# Public Relations as an Instrument of Good Governance: Structural Models and Challenges in Smaller States

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**Abstract:**
Government often dismisses public relations (PR) as publicity, yet in smaller states it can serve as a practical instrument of good governance. This paper examines how Information and Public Relations (I&PR) machinery supports transparency, participation, responsiveness, and accountability in India's smaller states, where compact populations, difficult terrain, and thin administrative capacity shape communication needs. It draws on Grunig and Hunt's four models of public relations, Excellence Theory, and on the characteristics of good governance from the United Nations Development Programme, to create a typology of three structural models: the publicity directorate model, the digital-citizen interface model, and the networked community model. The analysis is qualitative and document-based and triangulates the departmental manuals, the records of e-governance, and Public Affairs Index 2020 scores for small states. It clearly concludes that a well-established I&PR department is not enough for governance quality. The outcomes are dependent on whether the function reports to decision-makers, practices two-way communication, and is connected to service delivery systems. The main challenges are single-direction communication, the technical positioning of practitioners, limited research and evaluation, the digital and geographic divide, and political capture. The paper ends with a strategic framework and policy suggestions for enhancing the mechanism of PR as a device of governance in smaller states in India.

**Keywords:** public relations; good governance; smaller states; government communication; transparency; e-governance; India.

## 1. Introduction

Governance is assessed by the nature of the relationship between government and its citizens. The importance of laws, schemes and digital platforms is that they reach citizens only when information circulates both ways: between citizens and government and between government and citizens. Public relations (PR), understood as the managed communication and relationship-building function of an organisation, is the institutional means of organising that flow. In India, the function sits in the Information and Public Relations (I&PR) departments that state governments maintain. The Government of Nagaland's departmental manual describes the department's task as linking the government, the people and the media, and treats that link as the working form of accountability and transparency (Department of Information & Public Relations, Government of Nagaland, n.d.-a).

Smaller states offer a distinct setting for this function. The Public Affairs Centre classifies states with populations below two crore as small states, a group that includes Goa, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Himachal

Pradesh and most north-eastern states (Morung Express, 2018; Scroll.in, 2020). For instance, in 2011 Sikkim had a population of 610,577 in an area of 7,096 square kilometres, which is largely mountainous, making the provision of social services and infrastructure more expensive (Inclusion.in, n.d.-a). Comparative study of small polities suggests scale fosters close and institutionalized government-to-society relations (Katzenstein, 1985). It may be easier for small states to communicate with each other than for large ones. Meanwhile, they work with small audiences, limited budgets, and at the same time often have geographically dispersed audiences.

Even so, the public relations role in the smaller states is rarely examined as a means of governance in and of itself. The self-descriptions in the department focus on disseminating policies, schemes and achievements, a one-way, informational perspective of the task. In this paper, the question is raised: what happens if PR is instead interpreted as good governance? The analysis is guided by 3 questions:

1. What are the possible structures of public relations in the smaller states of India?
2. How is each of the models connected to the principles of good governance – transparency, participation, responsiveness, and accountability?
3. What are the obstacles to the role of PR in governance in these states, and how could these be overcome?

The paper makes three contributions. It presents a typology of structural models of government public relations suitable for smaller states, compares them with evidence on governance outcomes in Nagaland, Mizoram and Sikkim, and provides a typology and a set of 'pr' governance indicators that can be used by the administrators to enhance the role of public relations as a governance function.

The point of the argument is that it is more important to have a structure than to be young and small. However long a department has been in existence, very little is contributed to governance if it is issuing press notes without contributing to policy, without any research capacity, and without any connection to any service delivery. A leaner unit that can listen, declare proactively, and can be integrated with e-governance systems will be able to contribute a lot. The paper is organized as follows. The conceptual framework is presented in Section 2. The method is described in Section 3. This typology of structural models is presented in Section 4. Section 5 looks at governance outcomes in a select set of states. Section 6 analyses challenges. A strategic framework is suggested in Section 7, and a conclusion is given in Section 8.

## 2. Conceptual framework

### *2.1 Public relations as a governance function*

Grunig and Hunt (1984) have outlined four models of PR practice, as shown in Table 1. Press agentry and public information are unidirectional: organisation to public. The two-way models add feedback, but only the symmetrical model uses communication to negotiate and build mutual understanding rather than to persuade. Government departments have historically leaned towards the public information model. Nagaland's vision statement centres on disseminating credible news through the media (Department of Information & Public Relations, Government of Nagaland, n.d.-b), and the Punjab department counts liaison with other government media among its core tasks (Department of Information and Public Relations, Government of Punjab, n.d.).

**Table 1**

*Grunig and Hunt's Four Models of Public Relations Applied to Government*

| Model | Direction | Purpose | Governance example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Press agentry | One-way | Attract attention and favourable coverage | Campaign launches, ministerial events |
| Public information | One-way | Distribute accurate information | Press notes, scheme booklets, notices |
| Two-way asymmetrical | Two-way, imbalanced | Persuade publics using feedback | Opinion surveys used to shape messaging |
| Two-way symmetrical | Two-way, balanced | Negotiate and build mutual understanding | Public consultations, participatory planning |

*Note.* Model descriptions follow Grunig and Hunt (1984). The governance examples are illustrative.

Grunig et al. (2002), building on the Excellence study led by J. E. Grunig (1992), argue that PR contributes most to organisational effectiveness when it is part of strategic management, when the senior communicator belongs to the dominant coalition, and when communication is two-way and symmetrical. The theory has been criticised as normative. Canel et al. (1997) propose a contingency view in which practitioners move between advocacy and accommodation depending on circumstances, and Liu and Horsley (2007) adapt the discussion to government with a decision wheel that recognises political and legal constraints. Canel and Sanders (2012) likewise treat government communication as shaped by both democratic and political logics. Evidence from Ghana's public sector shows why the benchmark still matters: practitioners were largely confined to technical roles, rarely joined policy discussions, and defaulted to one-way or asymmetrical communication (Amedegbe-Doe, 2025). The paper therefore takes a benchmark of symmetrical practice in its assessment and not as a rule.

### *2.2 Good governance*

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997) defines the following characteristics of good governance: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision. Graham et al. (2003) summarise these into 5 principles: legitimacy and voice, direction, performance, accountability and fairness. The principles discussed here are obvious and carry clear communicative content and anchor this paper, namely: transparency, participation, responsiveness and accountability. Given the provisions of Section 4 of the Right to Information Act, 2005 that mandates transparency work in India among public authorities, I&PR departments have a statutory ground for this. Former I&PR Director of Andhra Pradesh Narasimha Reddy (2018) puts public trust at the heart of good governance and speaks on media relations in that context.

### *2.3 The small-state context*

Scale is double-edged. Low administrative levels, personal relationships, and a small media market could make it less expensive to listen to citizens. Still, communication infrastructure has a fixed cost that is spread across a small number of citizens, cadres are limited in number, and terrain can be costly to reach. Mizoram is the second least populated state in India, where almost 95 per cent of the people are tribal (Inclusion.in, n.d.-b). It mentions the geographic isolation and ethnic differences of NE states from mainland India; among the reform priorities, Citizen engagement and accountability in Assam and Mizoram (World Bank, n.d.). Therefore, the structure of the communications makes a difference in these conditions.

### *2.4 Analytical lens*

Each of the three structural models is evaluated on the basis of the three criteria mentioned in the preceding discussion. The first one is positioning, that is, if the public relations function has access to decision-makers and a voice in policy, as the Excellence Theory requires. The second is direction, in the sense of a one-way versus a two-way type of communication and whether or not citizens' feedback is gathered and acted upon. The third one is linkage – if the function is linked to service delivery and e-governance systems to ensure information translates to action. A model that works on all three will likely further TPA. If a model is not doing well on any of the three, it is not providing governance, just publicity.

## 3. Methodology

The research method is qualitative and comparative, using documents. The materials tested were of the three types. First, official documents: the Right to Information disclosure manual and vision statement of Nagaland's I&PR department, the Punjab department's account of its origins and organisation, and a 2003 Mizoram Government notification constituting a state-level committee on citizen-centric content for Community Information Centres, on which the Director of I&PR sat (Government of Mizoram, 2003). Second, governance evidence: Public Affairs Index (PAI) scores for small states reported in 2018, 2020 and 2021, and SKOCH governance and e-governance assessments summarised for Sikkim and Mizoram. Third, theoretical and empirical literature on government public relations and good governance.

