ORGANISATION THROUGH NEGLECT: UNDERSTANDING FIELD ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA

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The State Capacity Initiative at the Centre for Policy Research is an interdisciplinary research and practice programme focused on addressing the challenges of the 21st-century Indian state. The purpose of this initiative is to place the critical challenges of building state capacity at the heart of the field of policy research in India, where it has always belonged but remains surprisingly marginalised. We, therefore, start with first principles and ground ourselves in existing realities to deepen and expand the understanding of the challenges and possibilities of building state capacity in a democratic and federal India. Our programme of work focuses on the changing roles of the Indian state: institutional design, implementation and administrative capacity; the challenges of regulatory and fiscal capacity; and the complex and changing relations between society, politics and state capacity in India.

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the structure and processes of field administration in India and matches these with the outcomes on the ground. It highlights features of the administrative structure, human resources, and organisational culture that result in the sub-optimal delivery of social services and policy implementation. Recognizing the importance of historical antecedents, the paper provides a brief account of how field administration has developed over time. Subsequently, it presents the findings of a case study of a district situated in Madhya Pradesh. This is followed by a delineation of the key areas for reform and some possible strategies, though these need to be formulated after rigorous debate.

The paper traces the roots of the present-day field administration to the colonial era, when the existing decentralised and diffused field administration system was changed to achieve the government's goals to maximise revenue from land and forests and maintain order. The district became the key administrative unit in the field, and the district collector (DC) the overall administrative head. After Independence, government goals shifted dramatically, and socio-economic development became a central concern. However, the basic administrative structure was retained, while several departmental organisations were added.

The case study showed that while the role of field administration was wide, its structure was fragmented, making coordination difficult. Moreover, local governments, the legitimate site for decision-making, were disempowered and the workload of the DC was unrealistic. Departmental field organisations had insufficient human resources, the level of vacancies was high and expertise in many key areas was lacking, despite the formal educational qualifications of government officials being quite high. The physical infrastructure in government institutions deteriorated below the district level and was very inadequate in some grassroots organisations. Several grassroots organisations lacked funds for essential activities such as repair of buildings.

Additionally, field administration functioned in the context of a high degree of centralization at the state level, whereby activities were specified in government schemes and officials followed orders, ignoring citizens' needs that did not fit this schema. Field officials maintained close contact with citizens, but were constrained in their responsiveness because of the highly centralised system. Financial autonomy in the field, always low, had been whittled down further by recent initiatives to transfer funds directly from the state government to clients and beneficiaries. Hierarchy was so important that

senior officials could not be questioned. There was little attempt to analyse the situation and formulate appropriate strategies and rent-seeking was rampant.

The deficiencies of the administrative system had a visible impact on the ground. The lack of adequate skill sets in organisations meant that while simple services could be delivered, more complex ones floundered. The quality of grassroots institutions was inadequate because of limited expertise and centralisation, and frontline functionaries spent a great deal of time doing administrative rather than substantive work. The interaction of frontline functionaries with citizens was full of conflict because the former could not respond to the latter's needs and extorted money from them. Key problems could not be resolved because there was little analysis, contextual strategies could not be formulated, the fragmented structure made coordination difficult, and so on.

The paper argues that the reform of field administration is essential. Various directions of reform in terms of structure, human resources and working processes that emerge are suggested for future deliberation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The inadequacies of policy implementation and delivery of social services are subjects of much public dissatisfaction and media comment in India, but their causes are rarely analysed. While scholars in the developed world have studied the working of government on the ground in fields such as 'implementation studies' and 'street bureaucracy', this is not the case in India. The subject of this paper, field administration, or the structure and functioning of organisations charged with implementation, is at the heart of this problem.

This paper recognizes that public organisations are different from private ones and need to be understood in terms of the extent to which they achieve justice, equality and participation, and not just efficiency, technique and control, though these too are important. Moreover, in this paper, 'implementation' is seen as a dynamic process, embedded in the socio-political context as well as the structures and processes of field administration. In addition, field administration has been shaped by its historical antecedents as well as the overall policy thrusts.

In this paper, the historical evolution of field administration in India is discussed briefly against general developments in policy and public administration. This is followed by a case study of field administration in a district in Madhya Pradesh. Subsequently, areas where change is necessary for improved policy implementations and delivery of social services are highlighted.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The foundation of the present-day field administration was laid in the colonial era, as the previous diffused, decentralised administrative systems were replaced with more centralised ones. The field administration system emerged against the overarching aim of the colonial government to maximise revenues from land and forest, and maintain order, while minimising costs on administration. In this period, the public administration system became more complex as several departments were established in central and provincial governments. A salaried bureaucracy began to be recruited on merit, though it was split into higher services and lower services comprising mainly British and Indian personnel respectively, with few avenues of promotion for junior officials.

Field administration began to change as land revenue collection was streamlined. District collectors (DCs) were appointed at first to oversee revenue collection, but became district administrative heads over time. Below the district, the erstwhile system of revenue collection through zamindars was replaced by a centralised bureaucracy in many, but not all, areas. The policing powers of zamindars were withdrawn, and a professional police force created. At the same time, several departments set

up offices in the district. However, field administration was oriented towards serving the government, rather than citizens. For example, the police were concerned mainly with the maintenance of order rather than preventing crime, which was left to citizens. Weak attempts were made to establish local bodies that were partially representative, but these remained disempowered.

Post-Independence, government goals shifted radically. Socio-economic development, rather than land revenue collection became the priority. Numerous programmes were taken up in agriculture, education, public health, rural development, and so on. The number of government departments and organisations as well as the bureaucracy expanded significantly. The structure of the colonial bureaucracy, divided into higher and lower services, was retained and avenues for promotion for lower services remained very limited. However, the differences between the salaries of senior and junior officials narrowed and reservations for people of scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) in government posts were introduced.

After the 1970s, transfers and postings of officials became patronage-based, and rent-seeking increased steadily across the government system. From the mid-1980s onwards, dissatisfaction with the delivery of government services was visible within and outside government. After 1991, as containing government expenditure became a priority, a larger number of low paid personnel were recruited on contract, especially at lower levels, and there were attempts to privatise some services. This orientation remained even as government revenues began to increase with an upturn in economic growth after the late 1990s.

In the field, the colonial administrative structure was retained, and the DC remained the administrative head of the district. During the 1950s and 1960s, as the appropriate field administrative structure for socioeconomic development was considered, a three-tier structure of panchayats was established in rural areas. Panchayats were to lead socio-economic development in their area. However, in the mid 1960s, as the food crisis became acute, a more centralised approach to agriculture development was followed. Subsequently, panchayats were disempowered in most states. Instead, departments ran separate schemes or programmes at the field level. In parallel, the number of field level departmental organisations and personnel grew steadily. In most states, the role of the district collector expanded to include socio-economic development along with regulatory administration.

The increasing rent-seeking across government was reflected at the field level as well. District officials were subject to constant pressure to favour dominant political leaders and became corrupt, a trend that continues to this day. The dissatisfaction with the delivery of government services led to a renewed interest in panchayats, and in 1993, the constitution was amended to make elections to panchayats mandatory. However, as the powers to be devolved, panchayats were left for the states to decide, in most states, panchayats remained disempowered. At the same time after the mid 1990s, departments began to set up separate community-based organisations (CBOs).

Infrastructure at the field level developed slowly and several field officials worked without necessary buildings and equipment. However, as government revenues increased after the 1990s, infrastructure in the field began to improve. While the mode of functioning at the field level is little studied, available documents indicate that hierarchy remained very important in the bureaucracy. After the 1990s, several types of frontline functionaries began to be recruited on contract at very low salaries.

THE CASE STUDY

Methodology

In the case study, the structure, functioning and dynamics of field administration were delineated and analysed. The sample district had a population equivalent to the average district population in India. Its SC population was similar to the all-India average, though its ST population was higher. Within the district, a sample block with a high ST population and five sample villages of varying sizes, social composition and distance from urban areas were selected to study the working of field administration at the grassroots.

The overall structure of field administration was delineated and eight sample departments—Revenue, Forest, Panchayat and Rural Development (P&RD), School Education, Public Health, Women and Child Development (WCD), Public Health Engineering (PHE) and Cooperation were selected for detailed study. Across these departments, 56 organisations, which included 35 supervisory departmental offices, seven panchayats,[1] and 15 grassroots institutions, that is, five primary schools, five anganwadi Centres (AWCs), three sub-health centres (SHCs) and two cooperative societies, located in the sample villages, were studied in detail. Interviews were conducted with 95 people, including elected panchayat representatives (PRs), officials, frontline functionaries, non-governmental organisation (NGO) personnel and journalists, and 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with people from different social groups in the sample villages.

Socio-economic Context

The economy of the district was based primarily on agriculture and allied activities. The average land holding size was small, only 2.26 hectares, and nearly 50% workers were casual labourers. Almost 70% of the gross cropped area of the district was irrigated. In three of five sample villages, a few upper caste and Other Backward Classes (OBC) families held a large share of the land, which they leased out informally. In two sample villages, there were no well-off persons. In the sample block, the forest was a source of livelihoods too, as poor people collected minor forest produce and fuel wood for consumption and sale. The availability of wage labour in agriculture was declining because of mechanisation, as were livelihoods from the forest. Increased livelihood opportunities were identified as their most important need by people in FGDs.

The road connectivity of villages to the main district roads was good, but in the sample villages, some hamlets were not connected by all-weather roads to the main village. Nearly all villages in the district had electricity, but there was load shedding for six or more hours. For drinking water, hand pumps were available in all the villages, but the ground water level was falling, and several hand pumps had dried up, resulting in drinking water shortages in the summer. Less than 20% villages in the district had tap water supply. Inadequate drinking water was identified as the second most important problem in the FGDs. There were primary schools in all the villages and upper primary schools for every 2-3 villages, but high schools and higher secondary schools were sparse. Health facilities were quite limited. The district had 26 health centres with doctors, one per 54 villages, and 173 SHCs, or one per five villages, managed by auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs). On an average, there were more than two AWCs per village.

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[1] Panchayats are local governments in rural areas.

Role and Structure

The role of field administration was wide, encompassing law and order, infrastructure creation and maintenance, socio-economic development, social services and revenue collection. The field administration was organised along three axes. One axis, the 'departmental axis', comprised organisations of 37 state government departments at various levels. The second, 'local government axis', comprised elected local governments or panchayats at three levels in rural areas, and municipalities in urban areas. In the third, the 'DC axis', the DC functioned as the administrative head of the district.

The district was the key geographic unit of administration, and all except four departments had district-level supervisory offices. The field administration structure was fragmented, making coordination difficult. Below the district, there was no common geographical administrative unit for all the departments. Most, but not all departments adopted subdivisions or blocks as sub-district geographical units, and had even more varied units below the block. Coordination was made even more difficult because departmental organisations functioned fairly autonomously, following the instructions of their state offices. Further, there were two leading and coordinating agencies in the district: the DC and the panchayats. In regulatory matters, the DCs leadership was undisputed. But for socio-economic development in rural areas, though as per law panchayats were leading institutions, in practice, when the state departments delegated authority, it was usually to the DC, rather than panchayats.

As there were a large number of departmental offices, some had a very skimpy structure, so that their outreach was very limited. Only 12 departments had organisations below the block level, while another 12 had no organisation below the district level. Within the departments too, the structure was not optimal. In some departments, a single organisation performed many functions, while in others there were multiple organisations for the same function.

The departmental organisations of the district comprised supervisory offices at various levels, and 5421 other types of organisations. Among the latter, the largest number provided social services, such as schools, AWCs, health centres and so on. Other organisations included law enforcement agencies, such as revenue courts, police stations and jail; commercial organisations, which bought and sold goods or provided loans, such as the mandi (agricultural market), cooperative banks, public distribution system shops; and technical institutions such as water testing laboratories and teacher training institutes. In addition, departments formed two types of committees: inter-departmental committees for coordination, review and decision-making mainly at the district level, and CBOs with citizen membership at the village level.

Departmental organisations concerned with socio-economic development undertook pre-defined activities as per various schemes rather than undertaking context-specific activities to achieve outcomes. Organisations concerned with regulatory administration had a little more freedom as they applied general principles of law to specific cases. Among the sample departments, only the Forest Department worked on the basis of a 10 year plan based on the local context.

Panchayats existed at three levels: the zilla parishad (ZP) at the district, janpad panchayat (JP) at

the block and gram panchayat (GP) for one to four villages. Each GP had a gram sabha (GS), which comprised an assembly of all voters. As the role of panchayats was not clear, their administrative structure was amorphous. For example, the ZP had a core with its own small staff, programme managers of various schemes who reported to their state-level department offices as well as the ZP, and various departments sought approval of the ZP on various issues.

The political wing of the panchayats, comprising elected PRs, was an egalitarian structure, as PRs were drawn from all sections of society because of reservations for SCs, STs, OBCs and women. Several PRs said during interviews that they had contested elections to work for the community. However, most women PRs had contested elections for seats reserved for women, as per the wishes of their families, to enable their husbands to act as de facto PRs. However, some women PRs, who had experience in political movements and self-help groups (SHGs), were very active. ZP and JP PRs were generally dissatisfied, because their role was minimal. The GPs functioned mainly as implementation agencies for different departments.

Human Resources

There were 11,769 government personnel in the district, who could be categorised in three ways. One, they were either supervisors and experts, working at the district and sub-district level, or frontline functionaries, working at sub-block and village level. Two, 78.3% were 'regular' employees and 21.7% were contractual employees. Three, the regular employees were divided in four classes, where class 1 employees had the highest status and class 4 the lowest. In the district, a large majority of employees were from class 3. Among contractual employees, some worked supervisory capacity as programme managers and experts, and others as frontline functionaries.
Personnel management, including recruitment, promotion and posting of employees was highly centralised at the state level, except for a few frontline functionaries. Field officials were responsible for day-to-day supervision of employees and wrote their annual performance appraisal report (APAR), which was the basis for future promotions, and could impose minor punishments on some frontline functionaries. The DC had some authority over departmental officials as she wrote their APAR. Though the CEO of the ZP was also expected to write the APAR of several departmental officials, the latter often submitted the report directly to the DC.

The sample supervisory organisations had very limited managerial and expert staff. The subdivision and block level organisations had just one manager, assisted by clerks and helpers. Of the 10 district level organisations studied, five had only one officer, a manager or expert. The DC's office too had only six other officers, though the DC had access to officials of other departments. Similarly, among grassroots institutions, the staff was inadequate for the activities anticipated.

Though departmental activities required a complex set of skills, they were not available in the departmental organisations because these organisations were manned by personnel for two or more generalist or specialist services, and each service comprised personnel with similar skills and qualifications. The specialist services comprised engineers, doctors, para medical staff and teachers. The sample departments hired 26 types of frontline functionaries, and three hired specialist frontline functionaries like engineering diploma holders and teachers. In addition, there were three critical expertise gaps across departments. There were no human resource management professionals, legal

experts, and social communication. Mobilisation experts were available only in a few departments, and inadequately. Moreover, departments where personnel were mainly from specialist services had either no, or very little, management expertise. Further, some departments lacked experts even for their core activities. For example, WCD, charged with addressing child malnutrition, had no nutritionist.

The government employees interviewed were educationally well-qualified. All the supervisory employees were college educated, and some had advanced specialist qualifications. Among frontline functionaries, nearly two-thirds were college educated. Induction training for two months to two years was provided for services where specialist qualifications were not required. Provision of in-service training varied across departments. The in-service training programmes were structured around new government programmes and policies, rather than systematic skill development of employees.

A large number of posts were vacant. In the sample supervisory offices, the vacancy for all posts was 41%, for managers and experts, 47.4%, for technical and accounts personnel 30.4%, for office workers, 28.7%, and for office helpers 16.3%. Among the 24 types of frontline functionaries across the sample departments for whom information was available, the vacancy rate was 20%. But for 10 types of frontline functionaries, more than 30% posts were vacant, which could be expected to have a serious impact on work.

The service conditions of regular and contractual workers differed significantly. Contractual employees lacked job security, had lower salaries than the regular employees, no pensions and other benefits, and no avenues for promotion. Consequently, contractual frontline functionaries were extremely dissatisfied, and had formed unions which agitated for better working conditions. School teachers and GP secretaries had managed to improve their salary and tenure significantly through such agitations. Thus, for contractual workers, the path to improving service conditions was not hard work, but skilful agitation and negotiation.

Among regular employees, those at supervisory levels were generally satisfied with their salary, but many frontline functionaries were not. Most regular employees were dissatisfied with the slow rate of promotions. Moreover, the postings of regular employees were patronage-based. While some officials were reported to be involved in rent-seeking rackets along with powerful politicians, others reported being transferred for not following illegitimate directions. For regular employees, the lack of promotion avenues combined with patronage-based postings, created a perverse incentive structure: they did well by pleasing patrons, not by working hard. In addition, the average tenure of heads of district offices was less than a year, so that there was no continuity of leadership.

Infrastructure and Finance

The infrastructure in the sample organisations varied. The district level offices generally had adequate buildings and furniture, though the building of the District Institute of Education and Training was in such a poor condition that training programmes could not be conducted properly. At the sub-district level, in many offices the infrastructure was quite poor, with inadequate seating space, toilets and drinking water facilities as well as lack of sanitation. While computers were available in all supervisory offices, sub-district officials lacked vehicles,

which inhibited their touring. Barring ramps in some offices, there were no facilities for the differently-abled. Among grassroots institutions, GPs, schools and cooperative societies had well-kept buildings with adequate space, but those of the SHC were in very poor condition. The AWCs had the worst infrastructure, and many were run in rented buildings.

Nearly all the funds of departmental organisations, as well as panchayats, comprised allocations under various schemes, salaries and office expenditure. Consequently, few activities other than those specified in schemes could be undertaken. Limited untied funds were available for Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and block and district PRs to sanction projects of their choice, but no organisation had funds to undertake need based activities. In most sample offices, expenditure was more than 80% of the outlay, but in some it was much less, mainly because of lack of human resources.

The field administration collected seven types of taxes and royalties but the amount collected was small, less than the annual budget of many departments, and was deposited in the state exchequer. The GPs could levy taxes and generate income through other means, but GPs took little initiative, and had negligible income. At the grassroots, schools, AWCs and SHCs lacked funds for the upkeep of buildings, essential equipment and activities such as photocopying. Agriculture cooperative societies were mandated to follow numerous government norms, but also function as self-supporting business organisations and be. Moreover, the government often waived farmer loans, and many cooperative societies incurred losses.

Working Context and Ethos

Field officials functioned in the context of extreme centralisation, whereby activities to be conducted were specified with set targets and were constantly reviewed from the state level. Numerous directions on day-to-day functioning were issued as well. For example, the School Education Department specified the school time-table, the pace of teaching and so on. Field officials had little autonomy. When they were asked to state the most important decisions that they had taken in the previous six months, they identified minor ones, such as repairing equipment and doing work-division among staff. In panchayats, there was political centralisation in the form of directions from political parties, though as per law, they had no role in panchayats. While making decisions, PRs often split along party lines. But this control was incomplete, and at times, PRs across parties collaborated to resolve local issues. However, administratively, panchayats too implemented schemes, achieved targets and filed progress reports.

Hierarchical functioning went well beyond its legitimate role of systematising decision-making in large organisations. Several interviewees reported that they could not question senior officials, which reduced the space for thinking through issues. Moreover, as a rule, the actual work was done by junior-most officials, who were the least qualified, while senior officials only supervised, hence, the best skills were not used to formulate proposals and execute projects. Further, the state government undertook frequent campaigns on various issues in quick succession. Officials reported that before one campaign could take off, a new one began, and long-term tasks were neglected. Field officials also functioned in the context of a great deal of significant interference in their day to day functioning by state level politicians. While at times, politicians helped in solving problems and getting funds from the state

government, they also made several unethical demands, and punished officials through transfers and public insults.

The high degree of poverty and low levels of education in the community, along with a growing awareness of rights, created its own pressures. Officials often found it difficult to communicate information, rules and procedures. Many people were apathetic about their long-term interests, as indicated by the low level of children's attendance in sample schools and AWCs. But there was considerable pressure from people for immediate benefits, such as subsidised houses. Many powerful and well-off individuals attempted to benefit by pressurising and bribing government officials. Community pressures played out significantly in panchayats, where husbands of women PRs attended meetings along with them. Additionally, PRs who were daily wage labourers did not attend meetings regularly, as they lost a day's wages.

The mechanisms to ensure accountability were inadequate. Internal accountability functioned mainly though reviews by senior officials. This had limitations, as many officials participated in rent-seeking rackets, and protected each other. Financial audit by the Accountant General addressed limited issues. The Public Service Guarantee Act, whereby services had to be provided in a particular time frame, provided some accountability to people, but was limited to some services. The Right to Information (RTI) Act was used only occasionally, and sometimes misused to bully officials. The social audit threw up misutilization of funds at times, but usually, it was mechanical, and many people did not understand the intent. The biggest problem was that even if wrongdoing was revealed, redressal was not guaranteed.

Processes of Administration

What was considered 'work' was in keeping with the context of extreme centralisation and hierarchy. When field officials were asked to describe the most important activities in their office and those on which they spent the most time, they mentioned implementation of schemes, following directions from seniors, and supervision of junior officials. They described their role in similar terms too. The importance of centralisation and hierarchy even led to the basic mandate of an office getting ignored. On orders of the state government, officials performed a range of activities outside their mandated role, such as tasks related to elections, sanitation, plantation drive, and even activities of a religious and cultural orientation, which ate into the time available for substantive work. Teachers and anganwadi workers (AWWs) were involved in such activities the most, because of their numbers and village level presence.

The work sphere of the panchayats reflected their marginalisation. In the ZP and sample GPs, even the mandated number of panchayat meetings had not been held in the previous year. The ZP and JP panchayat representatives (PRs) saw their role as fulfilling people's needs and bringing about socio-economic development, but admitted that they had not succeeded in this role. The most common activity in the ZP meetings was reviewing the work of the departments, while in the JP, instead of a review, it was censuring officials. Most GP PRs and officials viewed the GP as a scheme implementation agency, particularly for construction work.

Because government officials saw their role as implementers of directions from above, analysis and

strategy formulation were scarce. For instance, in the sample organisations, the type of information maintained and its use reflected a concern with reporting, scheme implementation and day to day working, rather than analysis for strategy formulation. Moreover, given the fragmented structure, all the information was not available at any one place in the district, but remained with separate organisations. Additionally, some officials admitted that they occasionally fudged information because of the emphasis on achieving targets. Officials also reported that they did not consult resource and technical agencies.

In many instances, long and tedious processes were followed. For example, schools were expected to maintain 20 registers, and AWCs 15. Extreme centralisation meant that information had to be sent constantly to centralised agencies. Moreover, inflexible processes were introduced to counter rent seeking. For instance, to recruit AWWs at the district level, even though criteria for selection specified by the state level gave officials no discretion, the recruitment had to be approved by two committees, and the list of selected candidates had to be published and objections invited as well.

Supervision was oriented towards getting orders implemented. Supervisors, under pressure themselves, insisted that orders be followed even if they were unproductive, and did not attempt to get feedback to modify strategies. Additionally, interviews showed that supervisors saw disciplinary action as the main human resource management tool. However, its effectiveness was doubtful as district officials had very limited powers of discipline for regular employees. Further, interviewees remarked that many politically powerful employees could not be disciplined and related incidents of political interference in disciplinary proceedings. But for contractual staff, discipline could be harsh and arbitrary. The AWWs interviewed constantly feared being punished and relayed instances of unfair punishment.

Coordination was important because of the large number of departments, but it was difficult. The panchayats could not coordinate because they lacked authority. During interviews, PRs complained that officials did not provide them with information and ignored panchayat resolutions. The main method of coordination was through the DC, who chaired inter-departmental committees and took frequent meetings. But the DC was the chair or member secretary of 82 committees, a responsibility that is difficult for any individual to handle, and committee meetings were postponed often.

A positive feature of field administration was that not only the frontline functionaries, but all field officials maintained close contact with the community through tours, departmental events such as fairs and workshops, and people approached field offices with requests and complaints as well. They also shared various types of information with citizens, and in some departments, efforts were made towards public education.

Rent-seeking was rampant. An indication of its scale was that while the PRs and journalists interviewed reported widespread and systematic corruption, a majority of the officials interviewed denied it, as possibly, they too engaged in it. In FGDs, people said that they had to pay bribes to get every government service, for which there were fixed rates. Some officials also reported extensive rent-seeking, and even described systems wherein various officials took a 'cut' as money was extorted from people.

The two thrusts for improving administration were increasing the use of technology, especially digital technology, and privatisation of services. In several instances, technology has been instrumental in promoting better management and transparency. However, centralisation had increased as well, as officials reported that reviews from the state level had become more frequent via video-conferences and the demand for data and reports had increased substantially. Moreover, as digital technology was introduced at great speed, there were many glitches, and there were instances of pointless use of technology too. Similarly, privatisation of services had its limitations. As hand pump repair was contracted out, it was difficult to find local private contractors. Subsequently, the contractors' work was unsatisfactory, and the PHE Department resumed doing the technical work itself, while the contractor only provided labour and transportation. Problems of delay continued here too.

Administration on the Ground

While the government attempted to provide a large number of services through its wide network of institutions, it succeeded only to a limited extent. Given the scattered residential pattern, access to low-cost services was available but higher cost services were sparse. For example, AWCs were available in every village, but hospitals were often at a distance and people sometimes consulted traditional healers and dubious 'doctors' without medical qualifications. Moreover, because of the administrative deficiencies described above, only simple services such as subsidised food through the public distribution system could be provided successfully. Organisations struggled with the more complex tasks. Further, because of extreme centralisation, contextual needs were ignored.

The problems of the administrative system were reflected clearly in the inadequate quality of grassroots institutions. For example, in the five sample AWCs, though there was no indication of gross neglect by any AWW, because of their unrealistic workload, three AWWs failed to address pre-school education. School observation showed that teachers engaged with students for around only half the school time, and were busy preparing information, attending meetings and performing other administrative tasks. in the remaining time. Innovative teachers felt constrained by numerous directions and many class 5 students could not read.

The interaction of frontline functionaries with the community was full of conflict because frontline functionaries did not have the autonomy to address people's needs and lacked requisite skills to teach children from deprived backgrounds. Moreover, with rent-seeking, some officials behaved like oppressive tyrants as they extracted money from poor people. Given the inadequacies in service delivery and rent-seeking, people complained often to senior officials, which added to the conflict.

Gram Sabhas were impacted by centralisation too, as discussion of various government schemes and campaigns dominated the meetings, and not people's needs and demands. Attendance in the GSs was scanty. Similarly, most of the grassroots committees existed only on paper, and in those that were functional, the community often remained passive. The citizen members were alienated as the meetings revolved around the agenda of the department, and people's issues were neglected.

Finally, it was difficult to solve problems and reach goals. For instance, inadequate livelihoods were identified as the most important issue by people in FGDs, and national programmes to address it existed, still, little headway was made. There was no district level analysis or plan concerning

livelihoods and many key possibilities, such as improving the productivity of small and marginal farmers, were ignored as they went against state guidelines. An initiative to get SHGs to supply items purchased by the government was in jeopardy, because of rent-seeking and subsequent enquiries. In the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS) because of uniform targets adequate work was not available where it was really needed, and there were delays in wage payment, which was made directly to the workers' accounts from the state level.

In the case of drinking water, the second important problem identified by people, the splitting of administration into numerous small sections, blocked a solution. The core issue was that the water table was falling and ground water sources were drying up. But the district branch of the PHE Department could do little about it, as it was the responsibility of a separate state level agency. Water conservation and rainwater harvesting was required, but this required extensive community contact, but the PHE Department, staffed mainly with engineers, had very limited human resources for community mobilisation. At the same time, illegal mining on river banks, a consequence of wide-spread rent-seeking, exacerbated the problem as the exposure of water to the sun increased, accelerating evaporation.

Malnutrition could not be addressed because of lack of contextual strategies. Children's attendance at the AWCs was poor, as their parents took them along to work, and many children did not get daily supplementary nutrition. Moreover, in many families, supplementary nutrition for mothers and children of six months to three years of age, provided weekly in packets, was cooked at one go and eaten by the whole family. People found it difficult to keep their severely malnourished children in the Nutrition Resource Centre, where beds remained vacant. When it came to sanitation, in the rush to meet targets, the whole sample block had been declared open-defecation free, but in reality, not all the toilets had been constructed and an estimated 12%-40% people across the villages continued to defecate in the open. Moreover, other sanitation practices were neglected to focus on the target of building toilets.

THE WAY AHEAD

This study shows that a radical reform of field administration is needed, though more studies as well as deliberation in wider forums must carefully delineate the precise nature of reforms. However, a few reform ideas are put down for further deliberation.

To begin, for optimal results on the ground, field administration needs to be reconceptualized as a set of organisations to analyse the local situation and respond to it, rather than simply carrying out orders from the state government. This has important implications for the structure, human resources and modes of working.

Instead of numerous separate, skimpily staffed offices that mirror departments at the state level, there can be five or so organisations at the district level, concerned with law enforcement & general administration, agriculture, livelihoods & allied activities, infrastructure development & maintenance, social welfare and revenue collection. These organisations can have offices at two sub-district levels: the block, and a common sub-block level, so that coherent sub-district administrative structures are created to allow for local decision-making and response. Organisations concerned with socio-

economic development should be supervised by local governments, and those concerned with regulatory administration by the DC. The role of field organisations needs to be defined in terms of broad goals and not implementation of schemes. This requires a move away from scheme-tied funds to untied funds to be expended as per local plans formulated by local governments.

With a smaller number of organisations, each organisation can have the varied expertise it needs as well as an experienced manager or administrator. The gaps that exist in expertise would have to be addressed. However, 'expertise' need not be seen in terms of formal qualifications only and should include significant experience or work in an area. The current policy of keeping posts vacant is irrational and needs to be discontinued. To increase the motivation of government personnel, recruitment of low paid contract workers who are regularised subsequently needs to be abandoned, as it creates a perverse incentive. Similarly, promotion avenues need to be increased, and the role of patronage in the transfer and posting system needs to be eliminated to orient employees towards achievement of goals and reduce rent-seeking. To create a more positive working environment, issues such as the inadequate infrastructure in grassroots institutions, payment of travel allowances to frontline functionaries and similar issues need to be addressed.

Changing working style in the field is difficult without a parallel change at other levels of government. However, some space will be created if more decisions are made locally. In addition, some broad protocols for working methods, addressing situational analysis, consultation, managing junior officials, taking feedback and other such activities. can be developed and requisite training provided. While the use of technology should be promoted, a slower pace, where all the problems of a particular technology are sorted out before it is taken to scale, would lead to better results. Similarly, instead of viewing privatisation as inherently efficiency promoting, the pros and cons in various situations should be examined rationally.

While external accountability mechanisms such as RTI need to be strengthened, internal accountability, such as reviews based on goal achievement, need to be developed too. Eliminating rent-seeking is a major challenge, as it is widespread across different levels of government. Elimination of patronage-based transfers and postings would address it to some extent. A Lok Pal-like body at the field level, to which citizens can complain, can also be put in place. Though the possibility of it becoming part of the rent-seeking system remains.

Notably, among all the needed reforms, reforms in two areas, human resources and elimination of rent-seeking, are essential. Unless these change, other reforms will not be successful.
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INTRODUCTION

AN UNDER-ANALYSED PROBLEM

As numerous media reports highlight all too often, the interface between the government and citizens in India is characterised by substandard social services and unjust practices such as police brutality, public schools where students learn little and low-quality public health services. Moreover, numerous academic papers, studies and government reports confirm this unsatisfactory state of affairs (ASER Centre, 2017; Hammer et al., 2007; National Campaign Against Torture, 2020; National Council for Educational Research and Training, 2015a, 2015b; Powell-Jackson et al., 2013). In this context, policymakers and scholars often highlight the 'poor implementation' of policies and programmes and the poor 'implementation capability' of the state (Pritchett, 2009; Saxena, 2012). While a wide range of laws, policies and programmes for socio-economic development and social justice exist in India, they do not play out on the ground as envisaged.

While the inability of the state to transform its stated policies into concrete action is evident routinely, its causes are less. This is an important shortcoming. Criticism of government social services and implementation of policies generates pressure for better performance, but redressal is possible only when the causes of these shortfalls are clear. Yet, a rigorous analysis of 'implementation failure', why and how it occurs, does not exist. Consequently, appropriate strategies to improve implementation cannot be formulated. Moreover, time and financial resources can be spent on ineffective measures. For example, low student achievement levels may result from an inadequate number of teachers, poor teaching skills or a host of other factors. Yet, without an analysis of the core issues, often the response is to tighten supervision, with disappointing results.

One approach to understanding government performance on the ground has been to relate it to the wider socio-political context, such as unequal power relations in Indian society and democratic pressure leading to the prioritisation of the provision of visible goods rather than high-quality public services (Gupta, 2012; Kapur, 2020). But whether, and how, the administrative system that implements policy and delivers social services itself contributes to implementation failure has received inadequate attention. Moreover, social and political forces interact with the administrative system before they play out on the ground, and the characteristics of the system can heighten, reduce or modify the operation of these forces. Consequently, it is important to analyse this system in detail as well.
Situated at the heart of the 'implementation' problem is what is known as 'field administration'

(also called 'district administration') in India. Field administration includes a set of government organisations, personnel and processes concerned primarily with the implementation of policy and delivery of social services. Its basic unit is the district, with an average population of around 20 lakh, though districts vary a great deal in population. Over the years, field administration has developed a distinct, stable structure, along with well-established ways of functioning. Field administration is an important feature in the lives of ordinary citizens, especially in rural areas. It is an arena where justice is dispensed (or not), crises are managed, social services such as education and health are provided and benefits from various government programmes are delivered.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper attempts to address a wide knowledge gap. In general, the study of public administration in India is extremely limited, as is the case in most developing countries (Gulrajani & Moloney, 2012). Moreover, while apex public institutions have received some attention in academic literature in recent years (Kapur & Mehta, 2007; Vaishnav et al 2017), field administration has been almost totally neglected or studied sporadically in parts. While there is some research on local governments, on the implementation of specific programmes and occasionally on frontline functionaries, a comprehensive picture is lacking, so much so that even the approximate number of organisations that exist in a district is not known.

In contrast, in the developed world, there has been much greater interest in observing and theorising about how the government works on the ground, though these countries do not have the type of field administration that exists in India. For example, a body of work termed 'implementation studies' emerged formally in the mid-1980s[2] to examine why policies did not play out as envisaged on the ground (Barrett, 2004; Hill & Hupe, 2014). A second related theme of study is 'street bureaucracy', which focuses on the conditions in which frontline functionaries or street bureaucrats work and how they negotiate policies with citizens' needs (Hupe et al., 2016; Lipsky, 2010). Finally, substantial academic literature exists on local governments, focussing on their powers, financing, politics, administrative structure and work processes.

By scrutinising 'field administration', this paper attempts to address the gap that exists in the analysis of policy implementation and the dynamics of the delivery of social services in India. The analysis is undertaken in two parts. First, the history of field administration in India is traced briefly. This is important because the roots of present-day field administration were laid in the colonial era, and many structures and traditions have continued subsequently in spite of radical changes in the political context and stated policy goals. At the same time, as new policy goals have been pursued, several additions and changes have been made. However, most of these developments have taken place without much scrutiny and debate regarding the field administration system itself. In this scenario, the present-day structure and functioning of field administration are nearly incomprehensible unless their historical trajectory is understood. In parallel, an examination of the development of field administration over time provides insights into the underlying assumptions, which can then be scrutinised for appropriateness in the present context.

[2] Public administration scholars have been concerned about how policies are executed on the ground since much earlier (Hill & Hupe, 2014).

In the next part of the paper, a detailed case study of a district in Madhya Pradesh is discussed, describing the structure, human resources and processes of field administration and the outcomes on the ground. While the case study of a single district is admittedly not enough, against the context of the lack of studies that examine field administration, it is preferable to large surveys and studies. Large-scale studies are unlikely to be useful unless the core issues that need to be investigated are known. At this stage, it is important to delineate the various aspects and dynamics of field administration before moving on to more detailed investigations on specific features. The case study explores a wide range of issues and identifies the key aspects, strengths and fault-lines of field administration. It is hoped that larger studies will follow.

In the final part of the paper, some ideas regarding reform in field administration are delineated. Notably, the suggestions provided need to be deliberated further. One case study, though detailed, is not adequate, and more investigations of various types are necessary. Moreover, delineating precise reforms is a separate exercise, which needs wide consultation, weighing the pros and cons of different strategies, assessment of the realistic possibilities of change, and so on. However, the history of field administration and the case study highlight several key issues and possibilities, which are worth examining.

THE APPROACH

At the outset, it is necessary to identify the general approach to field administration in this paper. The first question concerns how public organisations should be viewed. There are two broad perspectives, with many variations within them, to draw upon. In the first, politics and administration are seen as separate, and bureaucratic organisations are viewed as concerned only with the latter. They are seen as being the same as, or similar to, private organisations, and their efficiency is emphasised, along with the importance of learning from private organisations. While the early proponents of this approach were concerned with optimising the organisational structure,[3] a somewhat different interpretation emerged with new public management (NPM),[4] a dominant approach, where efficiency was retained as the goal, but the emphasis shifted to ensuring it through performance measurement, incentives, privatisation, and so on, with significant managerial control and freedom (Denhart & Catlaw, 2015; Fry & Raadschelders, 2008; Hood, 1991).

In the second perspective, public organisations are seen as different from private organisations in a fundamental way. In a democratic context, public organisations are viewed as being concerned with issues of freedom, justice, equality and participation and not just efficiency, technique and control. Public organisations are committed to the pursuit of publicly defined societal values and are required to be responsive to citizens, unlike private organisations where profit is the key goal.[5] They rely on legislative appropriations rather than markets for funding, function in the public eye

[3] The organisational structure was sought to be optimised through single centres of power, hierarchical structures, communication mechanisms, and so on (Denhart & Catlaw, 2015).
[4] New public management was associated with the 'New Right' of the 1980s but was subsequently also adopted by several more left-leaning governments. It comprised a set of administrative measures encompassing greater managerial autonomy and private sector-style management in public organisations, performance measurement and linked rewards for personnel, contracting services on the basis of public tendering and discipline and parsimony in use of resources (Hood, 1991).
[5] Denhart and Catlaw (2015) argue that the degree of democratisation to which an organisation is committed determines the publicness of its management processes.

and are accountable to numerous agencies, such as legislatures and citizens, in addition to their own hierarchy. Another key difference between public and private organisations is that the goals of the former are less clearly defined, and they are concerned with service, rather than the production of goods for profit (Denhart & Catlaw, 2015).

The second perspective has been adopted in this paper, though concerns of the first have been included as well. Field administration has been scrutinised in terms of its responsiveness to people as well as its lawful and transparent functioning along democratic principles. At the same time, within these broad goals, efficiency is also seen as important, as public organisations need to deliver on their goals. However, efficiency has little meaning if the basic goals of justice, lawfulness and responsiveness are compromised. Moreover, the strategies for ensuring efficiency in public organisations may not necessarily be the same as those followed in private organisations. Consequently, efficiency concerns such as the organisational structure and working processes are investigated keeping in view the broad goals of justice and democracy.

A second important concern in studying field administration is the approach to 'policy implementation'. Notably, the implementation of policy has been considered from two perspectives. In the first and commonly used 'top-down' approach, policy is seen as formulated at the top or centre and then handed down to the administrative system for execution, where operational instructions are issued along the hierarchy of the system. In this approach, 'implementation failure' is seen as resulting from factors such as a lack of clear policy objectives that leads to varying interpretations; involvement of multiple actors and agencies which causes communication and coordination problems; inter- and intra-organisational differences in perspectives and priorities; and the limits of administrative control. Policy implementation is expected to improve through more precise policy formulations, the presence of a single line of command, greater monitoring, and so on (Barrett, 2004; Hill & Hupe, 2014).

The second approach is a 'bottom-up' approach, where implementation is seen as an integral and continuing part of the political policy process rather than merely an administrative follow-on. Those who seek to put policy into effect mediate, negotiate and modify it. Here, the power interest structures and negotiations between participants in implementation become key issues of study. In this approach, it is important to understand the process of implementation in detail (Barrett, 2004; Hill & Hupe, 2014). Similarly, research on 'street bureaucracy'[6] highlights the complexity of implementation issues. Charged with implementing government programmes and delivering social services, frontline functionaries or street-level bureaucrats have to respond to citizen needs in the context of stated policy directives and consequently take several decisions (Lipsky, 2010).

In this paper, 'implementation' is viewed as a complex process in its own right, the dynamics of which need to be understood. On the one hand, implementation is embedded in the structures and processes of the organisations involved. On the other hand, field actors negotiate various political and social forces in the field while implementing policy. At the same time, implementation is also situated in a larger context, and the types of policy directions that are given to implementers have an important

[6] Street bureaucracy' was first identified as a very specific type of bureaucracy by Michael Lipsky in 1980. Lipsky characterised street bureaucrats as having a high degree of interaction with citizens and performing complex tasks, as they address the needs of individual citizens in specific policy frameworks that may not complement each other (Lipsky, 2010).

impact on them. These can be over-specific as well as under-specific; thus, too much, as well as too little, control can pose a problem. In sum, the quality of work done at the field level is influenced by how field organisations are structured and how they function as well as the larger political, administrative and social context.

In studying field administration in India, it becomes necessary to juxtapose two streams of studies that exist separately: studies and analysis of local governments and those focussed on administrative agencies. Elected local governments are different from bureaucratic organisations. While they are far less autonomous than national and sub-national governments across countries, they have some government-like characteristics, such as elected politicians at the helm and powers to raise financial resources, which administrative field agencies lack. Consequently, compared to administrative agencies, local governments have a far greater potential to make independent decisions based on local priorities and act on them. Proponents of local governments see them as promoting democracy and citizen participation, representing local interests, being accountable to citizens and being efficient providers of local services (Dahl, 1967; Goldsmith, 1992).

In India, as per the Constitution and state laws, local governments are mandatory and are expected to play a leading role in planning and implementing programmes for socio-economic development and social justice. However, in practice, local governments have limited powers and funds, though the situation varies across states (Government of India, 2016). Moreover, in most states, activities related to socio-economic development are performed mainly by the numerous departmental bureaucratic organisations. Given this dichotomy between laws and practice, the analysis of field administration has to encompass local governments as well as bureaucratic organisations in the field, as both operate in the same sphere. In fact, as the case study illustrates, the extent of the empowerment of local governments is a critical feature of field administration. At the same time, while civil and criminal judicial courts exist at the district level and below as well, they are not part of field administration in the sense that they are not involved in policy implementation and delivery of social services.
gap, as some relevant information is not accessible. Further, the information available is uneven across different types of frontline functionaries and various states. These are limitations that will be addressed by field studies that will follow this paper.

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The foundation of the present-day field administrative structure in India was laid during the colonial period. Notably, the colonial system itself drew upon the extant administrative system. The colonists first attempted to work with the existing set up, and brought about changes slowly when it did not suit their goals (Abedin, 2013; Misra, 1970). This part of the paper is divided into three sections. The first section briefly describes the key features of field administration as it existed immediately before the advent of colonisation; the second section highlights the relevant developments in the colonial era and the third, main section elucidates the developments that took place post-independence.

As the trajectory of field administration is examined, it is important to note that it developed in response to the policy goals of the government, as the structures and processes to implement these goals were put in place. Moreover, field administration was part of the general public administration system, which included the overall administrative structure, the bureaucracy, the processes and so on. Consequently, while examining the developments in the colonial and post-independence periods, the broad thrust of government aims and policies as well as the key features of the public administration system need to be understood. Consequently, these are elucidated briefly before describing the changes in field administration. However, this description is not meant to be complete but is confined to issues relevant to field administration.

