Compendium of Best Practices on RTI

Volume I

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Government of India
Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
Department of Personnel and Training

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FOREWARD

The Right to Information Act is one of the biggest achievements of Indian democracy. The Act, which is one of the most powerful legislations of its kind in the world, is also the closest to the citizen's heart. Its success lies in its simplicity. It has empowered the citizenry in an unprecedented manner to participate in nation bulding by promoting transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority.

A number of Public Authorities have adopted certain practices that have resulted in greater transparency and accountability in their functioning, thereby leading to more effective implementation of the RTI Act. I appreciate the initiative taken by the Department of Personnel and Training to bring this compilation of write-ups on a few such best practices. I also compliment the authors for providing the write-ups.

Right to Information Act, 2005 has been rated second globally in a study conducted by 'Access Info Europe' and 'Centre for Law & Democracy', Canada. The RTI rating provides a numerical assessment for rating the overall legal framework for the Right to Information in a country, based on how well that framework provides the right to access information held by public authority.

I am hopeful that this compilation would encourage other public authorities to replicate such best practices on effective implementation of RTI Act, pro active disclosure in particular. This would further strengthen the RTI regime in the country and enhance its position globally.

(V. Narayanasamy)

Preface

The Right to Information Act, 2005 is one of the most important legislation of the Government of India to promote transparency and accountability in the functioning of the Government. Within eight years of its enactment, RTI has become one of the most effective means to make an informed citizenry. The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has been playing a pivotal role in the effective implementation of the RTI Act.

In the series of such initiatives, DoPT has decided to publish a compendium of Best Practices on implementation of RTI Act. Write ups were accordingly invited from public authorities/citizens on the subject. DoPT is thankful to all those public authorities and citizens who have provided the write ups. Amongst the write ups received, 12 write ups have been selected by DoPT for inclusion in this volume of the compendium. DoPT is also thankful to Shri K. G. Verma, Ex – Joint Secretary (RTI)/DoPT for his editorial support.

The write ups on the best practices on implementation of RTI Act include the background of the need felt by the Public Authority, its scope, financial implication and deployment of resources such as manpower & infrastructure, lessons learnt by the public authorities concerned during implementation of said practices, outcome of such practices & scope of their replication by other public authorities.

It is hoped that this compendium would encourage all the public authorities to adopt similar practices for more effective implementation of RTI Act.

Dr. S. K. Sarkar
Secretary
Department of Personnel and Training

Disclaimer

This compendium on Best practices on implementation of RTI Act is a compilation of write ups received from the public authorities and the citizens. This compendium is not a comprehensive overview of all the successful initiatives that are existing in India. It contains a few which have been brought to the notice of Department of Personnel and Training in response to the request by the Department.

Though editing and compilation of the write ups has been done by DoPT, the responsibility of the authenticity of the factual information contained in the write ups remains with the respective authors of the write ups.

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SARATHI

Mr. Shrikar Pardeshi

(This Practice relates to Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, Pimpri, Maharashtra)

Background

The city of Pimpri-Chinchwad is situated to the north of Pune and is 142 km from Mumbai. Pimpri-Chinchwad is predominantly an industrial area, and has seen a high rate of population growth and development in the recent past. The city has an area of 177 sq. km, while the population (as per census 2011) is 17.30 lakhs. Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC), established in 1982, has six administrative wards and 15 zonal offices with 32 departments providing nearly 116 different services to the residents of the city.

The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation was facing the following three challenges:

i.   Difficulties faced by the public

People usually visit government offices to seek information, submit applications, register complaint etc. Repeated visits, long queues/waiting periods, lack of uniformity in responses obtained, referrals from one office to another leads to frustration amongst the citizens, in addition to wastage of time and money. Often it is found that the information given is incomplete, with variation in information with regards to time, place and person which results in delays, confusion and corruption. Without timely and complete information people have no power to make choices and take decisions.

ii.   Mandate of Law

Government of India enacted the 'Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005' to ensure citizen's access to public information. The section 4 of RTI Act deals with proactive disclosure of information by the public authorities. The mandate is that every public authority should provide as much information suo motu as possible to the public through various means of communications so that the public take minimum resort to the use of the Act to obtain information. The items for pro active disclosure include Citizens Charter which involves disclosing all the necessary information about a service as well as the processes involved, the details of concerned officers, time involved etc.

iii.   Difficulties faced by the Administration

The administration too had to cope with the overload of demand for information and grievance redressal. The existing method of providing information and registering complaints was not streamlined and systematic, making the process testing for both the citizens and the administration. The officers had to spend a lot of time in giving even basic information to the citizens about services of Municipal Corporation. It was realized that there was a need of a mechanism which would spare the precious time of the administration spent in answering queries and at the same time satisfy the information needs of the community.

Details of the Practice

The aim of this initiative was to overcome communication barriers and expeditiously provide information which the citizens require, to access basic services. Hence the entire initiative was given the name 'SARATHI' which in Marathi means 'one who guides towards the right path or one who drives you through adversities to find the destination'. SARATHI in English has been aptly

given an acronym i.e. System of Assisting Residents And Tourists through Helpline Information.

Steps undertaken

In order to cater to the information needs of the citizens, a core committee was formed consisting of the heads of all departments led by the Municipal Commissioner. A weekly meeting of all the stakeholders was held on every Saturday for six months to discuss and finalize the details of the initiative. This resulted in completeness, standardization and authenticity of information. The stakeholders in the entire process were the core committee members as well as representatives of the civil society such as IT professionals & representatives of NGOs.

The points considered were:

A.   Format of information dissemination:

Instead of providing the descriptive information of the departments in the official language, it was decided to design the content in the format of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). The active participation of NGOs and citizens in the core committee helped in designing practical FAQs on the basic services of Municipal Corporation and important offices of Central and State Government.

B.   Content:

Information pertaining to the following points was to be included:

- Procedure for submitting an application for a service or a certificate: questions pertaining to availability of prescribed form; documents required to be submitted; place where the application is to be submitted; fees required; normal time taken for the service etc.

- Sources for additional information.

- Responsibility of grievance redressal.

- Services and amenities provided by a department.

A total of 774 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) were finalized for 45 departments. Standard answers were framed in consultation with the officers of respective departments. The FAQs were framed scrupulously ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information by cross checking it at various levels of hierarchy.

C. Departments:

FAQs pertaining to the following departments were included:

Sr. No.	Department	No. of Questions
	First Phase (rolled out on 15th Aug 2013)	
1	Property Tax	24
2	Water Supply	12
3	Sewerage	22
4	Building Permission	18
5	Town Planning & Development	50
6	Unauthorized Constructions	15
7	Health	10
8	Garden	17
9	Electrical	07
10	Civil	18
11	Local Body Tax	24
12	Traffic	12
13	Sky signs	15
14	Medical	24
15	Primary Education	30
16	Secondary Education	21
17	Environment	12
18	Sports	24
19	Slum Rehabilitation & Housing Scheme	22
20	Licenses	13
21	Animal Husbandry	21

22	E – Governance	07
23	Citizen Facilitation Center	08
24	Tourism	15
25	Science Park	08
26	Bus Rapid Transit	14
27	Fire	13
28	Disaster Management	16
	Total	492
	Second Phase (rolled out on 31st Oct 2013)	
29	Women & Child Development	23
30	Marriage Registration	23
31	Electoral Registration	26
32	Registration for U.I.D.	13
	Offices of Central & State Govt.	
33	Certificates issued by Collector Office	09
34	Ration Card	09
35	LPG Connection	14
36	Electricity Connection	11
37	Driving License	13
38	Passport	09
39	Food License	13
40	Pimpri Chinchwad New Town Development Authority	15
41	Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation	24
42	Registration Department	17
43	Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Bus Service	15
44	Right to Information	17
45	Travel	31
	Total	**774**

Use of ICT tools

It was decided to utilize the Information and Communication technology tools to provide direct and independent access to information. In order to address the needs of different groups of citizens, a multi pronged approach of delivery viz. through a Book, Website, Mobile application, e – Book, pdf Book and Helpline (Call Center) was designed. The SARATHI initiative in the form of a Book, Website and Helpline was launched on the occasion of 66th Independence Day i.e.

15th August 2013. in Marathi. The English version of SARATHI in all these forms was launched on 26th January 2014.

1) **Book:** A total of 3500 copies of a book in Marathi and 1000 books in english titled SARATHI (*System of Assisting Residents And Tourists through Helpline Information*) were published, in which the FAQs were categorized according to the departments. The books have been distributed to the Corporators, Officers and Supervisors of the Corporation, NGOs, Media persons etc.

2) **Website:** A department-wise list of all FAQs has also been displayed on the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) website. The citizens can access the information at a click of a button. Although the information of SARATHI is provided on the official website i.e. *www.pcmcindia.gov.in*, a special in house website i.e. *www.pcmchelpline.in* was developed to avoid traffic congestion on the official website. A conscious attempt is being made to popularize the new domain *www.pcmchelpline.in* during the publicity campaigns.

3) **Helpline (Call Center)** - A full-fledged Call Center (Phone no. 8888006666) has been opened to function as a helpline from 7 am to 10 pm. When the call operators answer the calls, they refer to the same FAQs which are available on their computers with easy search facility. This ensures consistency in the information provided to the citizens.

In the second phase, SARATHI was launched through three more modalities, from 11th Oct 2013, as mentioned below:

4) **App for Mobile / Tablet / I–pad** – A special application of SARATHI has been developed for mobile phone with separate version for android, apple, windows as well as blackberry phone. App has also been developed for tablet and I–pad. This can be downloaded freely from the website *www.pcmchelpline.in.*

5)   **E Book** – In order to cater to young, IT savvy population, the Corporation has also developed e-Book of SARATHI which can be downloaded, free of cost, from *www.pcmchelpline.in.*

6)   **Pdf Book** – As SARATHI book became very popular and its demand increased, the book was converted into pdf and made available on *www.pcmcindia.gov.in* as well as on *www.pcmchelpline.in* in both color as well as black and white version.

D.   Dissemination:

Huge advertisement hoardings displayed at major public places in the city and regular media briefings helped in wide dissemination of information of this innovative activity. In order to make the web link popular, active use of social media is being made. Besides, bulk sms (short message service) are also being sent. The display boards of SARATHI have been put up in all offices of PCMC. SARATHI is also being advertised in local movie theaters.

E.   Facility for lodging complaints and grievance redressal:

As the platform of call center is an interactive one, it was decided to use this channel to register grievances of citizens and resolve them in a time bound manner. The SARATHI system has been integrated with the existing grievance redressal system. As soon as a complaint is registered at the Call Center (on phone no. 8888006666), it is marked to the respective officer of the concerned department and a token number is automatically generated which is sent to the citizen via a SMS. Using this token number the citizen is able to track the process of resolution of the complaint online or can dial the helpline to check its current status.

A strict vigilance is kept on the grievance redressal system. A complete list of all the officers working in the field as well as in the head office looking after different works has been made available for the back end operators in the Call Center who ensure that the complaint is marked to the correct officer in shortest possible time. All the complaints received at the Call Center are entered into the centralized grievance redressal system. This system also tracks the resolution of grievances received through the website, official e mail of PCMC, complaints given at Lokshahi Din (Special Grievance Redressal Day) and complaints directly presented to the Municipal Commissioner.

A color coding system has been developed for existing grievance redressal system which helps to monitor the pendency at each level. In this, the complaints are monitored, coded and assigned negative points depending on the duration of pendency viz. pendency of more than 30 days (red code; 10 negative points); beyond 21 days (yellow code, 5 negative points) and pendency beyond 14 days (green code, 2 negative points). In the weekly meetings, the total points earned by each department are calculated. If a department head has more than 50 negative points in his name, he gets a memo; earning more than 75 negative points result in a show cause notice and more than 100 negative points leads to a departmental enquiry. The complaints which are pending beyond 30 days are taken on priority during the weekly review meetings and the reasons for pendency are reviewed.

The complaints are also being randomly tracked for the quality of disposal. The complaints of emergency nature like electric dangers, major leakage of pipeline etc. which are to be resolved within 24 hours are put under urgent category and monitored accordingly.

F.   Scope for Expansion:

On 15th August 2013, SARATHI was launched with information related to 28 departments. After analyzing the pattern of questions asked by the citizens on the call center, the Corporation decided to include FAQs on four more subjects i.e. Marriage registration, Voter registration, Aadhaar (U.I.D.) registration and on various schemes of the Department of Women and Child Development. The information of these 4 departments along with the information of 12 various offices of Central and State Govt were made available on SARATHI from 31st Oct 2013. The English version of SARATHI was launched on 26th January, 2014. The Hindi version of SARATHI in all forms would be made available on 24th February, 2014.

G.   Monitoring and Supervision:

A special cell has been formed to monitor and supervise the functioning of the helpline. The Assistant Commissioner (General Administration) is appointed as the overall in charge and is entrusted with the responsibility of coordination between all departments, updating the FAQs and training the call operators. The Computer Officer and the Wireless Officer have been entrusted with the responsibility to assist the Assistant Commissioner. The Computer Officer has the responsibility of provision and maintenance of hardware, software and backend operations including grievance tracking and monitoring redressal. The Wireless officer looks after recruitment of call operators, establishment of call operators and maintenance of the telephone line. Every week a review meeting of these officials is held to discuss the performance of the initiative.

H.   Resources for Implementation:

• **Infrastructure**: All the methods of dissemination, except the call center, did not require any new special infrastructure. While the books were printed through a private agency, the activities of developing website, mobile application,

e book and pdf book were taken up by the e Governance department of Municipal Corporation.

Separate space in the PCMC building has been earmarked for the Call center (helpline). A separate telephone line with ten hunting lines was sought so that calls from ten people can be attended simultaneously on one telephone number. Separate software has been procured to provide special facilities like recording of calls, call log facility and caller number identification etc. Instead of going for an automated voice response system, an interactive call center was developed to provide an interactive, comfortable platform for the citizens. Backend operator system was established for directing and monitoring complaints.

- **Funds:** The total expenditure for printing 3000 books was Rs 7.85 lakhs. The expenditure incurred in development of mobile application and e book was Rs. 4.55 lakhs. The development of special website and pdf book did not involve any costs.

The total expenditure on call center has been Rs. 13.60 lakhs. The expenditure incurred for setting up the call center included costs of Rs. 10.45 lakhs incurred on procuring hardware and server, Rs. 2.80 lakhs for procurement of the software and Rs. 35,000 on special telephone number etc. This is all one time capital expenditure. The recurring expenditure is likely to be about Rs. 1,30,000 per month which would include the honorarium for twelve call operators at the rate of Rs 10000/person/ month and Rs 10000 for other expenses.

The total expenditure of Rs 26 lakhs was incurred from the Municipal Corporation budget.

- **Manpower:** The development of website, mobile application, pdf book and e book was done by the technical experts of e Governance Dept. For call center, twelve professional call operators with experience were recruited on contractual basis through open competitive recruitment and posted in two shifts of six each. Three computer operators from the Corporation were appointed at the backend with the responsibility of tracking complaints and monitoring its

resolution. One week training of all these personnel included the theoretical aspects; dialogue, interaction and guidance from the departmental heads; exposure visits to major projects like water treatment plant, gardens, schools, science park etc and finally hands on training in the call center.

Lessons learnt

- **Unmet demand**: The SARATHI system has become hugely popular with a total of 78,241 citizens having benefitted in a short span of 5 months. Of these, a total of 54,002 citizens have accessed the information using the website while 24,239 citizens have taken the information using the call center.

Table 1: Citizens benefitted from SARATHI

Sr. No.	Period	Web hits	Calls at helpline	Total Citizens benefitted
1.	15th Aug – 31st Aug 2013	10,036	3,000	13,036
2.	Sept 2013	10,454	4,318	14,772
3.	Oct 2013	9,826	4,782	14,608
4.	Nov 2013	8,692	4,283	12,975
5.	Dec 2013	9,950	5,139	15,089
6.	Jan 2014	12,126	6,136	18,262
	1st Feb – 10th Feb 2014	3,628	1,909	5,537
	Total	64,712	29,567	94,279

On an average 512 citizens are benefitted from SARATHI every day. Of these, an average of 353 citizens are drawing the information from website, while an average of 159 citizens are getting the information from the call center.

Of the total 24,239 calls, a total of 16,018 calls (66%) were made to seek information, while a total of 8,221 calls (34%) were complaints of the citizens about the municipal services. Of these complaints, a total of 7,649 (93%) complaints have been successfully resolved by the municipal administration.

This indicates the huge amount of unmet demand for information in the society. The helpline is receiving complaints related to water supply, drainage, waste disposal, pot holes on the road, street lights, encroachment as well as issues related to garden, traffic, parking facility, veterinary department etc.

- **Team Work**: One of the most important learning of the initiative is to have all the department officials i.e. right from HoD to the field level officers on board and at same level. Streamlined backend process for redressal of complaints is an essential factor which determines the success of the initiative.

- **Using in house capacity**: With expertise in e governance, vast domain experience and adequate funds, the Municipal Corporation could independently design and implement the intervention successfully without any outsourcing. The internal technical expertise and capacity of the organization was utilized to design and implement the initiative. As a result, the corporation staff was more confident of running it independently and overcoming the problems confidently.

- **Ensure confidentiality**: It is being observed that now citizens complain without any fear when they call on the helpline. Considering the fact that citizens would lodge a variety of complaints, care is taken to ensure the confidentiality regarding the caller details.

- **Multiple channels of communication**: The multi-pronged approach is important as it caters to the needs of different sections of the society. The website, pdf book and e-book would be of much use to the educated and computer savvy

generation while the call center is intended to help the people without access to computers. The young population with the smart phones and i-pads in their hands can access SARATHI using the specially developed mobile application. In addition, if any problem arises in any of the tools, the other alternatives would act as a backup.

- **Providing up-to-date information**: The information provided on the website, call center, mobile app, pdf book and e-book can be updated easily. The analysis of the calls received at the call center is helping the administration to update the FAQs as well as to add new FAQs. The result was the second phase of SARATHI which was launched on 31st Oct 2013 with information of 16 additional departments.

- **Capacity building**: Providing information is necessary but certainly not sufficient to improve access to basic services and improve governance. The capacity to provide services needs to be strengthened too. For example along with the provision of a channel for lodging complaints, attempts were also made to improve the grievance redressal system of the Municipal Corporation.

Outcome

- **Proactive provision of information**: Information related to basic services offered by the various departments of Municipal Corporation can be easily accessed without having to visit the office in person.

- **Need based approach**: The information was presented as per the needs of the community and in the manner in which it is sought from the authorities.

- **Interactive Platform**: It was not a passive flow of information from the supply to the demand side but provided an interactive platform for the citizens to

communicate with the administration with two ways of information flow from government to citizens and vice-versa.

The benefits seen are:

1. **For the Citizen- Access to basic services**

a. Easy to access: Easy access to information saves time and money as the hassles of travel, wage losses etc. are prevented.

b. Citizen friendly: Citizens find the information easy to understand as the information is being delivered in the form of FAQs without the jargons of official language.

c. Empowerment: Awareness about the functioning of the Municipal Corporation, rules and regulations, responsibilities of the officials of Municipal Corporation as well as that of Govt offices is empowering the citizens while taking decision and actions for their own welfare.

d. Uniform and Standard information: The citizens are now able to negotiate deals in a better fashion and they are not misled. They are getting uniform, standard answers from official source which is avoiding confusion.

e. Preventing discrimination: There are no registration or membership requirements for accessing information. Any person can access information at any time without having to identify him/her self or provide any justification for doing so thereby preventing discrimination.

f. Grievance redressal: With SARATHI, now the citizens can get their grievances redressed with a simple call to the helpline.

g. Platform for communication: With SARATHI, now the citizens have a channel of communication with the administration which gives the community a sense of remaining connected with the administration.

h. Overcome barriers of communication: The information can be accessed through a mode one is comfortable with, irrespective of time and place.

2. **For the administration- Improved governance**

a. Check corruption- By being open, clear and verifiable with regard to the application of rules, standards and procedures, the Municipal Corporation is ensuring transparency and thwarting the role of middlemen.

b. Accountability: Putting the information in the public domain puts the responsibility of explaining and justifying the decisions taken on the officers.

c. Enhanced efficiency: It is enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of administration by creating pressure and an enabling environment for Government's delivery systems.

d. Monitoring: An analysis of the data regarding the information sought is helping in prioritizing and grading the information needed by the society.

e. Feedback on Municipal Services: An analysis of the complaints indicates the departments which need to improve their performance as well as the areas/wards which have poor services.

f. In house development: The intensive exercise in developing the FAQs for a department, compilation of information, standardizing the information and preparing short but complete answers, updating the data based on queries received on call center, resolving the grievances has completely transformed the functioning of the departments. As all the departments were involved in the exercise right from the beginning and as it was an intensive team exercise, the confidence of the entire system has increased.

Scope of Replication

Awareness about the rights and expectation of good services is rising and with it the demand for information is also on the increase. At the same time, the modern methods of communication are available which help us rise to this challenge successfully. SARATHI is an initiative to meet the huge information demand using effective tools of information technology.

All Municipal Corporations and Municipal Councils in the country, in general, can replicate this initiative.

RTI Library

Mr. Vijay Kumbhar

(This initiative relates to Pune Municipal Corporation, Maharashtra, India a local self-government body)

Background

With every passing year, the number of queries that the Pune municipal corporation (PMC) was receiving under RTI were increasing. In 2007, they received 5,218 applications, 5,804 applications in 2008 and 6,793 applications in 2009. As per records, 486 people went for a second appeal in 2007; a little over 300 did so in 2008 and 2009.

Due to increasing number of RTI applications, PMC officials were looking for way out. Civic activists were also aware of the situation. They observed that most of information that people ask by applying under section 6, falls under section 4 of the RTI Act. They were also aware that it is obligatory on public authority to disseminate all such information that falls under section 4. Section 4 (1) (b)(xv) speaks about the particulars of facilities available to citizens for obtaining information, including the working hours of a library or reading room, to be maintained for public use.

On discussion with the senior officers, it was agreed that a library for documents under section 4 of the RTI Act might be the answer to increasing number of RTI applications. Besides, the RTI library can be of additional advantage for RTI applicants.

Regarding the nature of the proposed RTI library, the concept of an open library was envisaged. That means the library without doors, so that anybody could walk in and read anything placed in library.

Details of the Practice

The library is situated on the third floor near general body meeting hall so that not only citizens but also electedmembers could use it. There is free access to everybody during all the working hours

As concept of library is open one, there would not be any attendant. For time being, one attendant has been employed for security purpose till the CCTV system is introduced. Hence, there is no cost of land or recurring cost for running the library. Only the cost of photocopying the documents is borne by the concerned departments.

The RTI library is named after Prakash Kardaley, the former resident editor of The Indian Express, Pune edition who had championed for RTI even before the Act had come into existence. It was inaugurated by on 17th July 2010.

