Model Framework for Replication: Usages of RTI in Rural Rajasthan, India

Enhancing Transparency and Reforming the Processes

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Foreword

The Right to Information (RTI) is one of the eight basic consumer rights as per the UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection (1985). This is also an integral part of the Indian Consumer Protection Act (1986). Furthermore, it is one of the citizen's fundamental rights, i.e., the right to freedom of speech and expression, under Article 19(1) of the Constitution of India. After many deliberations over the years, the RTI Act was passed by the Indian Parliament on October 12, 2005, thus opening up the governance processes of the country to the public. The RTI Act has far-reaching implications for the right to information of the consumer-citizen.

The Right to Information is a key enabler of good governance – being a tool to ensure transparency and accountability in the government. It also helps to ensure participation of the public in the governance process, eliminate corruption and empower the people. It gives the citizens the right to seek information and makes it binding on the officials to store and make the information easily available to the public. The only exception is when the information is sensitive to security and international relations.

Today, freedom of information law is considered to be a part of international law and about 90 countries have adopted it. India's RTI Act is seen as one of the world's best laws, with a strong record of implementation in a short period. From the day the Act came into force, enlightened citizenry are using it strategically. However, some stiff challenges have surfaced, including a threat of amendment, and all concerned have to meet these collectively.

CUTS was an integral part of the RTI movement, which started in the State of Rajasthan in the early 1990s. It has been actively engaged in public hearings, formation of Block Level 'Information and Advisory Committees' meetings against the proposed move of the Central Government to amend the RTI Act. CUTS has been organising annual events in Rajasthan to commemorate the enactment of the Act in India and review the progress of the implementation of the law in the State and the challenges faced in the process.

I am happy to observe that the focused interventions of CUTS at the grassroots, in collaboration with Partnership for Transparency (PTF), are yielding concrete results in terms of enhancing transparency and accountability in the government process and in contributing towards

containing corruption in the system. The interventions echo CUTS' philosophy of outcomes being more important than outputs.

I hope this Toolkit will be helpful for others working on RTI to replicate the successful interventions in Rajasthan.

Jaipur   **Pradeep S. Mehta**
September 30, 2010   Secretary General

Preface

Democratic freedom cannot be guaranteed under conditions where the basic characteristics of political democracy are stifled. Information enters the debate on governance at this point, basically from two perspectives: the freedom of speech, organisation and freedom of the media. Citizens cannot be free if every channel of basic democratic freedom is not freely accessible to them. Secondly, the right to seek and receive information is part and parcel of human rights. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and its twin Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), guarantees the same.

To that extent, Article 19 prohibits states from interfering with the enjoyment of these rights, requiring them to take practical steps to ensure freedom of expression. This includes legislative or other regulatory frameworks, as well as 'practical' positive measures. The issue here is not access to information *per se,* but also 'equitable' access to information, including government-held information. It is obvious that access to government-held information is the basis for democracy and public participation in ensuring accountability in governance. Such access is difficult to obtain where legislative frameworks and review mechanisms for implementation are absent.

The plea here is not for piecemeal access to information but for systematically integrating information in the debate on fundamental public issues into an accessible source. Democracy revolves around the basic tenet of citizens being at the centre of governance – rule of the people. Since the government is run on behalf of the people, they have a right to be informed directly.

The RTI Act, 2005 was enacted by the Parliament of India, giving Indian citizens' access to government-held information. While the RTI Act is widely heralded as a tool to contain corruption in public life, it is also significant for its affirmation of the basic principle of the government's accountability to its people. The RTI underscores the idea that democratic governance requires an informed citizenry and that lack of transparency in government conceals the operation of vested interests against public interest. By facilitating the public's participation in governance, RTI is potentially leading the way to a truly participatory democracy.

The RTI Act, 2005 legislated by the Central Government is seen as a landmark development in Indian governance and administration. It is already proving to be a revolutionary move, which will carry India forward. This legislation certainly falls in the category of one of the most progressive laws, as it fundamentally alters the normative basis of secrecy in Indian governance and administration.

The RTI Act comes as a paradigm shift, as it completely opens up the system and invites public to see whatever it wants to see and the system has to show. The access to information not only reforms administration but also empowers the public. It empowers the public to ask for any information that may leave the officialdom embarrassed. Officialdom had not thought that such a legislation could be enacted. With its enactment, the administration has come under public scrutiny. In a way, administration has become directly accountable to the public. The most radical provision of the Act is that the information seeker need not give any reason for it or prove his *locus standi*. This legislation has ended asymmetrical and undemocratic power relationship between the administration and the public in one go. The power relationship has been made to tilt in favour of the public.

This Act is proving to be one of the biggest mobilising factors forcing administration to show respect to democracy. Bureaucracy is not finding itself able to withstand the public pressure. This Act has brought the bureaucracy before the public and has taken away its sense of being powerful and unquestionable. The RTI Act not only ensures democratic elements in administration but also improves efficiency and increases promptness and speedy action in administration.

CUTS, in collaboration with PTF, conceptualised an intervention at a time when the implementation of the RTI in India was gaining a momentum and had started yielding results. The intervention is mainly aimed to test the potential of the Act as a social accountability tool. The first phase of the intervention, entitled 'Combating Corruption in Rajasthan State, India, by Applying RTI Act as a Tool', lasted a year, i.e., from March 2007 to September 2008 and was formally launched by Wajahat Habibullah, the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) of India. Encouraged by its success and the response, the second phase was formulated with a more focused approach.

The second phase of the intervention, entitled, 'Reforming the Processes in the Rural Development Department through Policy and Civic Engagement, based on RTI Act, 2005, in Rajasthan, India' (RePoRDD), with PTF was implemented between May 2009 to September 2010. It was launched by Shailesh Gandhi, the CIC. Targeting just one department and three identified schemes in a very specific geographical area, it followed a 'demonstration plot approach'. The intervention created a huge impact in terms of reforming the processes, by enhancing transparency and accountability in the service delivery processes.

The CGCC, grassroots watchdog groups for awareness generation and handholding, was at the centre of the intervention. The two initiatives therein, namely, the 'RTI Advisory and Information Cell' (RAIC) and developing 'RTI Model *Gram Panchayats'*, proved very effective. The exposure visit of the *Panchayat* officials to the *Gram Panchayats* in Kerala was of the most appreciated activities under this intervention.

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This Toolkit is an attempt to capture and consolidate the highlights of the interventions and learning for the purpose of replication in other parts of India and elsewhere. While thanking PTF for this rewarding partnership, I take this opportunity to congratulate the members of the project team, Madhu Sudan Sharma and Dharmendra Chaturvedi, for taking the intervention to its logical conclusion and the members of the CGCC for their untiring commitment to the cause of the RTI in the country.

Jaipur
September 30, 2010

George Cheriyan
Director, CUTS International

Chapter 1

About the Toolkit

What is the Aim?

The Toolkit, entitled, 'Model Framework for Replication: Usages of RTI in Rural Rajasthan, India: Enhancing Transparency and Reforming the Processes', is published under the project Reforming the Processes in the Rural Development Department through Policy Dialogue and Civic Engagement, Based on RTI Act (2005) in Rajasthan, India. It explores the need of reforming the service delivery and decision-making processes in three selected national flagship schemes implemented by the Rural Development Department, Government of Rajasthan. The main aim of this Toolkit is to enhance the capability of the citizens to use the RTI Act constructively, which would contribute to reducing the systemic forms of corruption *vis-à-vis* reforms.

> **The Toolkit is an analytical compilation of experiences gained during the implementation of the project, including a wide range of diverse activities, public and stakeholders' consultations/peer learning and formation of RTI support groups in rural areas and CSOs' networking for promoting strategic use of RTI**

How Was It Developed?

The Toolkit is designed for citizens/coalitions working against corruption in India and across the world and has been developed as part of focused and welfare schemes targeted in two project districts of Rajasthan by involving CGCCs, proactive citizens, scheme beneficiaries and local CSOs. It is an analytical compilation of experiences gained during the implementation of the project, including a wide range of diverse activities, public and stakeholders' consultations/peer learning and formation of RTI support groups in rural areas and CSOs' networking for promoting strategic use of RTI.

What Is the Structure?

The Toolkit is divided into four sections. Section 1 contains the introduction, aims, objectives and usage of the Toolkit. Section 2 deals with the rationale behind the project and emphasises the need of reforming the processes in the Rural Development Department and sheds light on the RTI Act, 2005 as an effective tool. Section 3 is related to the effective implementation of the RTI Act through people's participation and constructive policy dialogue. Section 4 carries several success stories, in the form of real case studies while using RTI.

How to Use It?

This Toolkit has been designed to assist and guide the citizens to use the RTI 2005 and exercise this right more effectively. The Toolkit consists of a set of tools that can be used to obtain and use information on various aspects related to the functioning of public agencies to improve governance. It can be effectively used to increase transparency and accountability in government agencies and thus directly benefit marginalised groups. The Toolkit can be used for making the recently introduced RTI Act effective.

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Who Can Use It?

The Toolkit is mainly targeted at NGOs, activists and civil society groups that are working on governance issues. It will also be useful for individuals and organisations working on human rights, justice and corruption issues. Community members (either individually or collectively) can also use this Toolkit. It will be particularly useful for NGOs and activists working in those countries/areas where the RTI has been enacted on paper, but its implementation is poor. While the presence of an enabling environment, in the form of a specific RTI law helps, the Toolkit can be also used effectively in areas/countries where there is no specific law on RTI.

Chapter 2
Executive Summary

Background

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART), one of the programme centres of Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS), in partnership with the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), Washington DC, implemented a project, entitled 'Reforming the Processes in the Rural Development Department through Policy and Civic Engagement, Based on RTI Act (2005) in Rajasthan, India', from May 2009 to September 2010. The activities under the project had been confined to two districts of Rajasthan, Jaipur and Tonk, and had been conceived to make the attempts more rigorous and deeper in defeating corruption.

It was done through diagnosing systemic causes of various facets of corruption and adopting measures to address them through simplifying the service delivery process, re-institutionalising agency processes and enhancing transparency and people's participation. These efforts ultimately contributed to improving RTI response capacity of service providers by using RTI Act as a tool in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana* (SGSY) and *Indira Aavas Yojana* (IAY) implemented by the *Panchayati Raj* and Rural Development Department, Rajasthan Government.

> **Efforts ultimately contributed to improving RTI response capacity of service providers by using RTI Act as a tool in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana* (SGSY) and *Indira Aavas Yojana* (IAY)**

The mentioned Phase II Project was in continuation of the execution of Phase I Project entitled 'Combating Corruption in Rajasthan State, India, by Applying RTI Act as a Tool', which was implemented in two divisions of Rajasthan, Jaipur (five districts) and

Ajmer (four districts), from March 2007 to September 2008, with the main objective of generating awareness and provoking/encouraging the citizens to use the RTI Act as a tool of addressing corrupt practices in the state government-run programmes. This one-and-a-half-year project was launched by Wajahat Habibullah, the Chief Information Commissioner, Government of India, with the objectives of generating awareness about RTI Act, 2005 and combating corruption by using it as a tool.

> **...more opportunities for citizens' interactive and engagement activities had been created and also scope was deepened to improve the knowledge base for effective enforcement of the RTI Act, 2005**

Since a supportive momentum in the previous phase had already been built up in the two target districts and majority of relevant stakeholders were aware of CUTS-PTF partnership for combating corruption by promoting legitimate 'information accessibility' by using RTI as a Tool. The network of 'Consortium Groups for Combating Corruption' (CGCCs) that had been formed and encouraged through building up their knowledge and capacity in previous phase, played a key role in motivating common people for filing RTI Applications. In addition, more opportunities for citizens' interactive and engagement activities had been created and also scope was deepened to improve the knowledge base for effective enforcement of the RTI Act, 2005 for the recipients and providers of selected services, particularly. The phase II activities were also designed to achieve the goals and objectives which are mentioned here:

Goal

Contribute towards reduced corruption in the processes of NREGS, SGSY and IAY implemented by the *Panchayat Raj* and Rural Development Department in Rajasthan, India.

Objectives

- Reduced incidence of bribery/corruption experienced by the project area citizens for service delivery under the targeted schemes of the PRIs and Rural Development Department.
- Transparency and accountability in the target schemes increased through RTI Act.
- Citizens in the project area are able to obtain corruption free services through empowered network of CGCCs, CSOs and other interested citizens that conduct advocacy at multiple levels and play the role of 'watchdog'.

Target Area

The project was implemented in two districts, namely, Tonk under Ajmer division and Jaipur under Jaipur division.

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Duration

The duration of the project was of one-and-a-half years, i.e., from May 01, 2009 to September 30, 2010.

Methodology and Process

A network of trained and resourceful CGCCs, CSOs and other interested individuals working together for transparency and accountability in all 17 blocks of Jaipur and Tonk districts was formed and worked in a focussed manner, which resulted in the emergence of trained critical mass within the community, increased use of RTI for targeting corruption issues and denial of benefits meant for common man in case of not paying bribes.

> **An RTI Advisory and Information cell was opened to advise and educate the masses, proactive citizenries and victims of corruption about the RTI Act**

An RTI Advisory and Information Cell was opened to advise and educate the masses, proactive citizen and victims of corruption about the RTI Act and its usages in government departments and targeting the areas of corruption to get corruption-free service delivery meant for them. An orientation programme of the concerned staff was conducted for handling it effectively. A total 210 phone calls were received and most of the callers were facing a situation in which service providers were demanding bribes in lieu of rendering the entitled services. More than 43 callers/ visitors filed RTI applications in various departments (26 of them received the demanded information) and used it as a tool which helped these 43 people to avail those services without paying any bribe, denied earlier.

The 'RTI Ground Realities and Corruption Vulnerability Survey' was conducted with 600 scheme beneficiaries, engaging the consortium of CGCCs. This survey revealed that every beneficiary of NREGS (average ₹303), IAY (₹1268) and SGSY (₹660) were paying bribes to avail the benefits. In Jaipur and Tonk districts, total bribes paid were: in NREGS (₹14.9 crore), IAY (₹48 lakh) and in SGSY (₹37 lakh). These findings formed the basis for evidence-based advocacy and constructive and continued dialogue with high officials of the concerned Rural Development Department.

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This constructive dialogue with the government resulted in passing office orders related to transparency and accountability. The data of the RTI Ground Realities and Corruption Vulnerability Analysis (RGR & CVA) survey was disseminated widely to common masses and service providers by organising 'RTI Block *Chaupals*' in all 17 blocks of both the

districts and their views and suggestions were invited. '*Chaupal*' means a meeting place of local villagers to discuss day-to-day issues with each other. In these Block Level RTI *Chaupals* (BLRCs), strategies were also discussed to make the service delivery system free from corruption by using RTI as a tool.

A 10-member delegation visited Kozhikode and Wynadu districts of Kerala during November 13-18, 2009. The delegates included *Sarpanch* and *Gram Sachiv*, Mundia and Harsulia *Gram Panchayats* and Sub-divisional Officer, Niwai, Tonk. Two NGO partners from SAJAG and NEH Sansthan and three staff members from CUTS were part of the delegation. The visit was very educative, an eye-opener and full of learning for all the visitors, which helped them in understanding the best practices related to people's planning process at ward and *Gram Panchayat* level out there and imbibing these to implement in their working areas in selected districts. It is significant to mention that, in India, it is the state of Kerala where 40 percent of the total plan outlay of the Rural Development and *Panchayati Raj* Department goes directly to *Gram Panchayats*.

As an outcome, one visiting official passed an order down the line in all *Gram Panchayats* and Block Development Offices to have a complaint-cum-suggestion box, fixed at some prominent place of their office so that common citizens could drop their complaints and later actions can be taken by concerned officials. The order was followed in some of the *Gram Panchayats* and the visiting official also placed a complaint-cum-suggestion box in his office just after returning from this visit. This exposure visit was extremely helpful in ensuring the participation of these key stakeholders throughout the project period.

Efforts were made to develop a Model RTI *Gram Panchayat* (MRGP) in each district to ensure transparency, accountability and corruption-free service delivery system in selected schemes. In these MRGPs, community mobilisation programmes were organised in villages regarding RTI awareness, filing process, identified areas of corruption and using RTI as a tool so that they all avail services without paying bribes.

As a result of these mass mobilisation efforts, slogan writings and frequent visits, more than 90 people came forward to file RTI applications on corruption issues prevalent in the three selected schemes. In both the districts, 450 RTI applications were filed. These applications were based on issues of corruption that cropped up during the RGR and CVA survey: The information demanded in most of the RTI applications was related to acts of corruption. These RTI applications were need-based, represented burning issues among

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beneficiaries and were filed individually, but supported collectively. These also contributed to simplifying the processes, use of RTI by common people, satisfactory resolution of problems, enhancing responsiveness of services providers and reducing corruption experienced by common people.