The emphasis on smaller states is based on population, not area or income. The rationale behind the selection of three illustrative cases, namely, Nagaland, Mizoram and Sikkim, is that each has documents publicly available on communication or e-governance and that they represent distinct structural characteristics. The governance comparison includes Goa, Meghalaya and Himachal Pradesh only.

The analysis process is carried out in 3 stages. The documents were coded on the basis of the four models of Grunig and Hunt (1984) and the conditions of strategic positioning and two-way practice of the Excellence Theory. This coded material was then categorized into ideal types, resulting in a typology which is presented in Section 4. Lastly, the types were compared with the governance evidence to look for patterns and challenges.

Design limitations should be noted by users of the design. The PAI does not measure public relations, but is a measure of governance as a whole; this does not equate to causation. Some scores are from the press release of the index, and not all small states are reported in the sources consulted. Award-based assessment is done in the form of SKOCH Summaries. There were no interviews or surveys completed. Typology refers to ideal types, while real departments tend to have characteristics of several of the types.

## 4. Structural models of public relations in smaller states

The documents exhibit three common structures. They are ideal types, set out in Table 2 and described below.

### *4.1 Model A: The centralised publicity directorate*

In the first model, a hierarchical department, headed by a minister and a director, produces press material, publications and field publicity through district offices. Nagaland's department is one of the oldest in the state. It was established in 1963 and was given its present name in 1984, partly to keep it at parity with the I&PR departments of other states (Department of Information & Public Relations, Government of Nagaland, n.d.-a). This is also reflected in the fact that the minister in Punjab has the authority to make important decisions regarding policy, personnel, and budget, while the responsibility of the department to serve other departments' communication needs is part of its mandate (Department of Information and Public Relations, Government of Punjab, n.d.). Its advantages are that it has a clear mandate and is longstanding with the press. It's weak in one area: orientation. The department's mandate is to represent government and

is not oriented toward the citizens, making it similar to the press agentry and public information models in Table 1.

The Model A template is very popular. According to a 2018 training presentation, there are 29 state information departments and central media units (Narasimha Reddi, 2018). The vision statement also includes documentaries and a digital archive cell in the repertoire of Nagaland's vision department, indicating adaptability of a department without altering its orientation to new media (Department of Information & Public Relations, Government of Nagaland, n.d.-b). Formal direction and linkage are weak on the three criteria in Section 2.4, but formal positioning is secure as the department reports to a minister.

### *4.2 Model B: The built-in digital-citizen interface*

The second is an amalgamation of communication and information technology and service delivery. The Department of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) of Mizoram introduced the eDistricts project and the Government of Mizoram Content Management System (CMS) in district, sub-divisional and block offices, whose objectives were to improve transparency and workflow (Inclusion.in, n.d-b). There is an early formal connection between the two functions as evident in the 2003 notification of the role of I&PR Director as a member of the committee for citizen-centric content at Community Information Centres (CICs) (Government of Mizoram, 2003). Sikkim's Cyber Village project is taking the idea down to the village level. It automates workflow in the village administrative unit and, at the cost of a single SMS (Inclusion.in, n.d.-a), it provides each citizen with a photo identity card, reducing the need for repeated trips to several offices.

Communication here is a way of service and responsiveness is enhanced due to reduced travel and waiting time. The dangers are found elsewhere. While the performance in the e-governance sector is high, Sikkim is at the bottom quartile in terms of e-governance infrastructure (SKOCH, 2024), leaving citizens who cannot access digital infrastructure behind. When the portals are in the hands of the technology units, the editorial and relationship role of the I&PR department can also be demeaned.

Model B is best on linkage as communication is a feature of service transactions. Moderate on direction, since portals and SMS services can determine queries and grievances, even if not intended for dialogue. It's a bad place to put it. In the case of technology units owning the channels, the I&PR department might be asked for input on content, but not design.