PRE-COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

As the East India Company launched its career in governance by obtaining the diwani, or rights to revenue collection, of Bengal in 1765, a plethora of administrative systems existed across the various kingdoms and principalities in what was to become India. The largest of these was the Mughal empire, and its field administration system is a useful starting point.

The Mughal administration system was diffuse, with several power centres (Misra, 1983). It may be seen as comprising three subsystems. One subsystem was the emperor's administration,[7] where the empire was divided into provinces (subhas), which were further split into districts (sarkars).

[7] This highly organised system was set up by the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542–1605) (Abedin, 2013; Misra, 1970).

The district was subdivided into tehsils or taluks. There was a highly bureaucratized hierarchy of officials, called mansabdars, where the mansab indicated the rank of the officer. However, the personality of the emperor was critical to determining government policy and ethos. Most officials were not paid a salary from state coffers. Instead, they were assigned a portion of the land revenue (jagir). The line between public property and the personal property of officials was fuzzy, and personal orders of superior officers, rather than the law, got precedence. Official competence was not defined, and appointment depended on the whims of the ruler (Abedin, 2013; Misra, 1970).

On the ground, the functions of the government comprised mainly revenue collection, maintenance of order and dispensation of justice. These were executed largely through the second subsystem of local zamindars, who collaborated with the emperor's bureaucracy. Zamindars were persons of varying importance, ranging from representatives of Hindu royal families to revenue farmers who had acquired a patent from the emperor. The zamindari estates were of different sizes, some spread across several districts and others comprising two or three villages. The appointment of zamindars was usually, but not always, hereditary, but they were not actual landowners.[8] Local zamindars collected government revenue, out of which they kept specified amounts (mahal) for themselves. They maintained a body of militia, [9] exercised customary powers and were responsible for securing peace. In many estates, several other persons also possessed inheritable and transferable properties in the zamindari estate, called talukdaris, and shared in the profits from land as per fixed rules (Abedin, 2013; Henningham, 1983; Misra, 1970, 1983).

At the district level, there was no single administrative head, and key functions were split among various officials of the emperor's bureaucracy. The executive function was vested in the faujedar, who maintained an armed force, assisted other departments and kept an eye on the zamindars. The amaguzar or amil was the chief revenue officer of the district, who exercised some executive and judicial functions regarding law and order. The kanungo was the state's repository of information concerning revenue receipts, area statistics, local revenue rates, practice and so on, authenticated leases and transfer of land, and checked the accounts of the zamindar. The civil judicial function was vested in the quazi and mir adl. Below the district level, tehsildars and mamlatdars functioned in tehsils. They were accountable to local zamindars and fairly independent of the bureaucratic control of the emperor. In addition, the patwari was an accountant for peasants and assisted kanungos in carrying out their duties. These posts were usually hereditary. As the Mughal empire began to degenerate in the beginning of the 18th century, the local zamindars and amils came to dominate the official apparatus, arrogating judicial and executive functions to themselves[10] (Abedin, 2013; Government of India, 1905; Jha, 2015; Misra, 1970; Moreland, 1911; Sapre, 1924).

In the third subsystem, villages were self-governed to a significant degree, and many administrative functions were performed by the councils of elders, or panchayats, and the village headman, though there were several regional variations. Land was held commonly by the village and usufructuary

[8] Their rights, instead, stemmed from tax-farming and their role as the military and fiscal fiefs of the state (Misra, 1970).
[9] In large towns, police administration was entrusted to an officer called kotwal, who was paid a large sum as salary, from which he paid for establishment expenses and retained the remaining amount (Misra, 1970).
[10] The influence of the Mughal bureaucracy had receded increasingly to the superior levels of administration and cities (Abedin, 2013; Misra, 1970).

rights were provided to individual villagers by panchayats. Panchayats provided several community services, administered justice, maintained peace and order, constructed and maintained irrigation works, represented village interests and, on occasion, even defended the village against outsiders. Policing was the joint responsibility of villagers, enforced by the village headman who was assisted by one or more village watchmen (Government of India, 1905; Jha, 2005–2006; Srinivasan, 1956; Venkatarangaiya, 1941, 1943). In addition, a small set of services, today part of field administration, were provided by individuals. For example, village schools for boys existed unevenly across the country, and teachers served the community, not by charging fees but by receiving gifts (Ghosh, 1995; Government of India, 1929; Kumar, 1991).

THE COLONIAL INHERITANCE

Introduction

In the colonial period, several different administrative systems existed in the territory of today's India, as nearly two-fifths of the country was governed by semi-sovereign Indian princes and the rest directly by the colonial government. This section focuses on administration in territories governed directly by the colonists, as this formed the basis for the post-independence system. Moreover, the administrative system evolved over time; thus, different administrative systems existed across the colonial period, with marked changes when the British Crown began to administer the country directly in 1858. The focus here is on the administrative system as it had evolved towards the end of the colonial rule.

Government Policy

As has been well documented, the key goals of the colonial government were maximising revenue, especially from land and forests, and maintaining order. There was little interest in village society, as long as taxes were paid. Initiatives for economic development were modest and taken primarily when these served the interests of the colonists. These included the development of physical and communication infrastructure, including railways and road networks, to enable greater access to natural resources and the introduction of modern agricultural technology to boost the production of exportable cash crops such as cotton, tea, coffee, jute, rubber and spices (Arnold, 2008; Misra, 1983; Parayil, 1992).

Towards the latter part of colonial rule, especially after severe famines between 1866 and 1908, the government increased its activities in socio-economic development including fisheries, irrigation, cooperatives, credit, livestock, dairy and animal husbandry. Attempts were made to provide services such as drinking water and sanitation, and in 1854, the outline of a public education system was laid out. However, intervention in the socio-developmental sectors remained minimal. For example, the commercial exploitation of forests for revenue was far more important than peoples' needs for forest produce. While mass schooling was promoted 'in principle', parsimonious strategies of decentralisation and encouragement of private schools were adopted, and the outreach of primary education remained very limited. [11] Similarly, a laissez-faire approach to health was followed till 1938. The chief concern was for the army and the European population, and the Indian population received attention primarily during epidemics of cholera, smallpox and the plague (Abedin, 2013; Amrith, 2007; Arnold, 2008; Chandra, 2009; Ghosh, 1995; Government of India, 1929; Misra, 1970; Lal, 1994; Sapre, 1924; Schug, 2000; Thiessen, 1994).

Relevant Changes in Public Administration

In the colonial era, as administrative efficiency and effectiveness were sought to be increased, public administration acquired some 'modern' characteristics, such as meritocratic recruitment in the bureaucracy. However, public administration was streamlined to further the extractive aims of the colonial government, rather than to enhance services for citizens. Moreover, the colonists attempted to administer at as little cost as possible, which had an important influence on the type of system that developed, especially in the field.

The organisation of government changed in two important ways. One, the diffuse governance structure with several centres of power became more centralised. Colonial public administration was organised at three levels: the centre, provincial government and district-based field administration. The central government controlled the provincial governments tightly, though there was some devolution of power with the Government of India Act 1919 and the Government of India Act 1935 (Misra, 1970; Potter, 1996; Sapre, 1924; Venkatarangaiya, 1943). The second shift was that the administrative system acquired an increasingly complex character, especially at the central and provincial levels, where several departments, including those for public works, education, police, forests, medical administration and prisons, were established (Misra, 1983; Potter, 1996).

The bureaucracy underwent significant changes as well, acquiring Weberian-like characteristics but slowly and only partially. Initially, administrative functions were performed by the servants of the East India Company who were appointed on the basis of patronage, paid poorly, but allowed to trade privately, and were extremely corrupt. Pressure from the British Crown for a meritocratic bureaucracy and reduction in rent-seeking was met with resistance from the Company's officials. Recruitment became more meritocratic after 1858, as the British Crown took over. [13] However, race and class continued to be critical organising principles of the bureaucracy, which was structured to free British officers, who were few in number and high cost because of their sizeable salaries, from routine and menial tasks, which were performed by Indian officials of lower ranks (Chandra, 2009; Fukuyama, 2014; Misra, 1970; Sapre, 1924; Singh, 2002; Thiessen, 1994).

The bureaucracy was divided into various higher and lower 'services' [14] of three types. The first, the higher or 'imperial' civil services, had an all-India character and mainly comprised officers of

[11] In 1911, G. K. Gokhle introduced a bill in the Imperial Legislative Council regarding compulsory primary education subject to the consent of local authorities, but this was opposed and rejected because of a lack of popular demand for such measures and the reluctance to raise taxes to fund them (Ghosh, 1995; Government of India, 1929).

[12] In the central government, the Directorate of Education and the Public Works Department were established in 1855, the Department of Forest in 1861, Department of Revenue and Agriculture in 1871, followed by a separate department for agriculture in 1905 and another for irrigation in 1906, Department of Medical and Sanitation in 1896, and so on. Similarly, at the provincial level in Bihar in 1938, the main departments related to judiciary, public instruction, forest, public works, civil medicine, public health, jail, excise, registration, agriculture, industries, co-operatives, income tax, civil veterinary and the archaeological survey, along with a large Revenue Administration and General Administration Department under a Board of Revenue. In the Central Provinces in the 1940s, there were 22 departments, addressing subjects such as revenue, police, jails, registration, excise, agriculture, forests, industry, labour, cooperation, fisheries, education and engineering (Misra, 1983; Potter, 1996)

[13] Reform of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) took place after the Northcote-Trevelyan Report called for an end to patronage-based appointments and for civil service examinations as a gateway into government service in 1854. The report was not accepted until 1870 (Chandra, 2009; Fukuyama, 2014; Misra, 1970)

[14] The influential Northcote-Trevelyan Report also proposed splitting routine clerical duties from higher administrative grade functions and setting high educational requirements for the latter.

British origins. While theoretically, the higher civil services were open to all, in practice, the kind of education required to pass the entrance examinations restricted the entry of Indians (Chandra, 2009; Fukuyama, 2014; Misra, 1970; Sapre, 1924). The second, the 'provincial' services, comprised mainly Indians of middle-class origin. The third component was the 'subordinate' services that comprised office assistants and swathes of Indian frontline functionaries. The difference among these three components in status and salary was sizable, and avenues for promotion were very limited for the subordinate and provincial services (Potter 1996, Schug 2000). [15] Furthermore, a conscious class distinction between the superior and subordinate officers was enforced. For example, the Police Act 1861 and subsequent departmental rules were framed so that the authority of senior officers could not be questioned (Verma, 2007).

The various services belonged to different departments, except the Indian Civil Service (ICS), which was a generalist service. Within the services, especially among the higher services, personnel were either required to have specialised qualifications at recruitment or were trained in departmental work after recruitment. From the point of view of field administration, the establishment of a consolidated civil police force, with its basic structure provided in the Indian Police Act 1861, is notable. For economic reasons, there was no separation between the crime investigation and law and order arms, and the police focused mainly on the latter (Arnold, 1976). Moreover, towards the end of the nineteenth century, a specialised bureaucracy was created to manage forests (Schug, 2000).

As citizen welfare was not a priority of the colonial government, the bureaucracy was structured to serve the state rather than the citizens. For example, proper rural policing was never developed, as it would have been possible only with the expansion of the police force, requiring significant financial investment. Consequently, the Indian police forces did little in terms of detecting crime but focused on maintaining order (Arnold, 1976; Giuliani, 2015). Additionally, the bureaucracy was not oriented to respect citizens. For instance, forest officials acted on the assumption that villagers were incapable of managing the forest resources on which their livelihoods depended. To protect people against their own improvidence, the forest administration steadily tightened its hold over forest produce (Schug, 2000).

Key Shifts in Field Administration

Each of the three subsystems of field administration that existed in pre-colonial India changed in the colonial period, albeit through a long process of repeated trials. At times, different administrative models were tried out in various provinces, and practices considered successful were adopted across provinces as well. Consequently, while there were substantial commonalities in the field administration system within the territories administered directly by the British, there were also important variations. In particular, the type of land tenure system that developed in an area had important repercussions on its field administrative system (Abedin, 2013; Chandra, 2009; Misra, 1970; Thiessen, 1994).

[15] For example, in the Forest Department, at the turn of the century, all of the executive and protective staff were Indian, but they could not rise to senior levels, which were the British sanctum (Schug, 2000).

Changes began in 1765 as the East India Company attempted to maximise its revenues in Bengal. The Company first attempted to collect revenue through the existing system of zamindars and local revenue officials, with some supervision, [16] but could not control the revenue officials and incurred losses. Consequently, in 1772, the Company undertook revenue collection directly, appointing its own collectors, which became the foundation of a centralised system of field administration. Over time, the district collector—also known as district magistrate, district officer and deputy commissioner in different areas—emerged as the administrative head of field administration [17] (Abedin, 2013; Misra, 1970; Sapre, 1924).

At the same time, the role of zamindars shifted significantly. To begin with, the policing functions of zamindars were abolished, and policing came to be overseen by district collectors. Further, after trying several strategies to enhance land revenue collection, two main land tenure systems developed: the zamindari or permanent settlement and ryotwari systems. In the zamindari system, which was established in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, modern Madhya Pradesh and parts of modern Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, the revenue liability lay with the zamindar. Here, the zamindar's rights over land were enhanced, and he effectively acquired property rights, in the sense that he could dispossess any tenant who did not pay rent. In the ryotwari system, established in most areas of Madras and Bombay presidencies and Assam, the revenue settlement was made directly with the cultivator. Here, existing landlords were wiped out, and the cultivator had substantial rights over the land. In addition, a third, the mahalwari system, existed in the North-Western Provinces and in Punjab, where village bodies jointly owned land and were responsible for collecting land revenue (Abedin, 2013; Banerjee & Iyer, 2005; Misra, 1970; Sapre, 1924).

While the district collector became the administrative head of the district across British-administered India, the field administration structure differed below the district level. In the ryotwari areas, field administration was undertaken by an expanded and centralised bureaucracy. The tehsil remained an important unit, with a tehsildar in charge, assisted by naib tehsildars. A new unit, the subdivision, was created between the district and the tehsil, with a sub-divisional magistrate as its head. These officials, known as 'revenue officers' played a key role in land management and revenue collection. They also provided speedy justice in land disputes, acted as executive magistrates in matters of law and order, handled crises such as droughts and performed various general administrative functions. Further, along with the existing patwaris, revenue inspectors were appointed for a 'circle' comprising four to five patwari halkas. Over time, revenue officials became the most important officials in field administration. In the permanent settlement areas, the zamindar continued to realise land revenue, and the structure of field administration was patchy. As noted in the first five-year plan, in some permanent settlement areas, there was no revenue administration bureaucracy below the subdivision. However, many large zamindari estates [18] were influenced by the British ideas of management, and several were administered by the British for a period of time for various reasons and re-organised

[16] A 'dual system' for revenue administration was established. Two naib diwans remained in charge of revenue collection, while zamindars collected land revenue from cultivators under the supervision of the Company. Subsequently, in 1769, two supervisors of the Company were appointed, but they encountered resistance from zamindars and kanungos (Abedin, 2013).

[17] The collector had emerged earlier, in 1668, when the Company had obtained zamindari rights in three villages that later grew into the city of Calcutta. In 1700, the official in charge of the administration of these areas was given the title of collector (Abedin, 2013).

[18] The difference between the wealth and influence of zamindari estates increased during the nineteenth century because of subdivision among the smaller estates, and by 1900, most zamindars had only small properties (Henningham, 1983).

along the lines of the ryotwari areas [19] (Government of India, 1952a; Henningham, 1983; Hoover, 2011; Misra, 1970; Venkatarangaiya, 1941).

Initially, as the policing powers of zamindars were abolished, the Company appointed darogas, each in charge of several villages, assisted by 15–20 armed personnel, with village watchmen subject to their orders. The darogas were paid on a task basis, that is, a sum of money for every dacoity apprehended, 10% of the stolen value received, and so on. However, a marked increase in crime ensued. After more experiments, ultimately a professional police force was established and the general management of the police force in the district was entrusted to a district superintendent of police; the subordinate officials included inspectors, head constables, sergeants and constables, with the head constable being in charge of a police station. Small armed forces were provided at district headquarters, which grew in strength over time (Abedin, 2013; Arnold, 1976; Chandra, 2009; Government of India, 1905; Misra, 1970).

The role of the district collector underwent several changes in the colonial period. At times, the district collector was marginalised and the post even abolished. The extent of the district collector' functions, especially their control over the police and judicial powers, changed from time to time. However, ultimately, the district collector emerged as the most important field-level functionary, the chief administrator of the district and the head of the magistracy, police and land revenue. The line of authority of the district collector to the provincial headquarters ran up to the chief secretary and the Board of Revenue and not to any government department. Moreover, from 1919 onwards, district collectors were increasingly involved in political work to support the colonial government, canvassing with people to take the British side, favouring 'loyal' Indians and taking offensive action against people in the opposite camp (Abedin, 2013; Government of India, 1905; Misra, 1970; Potter, 1996; Venkatarangaiya, 1941).

Most district collectors belonged to the elite Indian Civil Service. [20] They were sent to the district as per a 'tenure' system, that is, for a limited period of time. However, they were transferred far more frequently than warranted by the tenure, often spending less than a year in a district (Potter, 1996). The causes of these frequent changes included shifting of officials when they went on long leave, unexpected events such as the formation of new provinces, personal reasons such as illness, and incompetence. Additionally, after 1937, as elected provincial governments were formed, complaints from politicians demanding transfers of individual district collectors became noticeable (Potter, 1996).

[19] For example, Raj Darbangha, the most important landed estate in pre-independence India, distributed across six districts, was administered by the British through the Court of Wards when Maharaja Maheshwar Singh died in 1860, leaving an infant son. Maharaja Maheshwar Singh had distributed the estate in thikadari leases, whereby thikadars collected rent from the peasantry and received a portion in return. While the maharaja lived in luxury, the thikadars enriched themselves by rack-renting the peasantry and falsifying accounts. The British initially worked with this system but, finding it too inefficient, changed it. The estate was divided into 15 circles under circle managers who were accountable to the chief manager located at the headquarters. The circle managers directed a group of 4–5 tehsildars as assistant managers, each of whom had responsibility for a subdivision within the circle. Beneath the tehsildar were 'village servants', or jeths, in charge of collecting revenue from one or two revenue villages, keeping a commission of a few percent. Patwaris kept records of land and rent, both assisted by peons and barahils, who acted as messengers, guards and stand-over men. In addition to the above general bureaucracy, there was a specialist Law Department at the headquarters, with branches in circles, to protect the legal interests of the estate (Henningham, 1983).

[20] A total of 48% ICS officers were posted in the district in 1919 and 58% in 1938 (Potter, 1996).

At the same time, the district administrative structure acquired increasing complexity, reflecting the developments in the central and provincial governments. Various departments established their own offices and agencies in the district, and these offices came to be managed by officers of separate all-India services. For instance, by 1861, the police firmly had its own district head, the superintendent of police, in place. District forest officers (DFO) began to be appointed from 1877 onwards. The medical and sanitary arrangements of a district were under the civil surgeon. A district usually had a thousand or more officials (Misra, 1983; Potter, 1996; Ribbentrop, 1900).

The district departmental offices worked as per the instructions of their state-level offices. However, the district collector coordinated their work and acquired some authority over them (Abedin, 2013; Government of India, 1905; Misra, 1970; Venkatarangaiya, 1941). The extent of control by the department and the district collector over district officials remained a matter of contention. For example, attempts were made to make DFO totally subordinate to the collector, but ultimately, the department retained significant authority. In the Central Provinces, DFO were subordinate to collectors for unreserved forests but reported directly to the department for reserved forests. In North-Western Provinces, the DFO reported directly to the conservator of forests on matters such as accounts and establishment and to the collector on others (Ribbentrop, 1900).

The increasing complexity of the government apparatus reduced the district collector's authority. With the growth of departments and the growing availability of communication infrastructure such as the railways and the road network that enabled state departmental heads to tour the districts, the district collectors' autonomy, which had been considerable, reduced. Moreover, as commissioners to supervise the district collector were appointed for every 4- 5 districts in some provinces, the collector's autonomy eroded further. From the 1920s, as Public Service Commissions and Appointment Boards were formed in provinces, the number of patronage appointments that a district collector could make to reward supporters declined as well. Finally, as the Indian National Congress began to acquire mass support and as elected provincial governments were formed in the provinces, the district collector's authority reduced even more (Misra, 1983; Potter, 1996; Sapre, 1924).

The day-to-day administration of the district was carried out by Indian officials at various subordinate levels. The district collectors kept constant watch on subordinates, toured the districts a great deal and watched out for disloyalty to the colonial government. The lower-ranking Indian officials were looked upon with suspicion, and an elaborate system of checks, inspections and recordkeeping was set up (Potter, 1996; Sircar, 1988). In the police, the daily parade and salute to the commanding officer, the sentry at the superintendent's gate and the armed escort for British officers' tours were symbols that placed officials on a high pedestal (Verma, 2007). Moreover, senior officials often treated junior officials and workers harshly. For example, senior police officers were contemptuous of the work of the constabulary and treated them with disdain. There was a punitive system of departmental punishment, comprising fines and demotions, and the rate of dismissal was high (Arnold, 1976; Giuliani, 2015; Singh, 2002). Similarly, the dismissal of forest guards was not uncommon (Schug, 2000). School teachers were intimidated by inspectors and constantly feared punishment (Kumar, 1991).

Initiative at lower levels was reduced to a minimum. School teachers who, in pre-colonial times,

could decide what they would teach as well as the pace of teaching for each pupil, now had to follow government curricula, textbooks and teaching schedules (Kumar, 1991). Constables and head constables were not allowed to do investigative work (Government of India, 1905, 1979). Similarly, rules were drawn up to guide the work and supervision of patwaris (Moreland, 1911). Notably, the first Inspector General of Forests [21] emphasised the professionalisation and training of senior officers but opined regarding forest guards that what was 'necessary in order to ensure efficiency are local knowledge, a strong constitution, active habits, honesty and general intelligence' (Schug, 2000, p. 232). Similarly, police constables were given little training (Arnold, 1976; Giuliani, 2015). Moreover, most frontline functionaries, drawn from modest backgrounds, had had little basic education. For example, in 1927, a mere 28% of trained primary school teachers had completed middle school (Government of India, 1929).

In spite of the burgeoning administrative structure in the district, the outreach of the colonial government to the village level was limited because field administration was structured to serve the state rather than the citizens. For example, frontline functionaries, who reached up to the village level, were recruited mainly in the regulatory sectors and included patwaris to realise land revenue, police constables to maintain order and forest guards to exploit forest resources. In sectors concerned with socio-economic development and social welfare, institutions, as well as frontline personnel, were sparse. The availability of public education can be gauged from the fact that in 1927, 42.1% of boys and 10.4% of girls of the school-going age received primary education in British India (Government of India, 1929). Health facilities were all but non-existent, and the percentage of the population who went to hospitals was, at the very most, just 2.5% (Lal, 1994). [22] This orientation was visible clearly in the case of police, where an adequate number of police personnel to detect crime and prosecute criminals in rural areas—in other words, to serve citizens—were not recruited. [23] The police mainly maintained order, which served government ends (Arnold, 1976; Chandra, 2009; Government of India, 1905; Giuliani, 2015; Misra, 1970; Venkatarangaiya, 1941).

Moreover, a deliberate distance was created between the bureaucracy and ordinary people. For example, the police were housed in barracks away from the general population. Officers were not encouraged to mix with civilians, and police officials were transferred every three years (Verma, 2007). Similarly, civil surgeons were no less than 'gore rajas' or 'gore sahib' (White kings) to ordinary people. Moreover, colonial officials often indulged in royal activities such as hunting and convivial parties (Rai, 2014). In addition, the field administration was corrupt (Venkatarangaiya, 1941), which further vitiated the relationship with the community. For instance, police constables used the power of their official position to extort bribes from the weak and protect the interests of landlords and the wealthy; they turned to blackmail and extortion, and anti-police riots were frequent (Arnold, 1976; Giuliani, 2015; Singh, 2002). Similarly, patwaris could be 'a terror to cultivators' and continued to receive grains from cultivators at harvest time in addition to their salaries (Moreland, 1911, p. 76).

[21] Dietrich Brandis, a German botanist, who created the forest administration structure (Schug, 2000).
[22] The chief concern of the British health policy was the army and the European population. The Indian population was paid attention to primarily during epidemics of cholera, smallpox and the plague. The percentage of the population who went to hospitals was extremely low, at the very most 2.5% (Lal, 1994).
[23] The Police Commission (1902–03) expressed the view that it was best to let people handle petty crimes and to involve the police only in serious crimes (Government of India, 1905).

While the colonial field administrative structure was highly inadequate from the citizens' perspective, the autonomous nature of village-level governance was vitiated as well. In areas where the revenue and judicial functions were managed actively by the field bureaucracy, the importance of village communities and panchayats declined. In other areas, too, headmen and other village workers began to receive money from the colonial government in exchange for performing services such as assisting revenue collection. For example, in Bengal, in spite of the policy of letting villages do their own policing, high-ranked police established a system of rural policing that outwardly protected the idea of village autonomy but, in fact, entwined the village with the district police through layers of supervision [24] (Giuliani 2015; Jha, 2005–2006; Sapre, 1924).

Alongside the above field administration structure, a nascent structure of local bodies—boards at the district and tehsil levels and in towns—with elected and non-official members emerged during the 1860s. Services such as education, health, sanitation and water supply were transferred to local bodies to be financed by them through local taxes, thus reducing the financial liability of the government. It was also believed that associating Indians with the administration would make them less politically disaffected. While initially, no local bodies were set up at the village level, in 1915, village panchayats were set up in a few villages, and by 1920, legislation to set up village panchayats followed in most provinces (Chandra, 2009; Sapre, 1924; Venkatarangaiya, 1941, 1943).

The powers of local bodies changed over time, expanding between 1919 and 1937, but subsequently, they were limited to services such as education, public health and communication. Local bodies never developed as autonomous and effective institutions. They consisted mainly of nominated members and were presided over by district collectors. In 1882, a small number of local body representatives began to be elected, but the right to vote was severely restricted, and district officials continued to be dominant, though non-officials gradually became chairpersons of municipal committees. The government also exercised strict control over the activities of local bodies and suspended and superseded them as per its discretion. Local bodies had very limited financial resources. In 1911, the municipal boards had limited powers of taxation, and rural boards got a small cess out of land revenue and some grants. The local bodies that existed did not perform well; they were seen as inefficient, full of strife and indulging in favouritism (Chandra, 2009; Sapre, 1924; Venkatarangaiya, 1941, 1943).

The Freedom Movement and Field Administration

Parallel to the colonial field administration system, very different ideas developed in the freedom movement. On the one hand, these ideas were framed by the policy vision, as articulated in the report of the National Planning Committee of the Indian National Congress, the Bombay Plan proposed by a group of industrialists, the People's Plan drawn up by the Post War Reconstruction Committee of the Indian Federation of Labour and the Gandhian Plan, with a foreword by Gandhi himself. While these plans were set according to different economic frameworks, they all emphasised goals of improving standards of living, reducing inequality and providing public utilities (Banerjee, 2005; Qadeer, 2008).

[24] Initially, as per the law, village police were under the control of the village panchayat. But the panchayats were seen as inefficient and disinterested. At first, police officials supervised the village chowkidar in spite of the existing law. Over time, the police lobbied to get the law changed, so that the police came to supervise the village chowkidar through the district collector (Giuliani, 2015).

On the other hand, a small number of community initiatives were launched by Gandhians [25] and other activists to enhance the income of the rural populace, set up cooperative societies, promote village industries, improve sanitation, build model villages through collective decision-making, provide vocational training, and so on. These projects attempted to benefit rural communities rather than extract from them (Sinha, 2008). Consequently, the vision that was emerging was that citizens would be provided a range of social services, which would entail new field level institutions to deliver them.

In addition, as the nationalists came into frequent conflict with the colonial administration and suffered at its hands, an important idea was the need to contain the power of the bureaucracy, especially that of the district collector, who was seen as an autocrat and a living symbol of foreign domination. Instead, the concept of popular local governments received significant attention. Notably, Gandhi envisaged a radically decentralised polity based on gram swaraj, or village government. Here, the village was envisaged as autonomous and governed by five elected persons, with people's participation. District administration would be elected by the villages and would, in turn, elect state and national legislatures (Bhattacharya, 1969; Parel, 1997).

Among the popularly elected provincial governments formed in 1935, proposals for the strengthening of local governments emerged in the Central Provinces, United Provinces and in Bombay. Though these proposals differed, they showed the significance that prominent politicians and political parties of the day attached to local governments. Some proponents were in favour of extensive empowerment of local governments, including in regulatory sectors such as the police and jails, while others suggested that these be limited to social services (Mukarji, 1989; Venkatarangaiya, 1941).

POST-INDEPENDENCE DEVELOPMENTS

Introduction

After independence, the policy goals, as well as the political and legal context, changed dramatically. The directive principles of the new Constitution mandated that the state take measures to promote social justice, reduce inequality, ensure adequate livelihoods, promote universal elementary education, protect rights and promote the educational and economic interests of deprived groups, protect the environment, and so on. This framework had important repercussions for policy, as the stated government priorities shifted from revenue collection and maintenance of order to socio-economic development and social justice (Government of India, 1952a, 1957). Moreover, as India became a democracy, government officials became accountable to elected political leaders. Further, as

25 Gandhi emphasised constructive work, that is, communal amity, elimination of untouchability, prohibition of liquor, promotion of khadi, village industries, village sanitation, new or basic education, adult education, emancipation of women, general education in health and hygiene, welfare of farmers, urban labour, amelioration of living conditions of tribal people, care of lepers, and so on (Srinivasan 2006).

per the Constitution, citizens acquired fundamental rights, including rights to freedom of speech and peaceful assembly, [26] and no person could be deprived of life and liberty [27] except according to a lawful procedure, [28] thus limiting the government's authoritarian powers.

The Indian Constitution envisages a federal polity, and several key subject areas that concern field administration, including agriculture, rural development, school education, public health, social welfare, police, [29] land records and general administration are the domain of state governments. However, policy in these areas has been driven to a great extent by the central government, as it gets the major share of taxes, with which it provides funds for state subjects and, consequently, exercises considerable influence; hence, there is significant uniformity in the policies across India. Moreover, the influence of the central government extends to the structure of field administration as well, though it is a state subject, as some central government programmes provide funds for field-level organisations and officials.

The Policy Context

After independence, the government sought to achieve its goals through a planned economy in which the public sector played a key role. From the viewpoint of field administration, numerous government initiatives were undertaken for socio-economic development in the areas of agriculture,[30] poverty alleviation, [31] school education, [32] public health, [33] creation of rural infrastructure, and so on. In addition, there was a spate of progressive social legislation regarding the abolition of zamindari, ceiling on agricultural and urban land holdings, untouchability, bonded labour and minimum wages among others. Through these initiatives, government intervention in society and citizens' lives increased steadily.

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[26] Other rights include freedom to practise any profession of choice and freedom of moving and residing throughout India. However, these freedoms are not absolute, and 'reasonable restrictions' can be implemented by the state to protect public order, decency or morality.

[27] The idea of 'personal liberty' has been given a progressively wider interpretation by the Supreme Court over the years, also including the right to privacy within its purview (Arzt, 2016).

[28] A person who is arrested has the right to be informed of the grounds for their arrest at the earliest and has the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of their choice.

[29] The Constitution places 'police, public order, courts, prisons, reformatories, borstals and other allied institutions' in the State List; hence, the states have the jurisdiction to legislate on them. However, criminal law as well as criminal procedure law are in the Concurrent List, meaning that the central as well as state governments can adjudicate on them, with central laws getting precedence in case of conflict between central and state laws.

[30] The Intensive Agriculture Development Programme (IADP) was launched in 1960 in selected districts—'areas of quick response'—followed by the Intensive Agriculture Areas Programme (IAAP) and the High Yielding Varieties Programme (HYVP) in 1965 (Government of India, 1985a; Parayil, 1992; Sandhu, 2014).

[31] In the 1970s, addressing poverty became a priority, and several anti-poverty programmes were taken up and continued through the 1980s. These were of four types: individual beneficiary programmes aimed at small and marginal farmers, later supplemented by the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), in which loans were provided to persons below the poverty line to purchase productive assets; programmes for additional wage employment opportunities whereby employment opportunities were provided through the creation of public infrastructure such as the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP); programmes for ecologically disadvantaged areas, such as the Drought Prone Area Programme (DPA) and Desert Development Programme (DDP); and programmes to enhance living standards by providing social infrastructure, such as the Minimum Needs Programme (Government of India, 1985a; Parayil, 1992; Sandhu, 2014; Sinha, 2008).

[32] Through this period, the public education system was expanded, and attempts were made to improve its quality, though a large share of children below the age of 14 remained out of school (Ghosh, 1995; World Bank, 1996).

[33] Beginning with an emphasis on malaria eradication after independence, initiatives were taken to promote public health and family planning (Amrith, 2007; Connelly, 2006). Moreover, in 1975, the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) was started to address the nutrition and health of children under the age of six and pregnant and lactating mothers; additionally, it addressed pre-school education (Sinha, 2006).

At the same time, among the regulatory sectors concerned with field administration, the importance of land revenue collection declined significantly, becoming negligible over time. However, land records and dispensation of speedy justice regarding land disputes remained important. Importantly, in policing, there was substantial continuity from the colonial times. In particular, following communal riots after independence and the rise of labour agitations, political extremism, communal tensions, and so on (Bayley, 1983; Government of India, 1979), the police continued to have several 'preventive' powers of arrest, search and restraint on public assembly, [34] which was critiqued for opening the door to the abuse of fundamental rights. Moreover, maintenance of order, rather than crime detection, remained a priority for the police (Arzt, 2016; Raghavan, 1986; Verma, 2005).

The approach to socio-economic development began to shift in the 1980s, as economic growth remained disappointing, and the government adopted a more pro-business stance. This accelerated after 1991, as a structural adjustment loan was taken from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the economy was opened up to encourage private enterprise. An important development from the point of view of public administration was that there was significant emphasis on reducing the budget deficit, and the containment of government expenditure became far more important than it had been earlier. Initially, the reduction in expenditure was achieved mainly at the expense of social spending and public expenditure (Kohli, 2012; Shariff et al., 2002). For example, there was a 20% cut in the central health budget of 1992–93, and state government budgets saw even bigger cuts (Banerjee, 2005).

In the late 1990s, the growth rate of the economy picked up, though employment opportunities remained stagnant, inequality increased and human development indicators remained abysmal (Bhalla, 2018; Kohli, 2012). Subsequently, government revenues began to grow. As a result, financial investment in the development of physical infrastructure and the social sector picked up (Shariff et al., 2002), and new schemes for school education, public health, rural employment, amongst others were launched.

Public Administration

Structure

As intervention in areas concerned with socio-economic development grew, the number of government organisations of various types also grew steadily. For example, during the 1960s, a large

[34] The substantive criminal and procedural law as contained in the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act continued from the colonial era..
[35] While the police strength increased in the states, the number of detectives has remained almost constant (Raghavan, 1986; Verma, 2005).
[36] From 1993–94 to 2004–05, the GDP growth accelerated to 6.3% per annum but employment growth decelerated to 1.8%. GDP growth peaked at 9% between 2004–05 and 2009–10, while employment growth collapsed to a mere 0.22%. The share of non-agriculture private capital in the economy rose sharply, and the urban population in India grew from 27.5% in 1991 to 31.16% in 2011 (Bhalla, 2018; Kohli, 2012; Marshall & Randhawa, 2017).
[37] The central government launched the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1993 to make primary education universal, with financial assistance from external agencies. By 2000, DPEP was merged into a larger, mainly domestically funded programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which included upper primary education as well, and the funds available in the programme expanded steadily. In 2009, a new initiative for secondary education, the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) was initiated. In 2018, the two programmes were merged in the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SMSA), covering the whole school cycle.
[38] The National Rural Health Mission, a major health programme, was launched in 2005.
[39] The Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Scheme, a wage generation programme, began in 2006.

network of research and training institutions as well as departments to promote extension work were created for agriculture (Government of India, 1985b; Sulaiman & Hall, 2002). From the perspective of field administration, an important development was that the number of ministries and departments at the national and state level grew substantially (Government of India, 1969, 2009a, 2009b; Potter, 1996). Moreover, these numerous ministries and departments functioned fairly autonomously and became the key organising principle of public administration, right up to the field level.

Socio-economic development was promoted separately by different departments through specific 'schemes' in their subject areas, funded mainly by the central government in the five-year plans. A development scheme comprised one or more activities to be undertaken, such as digging wells, upgrading school infrastructure and building specified rural infrastructure. Schemes also specified unit costs, criteria for selecting beneficiaries, dimensions of the assets to be created, the process for fund disbursement, and so on. The departmental and scheme-based organisation of government activities in socio-economic development has been a constant, even when attempts have been made at convergence. For example, though the National Rural Health Mission in 2005 stated that various vertical programmes would be integrated, critics argue that this integration remains only on paper (Banerjee, 2005; Qadeer, 2008).

The number of organisations in the regulatory sectors concerned with field administration grew as well but to a more limited degree. Significantly, the five-year plans, which commanded a large share of the central government's attention and were prepared after a great deal of study and deliberation by policymakers and experts, did not address regulatory administration. Consequently, the practice of assessment and reflection that existed in sectors concerned with socio-economic development through the five-year plans was absent in the case of regulatory sectors, leading to the unquestioning continuation of several practices.

While from Independence up to the mid-1980s, government organisations and the bureaucracy were the accepted vehicles for policy implementation, subsequently, dissatisfaction with their performance began to grow within government circles, leading to attempts at management reforms and the strengthening of local elected governments (Government of India, 1985a, 1985c). After 1991, two new concerns were added to this dissatisfaction. One, focus on the containment of government expenditure, especially on the bureaucracy, increased. Notably, this emphasis remained even when government revenues rose and expenditure in the social sector increased. Consequently, increasing government expenditure on social services coexisted with a stringent approach to expenditure on human resources, and this had a significant impact on field administration.

Two, echoing a global trend towards the adoption of the principles of NPM, a greater role of the private sector in the provisioning of social services began to be envisaged, while public sector institutions were often delegitimized and labelled as inefficient and corrupt. On the one hand, there was a rapid growth in various types of private facilities in health and education, [40] and on the other, the government promoted the participation of the private sector in the provision of social services. For example, the

[40] Between 2010–11 and 2014–15, the number of government schools rose by 16,376 and the number of private schools by 71,360. Moreover, student enrolment in government schools fell by 1.11 crore, whereas enrolment in private schools rose by 1.60 crore (Kingdon, 2017).

Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), launched in 2005, promoted public–private partnership in water supply and solid waste management, as well as user fees. In health, the government provided various duty exemptions and incentives to private health facilities and encouraged public-private partnerships. However, a good regulatory structure for these facilities could not be set up (Banerjee, 2005; Kingdon, 2017; Marshall & Randhawa, 2017; Qadeer, 2008).

In the new millennium, as public services continued to be inadequate and unsatisfactory, many civil society actors began to push for greater transparency in government functioning and legal rights to social services. A spate of rights-based legislation followed. These included the Right to Information Act in 2002, guaranteeing citizens the right to get information from the government, and legislations guaranteeing rights to employment, education and food. [41] From 2010 onwards, several state governments began to pass acts that guaranteed the delivery of public services in a stipulated time period. [42]

Bureaucracy

As government activity grew, a significant expansion of the bureaucracy followed. Public employment nearly doubled during the first three five-year plans and doubled again by 1983 (Potter, 1996). At the same time, the structure of the bureaucracy showed remarkable continuity. It remained organised into numerous services that belonged to different departments. The services were divided vertically between different skills, professions and disciplines as well as horizontally into higher and lower services. 'Regular' or 'permanent' employees were recruited to the various services usually through public examinations, and they generally served in the government till retirement. In sectors concerned with socio-economic development, several new services were created, and additional personnel were recruited to existing services. Personnel in regulatory administration increased as well. State police forces grew rapidly, their numbers increasing from 3.81 lakh in 1947 to 11.52 lakh in 1991. Further, several additional central police forces were created (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (n.d); Kamtekar, 2017; Raghavan, 1986).

Government employees were divided into four 'classes', with class 1 employees being the most senior and class 4 employees the most junior; promotional avenues from one class to another remained small. For example, the Police Commission (1979–81) envisaged a radical restructuring of the police force, with recruitment at only two levels, constable and the Indian Police Service (IPS), instead of at four levels, constable, sub-inspectors, deputy superintendent of police and the Indian Police Service, to enable rapid promotion of police constables. However, in spite of subsequent government reports echoing this recommendation, there was no action (Government of India 1979, 2015). Moreover, though during the freedom movement, Indian nationalists had aimed to abolish the Indian Civil Service, it was simply replaced by the generalist Indian Administrative Service, and its members occupied most of the leadership posts in the central and state governments. As the government forayed into new areas, it also began to hire new types of specialists, and many specialists resented the

[41] The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed in 2005, followed by the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, or Right to Education (RTE) Act, mandating the state to provide free and compulsory education to children between six and 14 years, and the National Food Security Act in 2013.
[42] The first such act was passed in Madhya Pradesh (Thulaseedharan, 2013).

overall control of generalist administrators (Potter, 1996).

However, the hierarchical structure of the bureaucracy was softened in two important ways. One, not only did the racial basis for slotting people into higher and lower services end, but the Indian Constitution mandated reservations for scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) in proportion to their population in government posts. Consequently, the social base of the bureaucracy widened, especially at senior levels. However, the lack of promotion avenues for junior officials meant that different social classes aspired to different levels of services, and no amount of ability and hard work could enable junior employees to secure more than one or two promotions. At the same time, in 1993, the Government of India introduced reservation for other backward classes (OBCs) in direct recruitment at the broad rate of 27% (Government of India, 2016), though such reservations had already been made in several states. In the new millennium, some state governments also attempted to increase the representation of women in the bureaucracy. For example, by 2020, 27 states and union territories had reserved posts for women in the police (Bureau of Police Research and Development, 2020).

The second important mitigation of the hierarchy was that the difference between the emoluments of senior and junior government employees narrowed considerably, and the salaries of junior employees rose significantly. In the central government, the ratio of the salary of the highest and lowest paid government employees shifted from 1:36.4 in 1946–47 to 1:10.7 in 1986. However, in the 1990s, as economic growth picked up, the salaries of senior private sector personnel rose significantly, and the differential between the highest and lowest salaries in government showed a small rise as well, reversing the declining trend of the past.

After the 1990s, as the concern with containing government expenditure grew, the orientation towards the bureaucracy within government changed. Notably, the highest expenditure in the delivery of services is usually on personnel (Radnor et al., 2014). Consequently, a reduction in the financial resources expended on the bureaucracy can enable significant savings. Initially, in the 1990s, in several states, new recruitments were frozen, and posts lay vacant. However, as government revenues and programmes increased and more personnel were needed, the cost-cutting approach towards the bureaucracy manifested itself in two ways. One, additional personnel for new programmes were simply not provided, which led to an increase in the workload of the existing employees. Two, contractual employees were recruited, often at very low salaries. Notably, till the 1990s, with some exceptions, most government servants were 'regular' employees, that is, they had tenures in government till retirement, unless dismissed as a consequence of disciplinary action. At senior levels, the permanent bureaucracy remained the bedrock of the human resource policy, though new types of consultants were recruited on contract as replacement in some posts (Qadeer, 2008). However, at the junior levels, the permanent bureaucracy was increasingly replaced with low-paid contractual employees, with important repercussions for field administration.