Two advocacy meetings were organised at the state level and participation of policy makers and media was ensured. These meetings were extremely useful and fruitful in terms of putting the ground realities and corruption vulnerability survey findings before the policy makers. As an outcome of these meetings, official orders were given to ensure transparency and accountability measures in governmental schemes.

> **A set of recommendations for simplified and transparent service delivery processes of the selected schemes was submitted to the government and policy makers to take appropriate actions**

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Chapter 3

Growth Process and Salient Features of Indian RTI Act, 2005

In a democracy, people are the masters and government exists to serve them. People have a right to know how they are being governed, because the government runs on the money paid by people in the form of taxes. People have a right to know how their money is being utilised so as to intensify the process of paradigm shift from state-centric to citizen-centric model of development, with a transparent and an accountable regime. The RTI movement in India came into existence in 1990s by resolving a major contradiction between the colonial acts, which prevented access to information and the post-independent Indian Constitution, which recognised seeking of information as a fundamental right to promote transparent, accountable, responsible, participatory and decentralised democracy.
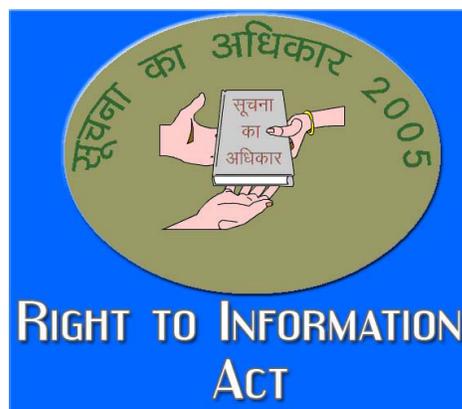
As a result of the grassroots movement for the RTI to combat corruption and promote good governance, the state responded in the form of the RTI Act, 2005

As a result of the grassroots movement for the RTI to combat corruption and promote good governance, the state responded in the form of the RTI Act, 2005. With the introduction of the RTI Act, 2005, the colonial acts, such as the Official Secrets Act, Indian Evidence Act and the Civil Service Code of Conduct Rules, which contain provisions that restrict the Fundamental RTI, as ensured to the citizens in the Constitution, have become irrelevant.

Colonial Acts and Denial of Information

The battle for appropriate legislation for RTI has been fought on two main planks. The first was a demand for amendment of the draconian colonial Official Secrets Act, 1923 and the second one was a campaign for an effective law on RTI. The Official Secrets Act, 1923 is a replica of the erstwhile British Official Secrets Act and deals with espionage and the damaging 'catch all' Section 5, which makes it an offence to part with any information received in the course of official duty to non-officials.

During the beginning of the 90s, the focus of citizens' groups shifted from demanding merely an amendment to the Official Secrets Act to the demand for its outright repeal and its replacement by a comprehensive legislation, which would make disclosure the duty and secrecy the offence. Even a powerful grassroots organisation like Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) continues to experience enormous difficulties in securing access to the copies of government documents, despite clear administrative instructions that on demand certified copies of such public documents should be available to all the citizens irrespective of any discrimination. This highlighted the importance of people's RTI, which should be enforceable by law.

Constitution and Right to Information

For the transparent functioning of the democratic political system, the founding fathers of the Constitution included the provisions of the right to expression in part three of the Constitution in the Fundamental Rights. While there is no specific RTI or even right to freedom of the press in the Constitution of India, the RTI has been embedded into the Constitutional guarantee, which is a part of the Chapter on Fundamental Rights.

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The Indian Constitution has an impressive array of basic and inalienable rights contained in Chapter three of the Constitution. These include the Right to Equality Before the Law (Article 14), the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression [Article 19 (1)(a)] and the Right to Life and Personal Liberty (Article 21). The Right to Constitutional Remedies in Article 32 backs these, i.e. the Right to approach the Supreme Court in case of infringement of any of these rights. These rights have received dynamic interpretation by the Supreme Court over the years and can truly said to be the basis for the development of the Rule of Law in India.

The legal position with regard to RTI has developed through several Supreme Court decisions given in the context of all the above rights, but more specifically in the context of the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression, which has been said to be the adverse side of the Right to Know, and one cannot be exercised without the other.

The interesting aspect of these judicial pronouncements is that the scope of the right has gradually widened, taking into account the cultural shifts in the polity and the society.

The development of RTI as a part of the Constitutional Law of the country started with petitions of the press to the Supreme Court for enforcement of certain logistical implications of the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression, such as challenging governmental orders for control of newsprint bans on distribution of papers, etc. It was through these cases that the concepts of the public's right to know developed.

Supreme Court and Right to Information

For more than two decades, the Supreme Court of India has recognised the RTI as a constitutionally protected fundamental right, established under the Article 19 (Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression) and Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Constitution. The Court has recognised the right to access to information from government departments as fundamental to democracy. Justice K K Mathew of the Supreme Court of India said that "In a government...where all the agents of the public must be responsible for their conduct, there can be but few secrets. The people have a right to know every public act, everything that is done in a public way, by their public functionaries...The responsibility of officials to explain or to justify their acts is the chief safeguard against oppression and corruption".

> **For more than two decades, the Supreme Court of India has recognised the RTI as a constitutionally protected fundamental right, established under the Article 19 (Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression) and Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Constitution**

Progressive Politicians and Right to Information

For the first time, among the politicians of India, in 1990, VP Singh, the then Prime Minister of India headed by National Front Government, stressed the importance of the RTI Act as a legislated right. Due to lack of political support and will, the RTI Act did not materialise during VP Singh's tenure.

The freedom movement, the Constitution of India, the Supreme Court and some of the politicians supported RTI, but it could not materialise due to various reasons such as policy support, institutional arrangements, etc. Therefore, to have a strong RTI Act in place at the Central level, strong grassroots level movement was needed. The MKSS, Parivartan, etc., fulfilled the gap of the grassroots level movement and intellectual pressure and inputs were given by the 'National Campaign for People's Right to Information' and 'Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative'.

Public Hearing is the Genesis of RTI Movement

Public Hearing or *Jan Sunwais* is the origin point of the RTI movement in India. The instrument of public hearing was initiated by the MKSS in some parts of rural Rajasthan. Public hearings were initiated to check corruption. A public hearing is nothing but an open and democratic debate about public issues. In these public hearings, elected representatives, government officials, people, local intelligentsia such as lawyers, media persons, NGOs, community based organisations (CBOs), external observers, etc., participated. In these public hearings, a great deal of corruption and misuse came to light. Secrecy in the maintenance of records and registers and lack of accessibility to the public information for the citizens emerged as a major reason for this. Therefore, to combat corruption in developmental activities initiated either by the Central or state government, there was a need to have an Act to access public information.

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Pioneering States in Introducing RTI

In response to the pressure of the grassroots movement, as well as to satisfy the international money lending institutions to borrow, some of the state governments, such as Goa (1997), Tamil Nadu (1997), Rajasthan (2000), Karnataka, (2000), Delhi (2001), Assam (2002), Maharashtra (2003), Madhya Pradesh (2003) and Jammu, Kashmir (2003), introduced the RTI Act. Among all these acts, the Maharashtra RTI Act was considered as a model Act in promoting transparency, accountability and responsiveness in all the institutes of the state as well as private organisations which are getting financial support from the government. The Tamil Nadu Act was considered as the most innovative one in how to refuse the information to the seekers.

> **...the state-level RTI acts provided the culture of transparency, accountability, responsiveness, social audit and awareness among the people. These state acts were the models for preparation of the National RTI Act**

Due to lack of awareness about the RTI Act among the grassroots, lack of institutional arrangements for the implementation and lot of exemptions in the RTI Acts of some states led to non-achievement of its objectives. Despite all these lacunas in the Act, the state-level RTI acts provided the culture of transparency,

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accountability, responsiveness, social audit and awareness among the people. These state acts were the models for preparation of the National RTI Act.

Towards a National RTI Act

For the introduction of National RTI Act, there have been efforts since 1996 onwards. The National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI), founded in 1996, campaigned for a national law facilitating the exercise of the fundamental RTI. International organisations such as Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) analysed that the RTI contribution for the enactment of the National RTI Act in India was through providing aid to discussions, analysis of the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act and recommendations to the National Advisory Council, Cabinet Ministers and Members of the Parliament.

In response to the pressure from the grassroots movement and national and international organisations, the Press Council of India, under the guidance of its Chairman, Justice P.B. Sawant, drafted a model bill that was later updated at a workshop organised by the National Institute of Rural Development and sent to the Government of India, which was one of the reference papers for the first draft bill prepared by the Government of India. For some political and other reasons, the bill could not be taken up by the Parliament.

> **The coalition government at the Centre, led by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), formulated an agenda called the 'Common Minimum Programme' (CMP). One of the agenda items of the CMP was the introduction of the 'RTI Act'**

Again, in 1997, the United Front Government appointed a working group, under the chairmanship of H.D. Shourie, which drafted a law called 'The FoI Bill, 1997'. This bill was also not enacted. In 1998, although Prime Minister Vajpayee announced that a law on RTI should be enacted soon, it did not materialise. In 2000, the FoI Bill, 2000 was tabled before the Parliament. After some debate, it was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs for review. The FoI Bill was passed by the Parliament as the FoI Act, 2002. However, it could not come into force, as the then government never issued the necessary notification (Section 31 of the RTI Act, 2005 repealed the FoI Act, 2002).

The coalition government at the Centre, led by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), formulated an agenda called the 'Common Minimum Programme' (CMP). One of the agenda items of the CMP was the introduction of the 'RTI Act'. The CMP stated clearly that the RTI Act will be made more progressive, participatory and meaningful. In order to look after the implementation of the CMP, the UPA constituted a National Advisory Council. In the National Advisory Council, some of the activists, like Shekhar Singh, Aruna Roy and Jean Drez associated with the National Campaign for Peoples' RTI Act put the pressure on the UPA government to pass the bill and enact a law. In response to these efforts, the Parliament passed the bill and the President of India gave his assent to the Act on June 15, 2005 and the implementation process of the RTI started on October 12, 2005.

Salient Features of RTI Act, 2005

1. RTI Act, 2005 empowers every citizen to ask any questions from the government or seek any information, take copies of or inspect any government document.

2. Any citizen can seek information from any department of the Central or state government, PRIs and any other organisation or institution (including NGOs) that is established, constituted, owned, controlled or substantially financed, directly or indirectly, by the state or Central Government [Section 2(a) & (h)].

3. In each department, at least one officer has to be designated as a public information officer (PIO). He/she accepts the request forms and provides information sought by the people [Section 5(1)].

4. In addition, in each sub-district/divisional level there is a provision for assistant public information officers (APIOs) who receive requests for information and appeals against the decisions of the PIOs and then send them to the appropriate authorities [Section 5(2)].

5. Any person seeking information should file an application in writing or through electronic means in English or Hindi (or in the official language of the area), along with the application fees with the PIO/APIO [Section 6(1)].

6. Where a request cannot be made in writing, the PIO is supposed to render all reasonable assistance to the person making the request orally to reduce the same in writing [Section 6(1)].

7. Where the applicant is deaf, blind or otherwise impaired, the public authority is expected to provide assistance to enable access to the information, including providing such assistance as may be appropriate for the inspection [Section 7(4)].

8. Besides the applicant's contact details, the applicant is not required to either give any reason/s for requesting the information or any other personal details [Section 6(2)].

9. A reasonable application fee (₹10 as prescribed by the Central Government, whereas in other states the fee amount may vary) will be charged for each application and supply of information. However, no fee is chargeable from persons below the poverty line [Section 7(5)], or if the information is provided after the prescribed period [Section 7(6)].

10. Fees will be charged for obtaining a copy of the documents. (The Central Government has prescribed fees of ₹2 for each page created and copied. In some states, the charges may vary. If the information is not provided in the stipulated time limit, then the information will be provided for free. [u/s 7(6)].

11. The various exemptions from disclosure of information are listed in Section 8 of the RTI Act, 2005. If the sought information is in public interest, then the exemptions enumerated in Section 8 of the RTI Act, 2005 can also be disclosed.

12. If a PIO fails to furnish the information asked for under the Act or fails to communicate the rejection order within the time specified, the PIO will be liable to pay a penalty of ₹250 per day for each day of delay, subject to a maximum of ₹25,000 [Section 20(1)]. The Information Commission can also recommend disciplinary action against the concerned PIO, under the service rules applicable to him/her [Section 20(2)].

Chapter 4

Major Activities and Outcomes

Role and Functions of CGCCs

This CGCC approach, which is informal in nature, consisting of local CSOs/NGOs and vigilant common citizens as members, was successfully practiced and implemented during project intervention at the block level and is a need of the grassroots. The following are the functions of CGCCs:

- Working as a local 'resource person-cum-centre' for RTI;
- Awareness generation among local citizenries and motivating them for filing RTI applications;
- Providing moral support to RTI applicants in fighting with corrupt network of service providers;
- Acting as a proactive watchdog against corruption and in support of good governance;
- Creating enabling environment at the grassroots;
- Providing handholding to RTI users to maintain the sustainability of impact created; and
- Empowering grassroots CSOs/NGOs.

It was envisioned in this project to empower the grassroots CSOs/NGOs to create a wider and deeper impact and making and ensuring inroads into a larger geographical area as a proactive mechanism against corruption.

It was a rigorous field exercise to build a network of CGCCs, which was done after frequent scoping visits of both districts, and, as a result, 150 CSO representatives and proactive citizens were short-listed. Finally, 39 CGCCs were selected (at least two from 17 rural blocks) of two districts, which were based locally and had good understanding of the local issues, reach within the community and rapport with them.

Importance

Since such interventions are against the malpractices and corruption in state-run schemes and it is a fact that working against corruption is a difficult task, the selection of project partners is very crucial. These partners should be resilient and strong believers of the philosophy of non-corruption and pro-reform and capable to provide handholding, moral/resource/knowledge support to common people who are the victims of corruption.

Challenges

The process of finding pro-governance CSO partners and proactive citizens was a difficult and long process, as there were chances of their backtracking or withdrawal from the intervention. The major challenge was to motivate and provide adequate support to CGCCs at all levels. It is sometimes difficult for anti-corruption agents with RTI tools in hand to deal with cases which are related to influential people.

Tips for Replication

- Prepare a list of all potential partners from the interventional area who can meet the above mentioned challenges and understand the importance of the initiative.
- Meet with partners to discuss the intervention plan, their roles and responsibilities and benefits of working in such programmes.
- Maintaining transparency with all the CGCCs about project funds

CGCCs Orientation Programme

A two-day residential orientation was conducted for 135 RTI activists/NGO representatives (75 from Jaipur and 65 from Tonk) to mark the launch of the project in June 2009. It was divided into various breakout sessions, including group/mock exercises in understanding RTI Act, 2005, selected schemes, mode of their operation, maintaining team spirit, individual task formation and targets are set for them with their inputs. During the deliberations, the roles which have to be played and responsibilities which have to be borne by them as a member of CGCC were also discussed in detail. Lastly, the way of periodic reporting to the Project team was shared with CGCCs. The orientation was fully interactive, open for comments and suggestions of the CGCCs in which CGCCs shared their experiences with each other.

In the Jaipur orientation workshop, Shailesh Gandhi, Central Information Commissioner, New Delhi, was the chief guest and Harinesh Pandya, the famous RTI Activist from Maheti Adhikar Gujarat Pahel (MAGP), Gujarat, was the resource person. Both shared their experiences and provided inputs to the project team and CGCCs. In Tonk, Rajesh Ranjan from CHRI, Madhya Pradesh, facilitated the orientation as a resource person. Both workshops received wide media coverage.

Outcome

- All 34 CGCCs were fully trained for using RTI as a tool against corruption, rather for redressing complaints. They were oriented towards project goals, outputs and objectives; and

- Wide media coverage at the state and national level.

Importance

A trained human resource at the grassroots was required who could work as expert agent for RTI, filing process, handholding and providing support to the common people in combating corruption. Trainings are essential to enhance the capacity of these CGCCs.

Challenges

Finding right grassroots proactive people and training them by resourceful, experienced activist of RTI and ensuring transferring of practical knowledge to these selected CGCCs is important.

Tips for Replication

Identification of CGCC members should be done carefully. Those who display a proactive attitude should be preferred.

