

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW
MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES
[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 8 | Issue 3
2025

© 2025 International Journal of Law Management & Humanities

Follow this and additional works at: <https://www.ijlmh.com/>

Under the aegis of VidhiAagaz – Inking Your Brain (<https://www.vidhiaagaz.com/>)

This article is brought to you for “free” and “open access” by the International Journal of Law Management & Humanities at VidhiAagaz. It has been accepted for inclusion in the International Journal of Law Management & Humanities after due review.

In case of any suggestions or complaints, kindly contact support@vidhiaagaz.com.

To submit your Manuscript for Publication in the International Journal of Law Management & Humanities, kindly email your Manuscript to submission@ijlmh.com.

Institutionalizing Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) in Indian Public Governance: A National Policy Blueprint

KHUSH DALBIR¹

ABSTRACT

Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) has evolved as a transformative tool in enhancing access to justice, particularly in a digital-first era. While India has made strides in adopting digital technologies for service delivery, its mechanisms for resolving disputes involving the State and citizens remain outdated, fragmented, and non-enforceable. Platforms like CPGRAMS and departmental grievance portals offer limited relief due to procedural opacity, lack of neutrality, and the absence of statutory enforceability. This paper argues for a comprehensive, legally mandated national framework to institutionalize ODR specifically in public service delivery and government-citizen disputes.

Drawing on global best practices from jurisdictions like Canada, Estonia, the United Kingdom, and the European Union, this research provides a comparative analysis that informs the design of a proposed Indian framework. Through doctrinal legal research and administrative policy evaluation, the paper outlines the key legal, institutional, procedural, and technological components of such a system. It advocates for the enactment of dedicated ODR legislation, establishment of a National ODR Authority, and development of an integrated digital justice platform supported by AI tools, multilingual access, and strong data privacy protocols. This framework, if implemented, can drastically reduce litigation burdens on courts, improve public trust in government, and realize the constitutional promise of access to timely and affordable justice for all citizens.

I. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) represents a paradigm shift in the delivery of justice systems worldwide. From private sector applications in consumer complaints and e-commerce disputes to limited judicial experimentation in civil litigation, ODR has grown in stature and utility. In India, this growth is conspicuous in the private domain. However, the public sector, despite its substantial involvement in disputes with citizens—ranging from service delivery failures to administrative penalties—continues to rely on archaic, inefficient

¹ Author is a LL.M (Cyber Law) Student at IILM University, Greater Noida, India.

mechanisms that are both time-consuming and costly.

India's legal and governance architecture is undergoing rapid digital transformation, underpinned by government-led missions such as Digital India, e-Courts, and National e-Governance Plan (NeGP).² Despite these advancements, the integration of technology into dispute resolution, particularly in government-citizen conflicts, remains fragmented and lacks institutional vision. This paper asserts that ODR, when deployed strategically and supported by statutory backing, can resolve public sector disputes effectively, reduce court burdens, and align public administration with the constitutional mandate of justice.

Understanding ODR in the Public Sector Context

ODR refers to the use of technology to facilitate dispute resolution through digital platforms, often involving asynchronous communication, video conferencing, document sharing, and algorithm-assisted negotiation. While its early uses were confined to private commercial disputes, especially in the e-commerce domain, ODR is now increasingly seen as a public utility in enhancing the effectiveness of state-citizen dispute resolution.

Public sector ODR, however, differs significantly from its private sector counterpart. Unlike the latter, where parties engage voluntarily and outcomes are often contractually enforceable, public disputes involve a complex interplay of administrative discretion, statutory entitlements, and constitutional guarantees.³ As such, the design of ODR systems for government disputes must ensure due process, legal accountability, and citizen empowerment.

The potential for applying ODR in India's public sector lies in a wide range of disputes, including but not limited to:

- Denial or delay of welfare benefits (e.g., pensions, subsidies, scholarships)
- Tax assessments and penalties
- Land registration and mutation errors
- Electricity and water bill disputes
- Public employment grievances
- Municipal fines or encroachment notices

² Government of India, Economic Survey 2017–18, Chapter 11, available at: <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicsurvey/> (last visited May 3, 2025).

³ NITI Aayog, ODR Policy Advisory (2021).

