

Great Expectations, Great Grievances:

The Politics of Citizens' Complaints in India

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By 10 o'clock in the morning, a crowd had gathered outside a rural district police headquarters in Madhya Pradesh (MP), in north-central India. It was Tuesday, the day of the regular *Jan Sunwai*, a public hearing held by senior officials across government departments. Among those gathered was an elderly man, who claimed that his sons had taken his land, leaving him without shelter or income. Unsatisfied with the response at his local police station, he had traveled hours to attend the Jan Sunwai. When his turn came, the Superintendent of Police (SP)—the district's senior-most police official—asked the man to sit and listened to his story. The SP then asked an officer to record the details of the case and to place a call to the local land registry. He also asked the officer to offer the man tea and biscuits.¹

This interaction was striking to observe. First, it took place in rural India, a setting noted for variable public administration and for often callous treatment of citizens by officials.² The mere act of being asked to sit in the presence of a senior official signaled a degree of courtesy often lacking in such encounters. Second, it took place among the police, a sector of government often perceived as lacking in downward accountability to citizens.³ Even more striking, the issue in question did not fall directly under police purview, but should have been directed to the local land registry. And yet, rather than simply send the man away, the SP attempted to make a referral—an unusual act in a fragmented governance environment.

The interaction above, and others like it observed over six months of intensively studying the Jan Sunwai in this rural district, reveals a serious attempt by a government agency at grievance redressal. This attempt is not unique. Formal complaints mechanisms are proliferating worldwide in sectors from healthcare, to education, welfare provision, the courts, policing, and beyond.⁴ These mechanisms, which range

from in-person hearings, to ombudsman offices, online complaints, and public hotlines, hinge on the premise that building formal platforms for grievance articulation increases the likelihood that citizens will come forward, while prompting greater responsiveness among officials.

Yet, despite the growing popularity of grievance redressal mechanisms, relatively little is known about how they function, and even less is known about how they are experienced by citizens. How does the formal act of complaining shape citizens' beliefs about government accountability and responsiveness? How, moreover, do the dynamics of grievance redressal play out over time, as complaints are subsumed into larger systems of governance? In this article, I explore these questions in India, which—despite (or perhaps because of) its reputation for uneven service provision—is a global leader in the number and range of its public grievance programs.⁵ I do so through an intensive study of the Jan Sunwai implemented by the MP police. Policing, which represents both the repressive arm of the state and a gateway to the justice system, is a critical arena of citizen-state interaction and a crucial sector in which to study the potential and limits of grievance redressal.

To investigate these dynamics, I draw on a near census of hearing attendees in one district over a four-month period ($n = 362$) and in-depth follow-up interviews with a random sample of those attendees ($n = 50$), along with a multidistrict citizen survey on policing in MP ($n = 6,444$). I find that, while most participants are initially enthusiastic about the Jan Sunwai, their enthusiasm decreases rapidly in the aftermath of their hearings. In exit interviews directly after the Jan Sunwai, a full 70 percent of participants stated that they were satisfied with their experience, while just 22 percent expressed the same in interviews a few weeks later. This, I argue, reflects an expectations gap provoked by the initially positive experience of the Jan Sunwai; a courteous audience with and promises from senior officials served to inflate citizens' perceptions of police capacity in ways that did not match the constrained reality of local policing. And yet, strikingly, the experience of the Jan Sunwai exceeded expectations for a small group: women and others who, for a variety of reasons, were unlikely to receive adequate assistance from their local police stations. For these individuals, the Jan Sunwai provided an opportunity to level-hop to higher authorities, serving as a critical—and in some instances the only—channel to the justice system. Importantly, many of these same cases received special attention and dedicated resources following the Jan Sunwai that helped to bridge the local capacity gap.

The study thus highlights the promise and the limits of formal complaints mechanisms, which can amplify both citizens' voices and their grievances. Complaining, I argue, is a powerful but at times paradoxical form of voice. In the absence of sufficient frontline capacity, government efforts to hear citizens' complaints may, perversely, create an expectations gap that leads to disillusionment. Yet, where coupled with bureaucratic commitment, grievance redressal efforts can meet and even surpass citizens' expectations. Understanding this interplay between citizens' grievances, their expectations, and government responsiveness is critical to the study of accountability, particularly as complaints mechanisms multiply across sectors and settings worldwide.

Grievances and Citizenship

To complain is an act of citizenship, an “expression of human agency in the political arena.”⁶ “Complaining to the state”⁷ is, in particular, a cornerstone of claim-making: that is, the practices through which citizens seek the goods, services, and protections of government.⁸ Citizens regularly make informal complaints, through moral sanctioning, public rebukes, acts of protest, and threats of exit.⁹ Formal acts of complaining—the focus of this article—stand apart as they are “invited” by the state: citizens fill out complaints forms, send emails, call hotlines, and attend hearings at the behest of officials. Through these institutionalized acts, citizens call on the authority of the state at the same time that they challenge the state in light of perceived rights violations or deficiencies in service provision.

India has a long history of grievance redressal efforts. Propelled in part by public sector reforms in the 1990s, state governments began to experiment with the design of complaints mechanisms. Today, all twenty-nine states boast some kind of redress procedure.¹⁰ Over a dozen states (including MP) have Right to Public Service acts that stipulate the time that an agency has to respond to a citizen’s request and that delineate an appeals process. At the national level, grievance redressal mechanisms have been built into all of India’s flagship social welfare programs, including the Right to Education act, the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the National Rural Health Mission, and many more. Other efforts include the national Right to Information Act (2005), the establishment of ombudsmen offices, a wide range of e-governance reforms, and, in some states, creating in-person public hearings.¹¹

MP was an early-mover in this last regard, mandating regular hearings that give citizens a chance to make complaints against and seek assistance from senior officials. In 2009, MP’s Chief Minister instituted the Jan Sunwai program, requiring that senior bureaucrats from all government departments hold weekly “hearings” (*sunwai*) in which members of the public can state their grievances.¹² The MP Department of Public Relations explained the rationale for the hearings:

It is a known fact that common people fear to approach senior officials and are quite hesitant to tell them their problems properly. In order to afford the general public a platform to meet the senior officers about their problems and pending cases, a Jan Sunwai or public hearing system has been introduced. . . . This has bridged the gap between administration and the common people on the one hand, it has also sent a message across the state to the employees that they would ill-afford to dilly-delay [sic] in doing public work on the other.¹³

This description of the Jan Sunwai highlights a set of assumptions about citizen-state relations: namely, that citizens given the chance to complain will do so and that officials, hearing these complaints, will take action. Grievance redressal efforts seek to strengthen this assumed linkage between citizen voice and government responsiveness by shortening the “route to accountability,”¹⁴ allowing citizens to circumvent or escalate beyond local officials. The aim is to make higher-level officials more directly accessible

to the public, to increase those officials' knowledge of ground realities, and to send a message to lower-level officials that they are being monitored. At the same time, grievance redressal mechanisms are presumed to "thicken" citizenship practice by emboldening citizens to give voice to their demands.¹⁵ It is this theory that this article sets out to probe, through a study of the Jan Sunwai in the policing sector.

Policing and Grievance Redressal

Policing is a critical sector in which to examine the dynamics of complaints and accountability. The police, in classic Weberian fashion, represent a repressive arm of the state with the authority to exercise the "legitimate" use of violence.¹⁶ The police are also the primary institution responsible for public security and a gatekeeper to the broader justice system. It follows that citizens are eager to make claims both on and against the police, seeking protection by and from law enforcement. Engagement with the police plays a key role in shaping citizens' legal consciousness and their perception of justice.¹⁷ As a frontline bureaucracy, the police also represent a primary institution through which citizens encounter and form opinions about the state.¹⁸ The stakes of grievance redressal in policing, as an effort to build—and often to repair—public trust, are thus particularly high; where citizens' confidence in the police remains low, public security is diminished, systems of law and order are undermined, and citizen-state relations are strained.¹⁹

Citizen-police relations in India are often fraught. India's inherited colonial police structure (still governed by the Police Act of 1861) has promoted an organizational culture that emphasizes political order and crowd control, prioritizing these ends over crime prevention or community-centered models of policing.²⁰ The result, often, is the application of repressive tactics to control public spaces and impose law and order. It follows that the poor often meet the Indian police at the receiving end of a *lathi* (a stick or baton), or worse.²¹ For many, then, interactions with the police are characterized by fear and attempted avoidance. At the same time, police officers are widely perceived as exercising what is at best a "provisional" authority, as policing is subsumed within and shaped by broader social structures and political networks.²² These dynamics are compounded by serious resource constraints, leading to uneven capacity for law enforcement, thinly spread personnel, and scant resources for community-centered policing. It follows that levels of public satisfaction with police performance are generally low. In a recent national survey, less than a quarter of those who contacted the police in the last four to five years reported that they were "very satisfied" with the help they received.²³ The same survey found that just 20 percent of respondents reported "a lot of trust" in the local police—rising to 30 percent for senior officers (for comparison, 54 percent expressed "a lot" of trust in the army).²⁴ Madhya Pradesh, which has the second highest number of reported crimes nationally,²⁵ falls tenth out of fifteen states ranked by citizen satisfaction with the police, and is ninth out of twenty-two states ranked in terms of trust in the police.²⁶

These relatively low levels of satisfaction and trust, however, paint only a partial picture of citizen-police relations in India. The police—despite their constraints and the public’s many misgivings about them—are a significant actor in citizens’ lives, fulfilling roles that reach far beyond law and order. This is particularly true for residents of underserved communities where the absenteeism of other frontline officials is a common problem. In these settings, the police are often the most visible and regular manifestation of the state. Interactions with the police can serve as a stand-in for government writ large, and so may spill over to inform citizens’ expectations of other arms of the state. The Indian police at times take on an informal social service (*janata seva*) role, providing citizens with information and channels of access to other public services.²⁷ This “service role” is less visible than the police’s “law and order” role and yet is central to how citizens in underserved communities make claims on the state. The police—where perceived as “strong” relative to other public agencies—may become the first port of call for citizens seeking assistance with a wide range of issues that fall only marginally (if at all) under police purview.