Tasks and Target Formation and Participatory Monitoring for CGCCs

The Task and Target formation for CGCCs is a very important activity and during the orientation workshop, CGCCs were the same along with the monitoring mechanism of achieving these tasks and targets. Monitoring was done on a monthly basis at individual level, using monthly reporting and CGCC feedback formats. The results of assessment of these filled in formats are as follows:

- Participation in training, meetings, consultations = 100 percent
- Sending photo copies of RTI applications = 90 percent
- Making regular telephone calls for reporting = 75 percent
- Fulfilment of objectives = 75 percent
- Sending regular progress reports = 65 percent
- Sending feedback forms regularly = 50 percent
- Level of completion of their monthly reports = 40 percent
- Average time spent by CGCCs in the field with citizens = 6-7days in a month

Importance

A well-defined road map has to be drawn for all the CGCCs for entire project period so that targets and objectives can be achieved in a time bound manner. This can be done by using Logical Framework Approach (LFA) as a tool so that the level of achievement of the objectives can be measured time to time.

Challenges

- Training to CGCCs for framing the right questions in an RTI Application and keeping the same short and concise and finally filing it before the right PIO so that rejection of RTI can be prevented, information can be received on time and no unnecessary cost has to be paid by applicant, was very tough.

- The task and targets relating to exposing corrupt officials was very difficult. This can brings harmful results for both CGCCs themselves and corrupt officials such as suspension from service.

Tips for Replication
- The target should be systemic reforms, rather than individual witch-hunting.

Encouraging Filing of RTI Applications by Common People for Quality Services

The main tool, which was used throughout the intervention, was to demand information related to malpractice of corruption under the RTI Act, 2005. About 450 attempts were made using RTI as a tool, focusing on the corrupt instances that came out of the survey. These corruption-combating attempts were made mainly by common people with the help of local CGCCs and most of RTI requests were successful in getting the desired objectives, which resulted in some positive changes in the service delivery and decision-making processes.

Importance
Every RTI application was an attempt against corruption with the aim of introducing positive changes and reforms in the service delivery of the selected schemes and addressing an area or form of corruption.

Challenges
It was experienced that most of the victims of corruption wanted to be aware of the RTI Act, but when they were advised to use it, they were not ready to take it up with the local service providers. With most of the RTI applicants, it was a long process to prepare them mentally for action.

Tips for Replication
- Identifying the core areas and forms of corruption and reaching out to victims of corruption and than suggesting them for filing RTI requests regarding the issue.
- Local CGCCs has to provide handholding to the common man who is filing a RTI application
- An informal group could be formed on behalf of which one member could file RTI applications.

Block Level RTI Chaupals (BLRCs)

17 Block *Chaupals* were organised in all the rural blocks for sharing the RGR & CVA survey findings, corrupt practices and areas of corruption in the selected schemes and for getting feedback from participants, in addition to providing a platform to the local participants. CGCCs, RTI applicants and corruption victims got together for further handholding and facilitating future strategies.

Block level officials, leading NGOs, PRI representatives, the media, the youth, students, RTI applicants and RAIC callers were mobilised by local CGCCs in advance for these meetings, which were well attended by 876 (553 in Jaipur and 323 in Tonk) participants, including 211 service providers and 215 women. All the participants were provided with an RTI Resource Pack containing RTI newsletters, brief of CUTS publications, agenda of the *Chaupals* and issues to be discussed. These 17 BLRCs were covered in the local media on 29 occasions and resulted in raising awareness about corruption and the use of the RTI Act through the *Chaupals* and the media.

Importance

Participants got courage to use RTI as a tool for combating corruption. They also came to know about the clear picture of corruption in the schemes and use of RTI in the concerned blocks.

Challenges

The block level officials and PRI representatives were hesitant in fixing the dates for block *Chaupals*. Orders to do so from the district level facilitated the process. Acceptance of the survey findings by service providers was difficult.

Tips for Replication

To start with, direct meeting with the block level officials to share the agenda and objectives of these BLRCs is worthwhile. Corrupt local officials should not be named during these meetings. The message should focus on the fight against corruption as a systemic malady, not against any individual.

Following up of RTI Applicants

During the project period, stakeholders, mostly CGCCs and beneficiaries, were followed up from time to time to know about their target achievements, problems faced, activities conducted and their expectations from the project team which helped the project team to make the plans and activities. CGCCs were also updated about the project activities, targets and outcomes of the project. As a result, the current status of most of the RTI applications was known.

Importance

Rigorous follow up with most of the RTI applicants is very important to know about the current position of the application to suggest/take appropriate further actions and providing handholding or moral support to applicants, if required.

Challenges

It is difficult to follow up applicants because they themselves break contact with CGCCs due to vastness and remoteness of the interventional area etc. Most of the rural applicants do not respond to any letter written to them.

Tips for Replication
- At the application filing stage, mobile number of either applicant or his/her family member or neighbour has to be necessarily collected which makes easy to contact him.
- A format to follow up applicants is always helpful.

Learning-cum-Exposure Visit to Kerala

A week-long exposure visit to Kerala, known for its transparent systems, service and decision-making processes, was organised to learn about the good practices of *Gram Panchayats* and try to replicate them in Rajasthan. Government officials from the Rural Development Department, PRI members and CGCCs of Jaipur and Tonk, 10 motivated and committed stakeholders were chosen for the visit. The visit was to two *Gram Panchayats* in the Kozhikode and Wayanad districts of Kerala. The interactions with local service providers and elected *Panchayat* representatives resulted in a perceptible attitudinal change in the visitors to replicate good practices seen and learnt there.

Importance

Kerala is one of the most progressive state of India and lot of good practices have been innovated there. Learning by seeing successful and efficient endeavours and imbibing them is one of the best ways to initiate desirable changes at *Gram Panchayats* in Rajasthan.

Challenges
- Initiating some positive changes as per good practices learnt during the visit is very difficult because of difference in the overall system in place.
- Language was a barrier for visitors to understand the conversations that had happened in Malayalam.

Tips for Replication
- A person who can translate the Malayalam into Hindi has to be within the group so that language problem can be eliminated.
- Local contacts at the site of the visiting state have to be capable to organise meetings at *Gram Panchayat*, block and district levels.

Resource Supply Mechanism to CGCCs

Supply of the required resource material like RTI application forms, information, education and communication (IEC) material, RAIC details, copies of the RTI Act, 2005, other formats, RTI resource packs, besides providing personal advice, consultations, moral support, etc., were ensured during the project period to all the CGCCs. The periodic meetings, workshops, interface meetings and publishing of quarterly newsletter covering complete project activities also helped in maintaining constant touch.

Importance
These inputs definitely impacted the outcomes favourably.

Challenges
Keeping track of specific individual needs of all the CGCCs and immediately supplying the same was challenging.

Tips for Replication
Need assessment of the resource material should be done in advance and supply ensured.

Model Gram Panchayats

One *Gram Panchayats* each was selected from target two districts for making it a model in terms of transparency, accountability and implementation and awareness among common people about Access to Information. The selected *Gram Panchayats* were Harsuliya in Phagi in Jaipur and Mundia in Niwai in Tonk. After scoping visits, rapport building with service providers and key community leaders was started.

On the one hand, service providers were imparted training, exposure, resource material, etc., on RTI to improve their response capacity and, on the other, side activities were done for common citizens to raise their awareness about RTI, corruption issues and preparing them for action against corruption and reforming the corrupt service delivery and decision making process through using RTI at *Gram Panchayat* and block levels.

Interface between both service providers and recipients were also done to share each others' views. For this, frequent visits were made to all villages of the selected *Gram Panchayats* and its offices every month to carry out the activities engaging local CGCCs and local proactive citizens.

Importance
It creates at least one *Gram Panchayat* in a district as model in terms of transparency and accountability and with regard to awareness on RTI, which has a replicating effect up on other *Gram Panchayats* in the district as well as power to influence the key officials and political leadership, who are interested in initiating a change.

Challenges
Change of elected representatives in the middle of the intervention, frequent transfers of service providers, and facing the wrath of higher officials who have vested interests were the major challenges. Such interventions should be for three to four years of duration, rather than one year or so.

Tips for Replication
Good rapport has to be established between the elected representatives and the implementing organisation.

RTI Evening Classes for Youth, Women and Common Man

A total of 20 RTI evening classes (10 in each MRGP) were organised in the villages of MRGPs in the evenings, so that in free time villagers, importantly the youth and women, could participate. This was done mainly to educate them about the importance, potential and filing process of the RTI Act, 2005. These evening classes were well-publicised one or two days in advance by local CGCCs. The team used to reach the villages in the afternoon itself to mobilise villagers and interact with them in detail and remained there till late evening. As a result of these evening classes, residents of these MRGPs were mobilised, local issues were discussed and then advocated before *Gram Panchayat* and district level service providers. MRGP people were mobilised and 70 RTI applications were filed.

Areas Covered during the Discussions

- Delayed payment of wages under NREGS;
- Task measurement process not being satisfactory;
- Facilities at worksites not available;
- Post offices not making payments after 2.00 pm;
- Hand pumps not working;
- *Gram Panchayat* staff not responsive and misbehaves with villages;
- Job cards not made;
- Most of the houses allotted under IAY incomplete, as sanctioned amount is less and *Gram Panchayat* officials deduct some amount;
- The quality of *pakka* (cemented and concrete) work not satisfactory; and
- Lack of knowledge on the RTI Act and Social Audit forum at *Gram Panchayat* level.

The potential of the RTI Act in resolving the systemic causes of corruption and solving the problems were shared by the project staff.

Importance
The tool proved effective in reaching out to a large and diversified populace.

Challenges
Some people close to the PRIs and service providers created impediments and disturbed the proceedings by misrepresenting the reason for the evening classes. Further, if lot of people were mobilised to file RTI applications in a particular *Gram Panchayat*, the concerned PIO were not able to deal with all the applications. In many cases, higher officials favour the corrupt service providers. Since the PIO at *Gram Panchayat* level is *Panchayat* Secretary so he/she threatens the RTI applicants.

Tips for Replication
The presence of local CGCCs and PRI members during the RTI evening classes is very critical. Evening class must start with the general discussions on the problems faced by the villagers about the selected schemes and ongoing development work under NREGA in their villages and quality of work done. After this, issue of corruption,

transparency and accountability shall be discussed and finally potential and filing process of RTI should be discussed in detail so that people can understand the importance of such a powerful tool and use it.

Team shall keep RTI application forms so that RTI requests can be filed. Local CGCC shall be responsible for follow up of filed applications and follow up visits has to be made of each village after a period of time.

'Training on RTI' for MRGP Level Officials and PRI Members

To educate the officials and PRI members on the RTI Act, 2005, training programmes for *Gram Panchayat* officials and PRIs were organised in the third-quarter of the project. To make this training programme need-based, a preliminary assessment was done for deciding the content. It turned out to be a well-appreciated programme. It was done at both the MRGPs twice (due to transfers of officials) during the project period. In this, all the PRI members, including the *Sarpanch* and *Gram Panchayat* officials like the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary, were present.

Importance
Imparting the training on RTI is key for enhancing the response capacity of the PIOs and first appellate authorities for ensuring effective implementation of RTI Act and its importance.

Challenges
Frequent transfers of trained service providers were a loss for the project, and it was difficult for training new officials creating ownership.

Tips for Replication
The date of the training should be decided in advance and participation of all the PRI members, *Sarpanch, Gram Sachiv* and Assistant Secretary be ensured.

Interface Meetings

Six community official interface meetings were conducted at the MRGPs level (three in each MRGP in the third-quarter of the project, with a half-day duration each) to discuss the issues and experiences of local people related to poor service delivery and malpractices in the select schemes. A number of *Gram Panchayat* residents came with their problems. During discussions, local corruption issues were raised and heated arguments were held between service providers and the local community. These meetings were planned in advance with a clear agenda, mobilisation of the community and participation of the *Sarpanch* and the Secretary.

Importance
These interface meetings provided a platform to victims of corruption or local community to raise their concerns and range of issues to readdress. All the raised

issues were followed up with service providers for redressal and RTI requests were filed to know the progress made in this regard.

Challenges
The community fixes direct charges against service providers and it is a challenge to maintain decorum. Service providers hesitate to participate in such meetings.

Tips for Replication
- Those people from the community should be targeted and mobilised who are not too aggressive and who would heed the advice of CGCCs.
- A preliminary visit is required to mobilise beneficiaries, discuss the issues and flag relevant issues during interface.
- Service providers need to be assured of maintenance of decorum and their own self-respect at such meetings. It also needs to be impressed upon them that the community would be reacting to the system and not individuals. Proceedings should be recorded.

Constructive Dialogue with Policy Makers

CUTS officials, CGCCs and grassroots people met policy makers at various levels during the implementation period. These dialogue meetings were issue, evidence and demand-based and began in the beginning of the project itself. 11 high-level dialogue events took place between CUTS, CGCCs and policy makers, including Minister, Principal Secretary and Secretary, Rural Development Department, chief executive officers, *zila parishads*, and collectors of selected districts. Issues discussed came out of the surveys and other meetings. Advocacy workshops were discussed in brief, including the general and specific issues related to the community and individuals. Most of the policy makers, barring a few, participated in these meetings with enthusiasm. Details are contained in the following chapters.

Importance
Sharing ground experiences and data directly with policy makers provided them with an opportunity to be aware of the policy issues.

Challenges
Such a dialogue process puts pressure upon policy makers and they tend to postpone or depute junior officials. They do not allow more than three-four people to meet at any given time and, therefore, participation of CGCC members was minimal.

Tips for Replication
The agenda of the meeting should be prepared and circulated well in advance. The dialogue should focus only on two or three issues and the concerned records related to the previous dialogues should be carried.

Self-disclosure of Information by Gram Panchayats

The objective of promoting the proactive disclosure of information by PIOs using RTI as a tool was the top priority of the project activities and more than 100 RTI requests were filed by common citizens. At both the *Gram Panchayats*, RTI slogans on the RTI request filing process, potential of the Act and other relevant information were written. At *Gram Panchayat* office, duties, functions of elected *Panchayat* representatives, various committees and their roles were also written for the common citizens.

Importance in addressing corruption
Proactive disclosure and updation of information symbolises transparency and accountability. Through this disclosure of information, common citizens are informed about the decision making processes and can take part in it.

Challenges during implementation
Resistance of local officials was a big problem at the initial stage.

Tips for Replication
At first the orders related to the proactive disclosure of information has to be collected and shared with the service providers to educate them about these people and fixing their responsibility to do so. These people should be motivated to file RTI requests for knowing the status and reasons of non disclosure of information proactively.

Conducting 'Focus Group Discussions'

These FGDs were conducted to evaluate the impact of project activities and also to know about the experiences of the beneficiaries of the selected schemes who used RTI as a tool. These were also conducted to locate success stories to showcase the project results. These were conducted on a pre-decided date on which all the RTI applicants and project stakeholders of the area were invited to hear/document their experiences. Total eight FGDs were conducted in both the districts.

Importance
FGD is a good tool to procure qualitative data on the impact of the project activities. The outcomes of the FGDs substantiate the findings of survey and make it lively and complete.

Challenges
Calling the geographically dispersed project beneficiaries was difficult.

Tips for Replication
Advance planning and communication for participation.

Publishing Quarterly Newsletter

Four quarterly newsletters were published and sent to the concerned policy makers; district/block and *Gram Panchayat* level service providers and all CGCCs for information, views and suggestions. In these newsletters, success stories and media coverage were also incorporated to motivate the grassroots CGCCs and the common man.

Importance

Newsletters enhance the sphere of outreach of the project activities.

Challenge

Some times CGCCs complained about not including their success stories and experiences in the newsletter which was due to space constraints. Satisfying them was a challenge.

Tips for Replication

Regularly document progress. Media coverage, success stories and other inputs have to be incorporated in it.

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Chapter 5
Special Endeavours

RTI Advisory and Information Cell (RAIC)

An 'RTI Advisory and Information Cell' was set up to advice and educate the masses, proactive citizens and victims of corruption on the RTI Act and its usage. An orientation programme was arranged for the staff handling of RAIC. A total of 210 phone calls were received. Most of the callers were facing a situation in which service providers were demanding bribes. About 21 percent callers/visitors filed RTI applications in various departments (12 percent of them received the demanded information) and used it as a tool which helped these people to get the required services, which were denied earlier, without paying any bribes.

Most of the people who benefited from RAIC were from rural areas. Only 16 percent urban people visited the RAIC to learn about the RTI and its filing process. 19 percent were women again, mainly from villages. It was good to note that government employees were also eager to know about it and about nine percent of them availed the services of RAIC. 79 percent were from the NGO sector.

In all the cases, people wanted to know either the RTI application filing process or first or second appeal process. 54 percent of the parties wanted to use RTI, while 355 parties were interested in knowing about the RTI Act, 2005 itself.