- Right to Information (RTI) second appeals

In each of these domains, existing redressal mechanisms are either too slow, inaccessible, or adversarial. Integrating ODR would not only expedite resolution but also standardise procedural safeguards across jurisdictions.

Moreover, the shift to digital governance through portals like UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance), MyGov, and state-specific e-district services indicates a readiness in infrastructure that can support the deployment of scalable ODR platforms.⁴ The need, therefore, is to move from mere digitisation of grievance registration (as seen in CPGRAMS) to the digital transformation of the entire dispute resolution lifecycle—right from filing to final resolution.

II. CURRENT LANDSCAPE: FRAGMENTED AND INEFFICIENT MECHANISMS

India currently operates several grievance redressal platforms designed to handle public complaints and service-level disputes. These include:

CPGRAMS (Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System): This is the flagship platform of the Government of India for handling citizen grievances. It allows individuals to file complaints against central and select state departments, which are then routed to the concerned authority.⁵

Departmental Portals: Various ministries and agencies operate their own redressal systems, such as the EPFO Grievance Portal, Income Tax E-Nivaran, GSTN Helpdesk, IRCTC complaint management, and UIDAI's grievance portal.⁶

Consumer Grievance Portals: The National Consumer Helpline (NCH), under the Department of Consumer Affairs, provides a central platform to address grievances of consumers involving private companies and public authorities.⁷

RTI Online Portal: Citizens can file and track Right to Information applications, including appeals, through this platform. However, resolution depends on offline correspondence and hearing at the Central or State Information Commission.

State-Level Lok Adalats and Service Guarantee Acts: Several states have enacted Right to

⁴ Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, India Stack Overview, available at: <https://www.indiastack.org/> (last visited May 3, 2025).

⁵ Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), available at: <https://pgportal.gov.in/> (last visited May 3, 2025).

⁶ Income Tax e-Nivaran, UIDAI Grievance Portal, EPFO Grievance Portal, GSTN Helpdesk – respective department websites.

⁷ National Consumer Helpline, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, available at: <https://consumerhelpline.gov.in/> (last visited May 3, 2025).

Public Services legislation mandating timely service delivery. Non-compliance can be challenged through appeal and penalty mechanisms, although these are largely paper-based or semi-digitised.

While these systems have introduced some level of digital access and transparency, they fall short of the characteristics that define true Online Dispute Resolution mechanisms:

Absence of enforceable outcomes: In most cases, complaints are "disposed of" without any binding decision or structured enforcement pathway.

Lack of structured mediation, arbitration, or settlement mechanisms: None of the platforms provide a systematic, tiered process involving online negotiation, facilitation, or adjudication by neutral third parties.

No neutral third-party involvement: Resolutions are typically made internally by the department being complained against, violating principles of natural justice and procedural impartiality.

Poor integration across ministries and departments: Systems function in silos with little or no interoperability, meaning citizens must navigate multiple platforms depending on the agency involved.

Delays in resolution with no procedural standardisation: For example, CPGRAMS reports a resolution time of 45–90 days, but anecdotal evidence suggests many complaints are auto-closed or resolved without adequate reasoning or relief.⁸

The lack of statutory mandate or centralized procedural rules means that departments are not obligated to deliver reasoned orders or offer avenues for digital appeal. This systemic deficiency not only weakens citizen confidence in digital governance but also increases the likelihood that unresolved grievances will escalate into formal litigation—thereby undermining judicial economy and public trust.

III. GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES IN PUBLIC SECTOR ODR

The application of Online Dispute Resolution in the public sector is no longer theoretical. Several jurisdictions have implemented robust frameworks that provide insights for Indian policy-makers. Notably, countries like Canada, Estonia, and the United Kingdom have demonstrated that ODR can be effectively integrated into public service and administrative dispute resolution systems.

⁸ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, CPGRAMS Monthly Performance Reports (2023).

- **British Columbia, Canada – Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT)**

The Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT) of British Columbia is one of the world's most advanced examples of a public-sector ODR platform. Enacted under the Civil Resolution Tribunal Act,⁹ the CRT is a statutory tribunal with jurisdiction over small claims, condominium disputes, motor vehicle accident claims, and certain administrative disputes. It follows a four-tiered, fully online process:

Solution Explorer: An AI-powered self-help tool that helps users understand their rights, identify their issues, and generate potential solutions. It also provides guided pathways and draft communications to resolve the issue directly with the other party.