Patronage and Rent-Seeking

In newly independent India, the subordination of the bureaucracy to the democratically elected leadership was an important concern, but the authority of political leaders was established quickly

(Mukarji, 1989). While this is essential in a democracy, because of the type of politics that evolved, this development had negative consequences as well. Beginning in the 1970s, political power came to be increasingly centralised, and a personalistic working style was adopted by top leaders. This was followed by the rise of patronage-based functioning and rent-seeking in public life (Kaviraj, 1988; Kohli, 2012; Rudolph & Rudolph, 1987).

Importantly, transfers and postings of officials began to be used liberally to reward and punish them on the basis of loyalty to politically powerful actors. The bureaucracy was politicised and became increasingly corrupt (Potter, 1996). For example, Bayley (1983) sees the Emergency in 1975 as a turning point for the police, when the level of politicisation increased substantially. This situation did not abate after the Emergency was lifted. Notably, the National Police Commission (1979–81) was extremely concerned about this politicisation, and it specified areas where direction by the government was appropriate and where it was not (Government of India, 1979). The extent of the problem can be gauged by the fact that the National Policy of Education 1988 commented on transfers of teachers, a routine administrative procedure, stating that guidelines would be formulated to ensure objectivity (National Policy on Education, 1988).

As the economy began to grow from the late 1990s onwards, along with the growing clout of business interests and increasing government expenditure, rent-seeking increased further, as illustrated by a series of high-profile corruption scandals from 2010 onwards. The patronage-based management of the bureaucracy through transfers and postings continued unabated as well (Bardhan, 2001; Chadda, 2013; de Zwart, 2010). For example, a government report noted rampant corruption in the police as well as a willingness to be manipulated by the party in power. This dynamic is illustrated vividly in the trajectory of a public interest litigation filed before the Supreme Court in 1996, [43] requesting the Court to direct the union and state governments to implement the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1979–81). In 2006, the Supreme Court gave directions to the government, most of which were aimed at reducing political interference in the postings of police personnel and checking misconduct. However, compliance from states was not forthcoming. When in 2012, the Supreme Court ordered all state governments to file affidavits regarding their compliance with its judgement, three major state governments raised constitutional objections against the 'interference' by the Supreme Court.

Administrative Reform

Notably, administrative reform has not been an important political agenda for any political party. The first Administrative Reform Commission (ARC) was set up in 1965 and undertook a comprehensive examination of the administrative system (Potter, 1996). However, several of its recommendations were ignored. Similarly, the central government set up the National Police Commission in only 1977, in spite of several demands much earlier. The National Police Commission completed its work in 1981, submitting eight reports between 1979 and 1981, which were largely ignored by subsequent governments (Bayley, 1983). [44] The second ARC was set up in 2005; it too made numerous

[44] In 1953, the Annual Conference of Inspector Generals recommended that a police commission be set up, but the central government did not agree, on the grounds that the police was a state subject. Subsequently, several state police commissions were set up in the 1960s (Bayley, 1983; Government of India, 2005).

recommendations, but no significant changes implemented as per its recommendations are visible. Another sign of the lack of initiative for administrative reform is a surprising uniformity in the public administration systems across states. By and large, instead of deliberating on ways to improve their public administration systems, state governments have simply continued earlier systems and added organisations and personnel in response to funds available from the central government.

Instead, from time to time, piecemeal changes have been attempted. One such change is the constant attempts at innovations with structures to bypass the main administrative system. For example, in the late 1980s, several 'missions' focussing on specific goals were formed, and after the 1990s, some programmes came to be delivered through 'societies' formed especially for the purpose. Another change has been the increasing use of technology in the government (Common Cause and Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2019). The use of digital technology in the government has accelerated considerably after the launch of the 'Digital India' programme in 2015.

Field Administration

Introduction

The trajectory of field administration after Independence has been one of significant continuities from the colonial era, along with changes led by the policy goals of the government. The district has remained the key unit of field administration. At the same time, district boundaries have been drawn and redrawn several times. Given the growth of population and the increase in government activities, the number of districts has risen steadily. For instance, in 1981, India had 361 districts, with an average district population of around 1.8 million (Mukarji, 1989), while as per the 2011 census, the number of districts had increased to 640, with an average population of over two million (Census of India, 2011).

Below the district level, a key shift that was observed after independence was that as the zamindari system was abolished, the varied field administrative set-ups across the country were replaced with a fairly even one, based on the kind that existed in the ryotwari areas. For example, in Bengal, where there were no subdivisions, the same was created, and in permanent settlement areas, where there were no revenue officials below the subdivision, tehsildars, revenue inspectors and patwaris were appointed (Government of India, 1952a; Venkatarangaiya, 1953). The field administrative structure was markedly different only in north-eastern areas identified in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, [45] which requires a separate analysis and is not addressed in this paper.

Expansion of Role

The role of field administration expanded significantly as activities related to socio-economic development and social justice became increasingly important. The regulatory functions continued, and new administrative functions such as conducting elections arose as well. A study team set up by the ARC in 1967 identified the following nine broad groups of functions of the district administration

[45] In these areas, fairly autonomous 'district councils' were created, with a variable structure below the district level.

(Government of India, 1967):

- Regulatory administration, including maintenance of law and order, ensuring public safety and tranquillity, control of crime and administration of jails.[46]
- Revenue administration, including maintenance of land records, adjudication of land-related disputes and the assessment and collection of land and other public dues.
- Development administration, including agriculture, irrigation, cooperation, animal husbandry and fisheries.
- Social welfare, including public health, education and social welfare.
- Executive functions, including control, regulation and distribution of food and civil supplies, holding elections of parliament, state legislatures and local bodies, administration of local bodies and management of emergencies and calamities such as floods and famines.
- Residuary functions, such as small saving schemes and contributions to public loans.
- These roles of field administration remain till today, but they have expanded and become more complex (Government of India, 2009b). For example, in keeping with national programmes, field administration was charged with special thrusts regarding the holistic development of villages in the 1950s, agriculture development in the 1960s and 1970s, poverty alleviation in the 1980s, and so on. At the same time, maintenance of law and order has remained an important role. Moreover, democratic and media pressure has made this a more sensitive and demanding task. Additionally, management of natural calamities such as floods and droughts is held up to much higher standards than in the colonial times. Land revenue collection has declined steeply in importance, as it is no longer a significant source of government income, though the maintenance of land records and resolution of land disputes remain critical functions. In addition, conducting elections for the national and state legislatures and local governments has been added to the general administrative role.

Structure

After independence, while the structure of regulatory administration, related to revenue, police and forest, continued from the colonial era, the appropriate field institutions to promote socio-economic development became the subject of many policy discussions (Government of India, 1952b, 1956). An important initiative from this point of view was the Community Development (CD) programme, launched in 1952. The CD programme, influenced by the various village development projects carried out earlier and by international expertise, aimed to bring about the holistic development of villages by addressing several aspects of rural life such as agriculture, rural infrastructure, school education and sanitation. In the programme, [47] the 'block', a new sub-district administrative unit, comprising a hundred or so villages, was created. The block was around the size of an average tehsil but was of a more even size than the tehsils of highly varied sizes. The block was viewed as a unit for planning socio-economic development, supporting holistic village development. The staffing

[45] Administration of justice was included in the report, but as a responsibility of the judicial courts rather than of the district administration.
[46] In the CD programme, a project was established over a 'unit' of approximately 300 villages and a population of two lakh, and each unit was divided into three blocks (Government of India, 1985; Sinha, 2008).
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pattern prescribed for the block comprised a block development officer (BDO) as the head, assisted by 'extension officers' and multi-purpose gram sewaks or village-level workers [48] (Dantwala & Barmeda, 1995; Government of India, 1985a; Sinha, 2008).

As the CD programme was reviewed by the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1957, inadequate public participation was identified as a significant drawback. This led to a key development in field administration. As per the recommendations of the committee, a three-tier structure of elected rural local governments or panchayats—the zilla parishad (ZP) at the district level, the block panchayat at the block level and the gram panchayat (GP) for one or more villages—was established in most states. The panchayats were expected to elicit people's participation and lead socio-economic development, and the block panchayat was expected to be the most important tier (Government of India, 1957; Mathew, 1994). Notably, the thrust for panchayats was propelled by the goal of socio-economic development. [49] From this time onwards, panchayats came to be identified with socio-economic development and the provision of civic services, rather than the holistic self-government envisaged by Gandhi. [50] These panchayats, known as 'first-phase' panchayats, were often captured by local elites. An important development at this time was that in Maharashtra and Gujarat, ZPs were empowered and came to play a leading role in socio-economic development (Bailey, 1965; Ghosh & Kumar, 2003; Mukarji, 1989; Sharma, 2009).

However, in the mid-1960s, as the country came to the brink of famine, an agriculture policy focusing on the intensive use of technology and selected areas with good growth prospects was adopted, [51] and the CD programme was abandoned. For field administration, this was an important turning point because as the CD programme ended, panchayats were disempowered in most states as well. Even in Maharashtra and Gujarat, the powers of panchayats were reduced, and in some states, even elections to panchayats ceased to be held regularly. Correspondingly, the idea of holistic village development was replaced with separate departmental programmes for socio-economic development, and field administration became the implementation arm of different departments rather than an integral part of local governments (Government of India, 1978; Jain et al., 1985; Mathew, 1994; Hanumantha Rao, 1994).

As panchayats were marginalised, new departmental offices and organisations, with their own heads and staff, began to be set up in the district, and the number of organisations in the district grew significantly (Dayal et al.,1976; Government of India, 1985a; Misra, 1983). For example, in the 1970s, 'Krishi Vigyan Kendras' (farm science centres) began to be set up at the district level to provide technical inputs to farmers. As poverty alleviation programmes began, separate agencies were created to implement them, which morphed into the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) in 1980, responsible for various rural development programmes. A District Industries Centre was started to

[48] In the CD programme, the recommended staffing pattern included eight extension officers for agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, panchayats, rural industries, engineering, school education, and programmes for women and children, 10 gram sewaks or village level workers, two gram sevikas, a programme assistant, a storekeeper-cum accountant and ministerial staff (Government of India, 1985a).
[49] The report of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee shows a distrust of local politics and implicit faith in the bureaucracy (Sharma, 2009
[50] In policy documents, a role for panchayats in regulatory administration has been proposed as well, especially in Kerala, but has not been attempted not in practice (Mukarji, 1989; Sharma, 2009).
[51] This led to a significant increase in food production, resulting in the Green Revolution.

promote small-scale industries (Government of India, 1985a; Sulaiman & Hall, 2002). After 1988, district institutes of education and training (DIETs) began to be established with the aim of providing pre-service and in-service teacher training and academic support to schools (Government of India, 1989). At the same time, the block survived as a unit. However, it was not a site for planning the socio-economic development of the area, as had been envisaged, but one where offices and organisations of several developmental departments such as agriculture, rural development, education and health were created.

At the grassroots, organisations to provide social services grew rapidly as well. For instance, between 1950 and 1985, there was a 136% increase in the number of primary schools and an eightfold increase in the number of upper primary schools. Moreover, new types of organisations began to be set up, including anganwadi centres (AWCs) to cater to the needs of children below the age of six and pregnant and lactating mothers and public health centres at the block sub-health centres below the block (Amrith, 2007; Connelly, 2006; Ghosh, 1995; Government of India, 1969, 1985a, 2009a, 2009b; Potter, 1996; Parayil, 1992; Sandhu, 2014; Sinha, 2008). Moreover, as government revenues picked up after the late 1990s, the number of grassroots institutions increased significantly. For example, between 1991 and 2015–16, the number of recognized primary schools grew from 0.56 million to 0.84 million, and the number of recognized upper primary schools from 0.15 million to 0.43 million (Government of India, 2018).

Yet, the question of elected local governments continued to be raised and debated in Indian policy from time to time. After the Emergency in 1975, when democracy had come under threat (Kothari, 1990) and the rural sector grew in importance (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1987), the Ashok Mehta Committee was appointed to review panchayats. Learning from the models developed in Maharashtra and Gujarat, the committee, concerned with agriculture development and rural industrialization, stressed the role of ZPs, rather than block panchayats. It suggested a two-tier structure of panchayats, at the district and 'mandal' level, the mandal being a unit smaller than the block, with a population of 10,000 to 15,000 (Government of India, 1978).

The recommendations of the Asoka Mehta Committee were not received well in most states (Sethi, 1989). However, in a few states, panchayats were empowered (known as 'second phase panchayats'), of which initiatives in West Bengal in 1978 and Karnataka in 1983 are the most notable. In Karnataka, as recommended by the Asoka Mehta Committee, the block was replaced with the mandal, and the district and mandal panchayats played an important role in socio-economic development and were the key tiers. In West Bengal, GPs played an important role in land redistribution and poverty alleviation programmes (Crook & Manor, 1998; Ghosh & Kumar, 2003; Mukarji, 1993). However, in most of India, a coherent, relatively autonomous local government structure did not develop.

In the late 1980s, as poverty alleviation programmes did not deliver as expected (Dreze, 1990; Swaminathan, 1990), concern regarding their 'poor implementation' grew within the government. Panchayats were sought to be strengthened again by giving them constitutional status (Government of India, 1984, 1985c; Sircar, 1988). While initial attempts were not successful, [52]in 1993, the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments established a three-tier structure of panchayats at the district, block and village levels, along with the gram sabha or an assembly of voters. It became mandatory to hold

[52] The 64th constitutional amendment bill was introduced in 1989 to give constitutional status to panchayats, but it was not passed.

elections to panchayats and municipalities every five years and ensure reservations in seats for SCs and STs in proportion to their ratio in the population while reserving one-third of seats for women. This changed the structure of field administration, as the presence of elected local governments was ensured.

Though as per the Constitution, local governments were to play a key role in planning for and implementing schemes for socio-economic development and social justice, states had the power to make decisions concerning the actual devolution of funds, functions and functionaries (also known as 3 Fs) to local governments. In most states, elected local governments remained disempowered, and departments continued to direct activities in the field. An exception here was Kerala, where, in 1996, GPs were provided significant untied funds, which they could use according to their own priorities. While departments continued to recruit and promote personnel, decide their service conditions and take major disciplinary actions, the day-to-day supervision of field personnel and some minor punishment powers shifted to the local governments (Isaac & Franke, 2000; Sharma, 2009).

While local governments have remained disempowered in most of the country, since the 1990s, three types of shifts in the structure have been attempted to deal with the problem of 'poor implementation'. One, new organisations have been set up parallel to the existing ones to implement specific programmes, the goal being to bypass existing inefficient structures with more effective ones. However, there is little evidence of any significant gains. For example, separate district-level societies, along with block and cluster resource centres to support teachers, were set up to implement the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), which began in 1993 in educationally backward districts with the aim of ensuring universal primary education (World Bank, 1997). In 2000, the DPEP morphed into the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), a larger country-wide programme that included upper primary education, and these separate structures were retained. However, although the DPEP societies were provided with more diverse human resources and greater technical support initially, over time, they came to resemble regular government structures (Sharma, 2009).

Two, after the 1990s, greater public participation was sought by creating community-based organisations (CBOs), which included citizens along with relevant frontline functionaries. Unlike local governments, separate CBOs were set up by different departments. For example, in 1990, the Forest Department set up Joint Forest Management Committees. These committees were charged with the protection of forests and given a share of the sale of forest produce obtained from the protected tracts (Schug, 2000). In the mid-1990s, Village Education Committees (VECs) were set up in DPEP, and as per the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, School Management Committees (SMCs) are mandatory in all elementary schools, and parents of children studying in the school had to constitute at least 75% of the members of SMCs. SMCs take decisions regarding expenditure and are expected to monitor the schools. Similar committees also exist for secondary schools. Other departments set up similar committees as well. The criteria for membership to these committees varied from simple nomination by the department to informal elections. Studies show an uneven performance of such community-based organisations, with most taking little initiative (Murali et al., 2003).

Finally, there were some attempts to privatise social services after the 1990s. As noted earlier, the

availability of private social services, such as schools and health facilities, kept rising (Kingdon, 2017; National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, 2016; Qadeer, 2008). An important corollary was that better off people shifted to private facilities, and government facilities increasingly catered to the poor. Within government structures at the field level, there were limited moves towards institutions set up with public–private partnerships. In agriculture, a new approach to agriculture extension was initiated through the Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA), a district-level registered society, established through a World Bank-funded project, bringing together key stakeholders from public, private and non-government organisations to provide services to farmers on the basis of projects as per local needs (Gulati et al., 2018; Sulaiman & Hall, 2002; Sulaiman & Holt, 2002). In some states, attempts were made to privatise health services as well (Pachauli & Gupta, 2015).

Notably, as urbanisation began to speed up in the new millennium, the vision of field administration in urban areas remained unclear. For example, small urban settlements were divided into 'statutory towns' that had elected municipalities and 'census towns' that had no effective urban governance structures. Moreover, peri-urban areas, or rural areas that acquired urban characteristics, were largely neglected in policy (Marshall & Randhawa 2017). Additionally, in some social sector subjects, government facilities remained underdeveloped. For instance, urban primary health care was neglected till 2013, when the government introduced National Urban Health Mission to set up a system of primary health care in urban areas, and remains underdeveloped (Government of India, 2019; Sah et al., 2019).

Personnel

Personnel at the field level have rarely been the subject of study, except for some work on individual frontline functionaries. In fact, 'personnel at the field level' is not even a category within government. The personnel in the field are drawn mainly from various state departmental services, barring the district collector, superintendent of police, DFO and, occasionally, other officers who belong to all-India services. State services that comprise frontline functionaries such as patwaris, school teachers and police constables and junior level supervisors such as tehsildars and police sub-inspectors work almost exclusively in the field. Senior field personnel can rotate in various types of posts at the state headquarters, training institutes and other departmental organisations, though personnel from state services usually spend a significant part of their career in the field. Notably, state-level departmental offices exercise almost complete control over recruitment, promotion and posting and have tightened their control over time. For example, while till the early 1990s, district collectors in most states had the power to appoint class 3 and 4 personnel on a temporary basis and to transfer them, these powers have shifted increasingly to the state level departmental offices (Mukarji, 1989; Potter, 1996).

Unfortunately, because of a lack of interest on the part of policymakers as well as the academic community, information about how human resources developed and changed in the field is not accessible. However, a few key facts might be noted. To begin with, as was the case with the bureaucracy in general, with the expansion of government activities, the number and types of officials at the field level grew steadily. For example, as the public health system developed, doctors and auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) were appointed. When the Integrated Child Development Services

(ICDS) programme began in 1975, a whole set-up was created to implement it, including a district women and child development officer with some staff at the district level, an ICDS project officer at the block level, supervisors below the block level and anganwadi workers (AWWs) at the anganwadis. Similarly, between 1951 and 1992, the annual growth rate of the number of teachers was 2.8% for primary teachers and 6.3% for upper primary teachers (World Bank, 1997). Between 2003–04 and 2012–13, the teacher workforce in elementary schools in India almost doubled (National Institute of Planning and Administration, 2016). The number of male health workers and ANMs grew from 1.33 lakh in 2005 to 2.34 lakh in 2019, an increase of about 75.9% (Government of India, 2019).

As programmes for socio-economic development grew, the role of the district collector changed. During the 1960s, as ZPs were strengthened in Gujarat and Maharashtra, a chief executive officer (CEO) was appointed as their administrative head, becoming the pivotal point for programmes of socio-economic development in the district, and the role of the district collector in socio-economic development reduced considerably (Inamdar, 1977). Most policy documents recommend this system (Government of India, 1967, 1978, 1985a). However, in most states, junior officials were appointed as CEOs of ZPs, and the district collector became the administrative head not only in regulatory matters but in socio-economic development as well (Misra, 1983; Potter, 1996). Consequently, the district collector's role expanded significantly.

Up to the mid-1990s, barring a few exceptions, field-level employees were part of the 'regular' or 'permanent' bureaucracy. Along with the rest of the bureaucracy, the salaries of field employees increased steadily. For example, between 1950–51 and 1987–88, the average annual salary of elementary school teachers increased 3.2 times in constant prices, along with benefits such as fixed medical allowance or reimbursement of medical expenses and retirement pensions (Shah, 1998; World Bank, 1997). An important exception here was the AWWs, who were paid very poorly and had no security of tenure (Sinha, 2006). At the same time, for the bureaucracy as a whole, the postings and transfers of field-level employees became increasingly patronage based after the 1970s, and this practice shows no signs of abating. Police officers who resisted political pressures faced frequent transfers (Bayley, 1983). In some states, teachers approached middlemen to get postings of choice or paid bribes (Beteille, 2015; Sharma, 2009). Similarly, a study of the Training and Visit System in agriculture noted 'widespread and disruptive' staff transfers of extension workers (Feder & Slade, 1984).

After the 1990s, the changed approach to the bureaucracy had an enormous impact at the field level. In particular, the service conditions of many frontline functionaries deteriorated, as low-paid personnel, hired on contract, began to be recruited. For example, between 1995 and 2000, more than 200,000 'para-teachers' had been recruited. The required qualification for para-teachers was lower than that of regular teachers, and in 2000, the salary of para-teachers varied between Rs. 900 to Rs. 3,000 per month against regular teachers' salary of about Rs. 5,000 per month. While some state governments were cautious, recruiting a small number of para-teachers as a temporary measure, in a few states, regular teachers ceased to be recruited at all and were declared a 'dying cadre'. [53] Over time, in many states, contractual teachers began to be hired in upper primary and secondary schools too (Kingdon & Sipahi Malini-Rao, 2010; Sharma, 1999). The para-teacher policy began to

[53] In Gujarat and Maharashtra, para-teachers were appointed to educate children in habitations that did not qualify for formal schools or as additional teachers in single teacher schools or in schools where the pupil–teacher ratio was high. Madhya Pradesh was the first state to stop recruiting regular teachers altogether, replacing them with para-teachers recruited through panchayats (Kingdon & Sipahi Malani-Rao, 2020; Sharma, 1999).

shift after 2012, and regular teachers began to be recruited. However, the idea of low-paid frontline functionaries, hired on contract, had come to stay, and several state governments, along with the central government, began to recruit such frontline functionaries. Notably, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS) rozgar sahayak and the accredited social health activist (ASHA) recruited from 2006 onwards in central schemes, were paid poorly and lacked security of tenure (Bhatia, 2014; Joshi & George, 2012).

It is difficult to comment on how the professional competence of field-level officials changed over time because data about their qualifications and training is not maintained. However, one secular trend was that the educational qualifications of government servants in the field rose steadily. For example, in the case of primary school teachers, the Kothari Commission in 1966 recommended a minimum education up to class 10 and up to the 1960s, a large proportion of teachers had no pre-service education. But by 2016–17, only a little over a quarter of government teachers did not have graduate degrees, and just 8.3% had not completed higher secondary school. Moreover, nearly 85% of government school teachers had teacher training diplomas or degrees (National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, 2018). Similarly, the qualifications of police constables also increased, with several graduates joining by 1979 (Government of India, 1979).

The emphasis on the professional training of field officials varied across departments. For example, attempts at promoting professional competence were made in agriculture (Gulati et al., 2018; Sulaiman & Hall, 2002; Sulaiman & Holt, 2002) and school education; while the attempts were fairly successful in agriculture, they were less so in school education (Government of India, 1985c, 1989) However, in the police, the quality of training was very inadequate at junior levels (Verma, 2005). The training of AWWs was brief and often of poor quality (Tikku & Jain 1989; Paul, 1988; Salil, 2009), while many forest guards received no training whatsoever (Schug, 2000). After the mid-1990s, in-service training began to be given more importance in some departments (Vasan, 2002).

Infrastructure

The infrastructure at the field level developed slowly. For instance, in the 1970s, the police wireless network was confined to the district headquarters and important police stations. Most police stations had no vehicles, and a large number did not have telephones. Similarly, in 1987, more than 8% of primary schools lacked buildings, almost 6% operated in thatched huts and 14% in kuccha (mud) buildings. Inadequate number of classrooms, lack of water supply and toilets were common, while libraries and other classroom equipment such as maps, charts and educational games were non-existent (World Bank, 1997). According to a study conducted in Maharashtra, most health sub-centres lacked buildings and residential quarters for ANMs (Jesani, 1990).

However, as government revenues increased, substantial improvement came about in the infrastructure. For example, the building infrastructure and equipment in elementary schools improved a great deal (National Institute of Planning and Administration, 2016). In 2018, 98% of police stations had vehicles, 94% had telephones, and 99% had wireless sets, though 13.4% of police stations still operated out of hired buildings (Bureau of Police Research and Development, 2018). Similarly, while in 2003, about 55% of sub-health centres lacked government buildings, by 2019, the

figure had reduced to 25%. Further, in 2003, 78% of sub-health centres did not have tap water, but by 2019, more than 80% had regular water supply (Mavalankar & Vora, 2008; Government of India, 2019). However, in some cases, such as AWCs, the improvement in physical infrastructure was modest (John & Srinivasan, 2019).

Functioning

How field administration functioned at various points of time has rarely been documented. However, the development of some basic features may be noted. One, an emphasis on status and the continuation of a command-based hierarchical style of working from the colonial times is indicated. For example, a study conducted during the 1970s showed that field officials saw complying with the orders of superiors as their most important duty and feared adverse remarks in their annual appraisal reports (that formed the basis for promotions), transfers and even termination of service, though this was rare if they did not. Junior officers felt that they could not do much to initiate a policy or modify a programme. Senior officers could make unexpected demands, and junior officials, fearing how they would be evaluated, could not question their superiors. Moreover, at times, pleasing superiors included cooking up data and doing their personal work (Potter, 1996).

This trend appears to have continued. In a recent country-wide survey of police officials, 39% of respondents reported the use of harsh or bad language by seniors, and 61% of the constabulary reported that junior officers were asked to do senior officers' personal or household tasks (Common Cause and Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2019). One manifestation of this working style is the 'orderly system' in the police. Formally, constables were attached to senior police officers at their residence to work as orderlies to attend to visitors, take telephone calls, pass on messages, and so on. However, constables posted as orderlies were misused for housework, a system that continued in spite of recommendations in several government reports that it be stopped (Government of India 1979; Rao et al., 1980). There are also indications that from time to time, rigid and unrealistic targets were set for the field administration. For example, a study in Maharashtra showed that to fulfil family planning targets, health workers made extra efforts that were not part of their formal duties, such as taking care of the patient's family, providing transport for relatives, keeping good relations with prospective cases and even providing extra cash, food and alcohol (Jesani, 1990).

In addition, field administration became increasingly partisan and corrupt. Illegitimate pressures on officials from politicians increased steadily. Over time, field-level officials became more compliant to illegitimate orders from politicians and administrative heads (Mukarji, 1989; Potter, 1996). For instance, the police were pressured to drop cases against politically powerful people and file trivial charges against political opponents. Local politicians sat in police stations to act as a buffer between their supporters and the police, and officers who resisted pressure faced frequent transfers. Moreover, drunk, insolent and corrupt policemen were saved from disciplinary action through political influence, leading to a general decline in the working ethos (Bayley, 1983). Similarly, the Report of the National Commission on Teachers commented that teachers had been politicised, leading to the emergence of 'teacher-politicians'. Several formed alliances with political actors to get postings of choice (Government of India, 1985a).

At the same time, along with the improved infrastructure, the use of technology increased in the field after the 1980s. For example, the digitization of land records began in the 1980s. In 2004, a project known as Common Integrated Police Application (CIPA) was introduced to digitise instances of crime and criminal records at police stations. A Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System was created, which morphed into a system to link police stations (Common Cause and Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2019). Since 2015, several government processes and citizen interfaces have been digitised, and funds in various schemes have been transferred directly into the accounts of beneficiaries through direct benefit transfer (DBT).

Field Administration and Citizens

The interaction between field administration and citizens has grown in multiple directions. Field administration has become a site where citizens can obtain a range of services and benefits, becoming a critical part of people's lives over the years. This development sets the field administration in independent India apart from its colonial predecessors. Its very role and activities have become oriented towards citizen welfare, rather than revenue collection and maintenance of order, and an extremely cooperative and collaborative relationship might be expected between the field administration and citizens.

This positive development has, however, been marred by two factors. One, the authoritarian approach towards citizens has continued, especially in the regulatory parts of field administration. For example, a survey in 1965 showed that a sizable proportion of the urban respondents, especially from North India, believed that police questioning was 'rude and tricky' and expected the police to be rude and brutal. Another survey of court witnesses in 1978 indicated that nearly half were of the opinion that the police had a threatening attitude, and one-fifth found them rude. Yet another survey conducted in Tamil Nadu in 1982 revealed that a substantial number of respondents did not think that the police were responsive to the needs of the common man (Raghavan, 1986). The Police Commission (1979–81) noted that the police needed to change their rough style. They needed to interact more with the public and in a more civil manner (Government of India, 1979).

The second problem is rent-seeking, which has made field administration exploitative. According to the Padmanabhaiah Committee (2000), the police showed a lack of fairness and impartiality in dealing with the public, especially in the investigation of crime. Another government committee noted that a widely held perception was that the police took care of the interests of the political and social elite. Similarly, the Report of the National Commission on Teachers indicated that citizens were disillusioned with teachers because of their preoccupation with private tuitions and income-generating activities (Government of India, 1985b).

A CASE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

This part of the paper describes the findings of a case study [54] of a district situated in Madhya Pradesh, conducted in 2017 and 2018. The case study analyses the structure, functioning and dynamics of field administration, to delineate key areas for future research as well as policy shifts for a more effective delivery of social services, improved policy implementation and enhanced responsiveness to citizens. In the case study, the administrative structure of the district, its human resources and processes of working were examined. Subsequently, an analysis was conducted regarding how these impacted the outcomes on the ground in terms of provision of social services, problem-solving, community interface, and so on.

In the case study, the overall administrative structure of the district was delineated. Subsequently, eight sample departments addressing different areas- Revenue, Forest, Panchayat and Rural Development (P&RD), School Education, Public Health and Family Welfare, Women and Child Development (WCD), Public Health Engineering (PHE) and Cooperation were investigated in detail in terms internal structure, human resources, processes of working and dynamics. Across these departments, 41 organisations, including 19 supervisory organisations, 15 grassroots organisations and seven panchayats, were studied. Broken up into administrative jurisdictions, 11 of these organisations were at the district level, three at the subdivision level, seven at the tehsil/ block level and 20 at the sub-block and village level (Table 1).

[54] The detailed case study can be accessed through the following link.

Table 1: Departments, Organisations and Panchayats Studied

Name of department	Department role	District	Subdivision	Tehsil/ block	Sub-block/ village	Themes explored
Revenue	Regulation and coordination	District collector's office superintendent land records	Sub-divisional magistrate	Tehsil	No organisation	Mutation in land records
Forest	Regulation and social development	District forest office	Sub-divisional office (Forest)	No organisation	No organisation	Provision of forest produce for people's needs
Education	Social development	District education centre	No organisation	Block education office	5 Primary schools	me
		District institute for education and training		Block resource centre		
Woman and Child Department	Social development	District programme office	No organisation	Child development project office	5 Anganwadis	Addre-ssing child malnu-trition
		District women empowerment office		Block women empowerment office		
Public Health	Social development	District chief medical and health office	No organisation	Community health centre	3 Sub-health centres	Provision of antenatal care
Public Health Engineering	Social development	Executive engineer office	Sub-divisional office (Public Health Engineering)	No organisation	No organisation	Repair of hand pumps
Cooperation	Social development	District marketing office	No organisation	No organisation	2 Cooperative societies	Provision of seed and fertiliser to farmers
Number of departmen-tal organi-sations		10	3	6	15	

Number of local government institutions		1	NA	1	5	
Total number of organisa-tions studied		11	3	7	20	

To understand the situation on the ground, five sample villages of varying sizes and social composition were selected in a sample block with over 40% population of STs. [55] The grassroots organisations, including five primary schools, five AWCs, three sub-health centres (SHCs) and two cooperative societies, were situated in these villages. During the case study, 95 interviews were conducted with officials, elected panchayat representatives (PRs), frontline functionaries, personnel from non-government organisations and journalists. Additionally, 13 focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with people from different social groups in the sample villages (details of methodology in Annexure 1). A limitation of the study was that no urban areas were studied in detail because of practical reasons.

The district in which the case study was conducted [56] had a population of 12.4 lakh as per the 2011 census, a little lower than the average district population at the state and national levels, and the sample block had a population of 1.3 lakh (Annexure 1, Table 1). The population in the five sample villages ranged from less than 800 to over 6000, and their distance from urban centres varied. Among the five sample villages, two were large villages, with a mixed population of castes belonging to the SC, ST, general and OBC categories. In three villages, the ST population was high. The smallest village was classified as a 'forest village' because of its proximity to the forest (Annexure 1, Tables 2a and 2b).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

As per the 2011 census, nearly 69% of the population of the district and 83% of the sample block were rural. The district had 961 villages (899 revenue villages and 62 forest villages), of which 921 were inhabited, and 12 towns (seven statutory towns and five census towns). [57] The sample block had 119 villages, of which 108 were inhabited, and a small part of a town. In the district, 40.9% of the area was classified as forest area. [58] The SC population of the district was 16.5% and that of the sample block was 15.3%, while the ST population was 15.9% and 40.3%, respectively. The average literacy rate of the district was around 75%, with the literacy rate of women lower than that of men by around 20%; the literacy rates of SCs and STs were lower than the average by 4% and 15%, respectively.

[55] When necessary, a tehsil, which overlapped substantially with that of the sample block, was taken as a sample.
[56] The name of the district is withheld to protect the identity of the interviewees.
[57] Statutory towns are places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee. Census towns are places that have a population of at least 5000, with 75% or more of the male population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits as their main occupation, and the population density is at least 400 persons per square kilometre (Census, 2011).
[58] Source: Provided by an official.

The district economy was based primarily on agriculture and allied activities. However, only 43% of households owned land, and the average size of land holdings was less than two hectares (Annexure 2 Table 1 and Figure 1). The percentage of irrigated area was high compared to the national average, as the district had a major dam. Animal husbandry was an important source of livelihood as well. In the sample block, the forest provided some sources of livelihood and resources such as fuel wood for daily needs, though forest resources were dwindling. The opportunities in sectors other than agriculture were limited. As per the 2011 census, a large proportion of the workers comprised agricultural and other types of casual labourers. The Socio-economic and Caste Census (SECC) data showed very low earnings for a large proportion of the population. In 75% of households in the sample district and 79% of households in the sample block, the highest-earning member earned less than Rs. 5000 per month. Ownership of assets such as vehicles and refrigerators revealed a similar picture.

In all the sample villages, households from general and OBC categories were economically better off and enjoyed the highest social status, while the tribal households were the poorest (Annexure 2, Table 2); however, in two villages, almost all the people were poor. The wealthy owned land, shops, small restaurants or dhabas and small businesses. Some people, employed in or retired from the army and local government had reasonable incomes. Those who had little or no land worked as sharecroppers or casual labourers in nearby towns and villages. People also worked in dhabas, as porters at bus stands or in brick kilns. Women collected minor forest produce and fuelwood from the forest or worked in low-level government jobs and as casual labourers. Children collected minor forest produce and worked in family farms after school and during holidays. In FGDs, villagers identified lack of employment and low wages as one of the most important problems and expressed the need for more livelihood generation activities.

All the villages in the district, including the sample villages, were connected by pucca or all-weather roads; of the total road network, 50.2% in the district and 15.2% in the sample block were pucca. [59] Inside the sample villages, many hamlets where poor people lived were not connected to the main village by pucca roads. As the state had privatised road transport, private buses plied to towns and the block headquarters and jeep taxis in the interior areas. In the sample villages, the bus service was uneven. Buses were frequent in two villages and infrequent in one, and no bus came to two of the villages, forcing villagers to walk, drive or hire vehicles to other villages for a bus. Among the sample villages, the two-way cost of travelling to the nearest town varied from 7% to 29% of the daily wage in MGNREGS. Apart from road transport, the district had 12 railway stations. All the villages were connected with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) mobile towers.

The main source of drinking water in the district comprised public hand pumps, though piped tap water supply was available in towns and some villages. Wells and ponds too were sources of drinking water. As per available data, all the habitations in the district had hand pumps, while 19.1% in the district and 26.7% in the sample block had a tap water supply. [60] Three of the five sample villages had a tap water supply, albeit for a limited time period, and some areas of the villages were excluded from this supply (Annexure 2, Table 2). In four sample villages of which information was available, 28.6% of

[59] Source: District Agriculture Census Handbook 2016.
[60] Source: Executive Engineer, Public Health Engineering, District Statistical Handbook 2016.

hand pumps were out of order. During interviews, several panchayat representatives reported water scarcity, especially in the summer, as a key problem; the same was highlighted by the villagers during FGDs.

Nearly all (98%) of the villages in the district had electricity connections, [61] though 20 villages in the sample block did not. In the sample villages, a large majority of the households had electricity connections, but the electricity supply was interrupted for 6–10 hours every day. For agriculture, big farmers had permanent electricity connections and the rest obtained temporary ones. Electricity bills were a major bone of contention between the people and the department. In two sample villages, electricity had been disconnected a week before the fieldwork because the bills had not been paid. In one village, many households had received large electricity bills, and the families had no idea why such sums were due.

Government education facilities at the primary level (classes 1 to 5) were widespread, and in the district, on average, there was more than one school per village. For the upper primary stage (classes 6 to 8), on average, one school was available for 2.5 villages, which meant that children from more than half the villages had to travel to another village. At the high school (up to class 10) and higher secondary (up to class 12) stages, education facilities were limited; on average, a high school served 5.7 villages and a higher secondary school 13.2 villages (Annexure 2, Table 3). The number of schools in the sample villages varied from one to 12. The larger villages had more schools, including schools that offered education for the higher grades (Annexure 2, Table 5).

In the district, there were a total of 26 health centres with doctors, including 17 public health centres (PHCs), [62] two civil hospitals, six community health centres [63] and a district hospital. [64] Notably, though one PHC is expected to serve a rural population of 30,000, in the sample district, a PHC served a population of around 50,000 on an average. In addition, there were 173 sub-health centres, [65] which had ANMs and where the doctor was expected to visit once a week. None of the sample villages had a medical facility with a doctor, and three out of five had a sub-health centre. There were 1771 AWCs to provide nutrition, health and pre-school education support to children below the age of six and to pregnant and lactating mothers in the district, which worked out to more than two per village on an average. The sample villages had between one and 10 anganwadis, a total of 26 (Annexure 3, Tables 3, 4 and 5).

In addition, in the district, there were 94 branches of national banks, 13 of the cooperative banks and 175 post offices. [66] Among the sample villages, one had a bank branch. In the sample villages, several

[61] Information obtained from district officials.
[62] A primary health centre is the first public health facility with a doctor and six indoor/observation beds. One primary health centre is expected to cover a population of 30,000 in plain areas and a population of 20,000 in hilly, tribal or difficult areas (Government of India, 2019).
[63] A community health centre is a 30-bedded hospital, while the civil hospital has 60 beds. It provides referral as well as specialist health care in rural areas (Government of India, 2019).
[64] A district hospital is the second referral centre for the whole district, along with specialist services (Government of India, 2019).
[65] Sub-centres are responsible for providing services for maternal and child health, family welfare, nutrition, immunisation, diarrhoea control and control of communicable diseases. Sub-centres also communicate with the community to foster better health practices (Government of India, 2019).
[66] Source: District website.

households had television sets. In three villages, newspapers were available in shops, but in two, these had to be accessed from outside. Two large villages had several shops and facilities such as marriage halls, while another had a small number of shops for daily needs scattered across the village; in two of the villages, there were just 5–7 shops, where groceries, tobacco and limited foodstuff could be purchased.

ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF FIELD ADMINISTRATION

Introduction

The area of the district was classified in various ways. As per the 2011 census, 98.2% of the area was classified as rural and 1.8% as urban. The rural area was further subdivided into 'revenue' areas, with most of the rural population living in 'revenue' villages, and 'forest' areas, which comprised mainly forestland, with small settlements of people at the edge of the forest known as 'forest' villages. The forest area was subdivided into two categories: reserved forest and protected forest, [67] with the former having stricter provisions for the protection of vegetation and animals. Another area type was the 'tribal' area, with a large population of STs, such as the sample block; these areas had special legal protections and programmes. [68] In addition, two area chunks were under the control of the Defence Ministry of the Government of India. An important point to be noted is that most of the villages were quite small, the average village population being 886 as per the 2011 census, and more than a third of the villages had a population below 500, though the population across villages was quite variable [69] (Annexure 3, Table 1). Moreover, there were 1397 'habitations', a habitation being a contiguous area. [70] Many villages comprised more than one habitation. While village boundaries were fixed, habitations changed, such as when new colonies came up.

The study showed that the structure of field administration was complex and the scope of its work wide. The role of the numerous organisations in the district encompassed enforcement of law and order, infrastructure creation and maintenance, socio-economic development, provision of social services, revenue collection and general administration. The government provided a large number of services to the citizens (Annexure 4, Table 2). Table 2 shows the provision of services by eight sample departments.

[67] Of the total forest area of the district, 65.7% was classified as reserved forest and 34.3% as protected forest (Source: District Agricultural Handbook 2016).
[68] There are special provisions for such areas in the fifth schedule of the Constitution.
[69] As per the 2011 census, in the district, the largest village had a population of 9557 and an area of 4975.9 hectares. The smallest village had merely seven people and 13 hectares.
[70] The sample block had 243 habitations in 119 villages (data obtained from officials).

