



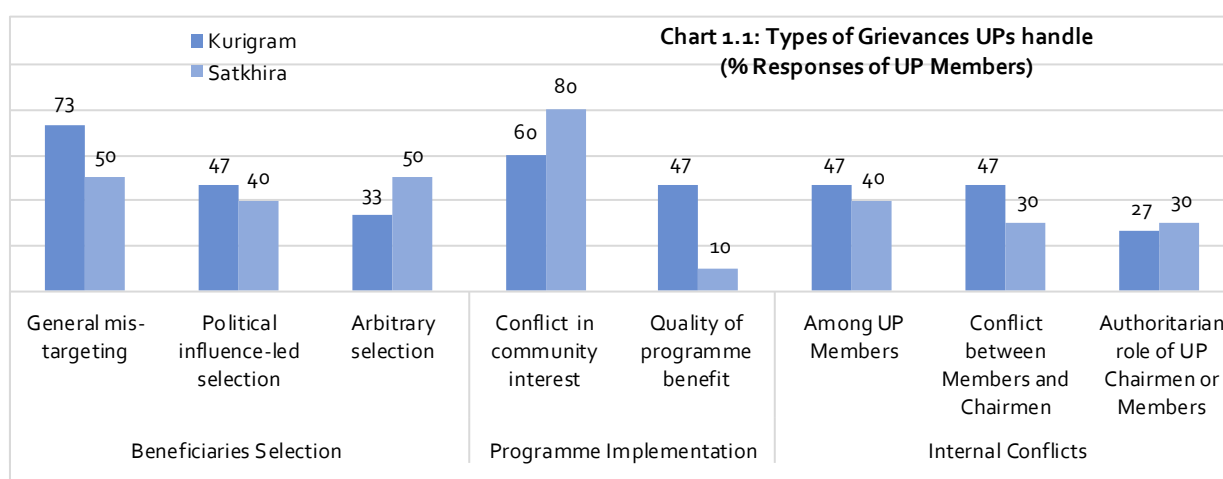
RESEARCH BRIEF

GRIEVANCE HANDLING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AT UNION PARISHADS

The local level representatives at the Union Parishads perform various tasks including targeting, delivery of benefit, approval process, monitoring, supervision, financial management, reporting, and coordination. Grievance handling and conflict resolution related to the implementation of social safety net programmes is another of the roles that UPs perform. Local level representatives regularly resolve conflicts in areas of beneficiary selection, programme implementation, and internal conflicts.

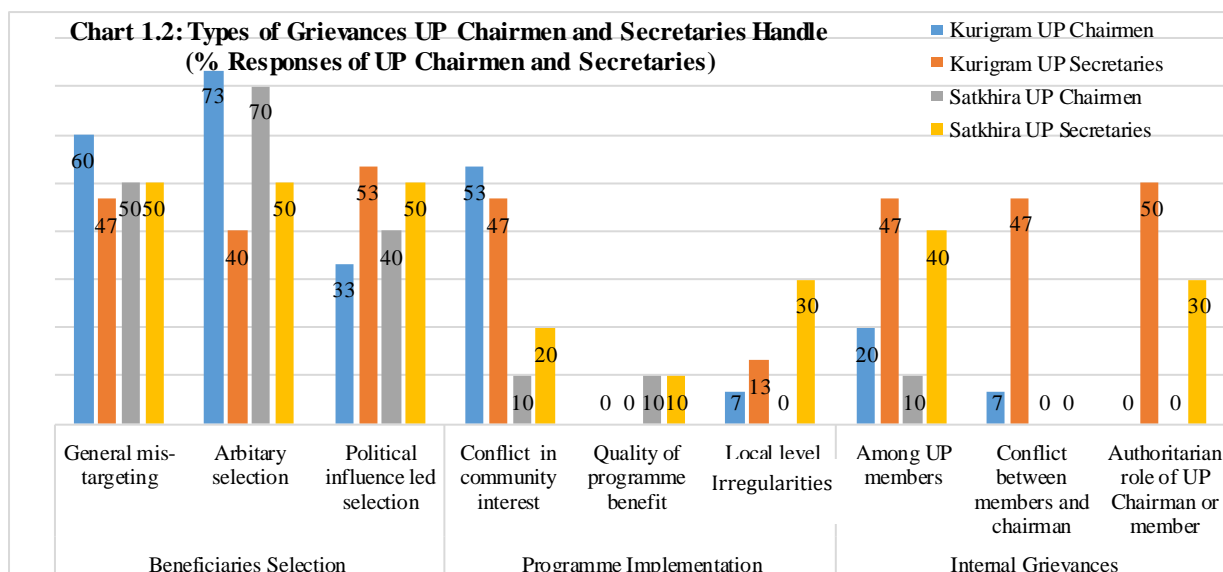
This brief outlines the grievance handling and conflict resolution for social security programme implementation at Union Parishads in general and identifies the areas of grievances UPs handles and the process of conflict resolution in particular. The brief draws on the training needs assessment of UPs conducted in around 20 percent of the participating UPs in the project area of Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO) in Satkhira and Kurigram districts. A total of 25 FGDs in different Union Parishads of Kurigram and Satkhira were conducted. 25 UP Chairmen, 25 UP Secretaries, and 16 Upazila Officials were key informants for this assessment.