Negotiation: If issues are not resolved via the Solution Explorer, parties are encouraged to engage in online negotiation through a secure platform with tools for asynchronous communication.

Facilitation: If negotiation fails, a CRT facilitator—a neutral tribunal staff member—guides the parties in a structured dialogue to attempt a resolution.

Adjudication: If facilitation is unsuccessful, the dispute proceeds to an online hearing before a tribunal member who issues a binding and enforceable decision.

The CRT's success lies in its accessibility (mobile-first interface, low digital literacy threshold), affordability (minimal fees), enforceability (legally binding outcomes), and user-centric design.

- **Estonia – A Digital Governance Model**

Estonia, often hailed as the world's most digitally advanced society, has embedded ODR into its public administration through its e-Governance framework.¹⁰ Every citizen has a unique digital identity (e-ID) used for accessing public services, filing disputes, and authenticating submissions.

The backbone of Estonia's digital justice ecosystem is its **X-Road** data exchange layer that interconnects government and private databases. This allows seamless sharing and verification of information across ministries, departments, and agencies. Citizens can challenge administrative decisions, request reviews, and file appeals entirely online, with decisions issued electronically.

⁹ Civil Resolution Tribunal Act, S.B.C. 2012, c. 25 (British Columbia).

¹⁰ Government of Estonia, e-Government Case Study, e-Estonia Briefing Centre, available at: <https://e-estonia.com/solutions/e-governance/> (last visited May 3, 2025).

What distinguishes Estonia is its focus on **automated administrative law enforcement**, real-time resolution of minor disputes (e.g., fines, tax corrections), and its data-first approach, ensuring transparency and legal certainty with minimal bureaucratic friction.

- **United Kingdom – HMCTS Reform and ODR Pilots**

The UK's Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has undertaken one of the largest digital transformation projects in the justice sector. Under the HMCTS Reform Programme, the UK has piloted ODR mechanisms in areas such as civil money claims, tax appeals, and employment disputes.¹¹

Key features of these pilots include:

End-to-End Digital Case Management: Citizens can file claims, upload documents, communicate with the court, and receive decisions entirely online.

Pre-Judicial Resolution: Trained case officers assist in resolving disputes before they are escalated to judges, functioning as a filter and mediator.

Automated Responses: For simple matters like uncontested debts or late payments, AI tools help generate resolutions, saving judicial time.

Procedural Transparency: Timelines, next steps, and user rights are clearly communicated through digital dashboards.

The HMCTS pilots underscore the UK's commitment to procedural fairness, judicial efficiency, and access to justice through responsible technology deployment.

- **European Union – Consumer ODR and Emerging Administrative Use**

The European Union pioneered one of the first regional cross-border ODR platforms through **Regulation (EU) No. 524/2013**.¹² Primarily focused on consumer disputes involving e-commerce, the EU ODR platform connects consumers and traders across member states with ADR entities that mediate or arbitrate cases.

Although its primary mandate is B2C conflicts, the EU is increasingly exploring the use of ODR for public administration issues, particularly around tax, customs, and regulatory compliance. Some member states have begun using the core infrastructure of the ODR platform to handle administrative appeals and inter-governmental claims.

¹¹ Lord Justice Briggs, "Civil Courts Structure Review: Final Report" (HMCTS, July 2016).

¹² Regulation (EU) No. 524/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Online Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes.

Distinctive features of the EU ODR model include:

Multilingual Interface: Available in all official EU languages.

Centralized Access Point: One portal handles cross-border complaints involving any EU member.

Transparency and Neutrality: ADR entities must be certified and follow strict quality standards.

This model showcases how a supranational digital justice system can evolve from private enforcement into a tool for administrative governance and regulatory compliance.

IV. WHY INDIA NEEDS A NATIONAL ODR FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC DISPUTES

Litigation Overload Involving Government

With nearly half of India's court caseload involving government departments, the cost and backlog implications are enormous. ODR can filter low-stake disputes before they reach courts.¹³

Inefficiency of Current Grievance Systems

Administrative grievance platforms lack structure, enforceability, and neutral intervention, which an ODR framework can introduce.¹⁴

Digital Infrastructure Readiness

India's Aadhaar, DigiLocker, BharatNet, and mobile penetration enable a tech-driven dispute resolution system nationwide.¹⁵

Constitutional Mandate and Citizen Rights

Articles 14, 21, and 39A demand access to justice, equality before law, and free legal access—all strengthened by ODR.¹⁶

Fragmentation and Lack of Procedural Uniformity

Without a central system, inconsistencies thrive. A national framework will unify grievance redress protocols.¹⁷

¹³ Government of India, Economic Survey 2017–18, Ministry of Finance.

