

PEOPLE'S RTI ASSESSMENT 2008

C 17A Munirka, New Delhi 110 067

**Compiling Case Studies
Methodology Statement*****Objective***

A primary objective of the assessment is to gain a better understanding of how RTI is working in India nearly three years after the Act was implemented. A quantitative picture will be gathered by conducting extensive surveys of applicants and authorities throughout the country. However, though the statistical analysis of an aggregation of data is important for a macro-level perspective, there are limitations. It cannot capture for example, the equally important micro-level experiences of individuals who have sought information, those who provide it, or those who use it. Collecting and analysing a set of case studies is expected to provide these insights.

Deliverables

1. A Selection of Cases Briefs that will be interspersed in the preliminary report of the overall assessment. Target Date: September 15, 2008.
2. A RTI Case Writing Competition through which the general public can participate by investigating and writing up cases. This competition is expected to generate both good cases as well as awareness and excitement in the public. Target Date: July, 2008. Results to be announced: October 12, 2008.
3. A Selection of Cases Briefs that will be interspersed in the general report of the overall assessment. Target Date: November 15, 2008.
4. An Analysis of Cases to illustrate various facts about how the RTI regime is functioning that could be included in the final report of the overall assessment. Target Date: November 1, 2008.
5. A final Volume of Cases consisting of the most insightful or compelling cases collected over the course of the study. Target Date: November 15, 2008.
6. A thematic, readable Case Studies publication highlighting particularly interesting or insightful cases alongside photos and cartoons. Target Date: December 31, 2008.
7. A Indexed Compilation of All Cases collected along with related documents in a digital format that will be searchable to facilitate awareness, preservation, and future research. This compilation could be made available online in the second, portal phase of our work. Target Date: December 31, 2008.

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A. CASE TYPE I – Use of the RTI Act

1. To Illustrate use of the RTI Act which:
 - 1.1. Are Innovative
 - 1.1.1. Use was not common
 - 1.1.2. Use was not thought to be possible, until demonstrated
 - 1.1.3. Use replicated once 'discovered'
 - 1.2. Demonstrate a forceful Human Interest angle
 - 1.2.1. Use Saved Life
 - 1.2.2. Use subjected applicants to intimidation or violence
 - 1.2.3. Use involved the basic necessities of life
 - 1.3. Are Humorous or satirical
 - 1.3.1. Use was ironic
 - 1.4. Demonstrate some Effective use
 - 1.4.1. Use resulted in a wide impact
 - 1.4.2. Use influenced policy
 - 1.4.3. Use set a legal precedent
 - 1.4.4. Use had a significant effect
 - 1.4.4.1. Saved a life
 - 1.4.4.2. Started off a dramatic chain of events
 - 1.4.5. Use sparked wide interest or debate in the media, other groups, or amongst authorities.
 - 1.4.6. Use resulted in some long term change
 - 1.5. Involve Identifiable Groups
 - 1.5.1. Applicant or those affected are mainly women
 - 1.5.2. Applicant or those affected are from SC/STs
 - 1.5.3. Applicant or those affected are young or old
 - 1.5.4. Applicants from other unique group type
 - 1.5.5. Applicant or those affected are geographically interesting
 - 1.5.5.1. Application filed from Abroad
 - 1.5.5.2. Application filed in one State from another State remote from the first
 - 1.5.5.3. Applicants are not all from the same place
 - 1.6. Involve Surprisingly Huge or Little Input or Output in term of Resources, Time, and Effort.
 - 1.6.1. Great deal of money involved relative to use
 - 1.6.2. Inadequate, generous, or any compensation ordered
 - 1.6.3. Inadequate, excessive, or any penalty ordered
 - 1.6.4. Large number of applicants
 - 1.6.5. Large number of information provided
 - 1.6.6. No information provided¹
 - 1.7. Exposes Remarkable Misuse of Public Resources
 - 1.8. Demonstrates the Misuse of Authority (Arbitrary Decision- making)
2. Relevant case studies can be gathered by:
 - 2.1. Collecting stories from the NGOs (Schedule 1) or individuals working (Schedule 2) with RTI
 - 2.2. Collecting leads from the survey teams collecting data for other components of this study

¹ The lack of information is certainly of interest, particularly in those situations where the lack of information had a significant effect in terms as discussed in A.1-A.6. Of course, a “negative” case is likely to be harder to find and document.