In terms of the areas of grievances UPs handle, a substantial number of respondents revealed that general mis-targeting is a major grievance which citizens have. Another grievance issue which is equally frequent is the political influence led selection. Under the programme implementation related grievances, a significant number of UPs (members) pointed out that conflict in community interests is a major grievance issue. Internal conflicts within the UPs are a major grievance issue of conflict amongst UP members due to allocation of benefits and schemes. Conflict between members and Chairman is also cited as another cause. A few respondents also highlighted the cause of people's grievance due to the authoritarian role of the UP Chairman or UP member (Chart 1.1).



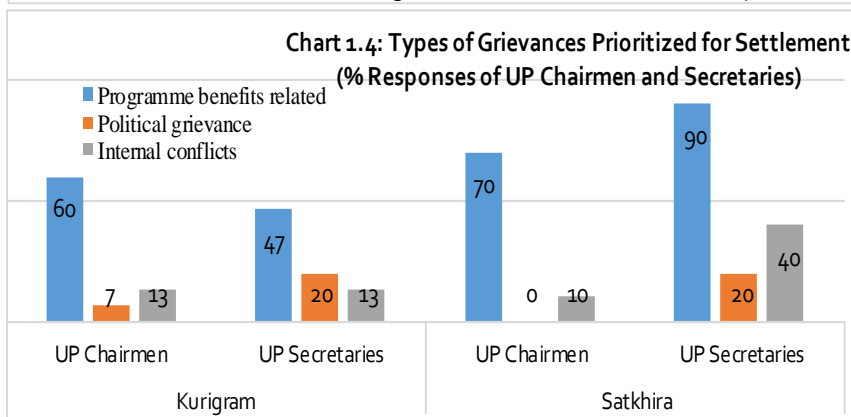
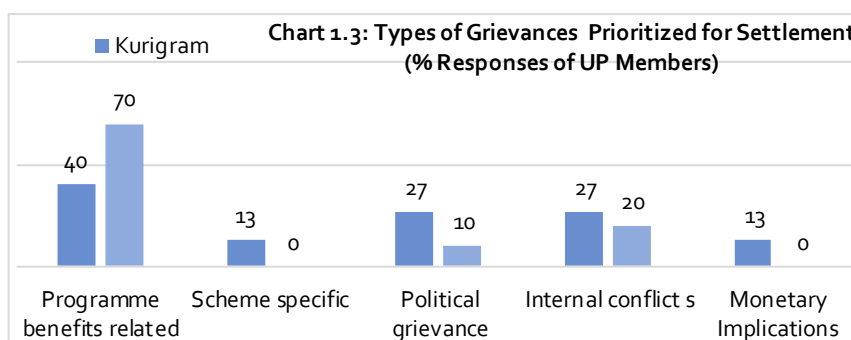
Similarly a large number (around 70 percent) of Chairmen in both districts identified that arbitrary selection is an issue of grievance for UPs. A number of Chairmen and Secretaries also mentioned that general mis-targeting and political influence on selection leads to issues of grievance handled by UPs. In the category of programme implementation, in Kurigram, a good number of Chairmen and Secretaries reported that a major grievance issue is conflict in community interests. Low quality of programme benefit is also cited as a cause of people's grievance.

For internal grievance matters, there is a contrast of opinion between Chairmen and Secretaries. A few UP Secretaries pointed out that 'grievance among UP members is commonplace'. In contrast, a very small number of UP Chairmen said that grievance arises amongst UP members. This was revealed from the findings of 47 percent of UP Secretaries in Kurigram who said that conflict between members and Chairmen is widespread. About 50 percent of UP Secretaries in Satkhira, and 30 percent in Kurigram cited that the grievances continue due to the authoritarian behaviour of some of the UP Chairmen or influential UP members (Chart 1.2).