Importance
The RAIC catered to the needs of guidance seekers from every part of Rajasthan.

Challenges
It was difficult to keep the focus on selected schemes under the project and project areas of Jaipur and Tonk districts.

Tips for Replication
- Adequate staff should be appointed (well-versed with the RTI Act, 2005 and practical problems) to attend calls.
- A full-time, dedicated phone line should be provided.
- In respect of callers, privacy of such discussions should be respected.
- Track of all callers should be maintained for classification and follow-up.
- Working hours should be fixed.

RTI Ground Realities and Corruption Vulnerability Analysis (RGR and CVA) Survey

Facts about the Interventional area: Jaipur and Tonk are two administrative districts of Rajasthan, where pre and post-surveys were conducted. Jaipur is the capital city of Rajasthan, comprising 11 rural blocks, with a geographical area of 11,117. 8 sq kms and a population of 52.5 lakh (urban – 25, 93,791, rural – 26, 58,597, males – 27, 69,096, females – 24, 83,292). It has a population density of 471 per sq kms, literacy rate of 70.63 percent and 13 sub-divisions and 13 *tehsils* and 2340 villages. This project was implemented in 11 rural blocks.

Tonk district has a geographical area of 7194 sq kms, population of 1211671, population density of 168 per sq kms, literacy rate of 52 percent and seven sub-divisions and *tehsils,* spread over 1093 villages. The project was implemented in six rural districts.

The Pre RGR and CVA survey was conducted in the second month of the project and findings were taken as base values. Similar survey was done after the end of the project activities which was know as Post RGR and CVA survey to measure the impact created and to know the progress made during the project period. Both, the baseline and endline surveys were carried out by CGCC members at block levels by CGCCs. These surveys were based on a structured questionnaire which was designed to gather general perceptions/opinions of the common citizens and service providers about various forms of corruption, corruption experiences of beneficiaries of select schemes, level of RTI awareness and its utilisation process and things related to other objectives. Both the CGCCs from each block were assigned this task.

Developing Survey Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were developed, keeping the project objectives and goals in mind. One was for selected scheme's service providers and the other for scheme beneficiaries. During the process of developing the questionnaires, consultations and feedback was taken from the governance and the project team of CUTS CART which is the project implementing organisation and comments from PTF, which is the funding agency, were also suitably incorporated in draft questionnaires. The draft questionnaires were field-tested at *Gram Panchayat* level, interviewing service providers and beneficiaries and citizens to receive their feedback and suggestions.

Importance

Since the questionnaires were related to collect the data of corruption and bribes taken from common citizenries so it was a tricky thing to form the probing questions and placing it at proper place in the questionnaires.

Challenges

Training the data collectors about the methodology of probing corruption and bribe related questions was very touch that required rigorous mock exercises during their orientation.

Tips for Replication

The stake of the CGCCs in the tools development process should be ensured and orientation of the surveyors be intensive, including practical exercise. Proper guidance/corrective suggestions should be provided to them throughout the survey period.

Training of Surveyors for 'RGR and CVA Survey'

A half-day training of all the 34 surveyors was conducted to make the exercise effective and in line with the methodology and research envisaged in the project. In the training, the focus was on vulnerability analysis and the level of corruption in the selected schemes of the Rural Development Department. Keeping the sensitive nature of the issue in mind, special emphasis was given to confidentiality of the findings and objectivity in the analysis of the data. Project team members facilitated the training. Details of the methodology are available in the coming chapters.

Importance

Since collecting data on the issue of need a lot of skill training of the surveyors is crucial.

Challenges

It is very difficult to get correct data on bribes. Assuring the respondents about the confidentiality of the gathered data is also very difficult.

Tips for Replication

Sufficient time should be expended for rapport building and assuring the respondents of confidentiality.

Data Collection, Analysis

A total of 600 questionnaires were received back, duly responded to, from both the districts. To start with, the project team checked all the 600 questionnaires and 76 respondents were contacted over phone/personally for clarifications and obtaining partially unfilled information. Another 90 questionnaires were identified for being filled up again. Data analysis was done by using MS excel and SPSS software, with the help of data entry operators and statistical experts.

The questionnaires were further scrutinised and identified for use in advocacy and dialogues with policymakers. Areas of corruption were identified and shared with CGCCs to target and focus on.

Importance
This data is the basis for evidence-based advocacy and has to be scientifically compiled and analysed, ensuring that it is error free.

Challenges
Procuring and validating accurate data is the real challenge.

Tips for Replication
Before actual data collection, surveyors need to spend sufficient time in rapport building with respondents, using ice-breakers. Surveyors need to be fully transparent in sharing the purpose of the survey to obtain relevant and factual data.

Research Methodology

Both the surreys were carried out by CGCC members at the block level in all 17 rural blocks of both the districts. All the CGCC surveyors were thoroughly oriented for conducting these surveys and the methodology in both was the same. Survey methodology and all the questions were discussed individually and a mock exercise of filling the questionnaires was also done. It was a day-long exercise, done with the help of subject experts. At least two surveyors from each block were short-listed and trained. The total sample size of the questionnaires was 600, including 413 beneficiaries of NREGS, IAY and SGSY and other schemes and 187 of service providers from Rural Development and *Panchayati Raj* departments of both the districts. The selection of respondents was done on the basis of the location of his/her residence.

In the pre-RGR survey, 77 percent of the respondents were males and the rest were females. 52 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 30 to 45 years and 55 percent were educated up to middle and secondary level and 15 percent were college and above level. Of the respondents, 62 percent were the beneficiaries of NREGS, 22 percent were the beneficiaries of IAY and 16 were the beneficiaries of SJGSY.

In post-RGR survey, 84 percent of the respondents were males. 65 percent were in the age group of 26 to 45 years 56 percent were educated up to middle and secondary level and 21 percent were graduates and above. 46 percent of them were the beneficiaries of NREGS and 28 were unemployed youth. In this post-RGR survey, the classification of the respondents has been done on the basis of rural which include the villages and semi-urban areas which include the respondents of block head quarters, roadside villages and towns under the block.

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Findings

Awareness about location

Only 37 percent knew where the *Patwari* is available; 64 percent people knew about the *Sarpanch*. 64 percent respondents thought that *Gram Panchayat* members also sit at *Gram Panchayat* which is wrong. This showed that citizens were not aware about the location and availability of key officials.

Location Awareness (%)
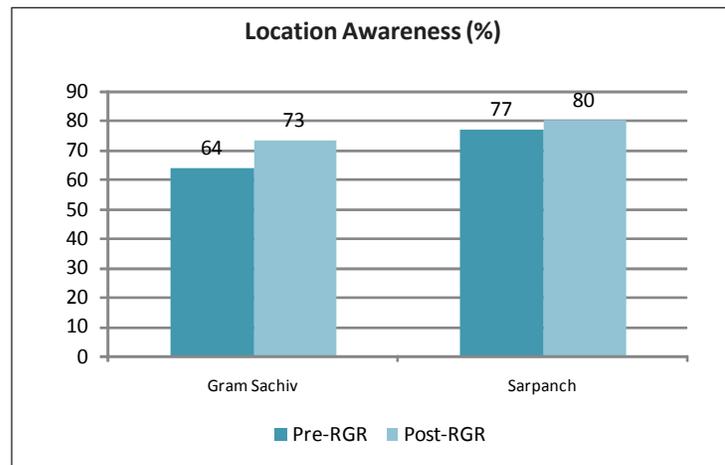
The existence of *Sarpanch* was unknown to about 20 percent and of the *Gram* Secretary to 27 percent of the local people. *Rojgar Sahayak* appointed under NREGS was unknown to 61 percent.

Visits to Gram Panchayat Office

Only 25 percent of the respondents visited often, 56 percent visited occasionally and 15 percent never visited *Gram Panchayat* office.

Awareness regarding Gram Sabha

At the start of the intervention, 47 percent respondents had not heard about the *Gram Sabha* which takes place at least twice in year. Eight percent of the respondents came to know about the provision of *Gram Sabha* during the intervention, but 39 percent remained unaware so lack of awareness is the main reason of poor community participation in *Gram Sabha*. 43 percent of the respondents expressed their willingness to participate in *Gram Sabhas*, if they were informed in time. The people who do not participate in Gram Sabhas said that it is due to time constraint or that it is a waste of their time.

Awareness Regarding Gram Sabha (%)
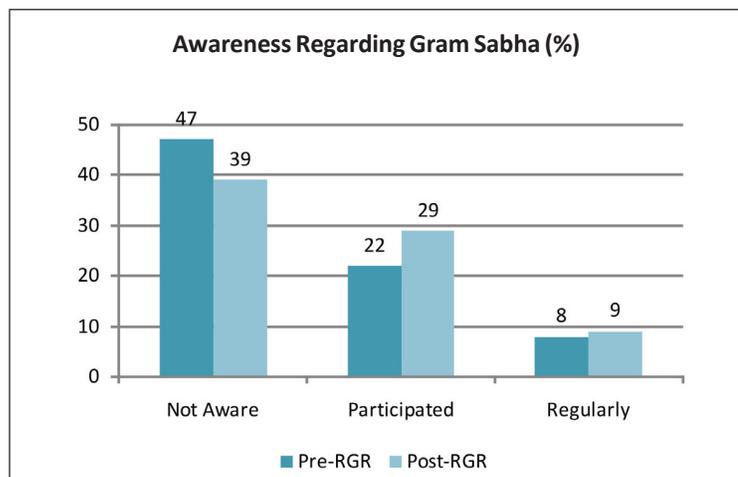
Awareness of RTI Act, 2005

In the selected two districts, only 39 percent of the people had heard about the RTI Act, 2005. As far as awareness regarding the RTI application-filing process is concerned, 26 percent of the people knew about the application format, 19 percent about PIO, 21 about the fee rules for APL and BPL applicants, 08 about the time period in which information has to be provided to applicants and only seven about the provisions of first and second appellate authorities.

Awareness regarding the filing process

The percentage of people aware about filing RTI application was as low as 5.4. Only 12 filed RTI application out of 242 respondents. In only 33 percent cases information was provided by the PIOs, out of which 75 percent of the applicants were not satisfied with the information. As far as going for first appeal was concerned, merely 8.4 percent of the applicants opted for it.

It is clear that the use of RTI Act in rural areas is minimal and awareness thereof has been mainly generated through NGOs. It is also clear from the analysis that in 48 percent cases the use of the RTI Act was related to corruption issues; 32 percent to personal issues and the remaining 20 percent pertained to public benefit issues of the villages.

Prevalence of Corruption

49 percent of the respondents reported that corruption in NREGS was more than in IAY and SGSY schemes. In IAY, *Gram Panchayat* officials give benefits after receiving bribe in some form.

After discussing with the stakeholders, certain areas were short-listed in NREGS. These are as follows:

High rate of Corruption (%)
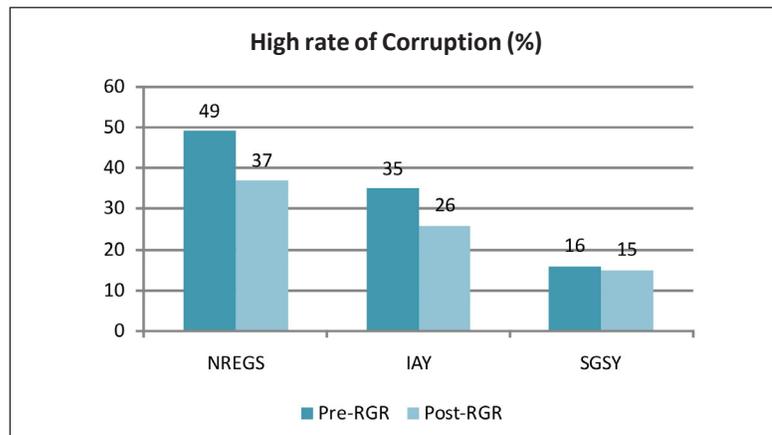
Registration for job and making job cards: Corruption was rampant at the initial stage when registration for entitlement for job was done and than job cards were made. As this scheme progressed, service providers took bribes in 56 percent of the cases at an average of ₹146, which is higher than in the pre-RGR survey, which was in 43 percent of the cases at an average of ₹68. The main reason for this was that most of the job cards were already made and in issuance of new cards, which were fewer in number, the service providers charged heavier bribes. In the post-RGR survey, no case was reported in which bribe was paid.

Payment of wages: On every withdrawal, a person had to pay ₹40 as bribe to various service providers.

IAY: Selection of beneficiaries was the first stage in which favouritism was seen. During the pre-RGR survey, the total amount given as bribe was ₹8,059 and post-RGR it was ₹6,125.

Bribe paid in IAY (₹)
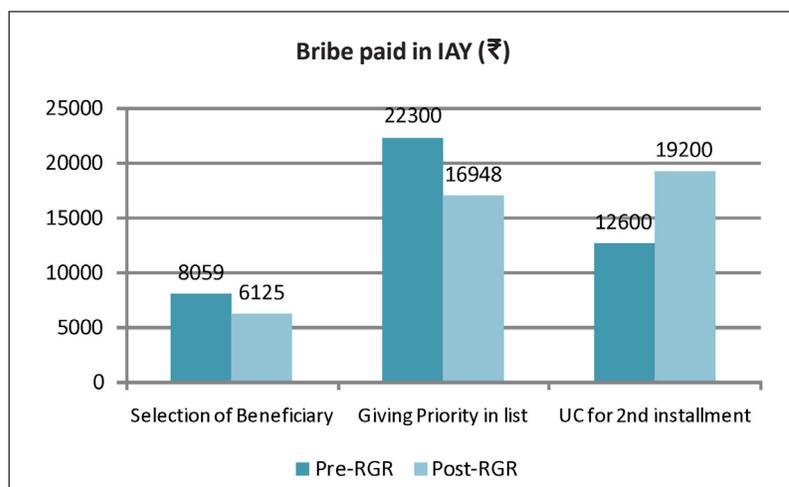
In the post-RGR survey, it was noticed that service providers demanded bribes at the time of submitting the utilisation certificate of the first instalment. In this area, the rate of corruption was reported higher than before due to initiation of a new system of crediting the sanctioned amount directly in beneficiary's bank account.

SGSY: In the post-RGR survey, grading and granting of loans to self help groups (SHGs) emerged as big areas of corruption. However, in group formation and trainings, no corruption was reported. Banks are overloaded with social and commercial banking and grading and sanctioning of loans to SHGs is priority for these banks. NGOs and SHG members are, therefore, giving bribes to bank officials.

SGSY: Areas of Corruption and Bribe Paid (₹)

Area	Pre-RGR	Post-RGR
Grading	300	16000
Loan to SHGs	1300	14200
During Training	5000	0
Group Formation	980	0
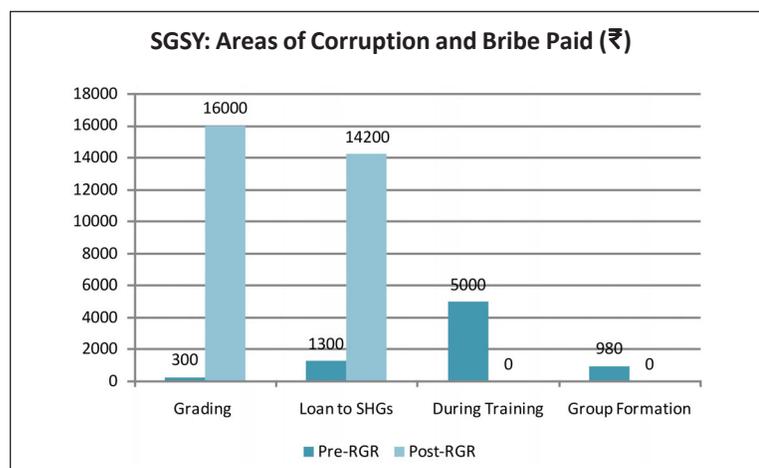
Corruption Vulnerability Analysis: In the post-RGR survey, 21 percent of the beneficiaries reported having paid bribes (pre-RGR 27 percent) to service providers and the amounts varied from one person to another, averaging ₹285 per beneficiary in NREGS, which was ₹18 less than the pre-RGR figure of ₹303.