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- 2.3. Scouring previous media RTI coverage for relevant stories
- 2.4. Soliciting stories from local area journalists/media
- 2.5. Soliciting stories through mailing lists, websites, or blogs related to RTI (Schedule 3)
- 2.6. Soliciting stories through advertisements in newspapers.
- 2.7. Soliciting stories from local area journalists/media SAME AS 4.4

3. Preparing collected cases for publication can involve:
 - 3.1. Survey teams collecting data for other components of this study.
 - 3.2. Organizations working on RTI²
 - 3.3. Student interns to analyze media coverage of RTI
 - 3.4. Rewriters to convert press coverage or other information into a case study conforming to the format and content requirements.
 - 3.5. Translators to convert from local languages to English.

4. The relevant case study should cover or include:
 - 4.1. The issue/problem that necessitated the use of the RTI
 - 4.2. How applicant learned of RTI or why they thought to use the Act.
 - 4.3. Describe the use of RTI
 - 4.3.1. Names and dates to the extent relevant and possible of applicants, public authority to which RTIs were filed to, etc.
 - 4.3.2. Who filed? (Socioeconomic background, age, sex, geography, etc)
 - 4.3.3. Type of information sought (sample, inspection, examine files, etc)
 - 4.3.4. Questions asked
 - 4.3.5. Process of filing (Innovation of Applicant, PIO, etc)
 - 4.3.6. Time duration (quick or slow or timely response time, etc)
 - 4.3.7. Quality and quantum of information received or not received
 - 4.4. How the issue/problem was addressed with RTI
 - 4.5. Describe what finally happened as a result of receiving information (or not receiving it) in the short term and over time.
 - 4.5.1. Impact, direct and indirect, of information received or denied through RTI on actual lives or work.
 - 4.6. Experience of appeals, complaints, etc
 - 4.7. Relevant illustrations or photographs

5. General Notes
 - 5.1. The target is to collect and catalogue as many of potential cases as possible.
 - 5.2. Ultimately we will rewrite XX for publication in a volume.
 - 5.3. Cases are to be limited to 2 pages or approximately 1000 words.
 - 5.4. Cases already done by other organizations that are compelling can be reused with permission.

B. CASE TYPE 2 – Unusual Users of the Act

1. To understand the motivations of those citizens of RTI Act who have:
 - 1.1. Made extensive use of the Act, filing more than 50 applications
 - 1.2. Innovated ways of filing applications

2. Relevant case studies can be gathered by:
 - 2.1. Collecting names of super-users from the NGOs or individuals working with RTI (Schedule 1)
 - 2.2. Collecting names of super-users from others already known to us (Schedule 2).
 - 2.3. Soliciting names from mailing lists, websites, or blogs related to RTI (Schedule 3).

² See Appendix 2 for the text of the letter sent to our partner NGOs requesting cases.

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- 2.4. Following leads from the survey teams collecting data for other components of this study
- 2.5. Reviewing past media coverage
- 2.6. Collecting names from local journalists or media generally
3. Preparing collected cases for publication can involve:
 - 3.1. Survey teams collecting data for other components of this study.
 - 3.2. Organizations working on RTI
 - 3.3. A team of two to follow up on leads. They would interview relevant people, collect germane documents, take appropriate photographs, and write up a draft case study.
 - 3.4. Interns to analyze media coverage in search of super-users
 - 3.5. Rewriters to covert press coverage or other information into a case study conforming to the format and content requirements
 - 3.6. Translators to convert materials from local languages to English.
4. The relevant case study should cover or include:
 - 4.1. Personal details of applicant
 - 4.1.1. Occupation
 - 4.1.2. City and State of Residence
 - 4.2. How applicant learned about RTI and how to use file applications
 - 4.3. Description of applicant's experience filing the first application
 - 4.3.1. Issue
 - 4.3.2. Process
 - 4.3.3. Impact
 - 4.3.4. Experience; desire to file other applications?
 - 4.4. Description of applicant's subsequent uses of the Act (if applicable)
 - 4.4.1. Most memorable
 - 4.4.2. Motivation
 - 4.4.3. General type of issue
 - 4.4.4. What benefits; what value? Impact.
 - 4.5. Planned future use and general outlook on RTI
5. General Notes
 - 5.1. Collect how many? As many as possible?
 - 5.2. Publish How Many? 5?
 - 5.3. Commission length? 2000 words
 - 5.4. Publish length? 1000 words? 500words?