Unique features of RTI library

- Easy access at one place

- No Application required

- No need to visit department to department.

- Information according to Sec. 4 of RTI Act made available easily

Documents kept in library

- Information on functions, powers & duties under section 4 (b)(i) and (ii)

- Development plan of the city

- Various study reports

- Process Manual for 456 subjects

- The rules, regulations, instructions, manuals and records, held by it or under its control or used by its employees for discharging its functions

- Citizen Charter of 155 subjects have been prepared showing Department's name and Subject ,Required Documents, Application Format, prescribed fee ,

time required for final disposal, concerned Law/Act/GR/Circular, details of Officers supposed to take decision, stages of decision

- Directory of officers & Employees.

- Budgets, books on RTI., about 281 books on various subjects are kept in the RTI Library

- Process Manual – 459 subjects

- Citizen Charter – 155 subjects

- All Department Information as per Section 4 of RTI Act, MRTP Act

- Various Project Reports under BPMC Act

- Various Committee Reports, Municipal Service Rules, Study Reports

- Local Body Tax Rules and Rates, development Plans

- Property Tax Rules Ward- wise Information

- Development Control Rules, list of Civic Properties, functioning of General Body, RTI Application Report, other Committee Reports

- Various PMC Circulars/ Orders, RTI Appeal Report, Government Circulars/ GR's.

Lessons learnt

Main task is to ensure proper coordination between offices of the civic body and to identify and procure documents required for the library. PMC has kept a notebook for suggestions and complaints in the library.

Financial Implications

A budgetary provision of rupees Twenty Five Lakhs was made to set up RTI library. However, the actual cost to set up library was ten lakh rupees.

Outcome

Number of RTI applications has come down because of the proactive disclosure of information through RTI library where all-important documents of the PMC are made available.

Scope of Replication

Such type of library does not require much space, and resourses. It can be set up at any available place in the public authority.

If CCTV is available in the Public authority, there is no need of any attendant for such library.

Even if public authority keeps attendant for the library, the cost will be less compared to processing RTI applications under section 6 of the RTI Act.

Transparency Desk

Dr.Sandeep N. Mahatme, IAS

(This Practice relates to Pro-Active Disclosure at the office of SDM Office of Dhalai District, Gandacherra Tripura)

Background

In the last 2 years at Gandacherra, a considerable volume of Right to Information queries were made by the citizens, social activists, academicians and others to various departments and offices, regarding diverse issues mainly relating to Land records, developmental schemes, compensation and relief assistance paid, old office records regarding citizenship and other certificates, election related issues like inclusion , deletion of voters, expenditure carried out during election by Sub-Divisional Magistrate Office, list of Booth Level Officers etc, issues relating to roads and drinking water schemes, different Rural Development and Panchayat department development schemes, etc.

From past experiences, there were instances of complaints regarding Right to Information reply being delayed or unresponsive departments seemingly unwilling to provide the requisite information. Such complaints were received with particular reference to the Agriculture department which concerns with activities implemented by them,
beneficiaries selected for the schemes and other programme. Also, the Department of Agriculture and Public Works Department (Drinking Water Source) were constantly flashed in the news allegedly due to lack of transparency and other corruption cases.

Details of Practice

Following the spirit of the Right to Information Act 2005, many departments and other organizations have pursued the electronic medium like internet for dissemination of information to the general public with good and effective results in urban areas where people have easy access to internet facilities. However, for rural areas, such good effects cannot be seen.

Gandacherra being a rural and remote sub-division of the state, the general people have no easy access to electronic media like internet. Hence, initiative for pro-active disclosure by manual medium in black and white have been launched to generate awareness and meet the demands and expectations of the public in harmony with the standards of the area. With this in mind, Sub-Divisional Magistrate office, Gandacherra has decided to start "*Transparency Desk"* for the people of the sub-division.

The plan of **Transparency Desk** covers all 22 Nos. Government departments like Sub-Divisional Magistrate office, Block office, Public Works Department (Roads & Buildings), Public Works Department (Drinking Water Source), Integrated Child Development Service, Agriculture, Health, Education, Police, etc. Each office will provide relevant information which is important from the public point of view. This information is based upon the analysis of public demands of information and based upon most commonly asked Right to Information applications. The head of offices were thoroughly briefed in the training cum meeting organized before actual starting of the system.

Example of such information can be like, Action Plan of the financial year, financial and physical progress reports of different development schemes implemented by the office, list of beneficiaries, work orders, and the like. This information will be collected from all the offices and stored centrally at Sub-Divisional Magistrate office where a separate room is allotted with dedicated staff and one Deputy Collector level officer as in-charge for the whole updation and management of the system. The respective dealing officers in all

departments were to select the most important information which would be made available in the Transparency desk.

The information thus selected and compiled by all offices would be maintained in systematic manner, separately for all departments. There will be registers for recording details of Right to Information application, date & time of public visit and nature of information required and their feedback would be taken whether they have received complete information sought by them. One Deputy Collector and Magistrate level officer would be appointed as Nodal Officer for grievance redressal with reference to all the issues related to the transparency desk. This Desk would give information to the applicant not only physically but electronically also as the desk staff would be equipped with desktop computers with broad band internet connection by which he can have access to all the websites of the ministry or district administration from which required information can easily be downloaded and provided to the public.

This system not only provides information to the general public but also to the department officers on demand. This information gathered at one place can be used for better planning, co- ordination in a constructive manner for better results. No additional work is required for this arrangement, as whatever information already exists, the same would be given to the transparency desk.

Key features of Transparency Desk.

- Each department's information is kept in separate file and each file has index showing the information contained in the file.

- Transparency board has been fixed outside the room depicting department wise available information in separate indices for easy location of files and other desired information.

- Information available in mixed format i.e English as well as Bengali languages. Some information is available in English and some in local languages. Also one office staff fluent in local dialect has been appointed

who can easily explain the contents to the public in their native tongue.

- No fee would be charged for seeking information irrespective of Above Poverty Line/Below Poverty Line status. Fee applicable only for Photostat and other purposes.

- New information is not created for "Transparency Desk". Whatever existing information was there is assembled together at one place.

- Appointment of Deputy Collector & Magistrate as Nodal Officer for looking into main issues related to functioning of "Transparency Desk"

- Timely co-ordination with other departments, i.e every 3 months updation of information, maintaining quality of information, addressing public grievances related to desk, training of the staff, maintenance of registers etc.

- Maintenance of "Transparency Desk " register mentioning name of visitors, nature of information required and name of department from which information required, remark of visiting personnel for taking feedback from the public.

- While implementing Transparency Desk, special attention has been given on sections 8 to 11 of Right to Information Act which prohibits making certain information available to people.

Lessons Learnt

Inspite of the good pre-launching preparation and effort, there were still some loop holes and problems which came to light after the system was launched. Some of them are as below:

1. It was seen that the quality of information was quite poorly selected by some of the offices, which shows that they were not wholeheartedly attempting to disclose relevant information.

2. Many of the departments submitted incomplete information, which was inadequate. Supporting documents were not attached. They look like casual

reports prepared for some meetings.

3.   Inspite of several reminders, most offices delayed in the submission of their reports. After second meeting with them they were asked to give complete, accurate, quality information along with supporting documents.

4.   It was seen that public information was very much essential so that the general public knows about the transparency desk designed especially for them.

Outcome

1.   The knowledge that the department's Action plan, work progress and achievements reports are within the public domain have put fear and caution in the mind of the officers.

2.   Prior to launching of the new practice, the Right to Information applications were mainly unattended and delayed at different levels. The availability of central information system has greatly helped in timely supply of required information to the demanding public.

3.   The appointment of dedicated staff with knowledge of local language has greatly benefited the local illiterate persons who can orally ask and get the required information easily from the staff in their own tongue. Earlier, there was no scope for illiterate citizen to get required information easily. The system provides information in black and white, in soft format as well as verbally in local dialect.

4.   The system will help in reducing the number of Right to Information applications and burden on public authorities and they can focus on other issues of development.

5.   "Transparency Desk" will also act as a deterrent on departments and government officers with respect to corruption, nepotism and favoritism.

In the long run, proactive disclosure of information will have good impact leading to proactive administration rather than reactive administration, giving

greater benefits to the society.

Financial Implications

No extra burden on administration in terms of man power, as the existing staff has been given additional responsibility to look after the desk. Financially also the expenditure for providing information, recurring and non- recurring, through "Transparency Desk" would be very less, only in the form of expenditure for stationery.

Scope of Replication

In the present administrative setup, we have the district level administration which is divided into sub-divisions comprising of several offices and departments. Administrative setup is uniform throughout the country in all the states with few exceptions. The Sub- Divisional Magistrate or Sub-Divisional Officer usually has overall control over all departments in the sub-division. Also it is an important point for contact and transaction between people and government where information relevant to them can be made available at one source, without any fee, through model like "Transparency Desk". Simple initiatives, efficient use of man power, necessary training and sensitization of staff, good co-ordination with different departments, "Transparency Desk" for proactive disclosure for Right to Information Act implementation can be started in each sub-division, other offices of public authorities in a cost-effective manner. Considering the system of "Transparency Desk" in the Gandacherra Sub-Division in Dhalai District; Additional District Magistrate of Dhalai District has ordered all Sub- Divisional Magistrate's and line departments like Rural Development, Drinking Water Source, Public Works Department, all Block Development Officer's for transparency. Considering all aspects of infrastructure, manpower requirement is less, recurring and nonrecurring expenditure which is very minimal, makes this

model financially viable, and therefore replicable elsewhere. It would also be sustainable because of its beneficial effects for the society and constant vigilance by citizens, civil society organizations, academicians, NGOs and social activists.

RTI Online

Mr. Sanjeev Saxena

(This Practice has been introduced by the Department of Personnel & Training (DOPT), Government of India)

Background

Consequent upon the implementation of the RTI Act 2005, a large number of RTI applications are being received by the public authorities. The citizens had to send the RTI applications through post or in person. Managing and monitoring the RTI applications received under this Act was one of the challenges for the public authorities. The Department of personnel and Training took an initiative to facilitate citizens in filing the RTI applications and to facilitate public authorities in managing and monitoring RTI applications, by applying the tools of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

Scope, Approach and Methodology

A new beginning has been made through "RTI Online" by extending the ICT based services for filing of RTI Request and First Appeal online to the citizens of India.

After due deliberations, analysis, feedback and experiences of earlier system, the mechanism of RTI Online (https://rtionline.gov.in) in the current form has evolved. It has been developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC), D/o Electronics & Information Technology, M/o Communications & Information Technology under the aegis of D/o Personnel & Training (DOPT), M/o Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Government of India.

The portal has two interfaces viz. Citizen Interface and Public Authority (PA)

Interface. The Citizen interface is integrated with payment gateway for online payment of RTI fee and additional fee, if any, by the citizen.
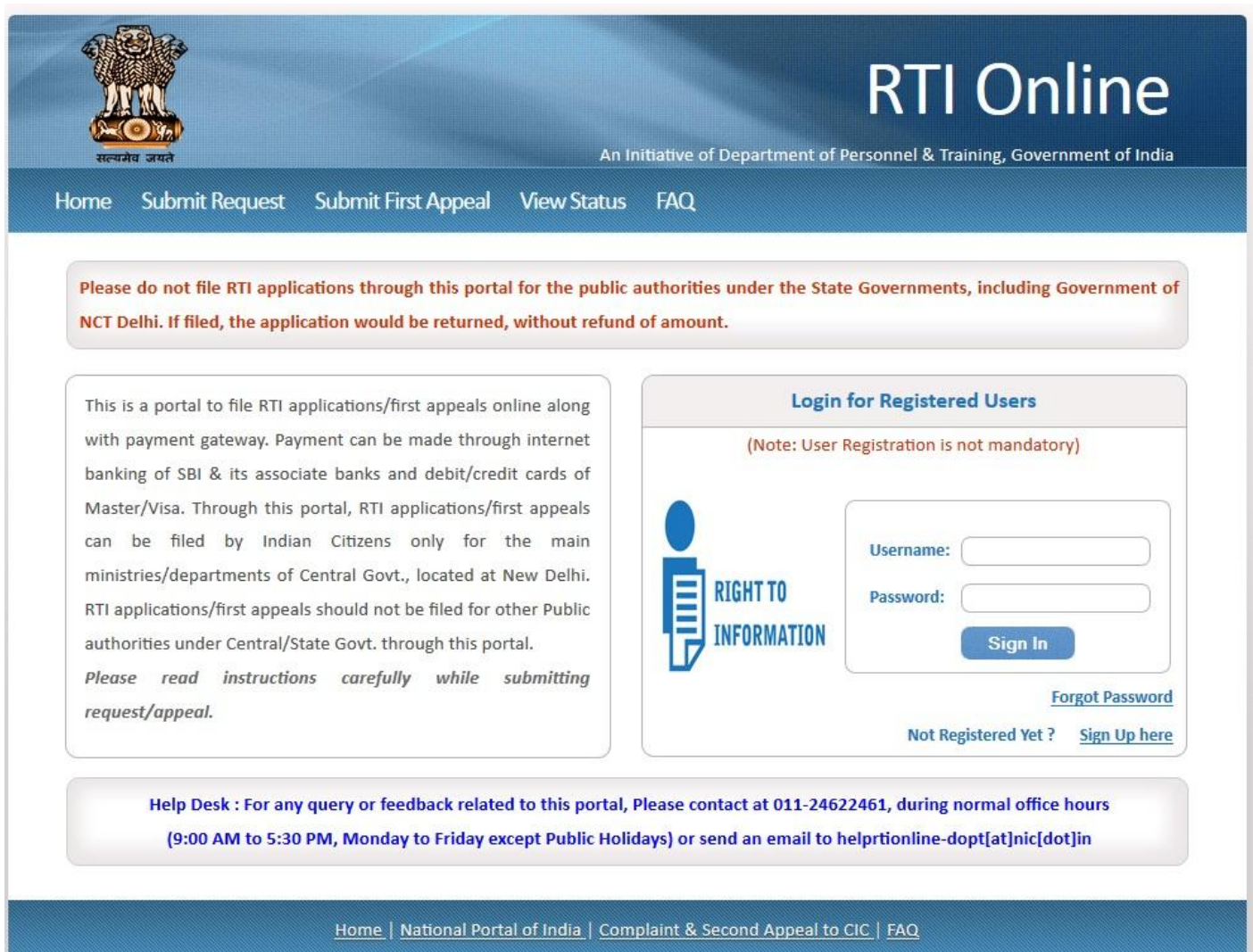
The PA interface (https://rtionline.gov.in/RTIMIS) enables the various functionaries of Central Government Public Authorities to manage and monitor the RTI requests and first appeals and thus providing necessary information in a time bound manner.

Beneficiary of the Portal:- All the stake holders viz. the information seekers - the Citizens of India as well as the information providers - Central Government Public Authorities and its Central Public Information Officer (s) and First Appellate Authority (s) are the beneficiaries of this Portal.

Salient Features of the Portal

- Facility for citizens to file RTI applications and first appeals online.

- Facility to pay the RTI fee and additional fee online through Credit/Debit cards of Master /Visa or Internet Banking of SBI and its associate banks.

- System generated unique registration number for the RTI requests and first appeals filed/registered through the portal.

- Facility for citizens to track the status of their RTI request or first appeal.

- SMS and Email alert to citizen at various stages of the life cycle of RTI request and first appeal.

- Facility to register and upload the RTI request and first appeal received physically by the public authorities.

- Alerts on pending RTI requests to CPIOs.

- Monitoring of RTI requests/first appeals by CPIOs/FAAs through various MIS reports.

- System generated letters for communication to Information seekers at various stages of processing of RTI requests/first appeals.

- Monitoring at the level of Nodal Officer for all CPIOs and FAAs.

- Generation of various types of Returns to be submitted to CIC.

- Facility for parameter based search on RTI request and first appeals received in a public authority.

- System maintains the history of all the actions chronologically in the life cycle of a RTI Request and first appeal.

RTI Online

An Initiative of Department of Personnel & Training, Government of India

Home   Submit Request   Submit First Appeal   View Status   FAQ

Please do not file RTI applications through this portal for the public authorities under the State Governments, including Government of NCT Delhi. If filed, the application would be returned, without refund of amount.

This is a portal to file RTI applications/first appeals online along with payment gateway. Payment can be made through internet banking of SBI & its associate banks and debit/credit cards of Master/Visa. Through this portal, RTI applications/first appeals can be filed by Indian Citizens only for the main ministries/departments of Central Govt., located at New Delhi. RTI applications/first appeals should not be filed for other Public authorities under Central/State Govt. through this portal.

Please read instructions carefully while submitting request/appeal.

Login for Registered Users

(Note: User Registration is not mandatory)

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Username:

Password:

Sign In

Forgot Password

Not Registered Yet ?   Sign Up here

Help Desk : For any query or feedback related to this portal, Please contact at 011-24622461, during normal office hours (9:00 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday except Public Holidays) or send an email to helprtionline-dopt[at]nic[dot]in

Home | National Portal of India | Complaint & Second Appeal to CIC | FAQ

Value Delivered to the Beneficiaries

Citizen Interface:

It facilitates the citizens to:

- **File request online:** Now a citizen is able to seek information online from any Central Ministry/Department and other listed Central Government public authorities, without visiting their office physically or sending the RTI request through post. The application immediately reaches the public authority on submission.

- **File first appeal online:** A citizen can also file first appeal to the said public authorities online, without visiting their office physically or sending their appeal through post. The appeal immediately reaches the public authority on submission.

- **Make payments online towards RTI fee and RTI additional fee for non-BPL applicants:** Non BPL Citizens can make the payment online for the RTI fee and additional fee through Credit/Debit cards of Master/Visa or using Internet banking facility of State Bank of India and its associate banks.

- **Track real time status:** A citizen can view/track the real time status of his/her RTI request or first appeal at any point of time by providing the registration number of the request or first appeal, as the case may be.

- **Register (themselves) on the portal (optional):** Citizens can register themselves to become a registered user of the portal. While online filing the RTI request or first appeal, registered users need not enter their personal details again. A personalized dashboard is available for easy tracking of all RTI requests and first appeals filed online by that registered user.

- **Recieve alerts :**The portal provides Email and SMS alert at various stages of the processing c ycle of RTI requests/first appeals to the citizen.

- **24x7 availability :** The portal is available 24x7, throughout the year for filing/tracking of RTI request and first appeal.

Public Authority (PA) Interface: The Public Authority (PA) interface of RTI Online titled as "RTI-MIS" has the following five modules:

1. *Nodal Officer Module*: It facilitates the nodal officer to:

➢ Create/maintain online master directories of Central Public Information Officer (CPIO), First Appellate Authority (FAA), and Deemed Public Information Officer (DPIO).

➢ Create user accounts for CPIOs, FAAs, DPIOs, RTI Cell users.

➢ Receive online RTI requests and first appeals from the citizens and forward to the concerned CPIO, FAA or transfer to other public authority, as the case may be.

➢ Generate RTI returns.

2. *CPIO Module*: It facilitates the CPIOs to:

➢ Take necessary action on the RTI requests.

➢ Demand for additional fee/payment (if any).

➢ Forward the RTI request online to DPIO (if necessary).

➢ Upload final reply.

➢ Register the RTI request received physically by CPIO.

➢ Generate various action based letters for RTI applicant such as acknowledgement letter, additional payment letter, final reply letter and forwarding letter, thus reducing the time for drafting and typing the same.

➢ Generate various MIS reports at CPIO level.

➢ Perform parameter based search for the requests received by CPIO concerned.

➢ Send online reply for the comments sought by FAA.

➢ Since the applications and their replies are stored in the system, there is no need to mainatain a hard copy of the same.

3. *FAA Module*: It facilitates the FAA to:

➢ Take necessary action on the first appeals.

➢ Seek online comments from the concerned CPIO.

➢ Upload final decision.

➢ Generate action based letters for appellant.

➢ Generate various types of MIS reports.

➢ Perform parameter based search for the first appeals received by FAA concerned.

➢ Since the appeals and their replies are stored in the system, there is no need to mainatain a hard copy of the same.

4. *RTI Cell/Secretariat/PA or PS Module*: It facilitates the secretarial staff to:

➢ Register RTI request, first appeal, legacy RTI request and legacy first appeal.

➢ Record dispatch date of RTI request and first appeal.

➢ Record additional payment details.

➢ Generate/print acknowledgment letter.

➢ Generate status and diary register reports.

➢ Perform parameter based search on RTI request and first appeals received in office.

5. *DPIO Module*: It facilitates the deemed PIO to:

➢ Receive the forwarded RTI request from CPIO

➢ Send appropriate information online to CPIO

Financial Implications:

The RTI Online portal has been designed and developed by NIC and hosted at NIC data centre. Hence, no expenditure required on capital expenditure and on

application maintenance. The citizen need not spend on postage charges to send RTI request or first appeal. Since the system is web-enabled, it does not require any additional implementation charges for the users of the portal.

A Project Monitoring Unit has been set up by DOPT to facilitate in successful roll out and implementation of this project in all Central Ministries/departments. The PMU also cater to the training needs and resolve the technical issues of the said public authorities. RTI Online helpline and email suggestions/feedback are also managed by the PMU.

Scope of Replication

The RTI Online Portal has been designed in such a way that it can be extended to the subordinate/attached as well as field offices of the Ministries/Departments of Government of India. The portal can also be easily replicated in the states for State Government Public authorities, with minor customization.

Central Monitoring Mechanism

Mr. Bibekananda Biswal

(The practice has been introduced by Government of Odisha)

Background

Consequent upon the implementation of the RTI Act, 2005, the Nodal Department of the Governement of Odisha had to face many challenges in catering to mandatory provisions till the year 2008. All public authorities were supposed to designate PIOs to deal with RTI applications for providing information to the Citizen and disclose information as per RTI Act. Information and Public Relations Department shouldering onerous responsibilities of the Nodal Department had to face potent challenges bereft of an appropriate intervention of the ICT (Information Communication Technology).

- Despite many Circulars, Resolutions and Orders issued by the Nodal Department of Government of Odisha to all (Odisha)Government Departments, the status of compliance were (was) sluggish. Few Departments were uploading their suo motu disclosure on the Government web Portal, while the compliance from Directorate and subordinate Offices were far from such adaptability. The information available at the Government Web-Portal were not updated in a regular manner. There was no mechanism to track the progress. Maintenance of various RTI Registers as prescribed under Odisha RTI Rules was a difficult task for many Public Authorities as it involved additional responsibilities, being pre-occupied consistently in the front of service delivery.

- Monitoring and reporting is an indicator of compliance of provisions of RTI. The Annual Report was a cumbersome process, as Departments were hovering

around the duty to collect and compile the information from their subordinate Offices. It was, thus, creating administrative difficulties in RTI implementation in the State of Odisha. At this critical juncture, while studying the process of implementation of RTI, Odisha Information Commission made a recommendation for putting in place a robust mechanism to address these issues.