Case Selection, Methods, and Data

The study setting is Vindhya, a rural district in central MP that is home to roughly 1.5 million people.²⁸ Vindhya, like all districts of MP, is constrained in its policing resources and personnel. It has a total force of 1,500 officers (roughly one per 1,000 people).²⁹ However, Vindhya stands out for its commitment to the Jan Sunwai. The Superintendent of Police in Vindhya at the time of research had the reputation of a reformer committed to citizen-centered models of policing. The SP was also highly invested in the Jan Sunwai. In the span of six months, he personally presided over all but three hearings (for which his second in command was deputized). He posted two of his most effective officers to Jan Sunwai duty, charging them with case intake and follow-up. He also allocated a budget from his discretionary funds to create banners for the Jan Sunwai and to set up a waiting area with chairs and an awning. Vindhya thus represents a “most-likely” case: if the Jan Sunwai can contribute to improved citizen-police relations, we would expect it to do so there, where the program was implemented in good faith coupled with bureaucratic commitment.³⁰

The study rests on observation of the Jan Sunwai over the course of six months at weekly hearings held at the district police headquarters; a near census of hearings attendees for four of those months; and follow-up interviews with a random sample held two to four weeks after their hearings.³¹ The survey, administered in a courtyard outside the Superintendent’s office, spanned fifteen Jan Sunwai sessions, with a total of 380 recorded attendees. All attendees were asked to participate in a rapid intake survey while waiting to be called into the hearing, as well as a short exit interview directly afterwards. A total of 362 consented to the initial survey—a response rate of 95 percent. 88 percent of those (321) also consented to the exit interview,³² which was held directly

upon leaving the hearing. 60 percent of these cases are also matched to official district data, enabling us to track the police’s responses.³³

All respondents were asked for permission to follow up at a later date, with a 91 percent consent rate. Research team members then attempted to contact roughly one out of five by phone, to ask if they would be willing to participate in an interview at a place and time of their choosing, no less than two weeks and no more than one month from the date of their hearing. This ensured that enough time had passed to reasonably expect some action on the complainant’s case, but also imposed a short enough timeframe to allow accurate recall of the Jan Sunwai. 62 percent of those selected for follow-up interviews were willing to speak again; 15 percent declined and 23 percent were unreachable. All in all, fifty people completed follow-up interviews, 14 percent of the original survey sample (sample balance is discussed later in the article). These in-depth follow-up interviews—which often involved a full day’s travel to remote locations—combined survey and open-ended questions, asking individuals to reflect on their experiences both at the Jan Sunwai and in its aftermath. These data gathered at and after the Vindhya Jan Sunwai are situated alongside data from a citizen survey on attitudes about policing (n = 6,444), drawn from twelve districts of MP.³⁴

Who Complains, About What?

Vindhya tracks state averages on key indicators of citizen-police relations. Table 1 presents district residents’ views on the likelihood that the police will help citizens, as well as about whether the police are generally honest or corrupt, alongside those drawn from the twelve-district survey. There is little difference in opinion between those in Vindhya and the multidistrict sample (columns 1 and 2).

Table 1 Citizen Views on Police Responsiveness and Trustworthiness

| | (1) Vindhya district * n = 424 | (2) All districts * n = 6444 | (3) All districts, crime victims * n = 911 | (4) All districts, attended JS * n = 270 | (5) Vindhya, attended JS ** n = 50 |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| A. The police help citizens when they should | 39% | 42% | 45% | 38% | 9% |
| B. The police are generally honest | 25% | 23% | 16% | 23% | 7% |
| The police are generally corrupt | 19% | 16% | 16% | 25% | 27% |

Sources: * Multidistrict Citizen Survey, Madhya Pradesh 2018; ** Vindhya Jan Sunwai follow-up interviews, 2017-18.

Note: Answer choices for B were not binary, but also included "can't generalize," and so do not total 100.

Jan Sunwai attendees, though, are not broadly representative of the general public. Only a small fraction (just 4 percent) of the multidistrict citizen survey respondents reported that they had attended a Jan Sunwai. Hearing participants are unusual in at least two regards. First, they are almost all victims (real or perceived) of crime. Second, they chose to escalate their grievance to a higher level (which, as we will see below, can be a costly undertaking). And yet, despite these anomalies, Jan Sunwai attendees across districts of MP (column 4) did not diverge significantly in their views on police responsiveness or trustworthiness from those of the full multidistrict sample (column 2), or from the broader sample of crime victims within those districts (column 3). This suggests that the decision to attend the Jan Sunwai was not driven by underlying differences in attitudes towards the police. Those who attended the Jan Sunwai in Vindhya expressed much bleaker views about the police (column 5). These opinions, though, are given in follow-up interviews just two to four weeks after their hearings and so likely reflect the recent and salient nature of their cases (the same data are not available for exit interviews carried out immediately after the Jan Sunwai). These more pessimistic views of police performance thus plausibly reflect those participants’ recent disappointment with the Jan Sunwai—a theme to which I return in the next section.

Before doing so, it is important to first understand who the Jan Sunwai attendees are. Across MP, those who participated in a grievance hearing tended to hail from relatively advantaged social backgrounds: almost three-quarters were male, more than 90 percent were Hindu, and only 12 percent could not read or write—compared to a statewide illiteracy rate of 24 percent (Table 2). In Vindhya, almost all attendees were also Hindu (despite a sizeable Muslim minority in the district). Most were also male, although the gender gap in Vindhya was smaller than for the rest of the state. In other respects, however, Vindhya’s hearing attendees appeared to be less privileged than elsewhere in the state. Disproportionate numbers hailed from the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) relative to their underlying presence in the district,³⁵ and 42 percent were functionally illiterate, reporting zero years of formal schooling. This relatively low socioeconomic standing is noteworthy given the high costs of

Table 2 Jan Sunwai Attendees Compared to District and State Population

| | Vindhya JS attendees * | All districts, JS attendees ** | Vindhya District *** | Madhya Pradesh *** |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Male | 65% | 72% | 53% | 52% |
| Hindu | 94% | 92% | 88% | 91% |
| Functionally illiterate | 42% (zero school) | 12% (illiterate) | 29% (illiterate) | 24% (illiterate) |
| Sheduled Caste | 30% | 20% | 20% | 16% |
| Sheduled Tribe | 11% | 8% | 5% | 21% |

Sources: * Vindhya Jan Sunwai Survey 2017-18; ** Multidistrict Citizen Survey, Madhya Pradesh, 2018; *** Census of India 2011. Note: % functionally illiterate is proportion reporting zero years school, or those coded as illiterate by the Census or who, in the multidistrict survey, report an inability to read.

attending the Jan Sunwai. On average, Vindhya Jan Sunwai participants reported spending ₹144 INR (roughly 2 USD) on travel, and another ₹145 on preparing documentation. Total spending (₹289) exceeds the MP daily minimum wage of ₹200 for unskilled farm workers and is nine times the national rural poverty line of ₹32/day. Attending the Jun Sunwai, thus, is a relatively high cost affair.

Why then did participants attend? For the majority of Vindhya Jan Sunwai attendees, the nature of their grievance was twofold. First, there was a complaint against a third party. Slightly less than one third of cases (29 percent) involved bodily harm or threats, including cases of murder and physical attacks. The next largest number of cases were related to land disputes (15 percent), followed by other kinds of disputes with family or neighbors (12 percent). 12 percent of cases were classified as involving a “crime against women”: of these, 61 percent were cases of rape or domestic violence. The remaining 32 percent of cases were centered on other issues, including theft, financial crimes, and missing persons or abduction.

Second, there was a complaint against the police, typically concerning lack of adequate response at the *thana* (the local police station). Just under two-thirds (65 percent) of Jan Sunwai attendees stated that they had previously sought assistance for the same issue from their local thana. Of these, 20 percent specifically mentioned a perceived failing on the part of their thana as a rationale for attending the district Jan Sunwai. Most of these complaints were related to inaction by local officers, for example, failing to register a case or to carry out investigation. For others, it was not police inaction but rather wrong action that served as impetus for attending the Jan Sunwai. For example, attendees stated: “The *thana* police slapped us and sent us home,” and “The *thana* did not register the report and the officers said that they would arrest us.”³⁶ Most survey respondents, however, did not overtly fault their thana; instead, they gave reasons for attending the Jan Sunwai such as “hopes for investigation” and “hopes for justice” that—given their prior interactions with their local police station—strongly implied dissatisfaction with thana performance. This is confirmed in follow-up interviews, in which respondents were asked to rate their initial contact with the local thana: 86 percent reported that they were not at all satisfied.

At the same time, just over one-third of attendees (36 percent) reported that they had not previously contacted their thana concerning the issue at hand, but had instead come directly to the Jan Sunwai. For some, this is because they felt they were blocked from the local level—often by the very people against whom they wanted to make a complaint. In a case involving a domestic dispute, for example, a woman stated that she had come to the Jan Sunwai because “I am being harassed a lot, and my in-laws are not letting the thana register a case.” In another case involving a land dispute, the complainant stated: “The accused does not let me go to the thana. He blocks my way and threatens to kill me. The TI [senior thana officer] is in his shoe [under his influence].” As these accounts illustrate, the local nature of the thana is double-edged: it is the most physically accessible point of contact with police, but this proximity also makes it a risky arena in which to bring a complaint against someone in that same

locality. In these cases, the ability to circumvent the thana provides a critical channel through which to pursue police action.

Citizen Satisfaction: At and After the Hearings

This section examines participants’ satisfaction with the Jan Sunwai in exit interviews directly after their hearings, and again in follow-up interviews two to four weeks later. Initially enthusiastic assessments of the Jan Sunwai quickly dissipated (Figure 1). In both interviews, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the Jan Sunwai on a four-point scale from not at all, to not very, to somewhat, to highly satisfied. In exit interviews (in which this question had an 81 percent response rate, n = 261), 70 percent expressed at least a degree of enthusiasm for the Jan Sunwai, while 30 percent voiced a level of discontent. Within a matter of weeks these trends were reversed: in follow-up interviews (n = 50), 24 percent expressed satisfaction and 76 percent were dissatisfied. Most notably, the proportion reporting that they were “not at all satisfied” increased more than twelvefold. This represents both a downward leveling and a hardening of opinion, as the proportion who gave the provisional responses of being “somewhat” or “not very” satisfied also fell significantly. This decline, though, was not consistent: the number reporting that they were “highly” satisfied also increased more than twofold. These patterns persist comparing the same subset of individuals at both exit and follow-up interviews (a total of forty-four matched individuals).³⁷

Figure 1 Level of Satisfaction at and after the Jan Sunwai

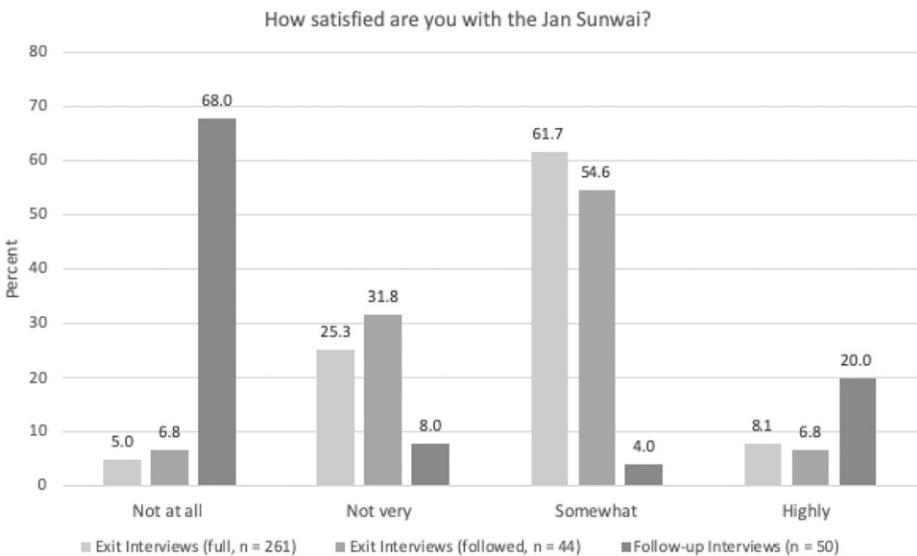


Table 3 illustrates the aggregate decline in satisfaction, drawing from a multivariate regression estimating the effects of time (indicated by observations drawn from follow-up interviews). Level of satisfaction fell, on average, by almost one point (0.98) on the four-point scale between the time of the Jan Sunwai and the follow-up interviews. This change is robust to the inclusion of a range of controls for sex, caste, religion, and education, as well as for whether the respondent contacted the local thana prior to attending the Jan Sunwai. Additional models include controls for the type of case, including those considered “grievous” and those classified as crimes against women: in these, the main effects of time on satisfaction persist.³⁸

