

14 June 2008
RURAL SURVEY BRIEFING NOTE

Tasks

1. Facilitate villager(s) to file an RTI application in one or more village public authority [Leave self addressed post cards – with the name and address of the state co-ordinator - with appropriate message to subsequently get information about the fate of the RTI application(s)].
2. The team will encourage and persuade at least one individual of the village to file an RTI. The team should assist the person to draft the RTI application but the person must go and file it herself/himself.
3. However, where the team, after its best of efforts, has not been able to persuade a single villager to file an RTI application, this should be recorded and team members can then file the application themselves.
4. Where it is found that in the selected public authorities no PIOs have been designated in the village (or they are not aware of such a designation) then the team should find out the next higher level where there is a designated PIO for that public authority and get an RTI filed there by one of the local people from that village/town. Usually this would be at the panchayat, or block/tehsil head quarters.
5. Please note that if the PIO for the selected public authority is not located in the sample village but some other village/town (where, for example, the panchayat/block or tehsil HQ is), the RTI is to be filed in that place by a local person who is resident there and not by a resident from the original sample village. Of course, here also, if no local resident is willing to file the application then team members should file the RTI application.
6. inspect the designated five public authorities in each village¹, checking for:
 - a. RTI related signage (location of PIO, timing for receipt of application, etc.)
 - b. Signage and availability of information in compliance with section 4 (1)(b) of the RTI act:
 - (i) the particulars of its organisation, functions and duties;
 - (ii) the powers and duties of its officers and employees;
 - (iii) the procedure followed in the decision making process, including channels of supervision and accountability;
 - (iv) the norms set by it for the discharge of its functions;
 - (v) the rules, regulations, instructions, manuals and records, held by it or under its control or used by its employees for discharging its functions;
 - (vi) a statement of the categories of documents that are held by it or under its control;
 - (vii) the particulars of any arrangement that exists for consultation with, or representation by, the members of the public in relation to the formulation of its policy or implementation thereof;
 - (viii) a statement of the boards, councils, committees and other bodies consisting of two or more persons constituted as its part or for the purpose of its advice, and as to whether meetings of those boards, councils, committees and other bodies are open to the public, or the minutes of such meetings are accessible for public;
 - (ix) a directory of its officers and employees;
 - (x) the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees, including the system of compensation as provided in its regulations;
 - (xi) the budget allocated to each of its agency, indicating the particulars of all plans, proposed expenditures and reports on disbursements made;

¹ *The same 5 PA's will be visited at the village level, then at the subdivision level, and finally at the district level*

- (xii) the manner of execution of subsidy programmes, including the amounts allocated and the details of beneficiaries of such programmes;
 - (xiii) particulars of recipients of concessions, permits or authorisations granted by it;
 - (xiv) details in respect of the information, available to or held by it, reduced in an electronic form;
 - (xv) the particulars of facilities available to citizens for obtaining information, including the working hours of a library or reading room, if maintained for public use;
 - (xvi) the names, designations and other particulars of the Public Information Officers;
- c. Collect information related to RTI applications/appeals/ complaints filed. [In many cases advance RTI applications would have been filed asking for this information and for examining of relevant records]. If the PA is also an APIO, then get at least the first two bits of information, otherwise get all:
 - i. Name and address of applicant
 - ii. Copy of application (take photo, if necessary)
 - iii. Was the application responded to
 - iv. If not, why not
 - v. If responded, was the information asked for given, and given in the form asked for
 - vi. If not, why not
 - vii. Was it given in time
 - viii. If not, why not
 - ix. How late was it
 - x. Has the applicant appealed and/or complained
 - xi. If so, get copy and details
 7. Similarly examine the five designated public authorities at the sub-divisional and district level.
 8. Examine the one register/record selected for each PA and checking its existence and accessibility, and noting down the date of the last entry.
 9. Interview the PIO/head of office of each of the public authorities visited (using the relevant schedule).
 10. ONLY at the sub-division and district level, leave behind a self addressed and stamped envelope and a copy of the HoO/HoD and the PIO questionnaires that can be filled in and sent back later by the Head of Office/Department and the PIO, if they want, anonymously. These should be sent back to the state co-ordinator.
 11. Also Interview the applicants/ appellants/ complainants, if any are available in the village/sub-divisional headquarters, using the relevant schedules.
 12. If names and addresses of applicants/appellants/complainants are recorded who reside in the district headquarters or in the state headquarter or at Delhi, these names and addresses should be passed on to the urban team (to Yamini Aiyar at yaiyar@gmail.com) for contacting and interviewing.
 13. Conduct at least three Focus Group Discussion in the village (one with the women, one with the SCs and/or STs, and one general one with the full village, and any others that might be considered relevant – using the relevant schedule).