C. CASE TYPE 3 – Specific Issues for Which RTI has been Used

1. To illustrate the effect of RTI on issues which:
 - 1.1. Are of public interest
 - 1.2. Involve the welfare of the public
 - 1.3. Require transparency or accountability (and therefore RTI) in a critical way
 - 1.4. Affects a segment of society that is:
 - 1.4.1. Large in size
 - 1.4.2. Unique demographically (SC/ST, women, children, elderly)
 - 1.5. Are amongst the issues falling under Schedule 4.
2. Relevant cases can be gathered by:
 - 2.1. Commissioning organizations or groups (ie. Schedule 1) working on the intersection of the issue and RTI to submit cases.
 - 2.2. Commissioning graduate students in relevant areas to submit cases.
 - 2.3. Soliciting cases through media advertisements?
 - 2.4. Reviewing previous media coverage?

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- 2.5. Commissioning local journalists to submit cases?
- 2.6. Input from Survey Teams
3. Preparing collected cases for publication can involve:
 - 3.1. Commissioning group to write a case about their own work.
 - 3.2. Commissioning graduate students to visit group, to write up and submit a case.
 - 3.3. Rewriters to edit and covert submitted cases into a case study conforming to the format and content requirements
 - 3.4. Translators to convert materials from local languages to English.
4. Cases should include³:
 - 4.1. Description of Issue
 - 4.1.1. Salient Points
 - 4.1.2. Relevance and Impact to average citizen
 - 4.2. Relevance of RTI to the Issue
 - 4.3. Examples of the type of RTIs filed
 - 4.3.1. Innovative questions in the application
 - 4.4. Process of filing RTI and receiving (or not receiving) information
 - 4.5. Future role of RTI in the issue
5. General Notes⁴
 - 5.1. How many to collect? Dependent factor: How much to pay for each case?
 - 5.2. How many are we planning to publish?
 - 5.3. Commission length: 3000 words
 - 5.4. Publish length: 2000 words

D. CASE TYPE 4 - Citizen Sector Groups and Movements working on RTI

1. To highlight the work of organizations, unofficial groups, movements, and campaigns working to:
 - 1.1. Preserve the RTI Act
 - 1.2. Promote the use of the Act
 - 1.3. Increase awareness of the Act
 - 1.4. Effect some goal which requires extensive use of the Act.
 - 1.5. Support the RTI Regime in other ways
 - 1.6. Weaken the RTI Regime
 - 1.7. Amongst those groups enumerated under Schedule 1
2. Relevant cases can be gathered by:
 - 2.1. Consulting and accumulating recommendations from our NGO network (Schedule1)
 - 2.2. Consulting individuals working with RTI
3. Preparing collected cases for publication can involve:
 - 3.1. A team of two to follow up on leads. They would interview relevant people, collect germane documents, take appropriate photographs, and write up a draft case study.
 - 3.2. Commissioning group to write a case about their own work.
 - 3.3. Commissioning graduate students to visit group, to write up and submit a case.
 - 5.5. Interns to analyze media coverage
 - 5.6. Rewriters to edit and covert submitted cases into a case study conforming to the format and content requirements

³ See Appendix 1 Below for template circulated to case study writers.

⁴ See Appendix 1 below for a summary of the funds length requirements, and timelines presented to issue based case study writers.

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- 3.4. Translators to convert materials from local languages to English.
4. Cases should include:
 - 4.1. Description of how group began their work
 - 4.2. Information about the leaders of the group
 - 4.3. Description of Accomplishments and activities of the group wrt/ RTI
 - 4.4. A timeline of events in relation to the general RTI movement
 - 4.5. Description of memorable events
 - 4.6. Points of collaboration with other groups
 - 4.7. Description of the work the group is involved with now
 - 4.8. Description of the groups outlook on RTI
5. General Notes
 - 5.1. How many to collect?
 - 5.2. How many to publish? Five
 - 5.3. Commission word length? 5000?
 - 5.4. Publish word length? 2500?