There are a number of concerns in interpreting these data, not least of which is the potential for desirability bias. Initially sanguine assessments of the Jan Sunwai in exit interviews held at the district headquarters could reflect respondents’ worry that a negative response could imperil their case if overheard by the police. While this possibility cannot be ruled out, there are several factors that lead me to believe that the responses are not systematically biased in this way. First, survey enumerators followed strict protocols that stressed the independence of the research from the police and the confidentiality of responses. Interviews took place in an external courtyard—not in any police building. Police officers were concentrated at one point in the courtyard at a registration desk. Hearing attendees were instructed to wait in a seating area located on

Table 3 Effects of Time on Satisfaction with Jan Sunwai

| | Level of Satisfaction (1 = Not at all, 2 = Not Very, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = Highly) |
|---|---|
| Follow up interview | -0.985*** (0.120) |
| Female | 0.200** (0.094) |
| Muslim | -0.200 (0.223) |
| Scheduled Caste | -0.080 (0.108) |
| Scheduled Tribe | 0.166 (0.140) |
| Education (years) | -0.025*** (0.009) |
| Direct to Jan Sunwai (no prior contact with thana) | 0.109 (0.091) |
| Observations | 306 |
| R-Squared | 0.238 |

Sources: Vindhya Jan Sunwai surveys 2017-18 (exit and follow-up interviews). Results from OLS regression, treating level of satisfaction (1-4) as the dependent variable. Independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether an observation was drawn from a follow-up interview. * = P ≤ 0.10, ** = P ≤ 0.05, *** = P ≤ 0.01. Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

the other side of the courtyard, at a distance from the officers that would ensure that conversations could not be audible—part of the police’s own effort to protect the confidentiality of the registration process. In addition, all respondents were offered the chance to hold their interview in a private room set aside for that purpose or, if they wished, to hold the interview at another location outside of the police complex—although no respondents availed of this option. The atmosphere within the police headquarters on the day of the Jan Sunwai, moreover, was one marked by the grievance redressal undertaking: participants had come with the express purpose of complaining to the police, and most did so vociferously with no visible indication that they were concerned with officers’ reactions.

Second, the data themselves do not appear to reflect desirability bias. If respondents at the Jan Sunwai were simply giving answers in exit interviews that they thought the police wanted to hear, we would expect to see a uniformly negative gap between these and the responses in follow-up interviews. And yet, as noted, a portion of the sample reports greater satisfaction with time. This suggests that follow-up responses are substantively driven by experiences with the police in the weeks following the Jan Sunwai and are not simply a downward revision of opinions expressed at a safe distance. Qualitative accounts (presented in the next sections) also strongly suggest that participants were revising their opinions of the Jan Sunwai in light of their lived experiences. While it is certainly possible that some felt at greater ease to complain in settings removed from police headquarters, respondents narrated in convincing terms the reasons why their expectations and assessments of the Jan Sunwai had changed.

An additional concern might emerge if individuals who consented to the follow-up interviews were systematically different from the full sample of those who participated in the exit interviews. Indeed, while the two samples were broadly balanced, those who completed the follow-up interviews were, on average, more likely to be male, less likely to be SC or ST, and had completed more years of school—all of which are potential markers of privilege (as is the fact that all had working phone numbers).³⁹ Given these differences, it is worth comparing the same individuals over time, restricting the sample to those who completed both the exit and follow-up interviews. The analysis here is necessarily limited, given the small sample size. Nonetheless, we are able to descriptively assess changes in satisfaction over time. The patterns remain consistent: of the forty-four matched individuals, thirty-two grew less satisfied, seven people reported no change, and five reported that they were more satisfied.

Is two to four weeks enough time to realistically expect action on a case? Most hearing attendees certainly thought so, in large part because of statements made to them at the Jan Sunwai. In exit interviews, participants were asked an open-ended question: “What actions did the officer take?” The most frequent response (from 38 percent) was that the SP had promised investigation, while another 4 percent said that an arrest was promised. One-third reported that their case had been referred to their thana, often with the SP calling their local station to arrange for their visit. 20 percent gave less precise responses that nonetheless indicated their perception that assistance was forthcoming,

for example: “The SP said he would help” or “The problem will get resolved.” In only 5 percent of cases did respondents reply that they were not promised any action.

The SP also expected action during this timeframe, as reflected in his own record keeping.⁴⁰ For each case, the SP made handwritten instructions during the Jan Sunwai, instructing the local thana personnel on how to follow the case. The SP then directed a dedicated officer from his staff to track the cases and, within the span of two weeks, to document the action taken. To be clear, the SP’s aim in this timeframe was not to fully resolve the cases (most of which are complex), but simply to “close” them for the purposes of Jan Sunwai tracking by ensuring appropriate follow up. Within two weeks of the original hearing, 38 percent of cases had a recorded action including: investigation, filing a report, making an arrest, referring a case to the courts, or referring a complainant to another government agency. The remainder (62 percent) had no noted action. Of these, 19 percent were marked as having “no grounds” for investigation, 8 percent were settled or withdrawn by the complainant, and the remaining 35 percent were left blank. Almost two-thirds of participants, in total, saw no movement on their cases by the time of their follow-up interviews—despite the promises and instructions of the SP at the time of their hearings.

Table 4 provides a consolidated picture of shifts in satisfaction over time alongside promised and recorded police action for the sub-sample of matched individuals who completed both exit and follow-up interviews and, for comparison, for the full sample (where data are available). Of the matched sub-sample, roughly two-thirds initially reported in intake surveys that they had sought help from their local thana prior to coming to the Jan Sunwai. Levels of satisfaction with these station visits remained very low (1.21 on the 4-point scale), as reported in follow-up interviews. In exit interviews directly after the Jan Sunwai, almost all reported that they were promised police action and expressed relatively high levels of satisfaction with their hearing experience (2.61 on the 4-point scale). However, a low proportion of cases (just over a third) actually saw police action (reported in the SP’s case records) before their follow-up interview, at which time satisfaction fell again to 1.65.

There was, in other words, a sharp disconnect for many participants between expectations generated at the Jan Sunwai and subsequent response by the police. In part, this disconnect highlights the subjectivity of the measures of satisfaction—which capture different things at different times. In exit interviews, participants were assessing the experience of the Jan Sunwai, including their interaction with the SP and other district police officers. Their assessments also reflected their expectation of future police action. In follow-up interviews, in contrast, they were assessing their experience since the Jan Sunwai, including police response and case outcomes. The assessment of the Jan Sunwai in exit interviews, in other words, is forward-looking, informed by expectations shaped during the hearing, while the assessment in the follow-up interviews is retrospective, informed by whether the police met those expectations.

The next two sections unpack these dynamics. Before proceeding, a caveat is in order: I am only able to document shifts between what I observed at the hearings and accounts given in follow-up interviews. I cannot assess the counterfactual of how

Table 4 Case Action and Satisfaction Over Time

| | Prior to Jan Sunwai | | | At Jan Sunwai | | | Following Jan Sunwai | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----|------|----|-------------|
| | Visited local thana ⁺ | Satisfaction with thana ⁺⁺⁺ | Police action promised ⁺⁺ | Satisfaction with JS ⁺⁺ | Police action following JS* | Satisfaction with JS ⁺⁺⁺ | n | % | n | % | n | mean |
| Full sample | 362 | 64.6 | 44 | 1.25 | 330 | 94.5 | 261 | 2.73 | 230 | 37.8 | 50 | 1.73 |
| Follow-up sample, matched individuals | 44 | 65.9 | 38 | 1.21 | 44 | 95.4 | 44 | 2.61 | 38 | 34.2 | 44 | 1.65 |

Satisfaction measured on a 4-point index, where 1 is not at all; 2 is not very; 3 is somewhat; and 4 is highly satisfied.
 Sources: + Vindhya Jan Sunwai intake survey (n = 362); ++ Vindhya Jan Sunwai exit interviews (n = 321); for responses on satisfaction, n = 261); +++ Vindhya Jan Sunwai follow-up interviews (n = 50); matched to exit interviews, n = 44); * MP Police Jan Sunwai case record, Vindhya district (n = 230, matched to author's surveys).

citizens faced with similar problems would have assessed the police had they not engaged in grievance redressal. Moreover, lacking data on citizens' a priori expectations, I cannot know for sure whether or how the experience of the Jan Sunwai altered their views. Some attendees may have already had high expectations (which drew them to the hearings in the first place), while others may have held low expectations but nonetheless decided to attend the hearings as an act of desperation. The research design does not allow me to disentangle these possibilities. I also do not know whether or how participants' expectations might shift again in the longer-term, beyond the two-to-four-week window captured in my data. I can, however, offer insight into how and why participants' assessments of the hearings changed in the short-run, by comparing statements in exit interviews to those in follow-up interviews. This gap, while it unfolds along a relatively short time horizon, offers revealing insights into the tipping points between hope and disillusionment.

Exceeding Expectations for the Most Marginalized

Initial assessments of the hearings were relatively positive across the board, regardless of demographic features such as sex, caste, religion, and level of education.⁴¹ However, female attendees were 24 percent more likely than male attendees to state in exit interviews that they were at least partially satisfied ($p = 0.010$).⁴² Similarly, ST attendees were 38 percent more likely than those of any other social background to express at least a degree of satisfaction ($p = 0.003$),⁴³ while those from Scheduled Castes were twice as likely as all others to state they were "highly" satisfied ($p = 0.093$).⁴⁴

These patterns are, at first glance, counterintuitive, since these same groups—women and members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes—are often among the most underprivileged in India. They are, moreover, groups that, given restricted mobility on the basis of gender and histories of exclusion on the basis of caste, often face high barriers in gaining access to public officials. And yet, the relatively positive assessments by women and by SC and ST attendees suggest that these groups may have found a receptive audience at the district-level Jan Sunwai. This is consistent with an expressed commitment among senior officers at the Jan Sunwai to act with particular sensitivity towards traditionally marginalized groups. Women's security has received considerable attention by senior officers, in part as a response to media portrayals of MP as one of the most unsafe places for women in India.⁴⁵ All districts have dedicated officers for Crimes Against Women (CAW), and it was not uncommon in the course of the Jan Sunwai to see the SP call on this CAW officer to handle a case. The SP of Vindhya, moreover, was particularly attuned to women's issues and was, at the time of research, in the process of establishing a one-stop crisis center for women—one of the first of its kind in the state. The SP also assigned two of his highest performing senior officers—both women—to weekly Jan Sunwai duty. These officers had undergone additional gender sensitivity training and were also involved with running the crisis center. They were thus particularly well positioned to respond to women's grievances at the Jan Sunwai. The

responsiveness of these district officials stands out in contrast to patterns of neglect or deterrence at the local thana level, where it is infamously difficult for women to gain attention let alone register cases.⁴⁶

Senior police officials also receive training and directives to respond with care to members of historically marginalized castes, who are afforded extra protection under the law. While the same training is passed down through police ranks, the messaging and oversight are considerably diluted at the thana level. The SP, for example, emphasized the importance of the 1989 Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in shaping the behavior of senior police officers, while worrying that it has less resonance at lower levels of policing: “By law we are required to treat SC and ST cases with the utmost care: this is drilled into officers in training. Although this reaches the thana much less.”⁴⁷

In sum, higher-level officers appear more likely to pay particular attention to traditionally marginalized groups of citizens, compared to rank-and-file officers at the local level. This suggests that the ability to level-hop to senior district officials at the Jan Sunwai may be of particular importance to those who are frequently underserved by frontline officers.⁴⁸ By bringing their cases to the Jan Sunwai, participants attempt to “bypass the morass of local bureaucracy.”⁴⁹ This ability to circumvent or escalate beyond the local level is particularly critical to citizens who have been “blocked”—denied assistance or otherwise deterred—by frontline officials.⁵⁰ Interactions with officials at the Jan Sunwai, in turn, shape participants’ expectations of police responsiveness.