Average Bribe Paid by Beneficiaries (₹)

Scheme	Pre-RGR	Post-RGR
NREGS	303	285
IAY	1268	960
SGSY	660	417
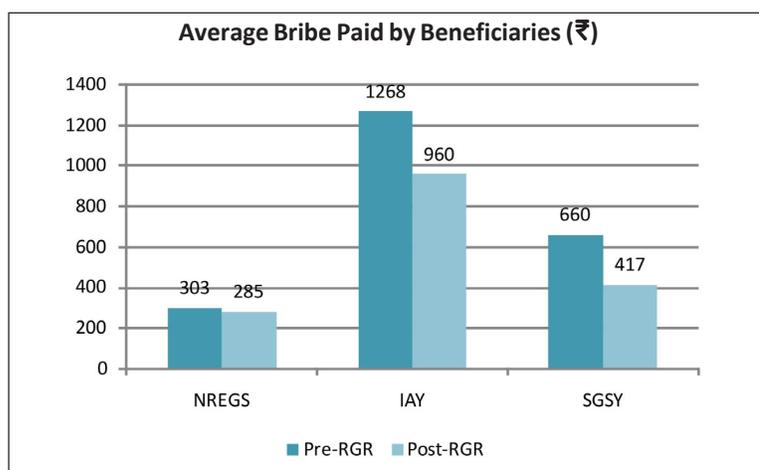
In IAY, 34 percent reported (pre-RGR 52 percent) having paid bribes for availing the benefits of this scheme at various levels of service delivery. On an average, the bribes paid to various service providers, mainly to *Gram Sachivs*, was ₹960 in each case.

In SGSY, 13 percent of the beneficiaries paid bribes (pre-RGR 18 percent) mainly to bank officials. The amount on an average was ₹417. Another finding was that the NGOs which are facilitating the SGSY programme at block level and coordinating with the SHGs formed under the scheme also has to pay a fixed percentage of their remunerations received from the implementing agency which is *Zila Parisad,* as bribe while getting the cheque of it.

Trend in the level of corruption: In the opinion of majority of the respondents (48 percent), the level of corruption in NREGS is on the rise. A large percentage of beneficiaries of IAY (34 percent) felt that the level of corruption is unchanged, but, at the same time, 28 percent felt that has decreased in the last one year. The beneficiaries of SGSY also felt that the level of corruption is static.

Level of Corruption (%)
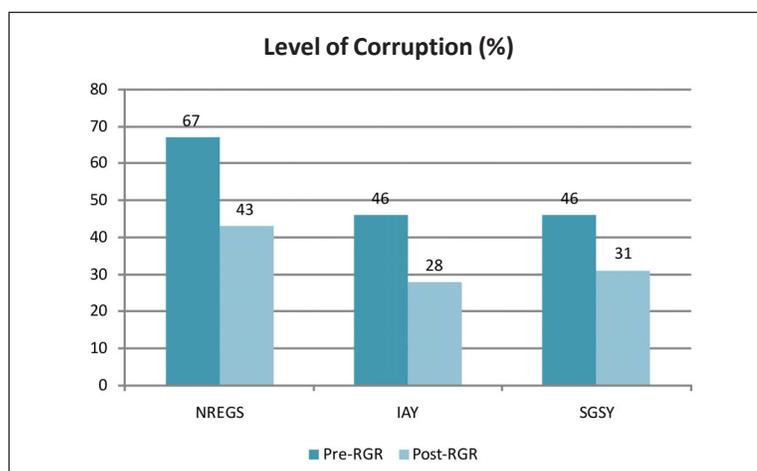
RGR and CVA Survey for Service Providers

Methodology: A total of 187 (121 from Jaipur and 66 from Tonk) service providers were interviewed from the Rural Development and *Panchayati Raj* Department, including the *Gram Sachivs* and *Sarpanchs* of selected *Gram Panchayats* and *Pradhans* of selected blocks of Jaipur and Tonk districts.

Advertisement of Schemes

In the pre-RGR survey, 23 percent of the respondents could not correctly remember the number of schemes under implementation. They identified the print media, signboards, *Nukkad Nataks*, TV and radio as the means of advertisement. Some felt that *Panchayat* notice boards also helped in making the schemes known amongst the masses.

People's Sources about Schemes and Public Participation

Most respondents procure information from local PRI members or by visiting *Gram Panchayat* office. Few respondents write to *Gram Panchayat* officials for enquiry.

Post-RGR survey findings reveal that *Gram Panchayat* officials make scant efforts for publicising the schemes and visits to their offices is the main source of gathering information.

Lack of Public Participation

45 percent of the respondents feel there is lack of awareness among people regarding the services rendered by *Gram Panchayat,* due to lack of education. Some respondents mentioned lack of interest due to suggestions and requests not being entertained. Others felt that people are busy in their work and participating in meetings is a waste of time.

Reasons: Want of Public Participation in Service Delivery (%)

Category	Value
Personal reasons	15
Suggestions not considered	20
Lost interest	20
Lack of awareness	45
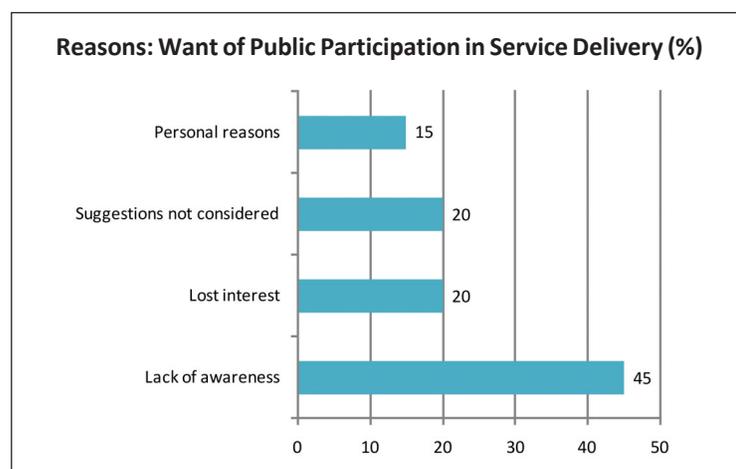
In the post-RGR survey, all the respondents mentioned that during the last one year, public participation in the decision-making and service delivery processes of the selected three schemes has gone up due to education and media involvement, mass mobilisation by NGOs and the IEC campaign of the government.

Awareness of RTI Act

78 percent of the *Gram Panchayat* respondents had heard about the Act, but not in detail. The real concern is that 22 percent of the functionaries at *Gram Panchayat* level are still not aware about the Act and this raises questions on their ability to implement it. The post-RGR survey, however, reveals that the awareness of the RTI Act among service providers of Rural Development Department is increasing every year.

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Awareness Regarding Filing Process

18 percent of the functionaries were not aware of the way in which applications should be processed. 80 percent of the respondents were aware about the required fee. What is more glaring is the fact that 46 percent of the functionaries were not even aware that they are designated as PIOs or First Appellate Authorities (FAAs). However, most of the respondents were aware that the demanded information has to be provided within the stipulated time of 30 days. 78 percent of the respondents were not aware of the provision of first appeal and 88 percent of the second appeal at departmental and state information commission levels, respectively.
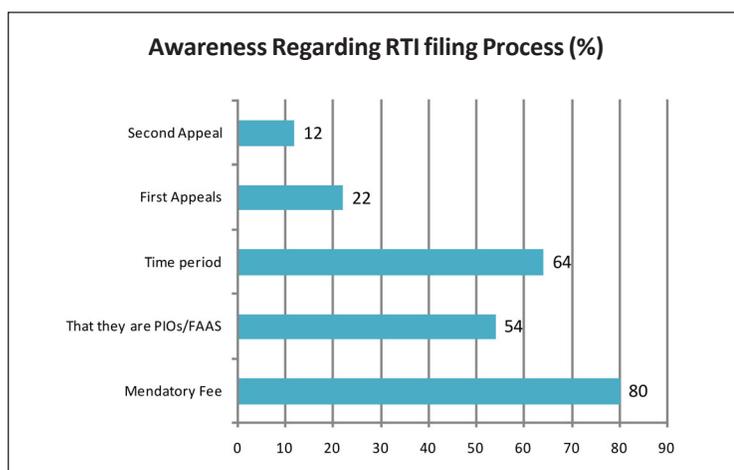
In the post-RGR survey data, most of the service providers (90 percent) gained awareness about the format on which RTI applications are requested and that there is no prescribed format for RTI requests, which can be made on plain paper as well. 83 percent of the service providers became aware about the required fee. Awareness of these officials about the PIO being appointed under this RTI was at 68 percent. They also knew correctly that the stipulated time period was 30 days for providing the requested information.

Only 38 percent of the respondents knew correctly about the first appeal and 22 about second appeal. Knowledge about the PIOs and FAA of their own department was restricted to 64 and 48 percent, respectively.

Training on RTI

Only 22 percent of the functionaries were RTI trained, but in a superficial manner, without any in-depth formal training. Their sources of knowledge about the Act were confined to the media and their fellow colleagues at work.

PIOs/FAAs in Offices

When *Panchayat* officials were asked about the PIO of their office, most of them were not aware about it and general perception among both *Sarpanch* and *Gram Sachivs* was that the *Sarpanch* is the PIO of the *Gram Panchayat*, which is wrong. Only 54 percent respondents know about the fact that *Gram Sachiv* has been designated as PIO at *Gram Panchayat* level and only 36 percent respondents know about the FAA which is the *Sarpanch* of the *Gram Panchayat.*
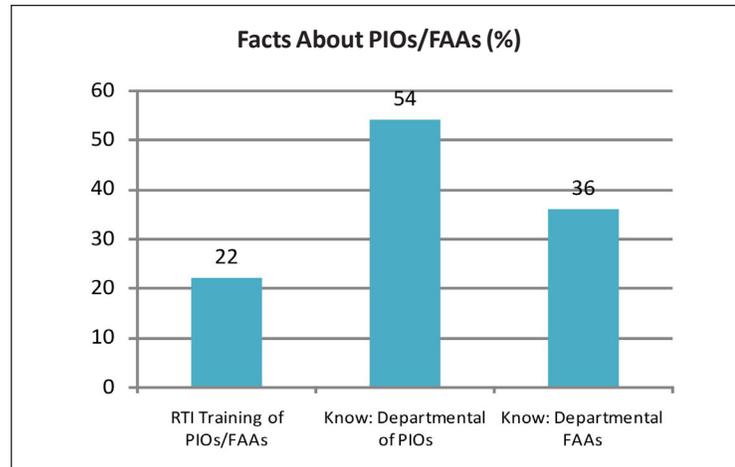
Response of PIOs before accepting RTI Applications: Most PIOs ask the applicants about the intended use of the demanded information. 14 percent of the PIO respondents accepted that they dissuade applicants on the plea that the information sought does not relate to any public welfare. 19 percent of the PIOs check personal/political motivation as well. 50 percent of the respondents thought that it was legal to ask the applicants for the reasons of filing a request under RTI.

Rejection of RTI Applications

Respondent PIOs, when asked about the possible grounds on which RTI applications could be rejected, were very cautious to respond. However, 32 percent of the PIOs said that applications can be rejected if the information sought is related to any other department. 30 percent said if the applicant is likely to misuse the demanded information, then his application would not be accepted. 17 percent said that applications were also rejected on account of a large number of questions or if the applicant's behaviour with them is not proper. Other reasons for rejection are information demanded is not clear or demanded information is not available with PIOs or address of the applicant is not written on the application.

In the post-RGR survey, two major categories of grounds for rejection came up: one, if the application is related to some other department; and, two, if they think that applicants would in any way misuse the requested information.

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Reasons of RTI Application Rejection (%)

Reason	Value
Information not clear/available	13
Applicant's behaviour not good	8
If too may questions are asked	17
Chance of Misusing information	30
If Information of other department	32
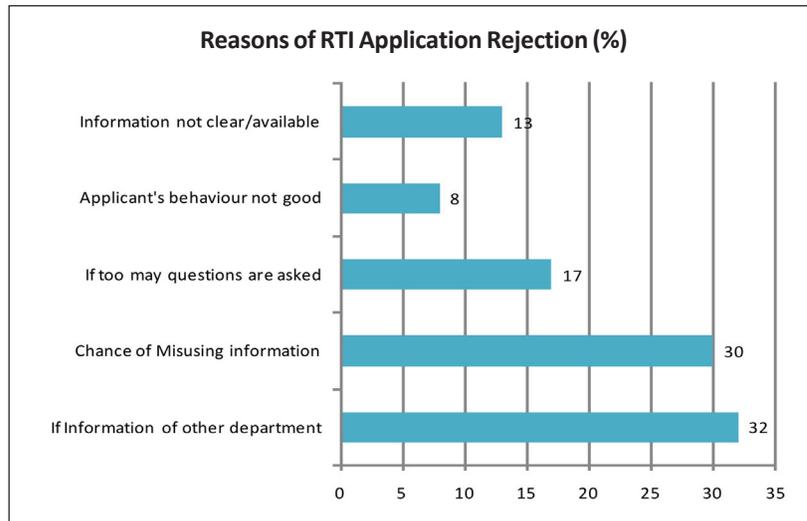
Problems Faced by PIOs and FAAs

- Proper training is not imparted;
- Record management is very poor at *Gram Panchayat* level;
- PIOs are heavily burdened with other work; and
- Attitude of the applicant is to create trouble.

RTI Applications

28 percent of the PIOs said that on an average two RTI applications per month were filed in their offices and that all were responded appropriately. 65 percent of the respondents said that in respect of section 4(1) b, *Gram Panchayats* have proactively published the filing process under RTI on office walls. They also publish the names of the beneficiaries of the schemes, annual budget and expenditures and most of the records are placed before the *Gram Sabha*, in which most of the elected members and villagers participate. They agreed that more is required to be done, for which infrastructure has to developed, particularly for disclosure and digitalisation of records.

During the post-RGR survey, 70 percent of the respondents said that during the year, the number of RTI requests had increased manifold, in comparison with previous years. They also said that these help in improving the quality of services provided by the *Gram Panchayat* and also promote public participation.

Potential of RTI Act

88 percent of the respondents felt that the RTI Act has the potential to promote transparency and accountability among service providers and policy makers and can control corruption. But, only 45 percent of the respondents felt that it would increase public participation in the decision-making and service delivery processes.

Use and Potential of RTI Act (%)

Category	Value
Enhancing public participation	45
Controlling corruption	84
Transparency & accountability	88
Satisfactory proactive disclosure	65
PIO received RTI applications	28
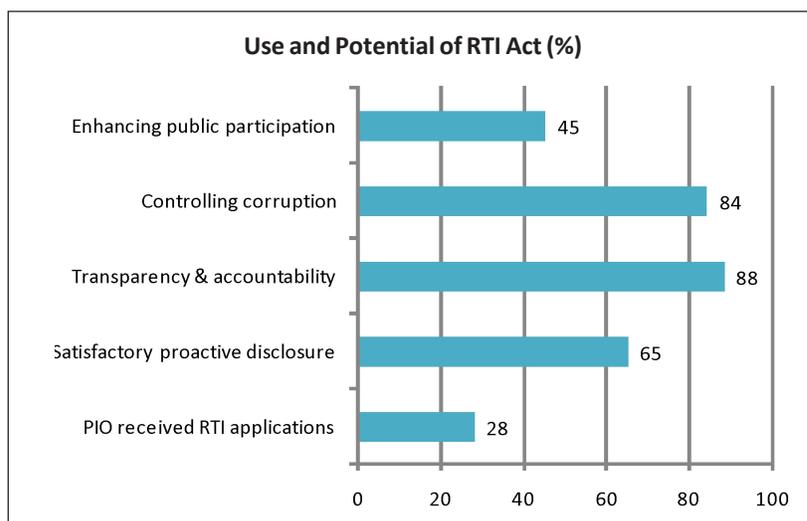
In the post-RGR survey, majority of service providers (75 percent) said that the RTI Act, 2005 is capable of enhancing accountability among officials and also forcing them to maintain their records properly. 44 percent of the service providers responded that this Act has successfully combated corruption.

82 percent of the respondents reported that transparency in the selection process of beneficiaries, decision-making process and pubic expenditure has increased. PIOs maintained that RTI work is putting extra burden and that they are unable to respond to these requests due to lack of human and infrastructural facilities at the *Gram Panchayat* level.

Steps Taken to Promote Transparency and Accountability

In the post RGR survey, 35-40 percent of the respondents stated that they had printed on the walls of *Gram Panchayats* the entitlements and qualifications of beneficiaries of the IAY and NREGS and about the RTI Act, 2005 for public. 70 percent respondents replied that they have also printed the annual income and expenditure details of the *Gram Panchayat* at its walls.

Prevalence of Corruption in Selected Schemes

39 percent agreed that corruption is prevalent in the NREGS and that most of the officials responsible for implementation are involved. Rest of the respondents did not accept corruption or maintained that there is no corruption in the department. In the IAY, prevalence of corruption was admitted by 20 percent of the respondents and the rest denied. Under SGSY, 31 percent admitted prevalence of corruption.