E. CASE TYPE 5 - Information Giving Institutions or other RTI related Organizations and Individuals within them

1. To illustrate:
 - 1.1. Government officials (Public Information Officers[PIOs] or Information Commissioners[ICs]) who have done extraordinary work with regard to giving information or facilitating access to information.
 - 1.2. Officials who have been particularly opaque or obtrusive in providing information or access to information?
 - 1.3. Institutions which have taken the lead on providing information conforming to the requirements of Section 4 of the RTI Act (Suo Moto disclosure).
 - 1.4. ICs who have been pro-RTI in their orders.
 - 1.5. ICs who have been particularly anti-rti in their orders?
2. Relevant cases can be gathered by:
 - 2.1. Soliciting recommendations from NGO network (Those already identified are noted in [Schedule 6](#))
 - 2.2. Soliciting recommendations from friendly government officials
 - 2.3. Searching media archives
 - 2.4. Others?
3. Preparing collected cases for publication can involve:
 - 3.1. Commissioning the following groups to submit cases:
 - 3.1.1. NGOs
 - 3.1.2. Local Journalists
 - 3.1.3. Graduate Students
 - 3.2. A team of two to follow up on leads. They would interview relevant people, collect germane documents, take appropriate photographs, and write up a draft case study.
 - 5.7. Interns to analyze media archives
 - 5.8. Rewriters to edit and covert submitted cases into a case study conforming to the format and content requirements
 - 3.3. Translators to convert materials from local languages to English.
4. Cases should include:
 - 4.1. Description of work that government officials or institutions have done

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- 4.2. Description of impact of work on information access for ordinary people
 - 4.3. Description of the motivation behind government efforts
 - 4.4. Highlights of leaders within organizations who have been instrumental in facilitating access to RTI.
5. General Notes
- 5.1. How many to collect? As many as possible?
 - 5.2. How many to publish? 5
 - 5.3. Commission word length? 4000
 - 5.4. Publish word length? 1000

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F. Schedules

1. Schedule 1: NGOs, Unofficial Groups, Organizations, Campaigns working on RTI.
 - 1.1. MKSS
 - 1.2. SNS
 - 1.3. NCPRI
 - 1.4. Parivartan
 - 1.5. Kabir
 - 1.6. Greenpeace
 - 1.7. Gene Campaign
 - 1.8. Kalpavriksh
 - 1.9. NBA
 - 1.10. Groups in Andra Pradesh and Orissa?
 - 1.11. Pardarshita
 - 1.12. Trilochan's Group
 - 1.13. Aman Biradari
 - 1.14. People for Transparency
 - 1.15. PRIA (<http://www.pria.org/>)
 - 1.16. Others? Public Institutions? Private Institutions?
2. Schedule 2: Unaffiliated Individuals working with RTI
 - 2.1. Sailesh Gandhi
 - 2.2. Vijay Kumbhar
 - 2.3. Avinash Murukute
 - 2.4. Anil Heble
3. Schedule 3: Websites, Blogs, Mailing Lists, etc with Information about RTI
 - 3.1. Hum Janenge
 - 3.2. India RTI Blog (indiarti.blogspot.com)
 - 3.3. NCPRI website
 - 3.4. RTI.gov.in
 - 3.5. <http://www.snsindia.org/stories.htm>
 - 3.6. www.copperwiki.org
4. Schedule 4: Social Issues involving RTI
 - 4.1. Public Distribution Systems
 - 4.2. Corruption in PRIs
 - 4.3. Corruption in Municipalities
 - 4.4. Transparency with GMOs
 - 4.5. Environmental Issues
 - 4.6. School Admission to EWS
 - 4.7. NREGA
 - 4.8. Social Audits
 - 4.9. Elections
 - 4.10. Fighting Communalism
 - 4.11. Dams
 - 4.12. Mining
 - 4.13. Political Representatives, MLAs
 - 4.14. Others?
5. Schedule 5: Information Giving Individuals (PIOs/ ICs)
 - 5.1. MM Ansari - CIC
 - 5.2. Vijay Kuvlekar - Pune, Maharashtra SIC
6. Schedule 6: Information Giving Institutions (Departments, Agencies, etc)

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Appendix1 : Template for Issue Based Case Studies

Case studies around issues with significant interlinkages to RTI specifically or transparency and accountability generally should have the following eight sections:

1. **Abstract** This should give an overview of the general coverage of the case study as well as a brief summary of the case and associated conclusions.
2. **Introduction:** Brief description; describes scope of case study. All this is covered, but beyond this nothing.
3. **Trace Issue (Facts):** That is, state the facts of the case. When? Where? Who was involved? How was RTI used? What happened? And so on. This information might be organized in a couple of ways:
 1. Chronologically, that is, in the order that events unfolded.
 2. Logically. For example, significant uses and failures of RTI use; ramifications of the use from small to large; geographical: local and national; or important to least important.
4. **Cataloging of the Issues, Constraints, Problems** relating to the **use of RTI**: This section should focus on the actual use of the RTI and challenges faced in the process of trying to acquire information.
5. **Outcomes:** The focus here should be what happened in this particular case as a result of threatening to file, after filing, or on the basis of getting information. We are interested in the micro-impact of receiving or not receiving information. What concrete change did RTI bring about for the applicant? Perhaps there was no impact at all, but this is also important.
6. **Systemic Changes** (if any): What, if any, was the macro-impact of receiving or not receiving information. Better distribution of public goods? Better governance? Some new law? A national debate on the issue? Etc.
7. **Future directions and analysis:** This section is the space for theoretical discussion and analysis. Why has RTI been such a success or failure with regard to this particular issue? What is the future of RTI as it relates to this issue?
8. **Conclusion:** Summarization and final remarks.