Table 2: Role, Structure and Provision of Services to Citizens in 8 Sample Departments

	Role	Structure	Services Provided to Citizens
Revenue	The department has specific responsibility for maintaining and updating land records, management of public land, summary resoluti on of land related disputes and collection of land revenue. It plays a critical role in the management of calamities such as droughts and earthquakes, and in maintenance of law and order. At the district and subdivision level, it is a coordinating department.	The department is headed by the district collector, who is also the administrative head of the district. There is also a superintendent land records (SLR) exclusively for land-related matters. At the subdivision, there are offices of the Sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) and at the Tehsil level there is the Tehsildar. The DC's, SDM's and Tehsildar's offices also function as revenue courts. At the grassroots, there are Revenue Inspectors (RIs) and Patwaris.	Certificates and documents such as voter ID cards, caste and birth certificates, copies of land records Financial assistance in case of disasters and accidents
Forest	The department protects and manages the forest area, for which a ten-year plan is prepared. It is responsible for tree plantation, cutting of old trees and prevention of forest crime, and registers cases for the same. The laws in terms of activities permitted are far more stringent in the reserved forest than in the protected forest. Cases of major crimes are presented in court while those of minor crimes decided on by forest officials. The department provides various types of forest produce to ordinary people through Nistar and Consumer Depots for the rural and urban population respectively at subsidised rates and through commercial depots to business persons by auction. It also provides compensation for loss of life, limb and animals by wildlife.	The forest area of the district is divided into two administrations. One is of a tiger reserve area with rich wildlife, spanning three districts. The second is the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) for the remaining forest area of the district. Under the DFO, there are three Sub-divisional officers (SDO) of Forest. Below that level, the area is divided in two ways. There are seven territorial ranges managed by rangers. Theseare further subdivided into 30 sub-ranges, managed by deputy rangers, and 138 beats, managed by beat guards. The area is also divided into three production ranges, which are concerned with felling of trees.	Dispute resolution in land-related cases. Forest produce, such as bamboo, wood and more, that people need for their daily needs at subsidised rates to people living near the forest.
Panchayats and Rural Development	The department focuses on creation of livelihoods and infrastructure in the rural areas. It also regulates Panchayats. Panchayats are responsible for socio-economic development in the rural areas, for which they are the coordinating institutions.	Given separately for Panchayats (Annexure 3, Table 8)	Wage labour as per community demand Houses to those without houses or very poor houses Subsidies for toilet construction for farmers below the poverty line (BPL), and for SC, ST, small and marginal farmers Construction and repair of public infrastructure such as roads, burial grounds and others Provision of civic services such as sanitation
School Education	The department is responsible for education from primary to higher secondary levels and adult literacy. It manages government schools, ensures enrolment of all children in elementary education, organises pre-service and in-service teacher training, provides textbooks and other student benefits and conducts examinations and tests.	The work is divided among three streams of organisations, led by the district education officer (DEO), the district institute of education and training (DIET), and the District programme office (DPO) respectively. While the DIET is a stand-alone structure at the district level, the DEO and DPO have separate offices at the block level, that is the block education officer (BEO) and the Block Resource Centre. In addition, the department had created Jan Shiksha Kendras, which are higher secondary and high schools to monitor elementary schools with the assistance of some staff. In the field, there is a network of schools providing various levels of education.	Free education for elementary school children Provision of midday meals, free textbooks, uniforms, scholarship to SC and ST students to elementary school students, and bicycles to high school students

Public Health and Welfare	The department provides basic health services through hospitals and health centres which can be accessed by citizens. It focuses especially on maternal and child and preventive health care. It is responsible for public education and activities such as surveys, health camps and campaigns for a range of health issues. It is responsible for regulating private health care.	At the district level, the Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) is the overall head of the department. There is a separate district hospital run by the civil surgeon. Below the district, at the block level, there are five Community Health Centres (CHC) and two civil hospitals which are up-graded CHCs. Added to these were 14 Primary Health Centre (PHC), and 173 sub-health centres.	Free health care, regular check-ups and advice related to antenatal care and safe delivery,
Women and Child Development	The department is concerned with the nutrition and health of children in the 0-6 age group and of pregnant and lactating mothers, as well as adolescent girls. It runs centres for the pre-school education of children in the 3-6 age group. It is also responsible for the empowerment of women, with a focus on preventing mortality of the girl child, addressing domestic violence, protection of children in difficult circumstances and juvenile justice	There were two streams of management organisations. One led by the DPO, and the Child Development Programme Office (CDPO) at the block level, was concerned with children from the 0-6 age-group. The second led by the District Women Empowerment Office and five Block Woman Empowerment Offices, handled issues related to women's empowerment, orphans, and juvenile justice. The grassroots organisations of both streams of the Women and Child Development (WCD) department were the Anganwadis. There were also specialist organisations. The Juvenile Justice Board was responsible for hearing cases of children who had transgressed the law. The One Stop Centre was a centre where victims of domestic violence could stay and get medical and legal help.	For children in the 0-6 age group, as well as pregnant and lactating mothers, supplementary nutrition, vaccination, health care and special care is provided Counselling in case of malnourishment Pre-school education for children in the 3-6 age group Education linked financial aid to new-born girls Counselling to adolescent girls Shelter and legal aid to women in case of domestic violence
Women and Child Development Public Health Engineering	The department aims to provide safe drinking water. It instals and maintains hand pumps, sets up tap water schemes in villages, tests the quality of water and takes up activities for water conservation, re-charging and rainwater harvesting.	There are two streams, 'civil' and 'mechanical'. The office of the Executive Engineer (Civil) is responsible for programme implementation and general situation for drinking water in the rural area of the district. The SDO of Mechanical was responsible for installing new hand pumps and repairs which needed sophisticated equipment.	Safe drinking water through hand pumps and tap water schemes
Cooperation	The department promotes and regulates and monitors the functioning of co-operative societies in agriculture, fisheries, housing and more. It provides input and marketing support to farmers' cooperative societies.	At the district level, for two combined districts, the deputy registrar for Cooperatives was responsible for the management of the cooperative societies, including registration, elections, inspection and audit. The Cooperative Bank provided loans to farmers. [71] The district marketing officer was responsible for ensuring supply of inputs such as seeds and fertilisers to the societies and managed Godowns for storing supplies. Below the district, there were three types of organisations: branches of the cooperative banks, cooperative societies and godowns.	Subsidised rations through the public distribution system Subsidised seeds and fertilisers to farmers Loans on low interest Support in purchase of various farm produce as decided from time to time by the government

The structure of field administration can be understood along three axes. In the first axis, the 'departmental axis', there were numerous organisations of 37 state government departments, linked robustly with their state departmental offices. In the second axis, the 'local government axis', elected panchayats at three levels in rural areas—ZP at the district level, janpad panchayat (JP) at the block level and GPs for one to four villages—and municipalities in urban areas, were responsible for socio-economic development and the provision of civic services as per the law. In the third axis, the 'district collector (DC) axis', the district collector functioned as the administrative head of the district and had their own staff. Each of these streams is described briefly below.

[71] The Cooperative Bank has a Board and a manager. The Board is selected by the societies. Elections are held every 5 years, and 11 people are elected to the Board.

Departmental Axis

In terms of broad goals, the field departmental offices could be classified as 'regulatory', focused on law enforcement and maintaining order, 'revenue collecting', focused on collecting government revenues, and 'socio-developmental', focused on providing social infrastructure, economic development, livelihoods and social services, though many departments combined more than one goal (Annexure 3, Table 2). The thrust of two-thirds of the departments was on socio-economic development and delivery of social services. Six departments were concerned with law enforcement. Only one department was concerned primarily with revenue collection, though three regulatory departments also collected revenue. The structure showed that the main thrust of field administration was on socio-economic development.

The departmental offices can also be divided into four types in terms of their focus (Annexure 3, Table 2). The large majority, a total of 25, were subject-focused, dealing with matters such as education, health, policing or forest management. Cutting across these were four client- or beneficiary-focused departments, concerned with the protection and welfare of vulnerable sections of society such as SCs, STs, women and children. In addition, there were five expertise-focused departments, concerned with statistics, public relations, and so on, while three departments were of a hybrid nature.

These departmental offices functioned quite independently. Each had its own manpower and financial wing. In fact, below the district level, departmental offices did not even have a common geographical administrative unit. Of the eight sample departments (Table 3), three adopted subdivisions, though the boundaries of these subdivisions were not the same, three worked as per blocks, while the revenue department had a separate unit, the tehsil. Though the number of tehsils and blocks was similar, around half the tehsils and blocks shared the same boundaries, while others did not. The tehsil headquarters of the sample block was located 17 km away from the block headquarter. The Cooperation Department created units as per commercial logic, and the Forest Department as per the types of trees and vegetation. Below the block level, the units were even more varied. For example, each sample department had a different name and headquarters for its sub-block unit, except for two departments, Revenue and P&RD, which had created a common sub-block unit. [72]

Table 3: Units of the Eight Sample Departments

Department	Units of departments			Whether it includes	
	Subdivision level	Tehsil/ block/ equivalent	Sub-block level	Urban area	Forest area
Revenue	Subdivisions: 5	Tehsils: 8	Revenue Inspector Circle: 25	Y	N
Revenue	SubDivisions: 3 Range: 7 Territorial + 3 Production Sub-Ranges: 30 Beats: 138	Tehsils: 8	Revenue Inspector Circle: 25	N	Y

[72] The number of patwari halkas had been increased from 214 to 427 around 10 years ago to match the number of GPs.

Public Health and Family Welfare	Nil	Block: 7	Primary Health Centres: 14 Sub-health Centres: 152	Y	Y
Women and Child Development	Nil	Projects: 9	Supervisor circles: 65	Y	Y
Public Health Engineering	Subdivision: 4	Nil	Nil	N	Y
Cooperation	No fixed units, organisations are started on the basis of commercial logic.			Y	Y

Within the departments, there were two broad types of organisations. The first were management organisations at various levels responsible for the supervision of grassroots institutions, employees and programme implementation. The second broad category comprised non-management organisations. There were 5072 such organisations (Annexure 3, Tables 3 and 4), among which the largest number provided social services, such as schools, AWCs and hospitals. Other organisations included law enforcement agencies such as revenue courts, police stations and jails; commercial organisations, which bought and sold goods or provided loans, such as the mandi (agriculture market), cooperative banks and public distribution system shops; and technical institutions such as water testing laboratories and teacher training institutes. Some organisations were hybrid types, supervising as well as providing services. Among the sample departments, health centres at the block level provided health care as well as managed employees and programmes. Revenue agencies functioned as courts and management agencies.

However, in spite of the large number of organisations, several departments had very limited outreach to citizens (Annexure 3, Table 5). A total of 16 departments had no presence below the district at all, and another three departments had no presence below the sub-divisional level, which meant that half the departments were difficult for citizens to access. Another four departments had no presence below the block level and could be called partially accessible. In all, only 38% of departments existed below the block level and could be accessed easily by people. Among seven sample departments, leaving out P&RD, which is considered in the subsequent sections, four had organisations below the block level: schools of the School Education Department, sub-health centres of the Public Health Department, AWCs of the WCD Department and cooperative societies of the Cooperation Department. In the other three departments—Revenue, Forest and PHE—grassroots workers were allotted areas below the block level. A limitation of the study was that no department without organisations below the district and subdivision level was examined in detail.

An important characteristic of the departmental organisations was that they were controlled tightly

[73] All departments had such organisations in the district except the departments of Higher Education and Technical Education and Skill Development, which were managed from the state level. The management office of two departments, Cooperation and Water Resources, was situated at the district headquarters but was responsible for more than one district.

by their state-level offices. In departments concerned with socio-economic development, nearly all funds were tied to government schemes. Among the sample departments, this was the case for School Education, Public Health, PHE and WCD. In turn, the schemes were rigid, and activities, unit costs, and so on were specified narrowly. Consequently, these departmental field organisations did not work towards outcomes, such as reducing child malnutrition, but carried out pre-defined activities, such as providing supplementary nutrition to children, irrespective of their actual impact. In addition, scheme activities often addressed an issue only partially. For example, in the main scheme of the PHE Department, provided for the installation and repair of hand pumps, though all the officials interviewed said that the real problem was that the water table was falling, because of which hand pumps were drying up, and water conservation as well as use of water sources other than groundwater was needed.

An exception to the scheme-based approach was the Forest Department, which worked on the basis of a 10-year plan, prepared to address the needs on the ground. Additionally, as the Revenue and Cooperation departments functioned mainly on the basis of laws, officials had more freedom because they applied general principles of law to specific cases. However, in all departments, the state-level offices exercised tight control over human resources, in recruitment, [74] transfers, promotion and punishment, except in some matters regarding very junior functionaries. The level of departmental control can be gauged from the fact that there was no organisation to manage human resources in the district.

Moreover, subject-based departments existed alongside client-based departments, and the role of client-based departments was not envisaged clearly. For example, pre-primary education was handled by both the School Education and WCD departments. This did not mean that the two departments shared expertise with each other. Instead, it meant that both the departments managed separate pre-school centres. Similarly, the SC & ST Welfare Department undertook activities that were conducted by other departments as well. For example, in tribal areas, appointments of teachers were made by the SC & ST Welfare Department, while in other blocks, this role was performed by the School Education Department. Yet it was difficult to see how this improved the education of tribal children in any way. Similarly, while land revenue was collected by patwaris, house tax was collected by GP staff, though both addressed the same clientele for similar purposes.

Within some departments (Table 2), there was an extreme division of functions across several organisations. For example, in the School Education Department, the work was divided among three streams of organisations: the District Education Office (DEO), DIET and the District Programme Coordination (DPC) Office. The DEO and DPC streams had separate offices at the block level, the Block Education Offices (BEO) and the Block Resource Centres (BRCs), though the DIET had no outreach below the district level. The administrative work was divided between the DEO and DPO and the academic work between the DPO and DIET. Moreover, duties concerning classes 1 to 8 were divided among various organisations, while those related to classes 9 to 12 were handled solely by the DEO. A district-level official said that there were problems with the responsibility of classes 1 to 8 being split across two separate offices. Sometimes, the DPO stream conducted an inspection, got a teacher

[74] The recruitment of senior and mid-level officials is undertaken by the State Public Service Commission..

suspended by an order of the DC, and the DEO, which handled the establishment, did not get to know about this.

The Panchayat Axis

Though, as per law, panchayats were leading institutions for socio-economic development (Table 4), in practice, they were disempowered. While across the world, local governments do not match national and sub-national governments in terms of their authority, in many countries, they are key organisations at the local level. For example, in the United States, local governments are active in financing and implementing social welfare policy, managing schools, providing housing and even addressing policy issues such as issuing minimum wage ordinances. They raise nearly two-thirds of their own revenues, obtaining the rest from intergovernmental transfers. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, local governments control the police and take substantial initiatives for economic development and the provision of social services (Craw, 2015; Imrie & Raco, 1999).

Table 4: Functions of Panchayats as per the Panchayat Raj Avam Gram Swaraj Act 1993

Zilla Parishad (ZP)	Janpad Panchayat (JP)	Gram Panchayat (GP)
Prepare plans for economic development and social justice, for the district and ensure execution Supervise works of the JP and GPs Recommend projects to the State Government. Administer and control employees transferred by the State Government to Panchayats.	Prepare plans for economic development and social justice Integrate the GP's plans and submit them to the ZP Ensure execution of all works and projects Supervise works of the GPs Recommend projects to the ZP Provide emergency relief in cases of natural calamities, manage local pilgrimage sites, ferries, public fairs and markets.	Prepare plans for economic development and social justice and submit them to the JP Ensure execution of all projects entrusted to it Monitor Committees of Gram Sabha and allocate funds to it Consider applications for establishing colonies in the GP area

In contrast, panchayats had very meagre funds to spend as per their priorities. State departments transferred funds to their district departmental offices, not panchayats, except for the P&RD Department, which transferred funds to panchayats for its schemes, that is, for stipulated activities. Consequently, though as per law, panchayats were mandated to prepare plans for socio-economic development and social justice, in the sample ZP and JP, no plan was prepared. Moreover, during interviews, officials of the ZP and JP were unclear about the extent of their authority. In the ZP, officials were unable to identify the departments under its control. Files of some departments passed through ZP officials, but they were not certain about the issues on which various departments sought comments or approval. As there was no coherent sub-district unit, the JP could access only the

departments represented at the block level and had little authority over them.

GPs acted largely as implementation agencies for the programmes of the P&RD Department and undertook a few activities of other departments, mainly construction work. In addition, tap water schemes, once set up by the PHE Department, were handed over to the GPs. Moreover, the size of the GPs was highly variable and often too small to justify a proper administrative set-up. The sample GPs comprised one to four villages, and their population varied between 2000 and 6500. Moreover, a special problem with GPs was that their boundaries were changed from time to time by the state government, usually to increase their numbers. In one sample GP, the boundary had been changed twice, once in 1986 and then in the late 1990s. Another GP was expected to be assimilated into the neighbouring municipal corporation. Such boundary changes meant that a database for GPs could not be created easily.

In terms of structure, panchayats may be seen as comprising two wings: the political wing, formed by elected representatives, and the administrative wing of officials. The political wing of the panchayats was an egalitarian structure, as there were reservations for marginalised groups and PRs were drawn from all sections of society (Annexure 3, Table 6). Moreover, an analysis of the socio-economic status of 84 GP PRs in the sample GPs showed a good representation of the poor, though a drawback was that their education level was low, and they lacked experience in public life. However, some PRs had experience in cooperatives, federations or political movements (Annexure 3, Table 7). [75]

The lack of clarity about the role of panchayats was such that their administrative structure was diffused. Broadly, the structure of the ZP could be envisaged as three concentric circles. The centre was constituted by the 'core' ZP, with its limited staff and which enabled activities such as panchayat meetings, events and so on. In the second circle were offices related mainly to P&RD schemes, transferred to the ZP. [76] For each of these, there were separate scheme guidelines, staff and budgets. The scheme staff reported to the CEO of ZP on a day-to-day basis and sought approval on many issues. Finally, the third concentric circle comprised several departments, which ran their schemes and programmes independently, secured some approvals from the ZP and were reviewed by it. At the GP level, there were some attempts to coordinate departmental functionaries, such as inviting them to the GP and gram sabha meetings, but the GP had little say in the day-to-day working of the departmental organisations.

The political leadership of the panchayats, though far from perfect, contained some motivated and active local leaders, who were passionate about local issues. When asked about their motivation for becoming PRs, a majority said they wanted to do good work for the area, help people and raise awareness about local issues in appropriate forums. In the case of some PRs, this motivation was very strong. In one GP, two of the interviewed PRs had contested the election, because they wanted to rectify the failings of the previous GP, which had been defunct and corrupt. In another GP, PRs who

[75] Similar information about the ZP and JP PRs could not be obtained. The ZP members interviewed were postgraduates. One had been a cooperative society member and another had been elected to the ZP for the second time. The JP president had studied only up to class 5 but had been a GP sarpanch for three terms. One female member had studied up to class 12 but another had no formal education and could only sign her name. Neither had had any experience in public life before becoming janpad members.

[76] The schemes transferred were the Pradhan Mantri Grameen Awas Yojna, National Rural Livelihood Mission, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Swachch Bharat Mission and Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

had been members of a radical political party and of a women's federation were asked to stand for elections by the people and were committed to working for the deprived. All these PRs were extremely active.

However, five out of seven female PRs interviewed reported standing for elections in seats reserved for women because of family pressure so that their husbands or other family members could exercise control. Interestingly, one male GP PR interviewed had become a GP member because his wife was the sarpanch (president), and as a PR, he would be in a position to direct her. [77] However, female PRs who had participated in a radical political movement and in women's federations were exceptionally motivated and active. Additionally, some PRs simply used the panchayat for personal gain. For example, one sample GP was not functional, as the husband of the female sarpanch was engaged in rent-seeking and had scant interest in the GP.

The District Collector Axis

The DC's authority derived from numerous laws, from the fact that they commented in the annual appraisal reports of most district heads and from specific powers delegated by state departments regarding programmatic decisions, personnel and financial approval. Notably, although, as per the Panchayat Act, socio-economic development was to be led by panchayats, departments delegated authority to the DC, as is indicated by the fact that the DC, and not the ZP president or the CEO of the ZP, chaired various departmental committees. Moreover, the CEO of the ZP reported to the DC and the CEO of the JP to the sub-divisional magistrate, (SDM) so much so, that though many department heads were supposed to submit their annual appraisal reports for remarks to the CEO of ZP, interviews revealed that they sent these straight to the DC. Consequently, the DC's role was very wide, as illustrated by the fact that the DC had powers under 71 central and state acts and was the chairperson or member secretary of 82 departmental committees. However, it is extremely doubtful whether it is possible for any person, no matter how capable, to do justice to such a wide role.

Moreover, as each department took its own decision regarding the functions it delegated to the DC, the DC's authority was uneven across departments. The DC had little say in the Forest and Cooperation departments, and the PHE Department had provided powers to the DC only in case of emergencies. On the other hand, two departments, School Education and WCD, had delegated substantial powers approvals to the DC regarding programmes, disciplining junior officials and financial matters. In the School Education Department, interviewees reported that state-level officials often talked to the DC on various issues, rather than to the departmental officials. One department, the Public Health and Family Welfare Department, while not involving the DC in human resource and financial management, had involved the DC in planning and strategizing (Annexure 3, Table 8). The varying powers delegated by departments made little logic in terms of coordination of activities. For example, the provision of drinking water was a key problem and required multifaceted activities, where coordination from the DC would have been useful, but the DC's authority here was much less than

[75] An odd situation had arisen in one GP. During the elections, persons who had not paid electricity dues were barred from contesting. As many people in the village had pending electricity bills, several seats were left vacant. Over the next six months, people who had paid their bills were asked by the panchayat to contest and were elected. As a result, several people who were interested in contesting elections but had not paid their electricity bills could not contest, while many uninterested candidates were elected, and they remained uninterested.

in School Education, where less coordination was required. The picture that emerged was that the DC's authority was considerable but ill-defined and patchy, and the DC's capacity to coordinate was uneven.

Below the district level, the SDM's authority, like the DC's, was defined as per law in matters of land and law enforcement. With respect to socio-economic development and social welfare, the SDM was in many ways expected to be like a mini DC and was often asked to play a coordinating role in the subdivision. However, the SDM did not comment on the performance appraisal reports of departmental officials in the subdivision and had no financial powers. Consequently, the departmental officials attempted to evade their control, often leading to a situation where the SDM had responsibility without authority. Below the SDM, revenue officials were not expected to play a significant coordinating role. As a result, the mechanism for coordination grew weak below the district level and was non-existent below the subdivision level.

Implications

The study showed that the field administration had a wide role, and a large number of organisations had been set up to address various aspects of this role. In this sense, significant capacity existed at the field level to achieve a range of policy goals, provide various types of social services and address citizen needs. However, it is also clear that as field administration had developed to achieve various national goals from time to time, without much attention to its organisation, it had acquired an ad hoc, lumpy structure, with several fault lines.

The case study showed that the most significant problems with the structure were the disempowerment of panchayats and the establishment of a large number of departmental agencies controlled by their state-level offices. Consequently, in spite of its sprawling character, the structure of field administration limited the capacity to respond to citizens. As panchayats were marginalised, easy access of citizens to governing structures was reduced. At the same time, nearly two-thirds of the departments had no organisations that were within easy physical reach of ordinary people.

Additionally, the field administration was not structured to work towards outcomes and resolve local problems. Working towards results can require varied strategies as well as changes in strategies over time. This, in turn, requires decision-making as per the context. However, the marginalisation of panchayats reduced the decision-making capacity in the field, as the legitimacy of decision-making by officials is much lower than that of elected representatives. The articulation of organisational goals in terms of scheme implementation added to this shortfall. Moreover, the possible gains from the high motivation of several PRs to resolve local issues were missed.

Further, achieving goals and addressing problems require coordinated action, but coordination was very difficult because of a very large number of organisations, the lack of a common administrative unit and coordination mechanisms below the district level and fuzzy, impractical mechanisms at the district level. Notably, research shows that, as a rule, chances of coordinated action decline as the number of agencies increase (O'Toole & Montjoy, 1984). Moreover, studies on networks of organisations show that network effectiveness is enhanced if networks are coordinated centrally

through a single core agency (Provan & Milward, 1995).

The department-based field administration structure was also inefficient, with pointless duplication of activities across departmental organisations.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Structure of Human Resources

There were 11,769 government personnel in the district, of which 78.3% were regular and 21.7% were contractual employees. Among the regular employees, less than 2% were class 1 employees, 7% class 2, 71% class 3 and nearly 20% class 4. The majority of the employees were class 3 and included most of the frontline functionaries and junior-level supervisors. Class 1 employees were usually district heads, while class 2 employees manned various supervisory posts. In addition, contractual employees worked as programme managers and experts and as frontline functionaries (Table 5).

Table 5 : Types of Government Employees in District

Employee role	Regular/contractual	Categorization	Level at which they were situated
Supervisory and managerial	Mainly regular but some on contract	Mainly class 1 and 2, some class 3	District, subdivision, tehsil, block
Experts	Mainly regular but some on contract	Mainly class 1 and 2, some class 3	District, subdivision, tehsil, block
Frontline functionaries	Regular and contract	Class 3	Sub-block
Office workers	Mainly regular but some on contract	Class 3	District, subdivision, tehsil, block
Helpers	Regular and contract	Class 4	District, subdivision, tehsil, block

The core human resources of departmental organisations were drawn from two or more state departmental services. Out of the eight sample departments, four departments—Revenue, Forest, WCD and Cooperation—recruited only generalists, while two departments—School Education and PHE—hired personnel with specialised qualifications in teaching and engineering respectively. Two departments hired both types of personnel. In the Public Health Department, health centres had doctors and para-medical staff who had specialised qualifications but the frontline functionaries did not. The P&RD Department had generalists, supplemented with an engineering service. In addition, a development after the mid-1990s was that the sample departments had added a few specialists, programme managers, sub-engineers and Management Information System (MIS) personnel on contract. Table 6 breaks the different types of personnel across the sample departments.

Table 6 : Types of Personnel in Sample Departments

Department	Basic Cadre of Supervisory and Expert Staff	Field Cadre	Additional Personnel
Revenue	Generalists are recruited and subsequently trained Cartographers and tracers are recruited at junior levels	Revenue Inspectors and Patwaris are recruited and subsequently trained	District, subdivision, tehsil, block
Forest	Generalists are recruited and trained subsequently	Forest or Beat Guards are recruited and subsequently trained	Nil
Panchayat and Rural Development	Generalists are recruited and trained subsequently Engineers are also recruited	Panchayat secretaries and MGNREGS rozgar sahayaks are recruited and subsequently trained	Programme Managers are hired for specific schemes. They are usually generalists
Education	Trained teachers are recruited and promoted	Trained teachers were made temporary workers hired on contract, but now have benefits similar to regular employees Guest teachers are hired as needed	Inclusive Education Coordinator to assist children with disabilities, sub-engineers and Management and Information Services (MIS) coordinators have been added.
Health	Doctors, nurses and other medical staff are recruited Staff is also recruited for education and media	Auxiliary Nurse and Midwives (ANMs) have no medical qualifications and are trained by the department. They are regular employees, though many ANMs have been hired on contract against vacant posts Multi-purpose workers, male workers similar to the ANM, have been declared a dying cadre ASHA is recruited locally in the Gram Sabha, trained and paid per case	Programme managers, staff for monitoring and evaluation have been added.
WCD	Generalists are recruited and subsequently trained	Anganwadi workers, hired as temporary workers, are generalists and receive training after recruitment	Nil

PHE	Engineers are recruited	Technicians with specialised qualifications are recruited as temporary workers	Social mobilizers, water testing technicians, such as chemists and lab technicians, have been hired on contract.
Cooperation	Generalists are recruited and subsequently trained Market specialists are recruited in the District Medical Office (DMO)	Managers of cooperative societies are recruited by the societies. Recently, service rules for these employees have been issued	Nil

The sample departments recruited 26 types of frontline functionaries. PHE, P&RD and School Education departments had specialist grassroots workers, including engineering diploma holders and teachers for primary, upper primary and secondary schools (Annexure 4, Table 1).

State Control

The human resource structure in the district was decided by the state government, and district authorities had little say. Recruitment of staff too was undertaken at the state level, except for a few frontline functionaries and some contractual computer operators and helpers. In three of the eight sample departments—Revenue, Forest and PHE—no frontline functionaries were recruited in the district, while in four departments, they were recruited within the district: GP secretaries and MGNREGS rozgar sahayaks in P&RD, guest teachers in School Education, ASHAs in Public Health and AWWs and helpers in WCD (Annexure 4, Table 5). In these cases, the criteria and process were fixed by the state government. Moreover, in recent years, centralization in recruitments has increased. For instance, patwaris and primary school teachers, earlier recruited at the district level, were now recruited at the state level. In the Cooperation Department, the cooperative societies hired their own staff.

Additionally, salaries were fixed at the state level, and decisions regarding promotions and postings were taken there as well. Disciplinary powers were vested largely at the state level, except for some minor punishments of grassroots employees. In terms of human resource management, the most important activity in the district was that supervisors wrote the annual performance appraisal report of junior officials, which became a basis for promotion. Moreover, senior district officials allotted work and supervised personnel on a day-to-day basis. Senior officials could also recommend disciplinary actions against errant employees.

Expenses

The numerous supervisory organisations of various departments had very limited managerial and expert staff. For example, the sample subdivision and block-level organisations had just one officer, assisted by clerks and helpers, except the tehsil, which had three officers, and the community health centre, which functioned as a health clinic as well as a programme implementing agency. In the

Revenue Department, though the SDM had important and diverse responsibilities, he was the only officer in the office. Among the 11 sample district-level organisations, five had only one officer. At the district level, offices that had been provided extra staff under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the National Health Mission were better staffed. The DC's office too had only six other officers, though the DC had access to officials of other departments (Annexure 4, Table 2).

Similarly, in grassroots institutions, the staff was very inadequate for the activities anticipated (Table 7). For example, at the AWC, one AWW, with the assistance of a helper, was expected to address numerous activities related to the malnourishment and health of children in the 0–6 age group and pregnant and lactating mothers as well as provide pre-school education, along with other activities. Moreover, this staff strength had been the same since 1975, though several new activities had been added, including additional meals and activities related to adolescent girls and domestic violence. Three of the five AWWs interviewed complained of excessive workload. The best qualified and most committed AWW took work home and sought help from her family to complete it. She complained of overwork and said that she wanted to quit the job but could not because of pressure from her husband. Another described how, during a time-bound survey, she became sick and lost weight, as she was unable to eat on time.

Similarly, ANMs reported that their sphere of activities had increased significantly over the years. Two of the three ANMs interviewed said that the workload was beyond the capability of one person, and officials at the district and block levels concurred with this view. In the GP, one secretary and one MGNREGS rozgar sahayak were expected to implement developmental schemes, provide civic services, organise meetings of the GP and gram sabha, levy taxes, maintain accounts, and so on.

Table 7 : Role and Staff Structure of Sample Grassroots Institutions

Institution	Main tasks performed	Staffing structure
Gram Panchayat	Organise GP and GS meetings; implement P&RD schemes; provide civic services: roads, drinking water, markets, abattoirs, and so on; collect revenue; generate income; maintain accounts; provide certificates.	One secretary One rozgar sahayak One chowkidar One safai karamchari
Primary School	Teach five grades; ensure enrolment of all children; provide mid-day meals; ensure children get scholarships, uniforms, and so on; organise school management committee meetings.	A teacher for every 30 students, with a minimum of two teachers.
Sub-Health Centre	Provide primary health care to the community; implement government programmes related to maternal and child health care, especially immunisation, pre-pregnancy care and institutional delivery; conduct surveys; assist in camps, and so on.	One auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) and one multi-purpose worker (MPW), assisted by accredited health social workers (ASHAs). A doctor to visit once a week. MPWs are no longer recruited.

Anganwadi Centre	Run the AWC from 9 am to 4 pm; provide two cooked meals to children of 3–6 years of age and weekly take-home packaged meals to children of six months—three years of age and to pregnant and lactating mothers; assess children for malnourishment; for malnourished children, provide a third take-home meal and for severely malnourished children, motivate and assist mothers to enrol in the Nutrition Resource Centre and follow up on return; visit homes of pregnant and lactating mothers and mothers of malnourished children to provide advice; ensure timely vaccination of children in the 0–6 age group, mothers and adolescent girls and provide supplements such as iron, folic acid, and so on; provide pre-school education to children in the 3–6 years age group; provide sanitary napkins to adolescent girls; identify families and girls entitled to benefits under incentive schemes.	One anganwadi worker, one sahayika.
Cooperative Society	Procure fertilisers and seeds; provide information to farmers about availability; distribute as per the demand and need; keep records of transactions, including stock registers.	One manager, two clerks, one data entry operator, one guard.

In addition, a large number of posts were vacant. In the sample supervisory offices (Annexure 4, Table 3), 40.5% of posts for managers and experts, 44.1% of posts for computer and other technical personnel, 31.8% of posts for accountants, 28.1% of posts for clerks and 16.3% of posts for helpers were vacant. An office as important as the DC's office had three deputy collectors against the sanctioned strength of five. Further, all but one of the block education officer posts were vacant. The Public Health Department faced a serious crisis, as nearly a third of the total posts, and more than two-thirds of class 1 posts, were vacant. In some cases, posts were not filled up because personnel resisted the posting. In the DIET, of the 23 academic posts, only three were filled. A posting in the DIET was considered a punishment posting because of the lack of education and health facilities where the DIET was situated.

Among the 24 types of frontline functionaries across the sample departments, regarding whom information was available, the vacancy rate was 20% (Annexure 4 Table 1). However, for 10 types of frontline functionaries , it was more than 30% and could be expected to have a serious impact on work. If 10% of vacancies are considered acceptable, then the vacancy situation was tolerable for only six out of 24 types of workers. Many officials interviewed said that as employees retired, posts were simply not filled up. This was clearly a decision of the state government, possibly to reduce expenditure on salaries. For example, in the Public Health Department, no ANMs had been recruited since 2016. In the PHE Department, the last recruitment of sub-engineers was in 2010, and nearly 50% of posts were vacant. The four water testing laboratories of the PHE Department had only one chemist and one laboratory assistant.

During interviews, supervisory officials said that it was very difficult to work because of vacancies, and many frontline functionaries complained of excess work. An interview with a staff nurse at a PHC revealed that it had no doctor. The doctor in charge visited once or twice a month, as he was

responsible for another centre in the city as well, which he preferred. The centre had one staff nurse, and a lab technician and pharmacist were shared with another centre. The staff nurse thus multi-tasked and largely managed the PHC on her own. She faced particular challenges if she had to handle a delivery at night and manage the PHC the next day. The staff said that people were often disappointed, as very limited medical facilities could be provided. Similarly, while ordinarily, a PHE technician was expected to attend to the repair and maintenance of 40 hand pumps, because of vacancies, each technician was actually responsible for 200–300 hand pumps. Among the four patwaris interviewed, one held three patwari posts, while the other three held two each. Four of the supervisory officers interviewed held two charges. Vacancies also interfered with critical work. For example, in the sample community health centre, four ward boys were needed for three shifts, but there was only one available. There was no one to get the patient from the door in a stretcher. There was no dresser, as he had been attached to the district hospital. The post of the compounder was vacant as well.

The significance of the problem of inadequate human resources was evident when officials were asked about constraints and problems in performing their roles. It was the constraint identified most often, and out of 21 officials, 15 talked of the inadequacy of human resources. As expected, when officials were asked for suggestions to improve government working, the suggestion given most often was to increase human resources. For example, one WCD official suggested that at least one extra worker per AWC be appointed and that there be one doctor and one sub-engineer at the block level.

Adequacy in Numbers

The departmental offices often lacked the expertise needed to perform their role (Annexure 4, Table 2) because the tasks that they were required to perform needed multiple skill sets, while the employees of field offices belonged to two or three departmental 'services', where each service comprised personnel with the same skill set. For example, in the School Education Department, the only services were of teachers, who manned management posts on promotion. There were no trained educational administrators or specialists for community mobilisation, gender related issues or the education of marginalised children, though the programmes addressed these aspects. Further, some departments lacked experts even for their core activities. For example, the WCD Department, charged with addressing child malnutrition, had no nutritionists. Notably, even when contractual employees were recruited such key gaps were not addressed. Of the sample departments, two departments had added specialists in substantive fields on contract: community mobilizers and technical staff in the water testing laboratories in PHE and specialists in the education of children with disabilities in School Education. However, in three departments, PHE, Public Health & Family Welfare and PR&D, contractual employees had been added as programme managers or specialists in non-substantive fields, such as sub-engineers and MIS personnel.

In addition, three types of expertise gaps were found across departments. One, there was no expertise in human resource management across the district, in spite of the large workforce. For example, the district had 4850 teachers, but the School Education Department had no human resource expert and not even a person for personnel management. Not surprisingly, teachers regularly filed cases related to pay, promotion, punishment, and so on in the courts, and officials spent a great amount of time

dealing with them. Two, officials did not have access to legal experts, though they handled issues with complex legal implications on an almost daily basis. For example, revenue officials were generalists and trained in a general way in law, public administration and socio-economic development. They passed numerous quasi-legal orders and dealt with a host of legal issues, yet there was no legal expert available for consultation. Finally, expertise in social communication and mobilisation was available only in a few departments, and that too inadequately, though this was an important aspect of the work. There was a Public Relations Officer at the district level, who assisted the DC in dealing with the media. However, there were no personnel to assist officials in communicating better with the people.

On the positive side, the government employees interviewed were educationally well qualified (Annexure 4, Table 5). All the supervisory employees interviewed were college educated, and some had advanced specialist qualifications. Among the frontline functionaries, nearly two-thirds were college educated. All had completed higher secondary education, barring two AWWs, who had studied up to class 8, and one ANM, who had studied up to class 10. After recruitment, the generalist employees had been provided induction training ranging from two months to two years. However, the duration of the training was less for the frontline functionaries, for example, two months for AWWs and six months for patwaris and forest beat guards, though it was 18 months for ANMs. Departments that recruited specialist staff provided very limited training, if any, on joining. In-service training varied across departments. In the Forest, School Education, Public Health and WCD departments, employees were trained frequently, but in other departments, training was patchy. Unfortunately, it is not possible to comment on the quality of training provided in this study. However, one issue that did emerge during interviews was that in-service training was structured around new government programmes and policies rather than the systematic skill development of employees.

Service Conditions

In terms of service conditions such as salary, allowances, tenure and leave, there were critical differences between regular and contractual employees. Regular personnel were paid reasonable salaries, [78] which were inflation protected with small annual incremental increases (3% of the salary). They had benefits such as house rent allowance, paid medical treatment and pensions, though pensions had become less liberal over the last two decades. In contrast, not only did the contractual workers lack security of tenure, but they were paid less than the regular staff and had no benefits. For example, in the PHE Department, social coordinators at the block level, who were contractual employees, were required to have a postgraduate degree in social work, but their salary was a mere Rs. 12,700 per month. The remuneration of grassroots contractual employees was often absurdly low. In the PHE Department, hand pump technicians were paid a mere Rs. 6,500 per month, in WCD Department , AWWs got an honorarium of Rs. 5,000 per month and the helper Rs. 2,500 per month, [79] MGNREGS rozgar sahayaks got Rs. 9,000 per month, and so on. In contrast, the regular patwaris had a salary of Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 1,10,000 per month, depending on their years in service. Interviews showed that supervisory regular employees were generally satisfied with their salary, though several frontline functionaries were dissatisfied. Contractual employees were extremely dissatisfied with their remuneration.

[78] Reviewed from time to time by the pay commissions appointed by state governments.
[79] The AWWs get Rs. 600 annually to purchase a uniform.

The promotion system left much to be desired. Contractual employees were not entitled to promotion at all, and while regular employees were entitled to promotion, most were dissatisfied with the slow rate. Two of the block-level employees interviewed had not been promoted even after 20 and 32 years of service. For frontline functionaries, the chance of promotion was even smaller. For example, patwaris could be promoted as revenue inspectors on passing an examination and no further. But even these promotions did not take place regularly. Similarly, forest beat guards could be promoted to deputy rangers, but no promotions had taken place for several years. Moreover, promotions were based mainly on seniority.

Regular employees were transferable from one post to another. Contractual frontline functionaries were usually not transferable, as they were supposed to be local. However, GP secretaries, originally appointed for a particular GP, had been made transferable. Interviews showed that political patronage played an important role in postings, and several officials revealed that they had been transferred unfairly for doing the right thing. During the course of the fieldwork of the study, an official was transferred because he started an inquiry against the supporters of a powerful local politician. Moreover, patronage-based postings resulted in a continuous change of leadership, as can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8 : Number of District Heads of Offices Posted in the Last 10 Years

Official	Number of Officers Posted in the Last 10 Years
District collector	8
District forest officer	5
Chief executive officer, Zilla Parishad	7
District education officer	6
District programme coordinator (School Education)	4
Chief heath and medical officer	15
District programme officer, Women and Child Development	4
Executive engineer, Public Health Engineering	5
District marketing officer, Cooperation	7

In fact, transfers were so highly politicised that sometimes it became impossible to manage different types of pressures. For instance, one official of the School Education Department related an experience when the department attempted to rationalise postings of teachers, as there were too many teachers in urban schools and too few in schools in small villages. Just as the exercise was complete, orders came from the state headquarters to not implement it. Now, he said, no one wanted to even try such an exercise. Finally, 'guest' teachers, paid for teaching specific classes, had to be recruited because it is not possible to do teacher rationalisation.

In addition to postings, many other personnel-related decisions were arbitrary, leading to resentment and hardship for employees and litigation. As per a block- level employee, in the P&RD Department, 89 people were suddenly transferred to the SC & ST Welfare Department, without taking any options etc., and had to serve in tribal blocks for their whole career, instead of all employees serving in such areas for some time. They went to court against this decision and won. The government filed an appeal in the Supreme Court, which was turned down. However, according to the interviewee, the decision was not reversed. Moreover, many frontline functionaries reported during interviews that their travel expenses were not paid. Patwaris were given Rs. 200 per month for travel, which was quite inadequate. Notably, some officials worked in especially difficult circumstances. For example, beat guards of the Forest Department who were interviewed said that they were expected to be on duty 24 hours a day, stay in the forest and guard it day and night while being paid poorly. They had great difficulty in getting any leave. Moreover, as they lived in the forest, it was difficult to send their children to good schools or get high-quality medical attention. Further, they did not have any weapons to protect themselves and reported being nervous as they patrolled the forest at night for fear of being accosted by criminals.

The Contractual Staff Problem

Though the recruitment of low-paid contractual staff is sometimes seen as 'reform' of administration, in the field, it caused numerous problems. In technical jobs, recruiting contractual staff on low salaries led to a large number of vacancies. For example, in the water testing laboratories of PHE, out of the six chemists appointed on contract, three had left. In the JP, of the six engineers who had joined a few months before the fieldwork of the study, two had left. There were also procedural problems. For guest teachers, the process of making recruitments every year itself became a hindrance in filling up the vacancies. In the year in which the fieldwork of the study was conducted, guest teachers could not be recruited for three months after the commencement of the academic session. Then district officials received oral orders to recruit people immediately and subsequently, to give them the highest marks in the recruitment test. Moreover, in some departments, such as teachers in the School Education Department, there were regular as well as contractual frontline functionaries, who did the same work but got very different remuneration.

An important development was that federations and unions of contractual frontline functionaries, including GP secretaries, MGNREGS rozgar sahayaks, teachers, AWWs and PHE technicians, were very active and agitated constantly for better service conditions. For example, during the course of the fieldwork, many AWWs and helpers went to Delhi to protest against their increasing workload and stagnant salary. Such employees also approached the courts. In the Forest and PHE departments, daily wage workers had instituted a court case to get regularised. Moreover, a pattern of contractual employees slowly improving their service conditions through protest and legal action was visible. Among the sample departments, contract teachers had made significant gains over the years, and their service conditions had begun to approximate those of regular teachers. [80] In addition, the

[80] Before 1995, three types of teachers were recruited: lower-division teachers to teach classes 1–5, upper-division teachers to teach classes 6–8 and lecturers to teach classes 9–12. In 1995, the regular teachers were declared a 'dying cadre' and converted into shiksha karmi (or education workers) 1, 2 and 3, paid a nominal monthly salary of Rs. 500, 700 and 1000, respectively. Over the years, their salaries increased. When the fieldwork of this study began in October 2018, contract teachers were paid around half the salary of regular teachers. By the time the study ended in March 2019, they had obtained a salary equivalent to that of regular teachers and had become state government employees, hired at the state level.

salaries of GP secretaries [81] had increased a great deal, including a substantial rise during the course of the study.

Implications

The above discussion shows that the government recruited and trained a wide spectrum of officials to serve in the field. Moreover, as a rule, government servants at all levels were well educated. But these human resources were not optimised, and their capacity to deliver was constrained for several reasons. One, professionalism, or requisite specialised skills acquired through education and training, which enhances organisational performance (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999), was given insufficient attention. In addition, in many organisations, the number of personnel was very inadequate. The fragmented administrative structure with a plethora of departmental offices led to small offices and organisations without the various types of expertise required as per their mandate. Moreover, in the key areas of law, human resource management and social communication, there was no or negligible expertise in the district. In addition, key offices such as that of the SDM and several frontline institutions such as AWCs, the key point of contact between the government and citizens, had inadequate personnel. This problem was exacerbated by a large number of vacancies, and human resources were scarce even for many critical services.