Details of the Practice

RTI Central Monitoring Mechanism is a Government to Citizen (G2C) as well as Government to Government (G2G) service web portal. This Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tool is primarily a web based centralized system to monitor the process of implementation of the Right to Information Act, 2005 in the entire State, conceptualized by the Information and Public Relations Department, Govt. of Odisha. The system provides IT based solutions to all Government Departments & sub-ordinate Offices with individual user ID & password to manage their proactive disclosure under section 4. They can also process and deal with the RTI applications of Citizen as per section 6 & section 7 and generate electronic annual reports under section 25 of the RTI Act, 2005. This ICT tool intends to benefit Citizens to a larger extent through the facility of filing RTI applications online and easily tracking the status of these applications at any point of time and at any stage. This system has maximum reach to rural areas through Common Service Centers and any internet outlet.

Date of Launch of the Practice: 01/06/2009

Coverage: This practice has the aim to cover and ensure proper implementation of Right to Information Act,2005 in respect of all public authorities (Offices) of Govt. of Odisha.

Beneficiaries: All Citizens of India including all public authorities, Public

Information Officers (PIOs), First Appellate Authorities (FAAs) and APIOs of Government of Odisha along with related Public Authorities.

Objectives

1. RTI Central Monitoring Mechanism is primarily an implementation and monitoring mechanism with auto RTI compliant features for all the stakeholders of RTI. The stakeholders include citizens, PIOs & FAAs of Public Authorities, Government Departments, Odisha Information Commission (OIC) & State RTI Implementation Cell of Nodal Department.

2. To provide a single click access to all information as per sections 4, 6, 7 and section 25 of the RTI Act, 2005 at a common point, in a uniform manner, of all the offices of Government of Odisha.

3. To enable Public Authorities (Offices) or Public Information Officers (PIOs) to maintain proactive disclosures under section 4, recieve online applications under section 6, dispose-off applications under section 7 and generate Annual Report under section 25 of the RTI Act.

4. To help the PIOs to maintain all RTI related Registers under Rule-11 of Odisha RTI Rules, 2005 & 2006 for generating Annual Report as mandatory under section 25 of the Act. Further, it provides a scope to the Administrative Department to monitor the process of RTI implementation in all subordinate Offices.

5. To provide a single gateway to get information of all offices.

6. To facilitate citizens for exercising their right by applying the tool of RTI. It is intended to establish an accountable and transparent system of governance to attain lofty ideals of democracy.

Scope, Approach and Methodology

After due deliberations, analysis, study tours to periphery states and thorough review into the situation, the mechanism has evolved in the form of 'RTI Central Monitoring Mechanism' (www.rtiodisha.gov.in) to fully comply with all mandatory

provisions of the RTI Act, 2005, Odisha Right to Information Rules, 2005 and Odisha Right to Information (Amendment) Rules, 2006. It aims to track the progress of RTI implementation throughout the State in a single network.

- Every Public Authority under Government of Odisha has access to the system through a Public Authority Account, where there is a predefined Web Content Management System for uploading the sou-motu-disclosure as per the section 4(1) (b), (c) & (d) of RTI Act, 2005.
- The Public Authorities are able to maintain and update the various requests for information received by PIOs / APIOs under Section-5&6 of the RTI Act.
- The request can be received physically, transferred from other Public Authority or can come through internet.
- The Nodal Department is now able to monitor the RTI implementation among Departments & their sub-ordinate Offices of the State.
- Likewise, Odisha Information Commission can also review the application (case) history of any Applicant and can generate Annual Report of any Public Authorities or Departments or the entire State at any point of time.

Financial Implications

The system is very cost effective in comparison to the present mode of dissemination of information or communication highway. The RTI Act requires computerization of records; But it is very difficult on part of public authorities to implement a website of their own to disseminate information to the masses. More succinctly, this intervention leverages economic benefit by way of minimizing extra efforts and enables the citizen to access information in a hassle free manner.

Eventually this system will help in setting a trend for implementing other e-governance applications in these offices. Once all the public authorities are enrolled and start using RTI CMM, this will help Government to roll out many other useful applications across the State, with much ease and comfort. This will make it

beneficial for the State Government to implement any e-governance initiative. Indirectly it also benefits the State budget by reducing the expenditure incurred on capacity building in terms of computer usage and related exercises.

An amount of Rs. 11,000 is charged from public authorities to open an Account with Web CMS and e-filing software facilities. Govt. offices spending lakhs of rupees on printing/copying/collecting information, now simply give their RTI (RTI CMM URL) web address to the citizen to avail information. Departments used to spend lakhs of rupees on collecting reports from hundreds of sub-ordinate offices, compiling the information, coordinating & doing calculations for generating annual reports. Now departments are generating annual reports at the click of a mouse, which saves money, time and effort.

Further, it was expensive on the part of nodal departments to inform, educate, monitor and ensure RTI implementation at all Offices throughout the State. Nodal department on behalf of Govt. of Odisha has implemented RTI CMM to meet the overall objective of the Act in a limited time span. Nodal Departments was incurring expenditure for physical audit of RTI compliance at Field level office by travelling to the respective field locations. Now Nodal departments are able to do an RTI compliance audit of any Office by logging on to the RTI CMM account.

Resources

Resource constraint was a major challenge which was faced during the implementation process of RTI CMM in Odisha. These were; insufficient human, financial and infrastructural resources. Due to lack of employees and infrastructure facility requirements at public offices, it was very difficult to make someone incharge of the RTI CMM with public authority accounts. This was managed by engaging Data entry operators and support teams from Content Service Provider, Luminous Infoways. Meanwhile, the financial challenge was also overcome by

recommending proposed budgetary heads by the nodal department to meet the minimum expenditure incurred for this purpose.

Manpower: Proper demonstration and training on capacity building helped the Public Information Officers (PIOs) and Data entry operators to maintain the system further. They are able to update their proactive disclosure under Section-4 (1) (b), (c) and (d) at regular intervals. The Nodal Department has signed an MoU with Content Service Provider, Luminous Infoways for development & implementation including capacity building for Public authorities of Govt. of Odisha. Similarly Public Authorities can also maintain and update the various RTI applications received by PIOs / APIOs under section 6 and generate their Annual Report under section 25 of the RTI Act, 2005. For this, many training programmes have been conducted at different levels for PIOs and Data entry operators.

Group training, RTI Workshops, Awareness campaigns and individual training programmes have been undertaken throughout the State by the Nodal Department as well support team from Luminous Infoways. To improve its organizational sustainability, all Data Entry Operators at department level and Directorate level have been well trained to perform the job. More than 2000 group trainings and other handholding support have been provided for capacity building of PIOs, FAAs & other supporting staff. Various teams have been constituted as support, for instance, Domain Team for domain knowledge and training, Tele-calling Team for facilitation and instant support, Second level Moderator team for necessary corrections and verification of the content.

In addition to this, District level and Block level training, workshops, training schedule/ Calendar and Training Sheets are being maintained regularly. District Informatics Officers at District level and Block level Programmers at Block level are involved in the capacity building of the said employees. More particularly, a

multi-pronged strategy is being evolved to have an intensive campaign on RTI CMM during the current financial year.

Lessons Learnt

This is a learning example of 'How Information technology can be used for Information management and meeting greater need of Governance & citizen. This online initiative has changed the mindset of thousands of Govt. employees to adopt IT for better Governance. In this process, about 5000 Officers & staff are already trained in Computer usage, which would help Govt. in implementing other systems in future. Another milestone achieved by RTI CMM is "How Information technology can be utilized to ensure implementation of   Act & Rules".

Outcome

a)   **Web Content Management System (CMS) to update**: The portal solution is the official information & service delivery interface to the citizen and extreme care was taken while designing the portal layout, color scheme, taxonomy etc. One of the key requirements for the portal was content management, which would be performed using the content management tools and processes to ensure that the content, form and services delivered through portal are adhering to the uniform standards across the portal. The CMS would help the PIO/PA to add and update the proactive disclosure information under section 4 of the RTI Act. Here one can publish or disclose as much information on the website as possible, so as to reduce the effort of the information seeker.

b)   **Thousands of Offices in a single network**: More than 6500 offices are now connected to RTI CMM starting from block to State level offices. Web Administrator indicates that, about 40-50 numbers of offices are updating their information on daily basis. All these Offices have individual web CMS through

which they upload and update their web pages while publishing the proactive disclosure. Presently, the website has more than 2,50,000 web pages.

c) **Online submission of application:** At present, an applicant who desires to obtain any information under the RTI Act can make a request through this Web Portal to the State Government Departments only and also make online payment for RTI application. This portal has been integrated with State Finance Department's e-payment portal of iOTMS (Integrated Odisha Treasury Management System / https://www.odishatreasury.gov.in/webportal/) for online payment of application fee. The citizens are also checking their application status online by using their Online RTI Application number generated automatically by the system. All these RTI applications are auto routed to the concerned Public Authorities (Offices) and status are maintained by concerned Public Information Officer (PIO) through this System. On an average, more than 100 RTI applications have been received online by various Public Authorities (Offices) per month.

d) **Online Disposal and Transfer of RTI Applications:** Now the departmental PIOs are able to receive online RTI application from applicants. After due verification, PIO registers the application into Information Register or rejects the application with valid reason or transfers the application to other public authority (Offices) within 5days under section 6(3) of the Act. The citizen can check his/her application status online by using his/her Online RTI Application Number given by the system earlier.

e) **Generating Annual Report under section 25 of the Act:** Currently, all the PIOs are updating their e-filing account which facilitates the line Department to generate Comprehensive Annual Reports. Even Nodal departments can generate comprehensive annual report for the entire State including all the Departments. The backlog entry of applications is an easy way to upload a bulk of RTI applications

into the e-filing system of the portal using MS Excel file. They can simply download the MS excel file from the website and after it is duly filled up; they can upload the same into the e-filing system. It would, thus, facilitate the Department to generate the comprehensive report of all Public Authorities under their administrative control. In order to make it happen all public authorities need to ensure they upload the duly filled in MS Excel file of RTI applications of every financial year of all public authorities in the system. This process was very cumbersome earlier, where Departments were finding it extremely difficult to collect the reports manually from each of their subordinate Offices.

f)   **e-Report – An information channel:** e-Report system is a communication channel that can be used to transmit data electronically / online from one location to another. Hence, here the system provides the scope to receive various filed level data on various schemes and programmes by using e-Reporting system. The form builder enables the departmental users to create new input forms for collection of grass root level data on various schemes and programmes. Department wise information namely; social welfare data, progress report from CDPO's, Social Security Scheme based reports, nutrition programmes, School wise enrollment data etc. can be collected through online mode. The e-form builder helps the department to create specific report format or forms, which would be filled up by the field level offices electronically. In a single click of the button, the state level user would generate the report and receive information from across the State.

g)   **Monitoring the Implementation:** After careful evaluation of the system & implementation process, World Bank has applauded the RTI Central Monitoring Mechanism to be truly impressive. World Bank has recommended creating a high-level steering committee chaired by the Chief Secretary to oversee the implementation of RTI Central Monitoring Mechanism across the State. Simultaneously, Chief Secretary, Government of Odisha has also instructed all

Secretaries of Government Departments & District Collectors to comply, review & ensure proper implementation of RTI CMM at all levels.

h) **Awards**: The RTI Central Monitoring Mechanism has received the National Award on e-Governance 2011-12 in Best Government Portal category at the 15th National Conference on e-Governance held at Bhubaneswar. Apart from this, commendation has been received from a sitting judge of Hon'ble Supreme Court India, World Bank and India eGov 2.0 Awards 2010 & eINDIA Citizen Choice Award 2010.

i) **Rural Service Delivery:** To make it more accessible at the door step of rural citizen, RTI CMM services are available with Common Service Centers (CSCs) located at remote rural areas. A coordination strategy has been adopted with IT Department & OCAC to deliver the RTI service transactions through CSCs. More than 5000 CSCs are now being used for delivering RTI services at village level. Rural citizens are now quite happy to access proactive information and apply online for information.

j) **Citizen Centricity:** The system provides an opportunity to the Citizen to submit an online RTI application to any Public Information Officer (PIO). Once an RTI application is submitted, information seeker gets an Online RTI Application number. By using this number, Citizen can track the status of his/her application at any point of time. He/she can simply go to a nearby cyber café or CSCs or RTI kiosk center. So the applicant directly saves the effort, time and cost incurred earlier.

The Portal has also demonstrated to be an effective medium for the participation of common citizens (People's Governance) in the process of governance as they are encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions on each manual of proactive disclosure and important decisions & policies taken by the Government. This feedback is vital for the Nodal Department as well as other Departments to ensure

constant evaluation for effecting desired changes in the service delivery as well as dissemination of information. The tagline of the portal 'You are just a click away from Government' is trying to bridge the gap between citizen and public authorities. Thus, Citizen Centricity is prime focus of this mechanism.

k) **Other distinctive accomplishments of the practice:**

1.   The manuals prescribed in section 4 (1) (b) of RTI Act, indicate almost everything about a Public Authority from the perspective of a citizen. Here the advantage is Citizen can go to specific manual for specific information, without browsing the entire site.

2.   Open Public opinion forum ensuring valid and updated data and information leading to a transparent system: While incorporating a value adding feature to this, the system helps a Citizen to float feedback on each manual of proactive disclosure of a Public Authority, which bridges a communication gap between Public Information Officer and public. This is an example of good governance initiative and participatory decision making process.

3.   First step towards Computerization: Many of the Public authorities and PIOs, who has never used computers, are being trained and acquainted with Computer and software through their e-filing account in RTI CMM. Eventually this will help in setting a pattern for implementing other e-governance application in these offices. After one year, once all the public authorities are enrolled and start using RTI CMM, this will help Government to roll out any other serious applications throughout the State, without much effort.

Scope of its Replication

The RTI Portal of Govt. of Odisha has been designed with all essential components of RTI Act, 2005, as a perfect model for other State Governments. This innovative approach is ready to cater to the mandatory requirements of the RTI Act, which is

the basic responsibility of every state Govt.

This Portal has been deployed with state-of-the-art technology architecture based on widely accepted web standards and can be adopted by any government constituents. From its user friendly technology and minimum cost of charges, it guarantees its replication. While providing a readily available base infrastructure to the government departments/ organizations for publishing their all public documents and request for information, it facilitates a user (PIO) to update proactive disclosure information or transfer an application to another public authority in a less time consuming manner. In view of its tested quality, operative convenience, vast documentation parameters and cost effectiveness, the system is fully guaranteed to be replicated in other state Governments.

A dedicated resource at Department level or HoD level can mobilize and monitor its implementation at field level or subordinate offices by using monitoring tool of the system. The system has come out with an ideal base of architecture to receive as well as dispose-off applications and prepare electronic monthly and annual reports under section 25 of the Act. The user manual and guidelines issued by the Nodal department are being followed by the public authorities of Govt. of Odisha while using the system. It has become mandatory for all the public authorities to comply with the format and guideline during the implementation across the state.

Moreover, this IT intervention carries the distinction of being a very significant initiative in the whole of South Asia. As per the study and evaluation made by the World Bank, the RTI Central Monitoring Mechanism has been adjudged as truly impressive.

RTI Central Monitoring Mechanism (www.rtiodisha.gov.in)

You are just a click away from Govt.

Upload & Update suo-motu disclosure	E-filing of RTI Applications	Online receipt & disposal of RTI Applications & Appeals	Maintenance of Information Registers etc.	Generate Annual Report	Respond to Opinion of Citizen

Public Authorities (From Secretariat to Panchayat)

Commissioner-cum-Secretaries of the Deptts. & Collectors

RTI Central Monitoring Mechanism (www.rtiodisha.gov.in)

Nodal Department & Information Commission

Citizen

Monitor the progress of RTI implementation of all Sub-ordinate offices

Generate Comprehensive Annual Report

Respond to Opinion of Citizen

Participatory approach in decision making process

Online Audit of suo-motu disclosure

Generate Annual Report

Monitor RTI Implementation

Check progress of Online Applications

Obtain information from suo-motu disclosure	Submit online RTI Application & First Appeal	Check Online Application Status	Float opinion on suo-motu disclosure	Generate Annual Report

(An initiative by Information & Public Relations Department, Government of Odisha)

Pro-Active Disclosure

Ms. Rakshita Swamy

(The write up relates to in-built system of disclosure of information in the provisions of three flagship programs of the Ministry of Rural Development)

Background

The Ministry of Rural Development has, in its endeavors ensured that it maintains the spirit of Section 4 of the Act, which is indicated in the provisions it has placed in the guidelines of some of its key flagship programmes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA), Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) and the Pradhanmantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

Since the said programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development are targeted towards the poorest of the poor amongst society, disclosure of information requires the use of modes and idioms that are capable of arousing the required curiosity among them, in addition to being able to successfully disseminate the complete information and records relating to a programme in the most granular manner possible. Hence, processes and systems that facilitate the above are embedded into the guidelines of many of the programmes of the Ministry, in order to provide official sanctity to the same.

Given below are some of the ways in which each of these three programs has ensured that information about the program is pro-actively disseminated to citizens. These provisions mark the shift from a web enabled 'Management Information System' primarily used by administrators to monitor the performance of the program, to a decentralized and inclusive 'Janta Information System'

primarily used by citizens and beneficiaries to access information in order to hold the program related functionaries accountable for their performance. Most importantly, information disclosures are aimed at making the entire process of implementation, starting from planning, implementation, monitoring and audit, participatory, transparent and inclusive.

Pro-Active Disclosure under MGNREGA

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was notified on September 7th, 2005 to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The goals of the Act include:

- Social protection for the most vulnerable people living in rural India by providing employment opportunities.

- Livelihood security for the poor through creation of durable assets, improved water security, soil conservation and higher land productivity.

- Drought-proofing and flood management in rural India.

- Empowerment of the socially disadvantaged, especially women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Schedules Tribes (STs), through the processes of a right-based legislation.

- Strengthening decentralized, participatory planning through convergence of various antipoverty and livelihoods initiatives.

- Deepening democracy at the grass-roots by strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions.

- Effecting greater transparency and accountability in governance.

The following are the provisions for pro-active disclosure under the Act:

1.   NREGASoft:

All records and information related to the status of implementation of the MGNREGA are hosted on its web portal i.e. www.nrega.nic.in. It has been ensured that there is no data on the MIS that is password protected and therefore all the data that is used by administrators is made available to the citizen. The nature of information that is pro-actively disclosed ranges from list of beneficiaries; wages earned; funds released; assets created; complaints registered and redressed; distribution of participation with respect to gender and socio-economic profile, amongst other things. For example, an NREGA worker in Bokaro District, Chas Block, Bhatua Gram Panchayat can view his/her job card for the year 2012-13 which would display the number of days for which work was demanded; number of days for which work is provided; names of the worksite to which the jobseeker was allocated for work; the details of his/her muster roll and the amount of wage earned. Similarly, officials from the Central Government can, through a click of a button, view the number of households who have not been issued a job card even though they have applied for one, thereby facilitating more targeted monitoring of frontline functionaries. In addition, all circulars/orders/notifications/policy changes initiated by the Ministry of Rural Development are hosted on the website so as to ensure that apart from details of records relating to the MGNREGA, citizens have information about the decision making process in MGNREGA, as well. Lastly, the web site hosts the 'Citizens Charter' which is a statement of obligations and responsibilities of the Division clearly articulating the division in roles and responsibilities among functionaries; their contact details on how to file grievances and the mandated period within which they ought to be redressed.

The Ministry is in the process of developing programmes for enhancing the visualization of data stored in the website, so that citizens can find it easier to compare the performance of MGNREGA as per their preferred parameters in a

graphical manner. 'Data Visualization' under MGNREGA ensures the disclosures of patterns and trends emerging from the records hosted on the web portal thereby enabling disclosure of a pattern in addition to a unit. In addition, the web portal provides for uploading photographs of NREGA worksites, before, during and after the completion of work on it by NREGA workers which is made publicly available. The uploading of dynamic information such as photographs expands the paradigm of information disclosure to include innovative modes too.

(Snapshot of the MGNREGA MIS)

2.   Progression from RTI:

It is important to note that the MGNREGA remains the only Act in the country which ensures that any request for information under it must be made available within a period of 7 days, irrespective of the provisions of the Right to information Act.

3.   Physical Mode of Disclosure:

To ensure that details of the implementation of the Act are made available to

citizens closest to where they reside and in a mode that is easily accessible and comprehensible to them, it has been ensured that the following information be disclosed in every village:

a)   Information Board listing down number of people employed, costs of labour, costs of material, duration of work etc is displayed in the local language in every MGNREGA worksite.

b)   Information consisting of physical and financial details of works completed by the Gram panchayat is disclosed at the Gram panchayat office through notice boards/paintings etc.

c)   Ensuring that all muster rolls, work allotment registers, Contract Registers, Material procurement Register, Employment provided register, Works and assets Register, Complaint register be made available at the GP office such that it can be accessed/inspected by anyone, without requiring to state the reasons for having to study the same.

(Panchayat Bhawan Disclosures in Rajasthan)

4.   Job card:

Every household who has applied for work under MGNREGA has a job card which lists down all the information relevant to him/her i.e. details of members of the family in the households; number of days worked by each of them; wages earned by each member of the household; benefits availed by each member of the

household. The Job card has introduced an innovative way of ensuring that the worker has access to immediate information pertaining to him/her on a card which as per provisions of the Law need to kept in custody of the jobseeker alone.

(MGNREGA Workers displaying their Job Cards in Uttar Pradesh)

5.   Mobile alerts:

Some States (such as Andhra Pradesh) have taken the initiative to ensure that citizens are proactively informed at the completion of key processes through SMS alerts. For example, NREGA workers who have applied for work receive an SMS alert on their mobile phone as soon as work 'opens' so that they can report to work on the due date; jobseekers who have submitted an application for registering their demand for work receive an SMS alert that acknowledges the receipt of the demand for work application etc.

6.   Wall paintings:

The biggest development in the transition from an 'MIS' to a 'JIS' remains the use of wall paintings under MGNREGA. As per the MGNREGA operational Guidelines, 2013, State Governments are mandated to ensure that key information such as the list of NREGA workers in the Gram Panchayat; number of days for which work provide to each job seeker; amount of wage payment made to ever NREGA worker; list of works sanctioned in the Gram Panchayat; expenditure incurred on labour and material; quantity of material procured for the execution of

works and the rates at which they were procured is painted on walls in every Gram Panchayat. Wall paintings have played a significant role in disseminating information to citizens in a mode and manner most accessible to them and have gone a long way in equipping them with information needed to hold implementing authorities accountable for their decisions/actions.