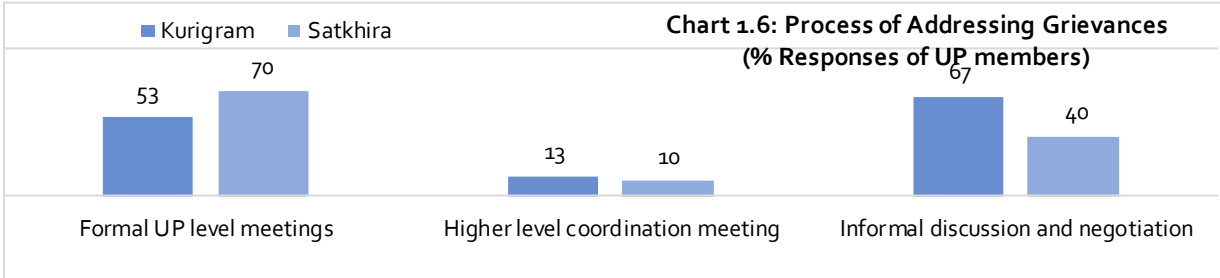
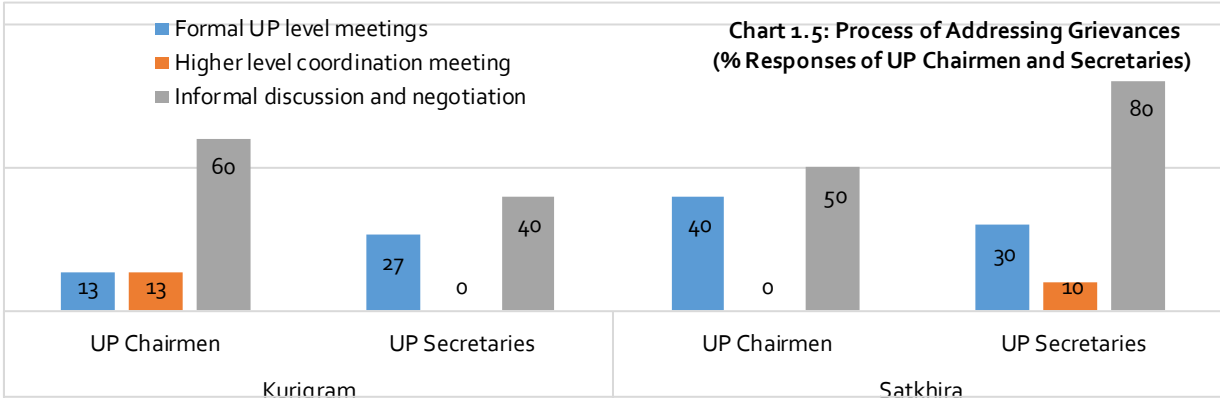


The meagre amount of social safety net programme cash benefits and the often poor quality of in-kind benefits aggrieve the beneficiaries, the burden of which is often disproportionately borne by the local government representatives, leading to further demotivation for them to carry out the defined responsibilities. No doubt, a mismatch between the expected benefits and actual allocation plays a part as constraint faced by the Union Parishads since the target group (expected beneficiaries) is bigger in size than the benefit allocation for social safety net programmes in each of the Union Parishads.

Both elected members and government officials act to solve grievances arising out of poor targeting, quality and quantity of programme benefits, and timeliness of reaching the programme beneficiaries. The priority in grievance handling by UP members is often provided in grievances those relate to programme benefits (Chart 1.3). The responses of UP Chairmen and Secretaries too reveal that they prioritize programme benefits related grievances over other types of grievances e.g., political grievance and internal conflicts (Chart 1.4).



It is identified from respondents that three ways or processes to address the grievances exist at the local level. These include formal UP level meetings, higher level coordination meeting, and an informal discussion and negotiation (see Chart 1.5). A substantial number of UP members (around 70 percent) in both districts stated that formal UP level meetings and informal discussion and negotiation are the means to address grievance and resolve conflicts (Chart 1.6). One of the UP members of Bondhober Union in Rowmari Upazila under Kurigram district said, "As public representatives, we always want to include them in social safety net programmes as they are the real poor people of the community and we are committed to help them. Our UPs frequently face grievances as beneficiary selection is related to political affiliation. Those who are really poor and not selected, they usually complain and we have to manage the issue informally."



The study found that UPs have not yet established a system and mechanisms of formally submitting grievances and addressing those grievances. In view of the weakness of the formal system, there are informal means of addressing the process of grievances based on circumstances at the Union levels. A formal system of grievance handling and conflict resolution, and attendant mechanisms of formally submitting grievances and addressing those grievances related to social security programme implementation at the local level is long overdue for successful implementation of social security programmes.

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SOCIAL SECURITY POLICY SUPPORT (SSPS) PROGRAMME
 The Cabinet Division, and The General Economics Division, Planning Commission
 Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh

