

**Evaluation of “Combating Corruption in Rajasthan State by Applying RTI Act, 2005 as a Tool” (October 2008)**

**By: Vinay Bhargava, Board Member, Partnership for Transparency**

**A. Project Sponsor:** CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training, Jaipur, India.

**B. Project Objectives and Results:**

<b><u>Objectives</u></b>	<b><u>Results (Outcomes)</u></b>
1. Generating awareness and encouraging the common citizens towards application of RTI Act as a tool in addressing corrupt practices in the governance.	1. Awareness among citizens regarding: (a) RTI act increased from 40% to 85%, and (b) the application filing process increased from 12 to 20%. At the start of the project, 30 % of the respondents were of the view that RTI has the potential to curb corruption. At the end of the project 70 % of respondents admitted that use of RTI act resulted in reduction of corruption in the departments they dealt with.
2. Empowering the CSOs and the vulnerable sections at the grassroots in curbing the corrupt practices by improving functioning of the existing accountability mechanisms and legal measures.	2. Two ‘Consortium of Groups Combating Corruption (CGCC) involving 42 CSOs were formed and succeeded in helping 779 citizens to file applications for information under RTI. To judge the public officials/agency response to applications 18 case studies were done. In 100% of the cases the request was satisfactorily resolved without payment of bribes and, in some case- in the views of the applicants- it helped reduce overall level of corruption also.
3. Advocating with the policy makers to sharpen further specific tools, i.e. the RTI Act, the Citizen Charters and the <i>Lokayukta Act</i> ensuring good governance and accountability in order to address the deep-rooted corruption in the state.	3. Advocacy was pursued through a State Level Launch meeting, District level workshops, a Mid-term Dissemination Meeting and a Final Dissemination Meeting involving all stakeholders including the public officials. One measure of impact is that: (i) RTI awareness level increased from 92 % to 94 %; and (b) 76% of the government employees said that RTI Act has succeeded in curbing corruption.
4. Revealing the corrupt practices and exposing corrupt officials of some selected departments, i.e. Panchayati Raj & Rural	4. The Completion report does not provide any information on systemic corrupt practices specific to PR & RD Departments

Development (PR & RD) in general and rest of others in particular.	or instances of exposing corrupt officials. However, the report contains 5 instances (see Attachment) in which systemic issues were exposed.
5. Assessing the project outcomes in a much deeper way to showcase the success stories for wider dissemination and replicating the model in Rajasthan and elsewhere.	5. The Launch and Dissemination meetings were well covered in media. The Final Report has recommendations. A 3-4 page Dissemination Brief may be useful for mailing and for online publication.

**C. Inputs, Activities and Outputs:** The Grant amount was [\$25,000.00]; a supplementary grant of \$2,500 was added for a total grant of [\$27,500.00.] The outputs and activities are shown in the following table taken from the Completion report.

S. No.	Actions Taken	Date	Venue/Place
1.	State Level (Project) Launce Meeting	April 18, 2007	HCM-RIPA, Jaipur
2.	Orientation Workshop for Surveyors (two Divisions)	June 28-29, 2007	Jaipur
3.	Formation of CGCC members	June, 2007	Jaipur & Ajmer
4.	Field Survey	July, 2007	Jaipur & Tonk
5.	Divisional Level Workshop for Jaipur Division	July 27-28, 2007	RICEM, Jaipur
6.	Divisional Level Workshop for Ajmer Division	Aug.06-07, 2007	SIAM, Tonk
7.	BLCs	Sep.20-Oct.18, 2007	Jaipur and Tonk
8.	Mid-Term Dissemination Meeting	Oct.10, 2007	RICEM, Jaipur
9.	RTI Facilitation Stall	Nov.17-24, 2007	Pushkar, Ajmer
10.	Final Dissemination Meeting	Feb.15, 2007	HCM-RIPA, Jaipur
11	FGDs	June, 2008	Jaipur & Ajmer Divisions
12	Phone Survey	July, 2008	Jaipur & Tonk

#### **D. Evaluation of the Project.**

1. All activities planned have been finished and the deliverables produced. The results for all objectives are impressive except for the Objective 4 i.e. identification and exposure of systemic corruption.
2. In terms of substance this project is a winner. The RTI act in India has provisions that trigger response by public officials to citizen requests under RTI. If they are not responsive within the time frame they may be fined (comes out of salary) and/or disciplined. So the mere act of filing application triggers response to resolve the problem and sometimes pressure to withdraw application.
3. The case studies and focus group discussions in the project confirm responsiveness to RTI applications in 100% of the cases. The Completion report should elaborate on the basis for selection of the 18 case studies and the basis for

- the judgment by applicants that the overall level of corruption was reduced.
4. While filing of applications resulted in resolution yet the problem is that very few citizens know how to use the RTI Act and file an application. This is where the project added value by an awareness campaign through various project supported activities. The project went beyond raising awareness to provide application filing and handholding support. The results are convincing that this strategy worked.
  5. I believe that the project has good potential to be showcased as a model for using RTI to advance citizen demand for good governance and reduce corruption.