(Wall Paintings in Rajasthan)

7.   Rozgar Diwas:

As per the MGNREGA Operational Guidelines, 2013, State Government need to ensure that a 'Rozgar Diwas' is held at least once a month in every Gram Panchayat where information related to the program are disseminated in a collective forum in the presence of all implementing authorities. Citizens are encouraged to attend the Rozgar Diwas in their GP and raise their request for need of greater clarity or facilitation in any process of the MGNREGA or any information relating to it. It is aimed to create a supportive and facilitative environment for people to put up their grievances and demand greater information.

8.   Social Audits:

Social Audits under MGNREGA provides each member of the community the right to access information and record relating to MGNREGA and verifying the veracity of the same with field realities. Social audits conducted by the Gram Sabha (duly facilitated by independent entities like the Social Audit Units) are built on the premise that communities are best empowered to verify the information traditionally held by implementing authorities about the performance of a program, with ground realities, thereby paving the way for system of downward accountability of the implementation machinery.

The key documents that are audited during the social audit process include; muster rolls, work site measurement book, work site records, procurement register, cash book, bank statements, invoices, bills, vouchers etc. With respect to the stated records, the exercise of a social audit by community social auditors leads to a confirmation of the information mentioned in records and its due verification by members of the community.

Social Audits have played a significant role in ensuring that pro-active dissemination of information remains dynamic and inclusive and can eventually lead to mid-course corrective action. Proactive disclosure through social audits has been imbibed in three ways primarily. First, the processes of social audits involve 'Village Social Auditors' having to interact with NREGA workers and other members of the community. This process entails them sharing with the community key rights and entitlements under the Act and the processes they need to undertake to access them. Second, the event of the public hearing during a social audit entails reading out of information stored as per Government records, and its comparison to local realities, thereby indicating discrepancies in performance and information. Third, the act of the social audit completes with the information collected in formats easily understandable to the common citizen

being hosted on the website for anyone to read and assess. Therefore, social audits remain the most powerful modes of pro-active disclosure under NREGA to date.

(Social Audit taking place in Uttar Pradesh)

Pro-active Disclosure under Indira Awas Yojana

Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development has since its inception been providing assistance to BPL families who are either houseless or having inadequate housing facilities for construction of a safe and durable shelter. Indira Awaas Yojana is essentially a public housing scheme for the houseless poor families and those living in dilapidated and kutcha houses with a component for providing house sites to the landless poor as well. The scheme is designed to enable Below Poverty Line (BPL) households (HHs) indentified by the community through Gram Sabhas following criteria suggested for such identification from time to time, to build their houses or get house sites with financial and technical assistance from the Government.

In the year 2013-14, 456266 households have completed construction of homes under the IAY, and 1998625 households are currently in the process of constructing.

The following are the measures incorporated in the IAY Guidelines to facilitate pro-active disclosure of information:

1.   AWAASSoft:

All data relating to the status of implementation of the scheme is hosted on its web portal which runs on the AWAASSoft program. Information hosted includes list of selected beneficiaries year wise; copy of payment orders generated to each of the beneficiaries; quantum of financial assistance provided to each beneficiary; status of completion of hose construction for every beneficiary along with photographs. This information is available to every citizen by enabling a drill down till the Gram Panchayat in which the house has been constructed and under whose name. In addition, AWAASSoft has enabled online submission of grievances so that the citizen can lodge a complaint online, obtain a receipt of acknowledgement for it, track that status of redress and obtain an action taken report, all of which will be displayed online for the citizen's benefit.

2.   Wall Paintings:

As per the revised IAY Guidelines, 2013 it has been mandated that the permanent waiting list of IAY beneficiaries is painted on walls in every Gram Panchayat to facilitate peoples' access to information pro-actively.

3.   Entitlement Card:

As per the revised Guidelines of IAY, 2013 it has been mandated to ensure that every IAY beneficiary has access to an 'Entitlement Card' reflecting his/her rights and obligations, along with listing all the benefits availed by the beneficiary under the Programme.

4.   Awaas Diwas:

Learning from the positive role that 'Rozgar Diwas' has played in ensuring regular sharing of information and provision of a public interface between public authorities and citizens, the revised guidelines of IAY, 2013 have provided for a mandatory 'Awaas Diwas' once a month in every Gram Panchayat. The Awaas Diwas will be recognized as the official medium for distribution of sanction letters and making of payments to the beneficiaries, all in the public domain. It will also be treated as a platform for reading out of records such as total amount

of funds sanctioned to every beneficiary with receipt of payment taken from the beneficiary in front of the community.

5. Role of Community Based Organization:

The IAY Scheme recognizes the important contribution of Self-Help Groups (SHG) and their federations in active dissemination of information to members of the community, under the Ministry of Rural Development's flagship program, National Rural Livelihood Mission. Therefore, the revised guidelines mandate that details like list of beneficiaries, norms used for selecting HHs, funds sanctioned to each beneficiary HH etc is read out and discussed in SHG and Village Organization meetings.

6. Notice Boards:

It is ensured that details such as names and addresses of HHs in the priority list, in order of priority, norms used for selecting the beneficiaries, amount of money each HH is eligible for and amount dispensed with and date of completion of house to be disclosed proactively through notice boards at the Gram Panchayat Level.

7. Social Audit:

As per the revised guidelines for IAY, 2013 it will be mandatory for the social Audit Unit (SAU) set up under the MGNREGA social audits. Resource Persons indentified by the SAU at different levels may be involved with the Gram Sabha in conduction social audit. The resource persons can be drawn from primary stakeholders, civil society organizations, SHGs under NRLM, Bharat Nirman Volunteers (BNV) and other organizations or individuals, who have knowledge and experience in working for the rights of the people. The Quality Monitors and Community Resource Persons under the scheme should be a part of the Social Audit process. Social Audit Gram Sabhas under the IAY are envisaged to verify and pro-actively read out important records like priority lists; selection of beneficiary households for the year; progress of completion of households; quality of houses constructed; quantum and timeliness of payments distributed; debt

incurred by beneficiaries to complete construction of their houses; reporting of grievances and their timely redressal, apart from hosting all of this on their websites.

Pro-active Disclosure under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Gram SadakYojana (PMGSY) was launched on 25th December 2000 as a fully funded Centrally Sponsored Scheme to provide all weather road connectivity in rural areas of the country. The program envisages connecting all habitations with a population of 500 persons and above in the plain areas and 250 persons and above in hill States, the tribal and the desert areas.

As of 2013, a total length of 494312.06 kilometers of road length was constructed under the PMGSY consisting of 93131 completed road projects and 33320 roads which are works in progress.

1.   Citizen Information Board:

The PMGSY Scheme Guidelines mandate the presence of a 'Citizen Information Board' at every road constructed under the Scheme listing down information such as length of road; time taken for completion; cost of completion of road' material cost incurred in completion etc.

(Citizen Information Board on a PMGSY Road in Tamil Nadu)

2.   Management Information System (MIS):

The PMGSY has been a scheme that pioneered the practice of hosting data and

reports online for the citizens' access. It's web portal-omms.nic.in hosts important data such as status of completion of each and every road being constructed under the programmes, payments made to date on each of the roads, photographic evidence of existence of the roads; status of fund transfers to the State Government; Monitoring Reports submitted by Quality Monitors responsible for conduction of random quality assessments. All of this data is freely available to citizens through an open access.

Scope of Replication

The Ministry of Rural Development has taken efforts to ensure that programmes adhere to institutionalized and inclusive practices of pro-active disclosure of information to citizens at large, and beneficiaries in particular. The following are some of the innovations that have made this possible, and continue to serve as trends that can be emulated in other programmes/interventions of the Government:

Entitlement Card- The practice of ensuring that each and every beneficiary of the program in entitled to a card that enlists the most important components of information relating to his/her participation in the programmed, ensures that information is not only proactive disclosed, but is also made the property of the beneficiary. This is a significant departure from traditional practices of record keeping that treated such information as the property of the implementing authority.

Wall Paintings- The most important message that wall paintings have effectively been able to communicate is that information 'can' be disseminated in the most granular and precise manner possible.

Open MIS- For the very first time the web portals of these Government programmes are providing detailed records relating to the implementation of the

program to the public, without any login/passwords required for access. This has enabled provision of the exact same information used by the administrators to monitor the performance of the program, be shared with the common citizen. In addition, provision of granular data on the MIS has greatly empowered people and peoples' collectives to launch the process of independent monitoring on a large scale.

Social Audits and Diwas- Social Audits have demonstrated the efficacy of programmes being monitored and audited by agencies outside the ambit of the implementing authorities. In addition, the entire process of social audits brings with it requirements of active dissemination of information and concurrent participation of community members in verifying the information thus disseminated. In addition, the concept of 'diwas" being held at the Gram Panchayat level provide a cooperative and facilitative environment for the interface between implementing authorities and citizens and pro-active sharing of information such as records and processes etc.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Rural Development envisages individual citizens and it's collectives to be the 'consumers of information' leading to their democratic empowerment. It is hoped that over the next 5 years, collectives of the poor such as Self Help Groups (SHG) and their federations be primary agents for consuming this information and demanding greater accountability in the implementation of all Government interventions, even those beyond the ambit of the Ministry of Rural Development.

Jaankari

Mr. Kunal Shaw

(The initiative has been taken by the Government of Bihar)

Background

The Bihar Government identified the major problems faced by the citizens and listed them as follows:

- Many people cannot write an RTI application, beingilliterate and due to this factor alone, RTI could not be used by a huge section of population.

- People did not know which Department to approach for different issues. Without this knowledge, it was not easy to file an RTI application.

- Even if one knows the Department, there are multiple Public Information Officers (PIOs) in a Department and it would be quite difficult for a person to know who is the right PIO, suited to his requirement.

- For an illiterate citizen in remote areas of the state, where many variations of different languages like Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Angika etc. are spoken, there was a need to have an interpreter/ intermediary who could communicate with individuals and translate the "need" in Hindi, Bihar's official language.

- Meeting government officials face -to-face & asking for information might not be an easy experience. Sending an RTI application by post was not a comfortable option for the applicant as he was not sure if it would reach its destination in time. Demanding an acknowledgement would mean extra cost implications.

- Depositing application fee of Rs.10 was another nightmare. One had to either go in person to the concerned office to deposit cash or to make a

Demand Draft or a postal order. Apart from financial implication, it also involved spending a lot of time at Bank/post office

- With a population of approximately 103.8 million, Bihar is spread over an area of 94163 sq. km (Census 2011). Many districts headquarter are located more than 200 km away from the state headquarter, Patna, a repository of State held information. Travelling to Patna for submitting an application also involved money & time.

It was therefore difficult to file an RTI application or to file an appeal. This was reducing RTI to be an affair of elite, urban, educated middle class only. Taking RTI to masses, including illiterates and to address all the above issues by means of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), concept of utilizing a Call Centre as facilitation Centre was thought to be a possible solution.

In order to tackle the problems preventing the Act from having a positive impact, the Government of Bihar (GoB) has implemented Jaankari – a call centre designed for the provision of: a RTI helpline, a line for the direct filing of RTI applications, and a grievance redressal line for those who have been harassed while making a request in-person.

Details of the Practice

To give shape to State Government's desire and commitment for transparency and people's participation in Government process via RTI, it was decided that currently available Information Technology tools and Communication access should be used effectively to make "Information" available to a large number of people in a comfortable way. To overcome the digital divide and illiteracy incapacities, it was thought that the most universal of all communication i.e. voice communication over phone line be used for generating RTI applications. The Facilitation Centre was to be equipped more with more than 15 sets of Computers, (capable of being up graded up to 30 sets) Operators, necessary software for application, telecom interface and voice recording hardware & Software.

Facilities for its monitoring as well as qualitative analysis were also put in place. Special Secretary, Chief Minister Secretariat, Bihar was assigned to monitor and remove all administrative and technical bottlenecks in the Project. Authorisation was given to review all arrangements on regular basis with all the stakeholders i.e. Facilitation Centre, telecom department, the PIOs, Beltron, the administrative department, NGO and most importantly feedback from common man.

Bihar Government's RTI Facilitation Centre "JAANKARI" for filing RTI application with the concerned State government Department works on premium rate services of BSNL.

Seven telephone operators manage incoming calls, from which they formulate structured requests using Jaankari software. A unique reference number is given to the application and copies of a formal letter of request are sent to the citizen and to the Public Information Officer (PIO) required to respond, by email/fax/post. In absence of a response or dissatisfaction with the response received, the applicant can file an appeal through appellate authority. In absence of a response to the first appeal, a second appeal can be filed in a similar manner.

A call center manager and team leader are on-site to assist operators with any questions that may arise while taking calls from citizens.

The Government of Bihar (GoB) launched Jaankaari in January 2007. Today, the project falls under the directive of the General Administration Department (GAD). It was originally conceived by the Bihar State Electronics Development Corporation Limited (BELTRON); at its outset, operations were outsourced to the private firm, Call2Connect. In December of 2010, Cybertech Software and Multimedia Pvt. Ltd. (CSMPL or CSM hereafter) replaced Call2Connect and took charge of over-the-phone RTI citizens' requests and appeals. Bihar E-Governance Services and Technologies Ltd. (BEST), the private partner of BELTRON, is responsible for the development and management of the integrated online platform. The telecommunications service provider for this project is the government owned, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL). Application fees for

citizens are Rs. 10 which is automatically charged to their BSNL account. Jaankari services all citizens in the State of Bihar – 38 districts and 103.8 million people (Census of India, 2011).

Jaankari call center is open from 8am to 8pm during which operators manage incoming calls.

1. Information line (Dial 155310): The information line can be used by the people to ask any general questions on RTI free of cost. The RHN, as it is known, is an ordinary number with hunting line facility with normal call charges. If any citizen wants to get any help about how to use RTI, they can use this number.

2. Application line (Dial 155311): The application line can be used to file an RTI application with a cost of Rs. 10 which is added to the telephone bill of the applicant. This is novel way of receiving application fee which saves significant effort for the applicant in making a Demand Draft or Money Order.

RTI Application Number (RAN) is for filing an application over phone by giving the name, address, the information sought and the department from which sought. The conversation in RAN is voice recorded and also typed on a computer simultaneously by the Facilitation Centre executive receiving the call request.

If the citizen does not know the department concerned, then the facilitation centre staff will help them identify it. Once the RTI application has been thus filed, the Facilitation Centre would confirm its contents with the caller again and then make two copies of it and send the first copy to the applicant. Each of these generated applications would have a unique reference number, which is assigned by the computer Software itself.

The applicant would receive his reply directly from the PIO within 35 days of applying or else he may make a call to Jaankari to file his first appeal. The Bihar RTI call centre has helped streamline access to all PIOs in the State

regardless of their level of illiteracy.

System designed to enable a citizen wishing to file an application for seeking any information under RTI Act, without any hassles of physical movement for purchase of postal order (for the requisite RTI application fee of Rs.10/-) or going to the designated RTI Officer of the concerned department.

The primary and mandatory requirement was to charge RTI application fee (Rs.10/-) from the citizen without physical transaction of money. This could be fulfilled with the help of BSNL Premium Rate Services. BSNL's Premium Service is basically a special service for subscribing premium services like Doctor's Advice, Fortune Telling, Exam Results over telephone, by paying at a premium rate i.e. higher than the normal Call tariff.

Later the Premium Service Provider gets his share of revenue from BSNL consolidated over a month.

All the facilities were quickly put up in place and the "JAANKARI" Facilitation Centre was located in the State Government's Software Technology Park in BISCOMAUN Tower, Patna. The State Government asked Beltron to procure the necessary hardware, software & authorised to operate it. The operation was outsourced to a government neutral agency.

The Facilitation Centre executives were not from government and hence were unbiased. The Software was designed in consultation with officials who had been operating another e-Janshikayat software from CM Secretariat.

Under the overall supervision of CM Secretariat, the state public sector undertaking Bihar State Electronics Development Corporation Ltd. (BELTRON) was entrusted with the responsibility of operationalizing the RTI Facilitation Centre within a time period of 2 months . The Chief Minister aptly gave the name "JAANKARI" for the Facilitation Centre.

Necessary amendments were made by the State Government in the relevant rules to lower the fees for filing first and second appeal to Rs. 10/- each, to enable e-transactions through phone call to receive payments. Executive Orders were

issued and the Facilitation Centre "JAANKARI" was designated and authorised to receive phone calls from public at the pre-arranged premium rate i.e. a call costing Rs. 10/per call (rupees ten per call) to take care of the prescribed application fee and generate RTI application on behalf of the caller. Arrangements were made by Beltron to have PRI E-I lines of BSNL dial (155311) terminated at the Facilitation Centre. Besides premium rate call number, another six digit number dial (155310) for help line on normal tariff was also made available for general enquiry on RTI and application status etc. Both these numbers have been widely publicized for public knowledge and consumption.

Normally BSNL provides Premium Rate Service through its IN Platform using 12 digit no. with access code 1867 xxxx xxxx. Premium Rate Services are normally accessible only to STD subscribers. To make the RTI Facilitation Centre facility accessible to every citizen of Bihar from all telephones, special 6 digit code of level 1 i.e. Dial 155311 has been allotted by the Department of Communication, Government of India. A special mechanism was evolved for extending the premium rate services without involving IN Platform. Premium Rate charge was generated by the Local/ TAX exchange itself. Of course, this required a huge effort in opening of the "RTI Call Centre Code" in all the main exchanges of Bihar.

In the present technical arrangement the RTI Facilitation Centre Code Dial 155311 (and also the RTI enquiry code dial 155310) has been routed to Patna Tandem Exchange. From Patna Tandem Exchange all Calls originated throughout Bihar, are routed to EWSD local exchange, Patna from where a PRI (Premium Rate Interface) line has been terminated in RTI FacilitationCentre EPABX, located at BISCOMAUN Tower.

Charging of Calls are done as below:

(i) RTI application filing dial number (RTN) 155311 – 10 pulses from

One India Subscriber, 8 pulses (Rs.9.60) from Non-India One Subscriber being charged immediately after the answer of Facilitation centre agent. This initial

charge is valid for 5 minutes duration after which subscribers is charged @ 60 second pulse rate.

(ii) RTI helpline/enquiry dial number (RHN) 155310 – Normal Facilitation Charges.

For all the RTI application filing Calls CDRs (Call Detail Records) for code dial 155311 are being generated at EWSD exchange Patna. The Facilitation Centre executives were trained and sensitized. They were to receive calls and covert the voice demands into "electronic format", compatible with RTI, Act. Since issues involved varied with each request and it was difficult to pinpoint the exact PIOs dealing with the issue, one senior administrative officer was made available to Facilitation centre to help in co-ordinating with PIOs and departmental heads. The official was well versed with the governmental system and its "Rules of executive Business" which assigns specific work to a department and also mentions its delegated powers. This is the first and unique experiment aimed at RTI empowerment of people.

The fully equipped Facilitation Centre for RTI was pre tested first and then inaugurated by the Hon' able Chief Minister on 29th January 2007. The Facilitation Centre is operational since then on all working days.

Training/Sensitization Programmes for Stakeholders

Special arrangements were made to train the Facilitation Centre executives and concerned PIOs to acquaint them with issues of the "JAANKARI"

Project at Bihar Institute for Public Administration & Rural Development,

(BIPARD), Patna. BIPARD has the mandate to train and sensitize officials of various departments with different seniority) on RTI issues.

"JAANKARI" Project under RTI, can be construed as an e-governance investment. The Government must regularly monitor, evaluate and do mid-course adjustments of its programmes, so that the desired objectives are achieved. E-Governance investments must engender enough rewards in terms of positive

enfranchisement of the traditionally disadvantaged groups for continued Government support for such projects.

The calculation of rewards in such a case is subjective and hence, very difficult. One possible way to calculate it can be the Benchmarking, which may include both quantitative as well as qualitative measures. Some of the possible measures are - reduction in average time for processing citizen requests or applications; reduction in number of complaints about the level and quality of government services; increased registration and / or turnout; in government services increased citizen participation in local government or elections; lower costs to government in delivering services and increased revenue.

The "JAANKARI" Facilitation Centre" Communication network was established in consultation with B.S.N.L., the largest telecom service provider in the country. Presently, its service is operationalized in the entire state of Bihar comprising of 19 telecom districts with 1162 exchanges. More than 10.62 lakh telephone subscribers are covered within the purview of this Project. A Total of 38475 villages with 85 million population of Bihar have benefited from this facilitation project.

A New Phase

A number of changes have been made to the Jaankari system since December 2010 when CSM29 took over Jaankari operations. Operators grew in number from six to twelve and were technically trained for one month by the CSM call center manager and on RTIA by a lawyer. With the advancement in penetration of computing technologies throughout the state, as exemplified by the computerization of 1000 urban schools and establishment of 5000 Common Service Centers (CSCs) in rural areas, the Jaankari platform was launched as a web-based system. This has made Jaankari easily accessible to all involved stakeholders. The Table below is an extensive list of effects from the switch to an online platform.

The entire Jaankari ecosystem, which is comprised of call centre users, PIOs, NGOs, information commissioners, and CSCs, has reached a stage of maturity at which it actively engages with the system in a way that furthers the intended impact of transparent access to public information for enhanced accountability and improved public service delivery.

As of December 2010	Impact
Integrated Online Platform http://biharonline.gov.in/RTI/	• Requests cannot be changed after they have been registered in the Jaankari system, therefore post-request malpractice is mitigated • PIOs have direct, real time access to requests through the online platform • Assistant Public Information Officers (APIOs) have a dedicated login for real time access to first appeals • State Information Commissioners have a dedicated login for real time access to second appeals • As call center operators log requests into the system, they are digitally transferred to the concerned authorities
Online RTI request	• RTI requesters can directly file a request through the online form • Online payments can be made through Visa or MasterCard (Rs.11= Rs.10 application fee + Re.1 processing fee; ~.24 USD)

As of December 2010	Impact
Online citizen application tracking	• Any citizen requester can obtain, in real time, downloadable and printable requests with submission of a request number and the district from where the call was made
Use of an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS)	• Automated transfer between operators based on time of operator stagnancy • Calls are recorded - transparency allows for easy transfer of data and monitoring for friendly service

Expenditure Item	Expenditure Amount	Responsible Agency
Call center operator salaries (12, as of Dec 2010)*	Rs. 11,000/ month (~244 USD)	CSM
Premium phone lines (BSNL)	95,000/yr (~2111 USD)	GAD
Hardware & Software	13 PCs 1 Printer IVRS 12 Headsets 2 modems Jaankari software Google Transliteration (free)	CSM BELTRON BEST
Post of Hard Copies**	Rs. 10.6/ application (~.24 USD)	GAD

Call Centre - Each caller is charged the regular application fee of 10 rupees for the first five minutes of the call; thereafter, he/she is charged 1.8 rupees per every three minutes. Interviews with operators revealed an average call time of approximately 10 to 12 minutes. This results in a 3 to 4.2 rupee charge per call to users in addition to the regular application fee. With an average of 3000 calls per month, this would bring the total monthly call centre revenues to
Approximately 9000 to 12,600 rupees.