### *4.3 Model C: The networked community model*

The third model is that of a PR unit as a focal point, which brings together village-level administration, community organisations and local media, and allows messages and feedback to be conveyed via trusted local channels. There is less evidence of this. Sikkim's village-level administrative units are a partial instance because information and services are organised at this level, but the sources consulted do not report on the role of I&PR staff at the village level. In this sense, then, Model C is most appropriately understood as a normative elaboration of the Excellence Theory for the small, dispersed and frequently tribal communities with which it is used, where the two-way symmetrical communication is most likely and most useful.

There would be 3 conditions that would make Model C viable. Clearly, it is necessary to identify and involve local partners, and to involve them as a defined partner, rather than as an informal favour. Second, the PR unit also requires some logistical assistance, including district staff, to conduct forums to gather feedback, and local-language materials. Third, feedback needs to be sent to decision makers via a permanent channel, rather than outreach. These are conditions that are not documented, but are rather considered a set of suggestions worthy of investigation in future studies.

**Table 2**

*Three Structural Models of Public Relations in Smaller States*

| Feature | Model A: Publicity directorate | Model B: Digital-citizen interface | Model C: Networked community |
|---|---|---|---|
| Organising logic | Hierarchy and mandate | Integration with ICT and services | Partnership with local institutions |
| Dominant PR model | Public information, press agentry | Public information, two-way asymmetrical | Two-way symmetrical (aspirational) |
| Typical instruments | Press notes, publications, documentaries, district offices | Portals, content management systems, e-District, SMS services | Village forums, community media, grievance feedback loops |
| Principles best served | Basic transparency | Responsiveness, efficiency | Participation, accountability |
| Principal weakness | One-way, minister-centred | Digital divide, marginal editorial role | Thin evidence, coordination cost |
| Evidence base | Nagaland, Punjab | Mizoram, Sikkim | Partial (Sikkim) |

*Note.* Typology developed by the author from the documents cited in Section 4. Models are ideal types and are not mutually exclusive.

In practice, most states combine the models. The general practice is a Model A department to which Model B digital channels have been attached, with Model C practices operating on an ad hoc basis where officials are familiar with their communities. The question, then, is not which model a state has, but which features are predominant and whether they lead to decision-making.

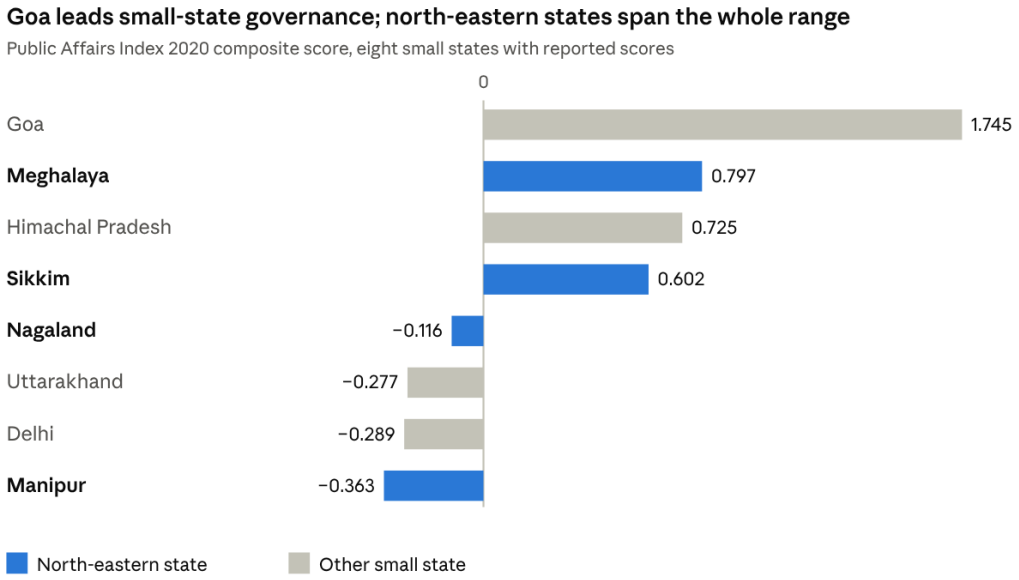
Now, they are considered through the three criteria—none of these is complete. Model A: Positioning without direction, Model B: Linkage without positioning, Model C: Direction without proven linkage. The strategic approach outlined in Section 7 is a mixture of all three.