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Prevalence of Corruption (%)
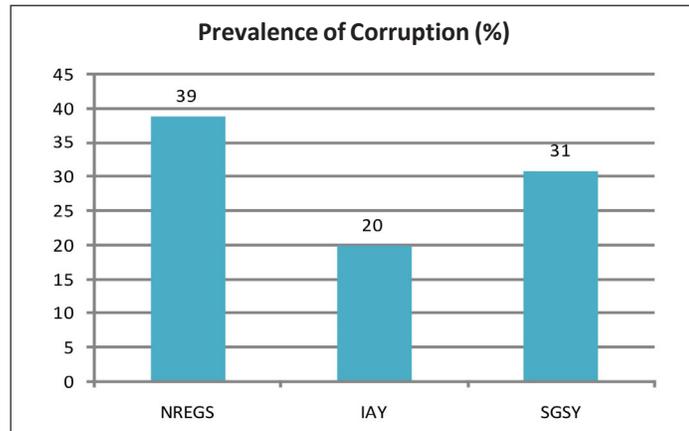
Reasons for Corruption in the Schemes

NREGS

- Lack of awareness among rural people;
- People do not want to indulge in paper work;
- Some people do not have supporting documents necessary for making job card and need to bribe concerned officials for issuance thereof;
- *Gram Panchayat* functionaries cite demand of higher officials; and
- Being a part of culture (*khai badi ke maai badi* phenomenon meaning that money is bigger and works well than a mother).

SGSY

As mentioned by respondents, SGSY scheme is not working effectively in the districts because bank officials are doubtful regarding repayment of the loans, which is correct to some extent. Instances of seeking gratification from NGOs to sanction loans exist. Respondents opined that NGOs are both victims as well as bribe seekers, as they are victim of the system and forced to pay bribes at the DRDA level.

IAY

Though benefits under this scheme are envisaged for BPL families only, but non-BPL powerful people create pressure by offering bribes to change their category at the cost of actual beneficiaries.

Measures for Controlling Corruption

- Credible CSOs should be included as a part of the tendering process.
- BSR rates must be consistent with market rates.
- Social and CAG audits should be mandatory and regular to reform the processes.
- RTI Act should be promoted and public awareness programmes should be intensified.
- People have to be motivated to participate in the *Gram Sabhas*.
- Complaint redressal mechanism should be established.
- Proactive disclosure of information at *Gram Panchayat* level be should be systematised.

- Entitlements of BPLs must be well publicised.
- Pattern of payments in all welfare schemes must be transparent.

Citizen's Report Card (CRC) at 'Model RTI Gram Panchayat' (MRGP) Level

Two CRCs were prepared at both the MRGPs, namely, Harsulia in Jaipur and Mundia in Tonk, mainly to enquire into and assess the satisfaction level of the *Gram Panchayat* residents, who are the beneficiaries of the services rendered by the *Gram Panchayats*. In these CRCs, mainly three schemes (NREGS, IAY and SGSY) were selected, covering its service delivery and decision-making processes. The findings were shared with the local community, service providers and the media through interface meetings and dialogues, with a view to bringing out malpractices in the public domain and to attempt getting rid of corrupt practices in the concerned *Gram Panchayats*. The findings in detail are attached in the later part of the Toolkit.

Importance
This is the only tool which provides users' feedback directly from the beneficiaries or users of the concerned services delivered by service providers. This tool has also been used when data on any issue in is not available on some satisfaction level issues.

Challenges
Availability of the experts of the tool of CRC is not easy.

Tips for Replication
Local people should be engaged to mobilise beneficiaries of the schemes in question to facilitate responses in an open and free manner, with the help of trained social researchers.

Maintaining, Cataloguing and Filing Project Records

All the project records, including correspondence, field notes, event reports, photographs, quarterly progress reports, financial statements, RTI applications, feedback forms and all required records were properly filed, classified, catalogued and computerised for future reference.

Importance
Each document either published or generated during the implementation of the programme is important.

Challenges
Various activities were conducted but minimal copies (either hard or soft) were published due to lack of infrastructure, time unavailability, space constraint and improper planning.

Tips for Replication
Keep a track of all records.

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Chapter 6

Impact and Learning

Project Outcome/Impact

a) Corruption free delivery of targeted services
- Before the start of this intervention, beneficiaries of IAY were disbursed grants in cash, which was a source of corruption. It was demanded by CSOs/NGOs, including CUTS, that this practice should be stopped, as most of these BPLs were also entitled under NREGS and had bank accounts. This was implemented across the state, though not fully, thereby reducing one major area of corruption.
- As a result of constructive engagement and dialogue with the state government and Rural Development Department, 11 orders were passed during the project period by the state government regarding effective implementation of RTI, proactive disclosure of information and names of beneficiaries, etc.
- Most of the service providers at all levels became fearful about RTI applications, which were filed with the help of CGCCs and forced them to reduce the level of corruption, as per the feedback of all the CGCCs and RTI applicants, though no research has been done in this regard.

b) Enhancing the capacity
- Created an active group of two-three CGCCs in each of the 17 blocks;
- Enhanced capacity of citizens to use and propagate RTI;
- Community is more sensitive and clear about the areas of corruption and their power of 'Say no to Bribe' has increased in the interventional area; especially the selected scheme's beneficiaries;
- Good governance team at CUTS enhanced its professional skills; and
- Developed newsletters, which were helpful in understanding the project related activities and also in advocacy with block officials.

c) Advocating and impacting actions taken by authorities to control corruption
- Official orders were passed to strengthen the transparency and accountability within the system.
- A high level monitoring visit was conducted, jointly by CUTS and state/district/block officials of state government related to selected schemes, which resulted in several on-the-spot decisions/clarification/going into reasons of poor implementation of schemes.

d) Community organisations empowered for fighting against corruption
The contribution of CBOs/NGOs has been very crucial as well as effective in this intervention and their contribution has been remarkable in terms of community mobilisation and sensitisation of the community against the issue of corruption in the government. They contributed a lot in winning the confidence of the community. They helped in identifying the areas of corruption. Under this project, a network of 34 CSOs/NGOs was formed and activated.

> **The contribution of CBOs/NGOs has been very crucial as well as effective in this intervention and their contribution has been remarkable in terms of community mobilisation and sensitisation of the community against the issue of corruption in the government**

Major Learning

a. Constructive engagement with policy makers: Some champions in the policy makers and executives take up the issues rose by the organisation seriously and supported the intervention. But, frequent transfers of bureaucrats and change in the political regime affected the quantum of outcomes.

b. Media support: Media also supported the project activities and played an active role in giving wider coverage of the activities, outcomes and recommendations.

c. Community mobilisation: Interface meetings of the community and service providers had been extremely useful and fruitful because people raise the local burning issues with the evidences of lack of service delivery in the locality. Service providers were also under pressure to deliver the services in an accountable manner.

> **Interface meetings of the community and service providers had been extremely useful and fruitful because people raise the local burning issues with the evidences of lack of service delivery in the locality**

d. Peer learning: Peer learning visits under the project, widened the scope of experience-sharing and provided an opportunity to learn the best practices.

e. Knowledge generation: Working with community/government on the issue of corruption opened the opportunity for huge learning regarding all the aspects

and factors which are affect corruption and review the policies and tools/ approaches and instruments to combat corruption and promote good governance.

f. Documentation: Documentation of records and reports related to outputs, outcome and impact had been extremely useful and helped in to showcasing the produced results.

g. CSOs/NGOs Network: Developing a network of CSOs/NGOs and proactive citizens had been highly useful. Though it needed lot of efforts, but once it was formed and became active, it was widened and deepened with inclusion of new partners who supported each other and provided required handholding in using RTI as a tool against corruption.

h. Project Monitoring Mechanism: Internal project monitoring system had proved highly useful in achieving the desired goals.

Policy Makers
- In Rajasthan number of APIOs, PIOs and appellate authorities is highly inadequate and not designated in all the offices so effective implementation of RTI Act has been affected by this.
- There is a need for constituting a state-level monitoring committee of a group of ministers, state nodal department of RTI, consisting of NGOs/CSOs/RTI activists for regular review of the effective implementation of the Act.
- Effective implementation of RTI Act is nowhere in the priorities of state government and state offices at all especially in rural areas.

> **Effective implementation of RTI Act is nowhere in the priorities of state government and state offices at all especially in rural areas**

State Information Commission
- The appointment process of SIC has not been transparent in nature and government is not open to consider the candidature of some civil society representatives who had been highly proactive in the field of RTI in state.
- There is strong need of appointing all the SICs in the state with immediate effect so that pendency rate of second appeal cases can be reduced and the Act can be implemented effectively.
- SIC should be provided more infrastructural facilities and resources for effective functioning.

Supply Side
- List of public authorities is not published as of now and signboards of PIOs/AAs are at place. Therefore, it is very difficult for people to reach up to PIOs/FAAs.
- There is lack of curriculum-based intensive trainings for PIOs/AAs on RTI Act and resources for effective implementation of RTI within department.

- The mindset of officials is in favour of hiding the information rather then opening up doors for providing information adequately. In some cases it is because the requested information is not readily available with PIOs and they have to collect it from various sources internally thereby delaying into furnishing the desired information.
- There are no disciplinary powers with appellate authorities for enforcing their orders upon PIOs under the Act.

> **In some cases it is because the requested information is not readily available with PIOs and they have to collect it from various sources internally thereby delaying into furnishing the desired information.**

- Physical harassment, abuse, mental torture, intimidation and victimisation by the officials are very much in vogue at grassroots and PIOs are either denying or deferring the acceptance of RTI applications.

Demand Side
- During the project implementation it was evident that there was lack of public awareness about RTI Act and its filing process, various authorities, provision of fee and timeline for obtaining information and going for first and second appeal. There is also lack of handholding of RTI applicants to fight corrupt officials in different departments.
- In the process of filing the RTI application, certain grievances got redressed. This is a positive aspect of RTI though RTI is not a grievance redressal mechanism. Most of the common citizens do not want to go often into first and second appeal due to the long process involved.

Problems Encountered

- Most of the service providers either stay away from the discussions on public platforms or cooperate partially.
- The problem of frequent transfer of bureaucrats and other service providers breaks the rhythm of project progress, but provides an opportunity to replicate the model at the new place where the official has been transferred.
- Advocacy with government regarding reforming the corrupt process was very difficult, but the top-down approach of advocacy and involvement of state Rural Development Minister also motivated down the line officials to take some actions and behave responsibly.
- Most of the NGOs are having small budget turnover and heavily depend on government small grants. Therefore, it is difficult to talk against corrupt officials whom they are dealing with and, as a result, such initiatives are affected.
- Completing all the project activities within the given timeline was a bit difficult and such interventions really need three to four years.
- Tracking the success of all the RTI applicants was a challenge.

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- There is no any cash collection window for depositing the fee for filing the application under RTI Act in rural areas and applicants have to keep on taking rounds of offices from pillar to post. No proactive disclosure of information is there in government departments especially in rural areas and no attempts have been made so far to publicise it.

Self-Assessment of Project Progress

The team was good in terms of knowledge, communication skills, rapport building, extensive field visits and networking and all these qualities contributed towards achieving the project outcomes and goal.

Community involvement was good during the project period in terms of participating in the activities, using RTI as tool, raising the issues in front of service providers and filing RTI applications on areas of corruption in selected schemes.

The attitude of the policy makers and bureaucrats, in general, towards initiatives against corruption was negative and they were not cooperative fully. Frequent transfers of service providers slowed down the progress of the outcomes and it was difficult for the team to orient the new officials about the project activities and sensitise them.

Chapter 7

Success Stories

1. A Job Card is Necessary for Demanding Employment Under NREGA

Gram Panchayat: Jai Singhpura, Chaksu, Jaipur
Applicant: Shiv Sahai Gurjar s/o Ram Chandra Gurjar
Problem: Non-issuance of job card under NREGS
Date of application under RTI: 2009-08-03
Date of resolution: 2009-08-16

The Case: Shiv Sahai was demanding the job card under NREGS for six months from the Secretary and the *Sarpanch* of the *Gram Panchayat*. However, they kept postponing action on the pretext that in his family there are three job cards already in the name of three brothers and, therefore, a fourth one cannot be issued. But, in reality, all the brothers were residing separately.

One day, Shiv Sahai came in touch with CGCC member Suresh Saini and shared his problem. Suresh informed him that every ration cardholder is considered a separate household and is entitled for a job under NREGS and suggested to Shiv Sahai to file an RTI application at the *Gram Panchayat*. CGCC provided all the requisite support for filing the application, which was filed.

The entire *Panchayat* machinery came into action and contacted the CGCC and called him for discussion. Thereafter, a job card was issued to Shiv Sahai.

Learning: Writing a one-page RTI request works more effectively than visiting the *Gram Panchayat* on daily basis and requesting for some work for the requester is entitled for.

2. RTI has the Potential to Change the Scenario

Applicant: Badri Lal Bairwa
Gram Panchayat: Kathawala, Chaksu, Jaipur
Problem: Non-sanction of Indira Aawas
Date of application under RTI: 2009-07-03
Date of resolution: 2009-07-22

The Case: Badri, a young below-poverty-line (BPL) person, lived in a small thatched house and was toiling hard as a mason to support his seven-member family. He often wondered how some people better off than him could manage to obtain benefits under the IAY and he could not under the said scheme.

Badri came into contact with local CGCC member, who advised him to file an RTI application at the *Gram Panchayat* office and he did that, seeking his waiting number in the IAY list and the reasons for not sanctioning Indira Aawas to him so far. 11 days after filing this application, the *Gram Sachiv* visited his residence and assured sanctioning of Indira Aawas to him in the next *Gram Sabha*. The *Gram Sachiv* requested him to withdraw his RTI application and later on tried to pressurise him through the local wardpanch, but Badri refused to do so.

On 19th day, the *Gram Sachiv* came back with written information about Badri's waiting number, which was on the top of the list, and handed it over to Badri. He informed Badri that his Indira Aawas has been sanctioned and guided for starting construction work, assuring him that the first instalment of the grant will reach in his account in coming months, which happened. Badri himself did masonry work and his house was constructed.

Learning: The delay in service delivery is common, but RTI can change the scenario.

3. Awareness Generation on the Provisions of the RTI Act

Applicant: Jai Kumar Bakliwal s/o Navratan Bakliwal
Gram Panchayat: Kirawal, Malpura, Tonk
Problem: Non-issuance of a duplicate job card
Date of application under RTI: July 07, 2009
Date of resolution: July 16, 2009

The Case: Educated only up to the Secondary level, Jai Kumar was working in NREGS and was enjoying the earnings under the scheme. However, he lost his job card and went to the *Gram Panchayat* and met the *Gram Sachiv* for a duplicate job card, who bluntly refused. A neighbour of Jaipur suggested to Jai Kumar to gratify the *Gram Sachiv.*

Jai Kumar, however, kept following up the matter with the *Gram Sachiv*, without success. On one such visit, he came in contact with a member of the CGCC in the *Gram Panchayat*

office, who suggested to him to file an RTI application in the *Gram Panchayat*, asking the reasons for not issuing the duplicate job card. He did as advised and within a week he was issued the duplicate job card. Jai was happy to get it and was able to join his job mates at NREGS worksite again and earn his livelihood. Today, he himself is advising his fiends to use RTI if something thing has not been delivered by government officials.

Learning: The uneducated villagers do not know the procedures under the RTI Act, 2005. Whenever guided properly, they can expect favourable results.

4. Insensitive Grievance Redressal Mechanism

Applicant: Kalu Ram s/o Roop Narain
Gram Panchayat: Sitarampura, Malpura, Tonk
Problem: Non-payment of wages of 15 days by the Gram Sachiv
Date of application under RTI: July 30, 2009
Date of resolution: August 17, 2009

The Case: Kalu Ram was working in the NREGS scheme, but did not receive his wages from 2009-01-16 to 2009-01-31. Verbal and written complaints yielded no results.

One day, Kalu too came in touch with a member of the CGCC, who explained to him about RTI Act and motivated him for filing an RTI application at the *Gram Panchayat*, asking about the unpaid wages of 15 days and the reasons of non-payment. Kalu Ram filed a RTI application on July 30, 2009, at the *Gram Panchayat*. It was a big surprise for Kalu to see prompt action taken by the *Gram Sachiv*. The *Gram Sachiv* turned up with entire related records and found that, due to the mistake of the Employment Assistant, Kalu's name was omitted from payment. In the next payment sheet sent to the bank for NREGS wage payments, Kalu's name was included for payment and Kalu's bank account was promptly credited with 15 days' wages.

