karun, MPP'24



Motivation

The digital era offers a unique opportunity to revolutionize how citizens interact with government bodies, particularly at the grassroots level (Gram Panchayats) in India where access is a challenge - **Empowering both stakeholders with credible information and accountability**





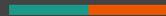
Problems Landscape

- + Besides few state level attempts, the only national level grievance redressal is the **Right to Information Act**
- + Current system requires payment to process requests and responds only by physical mail with no public access; **high-opportunity cost of filing**



Digitisation can enable **accessible, centralized and pressure free ways** to bring in accountability for governments and provide data for citizens to vote strategically in elections.

Conversely, if local governments have **insights into what areas of a citizen's welfare** require greater attention, they will be able to address these issues more efficiently.



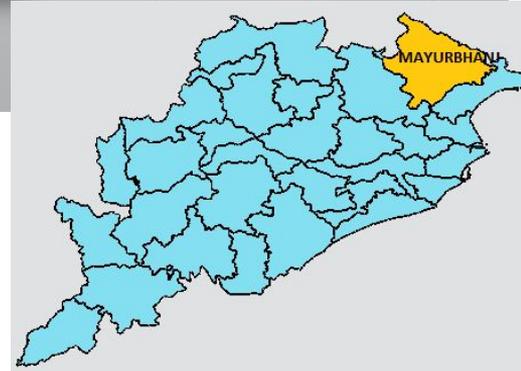
RESEARCH QUESTION

Does the provision of **digital grievance redressal** reduce information asymmetry through a shift in welfare spending and strategic voting?

Location

Mayurbhanj District, Odisha

- Located in the eastern India, Mayurbhanj is one of the largest districts in the state of Odisha (4,022 mi²)
- Consists of 26 blocks, 404 Gram Panchayats, and 3966 villages
- Literacy Rate: 63.4%
- Sex Ratio: 1.006 (more females)



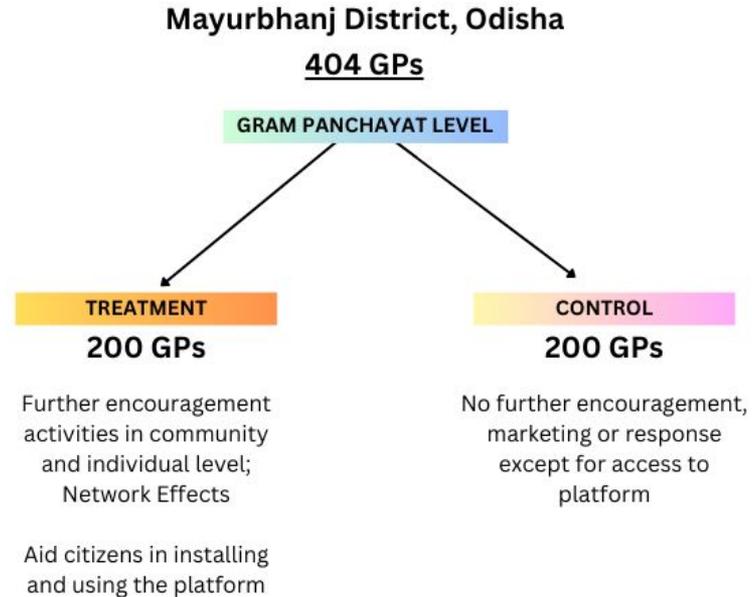


Intervention

Provide access to a **new digital platform** for grievance redressal where citizens can anonymously raise issues/tickets to the local government body and offer ratings on their responses.

Enable citizens to react/comment to complaints, view govt responses and ratings given by primary citizens. **Local Government has access to trends on complaints.**

Random assignment of Gram Panchayats to 50% Treatment (200 GPs) vs. 50% Control (200 GPs)





Strategic Voting

If citizens better understand the day-to-day progress of their local government, they will be empowered to make more informed voting decisions

Outcome 1: Strategic Voting

Determine the **motivations for voting** for a particular candidate in elections, can be influenced by bribes, self-identity, party politics.

Methodology: Survey on the decision-making process of voting for their Sarpanch (Head of Local Government)

Outcome 2: Trust of Local Government

Methodology: Measuring the **endorsement effect** between the two groups by posing similar questions with different endorsements



Welfare Spending

if local governments have insights into what areas of a citizen's welfare require greater attention, they will be able to address these issues more efficiently.

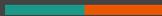
Outcome 3: GP Local Knowledge

Gram Panchayat understanding of citizens' concerns in correlation with the grievance data collected.

Methodology: The data will be collected through a GP survey and compared with the data collected on the platform from both control and treatment groups.

Outcome 4: Quality of Service Delivery

Methodology: Improvement in the **delivery of five prime state-level** government schemes in the domains of employment, health, and education. Data collected by the state government for each GP and is also reflected in the budget allocation.

A horizontal bar with a teal segment on the left and an orange segment on the right, positioned above the section header.

NEXT STEPS

The beta version of the application is under development and should be ready by July 2024.

We will be conducting **power calculations** for given outcomes through self-reported pilot data to determine the minimum detectable effect.

Actively **seeking funding** to implement the RCT and develop the platform

Thank you.