## 5. Good governance results in selected smaller states

In this section, the question is raised whether the structural models are consistent with governance outcomes. The Public Affairs Index measures the states on a composite of equity, growth, and sustainability by using 43 indicators which are related to the Sustainable Development Goals (Public Affairs Centre, 2021). It does not measure public relations; it is just a context.

**Figure 1**

*Public Affairs Index 2020 Scores, Small States*




Public Affairs Index 2020 scores as reported in Morung Express (2020); three of the 11 small states are not reported in the sources consulted

Figure 1 shows Goa well ahead, followed by a band of Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim. Nagaland ranked eighth of eleven small states, and Manipur was last (Morung Express, 2020). North-eastern states therefore appear at both ends of the distribution. Rankings are also volatile. Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya were at the bottom of the small-state category in 2018 (Morung Express, 2018). By 2020 Meghalaya was second (Assam Tribune, 2020), and in 2021 Sikkim, Goa and Mizoram were the leading small states while Manipur again ranked last (EastMojo, 2021). Governance performance in smaller states is evidently not fixed by size, region or institutional age. Nagaland's I&PR department dates from 1963, yet the state ranked eighth in 2020.

**Table 3**

*Communication Structures and Governance Evidence in Three Smaller States*

| State | Governance evidence | Communication-relevant feature |
|---|---|---|
| Sikkim | PAI 2020: fourth of 11 small states (0.602). SKOCH: second in education, bottom quartile in e-government infrastructure | Cyber Village: village-level services through a photo identity card and SMS access |
| Mizoram | PAI 2021: among leading small states. SKOCH: third nationally in e-governance; three Orders-of-Merit and one Platinum governance award in an earlier assessment | e-District, content management system across district, sub-divisional and block offices; I&PR Director on 2003 content committee |
| Nagaland | PAI 2020: eighth of 11 small states (−0.116) | I&PR department since 1963, renamed 1984; mission to link government, people and media; digital archive cell |

*Note.* Compiled from EastMojo (2021), Inclusion.in (n.d.-a, n.d.-b), Morung Express (2020), SKOCH (2024) and the Department of Information & Public Relations, Government of Nagaland (n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

Table 3 matches the typology with the three states. Communication is closely linked with e-District, Web content systems (Model B) and Mizoram was among the top small states in the SKOCH assessment of e-governance conducted in 2021, even though it was not in the top four in 2020. Nagaland with the profile most similar to model A was the bottom half of its group. Sikkim is sandwiched between: good results in some sectors, and a service model at the village level, but a limited digital infrastructure. The pattern suggests that institutional age is not as important as service delivery integration, but it is difficult to draw a causal conclusion because three states are not consistent with this inference. Additional omissions should be pointed out. The sources referred to do not provide details on the organisation of the public relations function in Goa, the clear leader of 2020, and this is a key area for future comparative research.

Interpretation requires care. The PAI's equity, growth and sustainability pillars are based on indicators including education, health and economic outcomes, not the quality of communication, and public relations is not likely to be the only factor that will impact such indicators. Indirect is a plausible channel. Knowledge of entitlements by citizens is more likely to lead to their claiming of entitlements, with implications for equity indicators, and responsive service channels can lower the time and expense required to obtain services, with implications for growth indicators. These channels are not findings, but hypotheses, and testing would need Communications Practice data that are not published. It is in the context of smaller states in which the outcomes of governance are contingent; in which they are not fixed; in which they can change rapidly; that listening-oriented communication may be expected to count.

## 6. Challenges

Six obstacles can be seen throughout the documents and literature. They are summarised in Table 4 and described in the following sections for the most important.

**Table 4**

*Structural and Operational Challenges Facing Public Relations in Smaller States*

| Challenge | How it appears | Consequence for governance | Response |
|---|---|---|---|
| Technical positioning | Staff handle press and publications with limited voice in policy | Messages explain decisions already taken; participation stays weak | Seat the head of PR in policy processes |
| One-way communication | Dissemination of schemes and achievements dominates mission statements | Citizen feedback goes unused; responsiveness is limited | Build listening channels |
| Weak research and evaluation | Little systematic audience research or outcome measurement | Impact on awareness and trust cannot be shown | Routine surveys and metrics |
| Digital and geographic divides | Mountainous terrain, dispersed settlements, uneven connectivity | Digital-first channels exclude remote and low-literacy citizens | Mixed digital and field channels |
| Capacity and fragmentation | Small cadres; separate ICT, I&PR and service units | Duplication and a marginal editorial role | Joint I&PR and ICT |

| Challenge | How it appears | Consequence for governance | Response |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | protocols |
| Political capture | Publicity credited to office-holders rather than public purposes | Credibility and accountability erode | Written rules; published spending |

*Note.* Synthesised from the sources cited in Sections 2 to 5.