**Attachment: Systemic corrupt practices and some instances of exposing corrupt officials**

S. No.	Corruption: Where & Who?	How systemic corruption prevails and RTI helps?	How it was exposed?	Ref. (C.S. No.)
1.	G.P., Jagmalpura, Dudu, Jaipur -Sarpanch-BL Meena and Gram Sachiv (GS).	-Loan of Rs 20,000 is sanctioned under 'state govt. self-employment scheme'. -Sarpanch, Sachiv and bank staffs demanded bribe from every beneficiary. <b>-A RTI application was filed asking about the reasons of delaying the payment.</b> -As a result loan was granted with immediate effect.	-Based on the information received through the RTI application, in the Gram panchayat meeting, in front of all the 13 elected representatives and other officials, the applicant exposed the Sarpanch, GS and their nexus with bank. -Certain opposition party members made it an issue and shouted slogans against all of them and the matter was a burning issue of the entire Gram Panchayat.	CS-9
2.	-Punjab National Bank (PNB), Dhandholi, Dudu, Jaipur. -Bank Manager, Cashier, Support Staff.	-RTI applicant took a loan of Rs. 15,000 and got defaulted. -Under 'Settlement Scheme of the bank' a 'settlement committee' decides to settle the defaulted case at discounted amount. <b>-But bank officials give the discount in proportion to the amount paid as a bribe.</b> The case of applicant's was settled at Rs 5000 and closes the account.	-Dissatisfied with the given reasons of the bank, applicant filed first appeal. After rejection of appeal by first Appellate Authority, applicant raised the issue before Gram Panchayat members, Panchayat Samiti members, Sarpanch, Pradhan and all the elected members of the area, made a complaint against corrupt bank functionaries to their	CS-14

		<p>-A bank official demanded bribe for this and due to nonpayment of bribe, bank officials cancelled the order of resettlement and asked to pay full payment plus interest.</p> <p><b>-A RTI application was filed to know the reasons of canceling the resettlement.</b></p>	<p>higher officials of bank.</p> <p>-After this incident certain other defaulters were also came out saying that bank officials demanded bribe against resettlement of the old unpaid loans.</p> <p><b>-The matter is still unresolved.</b></p>	
3.	<p>Accountant, Some of the Nurses and ward buys of the of CHC, Kishangarh, Ajmer.</p>	<p>There is a 'Maternity Health Package' scheme under NRHM and Rs 1,700 is given to the neonate's mother. Almost in every hospital accountants, Doctor and Staff Nurses demand some share of this package before payments in the name of gifts (this amount is more if newborn is male) and creates hurdles or delay the payments after asking to fulfill so many formalities. <b>RTI application was filed to know the reasons of delay and the details of gifts given under this scheme.</b></p>	<p>-As a result of this RTI application CHC hospital Incharge came to know about ongoing corrupt practices and corrupt functionaries. -CHC Incharge warned all of them and image &amp; reputation of the guilty functionaries was badly damaged in hospital after this incident.</p>	CS-15

4.	<p>Sarvad, Ajmer -Sarpanch and Gram Sachiv of Sarvad Gram Panchayat, Ajmer</p>	<p>-Sarpanch passed a proposal in Gram Sabha for allotting a piece of land to the RTI applicant under self-employment scheme. -After land allotment Sarpanch called the Allottee and told that he will keep its half portion for his use and rest half can be used by Allottee. -Allottee refused to do so and claimed to take the possession of entire piece of land as a result Sarpanch cancelled the allotment. Almost all the Sarpanchs demand their share as a bribe from all sorts of welfare work and schemes. <b>The Allottee filed a RTI application to know the reason of canceling the land allotment.</b></p>	<p>-After getting no reply of this application, applicant reached in the meeting of the Gram Sabha and demanded inquiry of his matter and shouted slogans against the Sarpanch and GS. Some of the GP members also joined the applicant and a anti Sarpanch move was initiated and Sarpanch got bad named by this incident. The matter was reached up to panchayat Samiti Office at Tehsil level and Sarpanch was exposed in front of all. Other citizens also came to know, though most of them were knowing about his day and night growing wealth, residential plots and new cars etc.</p>	CS- 22
5.	<p>Shastri Nagar, Bhilwara. -Police Thana (station) Incharge and entire 'Shastri Nagar Police Thana' staff of, Bhilwara</p>	<p>-The applicant filed a criminal case against his neighbor at Shastri Nagar Police Station. -Policemen were not investigating the matter seriously and had taken bribe from against party and demanding from RTI applicant also. <b>Applicant refused to pay any bribe and filed a RTI application at Police Station demanding a copy of the investigation report based on his FIR.</b> Police refused to give any information and threaten asking to withdraw the application and demanded bribe again to close the matter.</p>	<p>-Since applicant is retired Collector, so he decided to expose the corrupt police functionaries of the Thana. -Applicant complaint against entire Thana staff to city SP and dist collector. Both of them heard the matter in a open public hearing at Collectorate and openly exposed the guilty functionaries for their corrupt doings and ordered to take some disciplinary action against all of them. The entire staff was shocked and lastly Thana Incharge was ordered for to be APO and transferred at reserve police line.</p>	CS- 28