To know whether those expectations are met, we must turn to the follow-up interviews. Table 5 illustrates the shift in satisfaction, examining the forty-four matched individuals for whom complete data are available.⁵¹ While most participants downgraded their assessments of the Jan Sunwai, a minority (11 percent) gave more enthusiastic accounts. Notably, women—who make up just 38 percent of the follow-up sample—accounted for 80 percent (four out of five) of the cases in which satisfaction levels improved. While the small sample requires cautious interpretation, difference-in-means testing also suggests that satisfaction was most likely to rise among those who came to the Jan Sunwai because of a gender-based issue.⁵² When the case involved a crime against women, respondents were more than 2.5 times more likely than all others

Table 5 Change in Satisfaction from Exit to Follow-Up Interview

| | N | Worsened (n) | No Change (n) | Improved (n) |
|--------------------------|----|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| All follow-up interviews | 44 | 32 | 7 | 5 |
| Male | 27 | 21 | 5 | 1 |
| Female | 17 | 11 | 2 | 4 |
| Scheduled Caste (SC) | 10 | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| Scheduled Tribe (ST) | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Zero education | 12 | 5 | 5 | 2 |
| Higher education | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

Source: Vindhya Jan Sunwai surveys 2017-18, exit and follow-up interviews (matched individuals).

to state that they were “highly” satisfied ($p = 0.002$), and were 1.5 times less likely to be “not at all” satisfied ($p = 0.004$). The same is true of respondents reporting “grievous” crimes involving bodily harm, who were 1.25 times more likely than all others to state that they were “highly satisfied” ($p = 0.053$).

These positive assessments of the Jan Sunwai, weeks later in follow-up interviews, by those affected by crimes against women and other serious crimes suggest that senior district officials were not only sensitive at the time of the hearings, but that they followed through—drawing, in the case of CAW, on dedicated officers and resources. For example, a woman who came to the Jan Sunwai to complain of abuse at the hands of her husband and in-laws reported that she had attempted to file complaints at her local station for over three years. The police at her thana referred her to a lawyer, but, she said, did nothing about her husband. That lawyer told her about the Jan Sunwai. In her exit interview, she was cautious in her optimism, replying that she was “somewhat satisfied.” Later, during the follow-up interview, she replied that she was now “very satisfied,” since a report had been filed against her husband by the district CAW officer just one week after her Jan Sunwai hearing.⁵³

In another case involving alleged abuse, a woman reported that she had long wanted to file a report against her in-laws, but was prevented from doing so since her in-laws “threatened to abuse me more if I took the step to go to the thana.” The women subsequently left her home, returning to her father’s house. She then she decided to visit the Jan Sunwai, since she felt she could not approach her thana for fear of her in-laws. In her follow-up interview, she reported that she had been directed to speak with the district CAW officer and was “highly” satisfied with the response: eight days after the Jan Sunwai, she received a phone call from the thana informing her that they were filing a case against her in-laws.⁵⁴

In both of these cases, the women involved had difficulty accessing justice through their local police station but found redress by level-hopping. In the first instance, the woman visited her local station to no avail before escalating to the Jan Sunwai. In the second, the woman circumvented the local station altogether out of fear of reprisals. Qualitative accounts suggest that similar behaviors are widespread among women and may also extend to others who, for a range of reasons, felt that they could not approach their local police stations or that they would not receive fair treatment if they did so. In one interview, for example, a Scheduled Caste man reported that he came to the Jan Sunwai because the thana itself was part of his problem. He complained that he had been beaten by the TI (station head) and forced to sign a false confession. As a result, he felt he could no longer go to his thana: “The TI is highly corrupt. . . . They [the people who were bringing the case] and the TI belong to the same *jati* (caste), and so they have colluded.” He thus saw the Jan Sunwai as his only option for fighting the case, noting that the TI had only agreed to initiate investigation after a phone call from the SP. In his follow-up interview, he stated: “We are thankful to the SP. . . . He is not like the other government people who only help their caste members, or the wealthy and *neta log* (politicians).”⁵⁵

Crucially, the initially positive experience of attending the Jan Sunwai in all these cases was reinforced by police action after the hearing, directed by senior officers. These examples thus highlight the potential of grievance redressal mechanisms at their best:

where the act of listening to aggrieved citizens is coupled with bureaucratic commitment, resources, and effective action, citizens' grievances are diminished, and their satisfaction enhanced.

Unmet Expectations

If the preceding accounts illustrate the promise of grievance redressal, others reveal its peril. As we have seen, most participants (73 percent) downwardly revised their appraisal of the Jan Sunwai in the weeks following their hearings. This, I argue, was not simply a matter of participants feeling disappointed when their problems were not resolved. Instead, that disappointment was accentuated by high expectations generated in the Jan Sunwai hearings; satisfaction levels quickly soured when participants' expectations were not met with adequate follow-through. This section draws on qualitative interviews to illustrate this expectations gap, which rests upon a combination of hopes raised at the hearings; limited resources and capacity of the local police; and public confusion about police mandates.

The relationship between participants' initial and later assessments of the Jan Sunwai is complex, reflecting, in the first instance, their satisfaction with interactions at the hearing and, in the second, their satisfaction with the hearing's outcomes. And yet one does not necessarily follow from the other, particularly when the hearing is held by senior officials but follow-through is carried out by local officers. Case outcomes are shaped by any number of intervening variables, from the nature and complexity of the case itself, to the behavior of third parties involved in the complaint, to the will and capacity of frontline officers. There are thus many factors that may influence respondents' satisfaction weeks after the Jan Sunwai. Positive initial assessments of the experience of the Jan Sunwai, thus, cannot be said to simply cause subsequent (dis)satisfaction. However, initial satisfaction does play a conditioning role, by priming participants to expect action (or not).

Qualitative accounts suggest three interconnected factors that shape participants' initial expectations and subsequent disillusionment. A first factor centers on a politics of dignity that are at play in the Jan Sunwai. To voice a complaint, and to be treated with courtesy when doing so (to be asked to sit in the presence of a senior officer, for example), instilled for many a sense not only of being seen, but of their status as citizens.⁵⁶ Simply being heard by a senior official thus provoked a sense of public recognition often lacking in other encounters with the state. This sense of recognition, in turn, instilled in Jan Sunwai participants a sense of efficacy—that is, the expectation that one's complaint would be heard and that the police would respond. For example, a man (embroiled in a dispute with a neighbor) reflected on his hearing experience, noting that: "The officials talk very nicely. They talk with affection. We are treated justly." As a result, he explained, "I was hopeful that something would be done." And yet, this sense of efficacy was often short-lived. The same man recounted that, following the Jan Sunwai, "The [local] beat officer came and [spoke to] both parties. That is it. We think

that the police help, but it is only words. The police do not listen to decent men. . . . Later I came to realize: it [The Jan Sunwai] is all stupidity.”⁵⁷ The complainant’s disappointment was all the more pronounced when dealing with the local thana, where officers did not respond with the same level of attention. Positive interactions with senior officials, in other words, served to highlight the lack of responsiveness at the local level.⁵⁸

A second and closely related source of disillusionment stems from a police capacity gap—in particular between the district police and local police stations. Almost all cases heard at the Jan Sunwai are subsequently referred to a local thana. This is by design: by allowing level-hopping to the SP, the aim is to increase senior officers’ knowledge of frontline performance and to then direct local officers. However, this design assumes that local officers both can and will respond to oversight, and to the admonitions of senior officers. While this is sometimes true, in many instances a local officer does not have the time or resources to respond—a fact that is rarely understood by the public. One local station officer, for example, complained about the lack of capacity to investigate cases referred by the SP, noting, “We do not even have petrol for our cars or bikes. How can we run every which way?”⁵⁹

In other instances, local officers may not have the will or incentives to respond. The Superintendent noted his own concern over these dynamics: “I fear that the thana officers resent the Jan Sunwai. I call them up and I am hard on them. I have to be. But then they are left with the work to do, so how are they feeling in the end? They are feeling badly.”⁶⁰ The Jan Sunwai, in sum, provides an opportunity for citizens to air their grievances to senior officials, while actual redress of those grievances requires local capacity and commitment, both of which are often lacking.

Disillusionment is compounded by a third factor: an inflated sense among complainants of police authority. Here, the issue is not simply police capacity, but rather their legal mandates. The police, as an institution, are caught in a bind; because of their perceived public authority, people come to the police with a wide range of issues, some of which do not fall fully, if at all, under policing mandates. These cases are of two types. First, there are those that involve a legal dispute that must be resolved in the courts. In such cases, the police are an appropriate first port of call, since a police report is required to initiate legal investigation and to build a case. But, once referred to the courts, the police no longer play a role—something that appeared to escape the grasp of hearing attendees who came to complain about cases left lingering in the courts. A senior official in the MP police lamented these dynamics, stating, “We are just a link in the chain in a choked criminal justice system.”⁶¹

The second type of cases are those that fall squarely beyond police mandates. Citizens came to the Jan Sunwai, for example, to complain about garbage collection or about the condition of roads—issues that fall under the remit of the District Collectorate (which, notably, was located in the same complex as the district police headquarters). As the SP noted, “People see the police as effective, so they come to us with all issues and problems. Even cleaning the streets. And if we clean the streets as a public service,

then people come to think: the police only should do this work. But how can we take on all these tasks?"⁶²

And yet, citizens' confusion about police mandates is only one part of the difficulty, which is compounded by a failure on the part of senior officers to manage public expectations. Few individuals were told at the time of their hearings that there was likely nothing the police could do to assist them. Instead, almost all were given the impression that something would be done (often through mollifying statements by the SP, such as: "Let us see"). The Superintendent explained, "If someone has come all this way, spent their money, missed their meals, how can I just send them away again, without first listening? At least they will come and feel heard."⁶³ In his eagerness to make sure everyone felt heard, the Superintendent may have inadvertently raised expectations for some for whom the trip to the Jan Sunwai was little more than a fool's errand. Under these conditions, high expectations generate high grievances.

In sum, satisfaction with the Jan Sunwai and its proceedings is conditioned by attendees' expectations and by police capacity. Where the performance of senior officers exceeds citizens' (often very low) expectations of local policing, confidence in the Jan Sunwai is bolstered and subsequently reinforced by strong police action. The reverse is also true: if expectations formed at the Jan Sunwai are not coupled with adequate follow-through, disillusionment ensues.