¹⁴ NITI Aayog, ODR Policy Advisory (2021).

¹⁵ Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, India Stack Overview, Government of India.

¹⁶ Supreme Court of India, judgments interpreting Arts. 14, 21 and 39A, Constitution of India.

¹⁷ OECD, Online Dispute Resolution: An International Comparative Analysis, Working Paper (2022).

Lack of Awareness and Legal Literacy

A national ODR portal will standardize information, offer guided resolution tools, and democratize dispute resolution access.

V. CORE FEATURES OF THE PROPOSED NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

To address the limitations of existing mechanisms and leverage the potential of digital infrastructure, India must adopt a holistic, legally sound, and citizen-centric ODR framework for public service disputes. This framework must be designed with scalability, enforceability, transparency, and inclusivity as its guiding principles.

Legal Backbone

The successful institutionalization of ODR requires a firm legal foundation. This can be achieved through:

Enactment of a Central ODR Legislation: A dedicated law—such as the proposed "Online Public Dispute Resolution Act"—should define the scope, authority, process, and enforceability of ODR in public service delivery. This law should empower government departments to refer eligible disputes to accredited ODR platforms and recognize digitally resolved outcomes as legally binding.

Integration with Existing Statutes: Amendments must be made to existing laws to facilitate and mandate ODR processes. For instance:

- **Civil Procedure Code, 1908:** To include pre-litigation ODR mandates for disputes below a defined monetary threshold.¹⁸
- **Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985:** To provide for optional digital resolution pathways before formal tribunal hearings.
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** To integrate government departments as service providers accountable through ODR.

Institutional Structure

A robust institutional arrangement is necessary to ensure standardization, monitoring, and public trust in the ODR ecosystem. Key components include:

¹⁸ Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (India), s. 89.

National ODR Authority: A statutory body under the Ministry of Law and Justice to accredit ODR platforms, frame procedural rules, oversee neutrality and integrity, and coordinate with state governments.

ODR Panels and Registries: Accredited ODR service providers must maintain panels of trained mediators, conciliators, and arbitrators who are equipped to handle sector-specific public disputes.

State-Level ODR Cells: These bodies should be established to coordinate with local government departments, conduct awareness programs, and address region-specific implementation challenges.

Procedural Design

The ODR framework must embed procedural fairness and user-friendliness into its design. This includes:

Tiered Dispute Resolution Pathways: Every case should begin with online negotiation, followed by online mediation or conciliation. If unresolved, the dispute may proceed to online adjudication or binding arbitration.

Time-Bound Redressal: Clear timelines (e.g., 15 days for negotiation, 20 days for mediation, 30 days for adjudication) must be established to avoid delay.

Review and Appeals: A mechanism for limited digital review and escalation should be in place to uphold accountability without reverting to full litigation.

Digital Evidence Handling: Guidelines should be framed for the submission, storage, and verification of digital documents and audio-visual records to maintain procedural integrity.

Technological Integration

For ODR to succeed at scale, seamless technological integration across platforms is essential:

Unified Digital Justice Platform: A centralized dashboard linked to existing platforms like CPGRAMS, UMANG, DigiLocker, and Aadhaar should be developed for case initiation, tracking, communication, and resolution.

AI and Data Analytics: AI tools can assist in dispute triaging, sentiment analysis, and early dispute resolution, while anonymized data analytics can guide policy improvements and sectoral prioritization.

Multilingual and Accessible Interfaces: ODR portals should support regional languages, assistive technologies, voice-based filing, and mobile-first interfaces to ensure inclusivity.

Cybersecurity and Privacy Compliance: Systems must comply with the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, and relevant IT rules to protect user data, ensure informed consent, and prevent breaches.¹⁹

This proposed framework is intended to create a unified, enforceable, and citizen-focused ODR mechanism that can handle diverse public service disputes across administrative levels in India. It will serve as the legal, institutional, and operational backbone for India's next-generation public dispute resolution system.

