

# Grievance Redressal in India - An Overview

1. Grievance Redressal Mechanism is an important cog in the wheel of any Government.
2. Without efficient grievance redressal mechanisms, the Government and its administration can never be accountable and effective.
3. In Democracy, citizens make the Government and hold them accountable.
4. Some of the public grievances against the Government could be shortage of food, overcrowded public transport, late running of trains etc.

## Grievances of Citizens in India - Different Types

We can classify public grievances into different categories which are mentioned below.

### **Grievances against Policies**

1. Citizens may have grievances against the policies of the Government which may affect a large group of people.
2. Such grievances are raised in the media and legislatures.

### **Grievances due to Maladministration**

1. This grievance arises when the Government policies are not implemented efficiently by the administration due to various issues like lack of coordination between different departments or agencies or may be due to inefficiency of officials stemming from heavy workload.

### **Grievances due to Corruption**

1. This arises due to lack of integrity among officials working in the administration. For many years India is known for its high levels of corruption. For many years the public has been suffering due to rampant corruption at all levels. However there are efforts from the current Government to control corruption.

### **Grievances in Rural Areas**

Majority of the population in India resides in rural areas. The grievances faced by them are given below.

1. **Non-availability of supplies** - Grievances due to intermittent supply of essential commodities like electricity, seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, medicines etc. Instead of

making sure the supplies reach intended beneficiaries, it gets leaked into black markets for profiteering.

2. **Delay in Supplies or Services** - This happens due to inefficient public distribution systems.
3. **Harassment** - Many villagers at the hands of officials when they wanted to avail medical, administrative and agricultural services.

## Grievance Redressal - Nodal Agencies & Other Mechanisms

The 2 most important nodal agencies that are responsible for addressing grievances at the Central Government are listed below.

1. **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)** - It functions under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
2. **Directorate of Public Grievances** - It is part of Cabinet Secretariat

### **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)**

1. The primary role of this department is to plan and implement citizen centric measures in the domain of public grievances and carry out administrative reforms so that the Government is in a position to deliver quality public services without any obstacles.
2. The grievances received will be forwarded to the respective ministries, departments, and state governments. The cases will be followed till it is closed.

### **Directorate of Public Grievances (DPG)**

1. It was set up in the Cabinet Secretariat in 1988. They handle complaints pertaining to 16 Central Government Organisations.

### **Ombudsman**

This concept came from Sweden. It means an officer appointed by the Legislature to handle complaints against a service or administrative authority. In India Government has appointed Ombudsmen to resolve grievances in the following sectors.

1. Insurance Ombudsman
2. Banking Ombudsman
3. Income Tax Ombudsman

## Lokpal

Lokpal was established under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act 2013 to investigate corruption against public functionaries, even the Prime Minister. Lokpal can order investigation from its internal inquiry wing, Central Bureau Investigation (CBI), Chief Vigilance Commission (CVC).

## Tribunals

Tribunals are formed to address delays in disposal of cases in courts. These are quasi-judicial institutions. Some of the most important tribunals are mentioned below.

1. Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)
2. Railway Claims Tribunal
3. Debt Recovery Tribunal
4. Customs, Excise and Service Tax Tribunal
5. Income Tax Appellate Tribunal
6. Labour Tribunal

## Committee on Petitions - Parliamentary Committee

This is a Parliamentary Committee which works on redressing grievances of the public, a citizen can submit petitions to secure redress against grievances.

## E-Governance - To Address Public Grievances

The current Government has been working on addressing the public grievances by utilising Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Some of the noteworthy efforts of the Government to implement E-governance to reduce Public Grievances in a timely manner has been mentioned below.

1. **Central Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)** - It is an integrated online grievance redressal and monitoring system developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC) in collaboration with DARPG and DPG. Citizens can lodge complaints and monitor the status of their complaints through CPGRAMS. This system was developed in 2007.
2. **Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI)** - It is a multi-modal and multi-purpose grievance redressal system designed by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and NIC. It increases the cooperation and coordination between Union Government and State Government in addressing the grievances and monitoring government schemes.
3. **E-Nivaran** - It was launched by the Central Board of Direct Taxes for online redressal of grievances related to taxpayers. The taxpayers can register and track their grievances in this system.

4. **Unified Mobile Application for New-Age Governance (UMANG)** - It is a single platform through which citizens across India can access e-governance services, starting from Central Government to local government bodies.
5. **MyGov** - It is a platform launched in 2014 to disseminate information by the Government and Government can seek public opinion.
6. **Nivaran** - It is an online portal launched by the Indian Railways in 2016, to address the grievances of lakhs of Railway Employees.
7. **Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism (INGRAM)** - It is a portal launched by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs to address grievances of the public when they purchase any goods or services.
8. **Mera Aspataal (My Hospital)** - It was an app and portal launched by the Ministry of Health in 2017 under the National Health Mission. It was to capture patient feedback for the services received at the Government Hospitals. This is to help the Government enhance the quality of health care services provided across public facilities.

## Other Citizens Grievance Redressal Mechanisms

1. **Right to Information Act** - This act was passed in 2005. It empowers the citizens to ask any questions to the Government, seek information, obtain Government documents, inspect Government works. This act is to not only empower citizens but also promote transparency and accountability in the functioning of Government.
2. **Citizens Charter** - The task of formulating and operationalising Citizens Charter was undertaken by DARPG. The idea was to bring in transparency in public services, and to correct things when they go wrong. The idea of Citizen Charter was first pioneered in the United Kingdom in 1991, with focus on public services. However there have been many loopholes in the citizens charter which needs to be fixed.
3. **Gram Sabha** - Conducted at village levels to address the grievances of village community members.
4. **Senior Citizen Act** - It has been passed to address the grievances of senior citizens.
5. **Hostels Act** - This has been passed to address the grievances of working women.

## Sevottam

1. This is a model proposed by the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission.
2. When translated into English, Sevottam means Excellent Service.
3. This would provide a standard model for grievance redressal mechanisms. It will plug the loopholes of the Citizen Charter.
4. Sevottam focuses on improving the quality of service delivered to the citizens.

## **Sevottam - Focus Areas**

Sevottam will work on rectifying problems in the following 3 main domains.

1. Public Grievance Mechanism
2. Citizen Charter
3. Service Delivery

## **Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) - 2 Commissions**

Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) is the committee appointed by the Government of India for giving recommendations to reform the Public Administration System in India. So far there have been 2 Administrative Reforms Commissions. The details are shared below.

### **1st Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)**

1. The 1st ARC was established on 5th January, 1966.
2. The commission was chaired by Morarji Desai and was later chaired by K. Hanumanthaiah

### **Mandate of 1st ARC**

1. They were tasked with the mandate to suggest measures to improve financial, personnel, economic, district, agricultural administrations.
2. The administrations concerning Defence, Intelligence, External Affairs, Railways were excluded from the purview of 2nd ARC.

### **2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)**

1. 2nd ARC was constituted on 31st August 2015.
2. Veerappa Moily was the chairman of the 2nd ARC.
3. It was tasked to revamp the public administrative system.

### **2nd ARC Report**

The 2nd ARC submitted 15 reports covering the following areas

1. Right to Information (RTI)
2. Ethics in Governance
3. Local Governance
4. Public Administration
5. E-Governance
6. Combating Terrorism