Two, the human resource management strategies created a perverse incentive structure. For regular employees, promotions were very few and seniority based, while there were none at all for contractual employees. Consequently, promotions did not provide adequate positive incentive. At the same time, through patronage-based postings, developing political patrons yielded results, while honest officials were harassed. Consequently, a lack of commitment to work was a recurring theme during interviews. Moreover, many supervisory officials and most frontline functionaries did not live in their headquarters, unless they belonged to the village, and some lived so far away that it affected their work seriously. There were also frequent changes in leadership, though research shows that rapid turnover of top officials damages effective management within agencies, and stable leadership, with changes after reasonable periods of time, leads to improved performance (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999). The aforementioned problems were exacerbated by the practice of recruiting poorly paid contractual employees. In some cases, vacancies increased. Further, employees improved their terms of service not by doing good work but by agitating successfully, which skewed the incentive structure further. Moreover, the best possible personnel were not recruited, because, at the time of hiring, many eligible candidates with better qualifications were unlikely to apply. In addition, for contractual workers, the selection processes were often less rigorous. For example, the School Education Department officials claimed that several politically connected people had been employed as teachers, and their work ethic was poor.

[81] Until 1994, GP secretaries were regular employees. Subsequently, as the number of GPs was increased from around 14,000 to 31,000, possibly to reduce the financial burden, the state government created a new 'honorary' post of panchayat karmi, paid Rs. 500 per month as honorarium and appointed for a particular GP, and the recruitment of regular GP secretaries ceased. In 2012, the honorarium of contractual GP secretaries increased from Rs. 500 per month to the pay scale of Rs. 2,200–3,700 (around Rs. 13,000 per month). During the course of the study, an increase in the remuneration of the GP secretaries of Rs. 6000–Rs. 8000 was announced.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND FINANCE

Infrastructure

The infrastructure in the sample organisations was varied, ranging from good to extremely poor. District-level offices generally had adequate buildings, furniture, and so on, though three out of 10 did not, and the building of the DIET was in such poor condition that training programmes could not be conducted properly. At the sub-district level, the infrastructure in many offices was quite poor. For instance, out of 10 such offices, seating space was inadequate in six, three had no or inadequate toilets, and five were not clean. While computers were available in all supervisory offices, sub-district officials lacked vehicles, which inhibited touring. Except for ramps in some offices, there were no facilities for the people with disabilities (Annexure 5, Table 1).

Among the grassroots institutions, GPs, schools and cooperative societies had well-kept buildings with adequate space (Annexure 5, Table 2). Moreover, all schools had separate toilets for girls and boys, and four out of five had hand pumps within the school campus as well as reasonable teaching-learning materials and library books. However, only one out of four GPs had a clean toilet and none had tap water. The buildings of the two sample cooperative societies were in good condition but the seating space was inadequate and they lacked toilets and drinking water facilities. In all the sample sub-health centres, while basic equipment such as vaccines and instruments to measure blood pressure and glucose levels were available, the buildings were in poor condition.

Of all the grassroots institutions, AWCs had the worst infrastructure (Annexure 5, Table 4). Out of the 1771 AWCs in the district, only 29.6% had their own buildings, and the rest functioned from rented buildings. Among the five sample AWCs, though four had their own buildings, the buildings were not well maintained. Except for one, the AWCs were found to be clean, but none had a functional toilet. The department did not have funds for the repair and upkeep of AWC buildings. AWWs petitioned the GPs often for repairs and other needs, but the GPs varied in their response.

Notably, no grassroots institution had a vehicle, though touring various villages was an essential part of the work in GPs, sub-health centres and cooperative societies. In GPs, vehicles could be rented but not for all employees. This caused special hardship to female employees. In one GP, the MGNREGS rozgar sahayak was a woman, and to visit construction sites, she either walked or her husband ferried her on a motorcycle. The ANMs, who had to carry medical instruments, vaccines and registers in their area of operation of five to seven villages, reported that they faced considerable difficulties and had asked for transportation facilities, but their requests had been ignored.

Some frontline functionaries had no defined office space at all. In the eight sample departments, these included patwaris of the Revenue Department, beat guards of the Forest Department and sub-engineers and technicians of the PHE Department. Of these, forest beat guards were provided residence in their area of work, where they could do the paperwork. Patwaris used the facilities of the tehsil office, but the lack of a defined workspace was a problem, as they worked with large registers, maps and other documents. One patwari reported that he, along with five other patwaris, had rented out two office rooms at personal expense and that this was a common practice. Another patwari could

not afford to rent a place and because of shortage of space and inadequate access to computers in the tehsil, was compelled to work on Sundays and holidays. One demand of the patwari association was a proper place to work. While technicians of the PHE Department mainly worked in the field, the sub-engineers did some paperwork, for which they used the SDO's office. Like the patwaris, they had to do so by taking turns.

Finances

The main source of funds in the district was transfers from the state government, not only for departmental organisations but also for panchayats, though GPs had some taxation powers. Cooperative societies were expected to run as business organisations, but the state government provided salaries and running expenses for district-level offices to regulate them. In two sample departments, School Education and WCD, community contribution was sought but was a very minor source of funding. The field administration collected seven types of taxes and royalties: sales tax, excise duty, entertainment tax, land revenue, royalty on minerals, registration fees and stamp fees. The amount collected was small [83] compared to the expenditure in the district; it was deposited in the state exchequer and was not an income of the district.

The largest share of funds was transferred departmentally. A clear picture of the total funds received in the district could not be obtained, as funds were sent to departmental offices, and no budget was prepared for the district as a whole. Moreover, it was not even possible to know the quantum of funds flowing in the sample departments because several financial transactions were undertaken directly from the state level. For example, teachers' salary, which had earlier been transferred to the district office, was now sent directly from the state level to the accounts of various drawing and disbursing officers; for the school midday meals, funds were transferred directly to the accounts of self-help groups that cooked the meals; and MGNREGS wages were transferred directly to the accounts of workers.

For funds that were made available through district-level offices, among the sample departments, the highest allotments in 2016–17 were in education and health. Of the 11 offices for which information was available, in nine, the expenditure was more than 80% of the outlay. However, the expenditure in two key offices of the School Education Department was at 55.8% and 29% of the outlay, respectively, mainly because of lack of manpower. In other instances, the processes were long-drawn and funds could not be spent. In the office of the Executive Engineer of the PHE Department, some funds remained unspent because tenders could not be floated.

Funds were provided mainly for schemes, salaries and office expenditure, and there were hardly any funds to be spent on any other needs. The lack of untied funds reduced the capacity to implement strategies tailored to the context. For example, a block-level official reported an incident when the office got news of a child marriage and conducted a raid. However, on reflection, he thought that conducting a raid on the day of the marriage was not appropriate, and instead, camps should be held

[83] It was Rs. 278 crore in 2015–16 (Source: District Agriculture Census 2016), less than the budget of many district offices.

in every village to inform people of the consequences that could follow in case of child marriage. But there was no fund for such activity.

Moreover, in some instances, money was not available for simple but necessary activities, such as maintaining hygiene in school bathrooms. At the grassroots, schools, AWCs and sub-health centres lacked funds for the upkeep of buildings, essential equipment and activities such as photocopying. For example, one AWW reported bearing expenses for repairing and whitewashing the walls of the AWC. She was often told to spend money based on the understanding that it would be reimbursed but was not. Another AWW reported spending an average of Rs. 400 to 450 per month on photocopying. The heads of district offices had very limited powers to sanction funds for activities other than those approved in a scheme (Annexure 5, Table 5). For example, in the School Education Department, district heads could sanction only up to Rs. 10,000 for non-scheme activities. Some departments, especially School Education and WCD, had delegated substantial financial powers to the DC. Below the district level, officials had very minor powers of sanction, if at all, except for the CEO of JP. This financial centralization led to cumbersome processes, and officials complained that approvals were often delayed. Further, fund disbursement was increasingly being centralised as well. The financial powers of two sub-divisional and block sample offices of PHE and WCD departments had been withdrawn two years ago, and all financial transactions took place at the district level. The officials of these offices reported obstruction of work because of delayed payments. Sometimes, officials could not get an advance for necessary activities and spent from their pockets. One official remarked that even then, the money was not reimbursed for a long time.

The funds available with the panchayats too were mainly for schemes, salaries and office expenses. The ZP and JP had no income sources of their own, but each ZP and JP PR was provided Rs. 10 lakh and Rs. 4 lakh, respectively, to expend on relevant projects. [84] In the ZP and JP, accounts were maintained separately for schemes, and consolidated accounts for the panchayat were not prepared. GPs could levy house tax and streetlight tax, but in three out of four sample GPs, there was minimal tax collection, or none at all. Notably, a Central Finance Commission grant entitled GPs to untied funds to spend as per their priorities, but the state government had converted these into a scheme called 'Panch Parmeshwar'. The scheme mainly allowed the construction of roads and drains, leaving only 20% of funds to be spent as per the GP's priorities. The sarpanch of one GP said that the GP could not even make a small foot-bridge that was needed. In another, the MGNREGS rozgar sahayak commented that the GP had no power to construct even a drain to dispose of the sewage water but had to wait for a scheme.

In the Cooperation Department, the cooperative societies earned a commission by selling fertilisers and seeds and provided loans to farmers after obtaining finance from the cooperative bank. The rate of commission on seeds and fertilisers as well as the interest rate were decided by the state government, [85] and the loan limit to farmers was decided by a committee headed by the DC. Thus, cooperative societies were bound by numerous government directions but expected to be financially

8[4] Before 2015, the ZP and JP had received a central government grant, as recommended by the Central Finance Commission, but after 2015, this grant was provided only to the GPs. Consequently, the financial position of the ZPs and JPs had deteriorated substantially.
[85] The extant policy was to charge no interest on the loan if it was paid up within one year, 12% if paid up in the second year and 15% if paid up in the third year..

autonomous. Moreover, the government often waived farmer loans. As per district officials, half the cooperative societies in the district were in a bad state because of poor loan recovery. Among the two sample cooperative societies, the credit limit of one had been reduced, as it was not able to repay the money it owed the cooperative bank.

Implications

The infrastructure and equipment available in field offices fell far short of the requirements for optimal functioning. Additionally, the situation worsened at lower levels and was quite pathetic in some grassroots institutions. On the one hand, this reduced the productivity of officials and workers close to the ground, who came in contact with citizens most often. On the other hand, the government presented an uncaring face in very physical terms, such as when children attended AWCs with slip-shod buildings or when citizens visited unhygienic GP buildings.

The extreme and increasing centralization of financial authority reduced the capacity to respond to citizen and contextual needs. Only the needs envisaged in schemes could be addressed, and in some cases, funds were not spent because the activities envisaged in schemes were not possible due to various reasons. Extreme financial centralization also disempowered field institutions by reducing their autonomy. The lack of untied funds with panchayats disempowered them and made it impossible for them to respond to citizens' needs and demands. In fact, the very idea of local governments got defeated.

WORKING CONTEXT

Introduction

In addition to the frame described above, regarding the structure, human resources, infrastructure and finances of field administration created by the state government, field administration was also shaped by the signals given by the state government as well as by the community that it served. Field administration, being an arm of the state government, follows its rules and directions and shares in its working processes and ethos as well. In addition, field administration works with people and is subject to constant pressures from them, such as from petitions and complaints made by citizens to field officials as well as their senior officers. Notably, how public services operate is decided not only by those who deliver them but also by citizens who use them, conceptualised as 'co-production' (Whitaker, 1980). Citizens co-produce by requesting or not requesting assistance, such as from medical personnel; by assisting or not assisting in public programmes, as in the case of parents sending children to school regularly; and by mutually adjusting expectations with service delivery agents. [86]

The influence of the larger government system and the community operates in two ways. There is a

[86] Alford (2002) situates public sector clients in the context of social exchange theory, where, as distinct from simple market exchange, a broad set of things can be exchanged, and the exchange can be between more than two parties. In this conceptualization, agencies responsible for welfare recipients provide them benefits, not in the expectation of getting money in return but to fulfil a mandate endowed on them through the political process by the citizenry. In case of regulatory agencies, the 'client' provides compliance, which enables the organisation to get ongoing compliance. Thus, clients and beneficiaries participate in this social exchange in several ways and influence it..

day-to-day influence, as field administration interacts with both actors. In addition, there are formal mechanisms of accountability to state government agencies as well as to citizens. The robustness of these accountability mechanisms can have an important impact on the functioning of field administration. This section describes the day-to-day pressures emanating from the state government and the community as well as from formal accountability mechanisms. As the next section shows, these have a significant influence on the working processes of the field administration.

The Government Frame

Centralization

The state government used various means to ensure that the field administration delivered as per its goals. However, it did so not by setting broad outcome goals but by setting targets for specific activities and reviewing constantly. Targets and reviews created pressure on field officials to perform, but the narrow definition of goals could also lead to a focus on unproductive activities. For example, according to a representative from a non-government organisation in the district, in the previous year, officials ran around trying to fulfil targets for digging wells, when the water table was falling; consequently, the wells were not successful. Moreover, the targets set in schemes did not account for the context. For example, targets for block panchayats were set and monitored rigorously in a scheme to provide free houses to poor people. In the scheme, grants were given to beneficiaries to construct their own houses. These targets were unrealistic for the sample block because the block did not have an adequate number of masons and vendors of housing materials. Yet, officials were under continuous pressure to fulfil the targets.

In addition, the state government constantly asked for compliance reports and data of various types, and field officials spent a significant amount of time preparing reports for the state government and attending meetings; several interviewees complained that this took time away from actual work. Another method used to ensure the compliance of field administration was to lay overly specific guidelines for various activities, as illustrated by the fact that in the School Education Department, not just the curriculum and textbooks but also the school time-table, the pace of lessons, the mid-day meal menu, and so on were decided at the state level.

The high degree of centralization reduced the autonomy of field officials. This can be gauged from the fact that when field officials were asked to describe the most important activities that they had undertaken in the previous six months, they identified minor activities, such as equipment repairs and work division among staff. Similarly, when officials were asked to identify the most important decisions taken in the six months prior to the fieldwork, they mentioned the implementation of a government programme or direction or decisions related to a case. Moreover, when officials were asked about constraints and problems in performing their role, lack of powers and autonomy comprised the second most common set of problems. Some officials commented that they had little autonomy to act as per the needs on the ground.

The panchayats functioned in a context of political as well as administrative centralization. Though political parties did not have a formal role in panchayats, PRs reported receiving directions from them,

and often split along party lines while making decisions. Moreover, political leaders interfered with panchayats. For example, in one GP, in the housing scheme, the sarpanch decided to distribute small plots to a large number of people. However, the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of the area had already declared that people would get somewhat larger plots, in which case fewer people stood to benefit. As the GP began to carve out smaller plots, some beneficiaries complained to the MLA. The MLA insisted on having his way and even tried to get the sarpanch arrested when he refused to cooperate, forcing the sarpanch to eventually give in.

But this control was not complete. At times, PRs collaborated across party lines to resolve local issues. One ZP PR of the ruling party even admitted that sometimes his party's PRs asked opposition members to raise issues that, if raised by them, would displease their political party leaders. Moreover, PRs who were active could become influential, irrespective of party affiliation. In one GP, the sarpanch and a few other PRs had contested elections because they were dissatisfied with the previous GP. They had not been backed by the political party they supported but had won all the same because of people's support. However, administratively, panchayats too implemented schemes, achieved targets and filed progress reports. Moreover, GPs often got sudden orders from the state government to call special gram sabhas to address the prevailing government priority, which disrupted the GP. For example, in one GP, the sarpanch could not be present for the social audit, as the date was fixed centrally, and he had to attend court on the same date.

Hierarchy

Governments and bureaucracies, as well as other types of organisations across the world, function on the basis of hierarchy. As a principle, hierarchy enables organisations to employ large numbers of people yet fix accountability unambiguously (Jaques, 1990). However, the operation of hierarchy in Indian public administration goes well beyond a rational division of authority and responsibility. Instead, it takes the form of authoritarianism, which interferes with work. [87] The importance of hierarchy can be estimated from the fact that hierarchy had been built even into the Panchayat Act, though panchayats were envisaged as democratic and egalitarian institutions. The higher-tier panchayats were expected to supervise the lower-tier panchayats. The neglect of essential infrastructure and equipment in organisations below the district level, which were manned by officials who were placed lower in the hierarchy, and especially at the grassroots has been noted earlier.

As the field organisations stood 'lower' in the hierarchy compared to state-level organisations, they were bound by the commands from the state level so much so that they, as per government directions, performed a range of activities outside their mandated role. Out of 15 sample offices of six departments (excluding Revenue and P&RD departments, whose role was coordination), officials in 11 offices had, in the year preceding the fieldwork of the study, performed various government duties related to elections, sanitation, a plantation drive and activities of religious and cultural orientation (Annexure 6, Table 2). While some of these activities, such as elections and census, are essential and important, others showed the operation of hierarchy beyond the work logic, as they were optional, and

[87] As per Riggs (1964), rank is an overriding concern in prismatic societies. It is awarded for achievement, but once attained, it creates an artificial static hierarchy resembling an ascribed status system.

there was little evidence that they were more or even as important than the official mandate.

For example, shortly before the fieldwork of the study, officials of all departments spent a substantial amount of time on a plantation drive, which made it to the Guinness Book of World Records for the largest number of trees ever planted at one go. So intense was the pressure to achieve targets in the drive that some officials reported spending their own money. Moreover, at the time of this study, officials were involved in various cultural and religious events that had become the priority of the government. At the time of the fieldwork, an 'Ekta Yatra' (unity journey) of Shankaracharya was expected, and detailed instructions for various activities had been received from the state level. Moreover, in three sample GPs, the secretaries reported that they had to gather crowds when the chief minister visited. One secretary said that collecting crowds was difficult, as the villagers often refused to attend. But senior officers kept pressurizing him, so he offered a day's wage for attendance, initially paying from his own pocket but later 'managing' it from some account.

Campaigns

Along with development schemes, a key context in which field administration functioned was that at the national and state level, political leaders focused on undertaking 'missions' and 'campaigns' to achieve specific goals, rather than improving the day-to-day administration, and constantly announced 'new' initiatives. At the time of the fieldwork for this study, the Revenue Department was winding up a campaign to update all entries regarding the change of land ownership (known as 'mutation') that were undisputed, an activity that is part of day-to-day work. Often, state departments asked officials to undertake multiple campaigns, without taking into account the capacity on the ground. For example, a Public Health Department official reported that a programme to vaccinate all children for measles-rubella at one go had been launched recently, and a training workshop for the same had been held. As the training of block and sub-block officials was beginning, another new campaign, requiring a house-to-house survey, had been started. Similarly, the officials of the Cooperation Department were frequently ordered to procure one agriculture crop or the other, sometimes without adequate preparation, which caused several glitches in payments and often a high degree of dissatisfaction among farmers.

One outcome of this mode of working was the neglect of long-term goals in favour of short-term gains. Some officials said that the regular work of their department, which could have a slow but long-term impact, was neglected. Moreover, at times, the continuous emphasis on 'new' initiatives complicated matters. For example, for rural housing, two previous schemes had been replaced by a new one with more liberal provisions. However, beneficiaries of the old schemes were not allowed to shift to the new scheme and were dissatisfied. Additionally, three schemes were implemented for the same goal, while accounts were maintained and reports sent for each scheme separately, which created pointless work.

Influence of State-Level Politicians

As per law, PRs had a formal role in field administration, while ministers, Members of Parliament (MPs) and MLAs were expected to legislate and make policy at the state level. [88] However, in actual fact, PRs were marginalised, and ministers, as well as powerful MPs and MLAs exercised significant influence on field administration. When officials were asked who the most powerful politicians in the area were, they mentioned ministers and MLAs, not PRs.

[88] MPs and MLAs had some funds that they could expend in their constituencies for specific projects, but they had no role in district administration in general.

The patronage-based transfer and posting system has been described above. Political patronage impacted administration in other ways as well. In fact, in the sample district, even the administrative structure showed its influence: the smallest tehsil had been carved out at the behest of a rich and politically powerful family in the district [89] and cut across three blocks. Consequently, officials complained of problems in coordination.

Officials reported that they interacted frequently with MPs, MLAs, ministers and local leaders of political parties as well. Regarding the nature of the contact with state-level politicians, officials made positive as well as negative comments. Officials who reported positive contact said that politicians helped them get in touch with problems in the field, got money for the district, facilitated approvals and helped at the state level when there were problems. For example, PHE Department officials reported getting information about out-of-order hand pumps and receiving help in obtaining funds. Another powerful MLA had helped to get a sports complex built in the district.

Officials who reported negative contact complained about unethical demands, such as favours for political supporters and obstruction of action against those who transgressed the law. One official said that he wanted to take action against illegal sand mining, but politicians pressured him against it. Another official reported instances of paying from his pocket for the travel of a minister, his relatives and his associates to go sightseeing. One patwari said that a politician made recommendations on behalf of various people to add their names to the list of beneficiaries eligible for free houses and had offered to get him bribes from them. Frontline functionaries, because of their junior position, had special difficulties. One patwari said that whenever a politician made any request, he simply nodded. If the request was doable and involved no risk, he complied, but if it was risky, he explained it to the politician in person.

Along with the threat of transfers, officials feared public humiliation at the hand of politicians. One official said that sometimes, when ministers and MLAs wanted something done against the rules, they insulted officials at public meetings. In the district, no one wanted to be posted in a particular area because the powerful local MLA regularly humiliated officials in public forums. According to some officials, the MLA was a sand mining baron; he did not care for any rules but insisted that the demands of his supporters be met. If an official did not do so, he pulled up the officer publicly. One patwari said that some politicians treated government employees as their personal workers or helpers and asked them to do anything, anytime.

In addition, several officials were reported to be involved in rent-seeking rackets along with powerful politicians. For example, one of the three DCs who held office during the fieldwork had a poor reputation among state officials, and the journalists interviewed in this study said that he promoted the cause of the ruling party and was corrupt. When senior district officials themselves were connected closely to politicians, it became doubly difficult for other officials to refuse their demands. During the course of the study, as an interview with a senior official was going on, he received a call from a minister about the transfer of a frontline functionary. He then called another official and asked him to take care of it because the minister was closely connected to the DC. Another official related

[89] As the study neared completion, a new tehsil, that is, an urban tehsil at the district headquarter, was declared by the new government..

an incident whereby his boss asked him to pass an order in favour of some party because powerful politicians wanted it. Under pressure, the official prepared the order he deemed fit, simultaneously wrote his resignation and went to meet the boss. Finally, the boss relented.

Community Pressure

Inequality, Poverty and Lack of Education

The pressures from the community were rooted in the extant inequality, poverty and low educational levels. An important fallout of inequality for the provision of social services is that the least well-off people are often not able to avail the services meant for them. Several studies show that citizens with high socio-economic status tend to co-produce more than citizens with low socio-economic status, as the latter may lack the knowledge or material to engage in co-production (Jakobson & Anderson, 2013). For example, one outcome of poverty was that children's attendance in AWCs was poor. The poorest people were daily wage earners and often took small children to the work site, who then could not attend the AWC. Additionally, some poor children had dropped out of elementary schools because of migration or to perform agricultural work or tend to younger siblings. Many children also attended school irregularly for the same reasons (Annexure 7, Table 3). Poor people had trouble accessing fertilisers and seeds from cooperative societies. Share-croppers were not entitled to buy them from the cooperative society and, instead, bought them from the farmers or from the market at higher prices; hence, sometimes they could not get an adequate quantity.

With low educational levels, people often had an imprecise understanding of their entitlements or could not do the necessary paperwork to get them. For example, a patwari noted that in one sample village, the tribals were not even aware that they were legal owners of the land cultivated by other castes and had moved to the periphery of the village. Health officials said that many tribal people still had faith in traditional healers, shamans, and so on and consulted doctors only after their disease had progressed to an advanced stage. Similarly, a revenue official commented that rural people simply wrote about their problem, wanted relief and were not concerned about the legal position. When the application was not accepted, they saw the authorities as purposefully unjust. A WCD Department official remarked that people complained about not benefitting under a scheme but did not complete the necessary paperwork. As per a P&RD Department official, many people remained hazy about provisions and processes of schemes even after several explanations. Moreover, a Public Health Department official said that during field visits, people talked about issues other than health with him. The lack of education meant that, to do a good job, government workers had to make a great deal of effort and spend time with people.

The impact of unequal power was visible sharply in the panchayats. In all the sample panchayats, husbands of women PRs attended meetings. In one GP, the secretary had asked their husbands to leave, which had led to considerable argument. In another GP, the husband of the female sarpanch, also a ward member, acted as the de facto sarpanch. Moreover, PRs who were daily wage labourers did not attend meetings regularly, as, by doing so, they would lose a day's wages, and consequently, they had little say in the panchayats. In the GPs, attempts at elite capture were made by male, land-owning

PRs of the OBC or the general category who were usually aligned to the ruling party. In one GP, other PRs had nicknamed such a PR 'crorepati'. [90] He tried to take all the GP projects to his ward and knew many contractors and suppliers, who gave him a cut from the project money. Further, an ST PR from the GP said that in panchayat and gram sabha meetings, propertied PRs from the OBC community acted superior and pressurised the panchayat to start works in their area.

Poverty and lack of education also limited the extent to which people could participate in governance, even when forums to do so existed. In FGDs, several people said that they did not attend the gram sabha as they stood to lose a day's wages. Among the five School Management Committee cum Parent Teacher Associations (SMC-PTA) observed, only in one were the parents active, as one had experience of working with schools in a non-government organisation. This committee had taken measures to ensure regular attendance of students and teachers and resolved problems related to mid-day meals. In two schools, the SMC-PTA was dysfunctional, and in another two, teachers took the lead, while parents attended reluctantly. In one FGD, women admitted that they had no interest in the GP.

Increasing Awareness of Entitlements

However, along with exploitation and poverty, the field administration had to deal with an increasing awareness of people about their entitlements. Several officials who had worked for 20 years or more said that over time, people had become more demanding and vocal and were more likely to complain when dissatisfied. The combination of poverty, inequality and low levels of education on the one hand and awareness of entitlements on the other led to pressure from the community for immediate benefits, such as subsidised houses, though the appreciation of possible long-term gains was inadequate. For example, a School Education Department official pointed out that people always asked for uniforms, bicycles, books, and so on but rarely demanded that the school should function well or ensured that children attended school regularly.

At the same time, given an opportunity, the less powerful also fought for their rights. For example, in the GPs, dominant PRs often faced stiff opposition. In one GP, the sarpanch, a powerful person, focused on the main village, to which he belonged, and other villages were neglected. However, in the year before the study, a few residents and PRs of a satellite village lobbied with the DC for a road and succeeded. Similarly, an SC PR from another satellite village fought in the GP and got some development works sanctioned. In another incident, an acquaintance of a powerful PR obtained a contract for sand mining in a small river bed and demanded a no objection certificate from the GP. However, the GP PRs did not agree, and the attempt failed. Political leaders from the district headquarters tried to pressurise the secretary and even offered bribes, but he managed to dodge the issue. In another GP, rich PRs, MPs and MLAs wanted to supply material, labourers, and so on for the construction works but were resisted. Moreover, women PRs said that over time, they became less hesitant and understood more.

[90] Equivalent of the term 'millionaire'..

Ethics and Civic Sense

Unethical behaviour from the community was also observed. Patwaris reported being pressurised and offered bribes by big farmers and local leaders to manipulate land records, such as to inflate the amount of crop loss to enhance compensation from the government; to not measure poor people's land so as to not reveal the encroachments made by powerful people; and to exclude their women' names as owners from land records. A junior revenue official quoted a recent instance when a patwari and a revenue inspector were beaten up because they did not measure land to benefit a powerful person. Similarly, P&RD Department officials noted that several people tried to give incorrect information to get benefits under various schemes. Further, many beneficiaries had taken money in the name of toilet construction but had used it for other purposes; some had even spent it on alcohol. In one GP, people had got themselves photographed standing in front of somebody else's toilet, uploaded the photograph and got the money.

The lack of civic sense was a problem too, especially for GPs, where PRs chafed at the lack of community cooperation in the disposal of garbage and use of toilets. Similarly, the PHE Department officials said that people bathed and washed clothes near the hand pumps, which reduced water purity and also damaged the platform. The tap water schemes of the GPs ran into problems as people did not pay the dues. In one GP, more than Rs. 2 crores had been sanctioned for the renewal of a tap water scheme but could not be used, as the required community contribution was not forthcoming. The sarpanch proposed that all families contribute according to their financial capacity, yet the people were not willing. Moreover, the residents questioned the sarpanch's intentions. In another GP, a tribal PR said that he had given proposals for a particular road more than 10 times before it was approved in the gram sabha. The residents of his ward were impatient for the road and badgered him constantly but rarely attended the gram sabha.

Accountability Mechanisms

The main accountability of field administration was to the state government, which had the powers to direct and discipline field officials, as described above. A new twist to upward accountability had recently been provided by the 'Chief Minister (CM) helpline', whereby citizens could complain directly to the CM's office by telephone. These complaints were subsequently sent to field officials who were expected to resolve them, which included getting a statement from the complainant that the complaint had been resolved. This process was monitored stringently by the CM's office, and districts were ranked on the basis of the number of complaints resolved. At the time of the fieldwork of this study, the sample district was ranked seventh, out of 52 districts, and in the DC's office, officials said proudly that at one time it had been ranked first.

The CM helpline was quite popular because the CM had publicly taken disciplinary action against officials for not resolving complaints received on the helpline. Consequently, officials were on their toes, and complainants were likely to get redressal. The DC too spent a great deal of time monitoring the progress of the CM helpline applications, as districts were ranked for their performance. Officials were generally unhappy with the CM helpline. One problem with the system was that all complaints,

whether extremely serious or minor, were treated equally, and sometimes, field officials had to spend considerable time on minor or unresolvable issues. Additionally, some complaints concerned issues that could not be resolved locally, but local officials had to spend time replying. For example, there were many complaints to the CM helpline about a public health centre in the sample block, which had no doctor. Revenue officials reported getting complaints about family quarrels or people asking for jobs, about which they could do nothing but had to devote time replying to the complainant, satisfying them and uploading information. In GPs too, PRs and officials said that they received many pointless or unresolvable complaints.

One independent accountability mechanism was the financial audit by the Accountant General (AG), mandatory for all government organisations. In this audit, the AG's team examined documents such as accounts, registers and vouchers of the office and gave a report. The irregularities detected by the AG became 'audit paras', to which the office provided explanations. If the explanations were found to be satisfactory, the para was dropped, but if not, the matter was presented to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the state legislature. In all the sample offices except one, an AG audit had been conducted within the last year. Unfortunately, only four offices provided information about the findings of the audits, and the rest refused. In these offices, minor issues had been raised.

Another accountability mechanism, created recently, was the MP Lok Sewa ke Pradan ki Guarantee Adhiniyam 2010, or the MP Public Service Guarantee Act, which provided day-to-day accountability to the people by setting time limits for the provision of a range of services such as certificates, compensation and benefits under schemes (Annexure 6, Table 1). People could give an application for a service at the cost of Rs. 30 at a common centre. If the service was not provided within the stipulated time limit, a fine could be imposed on officials. Among the sample departments, the MP Public Service Guarantee Act was used extensively in the Revenue Department. In the sample tehsil, in 2016–17, 4876 applications were received, mainly concerning the provision of various types of certificates and documents, and 4404 dealt with. However, officials reported that people often provided incomplete information, because of which cases had to be rejected. Moreover, problems within the administrative system often came in the way of adhering to the time limits set in the Act. For example, the PHE Department officials found it difficult to respond to water testing applications because the laboratories lacked staff as well as the facilities to take samples.

Under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, a citizen could apply to get information from an office, which had to be provided in a mandated time period. There were provisions for appeal in case the applicant was not satisfied with the officer's response and penalty for officials for not providing information on time. In the sample offices, the use of RTI by citizens was limited. Notably, the opinion of officials regarding RTI was mixed. More than a third of the officials said that they did not have much experience with RTI. Some officials said that the Act increased transparency, while others said that people asked for detailed and unnecessary information, which wasted time, or that RTI was used to blackmail officials. As per one interviewee, when his office did not give a local newspaper an advertisement for Republic Day, the journalist got angry and asked for a massive amount of information. When the office put together the information and asked him to deposit money for photocopying, he failed to turn up. Given the widespread rent-seeking, the hostility of officials to RTI is to be expected. Notably, many RTI applications were about the expenditure made by offices. In

one office, junior officials admitted that sometimes senior officials indicated that the RTI application should be ignored, and consequently, information was not provided.

In addition, as mandated by the state government, the ZP organised social audits, whereby people could examine the work done, accounts, and so on of the GPs by recruiting chartered accountants. The social audit for 2016–17 was conducted in the sample GPs in January 2018. Observation and interviews with PRs showed that most social audits tended to be mechanical and unproductive. While people listened to the information that was read out, many did not understand the intent or process. However, in one sample GP, fraud in the construction of toilets was detected during a social audit, and it was found that many people who had been shown as having been provided funds to construct toilets had not actually received any money, and no toilets had been constructed. Several GP officials faced disciplinary proceedings subsequently. [91]

Implications

Field administration functioned in the context of a community where poverty and low level of education demanded a great deal of effort in terms of adequate communication and active support to the very poor and the powerful attempting to corner resources. At the same time, field administration operated under three broad types of pressures from state-level actors, two of which were openly accepted practices in the system.

One type of pressure emanated from highly specific directions and close monitoring. Notably, this runs contrary to the research findings that agencies are effective when oversight authorities demand performance but provide the necessary authorization and resources and refrain from micromanagement and that autonomy to manage its mission enhances agency performance (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999). Moreover, an important question regarding the implementation of public policy is whether implementation is about achieving conformance or performance (Barrett, 2004; Hill & Hupe, 2014). In the public administration ethos described above, the answer was emphatically in favour of conformance, rather than performance. Moreover, this centralization was also contrary to a considerable amount of research regarding work motivation that shows that people thrive when they are permitted autonomy in their work and feel competent yet challenged to improve the task (Denhart & Catlaw, 2015; Pink, 2012).

The second, related pressure was to achieve specific targets for various activities, rather than outcomes. In one sense, field administration was accountable and could not neglect its mandate easily. However, evaluations based on numeric outcomes can significantly increase unethical activity, as such evaluations relieve the burden on the prober to find out how the outcomes have been achieved (Anand et al., 2004). For example, after the NPM reforms in the UK, a top-down coercive pressure to meet prescribed targets has led to the skewing of service priorities and even manipulation of figures for fear of the consequences of failure (Barrett, 2004).

[91] The former secretary of the GP had been transferred, and during the course of the fieldwork, the MGNREGS rozgar sahayak too was suspended on charges of corruption..

The third, unstated pressure from the state government was for rent-seeking and other illicit activities. This pressure encouraged field officials to go against their formal mandate by overlooking and even encouraging lawbreakers and syphoning money from development schemes. Notably, the various accountability mechanisms to address it were highly inadequate. Accountability to the state government and senior officials was meaningless, as political actors and officials at various levels participated in rent-seeking rackets and protected each other. The AG audit was inadequate, as it was confined to the scrutiny of papers, which were usually in order. Accountability to citizens through the RTI and social audits sometimes yielded results but was not used adequately by people. While powerful people benefitted from rent-seeking, the poor lacked the skills and time to use the accountability mechanisms well.

PROCESSES OF ADMINISTRATION

Introduction

In this section, the processes of working of the field administration, or its management style, are described. These are critical because the quality of management can make a difference between success and failure in the delivery of public policy results (Meier et al., 2002). For example, a significant reduction in crime in New York City in the mid-1990s owed a great deal to a change in the working processes of its police (Smith, 2009). organisations with similar structures and human and financial resources can achieve very different outcomes by following different processes.

However, as the above discussion indicates, these working processes were not the outcomes of decisions made by only field officials. While field officials can approach their work in various ways, this approach is framed by the structure, human resources, infrastructure, financial resources and the pressures from the state government and the community, as described earlier. For instance, the availability of expertise is an important determinant of the types of processes that an organisation can adopt. For instance, forensic analysis is not possible without forensic experts. Similarly, the level of autonomy can have an important impact on the extent to which non-productive processes are replaced with better ones.

Definition of 'Work'

Departmental Institutions

How field officials perceived their own role and what they considered 'work' was the basis for subsequent actions. The definition of work was a direct fallout of the extreme centralization described above. When asked to identify the main activities of their organisation, field officials mentioned implementing programmes, following directions from seniors and supervising juniors. They also reported spending the most time on these activities. When officials were asked what their role was, they described it in similar terms. Some officials described their role in very concrete terms, such as distributing bicycles and planting trees (Annexure 6 Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6). Officials did not generally perceive their role in terms of achieving broad outcomes or meeting community needs.

Three-fourths of the supervisory officials were satisfied that they had fulfilled their role; they were also satisfied with their own performance as well as that of their office. Most often, when identifying reasons for satisfaction with the performance of their office, officials mentioned implementing schemes or meeting targets, though a few mentioned outcomes. However, when identifying reasons for satisfaction with their own role performance, along with the implementation of schemes, meeting targets, and so on, officials mentioned serving the community as well. When commenting on their own performance, an interesting response of many officials was that they had done their best in spite of constraints such as lack of manpower and infrastructure and political pressure. When officials were unable to address basic problems, their commitment was focused on managing the situation as best they could. To quote a block-level official, 'I do good work, but the whole system is in a mess. The department starts programmes without planning and without understanding the reality on the ground. To stay in the job, I also follow orders'.

In addition, the engagement with work outside the mandate cut into the time spent on core goals of the field offices. Teachers and AWWs were involved in such activities the most because of their numbers and village-level presence. In two of the five sample schools, at the time of the study, a teacher was involved in census and election work. In one school, the headteacher reported spending almost a month on the tree plantation campaign. He was given a long list of farmers whom he had to persuade to plant trees, monitor and maintain extensive records and upload photographs. He attended several training programmes and meetings. Moreover, as farmers were reluctant to plant trees, he had to visit each farmer several times.

Similarly, all the AWWs interviewed had been involved in work related to Aadhar cards, sanitation and various types of surveys, along with health-related programmes. One demand of the federation of AWWs was that extra work should not be imposed on them. The sincerest AWW among the five interviewed especially resented the extra work offloaded by other departments, which came in the way of AWC activities, and commented that children shifted to private facilities because such tasks interfered with pre-school education. Two patwaris interviewed said that they remained engaged on extraneous work for 15–20 days in a month on an average, while the core work got delayed and kept accumulating. A district-level official commented that everyone had become a multi-purpose worker, and there was no time to focus on the job.

Panchayats

The work sphere of panchayats reflected their marginalisation. Unlike officials, ZP and JP PRs saw their role as fulfilling people's needs and bringing about socio-economic development. However, they admitted that the panchayat had not succeeded in fulfilling this role and cited limited powers and resources of the panchayats on the one hand and centralization from the state level on the other as reasons. Moreover, while the sample JP had held 12 meetings in 2016–17 as was mandated, the sample ZP had met only four times. A ZP PR commented that as the ZP had no powers, there was little point in holding meetings. Attendance in the meetings was patchy. In the ZP and JP, PRs who lived in remote areas missed meetings. At times, PRs stopped attending meetings as poor response, conflicts and delays in implementing proposals dampened their interest.

An analysis of the minutes of three sample meetings in the ZP and JP showed that the most common activity in the ZP was to review the working of departments, while in the JP, instead of a review, it was censuring officials (Annexure 6, Table 7a). The PRs interviewed said that employees did not provide them with information and ignored panchayat resolutions. In spite of these limitations, the ZP and JP did play a role in highlighting the local perspective. During interviews, ZP and JP PRs said that panchayats provided a forum for raising issues. Sometimes they achieved small victories, such as getting some work done in their area. In the words of one ZP member, she 'acted as an elected social worker'.

In the GPs, many PRs and secretaries saw the GP as a programme-implementing agency, with a focus on construction works. When describing their role and achievements, GP PRs were most likely to mention construction works, especially roads. However, the level of satisfaction was much higher among GP PRs compared to the JP and ZP. Their expectations were lower and they were able to do more. However, one sample GP was dysfunctional—the GP office remained closed, and the husband of the woman sarpanch colluded with GP officials to pilfer funds. In the other three sample GPs, in 2016–17, five to eight meetings had been held. Usually, only 7–8 PRs out of 20 in a GP attended the meetings regularly. Decisions were taken by the PRs who attended, and then the meeting register was circulated to others for signature.

While in one GP, no records of meetings were kept, the minutes of three sample meetings of two GPs showed that the discussions focused on various construction projects. In 2016–17, the main activities of the sample GPs included the construction of roads, houses, crematoria and so on. Other important activities of the GP were the distribution of old-age pensions and preparation of cards for families living below the poverty line, among others (Annexure 6 Table 7b). However, some GP PRs viewed their role differently. A woman PR, also a member of the women's federation, tried to improve the school and accompanied women to government offices to facilitate their work. Another ST PR had helped people get ration cards and pensions and aided them in getting their names added to the list of families below the poverty line. In one GP, serious attempts were made to resolve various citizens' issues, such as getting names added to the voter list and making representations to the authorities.

Information and Analysis

As government officials considered their role to be implementers of directions from above, enhancing knowledge, analysis and strategy formulation were low priority. Notably, assessing the situation on the ground and strategizing were not important activities in the field offices. Among the sample departments, planning was a serious activity only in the Forest Department. In P&RD, School Education and PHE departments, scheme-specific plans that became targets for implementation were prepared. In the Public Health Department, an annual plan was prepared but usually could not be followed because it was overtaken by other instructions from the state level. In the Revenue, WCD and Cooperation departments, there was no planning at all.

Three types of information were maintained in the sample offices: on progress and target achievement in schemes to report to senior officials; regarding day-to-day working, such as salary and leave records, availability of medicines and court dates; and concerning the provision of manpower,

infrastructure and aid scheme implementation, such as the availability of teachers and infrastructure in schools and beneficiary-related information (Annexure 6, Table 8). Moreover, given the fragmented structure, this information was not collated for the district but remained with separate district offices. Most of the officials interviewed said that they were satisfied with the existing database and that more information was not needed. Additionally, some officials admitted that because of the pressure to achieve targets, they sometimes fudged information. In two sample GPs, where people were not willing to work at MGNREGS wages but targets had to be fulfilled, officials fudged data, showing smaller payments to more labourers on paper while paying higher amounts to a fewer number of people.

At times, information was collected but not analysed or used meaningfully. For example, in the School Education Department, information about students' grades in tests was collated but was not analysed and used to change teaching strategies. Similarly, in the WCD Department, information regarding the number of malnourished children and high-risk mothers was available, but they were only provided supplementary nutrition or taken to the Nutrition Resource Centres as per scheme provisions. There was no district-level analysis of the causes of child malnutrition and antenatal issues and no specific responses to address these.

When asked if they needed more technical support, many officials did not give a clear reply, and this appeared to be an issue that they had not thought about very much. When officials were asked who they consulted if they had a technical problem, out of 21, 13 officials said that they consulted senior officials, two said that they never needed such help, and only six said that they consulted colleagues and other departments or read and accessed information through digital media. Officials did not consult any experts or non-government organisations working in their subject areas. For example, WCD Department officials, charged with reducing domestic violence, were oblivious of the strategies followed by the self-help group federation in the district, which had done considerable work in this area.

An important corollary of the marginalisation of knowledge and analysis was that while administrative work was considered important, knowledge-based work tended to be sidelined, as illustrated by the pathetic condition of the DIET. Similarly, in the Public Health Department, where doctors did both expertise-based and administrative work, a doctor who was interviewed said that she was almost totally immersed in the administrative work, which took priority.

Rigid, Tedious Procedures

In most large organisations, there is usually a degree of 'formalisation' or written rules and procedures for working. Studies show that on the positive side, formalisation reduces role conflict and ambiguity and enhances job satisfaction among employees. On the negative side, it weakens employees' commitment and limits innovation. Formalisation is helpful when procedures are flexible, provide organisational memory that captures lessons learned from experience and are designed to enable employees to deal with contingencies effectively. By contrast, formalisation becomes coercive when procedures are designed to force reluctant compliance and extract recalcitrant effort from employees. The use of skill and discretion is minimised, and detailed instructions are provided (Adler & Borys, 1996).