VI. CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the clear benefits and international success stories surrounding Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) systems, the institutionalization of a national framework for public sector ODR in India is bound to face several challenges. These must be acknowledged and addressed proactively in the planning and policy formulation phase.

Legal and Jurisdictional Barriers

One of the fundamental hurdles is the lack of a statutory mandate that requires or even permits government departments to adopt ODR mechanisms. Many public disputes fall under diverse statutes, and implementing a single, unified ODR system will require extensive legislative harmonization. Jurisdictional overlap between central and state governments, and between tribunals and administrative authorities, further complicates implementation.

In addition, existing laws such as the Civil Procedure Code and various service-specific legislations do not contemplate digital pre-litigation resolution or confer legal status upon ODR outcomes. Without legal enforceability, resolutions passed through ODR mechanisms may lack credibility and compliance.

Institutional Resistance and Bureaucratic Inertia

ODR requires a shift in administrative culture—from control and hierarchy to service orientation and transparency. This shift is often resisted due to bureaucratic inertia, fear of technology, and apprehension about loss of discretion. Departments may resist adopting an ODR framework out of concern that external digital adjudicators will interfere with their internal decision-making autonomy.

There is also a lack of trained personnel who can manage and oversee ODR platforms. Without dedicated training and sensitisation of public officials, the rollout of ODR may be superficial or

¹⁹ Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (India).

poorly executed.

Infrastructure and Digital Divide

While India has made significant progress in digital penetration, stark disparities remain in internet access, device availability, and digital literacy—particularly in rural and tribal areas. For an ODR system to be inclusive, it must work across different levels of digital maturity and provide alternate formats such as voice-based or assisted filing mechanisms.

Moreover, connectivity gaps and infrastructure failures can lead to delays and user frustration, potentially eroding trust in digital justice systems. State-level disparities in digital readiness also mean that a one-size-fits-all model will not work; implementation must be modular and adaptive.

Privacy and Data Protection Risks

Any large-scale ODR system will involve the collection, processing, and storage of sensitive personal and government data. In the absence of robust data governance frameworks, there is a risk of breaches, surveillance, and misuse of citizen information.

While the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 has laid down foundational principles, sectoral guidelines specific to dispute resolution platforms must be framed. Consent protocols, data minimization practices, grievance redress for data breaches, and third-party access controls must be clearly defined.

Trust Deficit and Awareness Gaps

A significant section of the population continues to equate justice with in-person court hearings and physical interaction. There is also limited awareness about the existence of ODR platforms, let alone their legitimacy and effectiveness.

Building user trust in digital mechanisms will require a massive awareness campaign, pilot projects with success stories, and legal literacy drives. Unless citizens perceive ODR as impartial, fair, and enforceable, adoption will remain limited.

Funding and Sustainability

Setting up and maintaining an effective ODR system requires substantial investment in software development, cybersecurity infrastructure, training, and public outreach. Without a long-term funding strategy, ODR systems may become under-resourced or dependent on unreliable grants. The government must consider a blended model that includes public funding, user fees (with exemptions), and CSR/PPP partnerships to ensure financial viability.

These challenges are not insurmountable but require a concerted, multi-stakeholder effort involving legal reform, technological design, administrative training, and citizen engagement. Institutionalising ODR in India's public dispute ecosystem must be envisioned not merely as a technological fix, but as a socio-legal transformation aligned with constitutional values and inclusive governance.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY REFORMS

To ensure the successful institutionalization of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) in India's public service delivery framework, a multipronged strategy that includes legal, administrative, technological, and societal reforms must be adopted. This section outlines concrete policy recommendations that can form the basis for government action and stakeholder collaboration.

Enact Comprehensive ODR Legislation

- Introduce a dedicated law titled the "Online Public Dispute Resolution Act" to define the structure, jurisdiction, processes, and enforceability of public sector ODR.
- Include provisions for accreditation of ODR platforms, establishment of digital tribunals, appointment of neutral officers, and appellate structures.
- Recognize ODR outcomes as legally binding and admissible in judicial and quasi-judicial forums.

Mandate Pre-Litigation ODR for Select Dispute Types

- Make it mandatory for government departments to attempt ODR before litigation in specific categories like service delivery failures, pension delays, taxation disputes below a monetary threshold, and utility conflicts.
- Prescribe ODR as a condition precedent to approaching consumer or administrative tribunals.