Lengths, Budgets, and Deadlines

We are classifying cases into three broad categories by size. Here is a general description in addition to expected deadlines and funds available. **The final deadline is October 1, 2008.**

(1) **Short cases** of about 1500 words which cover a narrow period of time, one local area, or only a few cases. Rs.2000. 30 days from assignment.

(2) **Medium cases** of about 3-4,000 words which includes an analysis of around 500 cases, covers the issue over a substantial period of time, and/or a covers a large region or one or more states. Rs.10,000. 40 days.

(3) **Large cases** of up to 10,000 words which includes a lengthy period of time, covers all India, and includes an analysis of over 1000 cases. Rs.15,000. 60 days.

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Appendix 2: Letter Sent to NGOs Requesting Cases – pg1

Dear Friend,

Subject: Seeking RTI Case Studies

You may already be familiar with the ongoing People's Right to Information Assessment 2008 to evaluate the use and implementation of India's RTI Act as it nears its third anniversary this October. A significant portion of this study will be based on the collection and analysis of RTI case studies. From them we hope to capture the specific experiences and stories of those persons and groups who have sought or given information under the RTI Act.

Because of the work that you and your group have done with regard to RTI, I am writing to you today to solicit whatever case studies you might have collected in your work for our study. We would also be grateful for ideas and materials that you think could potentially be written up into a case study.

We are looking for five general types of case studies, and each type is described on the next page. If you have cases that fit this criteria, we would be grateful if you would at the earliest communicate them to us and send us any relevant supporting documents, videos, and audio recordings. To be able to process and use the materials you send us for our ongoing study, we must have them no later than September 1, 2008.

We would be happy to remunerate the cost of photocopying documents, creating copies of digital recordings or sending materials. Ideas for cases can be sent directly by email or phone to Soham Sen (ssen.rti@gmail.com and 99102-04314), and materials can be sent to Shekhar Singh, C 17A DDA Flats, Munirka, New Delhi 110 067. Many thanks in advance for your help.

Warm Regards,



Shekhar Singh
RAAG and NCPRI

Enclosures: 1 (on reverse side)

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Appendix 2: Letter Sent to NGOs Requesting Cases – pg2

Types of Cases Requested

We are searching for five general types of case studies:

The first type would include those that (1) demonstrate some unusual use of the RTI Act. For example the use could be innovative showing some uncommon way of filing an application; or it could demonstrate some human interest angle such as if the Act was used to save a life or provide food or shelter to the poor. Any cases that are funny or satirical are of interest to us also, as are those that involve some identifiable groups such as women, SC/ST, RWAs, and so on.

Additionally, we are searching for cases where filing an RTI (or the information received from filing) has led to a large impact of some kind; perhaps even to some legal or policy level change. If the case exposes the misuse of public resources or the arbitrary use of power by an authority, we would like to see it as well. Finally, cases that involve surprisingly big or small quantities of input or output in terms of time, resources, or effort. For instance those that involve a large or small amount of money or those applications that result in a large amount of information.

For the second category of cases, we are looking for (2) unusual users of the Act. Persons who have filed more than 50 applications or those who have originated interesting applications as described above.

The third category of cases are those that describe (3) specific issues for which RTI has been used. Issues such as PDS or environment which are of public interest and welfare, involve transparency and accountability in a critical way, or affect a large group of society.

Next, using case studies we would like to highlight the work of (4) organizations, unofficial groups, movements, and campaigns working to support the RTI Act. For example groups promoting awareness of the Act or using the Act extensively. If you have cases which describe your own organization or others that fit this fourth category, do let us know.

Finally, for our last category we are searching for (5) cases which would illustrate the work of information giving institutions or other RTI related groups (including the individuals within them). For instance, PIOs or Information Commissioners who have been particularly good or bad about providing information or passing orders. Or competent authorities which have done an extraordinary job of complying with Section 4 of the Act (suo moto disclosure).