Outcome

It is for the first time that a Facilitation Centre has been established to benefit the citizens of the state under the provisions of Right to Information. This is a unique experiment, first of its kind in India and is aimed at "information empowerment" of the people. Various technology issues and RTI knowledge base issues are continuously being handled to ensure quality and coverage.

For RTI, the normal practice followed by governments are cumbersome in the sense that the application in some states have to be filed in the prescribed Form A. Many of the citizens are illiterate and are not able to make use of RTI. Hence, , the Government of Bihar has utilized the most usual of all communication i.e. voice communication over phone line. The advantage of the voice communication is that phone facilities are present in almost each of the 38475 odd revenue village and available to a large population. Ease of communication is the key to this project's success.

As explained earlier, now all the relevant information is a phone call away thus, enabling the citizens to get access to information under the control of public authorities. By doing this, the Government is fulfilling the objective of promoting transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority. . The concept of e-government initiatives is essentially citizen-centric and it largely depends upon how many citizens get involved in it, and for that purpose the efforts to foster civic engagements are crucial.

The citizen is at the core of the concept of e-governance, which is directed inter alia, at improving the life of the masses by cutting cost and bringing in efficiency in governance. Policy-makers must keep the citizen centric vision while designing governance systems. Policy designers should endeavour to encourage stakeholders both government and non-government to interact and come with a

shared vision of e-governance and its goals. In brief "JAANKARI" Facilitation Centre" Project is a win-win situation to citizens, government and BSNL. As of December 2010, Jaankari changed from an internal, offline, telecom platform to a web-based platform.

Web-Based Platform

This was developed by BEST and is linked to all call centre operators and 67 government departments. It is a thin application so bandwidth is not a problem and thus, even remote locations can access it easily. Proprietary software including Microsoft - SP software for Front end development and SQL for backend is used. Developers gave three main reasons for using Microsoft products:

- First, they perceive them to be user friendly;
- Second, BEST has expertise in using these platforms;
- And third, they want to build a partnership with Microsoft because of its brand name.

Innovative features of the platform include:

- Bilingual input and display in Hindi and English. Call centre operators use the open source product, Google Transliteration, to record call requests in Hindi.
- Real-time application tracking system
- Online Feedback Integration through user feedback form and online survey
- User groups access the web-based platform with private logins and customized tool portals

Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) + Automatic Call Distribution (ACD)

The IVR system housed in Jaankari call center operates on Drishti 37 open source software. It receives users' input through a punch-in number and distributes calls

according to an algorithm that calculates operator call attendance. It is beneficial for two major reasons:

- First, it is completely programmable and as such, can be taught to give audible phone directions.

- Second, it records voice so all calls can be monitored.

MCA21

Mr. Anil Kumar Bhardwaj & Ms. Payal Mittal

(The practice is about providing Corporate Information online to Citizens, introduced by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs)

Background

Information is universally accepted as an essential input for efficient functioning of any political economy. The full potential of this resource can be realized if it is accessible and used appropriately by all stakeholders. Besides strengthening informed decision making on a real-time basis, easy and open access to data reinforces open scientific inquiry, encourages diversity of analysis and opinion, promotes new research/testing of new or alternative hypotheses etc. Ministry of Corporate Affairs through its online portal MCA21 has made all company related information accessible to various stakeholders and general public. Any person desirous of some information just needs to make some clicks on MCA21 portal and get the information on his screen. Ministry of Corporate Affairs is primarily concerned with administration of the Companies Act, 1956, and rules & regulations framed there- under, for regulating the functioning of the corporate sector in accordance with law. Besides, it also administers the following Acts:

i)   The Competition Act, 2002

ii)   The Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Act, 2008.

iii)   The Chartered Accountants Act, 1949

iv)   The Cost and Works Accountants Act, 1959

v)   The Company Secretaries Act, 1980

vi)   The Partnership Act, 1932

vii)   The Societies Registration Act, 1860

viii)   The Companies (Donations to National Funds) Act, 1951

The Companies Act, 1956 ("the Act") provides for, and casts an obligation on companies incorporated under the Act, to file various forms, returns & documents with the Registrar of Companies(RoC) under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA). Requirements are laid down in various sections of the Act and in the rules/ regulations made there-under, which prescribes the forms, returns and other documents to be filed with the RoC. Thus, a large volume of information gets generated and stored as a by-product of administration and regulatory compliance of the Companies Act, 1956.

The forms, returns and documents to be filed include various applications, returns, balance-sheet, prospectus, memorandum of agreement, article of association, particulars of charges, etc. As per Act these documents are required to be maintained by the RoC. These documents contain thorough information about the companies, their net worth, shareholding and ownership pattern and detailed financial statements i.e. Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Accounts.The information available with the RoC is relied upon by various courts, financial institutions etc. There are several sections in Companies Act (section 160, Section 163 and Section 610 read with Section 209) which mandate RoC to make such records available for viewing and also for providing certified copy at a prescribed fee.

Prior to 2006, the forms, returns and documents of the companies were received and stored in physical paper form in record rooms at the office of the concerned RoC. Filing of documents, their registration and consequential placing in respective file of the company, etc. was carried out manually. The difficulties were ever increasing, and required Ministry to find suitable alternatives.

Need Felt

Following were the main drivers to consider change of physical system to Electronic repository:

a) **Ever-increasing Corporates**: The heightened economic activity increased the number of companies to more than 7 Lakh. This meant RoCs were required to maintain more than 6 crore document pages in their offices. The number was swelling further due to ever expanding Indian economy. Economic growth also resulted in more and more financial instruments being used by companies resulting in requirement of registering more than 1 lakh charge documents every year.

b) **Physical presence and long queues**: Millions of persons were visiting various RoC offices every year. Physical presence of company representative was required for various activities. This used to result in long queues and difficulties to stakeholders. Moreover during last days of compliances (e.g. filing of Annual returns), the situation used to become almost unmanageable.

c) **Limited Access Points**: Ministry did not have presence in every district or city. Practically each state had one ROC office, causing inconvenience to stakeholders from other locations. Further the stake-holder base was increasing in smaller cities/ towns.

d) **Limited Payment options**: Each filing required payment of requisite fee. The payment options were limited to cash or demand draft.

e) **Record Maintenance and control**: The paper based system required manual sorting, storage and retrieval. Manual verification and checking made the process too time consuming. Further information availability to stakeholders was

time consuming and sometimes inaccurate. Paper based systems also required large space and document storage mechanisms.

Details

In 2006, keeping in tune with the e-Governance initiatives the world over MCA initiated an e-Governance project called MCA21. The project was aimed at enabling an easy and secure access of MCA services to the corporate entities, professionals and the public. MCA21 is designed to fully automate all processes relating to the proactive enforcement and compliance of the legal requirements under the Companies Act, 1956. Since September 2006, it is mandatory for companies to make all filings with the RoC online using specially designed e-forms under MCA21 system. The information contained in these filings provides a large repository of corporate sector data. The major source of corporate sector data lying with the MCA21 repository comes from all the e-filings made by companies with ROCs/Central Government. Some offline activities, which include complaints, inspections, investigations and prosecutions, are also updated into the MCA21 database.

Table 2.2. Companies Count at A Glance	
	(as on 31.03.2013)
Total number of Companies on the Registry	1301994
No. of Closed Companies	260154
Number of Companies under Liquidation/being Struck off	30857
No. of Companies lying dormant	144723
No. of Active Companies	858622
No of public Listed companies currently Working and have filed Annual Return	7020

Objectives: The project objectives for MCA21 were identified to enable each set of users illustrated as below:
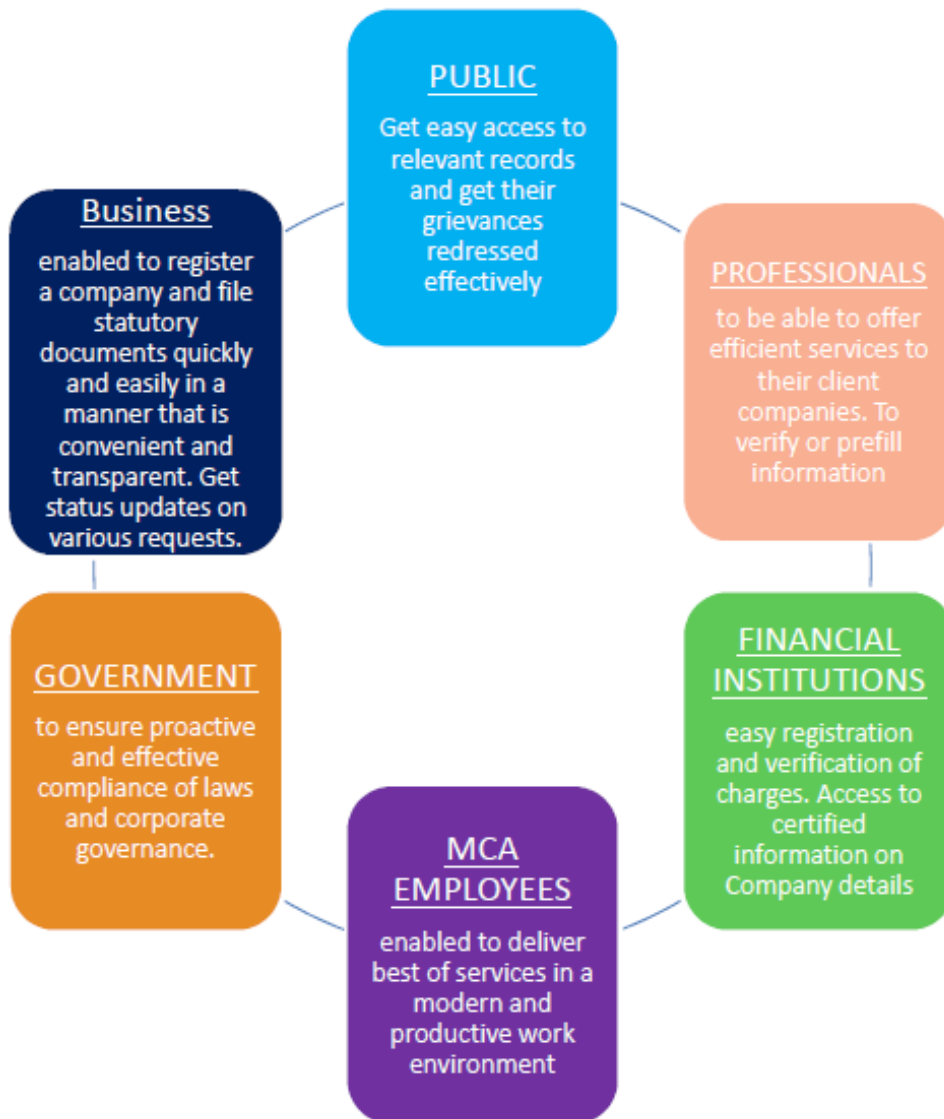
Electronic forms (e-form) were designed as per various activities and reporting requirements. E-forms were designed using adobe e-form software, keeping in mind easy and widespread usability of adobe by general public. These e-forms enabled stake-holders to fill-in the information at their office without necessitating the need to be online. The e-forms also enabled pre-filling of repetitive company specific information and online scrutiny (verification) of entries on the basis of previous data filed with MCA21. The details of activity wise e-forms are as per table below:

Purpose of filing	No. of e- forms	Type of e-Filing
		TABLE 2.1. ELECTRONIC FILINGS BY COMPANIES BY PURPOSE
Company Registration	8	**Application for Incorporation of a Company, Change of Registered Office, etc.**
Approval Services	22	**Application for change of Name, Conversion of a Public Limited Company into a Private Limited Company, etc.**
Change Services	6	**Application for Alteration in the Charter, Statute or Memorandum and Articles of Association, Address of the Registered or Principal Office and Directors and Secretary of a Foreign**
Compliance Related	14	**Return of Allotment, Particulars of Contract relating to Shares Allotted as Fully or Partly Paid-Up other than in cash**
Annual Statutory Filling	7	**Annual Return of a Company (not having share capital/ having a share capital), Annual Return of a Foreign Company having a share capital, Filings of Balance Sheet, Profit & Loss Account,**
Charge Management	5	**Creation or Modification of Charges, Satisfaction of charges, Registration of Charges for Debenture, etc.**
Information services	6	**Offer of a Scheme involving the transfer of shares or any class of shares between companies, Address at which Books of Account are maintained, etc.**
Others	**9**	**Increase in the number of Directors of the Company, Appointment or Reappointment and Remuneration or Increase in Remuneration or Over Payment to Managing or Whole-Time Director(s) or Manager, Intimating to Registrar of Companies of Conversion of the company into LLP, DIN application for appointment of director, etc.**

With the implementation of MCA21, stakeholders have been provided with easy and secure access to MCA services, anytime and anywhere. The MCA21 has enabled

- Businesses to register a company and file statutory documents quickly and easily,

- Financial institutions to register/verify charges with no loss of time,

- Financial analyst, regulators and policy makers to obtain authentic and timely company information, and

- Public to easily access company records, etc.

Services provided and Innovations Used

There are more than 100 services provided to various stakeholders such as:

- Name Approvals

- Director Identification Number (DIN)

- Incorporation of new companies

- Filing of annual statutory returns

- Grant of all approvals

- Registry reference to public records of companies to public

- Grievance redressal

- Compliance management & effective regulation

- Interoperability with other Government Department / Ministries/ Regulators

The following are the features of the new IT-enabled MCA process which includes many innovative processes:

- Anywhere, anytime secure electronic filing for MCA transactions through adaptation of all statutory forms to e-forms, suitable for electronic filing

- Automated scrutiny of e-forms at the MCA portal available, that substantially reduced the commonly associated mistakes encountered in form-filling

- Use of Digital Signatures to ensure the security of electronic forms and documents in conformance with the Information Technology Act, 2000

- Verification of the credentials of the authorized signatory (Director, Company Secretary or Manager and Practicing with another established identification such as DIN, and/or Professional Membership number provided

by the Institute.)

- PAN verification through system in collaboration with Income Tax Department
- Convenient multi-modal methods of payment encompassing existing payment mechanism and electronic payment options using credit cards and Internet banking, including an expanded nationwide network of Bank branches for challan payments

- Access to the MCA services optimized for use from a typical home Internet connection, with freely available software, with no additional costs for the end user
- Best-in-class information technology solution, including electronic workflows and sophisticated document storage and retrieval systems, that has significantly reduced paper usage at the MCA Offices
- Introduction of Hassle free stamp duty payment through MCA21 portal
- Nearly 5 Crore pages of legacy paper documents digitized for ready electronic access through Internet to the investors and general public
- Easy and comprehensive reporting of grievances by investors through MCA portal, for facilitating speedy redressal
- An architectural approach that allows easy adaptation of evolving technologies and platforms, while providing the robustness and scalability to the MCA21 solution
- National Data Centre located at New Delhi(with DR at Chennai) ensure provisioning of uninterrupted 24 x 7 operations
- High bandwidth connectivity across all nationwide offices of MCA and facility for access by several thousand users at the same time
- Total transparency whereby citizen can find out the status of their transactions.
- Automatic generation and sending of approvals/ certificates through e-mails.

Salient features

MCA portal has been designed to provide wizard based navigation to new users. Quick links are available on the portal for ease of use for the existing users. The portal uses hyperlinks within various web-pages to facilitate ease of use. A user can get information related to Corporate, LLP's and Director's director details with a few clicks sitting at his desk anywhere across the globe. The information is classified into following broad categories:

1. Company/ LLP master data information

Information related to Company and LLP master data is available without any fee and provides various details of the company (i.e. whether Public or Private, Listed or Unlisted etc.), Authorized Capital, Paid Up capital , date of incorporation etc. Portal provides easy to understand instructions for users, enabling quick view of Company master data.

View of Company Master Data on MCA Portal

2. Director's Information and Signatory details

The concept of a Director Identification Number (DIN) has been introduced for the first time with the insertion of Sections 266A to 266G of Companies

(Amendment) Act, 2006. Through Director's search, stakeholders can view information related to ownership and management of any company. Further if a person is director in multiple companies, then a list of all such companies with details of period in which such a person is/ has been a director is available.

3.   Charge documents:

This service is very useful for finding the financial status of a company including full details of various loans etc. The facility is available free of cost without necessitating need for login. This information is used extensively by Banks, Financial institutions and financial analysts. A typical charge information is as shown below:

<div align="center">View of Charge Information on MCA Portal</div>

CIN/FCRN/LLPIN/FLLPIN :	X00001DL1986XX000000
Company / LLP Name :	XXX LIMITED

Charge ID	Date of Charge Creation/ Modification	Charge amount secured	Charge Holder	Address	Service Request Number (SRN)
10310627	23/09/2011	10,000,000,000	Indian Overseas Bank	Janpath Branch, F-47,Malhotra Building,Janpath, New Delhi - 110001, INDIA	B22725287
10303213	30/06/2011	10,000,000,000	Union Bank Of India	F14/15,Connaught Place, New Delhi, New Delhi - 110001, INDIA	B19176254
10278289	30/03/2011	30,000,000,000	Punjab National Bank	Mid Corporate Branch, A - 9, Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110001, INDIA	B09917915
10271493	09/03/2011	40,000,000,000	IDBI Bank Limited	3rd floor, Indian Red Cross Society Building, 1 Red Cross Road, New Delhi- 110001, INDIA	B07756638

4.   Financial statements

Companies file their Balance Sheet and Annual return (including Profit and Loss statement) with MCA. This information is very useful for investors, financial analysts, regulatory oversight etc. The information is available at a prescribed fee of Rs. 50/- per company. Stakeholders can download relevant statements from the company record for future analysis.

5.   Other documents

As part of view Public document facility stakeholders can view any event based information and other filed documents related to the company. Such information is very useful to ascertain registration details, change of directors etc. This facility is also available on payment of prescribed fee of Rs. 50/- only.

Key Benefits

1.   Benefits for Public:

The initiative has benefited stake-holders and general public alike. Any document related to any Company/ LLP is available anytime and anywhere can be accessed by one and all. The facility has come as a boon for research studies and financial analysts. One can get information related to any company for all the previous years. The ease of access has improved the quality of information filed by the companies, as any wrong information is prone to scrutiny. Users can save desirous information and use the same later. There is also a feature to order certified copies of information from ROC online. These certified copies are required for various legal purposes. Thus the process of seeking and getting information has become absolutely hassle free with no requirement to visit ROC offices.

2.   Benefits for Business Stakeholders:

Business stakeholder have been the biggest beneficiaries. There is instant information available on the portal. Each transaction status can be tracked and clarifications/ queries for any approval can be answered online. There is no special technological investment required from any corporate, as the portal operates on most of the operating platforms including Safari, Opera etc. The portal provides single, uniform one stop solution for all needs related to Company/ LLP registration etc. including of stamp paper charges for all states and Union Territories. Further all convenient payment options are available,

which makes transaction very easy. The initiative has become a benchmark in best practices to be provided for business users and has been appreciated by World Bank as "*a laudable business friendly initiative by Government of India*".

3.   Benefits for Government:

There are numerous benefits of the portal for Government starting with creation of fully operational electronic service delivery portal meeting aspirations of global businesses. The initiative also is a step towards fulfillment of commitment for providing easy access to services including **ease of providing information**. The portal has made business eco-systems attractive for new investors from anywhere across the globe, benefitting the national economy. International corporates desirous of registering a business do not require to come for registration formality and can submit online application and seek all information online.

The portal has made information for other Government organizations readily available. Information is shared through Login based access with RBI, FinancialIntelligence Unit, Enforcement Directorate, Central Bureau of Investigations, CBDT, CBEC, Central Statistical Organization (CSO) etc. The sharing of data with other Government agencies with such ease has improved sectoral analysis enabling better policy initiative based on genuine and correct data. The use of data/ information by investigation agencies has enabled unearthing quite a few scrupulous activities and has improved regulatory oversight. The portal provides a platform for newer and newer joined up services. The portal has enabled in standardizing and automation of all Internal Functions. It has improved working environment. Further the effort in processing the cases has reduced many-fold resulting in huge savings as there is no need to increase manpower for increasing work due to larger number of companies. Further the reporting and monitoring of performance of various field offices and officers

has become very easy with various system reports enabling stricter control.

4.   Benefits for Banks/ Financial Institutions (FI):

Banking and financial sector has hugely benefitted from the initiative. Earlier there was a permanent team of officers from Banks/ Financial Institutions which required to visit ROC offices daily to seek charge related and other financial information of the companies. Further bank officials required to visit ROC offices to ensure that charge related to loans disbursed by their organization have been properly registered. Now the information is available to them sitting in their own offices saving huge effort.

MCA has facilitated the banks/ FI's further by allocating administrative password to them to enable creation of administrative login-id for their disbursal officers. This facility enables creation of a charge on MCA portal by the bank officers instantly at the time of loan disbursal. The facility has helped banking and financial sector by enabling effective decision making related to credit worthiness and evaluation of financial strength. Instant registration of charges has also helped in controlling non- performance-assets (NPA's)

Revenue Sustainability and Future Initiatives

The project was conceived and executed as a Built, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT) model with TCS as service provider in first cycle from 2006 till January 2013. The payment to operator was made using Equated Quarterly Installments (EQI) based model. The assets created (Application software as well as Infrastructure) belong to the Ministry. The project has entered its second cycle with Infosys providing the service as decided through an open competitive bidding process. Ministry's revenues have increased from Rs. 700 Crore in 2006 to Rs. 1500 Crore (Approx.) in 2012-13.

Electronic service delivery has become basic and integral functional part of

the Ministry. Further the platform has enabled Ministry to easily conceive new initiatives like XBRL based filing of financial statements, Public Grievance module, seeking and inviting comments on important policy related issues, IEPF sub-portal, Information related to companies under prosecution etc. In addition MCA21 has enabled cost effective implementation of automation and e-Governance of Official Liquidator (OL) offices. While the independent set-up for OL e-Governance was estimated at Rs. 120 crore, MCA21 enabled implementation will cost less than 5 Crores.

It can be appreciated that Ministry of Corporate Affairs is the only Central Ministry, which has achieved 100 % service delivery through electronic mode. There has been an annual increase in revenue to the tune of more than Rs. 700 Crore. Some of this can be attributed to efficient mechanism and zero revenue loss due to portal. The expense on portal is limited to Rs. 40-45 Crore per annum making project easily sustainable.

Future Developments: The portal has created a strong platform enabling the ministry to envision further initiatives. Extension of services to include OL e- Governance with minimal added investments has been undertaken and likely to become a reality by 2014-15.

From stake-holder point of view, improved facilities for information like create your own dashboard, SMS alerts on filing of any information by a specific company, create your own reports etc. will further improve the usability of information available on the portal. The new initiatives are under development and likely to be implemented in three to six month period.