Establish a National ODR Authority

- Constitute a central agency under the Ministry of Law and Justice or in coordination with NITI Aayog to oversee the ODR ecosystem.
- This body should be tasked with platform accreditation, process standardization, mediator training, compliance monitoring, and publication of annual performance reports.

Launch a Unified Digital Justice Platform

- Develop a centralized portal that integrates CPGRAMS, UMANG, e-District, and state-level grievance systems with a backend ODR engine.
- Enable access through Aadhaar-based e-authentication, DigiLocker for document sharing, and multilingual AI chatbots to assist users.
- Incorporate case dashboards, communication tools, automated scheduling, and digital record management.

Strengthen Capacity Building and Training

- Train civil servants, paralegal volunteers, and ODR professionals in negotiation, mediation, digital tools, and procedural fairness.
- Partner with law universities and judicial academies to include ODR modules in their curriculum.

Conduct State-Level Pilots and Scale Gradually

- Launch pilot ODR programs in selected states and departments (e.g., electricity boards, municipal bodies, welfare departments) to test feasibility and user experience.
- Use lessons from pilots to refine technology, processes, and training before full-scale rollout.

Promote Public Awareness and Legal Literacy

- Run multimedia campaigns to promote the concept, benefits, and legitimacy of ODR in public disputes.
- Partner with NGOs and local institutions to spread awareness in rural and underserved areas.
- Provide helplines, user manuals, and community access points to enhance usage.

Ensure Digital Inclusion and Accessibility

- Design ODR platforms for low-bandwidth usage, voice-based interaction, mobile-first interfaces, and regional language support.
- Set up physical assistance centers at panchayat and ward levels for guided filing and digital hearing support.

Institutionalize Feedback and Accountability Mechanisms

- Allow parties to rate the quality and fairness of the ODR process.

- Implement grievance redress mechanisms for complaints against ODR providers, mediators, or technical failures.
- Ensure platforms are auditable, transparent, and subject to data protection standards.²⁰

Encourage Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

- Incentivize innovation and investment in ODR by allowing empanelment of private ODR platforms under a regulated framework.
- Provide funding support or tax incentives for CSR-driven ODR capacity building and legal empowerment initiatives.

A national ODR framework for public sector disputes must go beyond technological enablement to establish a full-fledged justice ecosystem grounded in equity, efficiency, and inclusivity. The above reforms provide a strategic roadmap to build a resilient, transparent, and citizen-centric dispute resolution infrastructure that can meet the needs of a 21st-century democracy.

VIII. CONCLUSION

As India stands at the cusp of a digital revolution in governance, the imperative to extend this transformation to dispute resolution is both urgent and evident. This research has demonstrated that the current landscape of public grievance redressal—though increasingly digital in form—is still structurally archaic, procedurally opaque, and legally toothless. Citizens continue to struggle with fragmented portals, unresponsive departments, and a lack of enforceable remedies.

Global examples from British Columbia, Estonia, the UK, and the EU underscore a crucial insight: technology alone does not transform justice—institutions, processes, and statutory legitimacy do. These jurisdictions have shown that ODR can thrive when anchored in strong legal frameworks, user-centric design, and a culture of accountability. India, with its vast digital infrastructure and rising citizen expectations, is well-placed to leapfrog into a model of dispute resolution that is both efficient and equitable.

Institutionalizing ODR in public service delivery and government-citizen disputes will not only decongest courts but also reimagine the relationship between the state and its people. It can restore trust in governance, promote procedural justice, and enable faster and more transparent

²⁰ Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, India Stack Overview, available at: <https://www.indiastack.org/> (last visited May 3, 2025).

outcomes across sectors. For this transformation to occur, however, India must move beyond piecemeal portals and embrace a unified, enforceable, and rights-based ODR ecosystem.

This paper has outlined a blueprint for such a transformation, grounded in comparative legal analysis, administrative realism, and constitutional commitments. The proposed national framework—supported by legislation, backed by institutional mechanisms, and enabled by inclusive technology—has the potential to make India a global leader in digital public justice.

Ultimately, access to justice is not just a constitutional right but a measure of democratic governance. Online Dispute Resolution, when properly implemented, can be the means by which that access becomes universal, meaningful, and modern.