SAMPLE

1. Three districts selected on the basis of a stratified random sample.
2. Two blocks in each district, selected on a randomized basis.
3. Four villages in each block, selected on a randomized basis.
4. Four municipal wards in each district headquarter, selected on a randomized basis.
5. Five public authorities in each state, four of them pre-selected for the whole country and one to be selected by each state team for the whole state.
6. The same five public authorities would be visited and studied at the village, sub-division and district level.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

1. Model RTI application formats (in booklet distributed at Bangalore)
2. Checklist for villager filing RTI.
3. Postcard for subsequent dispatch regarding RTI filed.
4. Checklist for public authority inspection.
5. Details and format (to be procured by each state team for each state) of the record to be examined in each PA.
6. List of RTI related information/record to be collected from each PA.
7. Schedule for interviewing PIO.
8. Schedule for interviewing Head of office.
9. Questionnaire to be left behind with each head of office/PIO.
10. Check list and questions for the focus group meetings at village/ward level.
11. Schedule for interviewing applicant/appellant/complainant.

TEAMS

Each state will have three teams, one for each district, of 3 people each, of which at least one will be a woman. The three district teams will work simultaneously, covering one district each.

STATE TRAINING

Each state team will be trained by the trainers who attend the Bangalore meeting. This training will be for 3 days IMMEDIATELY preceding the start of the field survey. One day will be for the explanation of the questionnaires, one day for field training, and one day for debriefing after field visit.

TIME FRAME

The estimated time it would take for each district team to cover 8 villages, 2 sub-divisions, four municipal wards and the district headquarter is 19 days, as per the time table given below.

Day 1	Village 1
8 am	Arrive at village
	Proceed to the poorest part of the village (tribal/ dalit segment, colony, etc.)
8-9 am	Speak to the villagers and identify one or more who would be willing to file an RTI application at one or more of the village public authorities. Assist them to draft the RTI (using existing formats, if required) and brief them on what they should observe when they go to file an RTI (using checklist). Arrange to meet them later in the day to discuss their experiences in filing RTI application and also leave with them the pre-addressed post card (addressed to state co-ordinator) to get feedback on RTI application outcome.
9 – 10.30 am	Visit the first three public authorities (trying to avoid the ones where the villagers have gone to file their RTI applications), with each team member visiting one. Carry out the inspection and interview as per relevant schedule.
10.30-12 noon	Visit the remaining two public authorities, with two team member visiting the two remaining PAs. The remaining team member can interview any applicants/appellants identified in the village and also check on the experience of the villagers who went to file RTI applications in the morning.
12 noon to 1 pm	Make arrangements for the focal group meeting (s) in the evening. Specifically, talk to village head/ school teacher/any other person for organizing a FGD in the evening, do a recce for the possible location for the FDG .

	Walk around the village. Do a village recce.
1-5 pm	Have lunch and organize focus group meetings with special groups. Lso, if nearby village/panchayat HQ, Block or Tehsil HQ has to be visited for filing RTIs and doing a PA inspection, that can be done now by one or two of the team members.
5-7 pm	Hold village/focus group meeting as per check list.
Day 2	Village 2
Day 3	Village 3
Day 4	Village 4
Day 5	Additional day for completing pending matters
Day 6	Sub-divisional HQ 1
8 am to 10 am	Interview applicants/appellants
10 am – 1 pm	Visit PAs
1 – 2 pm	Lunch
2 to 5 pm	Interview any additional applicants/appellants who might have been identified in the PAs visited in the morning. Mop up gaps and pending work.
Day 7	REST DAY
Day 8	Village 5
Day 9	Village 6
Day 10	Village 7
Day 11	Village 8
Day 12	Additional day for completing pending matters
Day 13	Sub-divisional headquarters 2
Day 14	Rest day – travel to district HQ
Day 15	District Headquarters
8 to 10 am	Interview applicants and appellants
10 am to 1 pm	Visit public authorities
1 -2 pm	Lunch
2 – 6 pm	Visit public authorities. Interview applicants/ appellants.
Day 16	District HQ - Hold ward meetings (two). Interview applicants/ appellants, visit PAs.
Day 17	District HQ - Hold ward meetings (two). Interview applicants/ appellants, visit PAs.
Day 18	Additional day for completing pending matters
Day 19	Additional day for completing pending matters

LOGISTICS

Teams will be required to hire a local vehicle, where required, for the survey work.

Teams will also carry a digital camera and /or one mobile phone with camera in order to facilitate taking copies of records, which will be required for analysis [check list of records to copy in applicant/appellant questionnaires].