Replicability

Companies and LLP are only one form of registered organization carrying out business and commercial activities. There are various other forms of registered organizations which are engaged in businesses or operations like Partnership firms, Societies, Multi-state societies etc. These organizations are registered under state- governments either at state level or at district/tehsil level. The regulatory over-sight and information seeking for these organization registered at various tehsils/ district head-quarters is very cumbersome. In fact some of the partnership/ societies do not file any information subsequent to their registration due to poor regulatory framework and overburdened registries.

The MCA21 model can be easily adapted by the various state –IT and e-governance departments to enable electronic service delivery making hassle free registration and enabling online filing of information and reports. Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India which is nodal agency for registration of Multi-state societies has already carried out feasibility study and system analysis to replicate online registry similar to MCA21. Similarly officers of Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) have carried out detailed project study of MCA21 implementation and discussion with MCA's e-Governance team to implement electronic registration of Importers and trading firms and online submission and approval of consignments including payment of custom duty online enabling faster and hassle free custom clearance. Thus it is very clear that MCA21 has become a successful case of electronic service delivery which can be studied by various Government departments and agencies to enable improved service delivery and creation of online repository of information.

Information Kiosks

Kunal Shaw & Sunaina S Valecha

(The initiatives, namely, E-Soochna Himachal Pradesh, Lok Vani and Nagarik Soochna Kendra Kanpur Dehat District, Bhoomi Project Karnataka, E-Jan Sampark Project Chandigarh have been implemented through information Kiosks)

Background

The RTI Act requires all public authorities to proactively put their information in the public domain through various means of communication, which may include office walls, panchayat notice boards, school building walls, block office walls and notice boards, and media vehicles such as radio, television, newspapers, short messaging services, interactive voice response, toll free numbers and the Internet. Among these, the Internet is the only one that can be treated as truly permanent, unlimited space for public access. All other media is limited, temporary and perishable.

In rural areas common service centre's (CSCs), and cyber cafes are the most used access points for Internet usage, almost 60% of all the Internet users there use CSCs to access the Web by travelling on an average 6-10 kms.

Though there could be many ways to make RTI a national phenomenon, RTI kiosks have materialized as a very effective solution, where citizens seek information and request information through the RTI Act.

The public information kiosks generally aim to facilitate the flow of information between government and the public. However, as many people still lack access to PCs or the Internet, this relegates them to the wrong side of the digital divide. Use

of touch screen kiosks in Government to deliver information to the public is one way in which central and local governments can bridge this divide.

The RTI kiosk is an important accelerator to take the RTI Act implementation forward in India. The role of the RTI kiosk in enabling the RTI Act is vital and basic.

Details of the Practice

1. 'E-Soochna kiosks', as RTI Centre's of Himachal Pradesh at Palmpur and Kullu districts

'E-Soochna', A Public Information Kiosk (PIK) was set up at Palampur SDM office in conjunction with the Right to Information Centre, for enabling people to exercise their RTI in a meaningful and transparent manner. Within the kiosk, application forms for seeking information were made available both in hard and soft formats.

Through Intranet, the data of the office was made available to the users. The public could visit the kiosk for obtaining information about any task performed in the office. The kiosk had data about all kinds of licenses, vehicles and certificates issued from the office for easy retrieval and verification. The 'Integrated Case-filing and Monitoring System' at the SDM E-Court was integrated with the PIK. The aim was to streamline the judicial processes that are routine or time critical, coupled with a citizen-centric interface to achieve greater transparency and information dissemination to litigants. People could get print-out of requisite information from the kiosk. Thus PIK was a one-stop shop to have accurate, timely and cost-effective information.

The successful RTI initiatives in Palampur sub-division were carried forward at district level by Deputy Commissioner cum-District Magistrate during 2007-08.

'E-Soochna' kiosk has been established at district headquarters Kullu on 29th March, 2007. It is the first of its kind initiative in Himachal Pradesh to integrate E-Governance with RTI.

'E-Soochna', Right to Information Centre acts as a one-stop-solution not only for providing important information to the common public in respect of various works done from government offices but also of the important development activities and their progress.

A Touch Screen Kiosk has been installed containing various kinds of useful information for citizens in an easy and user-friendly manner. They are:

➢ Right To Information – It contains

    I. RTI Act, 2005 and HP RTI Rules, 2006
   II. List of PIOs and APIOs of the district
  III. Voluntary Disclosure Document of Deputy Commissioner Office, Kullu containing information on all 17 mandatory points. The application forms for both information and inspection can be accessed. The status of the applications pending with the PIOs and other details can also be seen.

➢ Himachal Pradesh – Achievments in different sectors, new programmes/schemes/announcements.

➢ At a glance data of Kullu district, all four sub-divisions, and five Development Blocks.

➢ List of Panchayati Raj representatives of three tiers along with their contacts.

➢ Development Schemes of the Government of India and Government of HP.

➢ Panchayat-wise list of rural development schemes along with their head,

sanction date, sanction amount, present status and likely date of completion. It would help immensely in speedy implementation and better monitoring of development works.

➢ Details of driving licenses and search of data for verifications.

➢ Details of vehicle registration and search for verifications by interested users (eg. police).

➢ Red Cross – main activities, projects etc.

➢ Results of various examinations, interviews etc.

➢ Voter List, BPL list etc.

The above initiatives have led to easy and hassle- free access to vital and useful information to the citizens, enhanced transparency and efficiency in administration at the cutting edge, saving time of citizens and of office staff, better monitoring of development schemes etc.

The E-Soochna kiosk has been accessed by around 15,000 citizens in one year period since its launch in March 2007 for various purposes. This is an encouraging figure considering the fact that the total population of Kullu town as per Census 2001 is 18,306.

At 'E-Soochna', Right to Information Centre various Public Information Display Boards have been put up inside and outside the Office and also in all the four offices of Sub-Divisional Magistrates and in all the five offices of the Block Development Offices of district Kullu. These Display Boards contain vital information required by citizens for getting their works done. For instance, District Kullu at a glance; Right to Information – how to access, PIO/ APIO of that office, procedure etc.; Check list for registration of Motor Vehicles; Arms Licenses – Procedures, Fees etc.; Important information about Elections, Voter Lists, Check list of documents required for certificates; Documents required for licenses; Schedule of fees etc.

The entire District is now compatible with the RTI Act as they involve the pro-active information dissemination not only by the Collectorate but also by line departments in the district. A Right to Information Document in respect of Deputy Commissioner, Kullu has been prepared, which is available for access by citizens and has also been put on the district website. The list of PIOs, RTI application templates, important socio-economic data of the district is accessible on the district website. The RTI Documents have also been prepared for all the five Block Offices. The consolidated information of various departments has been digitized. This would help departments not having distinct website at the district level. Lot of Information Display Boards have been set up in the various Panchayats of the district mentioning the status of development schemes.

2. Lokvani Project – Uttar Pradesh

Lokvani is a public-private partnership e-Governance programme which has been initiated with the combined efforts of both the district administration as well as the National Informatics Centre in the district of Sitapur. Lokvani has been projected as a commitment to the people in providing them with transparent, credible and accountable systems of governance. The primary objective is to bridge the digital Divide and "connect" the common man to the strategy makers in a seamless fashion.

Operational model of lokvani

"Lokvani" means the voice of the people in Hindi. The Lokvani model has been formulated keeping in mind the three key stakeholders − (a) the citizens, (b) the government and (c) the IT entrepreneurs/Kiosk operators. Essentially, since the literacy, IT literacy in particular, is very low in Sitapur, the kiosks form an interface between the IT enabled government and the IT illiterate citizens.

Scope & Implementation of Lokvani

Lokvani system has empowered the citizens by generating awareness towards their rights through a seamless flow of information. It is an outstanding manifestation of the "right to information". This has already been implemented in 59 districts of UP. The State Government has also issued Government Order (G.O.) on 16 June, 2006 to implement the project in all the districts of Uttar Pradesh. National Informatics Centre is the technical consultant to the project and the web-based software has been designed and developed by NIC using the latest software tools. The website has been hosted at NIC Delhi Servers and the replication will be carried out by the NIC District centre in each district.

3.   A model district - Nagarik Soochna Kendra in Kanpur Dehat District

The kiosk provides various options on the main screen. The operation is very simple and can be operated by anyone ranging from 6 to 60 years of age. As the user touches the option, it gets selected and the information is displayed at the main screen.

A touch-screen Information Kiosk has been set up by the District Administration and the National Informatics Centre of Kanpur Dehat district.

It was inaugurated on 0 9-01-2007. The kiosk provides information related to various issues some of them being: Vidhan Sabha voters list; population statistics; holidays list; data and statistics related to UP; list of government officials in the district; forms of different departments. Besides, the kiosk also provides print services such as it gives pay-slips of employees, especially of the Collectorate and basic education department as well as pension slips for retired teachers and treasury pensioners.

In addition, block and district maps can also be printed at the kiosk. In future, it is envisaged that more services will be added to the kiosk with the help of

departments like DRDA, Basic Education, and Health etc. The data for this kiosk will be provided by the different user departments of Kanpur Dehat.

The above model shows the methods of making information reach to the masses and creates awareness of their right to information. It also facilitates suo-motu disclosures.

4.   Project "Bhoomi" in the State of Karnataka, India

Karnataka, being an agrarian state, was facing the problem of maintaining immense land records and the work was done manually by the revenue officials. The duty of collection of records regarding the current ownership of land, cropping pattern and village maps etc. for three to four villages was assigned to 'Patwari', who was also entrusted with registering transfers of land due to sales or other reasons. He had to update the land records as per procedure, which could take years, for obvious reasons.

At present, computerized land record kiosk popularly called Bhoomi Center" is functional in the state.

The Revenue Department in Karnataka, with the technical assistance from National Informatics Centre (NIC), Bangalore, has built and operationalized the BHOOMI system throughout the state. The BHOOMI has computerized 20 million records of land ownership of 6.7 million farmers in the state.

BHOOMI has reduced the discretion of public officials by introducing provisions for recording a mutation request online. Farmers can now access the database and are empowered to follow up. In the BHOOMI project, a printed copy of the RTC can be obtained online by providing the name of the owner or plot number at computerized land record kiosks in 203 taluk offices, for a fee of Rs.10. A

second computer screen faces the clients to enable them to see the transaction being performed.

A farmer can check the status of a mutation application on Touch Screen Kiosks. If the revenue inspector does not complete the mutation within 45 days, a farmer can now approach a senior officer person with their grievance.

Operators of the computerized system are made accountable for their decisions and actions by using a bio-login system that authenticates every Login through a thumbprint. A log is maintained of all transactions in a session.

The new system has brought about a sea change in the way land records are maintained and administered in the state. The system has not only simplified the process of record keeping but has also provided many collateral benefits. This governance model has proven to be financially self-sustainable. It has become a trendsetter for e-Governance projects in the state as well as other parts of the country.

In the next phase of BHOOMI, the 'LAND RECORDS ON WEB' has been established wherein, all the taluk databases are getting uploaded to a web-enabled central database so as to allow the private agencies to set up the village – level kiosk to download the land records documents at the village and issue to the farmers. In this Private Public Participation (PPP) model, all the stakeholders will be benefited in land records delivery.

Geographical spread

203 kiosks are set up in the state at the Taluk offices.

5.   E-Jan Sampark Project

The Chandigarh administration is committed to bridge the digital divide by extending the application of IT for the benefit of the common man. After the successful launch of the Sampark centre's and in the second phase of the e-governance initiative, the administration has identified its aim as: to provide the information about services of various departments and also to provide information and facilitation to residents regarding private services and other Government of India services from the e-Jan Sampark kiosks, which are set up in each sector and each village of Chandigarh. The e-Jan Sampark project enables residents to access information and avail of services from the kiosks with ease, and without any harassment. These centre's also enable citizens to submit their grievances at a common centre and avail their quick redressal thereafter.

The Jan Sampark project's objective is that the benefits of ICT reach the masses, especially those who are without IT connectivity, by providing easy dissemination of information services to a citizen and to deliver useful non- transactional services, e.g., registration of grievances and applications seeking information under RTI for all departments at an easily accessible common place.

E-Jan Sampark Vision

- Bring the administration closer to all the sections of the society especially the underprivileged.

- Provide a single, efficient information dissemination system to the citizen for availing government services by minimizing multiple interaction points for the citizen and hence reduce the wastage of valuable time.

- Provide for better turn-around time in receipt, processing and issue of Services.

- Provide information services in a comfortable environment and make availing of information services a pleasant experience.

- Giving substance to Right to Information Act. Every e-Jan-Sampark centre

supports multi-service delivery (information delivery and non-transactional services), which is a judicious mix of all the possible government services, information and other localized services that are needed by a citizen.

- With these centre's the benefits of ICT reach people without PCs and internet connectivity and also saves their valuable time and money consumed in travelling to government offices.

Right to Information (RTI) Services: A provision has also been made for the submission of applications under the RTI at the Jan Sampark centre's along with the statutory fee in the form of a demand draft or Indian Postal Order (IPO). All such applications will be received and the same will be delivered to the central public information officer of the concerned department the same day. The applications will be received at the Jan Sampark centre's with the prescribed fee of Rs 10 per application in the form of a demand draft or IPO in the name of the concerned department from which the information has been sought, and the application along with the fee will be forwarded to the central public information officer (CPIO) of the concerned department. It will be his duty to reply directly to the citizen along with the desired information required by him, as per the RTI Act.

If any further amount is needed to be paid by the applicant, it would be the duty of the CPIO to request for additional fee (as per requirement) from the applicant directly. Besides replying to the applicant directly, the CPIO must also file the Action Taken Report in the RTI Application System created by NIC. The Jan Sampark centre would only be providing the facilitation services for the receipt of RTI applications so that a common man need not visit each and every office. The responsibility of submitting the information sought by the applicant will be of the CPIO of the concerned department who will ensure that the information is supplied to the applicant as per the provisions of the

RTI Act.

Roll-Out and geographical spread

Approximately 15 kiosks are set up in Chandigarh.

Infrastructure for the Kiosk:
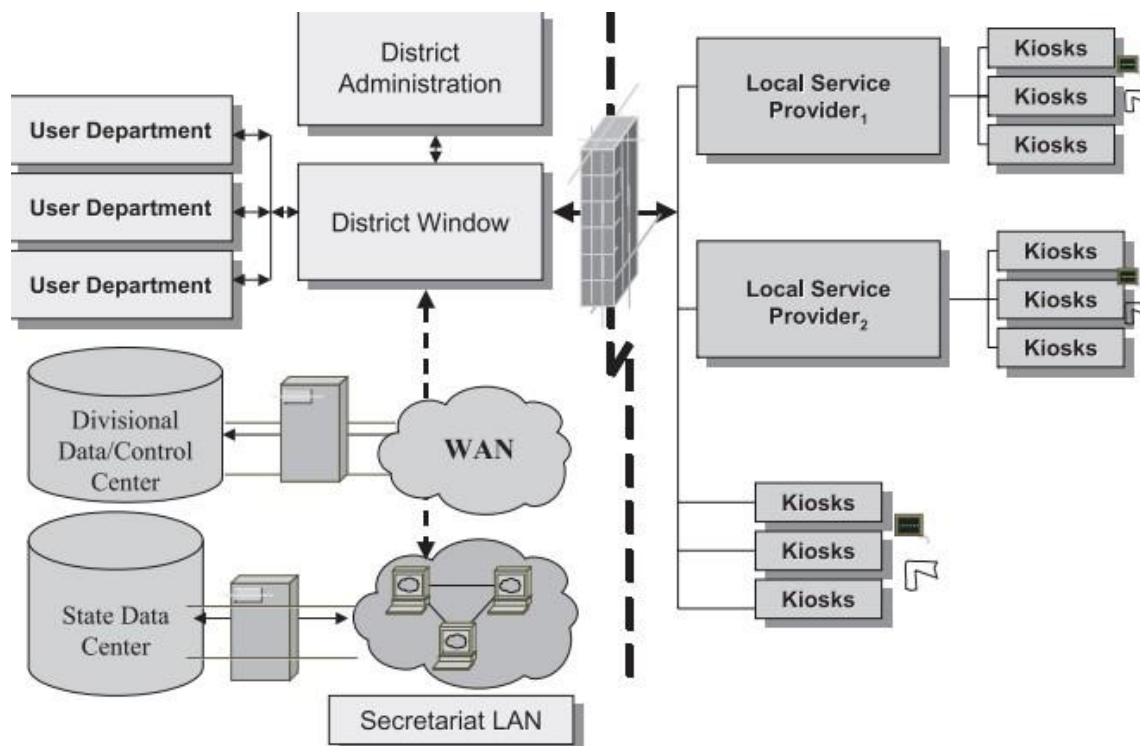
The Kiosk is planned to have about 200 Sq. ft. Floor Area. Computer hardware and software proposed for the Kiosk with approximate cost involved are as below:

Sl. No.	Item	Quantity (In Nos)	Unit Price (In Rupees)	Total Price (In Rupees)
1	Computer	3	30,000	90,000
2	Dot Matrix Printer	1	15,000	15,000
3	DeskJet Printer	1	5,000	5,000
4	Digital Camera	1	10,000	10,000
5	FAX Machine	1	10,000	10,000
6	Scanner	1	11,000	11,000
7	UPS(1KVA)	1	5,000	5,000
8	UPS (0.5 KVA)	2	2,500	5,000
9	Computer furniture	3	3,000	9,000
			Total	1,60,000

An inverter 700VA with one Inverter Battery at a cost of Rs10,000/- may be

required for the KIOSK. Otherwise a provision for 1KVA Generator Set may be kept to run the KIOSK in absence of normal electric supply. site Preparation like partitioning, painting, electrical wiring, electrical earthing if necessary, false-roofing and telephone connection can be completed within a cost of Rs.30,000/-. The kiosk operators have benefited from this system as it has led to enhancement of their income. An unexpected benefit of the system has been a perceptible shift towards gender equality. This has occurred as women are more computer literate and some of the most efficient kiosks are being run by women. In a place where not only computer literacy but even regular literacy is at an abysmal levels, the system has brought forth the economic value added by women. This has also made many of the women kiosk operators economically self-reliant. It has successfully showcased a paradigm that can be incorporated by other administrative organizations. It has also proved that a low literacy rate and financial constraints are not a barrier for implementing a successful e-Governance project.

Challenges Faced

Preparing Proactive Disclosure: A challenge faced during the implementation process of the RTI Portal was to maintain a certain discipline while collecting, preparing and uploading proactive disclosures of public authorities and publish all information under section 4 of the Act.

Technological: The major challenge was how to implement the system and

make proactive disclosures update, where no computer and internet connection is available. But thanks to the E-Governance initiative of the departments as District Informatics Offices and District Information and Public Relations Offices have computers and internet with V-sat facilities.

Insufficient Information:

While citizens are at the kiosk they are in need of help with finding the information, where to find different records, how to use the files, which options to select, and many similar situations. To solve this, a local villager facilitates the services provided through E-Kiosk.

He or she becomes a kiosk owner and takes it up as a self employment opportunity, mostly financed by some of the government sponsored schemes. The kiosk owner is also trained to handle E-Kiosk services while catering to his or her customers. Local rural youth will assist entrepreneurs in running the kiosks on commercial lines, without salaries or stipends. That employment thus leads to a new IT-literate generation in the country.

Outdated Information

Out-dated information is nearly as bad as no information as it is a potential source for dissatisfaction. The obstacles of out-dated information can easily be overcome through converting all paper documents into electronic content that is easily updated without incurring high expenditure.

Hardware, Software and Technical Challenges

Identifying the appropriate hardware platforms and software application packages for cost effective delivery of public services is an important ingredient of the system. The mismatch between local rural telephone exchanges with the optical fibre cable causing poor or no connectivity which reduces the economic

viability of the kiosk and decreases the motivation level of the kiosk manager. Alternative power supply for the kiosk is a must looking to the poor status of power supply in the state.

Scope of Replication

➢ Wide range of citizen friendly services of different departments are being provided under one roof so that the citizens do not have to run around various departments.

➢ The application is customized to provide limited access to various stakeholders by defining their roles and responsibilities.

➢ The application is based on open source technology hence can be replicated elsewhere.

➢ End-to-end delivery.

➢ A transparent framework by virtue of its design is creating a transparent platform for direct delivery of e-Governance services as well as social development activities to the consumer.

➢ RTI guidelines can be availed at the kiosks.

Chakravyuh

Ms. Dhvani Desai

(An Animation film funded by the Films Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India)

Background

The basic idea of making this short animation film " *Chakravyuh* "   arose from my personal experiences. The successes I got through usage of   RTI, empowered me so much that I decided to make a film on it and reach out to the masses and popularize it. I became an avid user and then helped my family, friends, acquaintances and even strangers. I realized that a   common   man was trapped in the "*Chakravyuh*" (The Vicious Circle) of   Corruption, Non Governance and Non Accountability by the Government system which needs a desperate attempt for a breakthrough. The only way to   break   this vicious circle was using RTI. The name "Chakravyuh "was unquestionably inspired from one of the stories of the Great Indian epic *Mahabharata*.

Animation is my medium of expression. My script has been approved by the Films Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India for theatrical release.

Details of the Practice

The Synopsis

The Film illustrates the petty struggles of 4 characters. All unrelated with each other and dispersed in different parts of India. They all have completely different type of problems in their lives but surprisingly have the same solution.

Film Scene:

First story of a young widow from Goa

The first story, is of a character, Mrs Braganza trapped in a vicious circle of corruption and non governance. And eventually is shown to have grown old without resolving the problem, until she uses RTI.

The character designs and the backgrounds have been stylized and exclusively designed for this film. The use of paper textures is mainly to show that the information is all around us, we just need to focus on the right information.

The biggest hurdle while designing the characters and applying the textures was the text that is readable on the characters. Great care was taken while selecting the text, as no political or non appropriate news or text is readable on the characters or the background which could hurt sentiments of any section of the audience.

Second story from Uttar Pradesh.

The second character is Mohammed bhai who lives with his family in Uttar Pradesh. He is waiting for an electric meter connection so that his family can live a normal life. The entire family waits and waits everyday but do not get a connection for a simple reason that they don't bribe the meter fitters of the Government Electric company. The entire neighbourhood is seen with electricity except his house.

Film scene :
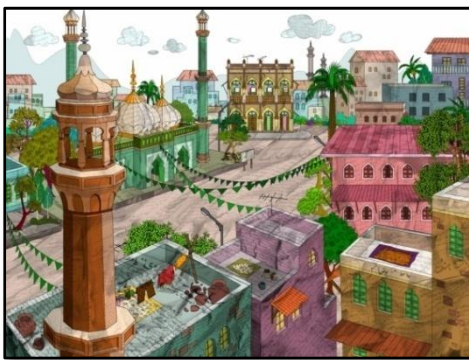
Mohammed bhai is a very honest and god fearing citizen. He refuses to give a bribe to the meter man that comes from the Government office. He walks straight to the Electric House to apply for an electric meter but there too he is asked for a bribe time and again. And in this struggle years pass by   without getting the meter.