Conclusion

Public acts of complaining by citizens are a critical but fraught form of participation. They are acts of bravery (asserting oneself in the public sphere) and of aspiration (expressing needs and interests). They are also expectant acts, which imply a sense of entitlement and of personal and political efficacy. However, when coupled with an expectations gap, complaining may serve to sharpen a sense of disillusionment. This occurs as the formal articulation of a complaint gives shape, meaning, and precision to a grievance.⁶⁴ When nothing or little is done, that grievance not only lingers but may be magnified.

These patterns are observed in Vindhya district—which I have argued is a most likely setting for effective grievance redressal given the commitment to the Jan Sunwai on the part of the Superintendent of Police. Further research is required to probe whether patterns might vary under different political conditions. On the one hand, the most-likely case selection might suggest that we should be even more circumspect about the effects of the Jan Sunwai in districts where it is less robustly implemented. On the other hand, the vigor with which the Vindhya SP approached the Jan Sunwai may have served to inflate expectations. If so, the very level of SP commitment upon which I initially designated Vindhya as a "most likely" case may, in fact, have undermined citizens' satisfaction with the Jan Sunwai in light of an expectations gap. This, again, suggests that effective grievance redressal efforts require attention both to citizens' expectations

(and how to manage them) and, crucially, to investments in the capacity and commitment of frontline officials, who ultimately carry out acts of redress.

Further research is also required to examine whether similar dynamics unfold in sectors beyond policing. Policing, as a crucible of citizen-state relations, is a particularly critical arena in which to investigate the Jan Sunwai. Citizens' experiences with the police inform their understanding of justice and the broader legal system,⁶⁵ as well as their expectations of and willingness to engage with other parts of government.⁶⁶ And yet the police are exceptional, both in their exercise of violence and in their perceived authority in the eyes of the public. The stakes of complaining to the police thus may be exceptionally high, as are citizens' expectations regarding the police's problem-solving capacities. Those high stakes and expectations may contribute to deeper disillusionment if complaints yield little in the way of results.

From a policy perspective, these findings should temper—but not extinguish—global enthusiasm for grievance redressal mechanisms. Participants' high expectations at the time of the Jan Sunwai, and their anger when those expectations were unmet, are important indicators of citizens' hunger for spaces in which officials hear and respond to their complaints. Moreover, the levels of satisfaction expressed in follow-up interviews by those dealing with crimes against women, which received particular attention and dedicated resources, indicate the potential for grievance hearings—when coupled with bureaucratic commitment—to serve as a channel to justice for some of the most marginalized. This occurs primarily through level-hopping, enabling those blocked or deterred at the local level to engage higher authorities. Level-hopping opens a critical channel for citizen voice; but voice without teeth is empty, and complaints to higher officials can be damaging to citizen-state relations if they result in promises that are disconnected from frontline realities. Grievance redressal mechanisms thus cannot serve as stand-alone institutions, but must be coupled with serious efforts at capacity building, particularly at local levels where frontline officials often lack the resources, training, or incentives to respond.

NOTES

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1. Author's Jan Sunwai observation, July 24, 2017.

2. While officials in India are often described as dismissive towards citizens, there is substantial variation in bureaucratic behavior. See, for example, Aditya Dasgupta and Devesh Kapur, "The Political Economy of Bureaucratic Overload: Evidence from Rural Development Officials in India," *American Political Science Review*, 114 (November 2020), 1316–34.

3. Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, *Status of Policing in India Report 2018: A Study of Performance and Perceptions* (New Delhi: CSDS, 2018).
4. World Bank, *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2017); Varun Gauri, *Redressing Grievances and Complaints Regarding Basic Service Delivery* (Washington, DC: The World Bank Group, 2011).
5. World Justice Project, *Rule of Law Index 2019*. (Washington, DC: World Justice Project 2019).
6. Ruth Lister, "Citizen in Action: Citizenship and Community Development in a Northern Ireland Context," *Community Development Journal*, 33 (July 1998), 228.
7. Nicholas Robinson, "Closing the Implementation Gap: Grievance Redress and India's Social Welfare Programs," *Colombia Journal of Transnational Law*, 53 (2014), 321–62.
8. Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner, *Claiming the State: Active Citizenship and Social Welfare in Rural India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
9. Naomi Hossain, "Rude Accountability: Informal Pressures on Frontline Bureaucrats in Bangladesh," *Development and Change*, 41 (September 2010), 907–28.
10. See the Centralized Public Redress and Monitoring System, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Government of India, <https://pgportal.gov.in/>.
11. Robinson; Jennifer Bussell, *Corruption and Reform in India: Public Services in the Digital Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
12. Madhya Pradesh Government, Serial/f11-29 /200 9/1/9, June 30, 2009.
13. Madhya Pradesh Government, Department of Public Relations, "Good Governance Restores People's Faith in System," August 14, 2011, <https://www.mpinfo.org/mpinfo/new/english/articles/2011/140811lekhbg02.asp>.
14. World Bank, *Making Services Work for the Poor* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2004).
15. Robinson, 361.
16. Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Routledge, 1948), 78–128.
17. Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey, *The Common Place of Law: Stories from Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
18. Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public service* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1980); Joe Soss and Vesla Weaver, "Police Are Our Government," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20 (May 2017), 565–91.
19. Magda Boutros, "A Multidimensional View of Legal Cynicism: Perceptions of the Police Among Anti-Harassment Teams in Egypt," *Law & Society Review*, 52 (June 2018), 368–400; Tom Tyler, "Procedural Justice, Legitimacy, and the Effective Rule of Law," *Crime and Justice*, 30 (2003), 283–57; Tony Cheng and Shelley Liu, "Service Cynicism: How Civic Disengagement Develops," *Politics & Society*, 46 (March 2018), 101–29.
20. David H. Bayley, *Police and Political Development in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); Arvind Verma, "The Police in India: Design, Performance, and Adaptability," in Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, eds., *Public Institutions in India: Performance and Design* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 194–58; Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
21. Beatrice Jauregui, *Provisional Authority: Police, Order, and Security in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Tariq Thachil, "Does Police Repression Spur Everyday Cooperation? Evidence from Urban India," *Journal of Politics*, 82 (October 2020), 1474–89.
22. Jauregui.
23. CSDS, 42.
24. CSDS, 55.
25. Government of India, National Crime Records Bureau, 2016. These are raw numbers; adjusted for population, MP had the third highest crime rate.
26. CSDS, 43.
27. Akshay Mangla and Vineet Kapoor, "Policing and Public Health: State Capacity on the Front Lines of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *India in Transition*, University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Advanced Study of India, May 4, 2020, <https://casi.sas.upenn.edu/it/manglakapoor>.
28. The district name has been changed to maintain the anonymity of its officials. Vindhya is the name of a mountain range and plateau in this region of India.
29. Nationally, there are 1.2 officers per 1,000 people in India. The United States, for comparison, has 2.3 police officers per 1000 people, according to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime.

30. John Gerring, "Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?," *Comparative Political Studies*, 40 (March 2007), 231–53.

31. See the online appendix (A) for a description of survey and interview methodologies and for copies of the instruments employed. Due to space constraints, the Appendix is not in the print version of this article. It can be viewed in the online version, at <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/cuny/cp>.

32. Of those who did not consent, fifteen refused the interview. Another twenty-three observations are missing since enumerators could not catch the respondent before they left.

33. The SP's Jan Sunwai case tracking system was made available for three months of the study. Of the 279 participants surveyed during that time, I was able to link the district data for 230 (a match rate of 83 percent).

34. This multidistrict citizen survey on policing is described in the online appendix (A.4), and was designed as part of largescale study of gender and policing in Madhya Pradesh, detailed in Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner, Akshay Mangla, and Sandip Sukhtankar, "Engendering Policing: Evaluating Reforms to Increase Women's Access to Security and Justice," AEA RCT Registry (June 2020).

35. The SCs are castes and the STs are tribes recognized in the Constitution of India as historically marginalized.

36. All quotes in this section are from open-ended questions in the Jan Sunwai survey.

37. Of the fifty follow-up interviews, six could not be matched because of missing data in the exit interviews.

38. The results from an ordered logit regression, presented in the online appendix (Table B.1), are broadly similar: there is a significant decline in level of satisfaction over time; female respondents are significantly more likely to express a degree of satisfaction than men; while years of education are negatively and significantly associated with satisfaction.

39. Balance of characteristics between the full set of Jan Sunwai survey respondents and those who participated in follow-up interviews is presented in the online appendix (Table B.2).

40. Descriptive statistics on SP instructions and police action, which were made available for 60 percent of the cases in the sample, are presented in the online appendix (Table B.3).

41. See Table B.4 in the online appendix for a description of levels of satisfaction reported in exit interviews, sorted by demographic features including sex, caste, religion, and education.

42. Results from a two-sample test, comparing the proportion of women (80 percent) to the proportion of men (64 percent) who reported being either "somewhat" or "highly" satisfied.

43. Results from a two-sample test, comparing the proportion of ST respondents (91 percent) to the proportion of the remaining sample (66 percent) that reported being "somewhat" or "highly" satisfied.

44. There is no significant difference in the proportion of SC respondents expressing satisfaction in binary terms compared to other caste groups (two-sample test of proportions, $p = 0.172$).

45. MP had the highest rate of registered rapes in 2016, according to the National Crime Record Bureau.

46. Nirvikar Jassal, "Gender, Law Enforcement, and Access to Justice: Evidence from All-Women Police Stations in India," *American Political Science Review*, 114 (November 2020), 1035–54; Human Rights Watch, *Everyone Blames Me: Barriers to Justice and Support Systems for Sexual Assault Survivors in India* (Washington, DC: HRW, 2017).

47. Author interview with SP, October 1, 2019.

48. Notably, the same dynamics do not appear to extend to Muslims—a religious minority with a history of marginalization but without special legal protection, who were significantly more likely than other religious groups to express dissatisfaction with their experience at the Jan Sunwai. These results, though, must be interpreted with caution given the small number of Muslim attendees and hence small sample size.

49. Robinson, 347.

50. This is consistent with patterns of politician constituency service in India, where citizens who have been denied assistance locally are more likely to turn to higher level politicians, as described in Jennifer Bussell, *Clients and Constituents: Political Responsiveness in Patronage Democracies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

51. For descriptive statistics on satisfaction in follow-up interviews, see the online Appendix (Table B.5).

52. Results in this section are derived from two-sample tests of proportion comparing the responses of different groups in follow-up interviews, presented in the online appendix (Table B.5).

53. Interview 2018010928, January 28, 2018.

54. Interview 2018012312, February 11, 2018.

55. Interview 2018011605, February 1, 2018.

56. Vijayendra Rao and Paromita Sanyal, "Dignity Through Discourse: Poverty and the Culture of Deliberation in Indian Village Democracies," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 629 (May 2010), 146–72.
57. Interview 2018010915, January 24, 2018.
58. In a similar dynamic, researchers found that citizens in Liberia, once exposed to an elite unit of police trained in community engagement, grew more dissatisfied with the regular police force since this exposure "raised expectations beyond the ordinary [officers'] capacity to meet them." Robert Blair, Sabrina Karim, and Benjamin Morse, "Establishing the Rule of Law in Weak and War-Torn States: Evidence from a Field Experiment with the Liberian National Police," *American Political Science Review*, 113 (August 2019), 644.
59. Author interview in Vindhya thana, December 14, 2017.
60. Author interview with SP, December 12, 2017.
61. Author interview, MP Police Headquarters, December 18, 2019.
62. Author interview with SP, December 12, 2017.
63. Author interview with SP, December 12, 2017.
64. Whitney Taylor, "On the Social Construction of Legal Grievances: Evidence from Colombia and South Africa," *Comparative Political Studies*, 53 (July 2020), 1326–56.
65. Tyler.
66. Cheng and Liu.

