

NATIONAL

Exclusive | High percentage of women, elderly approach Bengal govt grievance cell: report

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About 45 % of the callers who called the grievance cell were women, it reveals



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A comprehensive portal for effective management, monitoring and redressal of all grievances addressed to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, West Bengal. Effective monitoring and timely redressal of citizens grievances addressed to the Government is paramount to an efficient, responsive, accountable and transparent administration. It is with these objectives and ideals enshrined in the State Government's vision for a responsive and accountable administration, this Public



Between 2019 and February 2021, about 11 lakh people approached the Public Grievance Redressal Cell, set up by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for airing concerns and coming out with suggestions on the delivery of State-run schemes.

The cell was attached to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) and grievances were sourced through different means, helpline numbers, written complaints, emails, complaints submitted to the Chief Minister herself during her district visits.

A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the complaints received at the cell carried out by the CMO and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's Pratichi India Trust has come out with interesting findings.

About 45% of the callers who called the grievance cell were women, reveals the report titled "Action-oriented' Listening: People's Voice and Policy Choice : An Inception Report' by Pratichi (India) Trust.

“It is encouraging to note that participation of women in airing their grievances is almost 45 percent despite the fact that most of the households are headed by men. The figure indicates women’s interest in claiming their rights and entitlements,” the report points out.

A close analysis of the categories of grievances also reveals a large proportion of women responded and reacted to a plethora of schemes such as ‘Kanyashree, ‘Rupashree’ and educational scholarships for specific social groups and widow pension schemes.

The age profile of the complainants reveals that mostly (63%) the people of advanced age, i.e., persons aged above 50 10, registered their grievances, possibly indicating the role of head of the household in the family. About 16% of those who approached were in the age group of 20 to 35.

“The purpose and objective of the grievance redressal cell was not just limited to solving the grievances but by solving them making the government more responsive and reforming it,” P.B. Salim, Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at the CMO, says.

Formulation of policies

Dr. Salim, Secretary in the State government, who was in charge of the cell, cites specific examples where grievances resulted in the formulation of policies such as ‘Pathashri’, where construction of 10,000 km of rural roads was taken up by the government, and ‘Duare Sarkar’, an outreach programme, where beneficiaries were inducted in 11 key schemes.

Sabir Ahamed of the Pratichi (India) Institute says there have been district-wise variations with certain districts like Paschim Medinipur registering a high volume of complaints. He points out that a complaint or a grievance can be an indicator of what people value. “The data also shows that there has been a surge in complaints during the COVID-19 induced lockdown period and Amphan,” he adds.

The reports says the programme of grievance redressal is replicable and can be scaled up. “The success of this system indicates its viability and possibilities and holds much promise for re-imagining the governance system to the aspirations of people by making it more accessible, accountable and responsive,” it notes.

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