Film Scene:
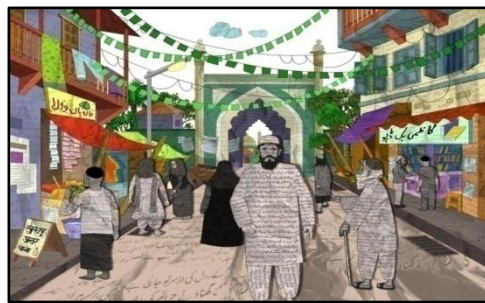
Third story from a village of West Bengal.

The third story is from West Bengal, of Bijoy, a poor farmer whose happiness is suddenly ruined. One morning, he notices encroachments on his small piece of land which leaves very little space to plough his field. He is harassed and bullied by the goons, who have occupied his piece of land by force.

He approaches the "Panch" who direct him to the "Gram Panchayat" of the village. There too he goes from pillar to post trying to escape bribe demands and gets depressed.

Film Scene:
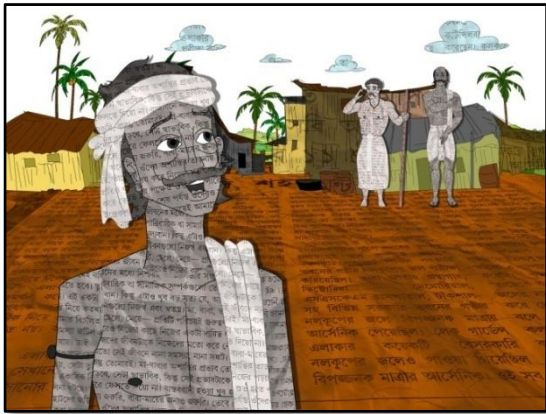
Film Scene:

Fourth Story from Kerala.

The last story is of a god fearing Mr Pillai , far away down South in Kerala . Who is miserable with the garbage dumped since months, on the street where he lives. There are no Government sweepers nor any Garbage trucks that come and clean up the place. He tries to stop his neighbors from messing the place but nobody pays any attention to it. Politicians periodically visit the area for votes but do nothing about the problem .

Film Scene:

Film Scene:

Satirically in the entire process months and years pass by but none of the problems get solved. And the struggles go on.

Film Scene:

The Narrator at the end explains " That all the characters broke the vicious circle of "Chakravyuh" through RTI. All that is needed is to fill an RTI form and ask for information and many a times in the process , the   problems   also get solved". He adds encouragingly " When the Government is there to support its citizens then there is no need to worry." The film ends on a positive note.

When I conceptualized the film I had one thing very clear in my mind that it has been the Government that has introduced the RTI Act for the   betterment   of the nation and indirectly helping the citizens by creating a tool to construct a transparent system . It is through this Act that we can also generate a corruption free country with good governance. Thus the citizens should fearlessly start using RTI in their lives.

Another obstacle that I constantly faced during the execution of this   film   was the budget constraints .It was only my determination and desperate effort to make a film on RTI that reaches the masses that motivated me to complete the film against all monetary constraints.

It was important for me to make the film colourful and attractive so that the message gets engraved in the viewer's mind effortlessly.

Obstacles

Only Single screen Cinema's show Film Division's films not Multiplexes.

The Cinematographer's Act 1952 Section 12 (4) has categorically laid out directives to licences to exhibit films intended for educational purposes.Still many theatre owners, especially of Multiplexes disobey the directive and do not show them.But it has also been studied that most Single Screen theatres in India show such message oriented short films before the feature films. Of course there will be theatre owners who would cut down the screening of such films and instead show Ad films where they would generate income. Whereas, some would try and squeeze in an extra show for earning a quick buck.

Thus the Statistics are as under:-

Screening per week in 204 theatres as these many prints are circulated among the 4,903 theatres across India.

ONE Week Statistics: For Nos of viewership of this film in a week

Total Nos of Prints sent to theatres	Nos of shows per day	Expected nos of viewers in a day, in a cinema hall capacity of 1000	Total nos of viewers in a day	Nos of people who may have watched this film in ONE WEEK
204	4	1000	8,16,000	57,12,000

Thus in one week the film viewership can be 65,28,000 lakhs in India.

It takes 24 weeks for the 204 prints to reach all the theatres as the film is screened for a week in each theatre.

| Total Nos of WEEKS when the film will be shown in all 4903 theatres across the country	Nos of people who would have watched the film in One week	Total nos of people who can view the film throughout India in 24 weeks
24	57,12,000	13,70,88,000

Thus Total nos of approx viewers of the film through single screen theatres is 13,70,88,000 crores. To increase the market share of the screening in more theatres, the I &B Ministry is working on waiving the 1 % Screening Fee from the theatre owners.

Promotional Measures

1.   Screening on Television, mainly through Doordarshan Channel

This film will also be telecasted on the Television on the Doordarshan channels across India.

Considering the Statistics of nos of households in the country and comparing it with the nos of households that own a television set, the reach will be remarkable. The Statistics and report of Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation , Government of India is as under:

Television owning households in India

Households owning a Television set
37%

Households who dont have TV in India
63%
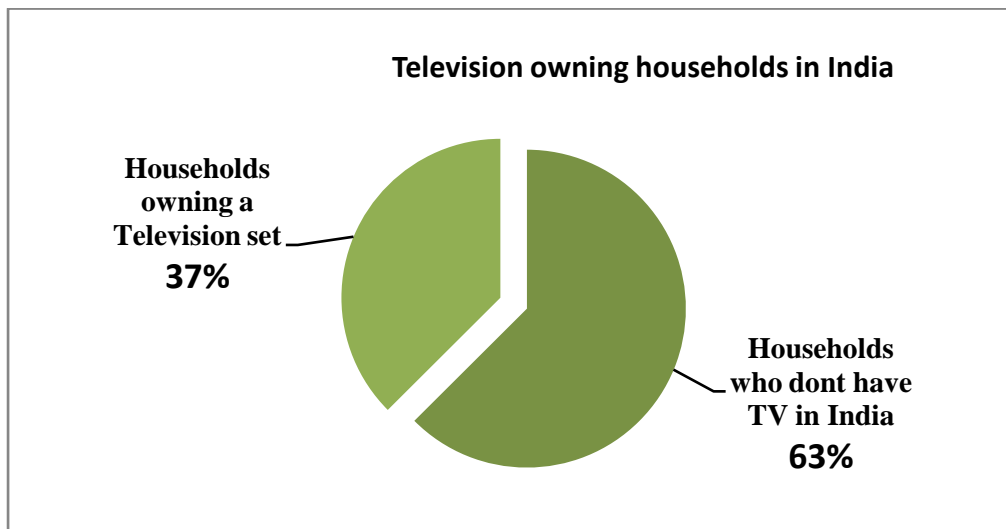
Statistics : Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

2.   Social Media in India

Social media has become very popular in India with the growing need of the internet usage. You tube, Facebook, Twitter, Orkut etc have become well accepted social networking sites in the country. The film will be soon uploaded on the internet for the wider viewership.

The rage of social media continues in 2013. With surging use of smartphone

and internet the number of social media users in India is manifold and expected to reach a whopping 6.6 crore by June 2013.

This is as per the latest report from the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Indian Market Research Bureau (IMRB).) Thus when a video goes viral, a lot of social media users see it.

Some Statistics is as under :
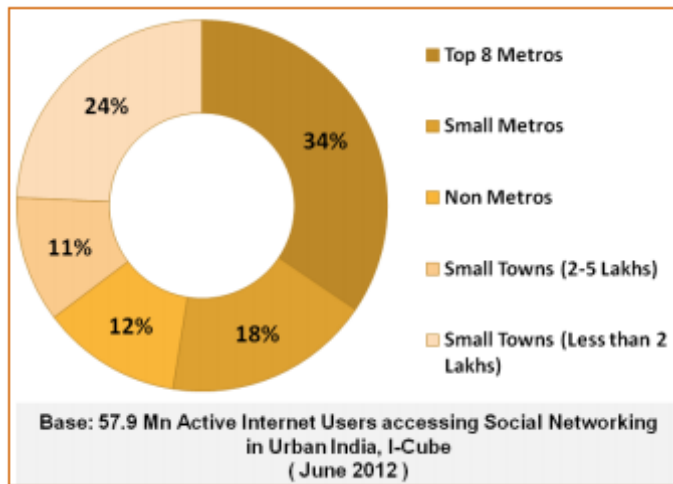
The Statistics shows that due to the rising trend of internet usage on a personal Computer and the mobile, the viewership could also reach out to this target audience too. And remarkably, the viewership is maximum from school going children to young men. Thus tapping impressionable minds that could make a difference in changing the nation.
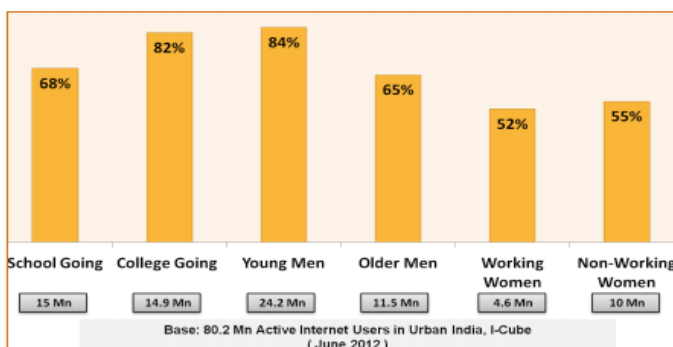
The Films Division, I & B Ministry in collaboration with me as an independent filmmaker and a citizen with social responsibility have tried to reach out to as many people as we can. Some viewers may see the film   multipletimes through

different sources. This again could leave a lasting impression on them that could motivate them to use RTI in their lives.

Lessons Learnt

Firstly, the thought about making an animation film on RTI was itself unique. And hence I was finding it difficult to explain to people that an animation film was to be made on this serious subject, a Legal Act. People in India usually relate an animation film to children's entertainment medium.. In fact, a serious topic can be conveyed more lightly that gets engraved in the minds of the audiences.When conceptualizing the story for the film, I wanted to convey that RTIcan be used for a lot of issues and also easily by a common man. In the 3 mins duration it was important for me to cover as many stories as possible. The time constraint was a big obstacle, as the duration for a public service film shown in the cinema halls is limited to 3mins which was 10 mins earlier. Interacting with many NGO's and other activists who single handedly help people solve their issues through RTI, I came across many case studies and success stories. Thus the stories which I have narrated in my film are from the research on real life experiences of a common man who has benefited through RTI.

It was decided to narrate four stories in my film. I chose stories about characters from different part of India. Namely, Goa, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Kerala.

Financial Implications

The script got approved for Rs 3.80 lakhs for the production of this short animation film for duration of 3.10 mins.

Manpower:

A team of 13 artists have worked on this project, which includes layout artists,

background artists, designers, animators and compositors.

In addition to the above mentioned there was a sound recording specialist, narrator, & Editor. This entire film was made using nearly four higher end computers and since it was stylized it took nearly 8-9 months to make the film. The film was later converted on the celluloid through a process called Reverse Telecine.

Distribution of Film prints to Cinema halls in India: Once the film is ready, the Film Division makes 204 copies of prints to the cinema halls which are sent across to allocated regions. These regions   will then send the prints once screened to another region. Presently, the film will be shown in the cinema halls with single screen facility and not multiplexes.

Cost for Printing and Processing the film with some miscellaneous cost is

Approx Cost for Printing and Processing of film + Misc Expenses	Nos of Prints	TOTAL
Rs 1000/-	204	Rs 20,4000

The distribution of the prints is done branch wise in Films Division. There are approximately 13000 single screen cinemas in the country.

Overall Impact

The Film has just been made and has already got a very warm   response   from the Media. Stories have been published throughout India in   Newspapers like Times of India, The Hindu, The   Indian Express, DNA etc and also many other regional papers. The First Public Screening of the Film was organized by the Public Concern for Governance Trust   (PCGT), The Indian Merchants' Chamber's (IMC) Anti Corruption Cell and Bombay Chartered Accountants Society (BCAS) in Mumbai on the RTI 8th Anniversary on the 12th Oct 2013 which got a tremendous response.

A lot of RTI groups have shown interest in showing this film in their training

workshops and seminars which will further promote the use of RTI. Thus this film will reach masses through Theatres, Doordarshan , Social Media and other means and create an awareness about RTI.

Scope of Replication

Similarly training films can be made for PIOs and issue based films for different public authorities. These films can explain the procedures of disseminating information which would be a faster form of redressal for the citizen.

Digitization

Dr. A. K. Ganatra and Dr. P. J. Derashri

(This initiative has been adopted by Gujarat Legislative Assembly & Gujarat Archive Department)

Background

In this era of Information Technology as well as after the execution of the Right to Information Act, the concept of DIGITIZATION OF RECORDS is getting momentum across the globe.

In Gujarat State, over and above Gujarat Assembly and the Archival Department, public authorities such as Collectorate Nadiad (approximately 10 lakh pages), Revenue Department (Land Records : approximately 50 lakh pages), Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (G.I.D.C. : approximately 10 lakh pages), etc. have also adopted this practice.

During our study, it has come to our notice that not only the Archival Department of Gujarat State, the Maharashtra State Archival Department has also adopted this practice of Record Digitization (approximately 40 lakh pages). Similarly, other public authorities in India such as Bhopal High Court (under Bhopal Gas Rahat : approximately 4 crore pages for 11 lakh cases), Indian Meteorological Department as well as Registrar of Companies (Government of India : approximately 1 crore pages) have followed the practice of Record Digitization.

Philippines Government has also digitized their LAND RECORDS which are almost identical in nature as that of Indian Land Records.

By and large, two kinds of machines are used to digitize the records : (1) Book

Scanner Machine (speed : 10 pages per minute) and (2) Automatic Document Feeder (speed : 100 pages per minute). A-Zero size scanners are used for scanning the maps.

Data Collection Method

As mentioned in Table-1, six different methods have been used to obtain relevant information regarding the best RTI practice implemented in respective public authorities.

Table-1
DATA COLLECTION MATRIX

SR.	PUBLIC AUTHORITY	DATA COLLECTION METHOD					
		Available Records	Printed Published Records	Personal Interview	Telephonic Interview	Interaction While Imparting RTI Training	Website Browsing
1	Gujarat Legislative Assembly	-----	-----	✓	-----	-----	✓
2	Archival Department, Gujarat State	✓	-----	✓	-----	-----	✓

Gujarat Legislative Assembly

Gujarat State was established on 01.05.1960. In order to promote transparency, preserve safety and security of the records of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly, i.e. the Business of the Assembly (Debates), the Government of Gujarat has digitized its records for the period from 1960 to 2010, i.e., 50 years' records.

Various problems were faced by the Gujarat Legislative Assembly prior to the digitization. Some of them are listed below:

- To remain in pace and at par with the Parliament of India with specific respect to transparency of assembly functions.

- Digitization of Assembly Debates since 1960 to 2010 and onwards *(an idea initially conceptualized in 2008 by Late Honorable Speaker Shri Ashok Bhatt).*

- **Problems faced**: Initially, there was resistance from the concerned staff to carry out and cooperate the process of digitization of the records, but with the motivational efforts and positive approach by Mr. D. K. Patel, Secretary, Gujarat Assembly, ultimately, the issue was successfully resolved. National Informatics Center (N.I.C.) has become instrumental to carry out the digitization process.

Details of the Practice

a) **Scope:** Digitization of Assembly Debates since 1960 to 2010 (50 years' debates), Decisions of Speaker and Assembly Rules, which comes to 3,94,084 pages have already been scanned with the help of National Informatics Center (N.I.C.), Gandhinagar. The entire work got completed within a span of 30 months. As on date, final phase of Software Testing, Search Engine Testing and Uploading is going on, which is expected to be completed within few months.

b) **Financial Implications:** Digitization of 3,94,084 pages has been carried out @ Rs. 0.30 paise per page, with the total cost of Rs. 1.21 lakh only. No additional expenditure has been incurred.

c) **Deployment of Resources:** Only 10 personnel of the concerned department, with the help of N.I.C., did the job successfully.

Lessons Learnt

Fulfillment of obligation of the *suo-motu* disclosure under section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act.

- Easy access of the digitized records

- Easy retrieval of the digitized records

- Online availability of the digitized records

Outcome

- Quick disposal of request for information under the RTI Act.

- Easy availability of the data of Historical importance.

- Space for storage of physical records is saved.

- Men power requirement is reduced significantly, thereby freedom from dependence.

- Leading towards "less-paper" administration, thereby saving the trees.

Scope of Replication

- This practice can be easily be replicated in any assembly of the country as well as in any public authority across India as the technology for scanning the records is easily available at minimum cost, making it affordable for any public authority with a meager budget provision.

- Over and above N.I.C., other private players are also offering their services in the country for digitization and scanning of the records, thereby making its replicability easier.

Future Plan

- Once the software is activated, uncorrected debate of Gujarat Assembly would be uploaded on day-to-day basis.

- Preparation of Admitted LAQ – Question Bank and their subsequent uploading would be undertaken.

Archival Department, Gujarat State

Archival Department of Gujarat State is the Nodal Department for storage, preservation and safety of important records of permanent category, records of historical importance as well as old records of different departments of Gujarat State. So far, up to the November 2013, the Archival Department has scanned 9.61 crores pages, i.e. 1,12,932 GB.

Since 1964, the Archive Department stores the records of different departments of Gujarat State. This department holds more than 27 lakhs files at 8 different locations in Gujarat State. Many academicians and researchers frequently use the records of Archive Department for their research purpose. Many a times, different departments of Gujarat State ask for certain important and historical records for their administrative use, which results in repetitive handling of the records. Frequent fetching and handling of the records usually adversely affects

their durability. This need compelled the department to use the modern technology of digitization –

1. To preserve and protect the old records as well as records of historical importance.

2. To maintain and preserve the records of "permanent class" scientifically of various public authorities of Gujarat State.

3. To deal with the request of RTI application from the citizens.

Problems

1. Handling of very old records requires a great deal of care and patience since the papers to be preserved and digitized are brittle in nature.

2. About 35 % posts are vacant.

3. Non-availability of permanent and experienced staff.

4. At the time of scanning, the officials have to continuously remain present since the documents to be scanned are original and of historical importance.

Details of the Practice

Scope

Digitization of all the records of the Archival Department, Gujarat State is envisaged. The State Archival Council in 2004-05 recommended for the digitization and the digitization process started from 17.08.2007 on experimental basis. Up to November 2013, a total of 9.61 crore pages have been scanned (Graph-1) and it is expected to scan about 2.0 crore more pages by the end of March 2014 (Graph-2). As on date, 27,82,738 files are stored at 8 different district offices of the Archival Department (Table-3), containing approximately 27 crore pages which are expected to be scanned in due course of time.

Financial implications :

- Digitization of 9,61,88,813 pages has been carried out @ Rs. 0=40 paise per page, with the total cost of Rs. 3.84 crore only. No any additional expenditure has been incurred. Budget provision and expenditure incurred for scanning is depicted in Graph-3.

- The preserved papers, files, documents are physically stored in 8237 compactors (Photo) at a cost of Rs. 8.66 crore (Table-4). The average cost of one compactor comes to about Rs. 10500.

Deployment Of Resources : The scanning work has been "out sourced" by inviting tenders and awarding the contract to the private agency. At the time of actual scanning, the existing staff has assisted to ensure the safety, security and preservation of the original records.

Lessons Learnt

1. At present, the scanning of records will lead to fulfillment of obligation of section 4(1)(a) of the RTI Act, which in future, is expected to fulfill the obligation of the *suo motu* disclosure under section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act in accordance with the provisions of the Archival Policy as well as directives of Government of Gujarat from time to time.

2. Easy access of the digitized records

3. Easy retrieval of the digitized records

4. Online availability of the "specific" digitized records

5. Old / torn / mutilated papers needs to be "repaired" first, and then to be handed over for digitization.

6. Certain papers need to be preserved with TISSUE TECHNIC.

7. Big size electronic storage capacity servers are needed to store the digitized records.

8. Suitable latest computers, having "compatibility" with the servers, need

to be purchased for effective utilization of the digitized records' retrieval to satisfy the need of the applicant / information seeker.

Outcome

1. Quick disposal of request for information under the RTI Act.

2. Easy availability of the data of Historical importance.

3. Space for storage of physical records is saved with the use of compactors. It is estimated to save Rs. 12.98 crore "storage space" in terms of money (Table-5).

4. Man power requirement is reduced significantly, thereby freedom from dependence.

5. Use of compactors imparts security, safety and precautions against theft, fire and natural enemies of the records.
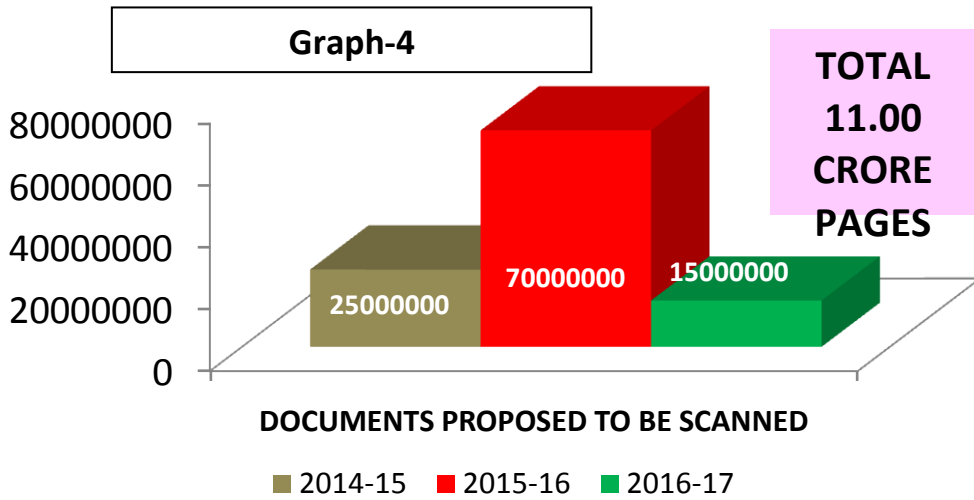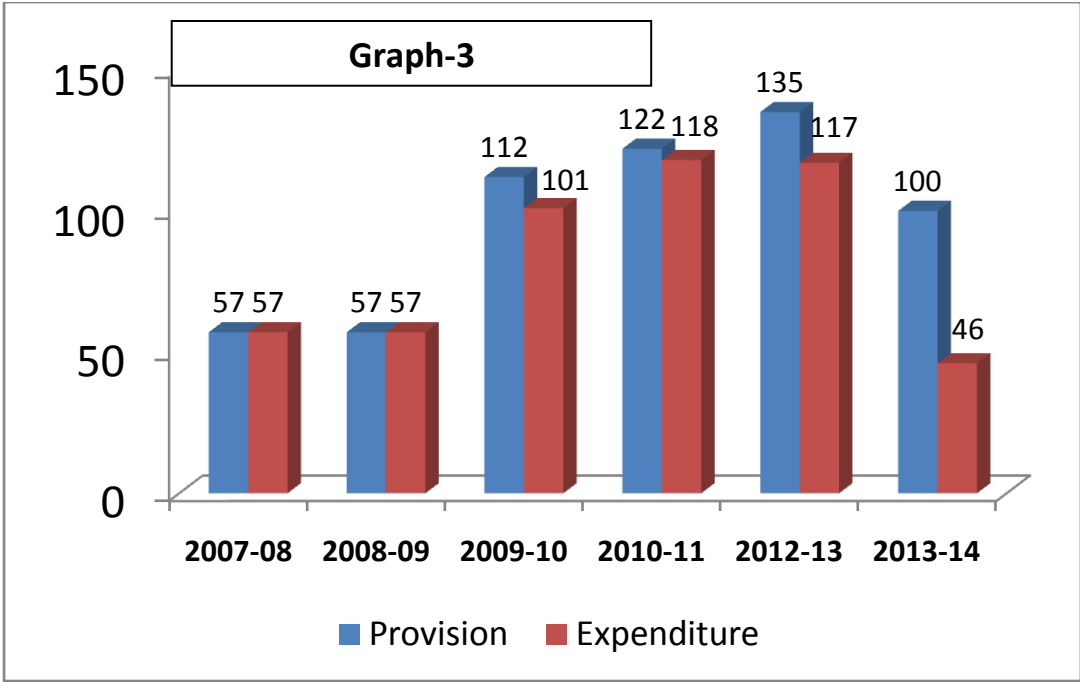
Scope of Replication

1. This practice can be easily replicated in any public authority of the country as the technology for scanning the records is easily available at minimum cost, thus, making it affordable for any public authority with a meager budget provision.