APPENDIX

Appendix A.1. Rapid Survey at Jan Sunwai, “Vindhya”¹ District, Madhya Pradesh²

ORAL INFORMED CONSENT (Read card)

Do you agree to participate in the interview? 1. Yes 0. No → End survey

Would you like to move to a private room, or to hold the interview at a different time and location?

1. No (Ok to proceed)

2. Yes (private room)

3. Yes, new time and location

If 3, Specify: _____

If consent given, the following section is to be filled out by the survey enumerator.

“I attest that I have read the above introduction and informed consent to participate, and have handed the consent information sheet to the respondent. I have given the respondent a chance to ask questions. The respondent understand the procedures, the risks and benefits, and is willing to proceed.”

| Enumerator's name | Enumerator's signature | Date |
|--|--|--|
| Who presided over the Jan Sunwai? 1. <input type="checkbox"/> SP 2. <input type="checkbox"/> ASP 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Other; Specify _____ Did the respondent arrive after the Jan Sunwai registration? 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 0. <input type="checkbox"/> No | | |
| A.1 | Type of case If 1 – 9, additional consent: “You mentioned that the case that brings you here involves something that would be classified a Crime Against Women. I want to pause to ask you again if you are comfortable proceeding. Remember that we will do everything we can do protect your privacy, but there is always a chance that someone will find out about our conversation. Do you have any concerns for your safety that could be worsened by participating in this interview? If so, we will stop right now.” | (Multi-coding; see codes below, include up to 3) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. <input type="checkbox"/> If 23 (Other), specify: _____ If 1 – 9 (codes related to Crimes Against Women), read additional consent Do you wish to continue the interview? 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 0. <input type="checkbox"/> No → End survey Do you wish to move to a private room 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 0. <input type="checkbox"/> No Do you hold the interview at a different time and location? 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 0. <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| A.2 | Without providing the particulars, can you tell me very basically about the problem or issue that brings you here today? What assistance do you need/want from the police? | (Description, 2-3 sentences:) |

¹ The district name has been changed to maintain the anonymity of its officials. Vindhya is the name of a mountain range and plateau in this region of India.

² Hindi versions of all survey instruments are available on request.

| | | |
|------|--|--|
| A.3 | Have you come to the Jan Sunwai before? | 1.[] Yes 0.[] No → skip to A.6 |
| A.4 | If yes, was it for this same case? | 1.[] Same case 0.[] Another case → skip to A.6 If 1, enter date of prior Jan Sunwai: _____ If 1, have we interviewed you before? 1.[] Yes 0.[] No |
| A.5 | If same case, why have you returned today? | (Description, 2-3 sentences) |
| A.6 | Before coming here , did you take any steps to try to solve this complaint? | 1.[] Yes 0.[] No → skip to A.12 |
| A.7 | Before coming here , did you contact your local thana about this issue? | 1.[] Yes 0.[] No → skip to A.10 |
| A.8 | If yes, what steps were taken? | Multi-coding (check all that apply) 1.[] FIR 2.[] NCR 3.[] Counselling 4.[] Referral to another thana _____ 5.[] Referral to another agency _____ 6.[] Other _____ 0.[] Nothing (Notes): |
| A.9 | If FIR filed, what is the status of the case? | Multi-coding (check all that apply); If no FIR filed, skip to A.10 1.[] FIR registered 2.[] Accused arrested 3.[] Challan 4.[] Challan sent to court 5.[] Case in court 6.[] Khariji 7.[] Khatma 8.[] Other _____ |
| A.10 | Before today , did you contact any other government agency, besides the police, about this issue? | 1.[] Yes; Specify: _____ 0.[] No |
| A.11 | Before today , did you contact any other person (in government or not) for help with this issue? | 1.[] Yes; Specify: _____ 0.[] No |
| A.12 | How did you first come to know about the Jan Sunwai? | Multi-coding (check all that apply) 1.[] Relatives 2.[] Neighbours 3.[] Friends 4.[] Panchayat/sarpanch 5.[] Police Station 6.[] Newspaper 7.[] TV 8.[] Lawyer 9.[] Collector's office 10.[] Other (Specify): _____ |
| A.13 | Why did you come to the Jan Sunwai today ? | (Open response, 2-3 sentences) |

| | | |
|------|---|---|
| A.14 | When you came here today , did an officer contact your local thana when registering your case? | 1.[] Yes 0.[] No |
| A.15 | How long did it take you to reach here today? | ____ Hours ____ Minutes |
| A.16 | How did you travel to reach here today? | Multi-coding (check all that apply) 1.[] Car 2.[] Bus 3.[] Taxi 4.[] Cycle 5.[] Auto 6.[] Motorcycle 7.[] Train 8.[] On foot 9. Other (Specify) |
| A.17 | How much did you spend for the Jan Sunwai? | A. Travel: ____ (Rs.) B. Documentation/legal ____ (Rs.) C. Other ____ (Rs.) |
| A.18 | Have you lost/missed any wages or other income in coming here today? | 1.[] Yes; Specify: ____ (Rs.) 0.[] No |
| A.19 | Gender | 0.[] Female 1.[] Male 2.[] Other |
| A.20 | Caste/Tribe | Name: _____ 1.[] SC 2.[] ST 3.[] General 4.[] OBC 5.[] Muslim OBC 6.[] Muslim GC |
| A.21 | Religion | 1.[] Hindu 2.[] Muslim 3.[] Sikh 4.[] Christian 5.[] Other _____ |
| A.22 | Occupation (of main income earners in respondent's household) | 1. ____ 2. ____ 3. ____ (Multi-coding; see codes below, include up to 3) If 21 (Other), specify _____ |
| A.23 | Years of education | ____ Years |
| A.24 | Does you or your family own a motor vehicle? | 0.[] No If Yes, Specify (Multi-coding, check all that apply and note how many) 1.[] 2-wheeler 2.[] 3-wheeler 3.[] 4-wheeler 4.[] Bicycle ____ Number ____ Number ____ Number ____ Number |

Thank you for participating. My colleague will ask you some very quick additional questions on your way out after the Jan Sunwai.

Appendix

General codes: Don't know – (-77); Refused to answer – (-99); Missing data – (-55); Not applicable (-44)

| Codes for question A.1 | Codes for question A.22 |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. CAW – female foeticide | 1. Agriculture: own fields कृषि-खुद का खेत |
| 2. CAW – sex discrimination | 2. Agriculture: other fields कृषि- किसी और का खेत |
| 3. CAW – domestic violence | 3. Manufacturing/ factory work उत्पादन/ फैक्ट्री में काम |
| 4. CAW – dowry | 4. Repair work मरम्मत का काम |
| 5. CAW – child marriage | 5. Street vendor सड़क के किनारे सामान का विक्रेता |
| 6. CAW – rape | 6. Driver चालक |
| 7. CAW – eve teasing | 7. Goods transport माल परिवहन |
| 8. CAW – human trafficking | 8. Education (Teacher, school worker) शिक्षा |
| 9. CAW – forced prostitution | 9. Anganwadi/ ASHA अंगनवादी/ आशा |
| 10. Property – Land dispute | 10. Healthcare स्वास्थ्य सेवा |
| 11. Property – Dacoity | 11. NREGS (Rozgar Guarantee) (रोज़गार गारंटी) |
| 12. Property – Robbery | 12. Midday meals/ To cook meals at a school मिडडे मील/ स्कूल में खाना बनाना |
| 13. Property – Theft | 13. Government work excluding NREGS (Rozgar Guarantee) शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य को छोड़कर सरकारी काम |
| 14. Body – Murder | 14. At-home production (handicrafts, beedi, food) घर पे काम (बीड़ी, खाने का, शिल्प कला) |
| 15. Body – Abduction | 15. Domestic work outside of home घर के बाहर घरेलू काम |
| 16. Body – Missing person | 16. Retail sector खुदरा क्षेत्र |
| 17. Body – Threat | 17. Hospitality आतिथ्य संस्कार |
| 18. Bodily harm | 18. Security guard सुरक्षा कर्मी |
| 19. Family dispute | 19. Finance वित्त |
| 20. CAW – Maintenance/ Bharan Poshan | 20. Daily wage labourer |
| 21. Money related issues | 21. Other (please specify) अन्य (कृपया स्पष्ट करें) |
| 22. Dispute with neighbours | 22. Unemployed |
| 23. Other | 23. Student |
| | 24. Housewife |

Appendix A.2. Rapid Exit Interview at Jan Sunwai, Vindhya District

Survey status: 1. [] Completed 2. [] Refused 3. [] Missed

Whom did the respondent meet for the Jan Sunwai? 1. [] SP 2. [] Additional SP 3. [] DSP CAW 4. [] Other; Specify _____

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| B.1 | What actions did the police officer take (if any) regarding your case? What directions did he give you? | |
| B.2 | Did he make any phone calls? | 1.[] Yes 0.[] No → Skip to B.4 |
| B.3 | If yes, to whom? | 1.[] SHO 2.[] SDOP 3.[] Other; Specify _____ |
| B.4 | How do you feel about your experience here at the Jan Sunwai today? | (Open response, 2-3 sentences:) |
| B.5 | How satisfied are you with the Jan Sunwai today? | 1.[] Highly satisfied 2.[] Satisfied 3. [] Not satisfied 4. [] Highly dissatisfied |

Appendix A.3. Follow-up Interview Guide and Survey, Vindhya District

ORAL INFORMED CONSENT (Read card)

Do you agree to participate in the interview? 1. [] YES 0. [] NO → End interview

If Yes, the following is to be filled out by the survey enumerator.

"I attest that I have read the above introduction and informed consent to participate, and have handed the consent information sheet to the respondent. I have given the respondent a chance to ask questions. The respondent understands the procedures, the risks and benefits, and is willing to proceed."

Enumerator's Name

Enumerator's signature

Date

It would be helpful to me if I could audio record our conversation today, to enable me to write better notes later on. I will delete the recording as soon as I have completed my notes, and no copy will be retained.

Do you agree to let me record the interview? 1. [] YES 0. [] NO

ADDITIONAL INFORMED CONSENT FOR CASES INVOLVING CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

Note to interviewer: if the rapid survey from the Jan Sunwai indicates a case of Crimes Against Women (CODE 1-9 in question A.1), you must read and discuss this additional oral informed consent.

You mentioned previously that the case that brought you to the Jan Sunwai involves something that would be classified a Crime Against Women. I want to pause the interview to ask you again if you are comfortable proceeding. If you Remember that we will do everything we can do protect your privacy and confidentiality, but there is always a chance that someone will find out about our conversation. Do you have any concerns for your personal safety that could be worsened by participating in this interview? If so, we will stop right now.

Do you wish to continue the interview? 1. [] Yes 0. [] No → End survey

Do you wish to move to a private room or location? 1. [] Yes 0. [] No

Do you wish hold the interview at a time? 1. [] Yes 0. [] No

Part A SEMI-CLOSED QUESTIONNAIRE, QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JAN SUNWAI

| | |
|--|--|
| Date of follow up interview (Should be at least 2 weeks since JS) | |
| Interviewer's name | |
| Date of JS attendance | |
| MPP Registration number | |
| MPP Complain number | |

1. **What was the recent issue that brought you most recently to the Jan Sunwai at the district Superintendent of Police's office on (date)?** (Open response. Ask follow up questions to flesh out as much detail as possible. The aim here is to flesh out the issue/case/ as well as what assistance the respondent hoped to receive from MPP.)