### *6.1 Positioning and orientation*

The Excellence Theory suggests that a PR head in the dominant coalition and with influence over decisions adds value to PR. The Ghanaian evidence given above indicates otherwise, as practitioners in technical positions and with less influence on strategy are found there (Amedegbe-Doe, 2025). There is a similar sense of conflict in Indian departmental documents. In the vision statement of Nagaland, spreading credible news and making documentaries are highlighted, and in the manual, there is a mention of accountability and transparency (Department of Information & Public Relations, Government of Nagaland, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). The aim is governance-oriented; instruments are predominantly informational. Punjab's department, too, gives importance to serving the communication needs of other departments (Department of Information and Public Relations, Government of Punjab, n.d.), serving the administration, rather than the citizen.

### *6.2 Research and evaluation*

The documents referred to refer to outputs like news, publications, and portals, though no document mentions a systematic study of the audience and the evaluation of communication results. The lack of mentions in public documents does not imply a lack in practice, but the Ghanaian study has also revealed underutilisation of research (Amedegbe-Doe, 2025), which is equally possible here. A department must conduct research to determine its reach and the channels on which it is trusted, if awareness leads to use of a scheme. Two-way communication then is just a promise.

### *6.3 Digital and geographic divides*

The isolation of dispersed settlements and terrain increases the cost to reach citizens (Inclusion.in, n.d.-a). While this reflects the village-level service model (SKOCH, 2024) of Sikkim, it also highlights the inadequate e-government infrastructure, which is also a factor to keep in mind when considering digital channels to reduce the cost. World Bank project document on Assam and Mizoram highlights the importance of increased citizen participation, even in the context of advanced automation of services (World Bank, n.d.). This is a suggestion that digital communications should be used in conjunction with the Model A department's existing field publicity, radio, and local-language media channels. There is a second reason why field publicity has value: It reaches citizens in face-to-face ways, and supports the two-way interaction that is not so easily reproduced in broadcast channels.

### *6.4 Capacity and fragmentation*

Small states don't have the resources to have a communication unit for each purpose. The Mizoram committee of 2003 is a case study of the coordination problem: the I&PR Director was one of fourteen members from various departments, from industries to health, and an IT secretary was the chairperson of the committee (Government of Mizoram, 2003). These committees bring together functions without providing the PR unit a permanent place in policymaking. With ICT units and I&PR units, citizens face two voices from one government.

### *6.5 Political capture*

There is a relation between democratic and political logics in government communication (Canel & Sanders, 2012). Small states are where politicians, officials and journalists are close friends, and the distinction between public information and promotion of office-holders can become blurred. Clear written rules separating public information from party publicity, reporting on communication expenditure in the public domain following the disclosure principle of the Right to Information Act (2005), and proactive disclosure under the same act.

### *6.6 How the challenges interact*

The six challenges build upon each other. If a department keeps in a technical role, why invest in research, and why can't it prove its worth by means of research to the dominant coalition? Listening and disclosure are compromised by fragmentation between ICT and I&PR units. Two-way communication is more difficult in places where it is needed most due to digital divides. Sequencing should be done – starting with positioning and listening, changing the purpose of the function, before investing in channels.

## 7. A strategic framework

The analysis identifies four functions of PR that support governance which are all related to governance principles, and where trust and legitimacy also contribute to citizen voice. This is set out in figure 2. Listening supports participation. Proactive disclosure is a way of promoting transparency. Responsiveness is facilitated by service and crisis messaging. Evaluation and public reporting help to measure accountability. The other three components of the framework are two-way, because the listening component is essential for all others to be more than dissemination.