Learning: Lack of complaint redressal mechanism and insensitive attitude of officials can also be corrected by moving under the provisions of the RTI.

5. Preference of the Bank Changed from Commercial to Social

Applicant: Manni Devi Raigar w/o Prahald Raigar
Gram Panchayat: Natwara, Niwai, Tonk
Problem: Delaying in the grading process.
Date of application under RTI: 2010-06-16
Date of resolution: 2010-07-06

The Case: Manni Devi, aged 59 years, was member of a well functioning *Shoba Swayam Sahayata Samooh*, a SHG, made for starting a dairy business under the SGSY scheme. The SHG was entitled for granting a revolving fund by the Bank, but the concerned bank official was demanding some bribe for doing that and had been delaying the

process for long. All women members were helpless. One day, Manni Devi's son came in contact with a visiting CGCC and told him the entire story. The CGCC suggested filing an RTI application with the bank, asking the reasons of delay in the grading process of the Shoba SHG. Next day, an RTI request was filed and with the bank by Manni Devi, asking the reasons for delay in the grading of the group.

On June 22, 2010, the local NGO coordinator of the scheme received a call from the concerned bank official who was enquiring about the 'SHG and Manni Devi' and told him that on July 05, 2010, he will visit this group for grading, without mentioning about the RTI request. The bank official visited the group and completed the formalities of grading on given date of July 05, 2010 and, in the same week, revolving fund was granted, without any bribe.

Learning: RTI changed the preference of bank from commercial to social banking.

6. A Grievance Settlement Mechanism in Place

Applicant: Gumani Devi Bairwa w/o Sheonath Bairwa
Gram Panchayat: Chimanpura, Chaksu, Jaipur
Problem: Delaying in the granting loan to SHG
Date of application under RTI: 2010-12-09
Date of resolution: 2011-01-15

The Case: Gumani Devi was a member of the *Shagun Swayam Sahayata Samooh* which was constituted under SGSY for starting 'Breeding of Goats and Dairy Business'. The SHG was granted revolving fund and had its own income from group members, who deposit monthly fixed amount and the second grading was pending since long, which was the basis on which loan was to be granted to the SHG. The bank official was demanding money for doing so. The coordinator of the NGO given the responsibility of facilitating the activities of concerned SHG, Mr. Norat Lal called in 'RTI Advisory and Information Cell' and as per given suggestions came in touch with the local CGCC, who supported him in filing an RTI application with the bank by Gumani Devi, asking about the reasons of delay in the second grading and sanctioning of the loan to the SHG.

The RTI application reached the Bank Manager directly, who instructed the concerned bank official to complete the second grading process of the SHG within 30 days and it was done within that time. As a result of this grading, the SHG was able to get a loan of ₹2.25 lakh to start the planned business activity.

Learning: Though RTI is not a complaint redressal mechanism, but it puts in place the complaint redressal mechanism if it is not there.

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7. Provision of Penalty Among Service Providers Works Well

Applicant: Kailash Chand Bagdolia s/o Radhe Lal
Gram Panchayat: Gudaliya, Tonk
Problem: Non-availability of medicines and tents at NREGS worksites
Date of application under RTI: 2009-11-02
Date of resolution: 2009-11-27

The Case: Kailash was an employee in a medical shop in a nearby town and his wife and other family members worked in the scorching heat of summer under NREGS in the village. He was well aware of the poor arrangements at worksites, but had no idea of how to improve the situation. One day, Kailash met with the local CGCC at his shop and enquired about the provisions of worksite facilities. The CGCC suggested to him to file an RTI application with the *Gram Panchayat*, asking the same question and he did so, adding a few more questions in the application about medicines and availability of tents.

This RTI application was the first one of its kind, which created waves in the *Gram Panchayat*. The *Gram Sachiv* enquired about the provisions under RTI Act from higher ups and his colleagues and came to know about the provision of penalty and departmental action, in case of not providing the requested information within 30 days of time and acted immediately. The *Gram Sachiv* ensured immediate availability of two tents and a few essential medicines used in first aid at all worksites.

Learning: The provision of penalty and fear of its imposition among service providers works well and ensures accountability among them. Merely filing an RTI application ensures redressal of complaint.

8. RTI Ensures Accountability and Service Delivery

Applicant: Jagdish Chand Meghwal s/o Jaina Ram Meghwal
Gram Panchayat: Panchala, Uniara, Tonk.
Problem: Non-sanction of a house under Indira Aawas Yojana
Date of application under RTI: 2010-01-07
Date of resolution: 2010-02-12

The Case: Jagdish Chand, a poor BPL person, lived in abject poverty and worked as a daily wager in the nearby town. Two years back, he was informed by the earlier *Sarpanch* that an IAY will be sanctioned to him soon, but nothing had happened. He enquired of the new *Sarpanch* about the same and got the answer that your turn will come next year. Jagdish was anticipating some corruption in this matter and told the story to the local CGCC, who suggested to him to file an RTI application, asking the waiting number in the permanent waiting list made for IAY. Jagdish did the same.

The *Gram Sachiv* talked with the local wardpanch and requested him to bring Jagdish to the *Gram Panchayat* Office. Jagdish went to the Gram Panchayat Office with the

CGCC and came to know that, by mistake, Indira Aawas had been allotted to some other person with a similar name (Jagdish Meghwal s/o Jaina Ram Meghwal), who was known to the applicant Jagdish and richer than him, but both the *Sarpanch* and the *Gram Sachiv* assured him that this mistake will be rectified and he will be sanctioned Indira Aawas in that month itself. On February 12, 2010, Jagdish got formal sanction of his Indira Aawas and started the construction and, very soon, the first instalment had been credited to his bank account.

Learning: RTI attacks favouritism and corrects the administrative mistakes and ensures accountability and service delivery.

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Annexures

1. Advocacy-cum-Dissemination Meetings

Under the project, two advocacy meetings were held at mid-project level and the last one was held towards the end of the project to disseminate the key findings of the 'RGR and CVA' survey and seeking the views of participants and their suggestions to take appropriate decisions to reform the service delivery and decision-making processes at Gram Panchayat/Block/District level. These meetings were attended by key policy makers, CGCCs and the media and resulted in process and policy changes related to selected schemes. As an outcome of the mid-term advocacy meeting, a joint monitoring visit of CUTS and government officials was done to look in to the issues emerging out in the survey which was conducted successfully in which number of on-the-spot decisions were taken to reform the processes.

A Final Dissemination-cum-Advocacy Meeting was organised on April 26, 2010, in Jaipur, to share the findings of the 'RTI Ground Realities and Corruption Vulnerability Survey' among the stakeholder and critical views/comments/opinions and other data were collected.

The main objective of the workshop was to share the findings of the survey, which showcased the current status of RTI implementation and the vulnerability of the poor and the marginalised to the menace of corruption. In the workshop, a set of recommendations/suggestions on better/transparent implementation of schemes like NREGA, SGSY and *IAY* was also given to the concerned state level officials. Also, the workshop served as a common platform for all the selected CGCC members, where they could share their views and project experiences and also review the project activities and accordingly make a strategy for future course of action.

More than 95 stakeholders participated in the workshop, which included representatives of more than 62 CSOs from almost all the blocks of Jaipur and Tonk districts. Around 32 CGCCs, 7 RTI Applicants, 13 PRI members, 14 members of SHGs and 8 PIOs of different departments participated in the event. Jagdananda, State

Information Commissioner, Orissa, was the chief guest and R.P. Chaudhari, Director, *Indira Aawas Yojana* and Nishkam Diwakar, Chief Executive Officer, Jaipur *Zila Parisad*, were other dignitaries.

A set of recommendations was put forward before the policy makers present to facilitate immediate action, so that processes in the selected schemes can be reformed.

2. Analysis of RTI Applications

Details of RTI Applications in Various Schemes

S. No.	Name of Scheme	Subject of RTI Application	No. of RTI	Info. Received	Cases in Appeal
1.	NREGS	Registration and making job cards	23		
2.	„	Priority in providing jobs	21		
3.	„	Payment of higher wages	47		
4.	„	Fake names in muster rolls	38		
5.	„	Commissions in payment	16		
6.	„	Worksite facilities	65		
		Total	**209**	**124**	**26**
1.	SGSY	Selection of beneficiaries and group formation	11		
2.	„	Grading of the group	69		
3.	„	Disbursement of grant and granting loan	09		
		Total	**89**	**66**	**13**
1.	IAY	Selection of beneficiaries	26		
2.	„	Changing the order in the list	23		
3.	„	Giving sanctioned check of the grant by *Gram Sachiv*	16		
4.	„	Inspection of constructing house of IAY	05		
5.	„	Cheque encashment at bank	09		
6.	„	Proactive disclosure of list of beneficiaries under IAY scheme	74		
		Total	**153**	**98**	**21**

In most of the RTI applications, the information demanded was related to some act of corruption. Through strategic RTI filing by the common man, these corrupt processes were targeted so that systemic issues of corruption could be addressed.

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3. List of CGCCs

Jaipur

1   Sailendra Koshti
    SHIVA, Amer, Jaipur
    9414251558, 9829563708

2   Deepak Mishra
    NEH Sansthan, Jaipur
    9314088822

3   Laduram Verma
    Gandhi Vikas Samiti,
    Chaksu
    9829666584

4   Ram Ratan Jangid
    Gramodya Samajik Sansthan,
    Chaksu Jaipur
    9950711592

5   Bansi Lal Bairva
    Prayas Kendra Harsoli,
    Dudu Sanstha
    9829246164

6   Soyji Ram Gurjar
    Sangarsh Sanstha Dhandoli,
    Dudu, Jaipur
    9928237468

7   Rekha Kumawat
    9829954507

8   Banwari Lal Kumawat
    9928222083

9   Anju Gupta
    Janchetna Gramin Vikas &
    Environment Sanstha,
    Jamua Ramgarh
    9772369391

10 Bina Joshi
    Sitaram Bhartiya Sanstha
    Jamuaramgarh, Jaipur
    9928203666

11 Suman Bhatnagar
    Madhukar Adarsh Vidya Mandir
    Samiti, Jaipur
    98280 48928

12 Dimple Kumari
    Sapna Sansthan, Phagi, Jaipur
    9460655015

13 Suresh Saini
    SAJAG, Bichchi, Phagi, Jaipur
    9929285125

14 A.R. Sharma
    ATMA Sanstha, Sambhar, Jaipur
    9413063961

15 Suleman Shekh
    Grameen Manav Kalyan Shiksha
    Sanstha, Phulera, Jaipur
    9214966654

16 BhanwarChoudhary
    Grameen Vikas Sansthan, Nagaur
    9413001796

17 Banwari Lal Bairathi
    Amar Bhawan, Viratnagar, Jaipur
    9252824578

18 Mali Ram Saini
    Jagriti, Viratnagar, Jaipur
    9214965078

Tonk

1   Asrar Zahan Secretary
Prerana Education and Welfare Society
Tonk
94144 25102

2.   Brij Bihari Sharma
Gauttam Rishi Gramoththan
Avan Sodh Sansthan
Tonk
9414348448

3.   Mohan Lal Meena
Shri Kalyan Seva Sansthan
Diggi, Tonk
9928119827

4.   Nathu Ram Kumhar
Gramothan Sansthan Malpura
Tonk
9414840019.

5.   Naresh Sharma
Paryavarna Avan Gram Vikas Sansthan
Malpura
9251341822

6.   Munna Lal Rao
Samuhik Vikas Sansthan
Niwai, Tonk
9413601148

7.   Dharam Raj Mahendra Kumar
Bal Sainik Seva Samiti
Todaraisingh, Tonk
9829449646
9829346036

8   K. K. Choudhary
Shri Jagdish Seva Sansthan
Tonk
9928870217

9.   Kishan Gurjar
New Saraswati Welfare Society
Tonk
98878 73029

10. Shyam Sharma
SVPM, Tonk

11. Gopal Lal Saini Secretary
M.M.M. Shikshan Evam Jan Seva
Sansthan, Tonk
9214167972

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4. RAIC Calls Details

Department/Purpose	May 09	June 09	July 09	Aug 09	Sept 09	Oct 09	Nov 09	Dec 09	Jan 10	Feb 10	Mar 10	April 10	Total
SIC/Second Appeal				3	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	14
To know about RTI Act, 05	1	4	11	5	4	5	6	9	13	3	5	7	73
Education Department			1			1	1	2	1			1	7
NREGS	2		4		1	1	2	3	5	4	2	2	26
Health	1			1	1			1	1		1		6
PDS/Food Department		1			1	1			1		1	1	6
Police	1		1					1	2		1		6
NGOs/Private Institutions						1		1					2
BSNL Department		1					1						2
Social Welfare Department		2	1						1				4
Revenue/Distt Collector					1	2	1		1	1	1		7
Agriculture	1		1		1			1					4
Bank	1	1								2		2	6
Electricity				1									1
Urban Development		1											1
Municipal Corporation	1						1	2	1				5
Ministry of Youth Affairs		1	1										2
Rajasthan Housing Board			1										1
Environment and Forest			1										1
PHED				1					1		1	1	4
Passport Office				1									1
Transport							1						1
Raj Pub Service Commission					1								1
State Election Commission								1					1
Temple Board of Rajasthan						1		1					2
Rajasthan Stock Exchange								1					1
RD Depot/GPs	2		5	1	1	1	2	3	1	3	2	2	23
PWD										2			2
Total	10	11	27	13	12	14	16	28	32	14	15	18	210

Issue-wise Queries	May 09	June 09	July 09	Aug 09	Sept 09	Oct 09	Nov 09	Dec 09	Jan 10	Feb 10	Mar 10	April 10	Total
About RTI Act, 2005	1	4	11	5	4	5	6	9	13	3	5	7	73
RTI application filing process in particular department	9	7	15	4	7	7	9	17	16	9	7	6	113
First appeal in particular Department			1	1		1			1	1	2	3	10
Second appeal & State Commission				3	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	14
Total	10	11	27	13	12	14	16	28	32	14	15	18	210

5. Orders Passed by Rural Development Department, Government of Rajasthan, during the Project Period

Constructive engagement in form of dialogues with the policy makers of Rural Development Department and state government and the advocacy efforts of project activities contributed in passing of the following 11 general orders related to effective implementation of RTI Act at gram *panchayats,* enhancing transparency and accountability in the service delivery mechanism and decision making processes.

1) Proactive disclosure of the information related to construction work under NREGS at GP, ordered on November 19, 2009;
2) Painting the names of NREG labourers with payment details on *Gram Panchayat* walls, ordered on January 10, 2010;
3) Order for following the NREGA (Grievance Redressal) Rules, 2009 in letter and spirit, ordered on December 18, 2009;
4) Better record management under NREGA at *Gram Panchayat* level as per rules and guidelines, ordered on October 23, 2009;
5) Regarding NREGA help line, ordered on April 23, 2010;
6) Publicising NREGA Citizens Charter among common people by *Gram Panchayat* s, ordered on February 05, 2010;
7) Maintaining the NREGA records well and furnishing full details, ordered on December 15, 2009;
8) Constitution of NREGA permanent committees at *Gram Panchayat* level and effective role in NREGA monitoring, ordered on February 08, 2010;
9) Effective implementation of the RTI Act at *Gram Panchayat* level. Writing the NREGA related information on notice board and regularly updating of the details of NREGA labourers twice a month, ordered on March 11, 2010;
10) Ensuring transparency, accountability and making it corruption free by developing an effective complaint redressal mechanism at district and block levels, ordered on June 17, 2009; and
11) Ensuring effective implementation of the RTI Act in Rural Development Department through proactive disclosure of information. Project officials participated in the dialogue process with the government, along with other NGOs, at Jaipur on September 17, 2009.