Coding of issues (Multi-coding; see codes below, include up to 3; refer to codes in JS survey part A)

- a. |__|__| b. |__|__| c. |__|__| If 23 (Other), specify:

2. **Before attending that Jan Sunwai, what else did you do to try to address the issue/problem?**
(Open response first, then follow up questions)

- a. Had you attended another Jan Sunwai previously? 1. Yes 0. No

If so, on what date? _____

Why did you attend more than once?

- b. Did you contact your local thana? 1. Yes 0. No → Skip to question 2.e

- c. If so, what happened at the thana? (Check all that apply, flesh out and describe in notes)

1. Give you anything in writing? 2. File any report? (FIR? NCR?)
 3. Referred you to another thana? 4. Referred you to counseling
 5. Refer you anywhere else? If so, Specify:
 6. Take other action? If so, Specify:

- d. How satisfied were you with the thana's response/actions? Why?

1. Highly satisfied 2. Somewhat satisfied 3. Not very satisfied 4. Highly dissatisfied

- e. Did you contact anyone not in the police, either for help in trying to solve the problem or for help approaching or following up with the police? If so, who? What happened?

(Ask as an open ended question, then follow with categories. Check all that apply, and describe in notes)

1. A lawyer or any kind of legal assistance?
 2. Local government representatives? (e.g. Gram Panchayat members)
 3. Other government officials? (e.g. block or district officials)
 4. Anyone from a political party? (e.g. MLA, party workers, political candidates)
 5. Brokers or fixers? (e.g. Bichauliya log, Dalaal, Naya Neta)
 6. Other influential people (e.g. traditional leaders or elders, caste or religious leaders)
 7. NGO staff or social movement leaders?
 8. Friends/family/neighbors?
 9. Other? Specify: _____

3. Why, in the end, did you decide to attend the Superintendent of Police's Jan Sunwai in [District name]?
(Open response first, then follow up questions)

a. What did you hope would happen at the Jan Sunwai?

b. Thinking back, how did you hear or find out about the Jan Sunwai process?

(Open ended first, then follow up with categories below. Check all that apply, and describe in notes)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> From family members or friends | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth in the neighborhood |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> At work (e.g. from co-workers, at job site) | 3. <input type="checkbox"/> In market/other public spaces in village |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Traveling to/visiting another village/town | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> From government official (specify who, where) |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> From a police officer or at my local thana | 7. <input type="checkbox"/> On the radio/on TV |
| 8. <input type="checkbox"/> In the newspaper/magazines/print media | 9. <input type="checkbox"/> Advertised on a billboard or posting |
| 10. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify): _____ | |

c. Do you personally know anyone else who has attended a Jan Sunwai, either in the police or another government department? 1. Yes 0. No → Skip to question 4

If so, who? For what?

What, if anything, did they tell you anything about their experiences?

4. How would you describe how you were treated at the Jan Sunwai? (Open response first, then follow up)

a. Were the officials respectful or rude? Were they attentive? (Explain in notes)

1. Highly respectful and attentive
2. Somewhat respectful and attentive
3. Somewhat rude but attentive
4. Rude and inattentive
5. Some were attentive, but some were rude

b. How long did you have to wait before being called inside?

c. Once called inside, could you explain your issue fully? Did you feel you were being properly heard?

d. What action did the officials take? What were you told at the end?

5. **Since attending the Jan Sunwai, what has happened?** (Open response first, then follow up questions)

- a. How satisfied are you, over all, with the **response** since you attended the Jan Sunwai?
1. Highly 2. Somewhat 3. Not very 4. Not at all (Explain in notes)
- b. Did anyone from the police contact you after the Jan Sunwai? 1. Yes 0. No
- c. Did you return to your local thana? If so, what happened and how were you treated there?
- d. Has the issue been resolved? If so, how? 1. Yes 0. No
- e. If not resolved, has there been any action? If so, what? What else (if anything) do you plan to do?
Action taken: 1. Yes 0. No. If yes, Specify: _____

6. **In general, what is your opinion of the Jan Sunwai process?** (Open response first, then follow up questions)

- a. Do you feel that the time and money you spent to attend the Jan Sunwai were worthwhile?
0. No 1. Yes
- b. Would you tell a friend or family member to come to Jan Sunwai if they had a problem?
1. Yes 0. No (Explain in notes)
- c. How effective do you think the Jan Sunwai is in helping people solve their problems?
1. Highly 2. Somewhat 3. Not very 4. Not at all (Explain in notes)
- d. How effective do you think the Jan Sunwai is in getting the local thana to improve its work?
1. Highly 2. Somewhat 3. Not very 4. Not at all (Explain in notes)
- e. Imagine that you are the Superintendent of police. If you were running the Jan Sunwai, what is one thing you would do differently?

ADDITIONAL NOTES & COMMENTS ON THE JAN SUNWAI

PART B – RAPID SURVEY, EXPERIENCE WITH & OPINIONS OF THE POLICE

| | | |
|------|--|--|
| B.1 | Following your experience with the Jan Sunwai, would you say that your overall opinion of the police has: | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Worsened 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Improved 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Stayed the same (if 3, Skip to B.3) |
| B.2 | If changed, can you explain why? (Open response) | |
| B.3 | In general, how often do you see the police patrolling in your area? | 0. <input type="checkbox"/> Never (Skip to B.5) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Few times/year or less 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Daily |
| B.4 | Which constable(s) patrol your area as part of his/her beat? Do you know their names? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> I hear that they patrol, but I haven't seen them and don't know their name(s) 2. <input type="checkbox"/> I have seen them patrolling, but I don't know their name(s) 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Name of constable(s): |
| B.5 | How far from your home is your local thana? | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Km |
| B.6 | How long does it take you to reach your local thana? | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Hours <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Minutes |
| B.7 | In the past year, did you visit your local thana? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 0. <input type="checkbox"/> No (Skip to B.9) |
| B.8 | How many times did you visit? | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> (Number – if estimate, provide average) |
| B.9 | Other than your recent visit to the Jan Sunwai, how long ago did you last contact/speak to a police officer? (If mentions date, note it & select code 1 – 4 accordingly) Date: DD <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> / MM <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> / YY <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | 0. <input type="checkbox"/> Never (Skip to B.11) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> days ago 2. <input type="checkbox"/> weeks ago 3. <input type="checkbox"/> months ago 4. <input type="checkbox"/> years ago |
| B.10 | Was that contact related to your Jan Sunwai case? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 0. <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| B.11 | Thinking back to before your current case, what were some other reasons why you contacted/approached the police? | Multi-coding (check all that apply) 0. <input type="checkbox"/> I never have/no reason 1. <input type="checkbox"/> To ask for directions 2. <input type="checkbox"/> For emergency assistance (medical, fire, etc.) 3. <input type="checkbox"/> For help with a family dispute 4. <input type="checkbox"/> For help with a dispute with neighbors/others 5. <input type="checkbox"/> To report an assault/attack (crime against body) 6. <input type="checkbox"/> To report a theft (crime against property) 7. <input type="checkbox"/> To respond to a charge/accusation 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): |
| B.12 | In general, how do the police behave with normal citizens? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Always polite 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly polite 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly rude 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Always rude |
| B.13 | In general, how often do the police help citizens when they should? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Always help 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely help 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Never help |
| B.14 | Who are the police most likely to help? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> All citizens in need 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Wealthier people 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Politically connected people |
| B.15 | Would you say that the police are generally honest or generally corrupt? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Generally honest 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Generally corrupt 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Impossible to generalize |
| B.16 | How does the performance of the police compare to other government agencies, for instance education or roads? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Better 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Same 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Worse |

PART C – RAPID SURVEY, PERCEPTIONS OF & TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| C.1 | Which of these two statements do you agree with the most? | <p>1. <input type="checkbox"/> Government is controlled for the people by the people; ordinary citizens can make their voices heard.</p> <p>2. <input type="checkbox"/> Government is controlled by the powerful, and serves the interest of the wealthy or politically connected more than the interest of the poor or common citizen.</p> <p>3. <input type="checkbox"/> Neither</p> |
| C.2 | Are government officials equally likely to assist any kind of person in need, regardless of their background? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 0. <input type="checkbox"/> No (If no, Skip to C.4) |
| C.3 | If their treatment of citizens is not equal, then who are they most likely to assist? | <p>Multi-coding (check all that apply)</p> <p>1. <input type="checkbox"/> Wealthier people, rather than poor</p> <p>2. <input type="checkbox"/> Politically connected people</p> <p>3. <input type="checkbox"/> Men, rather than women</p> <p>4. <input type="checkbox"/> People who share their religion</p> <p>5. <input type="checkbox"/> People who share their caste</p> <p>6. <input type="checkbox"/> People from their political party</p> <p>7. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify):</p> |
| C.4 | If you yourself approach a government official for help, are you more likely to get a response or be ignored? | <p>1. <input type="checkbox"/> Get a response 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Be ignored</p> <p>3. <input type="checkbox"/> Depends (Specify):</p> |
| C.5 | Imagine someone has a problem accessing a government benefit, for example, a pension or rations. Who would be the MOST likely to help that person? | <p>Open question (do not read responses), check only one</p> <p>0. <input type="checkbox"/> No one</p> <p>1. <input type="checkbox"/> Local (panchayat) officials</p> <p>2. <input type="checkbox"/> Block or district officials/bureaucrats</p> <p>3. <input type="checkbox"/> Other state officials/bureaucrats</p> <p>4. <input type="checkbox"/> Politicians (MLA or MP)</p> <p>5. <input type="checkbox"/> Central government officials</p> <p>6. <input type="checkbox"/> Police</p> <p>7. <input type="checkbox"/> Someone not in government</p> <p>8. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify):</p> |
| C.6 | Have you yourself ever contacted anyone like that for help with in accessing a government benefit or program? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 0. <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| C.7 | Imagine someone has a problem with the police, for example, they refuse to register a case. Who – outside of the police – would be MOST likely to assist that person in getting the police to respond appropriately? | <p>Open question (do not read responses), check only one</p> <p>0. <input type="checkbox"/> No one</p> <p>1. <input type="checkbox"/> Local (panchayat) officials</p> <p>2. <input type="checkbox"/> Block or district officials/bureaucrats</p> <p>3. <input type="checkbox"/> Other state officials/bureaucrats</p> <p>4. <input type="checkbox"/> Politicians (MLA or MP)</p> <p>5. <input type="checkbox"/> Central government officials</p> <p>6. <input type="checkbox"/> Someone not in government</p> <p>7. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify):</p> |
| C.8 | Have you yourself ever contacted anyone like that for help with a police-related issue? | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 0. <input type="checkbox"/> No |