In the district, government officials worked as per long-drawn-out, rigid procedures, which often reduced their productivity. The cluster academic coordinators of the School Education Department, who were expected to provide academic support to schools, had been provided with a list of 52 questions; to answer these questions, they had to conduct investigations during school visits and very detailed scrutiny of school records. The coordinators who were interviewed said that they focused on these questions during school visits and not on academic issues. Additionally, a great deal of paperwork was demanded of field officials. For example, schools were expected to maintain 20 registers and 15 AWCs. Copious information had to be sent to centralised agencies. For example, in the six months prior to the fieldwork, teachers had been asked to provide the number of students registered in the school in the last 10 years, figures regarding the attendance of students for one year, detailed data related to the mid-day meals, and so on.

Moreover, inflexible processes were introduced to counter rent-seeking, as the government sought to reduce the discretion available to officials. For the recruitment of AWWs, done at the district level, there were rigid criteria for selection, in which officials had no discretion. In spite of this rigidity, there was examination and approval by two committees, and the list of those selected was published and objections invited before actually making recruitments.

Managing Staff

Management by Officials

As noted above, senior officials in the district wrote the employees' annual performance appraisal report and could recommend punishment; they were also responsible for day-to-day supervision. Supervision was mainly a departmental affair, along with sporadic reviews and inspections by the DC. The common methods of supervision were review meetings, submission of progress and other reports by junior officials and site inspections in the case of construction works and grassroots institutions. Supervision was oriented towards getting orders implemented, rather than getting feedback from the ground, providing support and modifying strategies. Supervisors were under constant pressure from state-level officials themselves and insisted that workers achieve targets and follow orders, even if these were impractical or pointless. For example, AWWs reported that supervisors asked for information in unrealistically short time spans. Patwaris reported that dates for meetings were not fixed in advance, and these were usually held on the basis of 'urgency' or, in other words, due to some demand from senior officials. At the same time, supervisors ignored the needs and difficulties of junior employees. For example, a block-level official said that his boss ignored his problems, stating that he wanted results.

Additionally, the supervisors who were interviewed viewed disciplinary action as the main tool to direct employee behaviour. When district- and sub-district-level officials were asked how they motivated junior employees, they usually said that they punished errant employees suitably. So great was the belief in disciplinary action that one official had set herself a monthly target for the number of junior employees to take action against. This working ethos ran contrary to the theory widely accepted and espoused by managers and management writers that employees perform better under managers

who advance self-direction and self-motivation (Lawter et al., 2015; McGregor, 1957).
However, in spite of the pivotal place of 'disciplinary action' as a management tool, it suffered from many lacunae. In the case of regular employees, field officials' authority regarding disciplinary action was limited mainly to giving recommendations, except for minor punishment for frontline functionaries. The processes for serious disciplinary action were very time-consuming. Adverse remarks in the annual performance appraisal report could block an employee's chances of promotion, but when the promotion chances were limited to begin with, this was a weak tool.

A key problem was that some of the most negligent employees made alliances with powerful political actors and could not be disciplined. Interviewees gave examples of politically powerful employees who could not be touched and described incidents when employees approached politicians when punished, and the latter interfered. A senior doctor related an experience when he proposed compulsory retirement for some workers who were negligent in their duties. The workers used their political clout and bribes to get the disciplinary proceedings scuttled. One School Education Department official related an incident when 23 teachers were suspended for negligence at work. Subsequently, many politicians threatened the official in charge, and the order was withdrawn. Similarly, a cluster academic coordinator cited the example of a politically powerful teacher who did as he pleased, and no official dared to mark the teacher absent if he was not found in the school. Once when the cluster academic coordinator lodged a complaint against the teacher, his supervisor asked him to withdraw it. Notably, political patronage did not weaken the harshness and arbitrariness of punishment but merely shifted the line of hierarchy along personal loyalty and eroded the work ethic. For example, at times, public representatives wanted teachers punished for the wrong reasons, such as not greeting them with a namaste.

In the case of contractual staff, harsh and arbitrary punishment could be meted out. The AWWs interviewed constantly feared being punished and related instances of unfair punishment. If an AWW was not found present in her centre from 9 am to 4 pm, she was likely to be suspended straight away, without being given a chance for explanation. Consequently, when one AWW needed to measure the height and weight of children who attended private pre-schools, she did so after 4 pm, to ensure that she did not get caught up in disciplinary proceedings. Another AWW recalled when a year ago, her entire week's salary was deducted, as the monitoring team did not find her in the AWC, although at that time she was engaged in departmental work. [92] Thus, the highly valued disciplinary action often sets incentives incorrectly.

Management by Panchayats

The ZP and JP too attempted to supervise officials, but their authority was not accepted by officials and often led to conflict. For example, the ZP had formally expressed dissatisfaction with specific officials three times during 2016–17. It had passed a censure motion against a district head for not attending a meeting, constituted an enquiry committee against a bank manager reportedly taking

[92] The AWW had gone to her house to get papers for making payments that were due to some women. In the meanwhile, the monitoring officer came and found her absent. Unfortunately, the helper was also not present as she had gone to a health camp. Though the women who were paid vouched for the AWW, the monitoring team deducted her salary..

bribes and expressed dissatisfaction against another district head for unsatisfactory work. In the JP, the dissatisfaction was even greater. A JP PR remarked that much of the time during JP meetings was spent arguing with officials about delays in work, allocation of funds and getting detailed information, while officials claimed that these matters were not in the purview of the JP. During interviews, PRs said that officials withheld information and wilfully refused to carry out panchayat decisions, quoting rules and regulations. In GPs, there was little attempt to supervise officials. Instead, in some, the GP secretary played a dominant role. For example, in one sample GP, the sarpanch was very motivated but knew little and relied on the secretary. Notably, the sarpanch was poor and had studied only up to eighth grade, while the secretary was well off and a college graduate. Both the sarpanch and secretary sat at the same table (meant for the sarpanch); the secretary worked, and the sarpanch signed checks, documents, and so on.

The officials gave varied opinions on panchayats. Of the 21 officials interviewed, three said that they did not interact much with panchayats; 11 made positive comments, such as that PRs knew local realities and were in contact with people, that panchayats were transparent and accountable and that they got assistance from panchayats; and seven officials made negative comments, such as that PRs were not interested in work and that panchayats lacked capacity. For example, officials of the PHE Department said that 10 years ago, hand pump repair was transferred to the ZP but had to be taken back, as the ZP had no technical staff and, therefore, could not do the task properly. An important problem was that officials simply did not have the autonomy to respond to the concerns of the panchayats, because they had to follow departmental orders, and some bemoaned the difficulty of explaining guidelines and such to panchayats. While most officials resolved this dilemma by simply prioritising the demands of their department, officials of the P&RD Department were obliged to work with panchayats and complained about pressure from two sources.

Day-to-Day Hierarchy

The day-to-day interaction among field-level officials reflected the extreme hierarchy that characterised public administration in general and was in accordance with the 'prismatic society', referring to a combination of traditional and modern practices that exists in developing countries (Riggs, 1964). For example, in the PHE Department, as the new office of a senior official was established at the district headquarters, the rooms of a subordinate office were taken over, and the office had to function from one room with inadequate seating and storage space. Subsequently, even the computer of the office was taken away by a senior officer. Similarly, three district officials said that they had to stand outside the rooms of senior officers to get financial approvals. Several interviewees said that they could not question senior officials. For example, an AWW related an instance when she was asked to take charge of two AWCs, and when she asked for a written order, she was punished with a salary deduction. Another block-level official said that if he asked questions, seniors either rebuked him or started action against him.

Moreover, senior officials could make impossible and illogical demands, which the junior officials could not refuse. For example, a frontline functionary reported that he and his colleagues had to keep their mobile phones on at all times, as they could receive a call at any time of the night to attend a meeting the next day, or late at night, they could be asked to provide data the next morning. In his

words, the subordinate field staff was treated like 'some flock of animals'. Another junior official described a scenario where his supervisor had made him and his colleagues sign a declaration that they would never switch off their mobile phones. If an employee's phone was switched off because the battery had run out, the supervisor deducted a day's salary.

Another feature of the hierarchy was that the actual work was done by the junior-most officials, who were the least qualified, while senior officials only supervised; thus, the best skills were not used in formulating proposals and executing projects. For example, in the PHE Department, proposals and estimates for various works were prepared by the sub-engineer and presented on file to the sub-divisional officer, who sent the file to the executive engineer. The executive engineer gave technical approval and sent it to the superintending engineer for administrative approval. Once this was obtained, the file was sent back to the sub-engineer for implementation. Thus, the skills of the more qualified officials were not used in actually making the proposal but only in scrutinising and rectifying it. In fact, some senior officials even passed on their work to the junior officials. One sub-divisional official posted at the district headquarters said that he had to manage the entire district office.

Coordination

While officials focused on the schemes of their departments, at times, coordination was needed. For instance, in the WCD Department, which focused on a client group, rather than a subject area, coordination was needed with the Public Health Department for immunization, with the police to register offences regarding violence against women and stopping child marriage, with P&RD and PHE departments to build AWC buildings and provide drinking water facilities and with the Cooperation Department to supply grains for supplementary nutrition through fair price shops.

The main coordinating agent in the district was the DC, who held meetings to coordinate campaigns, solve emerging problems, and so on. However, the DC could not intervene in day-to-day matters. For example, as per state directions, AWWs referred severely malnourished children to the Nutrition Resource Centre of the Public Health Department, but the Nutrition Resource Centre did not deem many children eligible and refused to admit them, while its beds lay vacant. Another coordination mechanism were district-level committees, of which there were 82, spread across 24 departments (65% of all departments. The DC was the chairperson of 76 such committees and member or member secretary of six. As can be imagined, it was difficult for the DC to do justice to 82 committees. Officials reported that committee meetings were often postponed. For example, in WCD, the recruitment of AWWs was delayed frequently as the meeting of the committee could not take place. Consequently, coordination remained a problematic issue.

Importantly, there was no mechanism to create synergy in the socio-developmental initiatives of various departments. The panchayats lacked the authority to coordinate, and the work overload of the DC obstructed coordination. For instance, both the School Education and WCD departments ran pre-school education centres but did not share the approaches and methods adopted.

Community Contact

An important positive aspect of field administration was its close contact with the community. While frontline functionaries such as AWWs and patwaris were in continuous contact with people, officials at the district and sub-district level too made field visits where they interacted with client groups such as parents and held meetings. Moreover, ordinary citizens, as well as those representing various interest groups, approached district and sub-district offices with applications and complaints, and officials spent at least some part of each day hearing them. A very large number of people visited the offices of the DC and the SDM with a very wide variety of applications and complaints. In addition, various types of structured events such as numerous fairs, workshops and training programmes were held. A jan sunwai (public hearing) was held every week, when all district and block officials sat together, received applications and tried to sort out people's problems.

Additionally, departments provided information of various types to the people (Annexure 6, Table 9) through frontline functionaries, gram sabhas, fairs and media outlets. Departments varied in the type of information they provided. Among the sample departments, Revenue, Forest and Cooperation departments provided information of only a transactional type such as about availability of forest produce and their rates, availability of seeds and fertilisers, and so on. In the P&RD Department, information was provided regarding government schemes, people's eligibility to avail benefits and the methods of doing so. Similarly, in the School Education Department, the focus was on enrolment, retention and attendance, as well as government schemes. Three departments, WCD, Public Health and PHE, engaged with broader issues, such as child malnutrition, antenatal care and conserving water, and not just government schemes. However, it is not possible to comment on the extent to which such information penetrated the community. Notably, field-level officials did not monitor this aspect, and as has been noted above, expertise in communication was lacking.

Rent-Seeking

While rent-seeking is not an acknowledged 'process' in government, it is one in practice and has consequently been discussed in this section. Rent-seeking was widespread in the district. Its scale can be assessed from the fact that while the PRs and journalists interviewed reported large-scale, systematic rent-seeking, a majority of the officials interviewed denied it, as possibly, they too engaged in it. In FGDs, people said that they had to pay bribes to avail every government service, for which there were fixed rates. One politically active female GP PR said that women in her ward paid between Rs. 500 to Rs. 2000 as bribes, depending upon the work. PRs and journalists pointed to the extensive and open illegal mining of sand from the river beds, which was only possible with official collusion. A journalist alleged that powerful officials themselves were trading illegally in sand. Some officials also admitted that rent-seeking was rampant and even described how it operated. One forest beat guard described the following system:

Suppose any beat officer submits a proposal to construct an anganwadi building in a village for Rs. 10 lakh. After sanction, the DFO informs that the money has been deposited in the account of the village-level forest committee and orders that construction work be started. The ranger and deputy ranger fix

their share of the money at 20% and 10%, respectively. The construction is then done for Rs. 8 lakh, and the rest is distributed among the staff.

Rent-seeking was prevalent in panchayats too, visibly so in GPs, which lacked sophisticated means of concealment. In one sample GP, the incumbent secretary admitted to providing a 'share' to higher-level officials. However, he felt that it was important to maintain credibility and refrained from making money in the GP in which he was the secretary. Instead, he worked as a contractor in nearby GPs, where, as per the established system, he paid 15% of the estimated project cost as bribes. He acknowledged that he had earned substantial money and cited the example of a JP PR (actually the husband of a female PR), a well-known criminal, with whom he had an agreement—the secretary did not demand a cut on profits from funds given by the JP, and in turn, the JP PR's husband did not interfere with the secretary's gains as a contractor.

In another sample GP, the MGNREGS rozgar sahayak said that corruption had increased exponentially in recent years. Frequent campaigns and functions meant that tent dealers, contractors and suppliers benefitted, and government workers made fraudulent petrol and other bills. Tragically, innocent PRs could get caught up in it. In the GP described above, in the previous tenure, the then secretary and the female sarpanch's husband had embezzled Rs. 50 lakh. The female ex-sarpanch was still in prison, though the ex-secretary was out on bail.

Technology

An important thrust for improving administration was the increasing use of digital and other technology. Numerous software applications were in use across the departments, and video conferencing facilities were available at the district level. Moreover, payments to labourers in the Forest Department and under MGNREGS, funds for uniforms and scholarships to students and the payment for cooking mid-day meals for schools and the supplementary nutrition for anganwadis were made directly from the state level in the accounts of self help groups (SHGs) that cooked them.

The positive as well as negative impact of the increased use of technology could be seen in the district. On the positive side, technology enabled better communication and systematic working. For example, the PHE Department officials could quickly get information through their mobile phones about hand pumps that needed repair; through a revenue court management software, casework management improved; a computerised software had made accounting and record-keeping easier in the Cooperation Department, and so on. In one GP, digitization had helped prevent fraud as the digital software detected a discrepancy arising from the attempts of two wealthy villagers to obtain benefits aimed at families below the poverty line.

On the negative side, technology has increased centralisation. Officials reported that reviews from the state level had become more frequent via video conferences, and the demand for data and reports had increased substantially. Moreover, as funds were transferred directly to the accounts of beneficiaries and other payees, district offices ceased to even have knowledge about financial outlays and expenditures. The financial autonomy at the field level, already low, touched a new depth. In addition, when the payment of wages under MGNREGS was stalled, GPs could do nothing, though

people pressed them for their dues.

Several glitches emerged as digital technology was introduced at great speed. In the sample villages, many students could not get their scholarship money because they could not make the right entries or because of software problems. Revenue officials complained that land maps had become inaccurate after digitization. Often, servers failed to work, and frontline functionaries had to go to the block or tehsil headquarters to upload information. In one instance, a teacher was asked to do a door-to-door survey online. During the survey, his location was not traceable online due to poor network connectivity, and he was asked to redo it so that his location could be tracked. Another example was the M Shiksha Mitra App to record teachers' attendance. Teachers logged in and out of this app daily, and the software traced the location to ensure the teacher's presence in the school. However, officials and teachers reported technical faults, as wrong distances were shown, so that the teachers, even when in school, appeared to be absent. Moreover, as a School Education Department official remarked, a teacher could cheat by buying a second mobile and getting someone to log in and out at the place where the school was located.

There were instances of pointless use of technology too, such as an app whereby farmers could give feedback on their crop assessment, which no farmer used. In another case, a teacher said that she had received directions to use mobile phones to teach students and show them educational videos. She found this a waste of time, as the students were more interested in the mobile phone than the video that was being played on it. Moreover, students in the last row of the class were not able to hear the sound on the mobile phone. On the other hand, some useful technologies were not available adequately, especially at lower levels, such as a shortage of survey machines to measure the land area.

Privatisation

Some attempts at Privatisation of services had been made as well. Among the sample departments, since 2015, hand pump repair had been contracted out. However, considerable difficulties were faced, as there were no private agencies with experience in hand pump repair in the district. When tenders were floated at the state level, no bids were received. Tendering was then shifted to the district, and no bids were received there either. Consequently, district officials had to convince contractors to apply. Meetings were held, and some contractors were talked into tendering. Some previous employees of the PHE Department also put in tenders. Subsequently, in the first year, the work done by the contractors was unsatisfactory. According to officials, poor quality material was used, and there were delays. Therefore, from the second year, materials and technicians began to be provided by the department. The contractor's role was limited to providing the vehicles and workers, and the actual repair was done by field-level departmental staff. But problems, such as delays, continued here too.

Thus, Privatisation of the service did not automatically result in improved outcomes. Moreover, officials said that the process of contracting an agency was time-consuming. While officials admitted that contracting was cost-effective, they said that the actual success depended on the agency. Sometimes the contractors were not only cost-effective but also quite good, but in other instances, responsiveness and quality of work suffered. Notably, with Privatisation, an element of uncertainty was introduced, along with the problem of accountability. For example, a senior official stated that if

the private agency did poor work, the reputation of the department suffered. Additionally, because of inadequate manpower, officials could not supervise the contractor adequately. Officials remarked that working with one's employees was better than working through contractors. The officials wanted less Privatisation and strengthening of the department.

Implications

The processes of field administration had the potential for providing good service to the community because of strong community contact at all levels. An interesting point to be noted here is that many employees derived personal satisfaction from serving the community, displaying a 'public service motivation', which refers to 'an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organisations' (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368). [93] Moreover, because of their frequent contact with people, field officials were in a position to understand people's problems and address them. Potentially, they could also get feedback on their initiatives and improve them.

However, this potential was whittled down by two core problems. One, the processes of field administration were not oriented towards formulating intelligent strategies and improving them. Field organisations were not 'learning' organisations, that is, organisations where new skills and insights learned by individuals become part of standard operating procedures (Popper & Lipshitz, 1998). Notably, rigorous analysis of the situation and constant improvement of strategies after feedback and reflection can make all the difference between success and failure. For example, in the mid-1990s, crime in New York City began to be controlled, as the police began to recognize crime patterns and carefully monitor their own interventions, abandoning the unproductive ones and expanding the ones that worked (Smith, 2009).

organisations become capable of devising better strategies on a continuous basis when the hardware of 'organisation learning mechanisms', or the concrete structural and procedural arrangements that allow organisations to systematically collect, analyse, store and disseminate information relevant to the performance of the organisation and its members, exists along with its software—a culture that promotes inquiry, openness and trust (Argyris & Schon, 1978). For example, a survey of Texas State agencies showed that learning in organisations was fostered when workgroups had effective information systems, there was inclusive dialogue, information regarding performance was considered to foster improvement and there was decision flexibility, meaning that the operational staff could use their learning in decision making (Moynihan & Landyut, 2009).

In contrast, in the district under study, working processes were characterised by a narrow definition of work, lack of analysis, rigid procedures and hierarchical functioning. Working processes did not include the assessment of the situation and change of strategy after feedback and reflection. In other words, field organisations lacked the hardware as well as software for intelligent action. This meant

[93] The public service motive is seen as comprising rational motives such as the satisfaction obtained from participating in policy formulation, commitment to a public programme or advocacy for a special interest; norm-based motives such as loyalty to the country, serving the public interest and social equity; and affective motives such as a love for and desire to protect people within a political boundary (Perry & Wise, 1990)..

that the abilities of individuals within the field organisations were underutilised. Moreover, the insights that field officials developed through long years of work remained with them and could not become part of organisational knowledge. From such organisations, 'stupid' actions can be expected, even when individuals within them are capable.

It is important to note here that the rapid introduction of technology did little towards addressing this problem of field administration. The copious data generated through the use of technology remained un-analysed. Technology smoothened some processes, but it was also used to exacerbate some faults of the system, such as over-centralization. The expectation from technology appeared to be that it would solve the basic problems of field administration. But these expectations were misplaced. Instead, unrealistic expectations meant that technology was introduced at great speed, which led to glitches and worsened outcomes, at least in the short run. Similarly, Privatisation was no panacea either. Its success depended not only on the quality of private services, which is usually poor in rural areas but also on the processes followed in government, as officials needed to contract out services and supervise contractors. Moreover, a new problem of diffused accountability appeared.

The second core problem was rampant rent-seeking. As noted above, field administration was corrupt as a whole and had crossed the 'corruption threshold', a point at which corruption becomes so widespread that it characterises the organisation as a whole [94] (Pinto et al., 2008). Notably, in the case of widespread corruption in an organisation, a 'social cocoon' with rent-seeking norms develops, and newcomers are socialised to adopt corrupt practices (Anand et al., 2004). Notably, as a 'process', rent-seeking works towards sabotaging the very goals towards which other processes are oriented. Since officials supported law-breakers while enforcing the law and pilfered funds while providing various services and benefits, they undid their own efforts towards their stated goals. The wider damage caused by such rampant rent-seeking is discussed in the next section.

ADMINISTRATION ON THE GROUND

Introduction

The characteristics of field administration outlined above were reflected in its performance on the ground, the delivery of social services and the implementation of public policy. The fault lines in this administrative system had a substantial impact on the ground, leading to poor utilisation of government resources as well as hardships for citizens. This dynamic is described in this section.

Access to Social Services

As has been noted above, the scattered residential pattern impacted the provision of social services, as the per capita cost of providing these in small habitations was high. As population criteria were

[94] The criteria for crossing the 'corruption threshold' are as follows: corrupt portions of the organisation cannot be identified because these behaviours are covert and widespread; even if corrupt portions are identified, the number of individuals involved is so large as to make firing them en masse difficult; even if the individuals involved are fired, the organisation will remain corrupt, unless underlying processes and mechanisms are identified and dealt with (Pinto et al., 2008). .

followed in the provision of many services, smaller villages were at a disadvantage in terms of physical access to social services. Consequently, while AWCs and primary schools were physically accessible to all children, fewer children, especially girls and children from poor families, got high school and higher secondary school education. In the sample villages, the access to government health services was partial, and people had to supplement these with private services. Well-off villagers used private medical facilities in the village or nearby towns, while the poor often resorted to traditional healers or 'Bengali doctors', who did not have medical degrees but 'treated' the villagers. Such lack of access is mainly a matter of government policy and under-investment of funds, which are critical but not the subject of this paper.

However, special problems of access were created for administrative reasons too. For example, people living in forest villages were denied some services because these were the domain of the Forest Department, which lacked the capacity to deal with human settlements. In the sample forest village, no land records were available as revenue officials did not operate in the village. A forest official interviewed admitted that the department was not able to pay adequate attention to forest villages, and these would be better administered by the Revenue Department. It made little logical sense for the Revenue Department to not prepare land records in forest villages. The continuation of this practice reflects an unthinking approach to field administration.

Additionally, the allocation of facilities was distorted as contextual needs were ignored because of extreme centralization. For example, all AWCs, set up as per population-based criteria, [95] had the same staff. However, the number of children in the 26 AWCs across the five sample villages varied from 25 to 92. Additionally, while some AWCs had almost no malnourished children, others had many (Annexure 7, Tables 1 and 2). Similarly, in two GPs, the MGNREGS daily wage was much lower than the market wages in the nearby city; consequently, people did not want to work at MGNREGS wages. However, as these GPs had been allotted targets like others, officials met them by showing more labourers on paper while paying higher wages to fewer people. At the same time, in another sample village, people were forced to work for lower than the MGNREGS wages, as adequate work was not available under the scheme.

Moreover, because of the administrative deficiencies described above, services that required few technical and managerial skills were more likely to be provided than those that required higher-order ones. For example, subsidised food through the public distribution system was provided quite successfully. Similarly, in all the sample schools, the mid-day meal was provided as mandated; children ate the food and said that they liked it. But, lacking technical capability, GPs struggled to provide tap water, and many areas were left unserved even when a scheme was operational. They struggled administratively as well, as they could not raise a small community contribution that was required to get a tap water scheme or collect water charges that were needed for the maintenance of the system. One GP made three consecutive failed attempts before it managed to start pipe water supply.

[95] The criteria are to set up an AWC for a population of 400–800 and a mini AWC for a population of 150–400 in general, and for tribal areas, an anganwadi for a population of 300–800 and a mini anganwadi for a population of 150–300.

Quality of Grassroots Institutions

Introduction:

The deficiencies of the administrative system were visible sharply in the unsatisfactory quality of the grassroots institutions, including schools, AWCs and sub-health centres. Notably, the fact that people lived in small villages posed a dilemma for the quality of social services. If, to enable easy access, a large number of facilities were provided close to where people lived, very small institutions with sparse resources got created, and quality suffered. However, if bigger and fewer facilities were provided, poor people found it difficult to access them. For example, the five sample villages had 19 primary schools (with five classes) and 911 students, between 22 and 80 in a school and an average of 48 per school. There were a total of 45 teachers in these schools. Out of the 19 schools, 11 had two teachers, two had only one teacher, four had three teachers and two had four teachers. Consequently, in most schools, teachers handled two or more classes at a time, which was challenging. On the other hand, if there had been 10 primary schools in the five sample villages, or an average of two per village, the average number of teachers per school would have been 4.5, which means that all schools would have had at least four teachers, and nearly all schools would have had one teacher per class. However, children from some hamlets would have had to walk a longer distance to school and may have missed school more often.

At the same time, the administrative system had an important impact on the quality of grassroots institutions. Two types of such institutions, primary schools and AWCs, are discussed in this section.

Schools

During the course of the study, three visits were made to each of the five sample schools to check for the presence of teachers and students, verify the actual school hours, observe the classroom and conduct a basic reading test with students. During these visits, no gross dereliction of duty by teachers was observed. In the 15 visits made, all teachers were present on 11 visits, that is, around 73% of the time. On two visits, one teacher was on leave, and on another two visits, two teachers were out on administrative work and training. However, though the schools were expected to function for five hours and 45 minutes from 10.30 am to 4.15 pm, only two out of the five sample schools functioned as per the scheduled time. In the other three schools, the actual school timings were shorter by 15 minutes to one and a quarter-hour. An important reason was that no teacher in any school actually lived in the village, and some commuted long distances. Additionally, frequent buses were not available in small habitations, so the teachers came and left as per bus availability rather than school timings.

A key problem was that the time spent by teachers in educational activities with students was very short. During the 15 school visits, 24 activities were observed in the classrooms. Of these, only 10, or 45%, comprised the teacher engaging with students in an educational activity. As teachers handled more than one class at a time, there were periods when students of some classes were left to their own devices. In addition, teachers spent significant time on administrative work. Teachers managed

mid-day meals, addressed problems related to rations and fuel, conducted surveys during enrolment drives, made door-to-door visits, and were called upon to do vigilance duty during examinations. The teachers who were interviewed said that they attended four to five meetings per month at the block and cluster levels and provided various types of information. Moreover, with smartphones, meetings were fixed instantly and information demanded in a short time.

Teachers were dissatisfied with the excessive administrative work as it interfered with teaching. They reported that supervisors emphasised non-teaching work such as data collection and reports over teaching. The best teacher among the five interviewed constantly slipped up in administrative work and was pulled up for it. In three schools, teachers said that they took such work home or worked on holidays. In one FGD, people said that their primary school had only one teacher for all five classes. He was not found in the school very often, as he had to go to the block office frequently to attend meetings and present reports. Much of the time, the teacher only scolded the children, who learned little.

During school observation, some teachers were found to be negligent, talking on their mobile phones or playing music while in the classroom. Moreover, while in three of the five sample schools no corporal punishment was observed, in one school, a teacher often slapped 'naughty' children on their heads and referred to children who were not good at studies as kachhra or waste. In another school, a student's mother reported that the teacher had hit him. When the head teacher was asked what he did when he saw a teacher beat students, he replied that this could happen with any teacher, including himself, as teachers also had problems and tensions. In fact, in FGDs, many parents too said that corporal punishment was needed.

But there were committed teachers too. One teacher interviewed was totally immersed in teaching. He did all his non-teaching work after school and on holidays. Observations of this school showed teaching in progress on all visits. The teacher excitedly showed the researcher the teaching materials, students' notebooks and workbooks and the small changes he had made to the teaching methods and tools. The students performed well on the small reading test that the researcher conducted. Similarly, another teacher was proud that her school, though located in a small hamlet, had the highest number of students in the village. Yet another teacher said that though he was dissatisfied with the working environment, he felt happy when he saw children learning. However, no special recognition or incentives were offered to such teachers, and they were treated on par with teachers who neglected their work. Moreover, extreme centralisation meant that, even if they wanted to, such teachers could not innovate easily. One teacher said that it was not possible to alter or modify the pace in response to children's progress as the government had specified when each lesson was to be taught. Sometimes, he made changes, but the scope was very limited. In fact, at times, centralised guidelines were so out of sync with the context that they were impossible to follow on the ground. One teacher admitted that she could not follow the academic calendar provided all the time.

There was a high emphasis from the state level on student evaluation, and students were evaluated in multiple ways, such as through baseline evaluation, a test to assess learning improvement, monthly evaluations, an annual surprise test and final grading as the academic session ended. One teacher commented that though teachers were already burdened with non-teaching work and had little time

to teach, they had to do multiple evaluations as well. Another teacher believed that the evaluation had had no impact on children's learning as teachers were well aware of what students understood even without any evaluation. But the emphasis on evaluation continued, and teachers' experience was not taken into account. Moreover, student evaluation often did not reflect reality. When the researcher asked students of classes 4 and 5 to read in Hindi, the simplest possible exercise, in three out of the five schools, there were children who could not read. In two schools, a majority of the children who were asked to read were unable to do so, though 45% of students in one school and 70% in the other were shown as getting the top two grades among four.

Along with unfavourable working conditions and lack of autonomy, teachers also lacked the skills to facilitate learning among children who did not have educational support at home. For example, one teacher tried to facilitate peer learning for students who did not perform well. He divided the students into subgroups according to their skills and understanding levels and provided them with tasks such as inter-group discussions. He said that the peer group exercises helped as students were less hesitant with peers than in the whole class. However, the results were not satisfactory; the teacher did not know the reason for this and was at a loss regarding what to do next.

Notably, in spite of the availability of government schools, the better off people accessed private schools. While there could be several reasons for this, the importance of the quality of education in government schools cannot be discounted. Many poor parents too rushed to enrol their children in private schools. A small number of children could get education free of cost at the private schools as per the provisions of the Right to Education Act, but parents also paid fees for private schools that they could ill-afford. Because of the shift to private schools, the student population in government schools was declining, and the department was looking to reduce the number of schools. In the sample district, 93 government schools had been closed down.

Anganwadis

As in the case of primary schools, observation of five sample AWCs showed no gross neglect in any. Supplementary nutrition was provided in all, and FGDs showed that AWWs made home visits and counselled mothers too. However, as noted above, the mandate of the AWC was substantial, and a single AWW, along with a helper, was expected to fulfil it; in addition, they were assigned work outside the mandate as well. AWWs dealt with this unrealistic workload by focusing on tasks that were monitored most by supervisors, as per government priorities. All AWWs focussed on child malnourishment as it was monitored closely. Moreover, observations of AWCs showed their most frequent activity to be filling up registers as they were checked by supervisors. However, three of the AWCs provided no pre-school education, as it was not a high priority for their supervisors.

The skill and diligence with which AWWs dealt with malnourishment were varied. The sincerest AWW of the five interviewed had encouraged families of malnourished children to plant small kitchen gardens, sent the helper to massage a child with disabilities, asked mothers to contribute money for protein-rich biscuits and engaged with some malnourished adolescent girls, advising them on nutrition. A second AWW's work with malnourished children had been appreciated. She had got the eight severely malnourished children admitted to the Nutrition Resource Centre and had completed

the four required follow-ups, during which she interacted regularly with the mothers and children, calling them to the AWC and visiting them, and ensured that they ate on time. As a consequence, five out of eight malnourished children recovered. A third AWW was seen tracking the progress of malnourished children, updating mothers about it, appreciating mothers whose children's weight increased and reprimanding those whose children's weight declined while repeating instructions about using supplementary nutrition.

However, in one AWC, the researcher identified a malnourished child that the AWW had not. [96] Further, the AWW was not aware that the data regarding one child indicated severe malnourishment. Moreover, she believed that many children identified as moderately malnourished were merely thin. In another AWC, the researcher witnessed children's vaccination being carried out in a slapdash manner in extremely unhygienic conditions.

A shift to private facilities was visible in the case of AWCs too. In one sample AWC in a village near the city, two-thirds of the children in the eligible age group attended private pre-schools, though they were nominally registered at the AWC. A few children from the catchment area of two other AWCs were enrolled in private pre-schools too. The parents of these children were willing to forgo the supplementary nutrition provided in the AWC for what they perceived as better pre-school education, which the overburdened AWWs could not provide satisfactorily.

Struggles with Citizens

Though field officials interacted frequently with citizens in various ways, they faced numerous problems in doing so. Because of centralization, government and panchayat officials appeared rigid and unresponsive in their interactions with people. For example, officials could do nothing to help families who were eligible to get free houses but had been missed out in the SECC list. The pressure to achieve targets, rather than meet people's needs, could make the relationship between frontline functionaries and people antagonistic, even when no punitive action was involved. For instance, GP secretaries had to fulfil targets for construction of houses and toilets, which people themselves built, and resented being blamed if beneficiaries delayed the construction or misused the money provided. One GP secretary suggested that the government impose strict penalties on people who did not cooperate.

One sample department that was frequently in antagonistic contact with people was the Forest Department. The Forest Department officials lacked the skills to negotiate the exercise of people's rights with the protection of the forest. For example, a point of conflict was allowing animals to graze in the forest, which forest beat guards claimed was prohibited, while people believed it to be their right. The truth was that grazing was generally allowed but banned in some areas when new saplings were planted for some periods of time. However, forest officials frequently imposed fines on people who grazed cattle in the forest.

Another space for struggle with the community was the school. The teachers interviewed found

[96] The child was malnourished as per weight but not as per the middle upper arm circumference.

it difficult to ensure that students learned, and they saw many problems as emanating from the community. While there was a genuine problem of several students attending school irregularly, four of the five teachers interviewed claimed that students and parents lacked interest in studying. One teacher, though himself an ST, said that STs were quite backward and remarked that he had tried many ways to make children learn, such as citing real-life examples, but had made little headway. In another school, where almost all the students were ST, the teacher observed that compared to 'normal' children, the ST children were naturally weak and did not have the desired atmosphere in their homes. Similarly, three teachers said that students did not do the homework assigned and parents did not bother with them either.

However, FGDs with people revealed a more complex picture. Though the lack of job opportunities impacted the perceived value of education adversely, people were not indifferent to their children's education. They appreciated teachers who made an effort and resented those who were casual. For instance, parents were very happy with one sample school that had highly motivated teachers and reported that some children studied at night to complete homework. They were aware that their school was much better than that of other villages and said they felt good when they saw their children learning. When teachers were negligent, people complained to officials.

The use of technology for greater centralization, and its rapid introduction without adequate preparation, impacted people directly. For example, in one GP, payment of MGNREGS wages had been delayed for months as money had not been deposited by the state. The beneficiaries pressured the GP, but GP officials could do little, though earlier they had been able to address such issues by using funds from elsewhere and recouping later. In another sample GP, many people could not avail pensions for lack of bank accounts, and technical problems with digitised payment came in the way of receiving instalments for free houses. Similarly, as funds for scholarships were transferred directly to students' accounts, students and parents spent a great deal of time in the exercise, and a few had to forgo what was due to them because they were unable to complete the formalities. During the course of the fieldwork, problems concerning payment to farmers after procurement of paddy had become a significant issue and had led to demonstrations by farmers. The root cause of the problem was the glitches in making payments through an online system.

One outcome of this unsatisfactory state of affairs was that people complained often to supervisory officials as well as to politicians. The community was generally suspicious of officials, and complaints could sometimes be unreasonable. In one GP, the MGNREGS rozgar sahayak said that when she visited construction sites, and people could not find her in the GP office, they complained to the CM helpline. In other words, the poor functioning of the administrative system eroded the relationship between the government and the people.

Harassment and Denial of Entitlements

Widespread rent-seeking caused considerable harassment to people and deprived them of their entitlements. In such cases, government officials acted as oppressive tyrants, fleecing poor people to enrich themselves. As noted above, citizens had to pay bribes for services that were meant to be free. Moreover, in three sample villages, people reported that when they went to the forest to get firewood,

to which they were entitled, forest beat guards snatched their axes and demanded money for their return. Similarly, the rampant illegal sand mining, which the officials did little to stop, harmed the environment and people's livelihoods.

Rent-seeking had led to complete institutional collapse in one sample GP, as mentioned above, where fraud in the construction of toilets had been detected. During the fieldwork, the office of the GP remained closed, and discussions with citizens revealed that their petitions and requests were met with rudeness. In one ward, 25 people who had not received any money for toilet construction had been threatened with the cancellation of their food ration coupons for not constructing toilets. The villagers were alarmed and took loans to construct toilets. They were assured by the panchayat that they would get the money on completing the construction of toilets, but this was not forthcoming. The residents were still in debt at the time of the fieldwork. In another ward, a contractor was appointed to construct toilets but did a shoddy job, and the toilets were already on the brink of collapsing. The so-called beneficiaries were made to sign some papers and alleged that the GP staff had got the money deposited in their own bank accounts. A road constructed by the GP had begun to crumble within four to five months. The panchayat gave the work to a contractor, who hired workers for less than MGNREGS wages and had not paid them for over six months. When the workers demanded their wages, the contractor told them to ask the sarpanch, who in turn told them to ask the secretary, and the secretary told them to ask the contractor. People said that the muster roll has been filled thrice for the same work.

Rigidity in schemes and processes too deprived people of their entitlements as their genuine needs were not taken into account. For instance, at times, poor people were too short of money to buy the subsidised ration from the public distribution system shop. Their entitlement then lapsed. In the case of out-of-order hand pumps, villagers often called private mechanics as the department provided delayed service.

Community Forums

As noted above, poverty and lack of education reduced citizens' capacity to participate effectively in community forums such as gram sabhas and various types of CBOs set up by departments. Such forums were weakened further by the problems of the administrative system. For example, most CBOs were found to be dysfunctional, and people were not even aware of many. The 'Tadarth Samiti', to supervise the activities of ANM, ASHA and AWW, and the 'Gram Raksha Samiti', to prevent alcoholism and other types of drug abuse, were inactive in all the sample villages. This was not surprising in light of the inadequate manpower at the grassroots, the lack of expertise in communication with the community and a target orientation where the focus of frontline functionaries remained on activities that were monitored closely. Only two CBOs, the SMC-PTA and Forest Management Committees (FMCs), were active in some villages.

Among the five sample schools, in two schools, the SMC-PTA was dysfunctional. Observations revealed that meetings of the committees comprised largely of teachers lecturing to parents about regular attendance by students, hygiene, and so on. FMCs met sporadically, if at all, and forest beat guards simply obtained people's signatures as needed. One beat guard said that discussions in the

FMC meetings revolved around the agenda of the department, which included the protection and management of the forest, activities needed in different areas and people's willingness to work in the nursery. People's issues, usually regarding delayed payment of wages, were ignored. Another beat guard said that villagers often said that the forest was theirs and that they should be allowed to use it as per their needs, emphasising that outsiders had no right to impose fines. They pointed out that the actual thieves and poachers who destroyed the forest always managed to escape. Since the beat guard could not answer such questions, he encouraged only selected members who abided by the agenda of the department to attend the meetings.

Centralization impacted the gram sabhas as well. Notably, four gram sabhas were mandated by the P&RD Department on dates of national importance, rather than as per the GP's need and choice. A scrutiny of gram sabha minutes of the sample GPs showed that their agenda comprised discussion of various government schemes and campaigns and selection of beneficiaries for the schemes, as opposed to people's needs and plans (Annexure 7, Table 4). Attendance in the gram sabhas was scanty, and in FGDs, some people said that they did not participate because the GP did not respond to their requests.

Yet, the potential for community action was visible in the sample block, where considerable work had been done by Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) to organise and train SHGs of women. The focus of these groups was on credit linkages and livelihoods generation, but they also undertook a range of activities related to governance. For example, in one sample village, the SHG had succeeded in getting a mini AWC started in their hamlet. Similarly, in one sample GP, many women from SHGs had started attending and actively participating in gram sabhas. In one gram sabha, they proposed a tap water scheme, which had been installed. They had formed a good relationship with the active GP secretary, who often discussed panchayat matters with them and sought their support from time to time. In one village, women from the SHGs had held errant teachers to account. They reported that when they approached an official as a group, no one dared to ask them to pay bribes, though in their individual capacity they were vulnerable like other citizens.

Notably, the SHGs had acquired these strengths after intensive training and support. This was not possible in an administrative system that had little expertise in communicating with and mobilising the community, where officials were busy fulfilling targets and where the level of centralization was very high.

Solving Problems and Achieving Policy Objectives

As noted above, government institutions were capable of undertaking simple tasks but could not achieve complex goals. This made them poor problem solvers as problems are, by definition, complex. Moreover, when government goals were complex, success was difficult to come by.

For instance, though lack of livelihoods was identified as the most important problem by people in FGDs, centralization came in the way of addressing it. There was no district-level analysis or plan about it. Government programmes, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission and MGNREGS, were implemented with varying effectiveness. In the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, credit

flow to SHGs had improved, but little headway was made in creating and strengthening livelihood opportunities. As per state directions, there was no focus on small and marginal farmers, the logic of which was not clear. An initiative to get SHGs to supply goods purchased by the government was in jeopardy because of rent-seeking and subsequent enquiries. Another initiative to promote poultry, focusing on a local breed, did not take off because the types of institutions needed to undertake business activities had not been created, and realistic business plans had not been prepared. Consequently, the initiative had yielded little success. In MGNREGS too, as noted above, uniform targets had impacted the programme adversely, with two sample GPs struggling to fulfil them in spite of the lack of interest among workers, while in another sample village, enough works were not started, and people were forced to work for wages lower than MGNREGS. The village functioned as a cheap labour bank for the neighbouring areas. Moreover, the delay in wage payment was a disincentive.

In the case of drinking water, the second important problem identified by people, the excessive splitting of departments and organisations, rent-seeking and lack of needed specialisation blocked a solution. The core issue was that the groundwater table was falling, and water sources were drying up. But the district office of the PHE Department could do little about it as it was the responsibility of a separate state-level agency, which was not proceeding at the pace required in the district. Moreover, community education regarding the conservation of water could not be carried out effectively as PHE was basically a technical department, and its staff for community mobilisation was inadequate. At the same time, illegal mining on river banks, a consequence of widespread rent-seeking, exacerbated the problem as water became more exposed to the sun and evaporated faster.

Excessive splitting of field administration led to a grave problem regarding land titles in the sample forest village. The residents of the village had been re-settled twice and were given land documents during the second resettlement some 40–45 years ago. Some years ago, the Forest Department officials took everyone's land documents for renewal but reissued them only to the ST landholders as per the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2008 (known as Forest Rights Act or FRA 2008). The rest of the people were asked to show proof of 75 years' residence. The villagers provided a 75-year-old man as a witness, but the officials did not accept it as proof. The villagers alleged that they were asked to pay Rs. 250 as bribes but were unable to do so. Consequently, the SC and OBC families continued to occupy the land, but they had no papers. This meant that they could not get loans, benefit from agriculture development schemes or even get seeds and fertilisers from the co-operative society. The DC was sympathetic to the landholders and promised to get them the documents. However, the Forest Department officials did not agree, and he had little authority over them.