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6. Research Formats

CGCC Feedback Form
(Forms has to filled after asking with RTI Applicant)

1. What was your source of information to know about RTI?
   Radio ☐   Newspaper ☐   CGCC ☐   Others (Specify)_____

2. Do you know the complete process of filing na RTI application and making an appeal?
   Yes ☐   No ☐

3. What is the current position of the RTI application filed by you?
   Received information and satisfied ☐   Information received but not satisfied ☐
   Information not received ☐   Appeal (First/Second) Application rejected ☐
   Don't know ☐

4. What role a CGCC played in making you aware about RTI Act, 2005 and filing a RTI Application under this?
   _____
   _____

   4.1 Was it possible for you to file and receive information without help of CGCC?
   Yes ☐   No ☐

   4.2 Please describe about the help which you sought from CGCC but he could not provide?
   _____
   _____

5. How was the behaviour of PIO towards you on filing an RTI Application?
   Good ☐   Bad ☐   Denied to accept application ☐   Asked to wait ☐

   5.1 How did you counter the ill behaviour of PIO?
   _____
   _____

6. What impact your RTI application had created in ensuring the quality of service delivery and decision making process and behaviour of PIOs?
   _____
   _____

7. Experiences of RTI applicants in detail: (Please enclose the filed copy of RTI)
   _____
   _____

Signature of RTI Applicant

Name of Applicant:_____

Village:_____Tehsil:_____District:_____

Education:_____Profession:_____

Ration card type: APL/BPL_____Phone/Mobile No:_____

Name and contact details of CGCC:_____

Form - A
(See Rule 3 (1))
Format of Application for Obtaining Information under the RTI Act, 2005

To,

The Public Information Officer,
(Designation and address of the concerned office)

1. Full name of applicant:

2. Address:

3. Particulars of information required:
    (i)   Subject matter of information:
    (ii) The period to which information relates:
    (iii) Description of information required:
    (iv) Whether information is required by post or in person:
    (v)   In case by post: ordinary, registered or speed):

4. Whether applicant is below poverty line:
    (if so attach photocopy of below poverty line card.

Place

Date: :   Signature of applicant:

First/Second Appeal Application
(Under section 19 of RTI Act, 2005)

To,

Office of first appellate authority

1- Name and full address of appellant:
   _____

2- Name and full address of PIO against whom appeal is made:
   _____

3- Reason of appeal: Name and date of order if given:
   _____

4- Fact for applying for appeal:
   _____

5- Basis of appeal: ——

6- Other relevant details: _____

7- Certification of appellant: I _____
   _____certify that the facts mentioned in point no. 01
   to point 06 are factual and correct as per my knowledge. I have not concealed any thing in
   this regard and appealed for this anywhere rather than this.

                                                            Signature of appellant

Place:

Date:

Time:

List of attached documents:
1- One copy of the RTI application filed before PIO
2- Copy of the information provided earlier by PIO
3- Copy of the documents mentioned in the appeal
4- Other relevant documents in this regard
   Appeal has to be submitted in two copies

RGR&CVA Survey

RTI Ground Realities and Corruption Vulnerability Analysis in NREGS, Swarnagayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana and Indira Aawas Yojana

Common People/ Beneficiary Survey Questionnaire

1. Do you know the *Gram Panchayat* Office and persons sit over there?
   Yes ☐   No ☐
   Patwari ☐   *Gram Sevak* ☐   *Sarpanch* ☐   *Panchayat* member ☐   All ☐

2. How often do you visit *Gram Panchayat* Office and when you visited this last time?
   Often ☐   Occasionally ☐   Never visited ☐   Last visit ☐   Months/Yrs ago
   If yes, for what?

   If never visited, why?

3. Are you familiar with following schemes?
   NREGS - Yes ☐   No ☐   IAY - Yes ☐   No ☐   SGSY - Yes ☐   No ☐

4. How did you come to know about these *Gram Panchayat* schemes and programmes?
   Gram Sabha ☐   *Gram Panchayat* member ☐   *Panchayat* Notice Board ☐
   NGOs ☐   Others ☐

5. Have you ever participated in *Gram Sabhas*? If not, why?

6. Have you heard about RTI Act, 2005
   Yes ☐   No ☐

7. What do you know about the RTI application filing process? Tick appropriately
   Application format ☐   Public Information Officer ☐   Fee - General and BPL ☐

   Time Period ☐   Appellate authorities ☐   Others

8. What was the main objective/purpose of enacting this RTI Act?
   Garner votes ☐   Teach a lesson to government officials ☐
   Control corruption ☐

9. Has this Act been successful in achieving its objectives/purposes?
   Yes ☐   No ☐

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10. What impact this Act has created upon common men and government officials?
Common man:
A tool in hand ☐   Opportunity to participate in government processes ☐
Reduced corruption ☐   All above ☐

Officials or Service Providers:
More responsive and accountable ☐   Take citizens seriously ☐
Easy to get desired information ☐   All above

11. Have you filed an RTI Application at any point of time in any department? If yes, where and what is the status of that today? Tick the appropriate answer

Name of the Department/Agency?
Received and satisfied ☐   Dissatisfied ☐   Not Received ☐
Appeal 1st/2nd ☐   Withdrawn (Reason)

12. Do you think the RTI Act has been successful in controlling corruption in any way?
Yes ☐   No ☐
If yes, how much? Very much ☐   Much ☐   Less ☐   Negligible ☐
In what way? Give some examples?
If not, why? Give some examples

COMMON PEOPLE

13. Which is the government institute/agency (that is implementing rural development scheme) where corruption is prevailing?

Name of the department/agency?

Can you elaborate the causes of corrupt processes in which corruption is an integral part and chances are more in Rural Development Department?
NREGS:

SGSY:

IAY:

Beneficiaries of Selected Schemes:
14. Are you ☐   or your family members ☐   working in NREGS ☐
or beneficiary of Indira Aavas Yojana ☐   & Swarnjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana ☐ ?

15. What are the five processes in NREGS where you experience corruption and officials engulf money/cut their share? Descending order?

NREGS

    1.
    2.
    3.
    4.
    5.

SGSY

    6.
    7.
    8.
    9.
    10.

Indira Aavas Yojana

    11.
    12.
    13.
    14.
    15.

16. Have you or your family members ever paid any amount of bribes in cash or kind to people for getting services or work done or they cut in your share of benefit under the schemes of NREGS, SGSY and IAY in advance? If yes how much?
(Grant total if paid more than one time)?

NREGS: ₹
SGSY: ₹
IAY: ₹

17. The bribe you paid was demanded or voluntarily paid to them to solve your purpose or get your work done or get out of tern or without to be entitled of getting benefits of those schemes?

NREGS: ₹
SGSY: ₹
IAY: ₹

18. Why service providers need to demand bribes or cut the share of poor and misuse public money for their own purpose?
Lack of monitoring/public participation/ involvement of superiors/ discretionary powers/ no one to ask him or her or any other reason?

NREGS:
SGSY:
IAY:

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19. How the corrupt processes can be changed/reformed/restructured in your opinion?

    NREGS:
    SGSY:
    IAY:

20. Do you have any idea/information about any other person in your area, who is also affected/victim of corruption by the service providers/*Gram Panchayat*, which is responsible for delivering various service and implementing development work in your village?
    If yes, how many of them?
    What is nature of the victimisation and under which scheme/activity?

21. What role are you ready to play against corruption? Would you like to file an RTI Application in future for tracing the evidences of corruption and expose the corrupt officials of government departments?

22. Researcher's comments in brief.

Thanks for response and time given

Respondent's coordinates:

Name of respondent – Mr./Mrs./Miss_____

Age years_____Name of village_____Year since residing_____

Education_____Profession_____Ration cart Type- BPL( ) APL ( )

Phone Numbers- Resi; Mobile:_____

Date of interview:_____

Researcher's coordinates:

Name and Sign of Researcher _____

Phone Number: Resi/Off: Mobile: _____

7. CGCC Model: An Illustration
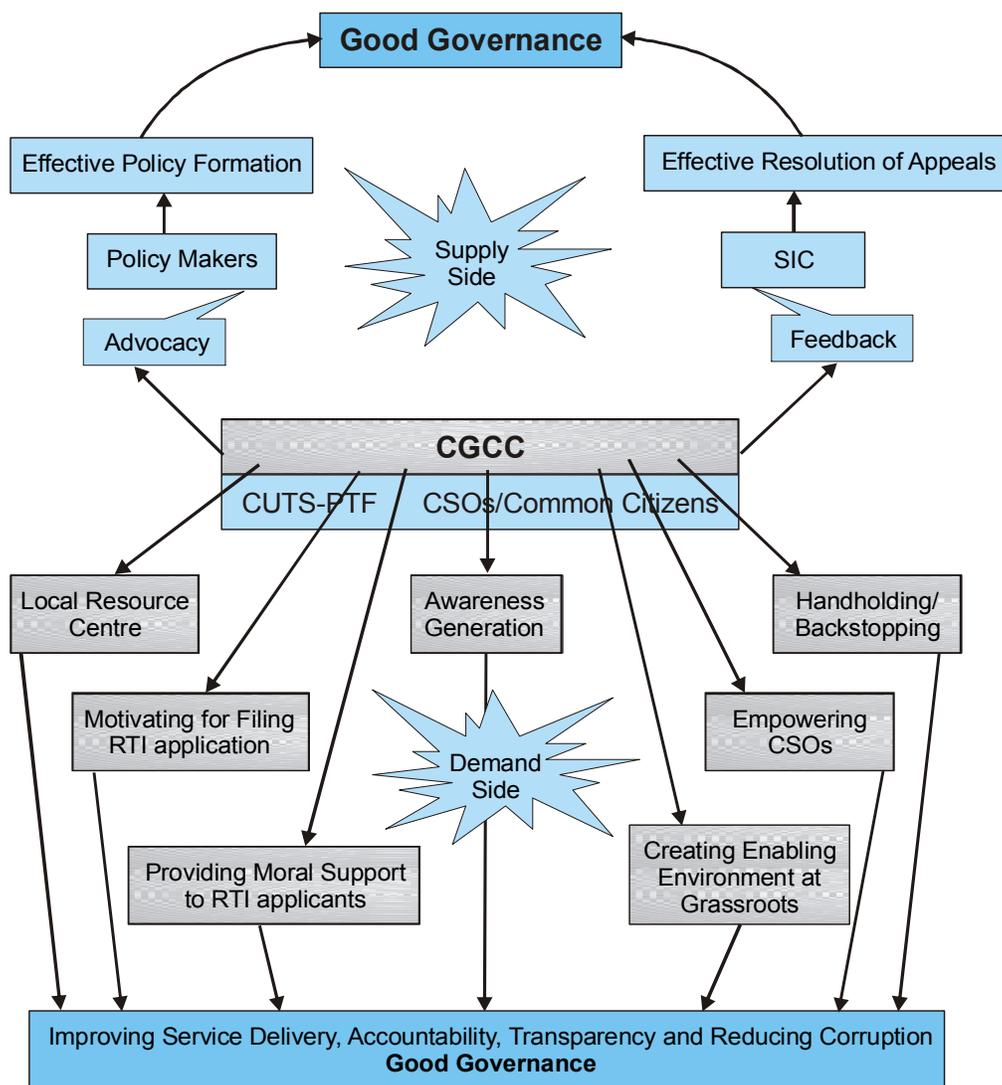
8. Log Frame Matrix

Narrative Summary	Verifiable Indicators (Baseline and Target values will be established thru a baseline survey at start of project)	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Project Goal (Impact)[1]- • Contribute to reduced corruption in processes of NREGS, *Swarna Jayanti Swarojgar Yojana* (SGSY) and *Indira Aavas Yojana* implemented by the *Panchayat Raj* and Rural Development Department in the State of Rajasthan, India	• Number of effective actions taken by the Department to curb corruption in the target schemes • Percentage of citizens who report that corruption in the PR&RD department is decreasing/increasing/about the same • Number of model *gram panchayats* established following the project example	* Review of relevant studies and surveys. Information obtained from the department using RTI * Information provided by the department using the RTI. Baseline before advocacy. End of project after advocacy * RTI Ground Realties and Corruption Vulnerability Survey at beginning and end of survey * Initiatives taken by RD deptt. for developing more model Gram Panchayats in the state	• Availability of relevant studies • Department level changes are a long-term process. Significant impact can only be made through a succession of projects over many years • The electoral process will provide political will and incentive for reform • High level leadership of the PR &RD department will remain committed to dialogue and reform
Project Outcomes (expected by end of the project). • Reduced incidence of bribery/corruption experience by the project area	• Percentage of project area citizens who report paying a bribe to obtain benefits under the schemes	• RTI Ground Realties and Corruption Vulnerability Survey of randomly	• Government will take number of initiatives for sincere and effective

_____
1. The Project Impact is expected to be visible only after several years of advocacy by citizens against corruption.

Narrative Summary	Verifiable Indicators (Baseline and Target values will be established thru a baseline survey at start of project)	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
citizens for service delivery under the targeted schemes of the PR and RD department • Transparency and accountability in the target schemes increased through increased use of the RTI Act • Citizens in the project area are able to obtain corruption free services through empowered network of the CGCCs, CSOs & other interested citizens that do advocacy at multiple levels and play the role of 'watchdog'	• Data related to percentage of surveyed beneficiaries and bribe paid by them on an average for availing the facilities of select schemes and extrapolation with total expenditure of schemes and total no. of beneficiaries in interventional area Percentage of respondents (beneficiaries and providers) who found the use of RTI Act to be effective in curbing corruption in letter and spirit, at various levels of execution of target schemes • Percentage of increase in RTI awareness, use and resolution • Percentage of respondents (users and service providers) who regard CGCC assistance, and orientation/ consultations events to be effective to help citizens obtain corruption free services	selected citizens in the project area. Survey to be done at the start of the project and at the end of the project. The survey will include a broader set of questions on the services under the scheme e.g. time taken, steps involved, user satisfaction, transactions costs etc • Information obtained from the department on funds disbursed under the scheme and estimating the proportion affected by corruption by using the survey data • An evaluation form to obtain feedback from the citizens and service providers reached by the CGCC, RAIC, and block level consultations CART records and RGR and Corruption Vulnerability Survey • Documented 'cases' of enhanced service delivery	implementation of provision of the RTI Act • Active involvement and cooperation of various stakeholders • Most of the beneficiaries and service providers will give feedback after their resolved grievances

Narrative Summary	Verifiable Indicators (Baseline and Target values will be established thru a baseline survey at start of project)	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Project Output • RGR and Corruption Vulnerability Survey • RTI Advisory and Information Centre established by 1st month after project start and a RTI Toolkit produced by last of 11th month of the project • Formation of 17 CGCCs (35 members) and a Network of CGCC, CSOs and other interested individuals to work together for transparency and accountability in target schemes using RTI • Two Model RTI *Gram Panchayat* established • About 340 RTI Applications filed • At least 30 dialogue/ peer learning events (2 district, 17 block level, one mid term dissemination cum advocacy, one final state level advocacy meeting, one exposure visit and 8 FGDs) process with policy makers and implementers and citizens to share their views and peer learning	• Survey completed by 1st quarter • Frequency of use and feedback from users • Number of CGCCs and networks established • Report on activities undertaken by them • For the target schemes, percentage of citizens reporting (a) satisfaction with bribe free delivery of services; (b) timeliness in service delivery; and (c) satisfactory quality • Number of RTI applications and leading to satisfactory resolution • Number and quality of dialogue events • CART report to the department • Number of case studies. Instances of proactive disclosure • Number of Newsletters issued (4000)	• Survey succeeds in providing baseline information for the results framework and project work programme • Monthly progress report. A user feedback form • Quarterly progress reports on regular interface of the network/CSOs/ CGCCs/ people with government officials and policy makers • Citizen's Report Card (CRC) at Model *Gram Panchayat* level- baseline and project end survey • CART progress reports • CART records • CART progress report • CART progress and completion report	• Government officials will be cooperative and proactive to implement changes in the system • Regular feedback from the CSOs, CGCCs etc. • Informed reporting in the media • The *Panchayati Raj* representatives and *Panchayat* Secretary will be adaptable to changes and will remain in the position until the end of the project period and continue active involvement beyond the term

Narrative Summary	Verifiable Indicators (Baseline and Target values will be established thru a baseline survey at start of project)	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
• A set of recommendations for simplified & transparent service delivery processes • At least 85 (05 per CGCC) documented case studies of obtaining corruption free services under target schemes • Four Quarterly Newsletters		• CART progress report	
Project Activities/ Inputs • Creating RTI Advisory and Information centre • Research for Situation/Problem Analysis and Strategy Formation for the core objectives as baseline and at end level • Building and empowering network of CSOs, CGCCs and people • Activities related to developing two Model RTI *Gram Panchayats* • Initiating, scaling up and sustaining the dialogue process among stakeholders and policy makers (30	• Advise and information on RTI Act given • Obstacles in achieving transparency and the areas in need of more transparent efforts are identified • CSOs and CGCCs are acting as facilitators • Dialogue process initiated and continued	• Record of number of requisitions received for advise and Information and their disposal • Identified problems and areas in the analytical report • List of CSOs and CGCCs, who are part of the network • Event Reports, photographs, media clippings	• All funds will be available on time • The capable project personnel for executing the activities will remain consistent and in place

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Narrative Summary	Verifiable Indicators (Baseline and Target values will be established thru a baseline survey at start of project)	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
dialogue/per learning events) • Documenting of case studies· Internal M & E Activities • Exposure Visit • Developing RTK			