PART D – RAPID SURVEY, DEMOGRAPHIC, & SOCIOECONOMIC INFORMATION

| | | |
|------|---|---|
| D.1 | Gender | 0.[] Female 1.[] Male 2.[] Other |
| D.2 | Age | _ _ (Years) |
| D.3 | Caste/Tribe | Name of caste (jati): _____ 1.[] SC 2.[] ST 3.[] General 4.[] OBC 1.[] Muslim OBC 5.[] Muslim General 6.[] Other |
| D.4 | Religion | 1.[] Hindu 2.[] Muslim 3.[] Sikh 4.[] Christian 5.[] Other (specify): _____ |
| D.5 | Years of education | _ _ (Years) Last (highest) year of school completed: _____ |
| D.6 | Occupations and sources of income (household) | List top three: _____ Code using JS survey part A a. _ _ b. _ _ c. _ _ If Other, specify |
| D.7 | Does your household qualify for a BPL card? If yes, do you have one? | 0.[] No 1.[] Yes, but no card 2.[] Yes, and has card |
| D.8 | Construction material of home | 0.[] Homeless (Skip to D.12) 1.[] Kaccha (mud, wood, other "rough" materials) 2.[] Pucca (brick, concrete) 3.[] Other Describe _____ |
| D.9 | Does your home have electricity? | 0.[] No 1.[] Yes How much do you pay each month? _ _ _ _ (Rupees) |
| D.10 | Does your home have piped/tap water? | 0.[] No 1.[] Yes How much do you pay each month? _ _ _ _ (Rupees) |
| D.11 | Does your home have a toilet? | 0.[] No 1.[] Yes |
| D.12 | (Assets): which and how many of the following do you own or have in your home? | a. _ _ Bicycle b. _ _ Motorcycle c. _ _ Car d. _ _ TV e. _ _ Radio f. _ _ Refrigerator g. _ _ Gas stove h. _ _ Phone/Mobile Total No. Assets: _____ |
| D.13 | In the past week, how often did you Watch/listen/read the: | a. TV 0.[] Never 1.[] Once 2. Few times 3.[] Daily b. Radio 0.[] Never 1.[] Once 2. Few times 3.[] Daily c. Newspaper 0.[] Never 1.[] Once 2. Few times 3.[] Daily |
| D.14 | In a typical week, how often do you leave/travel beyond your village/neighborhood? | 0.[] Never 1.[] Once 2. Couple/few times 3.[] Daily |
| D.15 | Do you or any of your household members migrate (travel to and live elsewhere) for some part of year? | 0.[] No 1.[] Yes (self) 2.[] Yes (family member) |
| D.16 | Are you a member of or do you identify with a political party? | 0.[] No/none 1.[] BJP 2.[] Congress 3.[] Other |

Appendix A.4. Multidistrict Citizen Survey on Policing, Madhya Pradesh

This citizen survey was carried out in 2018 the context of a broader study on gender and policing in Madhya Pradesh.³ The survey sample was drawn from 12 districts of MP (including Vindhya), including a total of 6519 citizens living in 180 different police station catchment areas. 3858 respondents (59%) resided in rural or semi-urban areas, while 2661 (41%) lived in urban areas. Given the survey’s gender focus, women were oversampled; 5648 respondents (87%) were female, and 871 (13%) were male. The data employed in this article have been reweighted to correct for that imbalance. This article makes use of a number of questions from the citizen survey that closely correspond with those in the Jan Sunwai survey. These include:

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| How often or regularly do the police help citizens when they are required? | 1 Always help 2 Most of the time 3 Rarely 4 Never help 5 They only help certain people who are rich, powerful, or can pay a bribe -89 Refused to answer -88 Don't know | Read choices to respondent, and select one. |
| Would you say that the police in your area are generally honest or generally corrupt? | 1 Generally honest 2 Impossible to generalize 3 Generally corrupt -89 Refused to answer -88 Don't know | Read the answer choices out loud, and select all that apply. |
| Have you ever heard of Jan Sunwai? | 1 Yes 2 No -89 Refuses to answer -88 Don't know | For all options except 1, skip to XX |
| Do you know anyone who has attended a Jan Sunwai? | 1 Yes, I myself have attended 2 Yes, I have family who have attended 3 Yes, my neighbors have attended 4 I have heard of the Jan Sunwai, but I don't know anyone who attended -89 Refuses to answer -88 Don't know | Read choices to respondent, and select all that apply |

³Kruks-Wisner, Gabrielle, Akshay Mangla and Sandip Sukhtankar. 2020. "Engendering Policing: Evaluating Reforms to Increase Women's Access to Security and Justice." AEA RCT Registry. June 29. <https://doi.org/10.1257/rct.3357-1.2000000000000002>.

Appendix B. Additional Analysis and Robustness Checks

Table B.1. Effects of Time on Satisfaction with Jan Sunwai: Standard Ordered Logit

| | Level of Satisfaction (1 = Not at all, 2 = Not Very, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = Highly) |
|---|--|
| Follow up interview | -2.929*** (0.391) |
| Female | 0.520** (0.242) |
| Muslim | -0.523 (0.513) |
| Scheduled Caste | -0.225 (0.277) |
| Scheduled Tribe | 0.515 (0.356) |
| Education (years) | -0.054*** (0.022) |
| Direct to Jan Sunwai (no prior contact with thana) | 0.224 (0.311) |
| Observations | 306 |
| Pseudo R-Squared | 0.115 |

Sources: Jan Sunwai rapid survey 2017-18, exit interviews; Jan Sunwai follow-up interviews 2017-18.

Notes: results are from a standard ordered logit regression, treating level of satisfaction (1-4) as the dependent variable. The independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether an observation was drawn from a follow-up interview, indicating time passed since the Jan Sunwai. Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

* = $p \leq 0.10$, ** = $p \leq 0.05$, *** = $p \leq 0.01$.

Table B.2. Sample Balance: Exit & Follow-up Interview Respondents

| | Exit interviews at the Jan Sunwai (n = 261) | Follow up interviews 2-4 weeks later (n = 50) |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Male | 0.66 | 0.71 |
| Hindu | 0.94 | 0.875 |
| Muslim | 0.05 | 0.0417 |
| Scheduled Caste | 0.28 | 0.25 |
| Scheduled Tribe | 0.13 | 0.041 |
| Avg. years school | 5.06 | 6.35 |
| Zero formal education | 0.44 | 0.3 |
| Higher education | 0.11 | 0.12 |
| Reporting "grievous" case | 0.26 | 0.22 |
| Reporting CAW | 0.1 | 0.14 |
| Direct to JS | 0.4 | 0.36 |

Sources: Jan Sunwai Rapid Survey 2017-18, Exit interviews; Jan Sunwai Follow-Up Interviews 2017-18.

Table B.3. Police Action on Jan Sunwai Cases

| SP directions at time of Jan Sunwai | | | Police Action Taken Following Jan Sunwai | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---------|--|-------|---------|
| | Freq. | Percent | | Freq. | Percent |
| File a case | 4 | 1.78 | Case filed | 9 | 3.91 |
| Carry out investigation | 180 | 80.00 | Investigation ordered | 47 | 20.43 |
| Make arrest | 7 | 3.11 | Arrest made | 8 | 3.48 |
| Refer to another agency | 8 | 3.56 | Case referred to another agency | 7 | 3.04 |
| - | - | - | Sent case to court | 11 | 4.78 |
| Other | 26 | 11.56 | Other action | 5 | 2.17 |
| - | - | - | Case dropped/settled | 19 | 8.26 |
| - | - | - | No grounds for case | 44 | 19.13 |
| - | - | - | No action noted | 80 | 34.78 |
| Total | 225 | 100.00 | Total | 230 | 100 |

Source: MP Police, Vindhya Jan Sunwai Tracking data, available from January 2018.

Table B.4. Levels of Satisfaction in Exit Interviews, by Demographics

| | N | Not at all satisfied (%) | Not very satisfied (%) | Somewhat satisfied (%) | Highly satisfied (%) |
|----------------------------|-----|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Full sample | 261 | 4.98 | 25.29 | 61.69 | 8.05 |
| Male | 171 | 6.43 | 29.24 | 54.97 | 9.36 |
| Female | 89 | 2.25 | 17.98** | 74.16*** | 5.62 |
| General Caste (GC) | 37 | 8.11 | 32.43 | 51.35 | 8.11 |
| Other Backward Class (OBC) | 116 | 4.31 | 25.86 | 64.66 | 5.17 |
| Scheduled Caste (SC) | 71 | 5.63 | 30.98 | 50.7** | 12.68* |
| Scheduled Tribe (ST) | 35 | 2.86 | 5.71*** | 82.86*** | 8.57 |
| Hindu | 12 | 0 | 50** | 50 | 0 |
| Muslim | 111 | 4.5 | 22.52 | 63.96 | 9 |
| Zero education | 48 | 2.08 | 16.67 | 66.67 | 14.58* |
| Primary education | 74 | 5.41 | 35.14** | 55.41 | 4.05 |
| Secondary education | 28 | 10.71 | 25 | 60.71 | 3.57 |
| Higher education | | | | | |

Source: Jan Sunwai Survey 2017-18, Vindhya district.

Stars (* = $P \leq 0.10$, ** = $P \leq 0.05$, *** = $P \leq 0.01$) represent the results of two-sample tests of differences of means, where: female is compared to male; where each caste category (GC, OBC, SC, and ST) is compared to the remaining sample; where Hindu and Muslim are each compared to the remaining sample; and where each level of education (zero, primary, secondary, and higher = more than 12 years) is compared to the remaining sample.

Table B.5. Levels of Satisfaction in Follow-up Interviews, by Demographics & Case Type

| | n | Not at all satisfied | Not very satisfied | Somewhat satisfied | Highly satisfied |
|--|-----------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| At the Jan Sunwai (Exit interviews) | 261 | 0.0498 | 0.2529 | 0.6169 | 0.0805 |
| After the Jan Sunwai (follow-up interviews) | 44 | 0.68*** | 0.08*** | 0.04*** | 0.20** |
| Female (follow-up interviews) | 17 | 0.41** | 0.24** | 0.06 | 0.29 |
| SC (follow-up interviews) | 10 | 0.6 | 0.1 | 0 | 0.3 |
| ST (follow-up interviews) | 5 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0 | 0.2 |
| Muslim (follow-up interviews) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hindu (follow-up interviews) | 47 | 0.68 | 0.08 | 0.02** | 0.21 |
| Zero education (follow-up interviews) | 15 | 0.47** | 0.066 | 0.066 | 0.40** |
| Higher education (follow-up interviews) | 5 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.20** | 0.2 |
| "Grievous" case (follow-up interviews) | 13 | 0.538 | 0 | 0.0769 | 0.38** |
| Crime against women (follow-up interviews) | 6 | 0.166** | 0.1666 | 0 | 0.67** |
| Direct to Jan Sunwai (follow-up interviews) | 18 | 0.61 | 0.11 | 0 | 0.277 |

Sources: Jan Sunwai Survey 2017-18, Exit interviews; Jan Sunwai Follow-Up Interviews 2017-18, reporting for individuals matched to exit interviews. * = $p \leq 0.05$, ** = $p \leq 0.01$, *** = $p \leq 0.001$. Results from two-sample t-tests. Follow-up interviews are compared to exit interviews. All other rows compare responses at follow-up interviews: women compared to men; SC and ST each compared to all other castes; Muslims and Hindus each compared to all other religions; those with no or higher education each compared to remaining sample; those reporting grievous cases or crimes against women each compared to all other case types; and those who came straight to the Jan Sunwai compared to those who first contacted local thana.