**Figure 2**

*Framework Linking Public Relations Functions to Good Governance Principles*




A framework built by the author based on the analysis in sections 2 – 6; functions correspond to the four principles of governance throughout the paper.

The following are six recommendations for smaller states.

1. Place a senior I&PR officer in policy-making. Ensure that the Head of the Department is involved in planning and Cabinet-Secretariat activities to ensure that communication is the focal point of policy, not the end result of policy.
2. Build listening capacity. Utilize grievance data, periodic surveys and community forums, and make district information officers responsible for conveying feedback upwards.
3. Institutionalise proactive disclosure. Have one state portal to disclose Section 4, co-managed by the I&PR and IT teams.
4. Don't duplicate; integrate. Find mutual consent on procedures in which the I&PR unit is responsible for the editorial quality and the ICT unit for the infrastructure, and that citizens get one voice of the government.
5. Use mixed channels. Reach remote and low-connectivity communities using radio, local-language print and field publicity in combination with digital services.
6. Evaluate and publish. Monitor basic indicators of reach, awareness and trust; make an annual communication report public; have written rules to distinguish public communication from party communication.

Monitoring is key to design. Table 5 offers indicators which a small administration could monitor using existing records and/or limited surveys.

**Table 5**

*Suggested Indicators for Monitoring Public Relations as a Governance Instrument*

| Element | Indicator | Possible data source |
|---|---|---|
| Positioning | Head of I&PR attends policy and planning forums | Departmental procedures |
| Listening | Share of new schemes with a documented citizen consultation | Department records |
| Disclosure | Section 4 items updated on schedule | State portal audit |
| Service messaging | Median time to answer citizen queries | Helpline and portal logs |
| Evaluation | Annual communication report published | Department website |
| Trust | Citizen awareness and trust scores | Periodic citizen survey |

*Note.* Indicators are proposals developed by the author and have not been tested. A step-by-step plan of action is achievable. States have the option to create written rules distinguishing public information from party publicity, publish a communication report, and designate a head of the I&PR to join planning efforts in the first year without any new technology. They can implement regular surveys and shared I&PR and ICT protocols in the second and third years. In the longer term, partnership working arrangements of the Model C type can be trialled in 1 or 2 districts and then assessed and extended. There is also something to be gained from learning from each other, and smaller states can do this too. The state of Mizoram, which integrated communication with e-District and web content systems, and the state of Sikkim**, which** developed the **village-level** service model, can serve as a template for other states.

## 8. Conclusion

This paper proposed that public relations, responsive in nature, can be a tool for good governance in smaller states, provided it is designed to listen as well as to inform. Three structural models were identified: publicity directorate, integrated digital-citizen interface, and networked community. Both operate under different principles of governance and have different risk factors.

Availability of evidence from Nagaland, Mizoram and Sikkim indicates that institutional age does not assure good governance. The department of Nagaland is one of the oldest in Nagaland, and yet the state was in the bottom half of the small states list in 2020. The connection between communication and service delivery, as in the case of e-District and the content management system in Mizoram, and good outcomes seems to be related, if not always present. The evidence spans three states and an index that is not a measure of public relations; therefore, this pattern is viewed as a hypothesis. Is not a causal finding.

Technical positioning of practitioners, one-way communication, weak research and evaluation, digital and geographic divides, fragmentation of small cadres, and the risk of political capture are six challenges that impede the contribution of PR. The strategic framework in Section 7 connects four functions – listening, proactive disclosure, service and crisis messaging, and evaluation – with participation, transparency, responsibility and accountability. The recommendations made here do not possess the grand scope and are within the capabilities of small administrations.

Future research should take a step from documentation to practice. But interviews with I&PR officers, citizen surveys for trust and awareness, and the addition of Goa, Meghalaya and Himachal Pradesh would enable the typology to be tested. The communication reforms in this document would be compared to PAI pillar scores in a longitudinal study to determine if the associations proposed here continue. Scale as an asset for governance only when the communication function is organised to use scale.

The message for the policymakers is that there is no need to wait for big budgets to be available for reform. The mere fact of moving the head of the department from one place to another, publishing disclosures as required, and collecting citizen feedback are low-cost measures, and each reinforces a governance principle directly. Short administrative chains and smaller states are ideally positioned to test and implement, and then disseminate, these reforms.

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