2. Many private players are offering their services in the country for digitization and scanning of the records, thereby making its replicability easier.

Future Plan

1. In the next coming years of 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17,   2.50 crore, 7.0 crore and 1.50 crore pages are to be scanned respectively (Graph-4).

2. Uploading the scanned papers within one year.

Annexure – Tables and Graphs

Graph-1

Total **9.61** Crore pages

Chart values:
- Up to 2007-08: 10786638
- 2008-09: 10033811
- 2009-10: 22797922
- 2010-11: 27101249
- 2011-12: 0
- 2012-13: 21353379
- 2013-14 (up to Nov. 2013): 4115814

DOCUMENTS SCANNED

Legend:
- Up to 2007-08
- 2008-09
- 2009-10
- 2010-11
- 2011-12
- 2012-13
- 2013-14 (up to Nov. 2013)

Graph-2

TOTAL **2.50** CRORE PAGES

Chart values:
- APRIL TO NOVEMBER: 4115814
- DECEMBER TO MARCH: 20884186

DOCUMENTS PROPOSED TO BE SCANNED

Legend:
- APRIL TO NOVEMBER
- DECEMBER TO MARCH

Graph-3

Year	Provision	Expenditure
2007-08	57	57
2008-09	57	57
2009-10	112	101
2010-11	122	118
2012-13	135	117
2013-14	100	46

Graph-4

TOTAL 11.00 CRORE PAGES

DOCUMENTS PROPOSED TO BE SCANNED

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
25000000	70000000	15000000

Table-3

Sr. No.	Place of Office	Ferist Register	No. of Files
1	Vadodara	602	6,00,000
2	Rajkot	569	4,37,000
3	Junagadh	896	5,82,000
4	Porbandar	337	1,50,000
5	Bhavanagar	827	5,06,000
6	Jamanagar	681	4,67,000
7	Gandhinagar	27	40,500
8	Mahesana	1	238
	Total	3,940	27,82,738

Table-4

Cost of Compactor Record System

Sr. No	Name of Place	No.of Cupboards	Running Feet	Cost
1	Gandhinagar	600	8430	63,00,000
2	Junagadh	2436	36540	2,64,60,000
3	Bhavanagar	2652	38100	2,70,90,000
4	Jamanagar	2224	33360	2,33,52,000
5	Porbandar	325	4875	34,12,500
	Total	8237	-----	8,66,14,500

Average Price of 1 Compactor = Rs. 10500

Table-5

Saving of Space & Money

Sr. No	Place of Office	Area in Sq. Ft.	Compactor Area	Space Saving Sq. Ft.	Cost per Sq. Ft	Money Saving (Rs.)
1	Gandhinagar	26196	1250	24946	3300	8,23,21,800
2	Junagadh	45061	21168	23893	1300	3,10,60,900
3	Bhavanagar	18650	11650	7000	1000	70,00,000
4	Jamanagar	17000	11000	6000	1100	66,00,000
5	Porbandar	11800	7400	4400	650	28,60,000
Total Saving of Rs.						**12,98,42,700**

RTI Foundation of IndiaInitiative

Dr Anuradha Verma

(RTI Foundation of India has taken an initiative catering to the needs of various stakeholders of the RTI Act through the use of information technology)

Background

Information and knowledge are critical for realizing all the human aspirations, such as, improvement in quality of life. In a democratic set-up in which we live today, acquisition of information and knowledge and its application have intense and pervasive impact on governance. A representative government requires that a citizen should not only contribute to the development process, he should also feel a part of the administration. The principal factors which necessitated the formation of RTI Foundation of India (RTIFI) were:

1.   It has been observed that the awareness level in respect of the RTI Act is low even amongst the educated and there is an underlying need to make the citizens conscious of their rights. Massive efforts are required to spread awareness about the RTI Act amongst the masses to enable them to use the Act effectively.

2.   Over the years, RTI Act has witnessed rise in usage and therefore, a need has been felt for an easily accessible dynamic medium which can present the interpretation of Law and the current happenings to all. Such a medium needs to be low cost, universally reachable, unbiased and not pose any difficulty to the person who wishes to obtain the information. For greater accountability and higher degree of transparency

3.   For a law which is new and evolving, the public authorities look for a

window which tells them about their role and responsibilities and helps them in adjusting to the new working environment. The disclosures required from the public authorities and the repercussions of not fulfilling the same need to be specifically pointed and frequently reinforced. The difficulties faced by the public authorities and the solutions found by them need to be shared for better practices to develop.

4. For an effective implementation of the RTI Act, there is a need to enhance the capability of the Public Information Officer (PIO) and First Appellate Authority (FAA) who are at the cutting edge of the delivery of the services. There is a need for a regular training and inputs in the field of RTI and unless capacity building is done at the level of these officers, the Act is doomed to fail. There is no stage available for resolution of RTI related problems faced by them which sometimes leaves the PIO / FAA groping in dark. For creating a balance between all the stake holders

5. Exploring and adapting is a very important stage in the implementation process. Considering the importance of the RTI Act, a medium is required which can stimulate positive thinking and research amongst the readers.

6. There is a requirement of a think tank which can point to the emerging requirements and prepare the ground for a healthy debate on RTI related topics.

Considering the situation, the need was felt for a neutral platform where exchange of ideas can take place amongst all stakeholders and all RTI matters can be discussed.

Details of the Practice

In the wake of the passage of the RTI Act in 2005, the RTIFI took note of the significance of the Act and the need for its effective implementation at all

levels. Periodical evaluation meetings were held to review the state of affairs and taking necessary steps to address the incipient issues. It has been felt in many quarters that the achievements of the RTI Act are much lower than the expectations and its potential. Through the use of the information technology, the RTIFI has created a platform for all stakeholders to become partners and participate in the manner in which the RTI Act is going to evolve in future. It is a unique effort to provide inputs on a daily basis to all and add a little bit of RTI to everyone's life just like a pinch of salt without which the food would be tasteless.

Practice and scope

The creation of this platform is unique and has led to many improvements in the effective implementation of the RTI Act.

1. Capacity Building - RTIFI is closely monitoring the implementation of the Right to Information Act and is proactive in identifying the difficulty areas and recommending future course of action. It has focused on actions for capacity building and resource planning.

2. Dissemination of guidelines - RTIFI has focused on dissemination of guidelines to remove any impasse in the implementation of the provisions of the RTI Act and also to streamline the functioning of the public authorities.

3. Empowering citizens - RTIFI has aided in the process of empowering citizens who can now demand information and become a part of the informed citizenry. Hopefully, it would lead to significant quantitative and qualitative improvement in the delivery of services and realization of benefits of the programmes designed and implemented for the poor.

4. Promoting information literacy –Those who come to website of RTIFI get free information and gain ideas to improve their level of knowledge of the Act which culminates in better governance. The basic idea behind launching of the website was to promote information literacy among people enabling them to decide what to ask for, how to ask and how to make good use of information, so that they can effectively participate in the process of development, including control of corruption. RTIFI has designed a multimedia strategy for promotion of information literacy by organizing trainings and seminars as per the requirements of the user based on examples from real life situations. Study material is also provided for the specific needs of users.

5. Pro-active disclosure by public authorities - Another major endeavour is to guide the public authorities in the field of pro-active disclosure and dissemination of information. An analysis of the working of the public authority based on the expected role to be played by it under the RTI regime and by recommending changes in its working has helped in evolving a transparent working.

6. Training the PIOs and FAAs - RTIFI has helped in equipping the PIOs and offering solutions to the problems faced by them so that they may deal with their responsibilities in the RTI regime. The PIOs and FAAs are hard pressed for time as their primary work is something else and implementation of the RTI Act is an additional responsibility. The website updates are expected to equip them on a daily basis and keep them abreast with the latest developments in the field.

7. RTIFI is working for identification and analysis of the all the factors (Institutional, Structural, Systemic, Procedural, Technological, and

Attitudinal) facilitating and obstructing the implementation of the RTI Act at various levels in the Government and for taking remedial measures for the same.

8. Research - RTIFI presents a ground for the implementation of RTI and it is into doing research on the key features of RTI and how they promote success for common masses.

9. Best practices - RTIFI encourages the readers to question themselves as they learn about the various provisions of RTI to make it a self-evolving process. One can find examples of RTI implementation in and across the country including the steps initiated for implementing the provisions of the Act based on best practices from research.

10. Real life examples - The website provides people with the mechanism to access information, which they can use to be aware of the various ways and means by which the RTI Act has been or can be used. It describes real life situations where RTI has been used by ordinary citizens with the results achieved. In addition, analytical articles and studies provide a bird's eye view of the ground situation for a discerning reader.

11. Helping the citizens - The RTIFI undertakes interactive awareness programmes to make the citizens conscious of their rights and promotes the judicious use of RTI Act in all fields. RTIFI indulges in dissemination of information through lectures, seminars, distribution of literature and offers guidance to all citizens who seek assistance. These programmes range from creating a basic level of awareness and extend to giving a thorough knowledge of the Act. Apart from the use of the RTI Act for seeking or obtaining information, the organization has pointed to the

innovative uses of RTI Act for creating an environment where all citizens can work in harmony for the progress of the nation.

12.   Accountability - RTIFI has tried to unmask the potential of an ordinary person to be a part of the decision making process. It has made it possible to hold a free and frank discussion on issues of common concern for people and thus aid in augmenting the accountability levels.

13.   Bringing everyone on the dais - To bring the Civil society, NGOs and activists together to look into all RTI matters and work in a constructive manner for the development of the RTI Act.

14.   Involving the intelligentsia - To encourage the intelligentsia to be involved with the RTI movement and build an atmosphere which favors transparent working. Contest has been organized for law students relating to issue involving RTI Act with cash awards for the winners.

15.   Economical - It is an economical and egalitarian manner of dissemination of information to all. Until stakeholders are clear about what is being implemented and why it is being implemented, they may be disinclined to support the implementation efforts in a whole-hearted manner. RTIFI seeks to set the context for successful execution by creating momentum by involving the citizens, PIOs, FAAs, NGOs and professionals in the process of finding solutions. With nearly 1 lakh cumulative hits (nearly 600 hits daily), the website has begun to make an impact and is leading to an informed citizenry in the country.

Resources

The assets utilized for creating the dynamic web based platform are frugal which points to efficient use of resources by RTIFI.

The creation of the platform (website) has been through the use of voluntary service. Two personal laptops have been used to create the data and compile it

in the fashion as it is seen. The non-copyrighted data from a variety of sources, both public and private, has been compiled and put up in a manner from where

it can be accessed easily. All the orders of the Central Information Commission are downloaded from their website and read daily by part time workers. Those shortlisted are read by the experts and a selected few significant orders are put on the website. The different kind of data available on the website includes:

Case Laws: RTIFI publishes case laws everyday which provide an insight into how the Information Commission or the Court has dealt with an appeal. The description is in a very simple language like a story which aids the readers in understanding what can be sought and obtained under the RTI Act. The correct interpretation of RTI Act helps in dealing with a given situation and taking an authoritative decision citing the judicial order.

Latest Bytes: The latest news and developments in the field of RTI are presented as Latest Bytes. It provides an overall glimpse of the ways in which RTI Act has been used by the citizens and how it is shaping our future. One can keep in touch with the recent events / happenings in the RTI arena through this column.

Reading Material: Through this particular section all the study/ reference / legal material like bare Act, rules, circulars, guide books, etc. are presented at the click of the mouse. The plethora of the state fee rules and appeal rules has been made available at a single place. Further, some citizens may enjoy reading the RTI Act in vernacular and comprehend it better. The frequently asked questions for the PIO and applicant are useful for the readers. The judgments delivered by the High Court and Supreme Court have been compiled for readers. A link to the different Information Commissions and other organizations has also been provided.

Articles: A series of Articles are being put on site regularly to enlighten the readers. These articles dissect the issues relating to right to information threadbare and assist in a better comprehension and overall perception of the subject.

Research: Analytical articles and in-depth study on certain cases is taken up

from time to time.

Contest: Various contests are planned by RTIFI such as the contest for law students with the objective of opening up the minds of the flag bearers of law who can play vital role in proper implementation of the RTI Act in the times to come.

A live picture of the site is given below

Lessons Learnt

The creation of the platform is challenge which has thrown up various structural, procedural and logistical issues and problems, which RTIFI tried to deal from time to time.

1. Downloading all the CIC orders – Clicking on the link of the CIC and downloading each and every order was a tedious job. The RTIFI developed software for downloading the orders.

2. As the team was small, there was a difficulty in keeping up with daily updates specially when someone was unwell or had some personal work. The organization gradually learned to tackle this issue and since the inception, not a single day has passed till date when fresh contents have not been posted on the website.

3. Queries from the readers are frequent and some seek the telephone numbers for the resolution of their problems. The RTIFI offers only e-mail based solutions and has yet to develop resources for tele-answering.

It has been a satisfying experience of being able to respond to the various e-mails.

Outcome

For any plan to be successful, accountability and performance measures have to be clearly defined in the absence of which, the probability of failure is high. In

this background, it can be seen that the effect of the initiative taken out by the RTIFI has been tremendous.

1. The platform created by RTIFI has helped in creating a win-win situation for all stake holders by ensuring free and fair exercise of RTI by common people and providing legal inputs to all. It has helped in reducing the suspicion amongst the different stake holders.

2. When people use RTI, they tend to form informed opinions, thereby they influence policies and help in shaping a more assured future for themselves and for the next generation.

This idea has been carried by the RTIFI which has aided the common man to seek information. With the initiative of RTIFI, a larger number of people are filing applications, that too in an effective manner which does not drain the resources of the public authorities.

3. RTIFI has helped in spreading transparency both from the demand side as well as the supply-side, thereby enabling effective access to information, thus paving the way to better service delivery. With the initiative taken up by RTIFI, transparency is now moving stealthily into governance paving the way for good governance.

4. RTIFI is assisting the public authorities in making appropriate disclosures as per the section 4 of the RTI Act. It has repeatedly brought to fore the case laws which point the adverse impact on the public authorities in the absence of good records maintenance practice.

5. The RTIFI has been working towards providing a framework for promotion of citizen-government partnership in carrying out programmes for the welfare of the people. The assortment of information as provided on the website of RTIFI has enabled the beneficiaries to assume a central role in design and execution of projects. RTIFI has instilled a wider sense of understanding in the mind of common people enabling them to participate in economic and political processes through a dialogue between people and the government or public

campaign on public policies.

6. The capacity building amongst the public servants has received a massive fillip with the continuous updates on the site. The PIOs who are reading this site are better equipped to deal with RTI applications.

7. In addition to lack of resources, many PIOs lack the motivation to implement RTI Act. RTIFI has tried to provide fill ups in RTI by covering the aspects usually neglected like lack of behavioral / attitudinal training. The PIOs are mentally prepared to deal with the RTI applications with a positive frame of mind.

8. The number of RTI Appeals with the Information Commissions is growing at a rapid pace year after year. The RTIFI has assisted in reducing the pendency status indirectly by helping the applicants to file RTI applications in an appropriate manner. Further, the PIOs have also been supported to respond to these applications in a judicious manner.

Scope of Replication

There is abundant scope of replication of the practice as it will assist the public authorities in many ways.

1. Simplify the process of filing the RTI applications - The PIO is expected to assist an applicant in filing the RTI application. It is very commonly seen that an applicant does not know how to draft an RTI application, so in case an applicant makes a visit to rtifoundationofindia.com for just 5 to 10 minutes it would help in overcoming all doubts regarding the Act. The public authorities can borrow this link and place them on their websites to fulfill the legal obligation cast upon them under the RTI Act.

2. Frequently asked questions – There is a column of frequently asked questions in the website which helps in allaying the doubts and confusion in the mind of the PIO/ FAA. All public authorities can borrow this idea.

3. Training the PIOs and FAAs – A visit to the website should be made

mandatory for all the PIOs and FAA to get a free training and update regarding the RTI Act.

4. Details of Court cases – A need is felt by the public authorities to refer to the judgments of the High Court and Supreme Court for which no single source is available. The public authorities can mimic this effort.

5. Research - As an organization working in the field of RTI, RTIFI realised fairly early that the quality of research about RTI implementation was imperative for successful implementation of the Act. One can find many articles about RTI on the website which are the result of extensive research. The content provided by the RTIFI is backed by accurate research that one may not find even at a for- profit organization. The contents provided on the website provide a ground for further research.

6. Use of e-mail – The public authorities may imitate the use of e-mail to deal with the queries of the readers and reply to them. This builds up goodwill and loyal following. With the help of internet connection one can interact with others from even the underdeveloped parts of the country and as no physical movement is required, it saves time and money.

7. The public authorities can create a platform for sharing the views with the users / customers. A platform for sharing views and opinions and challenges and constraints would be critical in pooling together experiences and lead to better delivery of services.

8. Just as information and knowledge is shared by RTIFI on the website to empower the common people so that they can make an informed choice, all public authorities can consider disseminating information about their organization on a daily basis. It would aid in devising an action plan for adoption / adaption by public authorities to promote transparency in the working of every organization.

Notes on Authors

DR. SHRIKAR PARDESHI

He took over as commissioner of PCMC on May 19, 2012. During his tenure he has been known to take a strong stand against illegal construction and setups which has given him the tag of 'demolition man'. Dr Pardeshi introduce Sarathi helpline as part of citizen-oriented policies. He also implemented e-governance policy effectively.

VIJAY KUMBHAR

He is a renowned RTI Activist who has authored the book on RTI 'Paillu Mahitichya Adhikarache', has published more than 300 articles related to RTI and has more than 650 Lectures /workshops/ seminars on RTI to his credit. He is presently writing columns on Right to Information in the leading Maharashtra Daily 'Daily Sakal'. He successfully campaigned for implementation of section 4 of RTI Act in several public authorities. He has played major role in starting a first of its kind RTI library at Pune Municipal Corporation.

DR SANDEEP N MAHATME

He is an IAS officer of Tripura cadre, was posted as Sub-divisional Magistrate (SDM) of Gandacherra in 2012. He is known to have done pioneering work in generating awareness about health, environment and personal hygiene.

SANJEEV SAXENA

He is presently working as Scientist 'C' in National Informatics Centre, Department of Electronics and Information Technology, Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, New Delhi. He is actively involved in the development of ICT based Citizen-Centric applications in the domain of Public Grievances and Right to Information.

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He bears an experience of 30 years of public service both in Government of India and Government of Odisha. Worked in the field of development communication and e-governance initiatives. He is National Award Winner on e-Governance for the year 2011-12. His earlier effort on disseminating information for the uplift of the common man basically hinges on the intervention through print media, "Utkal Prasang and Odisha Review", the mouth piece of the State Government for which he worked as the Executive Editor. He has not only been associated with the process of implementation of RTI in Odisha from its initial period but also the State Portal of Government of Odisha put in place under the prescription of National Portal Committee of Government of India. Presently he shoulders the responsibilities of Chief Monitoring Officer, RTI implementation in the Nodal Department of Information & Public Relations, Government of Odisha.

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Anil Kumar is currently Director e-Governance at Ministry of Corporate Affairs looking after MCA21, a very successful e-Governance initiative. He has more than 20 years experience in Telecom , Networking and Computerisation. He has been instrumental in new initiatives like online payments through NEFT, filing of Financial statements through XBRL, DIN -DPIN integration etc. He has done his engineering from YMCA Institute of Engineering Faridabad and MBA (Finance) from IGNOU.

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SUNAINA S VALECHA

She is a Management Graduate. She is a volunteer for raising awareness on Forced organ harvesting and severe human rights violations of Falun Gong practitioners in China and is also collecting signatures as a petitioner to various Governmental organizations, Amnesty International and UNO concerning the same.

DHVANI DESAI

She is an international and Indian award-winning animation filmmaker . She is best known for her animation film Manpasand - the Perfect Match produced by the Children's Film Society of India (an autonomous body of the Ministry of

Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India).

DR. A. K. GANATRA & DR. P.J. DERASHRI

Dr. Ganatra is Deputy Director of A. H. Dept. Government. of Gujarat B.V.Sc. & A.H., LL.B., MBA**.** Dr. DERASHRI is a Veterinary Officer of A. H. Dept. Government. of Gujarat B.V.Sc. & A.H., MBA. Both are Master Trainers & Resource persons for RTI Act 2005 and Administrative Reforms. They are also Panel members for JANVANO HAQ an In-live programme on Doordarshan Ahmedabad. They have authored SHATDAL – a compendium of 101 important abridged RTI related judgments of Supreme Court, different High Courts, CIC, SIC in Gujarati language.

ANURADHA VERMA

She is M.Sc. (Zoology) and Ph.D. Her weekly column 'DATE WITH RTI' on the site whispersinthecorridors.com is the longest running column on the subject in India. She has been invited by many institutions to deliver lectures and train their master trainers on the RTI Act, 2005. She is currently working as an RTI Consultant for IIM, Indore. She had published two books namely **Right to Information Law & Practice and PIO's Guide to RTI** along with co-author Dr. R K Verma.