

Shikayat Nivaran Kendra for timely redressal of grievances in SBM-G



The Department of Water Supply and Sanitation (DWSS), Government of Punjab has established the Shikayat Nivaran Kendra (SNK) - a system through which it ensures time-bound delivery of services to the public and redressal of their grievances satisfactorily.

Most modern-day organizations are moving towards adopting a more participatory form of governance, with a view to involve citizens in the management of public institutions. It provides a bridge between ordinary citizens and Government departments dealing with the public in making the latter more efficient in delivery of public services. Citizen complaints and feedback mechanism is one such facet that makes the government more responsive to public needs.

However, the traditional system wherein a complainant visits the concerned department to file a complaint is inconvenient, time consuming and often, unresponsive. A physical register is just not capable enough to handle the sheer volume of complaints generated daily. It not only hampers productivity, but is also riddled with impartiality, and inter-departmental grievances become a quagmire to trudge through.

An effective and efficient response to citizen grievances becomes an essential index of a government's performance. To address this, the Department of Water Supply and Sanitation (DWSS) has brought in a paradigm shift in the physical system of handling grievances. With a vision of good governance considering the needs of the citizens, DWSS has launched an effective and accountable centralized complaint redressal system SNK in state of Punjab under the World Bank (IDA) supported Punjab Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project.

The idea of leveraging the use of Information technology and communication tools for redressing the complaints related to water and sanitation have provided the foundation for establishing SNK. It is an IVRS (Interactive Voice Response System) system with a 24x7 call centre. Not only it is a platform for citizens to file their complaints but also one of the sources for providing information related to various schemes/projects of the department.



Objectives of SNK: SNK facilitates every rural citizen to get their water supply and sanitation related complaint registered free of cost on the Toll free number 1800-180-2468. The objectives are: To improve quality of service delivery at grass root levels; register complaints and provide feedback; achieve best results while utilizing the latest e-governance methods and techniques; to enhance efficiency and financial sustainability of the Water Supply and Sanitation

System operations by reaching out to the beneficiaries in the villages; making the technical staff such as junior engineer, pump operator working the villages accountable for providing good service delivery.

Services offered by SNK: To begin with grievances are gathered through a call center after which action taking authorities are assigned to the case. A desk operator is responsible for the tagging of the grievance to the concerned officer, analysing and segregating grievances based on their type. If a grievance is not addressed within the specified time allocated to a it, it is automatically escalated to a higher authority and the status of the grievance is constantly updated as resolved, under review or closed. The platform offers provision for capturing and monitoring feedbacks from inbound and outbound calls, ensuring faster and easier processing of voluminous data in multiple environments. Also, data-rich reports that give an insight into the nature of grievances, their outcomes, any systemic issues that are identified, any service improvements made resulting from the grievance can be availed.

SNK Human Resource and functioning: The SNK unit's Digital Call Centre comprising of a Data Base Administrator and supported by computer operators functions in 3 shifts from 7 AM to 9 PM. IVRS is also active through which complaints can be registered during working hours i.e., 7 AM to 9 PM as well as beyond hours i.e., 9 PM to 7 PM making it a 24X7 active grievance redressal system.

Highlights of the system: SNK which has been operational since 2009 and digitally upgraded in December 2020 reaches out to approximately 15424 habitations, covering a rural population of almost 193 lakhs. Its management and operation have been outsourced to NIELIT (National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology) to ensure transparency in the online complaints' redressal system. While the daily progress report is reviewed at the highest level of DWSS, daily monitoring is ensured by sending reminders to the concerned officers via SMS, WhatsApp, e-mail, and telephone.

Shikayat Nivran Kendra and Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen): The Department of Water Supply and Sanitation has been the implementing agency for Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) in Punjab. SNK system has played pivotal role in monitoring and evaluating the

targets achieved during the last 5 years. The system has contributed to the effective implementation of SBM (G) in the State as under:

- I. Grievances related to SBM (G) implementation are majorly routed through SNK.
- II. Complaints have been classified under various categories and specific category codes have been assigned for monitoring.
- III. The State was declared as Open Defecation Free in March 2018. SNK ensures that gaps are identified and resolved to ensure sustainability of ODF status.
- IV. Rural residents can call on the toll-free number and register complaints regarding availing toilet facility provided by the Government.
- V. People can report whether the incentive has been paid on time or not.
- VI. Complaints registered are not closed until the beneficiary is not fully satisfied.
- VII. SNK provides information about the districts where improvements are required to resolve issues.

Nature of Complaints in sanitation: Sewerage line is blocked; Sewerage treatment plant is not functional; Sewerage Intercepting Tank is not cleared by Contractor, request for incentive for new toilets; name left out of GP list or erroneous allotment; complaint of open defecation, etc.

SNK Statistics: Out of 77295 complaints received as on 30.05.21 relating to the DWSS, 76512 complaints have already been attended to the satisfaction of the complainants since the inception of SNK (01.12.2009) which is 98.98 per cent.

Toll free number: In order to ensure the widespread reach of SNK, a toll-free number has been painted at prominent places in the villages which provides ease of access and citizens do not have to run from pillar to post to get their Water Supply and Sanitation issues resolved.

Feedback from Citizens:

- **Kulvir Singh, Village Roshanpur Jhuggian, Patiala:** In total I have lodged 4 grievances till date and each time the complaint was resolved within few days, the last being lodged on 12.5.21 and resolved on 17.5.21. I am totally satisfied with the service.
- **Major Singh, Village Sainfalpur, Ropar:** Being a first-time user of this service, I got the toll-free number from the internet. My complaint was resolved quickly and even during the Covid-19 Pandemic the complaint was redressed without a need of my intervention other than a single call to SNK.
- **Tarsem Singh, Village Mullapur Garibdas, Mohali:** Within 10-15 minutes of lodging my complaint, officials of DWSS contacted me and rectified the problem on the same day. This service is efficient and well-built for public interest. I would like to rate it 10/10.
- **Manvinder Kaur, Village Brahamjit, Hoshiarpur:** I called the toll-free number and pressed "4" in IVR (Interactive Voice Response). After 1 hour I received a call from an SNK operator attending to my complaint pertaining to amount not received of IHHL construction. Officials of DWSS contacted me and on the 3rd day and both my 2nd and

3rd instalment were paid. Thereafter, I called the toll-free number and gave my approval for closing the complaint. I am very satisfied with this service. Coming from an economically backward certificate, this was a truly quick resolution to my grievance.

- **Simmi, Muktsar:** I had made a complaint about the blocked sewerage line in our street that was causing foul smell and causing a widespread sanitation issue. On the same day DWSS official contacted me and within 2-3 days the cleaning of sewerage was done and blockages cleared.

SNK during COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis: SNK Digital Call Centre has been working rigorously even during the Covid-19 Pandemic including during curfews/lockdown to resolve every complaint pertaining to DWSS, Punjab. In doing so, DWSS has established trust and satisfaction among the consumers of Punjab.

Social impact: SNK has emerged not only as an effective grievance management mechanism but also as an important social management tool to measure the impact of the DWSS projects interventions such as World Bank (IDA) supported Punjab Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project, Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) and Punjab Rural Water and Sanitation Sector Improvement Project. Verification and monitoring of various parameters such FHTC (Functional and Household Tap Connection) under JJM (Jal Jeevan Mission), SDP (Service Delivery Parameters), service satisfaction etc. are also taken by tele calling with Sarpanches and Panches of villages of Punjab. This has enhanced outcomes and is giving people the satisfaction that their complaints and feedbacks are being heard, thus helping to build trust as part of the broader community relations activities. This has contributed to the overall success of the department's social performance.

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