The West Bengal government's Kanyashree project that has gained enormous success and fame as born out of data and not perception. The government looked at data relating to age of arriage in different districts, enrolment rates and drop-out rates and discovered that while more girls enrolled into schools at lower classes, the dropout rate of girls was higher as they reached adolescence. Thus, a conditional cash transfer scheme was introduced that incentivized education till at least 18 and discouraged early marriage.

“The Kanyashree project is a rare instance where data was used. Much of the so-called public policy hap pens, if not in a vacuum, largely on perception. There are some instances where one acts on specific inputs but by and large, be it regulatory policies or development oriented projects, the decision is rarely based on data. We need to access data more often to take away the biases and reach an informed decision,“ chief secretary Basudeb Banerjee said at a workshop on Kolkata Urban Observatory , a proposed data centre that will collect real-time data and disseminate it for indicator-driven policies and projects instead of them being resource-driven. IIT-Kharagpur is coordinating the KUO initiative.