The goal of eliminating child malnutrition could not be addressed effectively because of the lack of contextual strategies coupled with the low skills of AWWs. The supplementary nutrition provided was not effective as attendance of children at the AWCs was poor, since their parents took them along to work. Moreover, in many families, supplementary nutrition for mothers and children of six months to three years of age, provided weekly in packets, was cooked at one go and eaten by the whole family. The WCD Department's approach of confining support to its client group made little sense in the family. As AWWs were not very skilled, they sometimes failed to identify malnourished children, and the children they referred to the Nutrition Resource Centre were often refused admission because

they did not meet the criteria for severe malnourishment. Moreover, mothers found it difficult to stay with their children in the Nutrition Resource Centre because the compensation provided was lower than the wages they earned and because they could not leave their other children. As in the case of livelihoods, field-level officials were neither mandated nor trained to analyse the context and evolve strategies. Two WCD officials interviewed expressed concern about the fact that malnutrition was not declining at the expected rate, and lacking the tools to investigate the causes of the problem, they could only wonder at the 'scheme' not working.

During the time of the fieldwork, sanitation was a major priority of the state government. The focus of the Total Sanitation Campaign was on making villages open defecation free (ODF), for which funds were provided to families below the poverty line to build toilets in their homes. In the rush to meet targets, the whole sample block had been declared ODF, but in practice, an estimated 12%–40% of people across the sample villages continued to defecate in the open. In four of the five villages, all the toilets had not been constructed. Additionally, in many cases, toilet use was difficult because of the lack of water, and some toilets were used to store cow dung cakes, wood, and so on. Moreover, other sanitation practices were neglected to focus on the target of building toilets. In all the villages, drains had been constructed along with roads, but they usually remained clogged and did not help in draining water. Wastewater was disposed of at homesteads. In one village, dirty water overflowed onto the roads. Garbage was similarly disposed of at homesteads or even thrown on the road. Only one GP had taken special initiatives, employing a sanitation worker, who cleaned the market, panchayat building and roads, and constructed a drain where the sewage water accumulated.

LOOKING AHEAD

THE INDIAN PROBLEM OF IMPLEMENTATION

The above case study showed that the lack of focus on field administration in government policy, as well as among its critics, had eroded citizens' welfare and the government's capacity to fulfil its stated goals. Fundamentally, field administration in India has developed in the context of a lack of recognition of the complexity of 'implementation' and that effective organisations are needed to ensure the provision of high-quality social services and the achievement of policy objectives.

After the 1950s, few policy documents have addressed field administration seriously in terms of the number and skills of personnel needed, the ideal level of autonomy, strategies to improve responsiveness to citizens and enhance productivity, and so on. At best, occasionally, field administration was considered separately for different sectors, and the treatment has usually been perfunctory. The one topic that was examined from time to time was the strengthening of local governments. Here, the recommendations of the government's own committees were ignored in favour of centralised, departmental functioning. This lack of analysis and reflection in policy has been exacerbated by a parallel absence of academic interest. While 'poor implementation' has been lamented, there has been little attempt at identifying its root causes, much less redressing them.

In the above context, the basic field administration structure that developed in the colonial era was retained after independence, even as the stated government goals shifted radically. Subsequently, field administration expanded but in an ad hoc fashion. The number of field organisations grew steadily, while key questions such as the empowerment of local governments were approached casually. Human resources grew as well but with inadequate attention to the type of expertise needed and to the enhancement of the productivity and creativity of personnel. The processes to be followed at the field level rarely came into focus. At the same time, rent-seeking grew steadily, becoming an integral part of the government's activity on the ground.

The case study showed that this neglect led to a suboptimal field administrative system. The structure of the field administration was fragmented and inefficient. Local governments had been marginalised, so their role was ambiguous, and the commitment of several local government representatives to address the needs of their constituencies could not be channelled into effective action. Field

organisations lacked the expertise that they needed to achieve their goals. In addition, slow promotions along with patronage-based functioning and rampant rent-seeking created a perverse incentive structure for employees, who gained little by serving the community and benefitted by furthering their own and their benefactors' interests. Grassroots institutions were poorly staffed and, at times, lacked the necessary infrastructure and financial resources.

An important positive aspect of field administration was its close contact with citizens and the motivation of several field officials to serve the community. However, the full potential of this aspect could not be realised because of the style of functioning. Field officials were required to work as per the directions from the state level and achieve targets for specific activities, rather than meaningful outcomes. Citizens' needs took second place to orders from above and could not be met if they did not match the priorities set by the state. There were no systems for analysing the situation on the ground, formulating appropriate strategies and improving them through feedback and review to achieve the real policy goals. Instead, rigid and unproductive procedures had to be followed. Moreover, officials had to undertake numerous campaigns from time to time, rather than work towards long-term goals. Human resource management was based on hierarchy and punitive action, which further whittled down the motivation of employees at the frontlines.

Rent-seeking exacerbated these problems, leading to increased inefficiency, and reduced the capacity to meet policy goals. Government resources were pilfered. Worse, with rent-seeking, justice was perverted, as the powerful could pay bribes and the poor could not. Officials became partisan actors and exploiters, instead of referees and facilitators. Collaboration between field officials and citizens, essential for effective action, became even more difficult. The outcome of these problems of field administration was that citizens' access to social services was reduced, the quality of grassroots institutions suffered, a mutually suspicious relationship between citizens and state actors developed, rent-seeking officials harassed ordinary people, citizens did not get their entitlements, key problems could not be solved and goals could not be achieved.

It is important to note that, as highlighted by the case study, this unsatisfactory state of field administration is not a consequence of choices made by individual field officials. It is a response to the conditions in which field administration functioned. Decisions regarding the structure of field administration and its human resources were made at the state level. Moreover, targets and directions from the state government directed the actions of field officials. Rent-seeking too was a feature across the whole system and not just at the field level. Consequently, changing field administration requires key policy shifts.

THE DIRECTION OF REFORM

If social services and policy implementation are to improve, a radical reform of field administration is clearly necessary. However, more work is needed before the details of the reform can be sketched out. As noted at the beginning of this paper, further studies are needed, and more importantly, the strategies for reform require a separate exercise that includes wide consultation. However, to setthe ball rolling, the key areas for reform that have emerged from the case study, as well as a few ideas regarding the direction of reforms, are articulated briefly. These can be investigated and deliberated further.

To begin with, a conceptual shift regarding field administration and the process of implementation is needed. At present, the underlying premise appears to be that the role of field administration is to execute orders from above and that more specific and detailed instructions, along with stringent monitoring, will lead to better outcomes. However, the case study showed that this approach resulted in a capacity to deliver simple services only; more complex tasks and problems could be addressed merely partially. It needs to be recognized that the role of field administration comprises a complex balancing act. It is framed by national and state goals, but these goals have to be given concrete shape in collaboration with the community, in specific contexts. In addition, the felt needs of citizens have to be addressed. Consequently, field administration needs to be re-conceptualized as a set of organisations that assess and analyse the local situation and respond with context-specific strategies to achieve national and state goals and serve citizens' needs. This conceptualization has important implications for the structure, human resources and modes of working of field administration.

If field administration is to develop context-specific solutions and address citizens' needs, local governments need to be empowered for two reasons. One, local government representatives are often keenly aware of the local context and sensitive to people's needs. Consequently, they can play a significant role in contextualising policy goals. Moreover, many local government representatives are highly motivated to work for their area, which can act as a spur. While they may lack various technical skills, these can be supplemented by officials. Local governments are also necessary because context-specific interventions require a high degree of autonomy and decision-making at the field level. Here, elected local governments have legitimacy, which bureaucratic agencies do not.

As local governments are empowered, their role needs to be defined against the achievement of broad national and state goals as well as their own, instead of the implementation of schemes. This requires a shift from scheme-tied funds to untied funds, to be expended as per local plans. At the same time, the fragmented administrative structure needs to be addressed. In place of numerous offices to mirror departments at the state level, fewer but larger field organisations can be created. One possibility would be to set up five organisations concerned with the following areas:

- Law enforcement and general administration
- Agriculture and other livelihood activities
- Infrastructure development and maintenance
- Social services and welfare
- Revenue collection

While the precise number of such organisations and the subjects to be dealt with by them could vary, reducing the number of organisations would improve coordination and allow the sharing of expertise and resources. These organisations can have offices at the district level and one or two common offices at the sub-district level to ensure coherent sub-district administrative structures for local decision-making and response. The organisations concerned with agriculture, livelihoods and allied activities, infrastructure development and maintenance, and social welfare can be supervised by local governments and the others by the DC.

At the same time, for effective action, it is important to address the expertise gaps in field administration. The three gaps in expertise that existed across the field administrative system were in human resources management, law, and social communication and mobilisation. With a smaller number of organisations, each organisation can be provided such experts as per need, along with a skilled administrator. Moreover, expertise in areas such as finance, engineering and management information systems, which exists separately in various departmental organisations, can be pooled in the five organisations to reduce duplication. Concurrently, more specific gaps in expertise, such as the lack of nutrition experts, would have to be addressed. However, it is important that expertise not be seen only in terms of formal qualifications but in terms of a more contextual knowledge. This would have significant implications for valuing and codifying the knowledge developed by government and non-government actors working in the field as well as revisiting the training of field officials in terms of content and methods.

The number of personnel needed to fulfil various goals needs to be assessed realistically, especially at the frontlines, and provided accordingly. It is important to shift away from viewing expenditure on human resources as a 'waste' to be minimised, even at the expense of the quality of services provided. A great deal of the work of field administration is concerned with the provision of services, for which the number and quality of personnel are key. This puts a question mark on the current policy of not filling up posts and of hiring low-paid contract workers. As field-level posts are kept vacant, the government saves money at the expense of citizens, which defeats the whole purpose of government activity. Moreover, the salaries of low-paid contractual employees are often increased subsequently anyway, but after conflict and agitation.

An important reform that is needed is an improved incentive structure for field officials to do their best. This requires addressing the paucity of promotion avenues and tightening processes of disciplinary action on the one hand and doing away with patronage-based transfers and postings on the other. Increased promotional avenues are likely to require reductions in the number of levels at which recruitments are made as well as a transparent process for assessing performance. Faster and more effective disciplinary action is likely to require personnel especially devoted to this task, with a manageable workload. Creating a need-cum-merit-based, transparent system of postings requires merely a will to do so. Furthermore, the inadequate infrastructure and lack of sanitation in grassroots institutions would have to be addressed to create a more positive working environment, grassroots employees would need to be paid an appropriate travel allowance, and so on.

At present, changing the working processes in the field is difficult, as these are often a response to the processes followed by the central and state governments. However, if the autonomy of field administration increases, a new space will be created. Nonetheless, the processes of functioning will not change automatically. Some broad protocols for working methods can be developed to include situational analysis, consultation, weighing of pros and cons, managing junior officials, securing feedback and improving strategies, among others. These will serve as a signal to employees, and requisite training can also be provided. While the use of technology should be promoted, a slower pace, where all the problems of a particular technology are sorted out before it is taken to scale, would lead to better results. Similarly, instead of viewing Privatisation as inherently efficiency promoting, the pros and cons in various situations need to be examined rationally.

As the capacity of field administration is enhanced through an improved structure, human resources and processes, its accountability needs to increase as well. Eliminating rent-seeking is a major challenge, as it is widespread across different levels of the government. It is doubtful whether it can be eliminated at the field level while continuing at higher tiers of the government. For example, in such a scenario, even if watchdog institutions are set up or new rules framed, these would get captured and subverted. A significant shift is possible only if state and central leaders decide to eliminate corruption or through strong citizen action that exposes corruption and increases its cost through protest and litigation, both of which are well beyond the scope of 'field administration'. Possibly, a continued strengthening of accountability to people through mechanisms such as RTI and social audits can provide some protection. One step that can also be taken is to replace the simple upward accountability to senior officials in terms of work performance achievement, with more impartial, systematic reviews. Such an exercise can reduce the effectiveness of nexuses across various levels of the system that promote rent-seeking and ignore shoddy performance.

Among the various reform areas identified above, two are basic: up-gradation of human resources and elimination of rent-seeking. Without these, other changes would yield limited results. If appropriate manpower is lacking, structural changes would be formal, without substance, leading to only minor efficiency gains. If rent-seeking remains rampant, process reforms are likely to be distorted to adapt to it and their effectiveness vitiated. On the other hand, a focus on these two areas is likely to yield significant results.

As the above discussion shows, the reform of field administration is a wide-ranging and complex task, going way deeper than the up-gradation of technology and Privatisation, which are often seen as panaceas. However, it is an essential task because field administration is the arena where the government and citizens interact, and if the arena itself is faulty, so will be the outcome of the interaction.

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ANNEXURE 1: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

The aim of the case study was to get as complete a picture as possible of the working of field-level government and local government institutions, with a focus on underdeveloped rural areas. The over-all administrative structure of the district was studied, and 41 government organisations were investigated in depth—including local governments, and grassroots and supervisory departmental organisations—to understand the structure, personnel and working processes of state institutions at the district level. Moreover, the relationship of the field administration with the community, as well as the delivery of social services and mechanisms of policy implementation was studied in detail in 5 sample villages.

METHODS

The resources and methods used in the study included:

- Analysis of documents of various offices and institutions such as information pamphlets and minutes of meetings.
- Visits to selected organisations and interaction with 2-3 knowledgeable persons.
- Interviews with officers, village level workers, Panchayat representatives, journalists and non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives.
- Observation of local village institutions such as schools, Anganwadi centres, and sub-health centres.
- Observation of sample villages and interaction with 4-5 persons from the village who were aware and articulate.
- Focus group discussions with people in the sample villages.

SAMPLE

Area

The study was conducted in a district[97] with an agriculture-based economy, which contained rural and urban areas, as well as a block with a significant tribal population—this was selected as the sample block. However, as some data was maintained for tehsils rather than blocks, a sample tehsil, which largely overlapped the block but was not co-terminus with it, was also treated as a sample unit when necessary.

[97] The name of the district has not been provided to maintain the anonymity of interviewees.

Table 1: Sample District and Block Demographics Compared to State and National Averages as per Census 2011[98]

	Sample District	Sample Block	State	All-India
Total population	12.41 lakh	1.30 lakh	13.97 lakh per district	20.41 lakh per district
Population density (persons per sq. km)	185	187	236	325
Chief executive officer, Zilla Parishad	7	7	7	7
% Men	52.25	51.88	51.79	51.54
% Women	47.75	48.12	48.21	48.46
Sex ratio (number of women per 1000 men)	914	927	931	940
% scheduled caste (SC) population	16.51	15.29	15.62	16.62
% scheduled tribe (ST) Population	15.89	40.26	21.09	8.27
% Rural population	68.58	83.03	72.37	68.80
% Urban population	31.42	16.97	27.63	31.20
Total literacy rate (%)	75.29	64.20	69.32	74.04
Literacy rate for men (%)	83.35	71.30	78.73	82.14
Literacy rate for women (%)	66.45	56.50	59.24	65.46
Literacy rate for SC population (%)	71.65	70.00	66.16	66.10
Literacy rate for ST population (%)	59.95	Not available	41.20	58.96

Five sample villages of different sizes and population composition were selected in this block. The population of these villages ranged from less than 800 to over 6000. They were located at varying distances from the block headquarters and the nearest town. Three of these villages had active self-help groups (SHGs) and two did not (Table 2).

[98] Source: District Census Handbook 2011, Census of India 2011, http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/mp/07Literacy.pdf, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/India_at_glance/admn.aspx,

http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/statistical_publication/social_statistics/Chapter_3.pdf

Table 2a: Profile of Sample Villages

Village	Type of village	Distance from tehsil headquarters (HQ) (km)	Distance from block HQ (km)	Distance from gram panchayat HQ (km)	Total village area[99](ha)	% Land under individual ownership[100]
V1	Revenue	2.5	23	At the HQ	626.87	76.04
V2	Revenue	40	20	At the HQ	1870.65	52.67
V3	Revenue	17	0.5[101]	At the HQ	1719.65	56.80
V4	Revenue	8	30	1.5	228.12	67.13
V5	Forest	31	11	0.8	564.34	NA

Table 2b: Population Demographics of Sample Villages[102]

Village	Total population[103]	% Male	% Female	% SC	% ST	Number of households	% Total literate	% Male literate	% Female literate
V1	6003	52.24	47.76	22.99	12.24	1323	83.96	90.48	76.89
V2	4678	51.80	48.20	12.70	70.35	935	64.03	73.03	54.34
V3	3365	50.88	49.12	10.37	36.37	689	75.99	82.47	69.16
V4	1048	50.67	49.33	10.21	79.77	222	63.49	73.63	48.41
V5	789	50.19	49.81	15.97	80.48	157	47.06	54.05	40.0

[99] Source: District Census Handbook

[100] Source: Patwari records

[101] Source: District Census Handbook

[102] Ibid

[103] Source: 2001 Census

Organisations, Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

A total of 95 interviews were conducted. Of these, 78 were semi-structured, with 20 Panchayat Representatives (PRs) and 58 government officials. To supplement information to explore important issues, another 17 unstructured interviews were conducted with one PR, 12 officials, two NGO representatives and two journalists. In the five sample villages, 13 FGDs were conducted. Three different groups were constituted for these discussions—one comprising low income residents, one with higher income residents and one with women from various economic backgrounds. (Table 3).

Table 3: Number of Interviews and Focus Group Discussions Conducted

Number of persons interviewed at various levels					
Semi-structured interviews	Revenue	Revenue	Revenue	Revenue	Revenue
Panchayat representatives	2	NA	3	15	20
Government officials	9	3	9	37	58
Subtotal	11	3	12	52	78
Unstructured interviews					
Panchayat representatives	1	0	0	0	1
Government officials	10	0	0	2	12
NGO representatives	2				2
Journalists	2				2
Subtotal					17
Total number of interviews	95				
Number of villages studied	5				
Number of FGDs conducted	13				

CONDUCT OF STUDY

The study began in July 2017. The design and tools of the study were developed, discussed with an advisory committee and the field research teams. They were then field tested and subsequently refined. The fieldwork of the study began in October 2017, and the report was completed in June 2019.

ANNEXURE 2: SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SAMPLE DISTRICT

Table 1: Employment, Income and Asset Ownership as per the 2011 Socio-economic Caste Census (SECC) Data[104]

	Sample district (%)	Sample tehsil (%)
Ownership of land and agriculture equipment		
Households with land	43.58	28.36
Households owning mechanised 3 or 4 wheeler equipment	7.97	10.68
Households owning diesel equipment	16.67	17.05
Main source of household income		
Cultivation	31.70	18.74
Manual casual labour	58.38	62.23
Others	9.59	18.81
Non-agricultural, own account enterprise	0.33	0.20
Households with jobs and registered enterprises		
Households with jobs	11.81	22.42 + % of households with private sector jobs ("Co")
Households that own an enterprise registered with government	81.50	18.50
Monthly income		
Monthly income of highest earning member is less than 5000	75.26	79.32
Monthly income of highest earning member is Rs. 5000-Rs. 10000	14.71	11.45
Monthly income of highest earning member is more than Rs. 10,000	10.04	9.23
Asset ownership		
Households having motorised two/three/four wheelers and fishing boats	24.05	23.01
Households own a refrigerator	7.08	13.14
Household without any phone (landline or mobile)	44.52	45.34

[104] Source: https://secc.gov.in//statewiseTehsilEmploymentAndIncomeReport

Figure 1: Land Holding Size as per Agriculture Census 2010-11[105]

	Sample District	Sample Tehsil
Average size of individual and joint land-holdings	2.26 hectare	1.94 hectare
Total Number of farmers	1.36 lakh	0.17 lakh
% Marginal farmers (less than 1 hectare)	32.45%	35.52%
% Small farmers (less than 2 hectare)	29.92%	32.13%
% Semi-medium farmers (2-4 hectares)	22.95%	21.51%
% Medium farmers (4-10 hectare)	13.18%	10.06%
% Large farmers (More than 10 hectares)	1.51%	0.78%

Table 2: Social Composition, Economy and Civil Society in Sample Villages

There are no caste associations in any of the 5 samples villages

Social composition	Economy	Civil society
Village 1		
There are more than 15 castes of SC, ST, Other Backward Class (OBC) and general categories. The OBCs are the dominant group. They are big land owners with shops, dhabas,[106] marriage halls and petrol pumps. STs are the least well-off, followed by SCs. Many government servants and retirees are settled in the village and are economically well-off. There are 15 colonies, where the residential pattern is mixed, but an SC caste of low social status resides in one colony. People of all castes participate in social gatherings such as festivals and marriages, but there are unwritten rules about the seating pattern. Generally, the SCs sit at the back and the upper castes at the front. Inter-caste marriage is not practised.	Around 70% of the agricultural land belongs to a few OBC and upper caste families, who let it out to share-croppers. One such person is a local political leader and controls 120 acres of land, registered in the names of his family members. Additionally, he has encroached on another 80-90 acres of land. People from scheduled tribes were resettled in the village after being dislocated from elsewhere and do not own land. People with low incomes are engaged in daily wage labour in agriculture and construction sites in the nearby town, selling fire-wood to dhabas, and collecting mahua leaves[107] to brew and sell liquor.	The leader of the district level scheduled caste association is from this village. There are 2 dysfunctional SHGs.

[106] A dhaba is a small restaurant.

[107] Mahua trees grow in the forest, and the leaves are used to make silk, brew liquor, make dona pattal (leaf bowls) and the flower is edible and also used for medicinal purposes.

STs who are financially well off or have a position in the gram panchayat are welcomed in the houses of higher castes.	The availability of work within the village has been declining over the years as land-owners increasingly use machines for agriculture. Around 65% of the population goes to cities and towns for daily wage work. The poor also migrate to nearby big villages during the harvest season. Women collect and sell fuel-wood and engage in wage-labour. Some work as plant protectors, accredited social health activists (ASHA), anganwadi workers and sahayikas (helpers), and cook midday meals in schools. Children help with domestic work during school holidays. Not many children are seen working, but a few work in the dhabas.	
Village 2		
There are 18 castes of all categories, but more than 70% people belong to the ST category. The general and OBC families are well off and are money lenders, shop and orchard owners. The chamars have the lowest social status. There are 15 colonies. While there are mixed residential patterns in many colonies, there are few in which only STs reside. The STs inter-dine among themselves, but there is no inter-marriage between tribes. The SCs, especially chamars, are not welcomed to the kitchens of upper-castes, although most people deny this to be true when questioned.	Here too, nearly 65-70% of the cultivable land is owned by a few families. The well-off people own mango-orchards, tent-houses, road-side hotels and shops. Scheduled tribe families own around 2.5 acres of land on an average, including homestead land. The poor, almost half the people, are share-croppers and agricultural labourers, and collect minor forest produce (MFP). When there is a bad crop, the sharecroppers do not get the compensation provided by the government, but still have to pay for their lease. The agricultural wage inside the village is Rs. 120-130 (lower than the MGNREGS wage). Young people and men migrate during the harvest season. Agents of big farmers from adjoining districts come to the village and hire young boys and girls at a rate lower than MGNREGS wages. Women engage in poultry rearing, MFP and fuel-wood collection, wage-labour, work as ASHA, Anganwadi workers and Sahayikas, and cook midday meals at schools. Children collect MFP, work in family farms and in snack shops.	There are 35 SHGs. Their activities include weekly savings which are substantial and poultry rearing. The SHGs have many women leaders who are members of the SHG federation. Some have received training in women's rights and legal issues. They have addressed violence against women, made efforts to improve schools, monitored Anganwadis, initiated infrastructure development such as road-construction, resolved problems with electricity bills, and more. They have also expanded the SHGs network in neighbouring villages and provided them training.

Village 3		
There are 22 castes in the village. Families from the OBC category are the richest. Tribals are the poorest group. Many retired government servants are settled in the village. Some have moved elsewhere and rent out their houses. There are 13 colonies in the village. The residential pattern is fairly mixed, but Muslims live in one colony and tribals are settled on the fringes of the village. In social gatherings such as marriages and death anniversaries, almost all castes invite each other, but there are separate eating spaces. Money and social class ease out some differences, particularly for men. Women generally do not interact across castes.	OBC families occupy almost 80% agricultural land. The poorest people work as daily wage-labourers in construction and, during the harvesting season, migrate to neighbouring districts. However, because of mechanisation, availability of farm work is declining and wages are low. The agricultural wage in the village is Rs. 150 per day, which is lower than the MGNREGS wage. Other occupations include agriculture and shop-keeping. People also catch fish and work as auto riksha drivers. Women collect firewood and work as teachers, ASHA, Anganwadi workers and Sahayikas, and cook midday meals in schools. SC and ST women work as agricultural labourers and sharecroppers. A group of 20-25 people has been formed by an NGO to collect and store mahua flowers, which are then dried and processed to make sweets such as laddus and barfis that are then sold in fairs in cities where there is high demand.	There are 37 SHGs. SHGs engaged in savings and credit and rear poultry. They have addressed violence against women. Some women function as kanooni sakhi (legal helpers) and members of Gram Suraksha Samiti. They have helped victims of rape and attempted rape to get redressal from the police. Women belonging to the SHG federation interact more with other castes, though there are limits to which other castes can touch the cooking stove and religious corners of the house.
Village 4		
There are castes of all 4 categories but nearly 80% people are tribals, and form the dominant group. The chamars from among SCs have the lowest social status. There is only one well off family. They stay outside the village and have rented their house. The various castes stay in separate colonies. The SCs and STs sit and chat together, but do not inter-dine. There is no inter-marriage among tribes.	People are engaged in agriculture as well as wage labour, and collect and sell MFP and fuel wood. Women most commonly collect firewood and sell them to dhabas. They also collect MFP and work as wage-labourers. A handful of women work as ASHAs, Anganwadi workers and Sahayikas, and cook midday meals at schools. Children also collect MFP.	There were 2 SHGs some 3-4 years ago, but these are now dissolved due to conflicts. Now there are 2 new SHGs who prepare mid-day meals for schools.
Village 5		
The village comprises people from SC and ST categories, and a few OBCs. More than 80% of the people are STs. SCs are the richest and have more contact with outsiders. They have good quality land, which has helped them acquire a high status in the village. Tribals believe that they rank above the SCs and OBCs. Though OBCs consider the STs backward and of the lowest strata.	The main occupations are farming and wage labour within and outside the village. The poor are mostly landless. They migrate as farm labour during the harvesting and weeding seasons and in the summer. Other occupations include fishing and cattle grazing.	There are 12 SHGs. Their main activities are savings, credit and poultry rearing. The SHG groups have been active in challenging caste discrimination and have helped form new SHGs in other areas.

There are 5 colonies and people live near their relatives in these colonies. However, all colonies are situated close to each other and many share homestead boundaries. There is discrimination against SC and ST families, but it has reduced over time. There is inter-dining among SC and ST families, though family members object to cooking stoves being touched by other castes.	Three young adults are employed in the army and one in a nearby factory. Three people work as supervisors in livelihood societies formed by an NGO. One young girl is engaged in the Common Service Centre, and one man works as an MGNREGS Sahayak in the Gram Panchayat. Women engage in poultry, collection of MFP, selling wood, and wage labour within and outside the village. Children collect MFP	

Table 3: Educational Institutions in the Sample District

	Number	Average Number of Villages and Towns covered by One Facility	Number of Students Enrolled
Primary Schools	1,142	0.8	54,048
Schools with Middle Sections	368	2.5	42,067
Schools with class 9 and 10	161	5.8	17,173
Schools with class 11 and 12	70	13.3	24,462
Colleges	11	88.8	18c06
Polytechnic Colleges	2	466.4	NA
Industrial Training Institutes (ITI)	6	155.5	NA

Table 4: Health Services in Sample District

	Number	Number of Beds per Facility	Average Number of Villages and Towns Covered by One Facility
District Hospital	1	300	933
Civil Hospital/ Community Health Centre	8	30 in CHC and 60 in the Civil Hospital	116.6
Public Health Centre	17	5-10	54.8
Sub-Health Centre	173	Nil	5.4
Anganwadi Centres	1771	Nil	0.53

Table 5: Availability of Schools, Sub-Health Centres and Anganwadi Centres in the Sample Villages

School type	Village 1	Village 2	Village 3	Village 4	Village 5
Government Primary	3	8	5	2	1
Private Primary	2	0	1	0	0
Government Middle	1	3	1	1	0
Private Middle	1	0	0	0	0
Government High School	1	1	2	0	0
Private High School	0	0	0	0	0
Government Higher Secondary	1	0	1	0	0
Private Higher Secondary	0	0	0	0	0
Total Schools	9	12	10	3	1
Sub-Health Centres	1	1	1	0	0
Anganwadi Centres	8	10	5	2	1

ANNEXURE 3: ROLE AND STRUCTURE

Table 1: Number of Villages as per Population Category in Sample District and Block (Census 2011)

	Total Number of Villages	Distribution of Villages by Population (%)							
		Uninhabited	Below 200	200-499	500-999	1000-1999	2000-4999	5000-9999	More than 10000
District	961	4.2	7.8	26.5	32.0	21.2	7.4	0.7	0.1
Block	119	9.2	8.4	28.6	21.0	21.0	11.1	0.8	0

Table 2: Types of Departments in the District

Type	Number	Departments
Department Types in Terms of Focus		
Subject Focused	25	Animal Husbandry, Commercial taxes, Commerce Industry and Employment, Cottage and Rural Industries, Energy, Fisheries, Food Civil Supply and Consumer Protection, Forest, Higher Education, Home, Horticulture and Food Processing, Housing and Environment, Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy (Ayush), Jail, Mineral Resources, Panchayat and Rural Development, Public Health Engineering, Public Health and Family Welfare, Revenue, School Education, Social Justice, Technical Education and Skill Development, Transport, Urban Administration and Environment, Water Resources
Beneficiary or Client Focused	4	Backward Classes and Minority Welfare, Labour, SC and ST Welfare, Woman and Child Development
Expertise Focused	5	Planning, Economics and Statistics, Public Relations, Public Service Management, Finance, Law
Hybrid	3	Cooperation, Farmer Welfare and Agriculture, Sports and Youth Welfare
Department Types in Terms of Goals		
Regulatory	7	Home, Finance, Food Civil Supply and Consumer Protection, Jail, Mineral Resources, Revenue, Transport
Revenue Collection	1	Commercial Taxes
Socio-developmental and Social Services	28	Animal husbandry, Backward Classes and Minority Welfare, Commerce Industry and Employment, Cottage and Rural Industries, Cooperation, Energy, Fisheries, Higher Education, Horticulture and Food Processing, Housing and Environment, Farmer Welfare and Agriculture, Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy (Ayush), Labour ,Law, Panchayat and Rural Development, Planning, Economics and Statistics, Public Health Engineering, Public Health and Family Welfare, Public Relations, Public Service Management, SC and ST Welfare, School Education, Social Justice, Technical Education and Skill Development, Urban Administration and Environment, Sports and Youth Welfare, , Water Resources, Woman and Child Development.
Hybrid	1	Forest

Table 3: Departmental Offices and Institutions in the District

N: No office or institutions

Name	District		Subdivision		Tehsil/block		Sub-block	
	Name	No.	Name	No.	Name	No.	Name	No.
Animal Husbandry	Deputy director office: 1 Divisional veterinary centre: 1 Artificial insemination centre: 1	3	N	N			Veterinary hospital: 14 Dispensary: 30 Cross-breeding centres: 16	60
Backward Classes and Minority Welfare	Assistant director	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Commercial taxes	District excise office	1	N	N	N		N	N
Commerce, Industry and Employment	District industries centre	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Cooperation	District cooperative bank: 1 District marketing officer: 1 Deputy registrar (Cooperation): 1	3	N	N	N	N	Cooperative banks: 12 Cooperative societies: 933 SHGs + Federations converted into cooperative societies: 403 +10 Godowns: 6 Public distribution shops: 441	1805
Cottage and Rural Industries/ Gramodyog	District khadi evam Gramodyog board Assistant director sericulture	2	N	N	N	N	N Resham utpadan kendra	30

Energy	Superintending engineer	2	Divisional engineer/ SDO	4	N	N	N	N
Farmer Welfare and Agriculture	Deputy director agriculture	2	SDO (Agriculture)	2	Agriculture mandi Senior agriculture development officer in janpad	6 7		
Finance	Treasury officer	1			Sub-treasury at tehsil	8		
Fisheries	Deputy director (Fisheries)	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection	District food office	1	Additional food officer	2	Food inspector in each tehsil	8		N
Forest	Territorial forest division: 1 Satpura tiger reserve: 1	2	Subdivisions	3	N	N	Ranges offices: 10 Nistar depots: 30 Consumer depot: 2 Commercial depot: 1	43
Higher Education	N	N	N	N	N	N	Degree colleges	11
Home	SP: 1 District commandant, (Home guards): 1 District prosecution officer: 1	3	SDO (Police)	4	Additional district prosecution officer	14	Police stations: 18 Police chowki: 13	31
Horticulture and Food Processing	Deputy director: 1 Assistant director farm: 1	2	N	N	Senior horticulture development officer	7	Nurseries regular: 7 Farm: 3 Training centre: 4	14

Housing and Environment	Deputy director, (Town and Country Planning)	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy	District Ayush hospital	1	N	N	Ayurvedic primary health centre	9	Ayush hospital and dispensary	34
Jail	Superintendent (Central Jail)	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Labour	Assistant labour commissioner	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Law and Legislative Affairs	Legal aid officer	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Mineral Resources	District mining office	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Panchayat and Rural Development	Zilla parishad[108]	1	N	N	Janpad panchayat	7	Cluster: 66 Gram panchayat: 428	494
Planning, Economics and Statistics	District planning office	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Public Health Engineering	Executive engineer: 1 SDO (Mechanical): 1	2	SDO PHE: 4 Water testing labs: 4	8	N	N	N	N
Public Health and Family Welfare	Chief medical and health officer: 1 Civil surgeon: 1	2	N	N	Civil hospital: 2 CHC: 6	8	Public health centre: 17 Sub-health centre: 173	190
Public Relations	Deputy director	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Public Service Management	District LSK manager	1	N	N	Lok sewa kendra	9	N	N
Revenue	DC	1	SDO	5	Tehsil	8	RI circle	25

[108] Statutory towns are places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee. Census towns are places which have a population of at least 5000, where 75% or more male population is engaged in non-agricultural pursuits as main occupation, and the population density is at least 400 persons per square kilometre. (Source: censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data_files/kerala/13-concept-34.pdf).

SC and ST Welfare	Assistant commissioner tribal welfare and ST finance and development corporation: 1 ST Finance and Development Corporation: 1	2	N	N			N	N
School Education	Deputy director education: 1 District education office: 1 District institute of education and training: 1	3	N	N	Block education office: 7 Block resource centre: 7	14	Jan shiksha kendra: 48 Primary schools: 1142 Upper primary schools: 539 High schools: 91 Secondary schools: 70	1890
Social Justice	Deputy director	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Sports and Youth Welfare	District sports office	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Technical Education and Skill Development	Employment exchange: 1	1	N	N	N	N	Polytechnic Colleges ITI	2 6
Transport	Regional transport officer	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Urban Administration and Environment	District urban development agency	1	N	N	N	N	N	N
Water Resources	N	1	Executive engineer TAWA	3	N	N	N	N
Women and Child Development	District programme officer: 1 District woman empowerment officer: 1 Juvenile justice board: 1 One stop centre: 1	4	Bal grah	4	CDPO: 9 Block woman empowerment officers: 5	14	Anganwadi centres	1771

Table 4: Agencies of State Government Barring Supervisory Officers

Department	Agency	No.
Law Enforcement		
Home	Police station/ police chowki	31
Jail	Central Jail	1
Revenue	District collector's court	1
	Sub-divisional magistrate court	5
	Tehsil court	8
Woman and Child Development	Juvenile Justice Board	1
Subtotal of Law Enforcement		47
Social Services		
Livelihoods		
Animal Husbandry	Veterinary centre	14
	Cross-breeding centres	16
	Dispensaries	30
Horticulture	Nurseries	7
	Farm	3
	Training centre	4
Subtotal of Livelihoods		**74**
Health		
Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy	Ayush Hospital and Dispensary	34
	Ayurvedic Primary Health Centre	9
Public Health and Family Welfare	District Hospital	1
	Community Health Centre and Nutrition Resource Centre	8
	Public Health Centre	17
	Sub-Health Centre	173
Subtotal of Health		**242**
Education		
School Education	Primary Schools	1142
	Upper Primary Schools	539
	High Schools	91
	Higher Secondary Schools	70
Higher Education	Degree Colleges	11

Technical Education	Employment Exchange	1
	Polytechnic Colleges	2
	ITI	6
Subtotal of Education		**1862**
	Women and Children	
Woman and Child Development	One Stop Centre	1
	Bal Grah	1
	Anganwadi Centres	1771
Subtotal of Women and Children		**1773**
	Others	
Public Service Management	Lok Sewa Kendra	9
Subtotal of Social Services		3960
	Commercial	
Cooperation	District Cooperative Bank	1
	Cooperative Banks	12
	Cooperative Societies	933
	Godowns	6
	Public Distribution Shops	441
Farmer Welfare and Agriculture	Agriculture Mandi	7
Forest	Nistar Depot	30
	Consumer Depot	2
	Commercial Depot	1
Subtotal of Commercial		**1433**
	Technical and Training	
Cottage Industries	Resham Utpadan Kendra	30
Public Health Engineering	Water Testing Laboratories	4
School Education	District Institute of Education and Training	1
Subtotal of Technical and Training		**35**
Total		**5475**

Table 5: Penetration of Departments

Departments with only district level presence	Backward Classes and Minority Welfare, Commercial Taxes, Commerce, Industry and Employment, Fisheries, Housing and Environment, Jail, Labour, Law, Mineral Resources, Planning Economics and Statistics, Public Relations, SC and ST Welfare, Social Justice, Sports and Youth Welfare, Transport, Urban Administration and Environment	16
Departments with subdivision presence	Energy, Public Health Engineering, Water Resources	3
Departments with tehsil/ block presence	Farmer Welfare and Agriculture, Finance, Food Civil Supply and Consumer Protection, Public Service Management	4
Departments with sub-block presence	Animal Husbandry, Cooperation, Cottage and Rural Industries, Forest, Home (Police), Horticulture and Food Processing, Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy (Ayush), Panchayat and Rural Development, Public Health and Family Welfare, Revenue	10
Departments with presence in every village	School Education, Woman and Child Development	2
Others	Higher Education, Higher Education Technical Education and Skill Development	2

Table 6: Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Women Representatives in Sample Panchayats

	Zilla Parishad	Janpad Parishad	Gram Panchayat 1	Gram Panchayat 2	Gram Panchayat 3	Gram Panchayat 4	Gram Panchayat 5
Number of Panchayat Representatives (PRs)	15	20	21	NA	21	21	21
% SC PRs	13.3	25.0	28.6	NA	9.5	19.1	9.5
% ST PRs	20.0	40.0	47.6	NA	52.4	81.0	90.5
% Women PRs	53.3	50.0	47.6	NA	52.4	47.6	52.3
Gender of the President	Male	Male	Male	NA	Male	Female	Female
Social Group the President Belongs to	OBC	ST	ST	NA	ST	ST	ST
Gender of the Vice President	Female	Male	Female	NA	Female	Male	Male
Social Group the Vice President Belongs to	General	OBC	ST	NA	OBC	ST	ST

Note: Information regarding GP2 could not be obtained as it was dysfunctional.

Table 7: Socio-economic Background of Sample Gram Panchayat Representatives

Total Number of Panchayat Representatives: 84

7.1: Education Qualifications

Level	No education	Class 5 and below	Class 8	Class 9 or 10	Class 11 or 12	With college education but no degree	With college education degree
% of Panchayat Representatives	28.6	11.9	20.2	19.1	11.9	3.6	4.8

7.2 Political Affiliation

Party	Members not willing to say/ no party	BJP	Congress	Samajwadi Jan Parishad
% of Panchayat Representatives	71.4	22.6	2.4	3.6

7.3 Land owned (family)

Size of land	None	0-2.5 acres	2.5-5.0 acres	More than 5 acres
% Panchayat Representatives	39.3	10.7	36.9	13.0

7.4 Vehicles owned (family)

Vehicle	None	Bicycle	Motorbike	Car/ jeep
% Panchayat Representatives	17.9	22.6	52.4	7.1

7.5 Occupation

Occupation	% of Panchayat Representatives
Only unskilled wage labour	21.4
Farming, skilled wage labour and unskilled wage labour	41.8
Farming only (no wage labour)	19.1
Skilled labour	3.6
Contractor	3.6
Housewife	3.6
Asset owners (shops, dairy farms, vehicles, etc.)	7.2

Table 8: Relationship of Sample Departments with District Collector and Panchayats

	Control by district collector (DC) and sub-divisional magistrate (SDM)	Control by panchayats	Activities assigned to panchayats
Revenue	Last court of appeal in. district Complete administrative authority in day-to-day matters	None	Gram panchayats do undisputed change of title in land records (mutation)
Forest	Officials attend DC's meetings	Officials attend meetings of the Standing Committee of zilla parishad (ZP)	Panchayats propose work in forest villages for new depots, demand for timber, bamboo and others, and offer department sanctions.
Panchayat and Rural Development	The CEO of the ZP takes directions from the DC The CEO of the JP takes directions from SDM	Departmental heads are chief executive officers of panchayats and report to them	All Panchayat andRural Development (P&RD) activities are undertaken by panchayats
School Education	The DC is the Mission Director of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Most departmental committees are chaired by the DC The DC writes the annual appraisal report of the district officials and has powers of minor punishment of junior officials The DC gives financial sanctions The DC and the SDM inspect schools	Officials attend meetings of the Standing Committee of the ZP and the JP The ZP supervises midday meals The GP has the right to inspect schools, and the GP sarpanch/ panch is a member of the School Management Committee	GPs repair schools and are involved in other construction work
Public Health and Family Welfare	The DC heads the decision-making committee in the National Health Mission The DC writes the annual appraisal report of the district head	Officials attend Standing Committees of the ZP and the JP ASHAs are selected in Gram Sabhas GPs appoint ASHAs	Panchayats assist in organising health camps

Woman and Child Development	Divisional magistrate (DM) and SDM chair Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) monitoring committee and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) committees DC writes the annual appraisal report of the district head and has powers of minor punishment over staff The DM and SDM chair the Anganwadi Worker selection committees Financial sanctions are given by the DC Information and communication programmes have to be approved by the DC The DC and SDM inspect Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)	Officials attend meetings at the ZP and JP The Sarpanch is the chairperson of the Child Protection Committee GP PRs are members of Village Health and Sanitation Committee	GPs construct Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) GPs encouraged to adopt AWCs
Public Health Engineering	The DC can take decisions during emergencies	Officials attend meetings at the ZP and JP New work is started after approval of Gram Sabha GPs certify the completion of work and are involved in site selection	GPs and JPs provide information about nonfunctional hand pumps and the JP maintains a complaints register Tap water schemes are transferred to GPs when installed Panchayats are active when there is water scarcity, the department takes help of the GPs for awareness generation and GPs are given water testing kits and trained
Cooperation	The DC is chairperson of a committee that investigates fraud	No role or contact with any Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)	No role or contact with PRIs

ANNEXURE 4: HUMAN RESOURCES

Table 1: Frontline Functionaries of 8 Sample Department

Worker	Role	Availability of Office Space	Vacancies		
		Number of Posts	Filled	% Vacant	500-999
Revenue					
Revenue Inspector	Monitor patwaris in their crop assessment, land measurement, map modification, and mutation	Some have offices, some don't	59	26.5	11.9
Patwari	Maintain and update land records Assess and maintain data of agricultural cropping and production Assist the Tehsildar/ GP in revenue cases	No offices	215	169	21.5
Kotwar	Make announcements in the village Record information about births and deaths Act as witnesses in land-related cases	No offices	885	866	2.1
Forest					
Deputy Ranger	Implement departmental activities to protect forests	No offices	81	56	30.9
Forest Guard	Patrol and protect forest Oversee plantation in the monsoon season Supervise cutting Measure produce and transport it to the depot Maintain records	No offices	235	178	24.3
Panchayats and Rural Development					
Sub-engineer	Supervise civil works of the JP and GPs	No offices	44	34	22.7
Panchayat Coordination Officer	Supervise the GPs	No offices	70	56	20.0
Assistant Development Officer	Supervise schemes of Rural Development	No offices	30	15	50.0

GP Secretary	Organise meetings of the GP and Gram Sabha and record minutes Ensure implementation of all the schemes and activities of the GP Manage finances, including purchase of materials and disbursement of funds Report to the JP	Space in GP	421	415	1.4
Patwari MGNREGS rozgar sahayak	Do on-site supervision of MGNREGS and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY) works and maintain records Act as assistant to the GP secretary Carry out other work of the GP as allotted	Space in GP	421	404	4.0
School Education					
Deputy Ranger	Implement departmental activities to protect forests	No offices	81	56	30.9
Principal Higher Secondary School	Manage higher secondary school and the Jan Shiksha Kendra and teach	Works in school	57	47	17.5
Principal High School	Manage high schools and teach	Works in school	60	25	58.3
Lecturer/ equivalent	Teaches grades 9-12	No offices	70	56	20.0
Upper primary teacher/ equivalent	Teaches classes 6-8 Undertake enrolment drives Supervise mid-day meals Ensure children get scholarships and other benefits Organise and participate in School Management Committee (SMC) meetings	Works in school	2315	1832	20.9
Primary school teachers/ Equivalent	Teach classes 1-5 Undertake enrolment drives Supervise mid-day meals Ensure children get scholarships and other benefits Organise and participate in SMC meetings	Works in school	4850	3043	37.3
Guest teachers	Teach classes as assigned	Works in school	Not available	47.4	50.0

Woman and Child Development					
Supervisor	Supervise AWCs and all activities Do house visits Counsel mothers of malnourished children Help in admission to NRC Report progress	No offices	65	57	12.3
Anganwadi Worker (AWW)	Run AWC Distribute supplementary nutrition to mothers and children Ensure vaccination Provide informal education to children about health and nutrition Identify malnourished children Identify severely malnourished children and admit them to the NRC Organise meetings with committee members and mothers	Works in Anganwadi centre	1772	1759	7.3
Sahayika	Assists the AWW in serving meals and other activities Pick and drop children	Works in Anganwadi centre	1571	1564	4.5
Public Health					
ANM/ Lady Health Visitor (LHV)*	Manage the sub-health centre Provide check-ups, vaccinations, supplements and referral services for maternal and child health Implement government schemes and programmes	Works in sub-health Centre	311	214	31.2
Male Health Worker	Assist the ANM in managing the sub-health centre Provide vaccination and other medical services for maternal and child health Implement government schemes and programmes	Works in sub-health Centre	153	69	54.9
ASHA	Act as a link between the community and health services by facilitating institutional delivery and access to medical servicesParticipate in health-related activities, including antenatal care and care of malnourished children in the villages	No offices	1230	1191	3.2
Public Health Engineering					
Sub-engineer	Prepare project estimates to send to which SDO after technical approval Involved in implementation Manage contractors to ensure efficiency in pace of work	No offices	17	10	41.2

Hand pump technician	Inspect hand pumps Take feedback from people during field visits and phone Register and resolve complaints Provide fortnightly and monthly reports regarding the status of hand pumps	No offices	37	18	51.4
Cooperation					
Godown In-charge	Take care of the stock in godown	Works in Anganwadi centre	1571	1564	4.5
Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS) manager	Manage the cooperative society	Works in cooperative society office	Information not maintained	33.3	31.2
Total			**15490**	**12386**	**20.0**

*The LHV is a senior ANM.

Table 2: Staffing Structure of Sample Offices at District, Subdivision and Block Level

	Role and Main Activities of Office	Staff Structure	Gaps and Issues
Revenue			
Superintendent land records (SLR)	Management, maintenance and updating of land records, including computerization Management of RIs and Patwaris.	Three posts of SLR (Diwani, Nazul and Regular), six Assistant SLRs, two Cartographers, four Tracers and clerks and helpers.	All the SLR posts and two ASLR posts are vacant. An ASLR holds the post of SLR due to vacancies. Most cartographer and tracer posts are also vacant.
Sub-divisional magistrate (SDM)	Management of rural and urban public land Hearing cases of land-related disputes Maintaining law and order General coordination of activities of subdivision.	One officer, the SDM, aided by an e-governance consultant and clerical staff.	Only one officer, no personnel with rigorous legal training, no expert in disaster management, no one to manage extensive public dealing. Clerical staff has been drawn from various departments and is inexperienced.
Tehsil	Management of rural and urban public land In charge of summary settlement of land-related disputes Supervision of revenue collection and land records Management of calamities, law and order work from time to time.	One Tehsildar, one Additional Tehsildar, one Nayab Tehsildar, assisted by readers, clerical personnel to maintain land records, typists and class IV staff.	Though the office does extensive legal work, there is no personnel with rigorous legal training. There is no one to manage extensive public dealing.
Forest			
District Forest Office	Management of the forest Provision of Nistar rights to people and administration of forest villages. Functions as court for forest related crime and offences	District Forest Officer (DFO) and Additional DFO who doubles as the SDO Forest, assisted by clerks and helpers.	There are no botanists, zoologists or social mobilizers.

Subdivision Office, Forest SDO (F)	Key institution for implementing the work plan and assists in planning.	One officer, the SDM, aided by an e-governance consultant and clerical staff.	Only one officer, no personnel with rigorous legal training, no expert in disaster management, no one to manage extensive public dealing. Clerical staff has been drawn from various departments and is inexperienced.
Panchayati Raj and Rural Development			
Zilla Parishad (ZP)	Formal role is overall socio-economic development of the district, but in practice, the ZP monitors a few schemes.	There is a core staff of the ZP and staff provided in different schemes ZP staff: Chief Executive Officer, three Assistant Project Officers, two Accounts Officers, three Accountants, Project Economist, Assistant Statistical Officer, 27 clerks, eight drivers, guards and helpers. Scheme related staff: MGNREGS: Project Officer, Technical Project Officer, Social Audit Officer, Accountant, Senior Data Manager, two Computer Operators Watershed: District Technical Officer, Accountant, Data Entry Operator Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM): District Coordinator, Accountant, Data Entry Operator, Management and Information Services (MIS) consultant provided by TATA Consultancy National Rural Livelihoods Mission: District Project Manager, Data Entry Operator Midday Meals: Task Manager, Quality Monitor, Computer Operator	The CEO of the ZP is posted from the IAS, State Revenue Service or from the Assistant Directors of the Rural Development Department. This does not ensure a CEO with appropriate training and experience. Similar staff is duplicated in each scheme, like programme managers, accountants, data entry operators. There are a large number of vacancies.
Janpad Panchayat (JP)	Formal role is overall socio-economic development of the district, but in practice, the JP monitors a few schemes.	The CEO of the JP, one Assistant Accounts Officer and two accountants, three clerks, timekeeper, peon, watchman. MGNREGS: Additional Programme Officer, Assistant Accounts Officer, Assistant Cartographer, SBM: Block Coordinator Watershed Scheme: Technical Officer, one engineer.	The staff of the Janpad is very limited.

School Education			
District Programme Coordinator	Development of the education system in classes 1-8, which includes ensuring enrolment of all children in 5-14 age group in school Improving quality of education Implementation of SSA.	The District Programme Coordinator is the overall in charge. There are 5 Assistant Project Coordinators who work in the functional areas of academics, community mobilisation, gender, finance, student enrolment and retention, and education of children with disabilities and monitoring Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and schools, and clerical staff.	All staff except coordinators for children with disabilities are drawn from among teachers. The office lacks managerial expertise and expertise in community contact.
District Institute of Education and Training (DIET)	Set up under the DIET scheme. Training of teachers Offer research and academic support to schools.	23 academic staff are envisaged, including a principal, senior lecturers, assistant lecturers and librarian.	Only three out of 23 academic staff envisaged are posted.
Block Education Officer (BEO)	Overall management of school education	There is a of BEO and Area Organiser, Accountant and clerical staff	The role of the office is ill-defined and staff is meagre. The Area Organiser is attached to the district office.
Block Resource Centre	Provide academic support to schools to ensure quality of education, and manage SSA.	A Block Resource Centre Coordinator, and 5 Block Academic Coordinators (BACs) and two posts of resource persons for children with disabilities, of which one is filled. There is a sub-engineer, MIS officer and accountants.	Out of five BAC posts, two are filled. Out of two accountant posts, only one is filled.
Public Health and Family Welfare			
Chief Health and Medical Officer (CHMO)	Supervise provision of health services in the district Reduce infant mortality Promote maternal health Control malaria and TB Prevent polio.	Seven Doctors: including one CMHO, two District Health Officers, District Vaccination Officer, District Malaria Officer, two TB doctors One District Health Public Nursing Officer, one Media, Extension and Information Officer (MEIO), two Deputy MEIOs, one District Education Officer. Under National Health Mission (NHM): Programme Manager, one Assistant Statistical Officer, one Media Officer	There are many vacancies

Community Health Centre	Act as referral centre for the neighbouring Primary Health Centres (PHCs), for the patients requiring specialised health care services. Also responsible for overseeing government programmes in the field.	One Medical specialist, one surgeon, one gynaecologist and three general doctors. One Block Extension and Education Officer Under NHM: One Block Programme Officer, one Block Community Mobilizer, one Accounts Manager Five Nurses, three ANM, two lab technicians, two pharmacists, one accountant, three computer operators, one enumerator. One dresser, one ward boy, one X Ray attender, one caretaker, one cook, one peon.	Half the doctors' posts are vacant. There are an inadequate number of ward boys.
Woman and Child Development			
District Programme Officer	Address malnourishment and health of children in the 0-6 age groups and pregnant and lactating mothers	One Programme Officer, two Assistant Directors, two clerks, one driver	No nutritionist or specialist in early childhood education. Both the posts of Assistant Director are vacant.
Child Development Project Office (CDPO)	Address malnourishment and health of children in the 0-6 age groups and pregnant and lactating mothers Pre-school education of children in the 3-6 age group.	One CDPO, one Assistant CDPO, three clerks, one driver, one helper	No nutritionist or specialist in early childhood education.
District Women Empowerment Office (DWEO)	Address domestic violence and protect vulnerable children including orphans and homeless children.	One DWEO, four clerks and one helper	Very skimpy staff, no gender specialist or legal expert
Block Woman Empowerment Office (BWEO)	Address domestic violence and protect vulnerable children including orphans and homeless children.	One BWEO, one Computer Operator	Very skimpy staff, no gender specialist or legal expert
Public Health Engineering			
Executive Engineer	Oversee repair of hand pumps, and installation of tap water schemes Ensure safe drinking water Educate people on water conservation and hygiene Manage field staff Issue tenders for engineering works	Executive Engineer, draughtsman, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Coordinator, MIS Coordinator, accounts and clerks.	There is only one officer, an engineer, who does the administrative work.
Subdivisional Office	Install new hand pumps and repair old ones Test water for potability Install tap water schemes Educate the community about the importance of drinking safe water and protecting water sources.	An Assistant Engineer is the head, assisted by clerks. Block level IEC Coordinator to mobilise the community.	Very skimpy staff, no gender specialist or legal expert

Cooperation			
District Marketing Office	Store and supply inputs to farmers such as fertilisers, seeds, agriculture equipment, pesticides and more.	One District Marketing Officer assisted by seven Field Assistants, one Assistant Accounts Officer and two peons. All staff are regular.	

Table 3: Posts Filled and Vacant in Sample Offices and Institutions

Name of Office	Managerial/ Expert/ Programmatic		Technical Computer/ Statistics/ Cartographer/ Para Medics		Accounts		Clerk		Helper	
	Number of Posts	Number Filled	Number of Posts	Number Filled	Number of Posts	Number Filled	Number of Posts	Number Filled	Number of Posts	Number Filled
Revenue	21	14	7	2	0	0	91	81	57	51
Forest	2	2	0	0	2	3	6	4	4	4
Panchayat and RD	15	12	3	1	11	6	42	16	14	11
School Education	38	14	8	7	6	5	17	10	10	6
Public Health	23	15	7	7	2	1	4	4	7	3
Women and Child Development	7	4	0	0	0	0	11	9	5	4
Public Health Engineering	4	4	NA	1	NA	1	NA	6	NA	15
Cooperation	1	1	0	0	1	1	7	5	2	1
Total	111	66	25	18	22	17	178	135	99	95
Percentage Vacancy	40.6	28	22.7	24.2	4	5	17	10	10	6

Table 4: Qualifications and Experience of Government Officials Interviewed

	District	Subdivision	Tehsil/ Block	Sub-block/ Village
Qualifications				
Postgraduate/ Engineering degree/ Medical degree/ MBA	7	2	8	8
Graduate	2	0	1	12
Civil Engineering Diploma	0	1		1
Industrial Training Institute Engineering Diploma	0	0	0	1
Nursing diploma				1
Class 11/ 12	0	0	0	5
Class 10	0	0	0	1
Class 8	0	0	0	2
Not Available	0	0	0	2
Total	**10**	**3**	**9**	**33**
Experience				
Less than 5 years	0	0	0	2
5-10 years	1	0	0	6
10-15 years	1	0	2	9
15-20 years	0	1	3	4
More than 20 years	8	2	4	9
Not Available				3
Total	**10**	**3**	**9**	**33**

Table 5: Service Conditions of Selected Frontline Functionaries

Worker	Recruitment and Training	Salary	Position Type	Other Service Conditions
Revenue				
Revenue Inspector	On-line test at state level Basic training after recruitment	Salary: Rs. 30,200 to Rs.1,10,000	Permanent	Service book, leave record maintained
Patwari	On-line test at state level Basic training after recruitment.	Salary: Rs. 25,100 to Rs.82,100	Permanent	Eligible to be promoted as RI after an examination

Forest				
Beat Guard	Required qualification is class 12. Passing a physical fitness test is mandatory.	Salary Rs. 18,000-Rs.25,000 per month.	Permanent	Eligible to be promoted as Deputy Rangers after an examination
Panchayats and RD				
GP Secretary	Recruitment by district board. An examination is conducted. Should be a graduate as per new regulations, knowing computers is an added advantage. Training provided through Panchayat Training Centres.	Salary: Rs. 24,000 per month.	Semi-Permanent	Not available
MGNREGS rozgar sahayak	Recruited through examination at the district level. Should be a resident of the village, and must know computer with graduation	Total Rs. 9000 per month: Rs. 5000 for MGNREGS, Rs. 2000 for toilet construction, Rs. 2000 for PMAY	Temporary	
School Education				
Sahayak Adhyapak Grade 3	Required qualifications are class 12 and D. Ed. Recruited at state level through examination Annual training through DIET/ BRC	Salary around 50% of regular teachers when study began, but equivalent before study ended.	Semi-permanent: they are not removed.	Promotion up to varishtha adhyapak, but cannot become headmasters. Service record and APAR are maintained.
Guest teacher Grade 2	Recruited in case of vacancies. SMC issues, selects most qualified living nearby. Get no training.	Salary: Rs. 3,500 per month. No other benefits.		
Supervisor	Appointed at the state level. Essential qualification is BA. Trained on various issues from time to time.	Salary: Rs. 25,300 to Rs. 80,500 per month.	Permanent	Promoted as Assistant CDPOs and CDPOs over time.
Anganwadi Worker	Selected by district committee as per pre-defined criteria. Minimum qualification is grade 12. Foundation training of one month and in-service training from time to time.	Paid Rs. 5000 per month.	Temporary	Entitled to is 13 days' CL.

Public Health				
ANM	Recruited at state level Qualified nurse		ANMs are regular, but temporary ANMs have been appointed because of vacancies.	
ASHA	Appointed for every 1000 population, and less in tribal areas. Only local married women can be ASHAs. The minimum qualifications required are class 8 in rural areas and class 12 in urban areas. In rural areas, if no woman who has passed class 8 is available, women who have passed class 5 can be hired. ASHAs are selected in the Gram Sabha.	Paid on the basis of services delivered. There are 38 types of services for which the ASHA can be paid. The minimum amount paid is Rs. 2000 per month.		
PHE				
Sub-engineer	Recruited at the state level. Required qualifications are diploma in civil engineering Training organised at state level	Salary: Rs. 9,300-Rs. 34,800.	Permanent	All service records are maintained at the Executive Engineer (EE) office.
Hand pump technician	Required qualification is an Industrial Training Institute diploma. Trained when hired and from time to time by state	Salary Rs. 5200 to 20,200 Contract mechanics paid Rs. 65 per hand pump: around Rs. 6,500 per month	Some contracts, some permanent, declared 'dying cadre'. Contract renewed every month	
Cooperation				
PACS/ LAMPS Manager	Mostly recruited by the board of the cooperative society. Some deputed from the Cooperative Bank.	Salary varies from society to society: between Rs. 8000 to Rs. 10000 per month.	Not strictly a government employee.	Service rules prepared in 2018, minimum qualification is graduation.

ANNEXURE 5: INFRASTRUCTURE AND FINANCE

Table 1: Infrastructure in Sample Offices

	Number of Offices		
	District	Subdivision	Tehsil/ Block
Building condition			
Good condition	7	2	3
Poor condition	3	1	4
Seating Space			
Adequate space	5	1	3
Toilets			
Separate for men and women	6	1	4
Single toilet for men and women	4	1	3
Toilet in poor condition/ No toilet facility	2	1	2
Drinking Water			
Adequate availability	6	2	1
Inadequate availability	3	1	5
Drinking Water			
Clean	5	2	3
Not very clean/ unhygienic toilets	5		4
Information not available		1	
Facilities for disabled			
None	7	1	4
Only ramp	2	1	3
Information not available	1	1	
Furniture			
Adequate furniture in good condition	8	2	5
Inadequate furniture/ Furniture in poor condition	2	1	2
Vehicle			
Office vehicle/ vehicles available	8	2	1
Full-time vehicle on contract	2		1
Vehicle hired when needed			1

Vehicle not available		1	3
Information not available			1
Computer			
Computer available	10	2	7
Computer not available		1	
Telephone			
Telephone available	10	2	4
No Telephone		1	3
Stationery			
Stationery adequate	10	2	6
Stationery inadequate		1	1

Table 2: Infrastructure in Sample Schools

School	Building	Toilet and Drinking water	Library, Books and other Teaching-Material
School 1	The building has four rooms and a hall. There is a play-ground. The building condition is poor, the walls are cracked and the floor is broken. The school compound is clean. Students clean the classrooms.	There are separate toilets for boys and girls, each with a wa-ter can. The hand pump is a at distance of 150 metres and children carry water in buckets	Many Hindi story books are stored in a cupboard. Students of classes 3-5 can borrow books for a week, and an issue and return register is main-tained. The school also has chart papers, sketch pens, al-phabet charts, a globe and number cards.
School 2	The school building has four rooms. There is a playground. Building is well-maintained, white washed and clean.	There are separate toilets for boys and girls. There is a hand pump in the campus.	Story books are stored in a cupboard. The books are issued mainly to middle school students. Primary school children are only allowed to issue books on limited occasions. The school had number and alphabet charts, pictorial charts of vegetables and more.
School 3	The building has three rooms and a hall. There is no playground. The building is new and the school is clean.	There are separate toilets for boys and girls. There is a hand pump close to the school.	Hindi story books are stored in a cupboard. The school has chart papers, sketch pens, crayons, alphabet and number charts, balls, bats, as well as picture stories, paper toys and earthen lamps made, decorated and painted by children.

School 4	There are two classrooms across two buildings. One is old and needs repairs, while the newer building is in good condition. There is a small playground. The school is very clean.	There are separate toilets for boys and girls. There is a hand pump in the campus.	There are many Hindi story books in a cupboard, which are displayed outside daily. Children are allowed to read these during school-hours. A register for borrowing books maintained. The school has chart papers, sketch pens, number and date cards, alphabet and numerical blocks, abacus, boxes of different geometric shapes, embossed plastic charts of animals, birds, insects, fruits and flowers and story charts made by teachers and a map of India. There is a carrom board set, skipping ropes and other games. All these are accessible to students
School 5	The building has three classrooms of which one is used as a staff room. There is no playground. The walls of the building are damp and the building is not clean. The room where the midday meal is prepared is unhygienic.	There are separate toilets for boys and girls, both without water. There is a hand pump on campus.	The corner of the staff room is used as a library. There are 3 story books, and alphabet and number books. There is an old globe that is kept in a cupboard. There are no games or play materials.

Table 3: Infrastructure and Equipment in Sample Sub-Health Centres

	Public facilities
Village 1	There are three rooms and one small hall. The building is quite poor and the walls need paint. There is electricity and a toilet facility. The Centre has vaccine boxes and ice-packs, a weighing machine, a BP instrument, medicines, a malaria kit, an anaemia kit, vaccine vials, disposable syringes and needles, cold-chain monitors and related accessories.
Village 2	The condition of the building is not good, and the outer and inner walls have black patches. There are three rooms and one small hall. There are a few old furniture pieces stacked at one corner. The ANM carries equipment with her.
Village 3	There are three rooms and one small hall. The building needs repair. In one room an ASHA sits and distributes medicines in the out patient department hours. There is one delivery/ labour room, which is no longer used for delivery, but to store beds, equipment, lime, bleaching powders and other items. One room serves as the ANM's residence with an attached bathroom facility. Another bathroom is attached to the labour room.

Table 4: Infrastructure in Sample Anganwadis

	Anganwadi Centre 1	Anganwadi Centre 2	Anganwadi Centre 3	Anganwadi Centre 4	Anganwadi Centre 5
Ownership	Own	Own	Own	Own	Room in government school
Building condition	Good, but poor air circulation	Small, run down, poor air circula-tion	The building is old and the walls are discol-oured.	The building is new, but the ceiling and walls are not painted.	Old build-ing, but airy.
Toilet	No	No	No	Dysfunctional toilet	There is a toilet but it is not in use
Cleanliness	Clean	Not very clean	Clean	Clean	Clean
Drinking water	Available	Information not availa-ble	Available	Available	Information not availa-ble
Stories and posters on walls	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available
Standard educational equipment	Available	Available but kept inside trunks, children play out-side	Available	Available	Available but kept inside trunks, children play outside
Additional educational equipment	Rubber models of vegetables, fruits, shapes, paper models of dolls, birds, sun, moon and others hang from beams	None	Dolls and birds made of fibre hang from beams. They also have two locally made clay bullocks.	Chalks were bought by the AWW herself.	None

Table 5: Financial Powers of Heads of Offices of Sample Offices

Department	District		Subdivision/ Tehsil/ Block	
	Office	Powers	Office	Powers
Revenue	District Col-lector	Varied pow-ers for dif-ferent activi-ties as dele-gated by the departments	SDM	None
			Tehsildar	Can sanction compensation for crop damage as per specified norms
Forest	DFO	Can sanction all activities approved in plan	SDO	Construction works up to Rs. 2 lakh, repair works up to Rs. 50,000
P&RD	CEO ZP	Works up to Rs. 25 lakhs	CEO JP	Works up to Rs. 15 lakh
School Education	DEC	Can sanction all activities approved in plan	Available	Available
	DIET	Rs. 50,000		
Health	CHMO	Rs. 10 lakh.	BMO	Rs. 2 lakh under NHM
PHE	Executive Engineer (EE)	Issue and approval of tender up to Rs.10 lakh Technical sanction up to Rs: 20 lakh Administrative sanction: Nil	SDO	Assistant Engineer: Approve expenses up to Rs. 500
Cooperation	DMO	Rs. 10,000 for repair of godowns and trans-portation		

ANNEXURE 6: WORKING CONTEXT AND PROCESSES OF ADMINISTRATION

Table 1: Main Services of 8 Sample Departments in the Public Service Guarantee Act

Department	Services Covered
Revenue	• Offers compensation for crop damage, loss of life, harm to body organs or cattle caused by wild animals • Issues no objection certificate for Nazul land and solvency certificate • Resolves undisputed land mutation, division, and demarcation cases. • Maintains copies of land records
Forest	• Issues permits to carry wood for government offices, registered dealers and landowners • Makes payments for wood sold on behalf of owners
Panchayat and Rural Development	• Adds names to the BPL list • Provides certified copies of BPL list • Provides tap water connections • Grades SHGs • Registers and renews colonisers licence in rural areas • Provides benefits under maternity assistance plan, marriage assistance plan, and compassionate assistance on death or disability incurred after accident at workplace
School Education	Nil
Health	• Offers benefits under child heart treatment scheme, state illness assistance scheme, pregnancy assistance scheme, mother Vandana scheme • Issues disability certificate, age verification certificate, and entitlement for free health care certificate • Registers private clinics
WCD	• Offers benefits under the Ladli Laxmi scheme • If registered beneficiaries don't get nutrition, they are to ensure its availability.
PHE	• In charge of repairs of hand pumps • Report on the potability of water
Cooperation	• Issues credit limit certificate to farmers

Table 2: Activities Out of Mandate of 15 Sample Supervisory Offices

	Number of Offices Involved		Number of Offices Involved
Government Activities		Activities of religious and cultural orientation	
Elections	2	Ramji baba fair	1
Sanitation drive	1	Poornima/ Amavasya Snan	2
Fairs not pertaining to office	6	Nagardwari Mela	4
Disaster Management	3	Maha Shiv Ratri Mela	4

Plantation drive	8	Narmada Sewa Yatra	3
Cabinet Meeting	1	Singhasth mela	1
Politician visits	2	Surya Namaskar	2

Table 3: Main Activities of Supervisory Sample Offices

	Number of Offices Reporting as Main Activity		
	District Level	Subdivision/ Block Level	Total
Planning			
Prepare plans for different schemes	3	2	5
Prepare annual plans	2	1	3
Prepare 10 year plans	1	1	2
Personnel related			
Write Annual Appraisal Report	10	10	20
Maintain leave and other records	9	6	15
Divide work n among grassroots personnel	0	3	3
Take disciplinary action against grassroots personnel	1	4	5
Recruit grassroots personnel	1	1	2
Continue services of grassroots personnel	1	0	1
Finance			
Manage scheme/ plan funds	5	3	8
Sanction financial compensation/ assistance	0	3	3
Allot works to private parties through tenders	1	0	1
Transfer funds to institutions/ beneficiaries	2	1	3
Pay service providers	2	0	2
Check if DBT funds have reached beneficiaries	0	1	1
Implementation	**10**	**9**	**19**
Supervision			
Supervise work of junior officials	9	9	18
Inspect institutions/ depots/ stores	3	5	8
Inspect construction works	2	2	4
General supervision	0	1	1
Inspect private institutions	1	0	1
Provide technical support/ training to grass-roots personnel	2	1	3

Prepare plans for different schemes	3	2	5
Community related			
Meet complainants, sort out people's prob-lems	1	1	2
Organise public hearings	1	1	2
Undertake programmes for community awareness	1	0	1
Reporting to and following orders of superior authority			
Attend meetings/ Video-conferences	6	3	9
Report to superior offices	5	3	8
Collect/ compile data for reporting	0	2	2
Understand/ follow directions of superior of-fice	1	2	3

Table 4: Types of Activities that Took Most Time in 20 Sample Offices

	Number of Offices Reporting at Various Levels		
Activity	District	Sub-District	Total
Superior authority oriented	7	3	10
Implementing	8	8	16
Financial work	0	1	1
Monitoring and supervision	6	1	7
Out of mandate	1	0	1

Table 5: Role Perception by Officials

	Number of responses by		
Role perceived in terms of	District Officials	Subdivision/ Tehsil/ Block Officials	Total
	Total number of respondents: 9	Total number of respondents: 12	Total number of respondents: 21
Broad goals	0	2	2
Acting as per orders	6	6	12
Planning, project formulation, proposals	3	3	6
Implementation	8	10	18
Managing finances	0	2	2
Monitoring and supervision	8	10	18
Coordination	1	4	5
Responding to people	0	2	2

Table 6: Main Implementation Work in Sample Offices and Local Governments

	District		Subdivision	
Revenue	SLR	Maintenance of old land records	SDM	General administration
			Tehsildar	Enquiries Court work Correct entries in land records Provide certificates and copies of records Make revenue recoveries Function as executive magistrate
Forest	DFO	Hearing cases regarding forest crime Preparation of Nistar Patrak	SDO (F)	Hearing cases regarding forest crime
PR&RD	ZP	Organise meeting of ZP Organise workshops Scheme related work by programme officers	JP	Organise meeting of JP
School Education	DPO	Form resource groups, train resource persons Make route chart to deliver student benefits to BRC office Organise admission of students to private schools	BRC	Organise teacher training Organise campaigns, fairs Organise distribution of benefits, get bicycles coming to BRC assembled. Organise achievement surveys, tests Visit schools for academic support Assist in admission of students to private schools
	DIET	Run D.Ed. programme	BEO	Nil
Public Health	CHMO	Organise campaigns, camps etc. Register private doctors	CHC	OPD Organise health camps Check-up and care of pregnant mothers and infants
Monitoring and supervision	8	10	18	CHC
WCD	DPO	Declare GPs as con-struction agencies for new Angnawadis	CDPO	Organise campaigns, fairs Organise distribution of supplementary nutrition rations
	DWEO	Counsel women	BWEO	Registration for benefits under schemes Counsel women Prepare DIR, present in court
PHE	Executive Engineer (EE)	Provide technical sanction Examine technical proposals to send to superior office	SDO (PHE)	Get information about out of order hand pumps and material available, so that there is no problem in hand pump repair. Make new proposals and send to district office
Cooper-ation	DMO	Procurement of seeds, fertilisers etc. from contractors Reaching seeds/ fertilisers etc. to cooperative societies	CDPO	Organise campaigns, fairs Organise distribution of supplementary nutrition rations

Table 7a: Issues discussed in 3 Sample Meetings in 2016-17 in ZP and JP

	Number of Times Taken Up in 3 Sample Meetings	
Total number of agenda Items in 3 meetings	29	29
Review of departmental activities	9	1
Approval of plan/ project	2	6
Information provided by department to Panchayat	7	3
Panchayat demanded information/ report from department/ official		5
Directions given to official	1	4
Censure/ enquiry/ resolution/ recommendation of transfer against officials	3	7
Benefits for Panchayat employees		2
Demand from State Government	2	2
Approval of previous meeting minutes, ATR	4	2
Support requested from members for departmental ac-tivity	1	
Directions for lower tier Panchayat		1
Not Clear		1

Table 7b: Issues discussed in 3 sample meetings of 3 sample GPs

Issue	Number of times discussed
Construction works	11
Distribution of land documents for PMAY, encroachment	3
Sanitation Programme	4
Drinking water	4
New pension scheme	2
Addition of new names to BPL list	2
Plantation programme	2
26th January function	3

Table 8: Types of Information Maintained by Sample Offices

Office	Information Maintained	Information Use
Revenue	Land records Agriculture production	Office mandate
	Court case dates and records	Day to day working
	Jan Sunwai and CM helpline applications	Upward reporting

Forest	Forest area	Office mandate
	Physical and financial progress	Plan implementation
Panchayats and Rural Development	SECC data Beneficiaries in various schemes Job card holders in MGNREGS	Beneficiary selection for schemes
School education	Number of children enrolled Number of children out of school children Number of teachers	Upward reporting, beneficiary selection and planning
	Teacher records of salary and leave Action taken against teachers	Day to day working
	School construction Distribution of cycles, uniforms, textbooks Number of teachers trained Number of children admitted to private schools	Upward reporting and scheme implementation
	Student achievement	Upward reporting
Health	Population around CHC Number of pregnant women, high risk women Persons with TB, HIV or other serious illnesses.	Upward reporting and planning
	Availability of medicines and details of purchase	Day to day working
	Progress of Pregnancy Assistance scheme, state illness assistance scheme, LTT, ANC check up	Upward reporting
WCD	Number of children in 0-6 Age Group Number of children in various malnourishment categories Number of pregnant and lactating mothers Number of adolescent girls and their health status Children's weight and upper arm circumference Attendance of children at AWC Number of children vaccinatedAttendance at various events and meetings	Upward reporting, and scheme implementation
	Number of AWCs Areas that need new AWCs AWCs that need repair, electricity, water or other utilities Equipment in AWCs	Scheme implementation
	Number of applications from women affected by violence Number of women assisted FIRs registered Cases pending in court Complaints	Upward reporting
PHE	Water availability and quality for each habitation Demands of public representative Habitation-wise hand pumps and tap water schemes Status of hand pumps and platforms.	Planning
	Whether approved hand pumps have been installed Hand pumps working and out of order How many tap water schemes functional Complaints about hand pumps and whether addressed Number of pipes in hand pumps	Day to day working.

Cooperation	Targets and achievements	Upward reporting
	Number of societies Number of banks Company wise purchase data Payments status data Stock availability at godowns	Day to day working
	Whether approved hand pumps have been installed Hand pumps working and out of order How many tap water schemes functional Complaints about hand pumps and whether addressed Number of pipes in hand pumps	Day to day working.

Table 9: Information Provided to People by Sample Departments

De-part-ment	Main Method	Information Provided
Revenue	Kotwars and patwaris who come in direct contact with people.	Information is provided sporadically, such as in case of natural calamities, law and order etc. Department is more focused on collecting information from people.
Forest	Forest Committees andBeat guards who interact with the people and provide them with the Nistar Patrak.	Nistar Patrika provides the Nistar policy and rates and activities in the annual plan.
Rural Development	Gram Sabha meetings, airs and publicity programmes	Information about government schemes, norms for selection of beneficiaries etc. is provided.
School Education	SMC-PTA meetings, in enrolment drives conducted at the beginning of the academic year, and also in camps, fairs as well as hoardings, and media.	Information provided is about importance and status of enrolment, and benefits available in government schemes.
Health	ANMs and ASHA who are in close touch with people Government schemes are advertised through advertisements, hoardings, wall writings, pamphlets, street plays	Importance of and information about vaccination, antenatal care, and about government programmes, preventive and curative action for widely prevalent disease such as malaria, tuberculosis etc. .
WCD	AWW provides information to mothers, information is displayed on AWC walls. There are camps, street plays, posters, pamphlets, and information is provided through the media. Special awareness programmes are held on national girl child's day.	Information nutrition, importance of looking after the girl child, the ills of dowry, gender equality, domestic violence, services and benefits provided by the government,
PHE	Fairs and campaigns, media and publicity programmes	Community provided information on keeping drinking water sources safe, not dirtying places near water sources, water testing, taking tap water connections, paying water charges, collecting rainwater, washing hands and using toilets.
Cooperation	Cooperative societies and sporadically in fairs.	Information to provide to farmers about agriculture and agriculture practices by the

ANNEXURE 7: ADMINISTRATION ON THE GROUND

Table 1: Children Enrolled and Malnourished in Anganwadis in Sample Villages

AWC	Number AWCs	Number of children enrolled			Number severely malnourished			Number moderately malnourished		
		Average	**Lowest**	**Highest**	**Average**	**Lowest**	**Highest**	**Average**	**Lowest**	**Highest**
V1	8	53.9	25	92	1.1	0	3	8.1	4	22
V2	10	50.0	36	70	1.0	0	2	8.4	5	13
V3	5	34.2	21	45	1.2	1	2	NA	NA	NA
V4	2	70.5	62	79	1	0	2	13	12	14
V5	1	54	NA	NA	6	NA	NA	20	NA	NA

Table 2: Children and Mothers Enrolled in Sample Anganwadis

AWC	Number of children enrolled			Number children in private schools	Number mothers registered			Number of adolescent girls	Number of malnourished children		
	0-3 YRS	**3-6 YRS**	**Total**		**Pregnant**	**Lactating**	**Total**	**Average**	**S**	**M**	**T**
AWC 1	36	46	82	29	6	11	17	60	0	4	4
AWC 2	39	31**	70	NA	16	7	23	2	6	6	12
AWC 3	37	20	57	NA	7	5	12		1	NA	NA
AWC 4	27	17	44	4	7	3	10		2	12	14
AWC 5	25	30	55	1	7	8	15	2	6	20	26

S=Severely malnourished
M=Moderately malnourished

Table 3: Social Services Accessed in 5 Sample Villages

Village	Anganwadi	Schools	Medical Facilities
V1	Well-off families' children go to private nursery schools. Children from poor families attend AWCs.	Boys study up to class XII. But except for a few, girls generally study up to class VIII, especially ST girls, who work and support their parents. General caste students and students of well-off OBC and SC families study outside the village in nearby cities after class 12. There are private tutors in the village, and some students of private schools go to them	The village has a SHC but it is sometimes closed because the ANM has to travel to other villages. There are many pharmacy stores where private doctors from the city are available for a part of the day or week. The STs and SCs consult traditional healers for minor illnesses. For major illnesses they consult the SHC, the pharmacy stores and if these don't work, go to private clinics in the nearby city. The well-off groups directly go to the private clinics in the city.

V2	All children go to AWC.	Students usually study up to grade 10 and those who pass go to a nearby village for higher secondary. A few students (1-2 per school) of 6-14 age group, from families who migrate as agriculture labourers are out of school. One guest teacher of a government primary school provides private tuition and . children also go to a nearby village where there are 5-6 private tutors who charge Rs. 500-600 per month.	The village has a sub-health centre, no traditional healer, medicine shop and a pharmacist who also acts as a doctor. There is a CHC close to the village, which the villagers access. Some people from SC and ST groups
V3	All children go to AWC.	Some poor children in the 6-14 age group, from families of agricultural labourers who take care of their siblings or earn money do not attend school. Children usually study up to IX. Better off students study up to class XII. Some are doing college in a nearby city. Students from 15-16 families study in private schools in a nearby city. Some families have shifted to the city for children's schooling. There are 3 private tutors in the village.	The village has a SHC, one traditional healer and private health clinics with doctors. The STs go to the traditional healer for minor illnesses, and visit private health clinics for major illnesses. The poor access the nearby CHC but the travel is expensive, and often they are not able to reach during the OPD hours. The well-off groups access the private clinics.
V4	Most children attend the AWC. Some children of better off families go to the private schools in another village.	All students study up to class 8. There are no drop-outs, but some students attend school irregularly. For class 9 and 10, 70% students go outside the village to study. After class 10, girls generally do not go to school, because the school with class 11 and 12 is further off. There are no private tutors, but a few students go for tuitions at another village, where there are 2-3 private tutors.	There is no CHC in the village but there is a PHC 2 kilometres away. There are no traditional healers, but a 'Bengali doctor' (with dubious medical qualifications) has a clinic. clinic. For minor ailments, people visit the Bengali doctor, who treats common ailments for Rs. 30-50, and sometimes the PHC. For major ailments they access the government hospital in the city.
V5	All children attend the AWC except for one child from an OBC family who goes to private school.	Almost all children study up to class V. One ST girl from a very poor family dropped out last year in class 4. Another 2-3 children do not attend school regularly, though they are enrolled, because families migrate, or parents go out for work on a daily basis. Students go to a nearby village for grade 8. In the 6-14 age group, approximately 10 children don't attend school. Students go to nearby villages and cities for secondary education. No tuition is available in the village. One OBC family, which is well off, sends children to a private school in a neighbouring village.	There is no SHC in the village, but one is available 1 km away. There is a CHC 12 kms away. There is no private allopathic doctor. There are 2 traditional healers and one Bengali doctor in a village I km away. People access all the facilities. Most often they visit the Bengali doctor who is accessible and inexpensive.
V2	All children go to AWC.	Students usually study up to grade 10 and those who pass go to a nearby village for higher secondary. A few students (1-2 per school) of 6-14 age group, from families who migrate as agriculture labourers are out of school. One guest teacher of a government primary school provides private tuition and . children also go to a nearby village where there are 5-6 private tutors who charge Rs. 500-600 per month.	The village has a sub-health centre, no traditional healer, medicine shop and a pharmacist who also acts as a doctor. There is a CHC close to the village, which the villagers access. Some people from SC and ST groups

Table 4: Issues Discussed and Action Taken in 3 Sample Gram Sabhas

Issue/ Decision	Number of Times Discussed in 3 Sample Meeting				
	GP1	**GP3**	**GP4**	**GP5**	**Total**
Top Directed	**2**	**4**	**0**	**6**	**12**
Information provided about scheme	1	2		3	6
Plantation drive, Gram Uday se Bharat Uday	1	1		1	3
CM address telecast		1			1
Adhaar linked student ID				1	1
People asked to complete toilet construc-tion				1	1
Panchayat business	**1**	**10**	**8**	**5**	**24**
Approval of project proposals		3			3
Submission of applications in schemes, beneficiary list approved	1	4	2	2	9
Flag hoisting, Tribute to Dr. Ambedkar			1	1	2
Tax collection, monthly subscription for tap water scheme		1	2	1	4
Selection of road sites		1			1
Social audit			1		1
Discussion/ approval of village develop-ment plan		1	1	1	3
Tap water scheme			1		1
Wider Issues	**1**	**1**	**2**	**0**	**4**
Schools, teachers not coming on time		1	1		2
Malnutrition			1		1
Village hygiene day celebrated, people in-formed of importance of sanitation	1				1

ABBREVIATION LIST:

ASER: Annual Status of Education Report

NPM: New public management

ICS: Indian Civil Services

DFO: District Forest Officer

IMF: International Monetary Fund

JNNURM: Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission

IPS: Indian Police Service

SC: Scheduled Caste

ST: Scheduled Tribe

OBC: Other Backward Class

ARC: Administrative Reform Commission

CD: Community Development

BDO: Block Development Officer

ZP: Zilla Parishad

GP: Gram Panchayat

DRDA: District Rural Development Agency

DIETs: District Institutes of Education and Training

AWC: Anganwadi Centre

DPEP: District Primary Education Programme

SSA: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

CBO: Community-Based Organisations

VEC: Village Education Committee

SMC: School Management Committee

ATMA: Agriculture Technology Management Agency

ANM: Auxiliary Nurse Midwife

ICDS: Integrated Child Development Services

AWW: Anganwadi Worker

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

MGNREGS: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme

ASHA: Accredited Social Health Activist

CIPA: Common Integrated Police Application

DBT: Direct Benefit Transfer

P&RD: Panchayat and Rural Development

WCD: Women and Child Development

PHE: Public Health Engineering

SHC: Sub-Health Centre

PR: Panchayat Representative

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

SECC: Socio-Economic and Caste Census

BSNL: Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited

PHC: Primary Health Centre

JP: Janpad Panchayat

DC: District Collector

DEO: District Education Office

DPC: District Programme Coordination

BEO: Block Education Office

BRC: Block Resource Centre

SDM: Sub-Divisional magistrate

MIS: Management Information System

MLA: Member of the Legislative Assembly

MP: Member of Parliament

SMC-PTA: School Management Committee cum Parent Teacher Associations

CM:Chief Minister

AG: Accountant General

PAC: Public Accounts Committee

RTI: Right to Information

SHG: Self Help Group

FMC: Forest Management Committee

PRADAN: Professional Assistance for Development Action

FRA: Forest Rights Act

ODF: Open Defecation Free

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