CHAPTER – IX

ANALYTICAL ASSESSMENT OF OPERATIONAL SYSTEM OF RTI IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE

I – Introduction:

Previous chapter dealt with the analysis of legislative features and procedures involved in the right to Information act. It has also provided the assessment of the potentials of right to information in the light of procedures of rural development. The previous chapter revealed that the legislative features of right to information act has great potentials with which common rural citizens can get their dues, reduce corruption and even can participate in the process of rural development. There is a tremendous scope that if used in right direction RTI can make wonders. Interlinking the earlier chapter this chapter aims to assess the actual working of the act. It is an attempt to elaborate the actual implementation level situation. There is no doubt that the RTI act has potentials but whether people were able to get the benefit of that opportunity or not. By way the utilization of potential what exactly happens in the field while a citizen uses this act? Whether the act is able to play it’s role successfully or not? How it actually corrects the situation and reform the rural development governance system? Such questions are attempted to answer by reviewing the reports and data related to usages of RTI as well as actual cases where in the citizens used this act and either got benefit at individual, community level or reformed the system influencing the prevailing system. Beyond numerical data the actual case studies addressing rural governance related issues has been described and examined. Several Judgements of Gujarat State information Commission has also been presented and critically examined in light of issues of rural development and governance. It
is attempted to document very selected case based on analysis of what extent to it provides solution or otherwise in rural development governance.

II – Operational Analysis of working of RTI:

Data related to usages on Right to Information act by citizens is presented in the following portion of this chapter. The data has been taken from the documents of State Information Commission of Gujarat as well as Central Information Commission. Data related to MAGP (Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahel) helpline has also been presented to show the usages or to say the performance of the act.

The Section – 25 of Right to Information Act provides for the Monitoring and Reporting functions of Information Commissions with regard to the Implementation of Right to Information Act. Under this section it is mandatory for Information Commissions to Monitor the Act, Compile Data related to usages of this act and reporting for the implementation of this act.

The Section – 25 of Right to Information Act reads as follows:

25. (1) The Central Information Commission or State Information Commission, as the case may be, shall, as soon as practicable after the end of each year, prepare a report on the implementation of the provisions of this Act during that year and forward a copy thereof to the appropriate Government.

(2) Each Ministry or Department shall, in relation to the public authorities within their jurisdiction, collect and provide such information to the Central Information Commission or State Information Commission, as the case may be, as is required to prepare the report under this section and comply with the requirements concerning the furnishing of that information and keeping of records for the purposes of this section.

(3) Each report shall state in respect of the year to which the report relates,—
(a) the number of requests made to each public authority;

(b) the number of decisions where applicants were not entitled to access to the documents pursuant to the requests, the provisions of this Act under which these decisions were made and the number of times such provisions were invoked;

(c) the number of appeals referred to the Central Information Commission or State Information Commission, as the case may be, for review, the nature of the appeals and the outcome of the appeals;

(d) particulars of any disciplinary action taken against any officer in respect of the administration of this Act;

(e) the amount of charges collected by each public authority under this Act;

(f) any facts which indicate an effort by the public authorities to administer and implement the spirit and intention of this Act;

(g) recommendations for reform, including recommendations in respect of the particular public authorities, for the development, improvement, modernisation, reform or amendment to this Act or other legislation or common law or any other matter relevant for operationalising the right to access information.

This part of the study would have covered better area to assess the performance of the act if Gujarat Information Commission has implemented section – 25 of the act in letter and spirit but it is very unfortunate to note or to say one of the important finding of this study that Section – 25 of the act which provides for Monitoring and Reporting is not implemented by Gujarat Information commission. And hence it is not possible to get the state level picture with regard to the performance of this act. An attempt has been made to capture and present the
picture with available data with Gujarat’s State Information Commission. To supplement this deficit part of data an attempt has been made to present the performance of the act analyzing the data available with Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Initiative a voluntary initiative. It is very interesting to note here that mandatory data is not available but the data from voluntary initiative is easily, widely available and accessible.

Table No – 9.1 Review of RTI in Gujarat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Appeals Received</th>
<th>Appeals Disposed</th>
<th>Complains Received</th>
<th>Complains Disposed</th>
<th>Total Applications Received</th>
<th>Total Applications Disposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>108 (100%)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>82 (92.13%)</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>190 (96.44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>299 (37.37%)</td>
<td>2090</td>
<td>428 (20.47%)</td>
<td>2890</td>
<td>727 (25.15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>324 (32.49%)</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1151 (58.01%)</td>
<td>2981</td>
<td>1475 (49.48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>2669</td>
<td>595 (22.29%)</td>
<td>1482</td>
<td>1354 (91.36%)</td>
<td>4151</td>
<td>1949 (46.95%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>3359</td>
<td>2172 (64.66%)</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>752 (297.23%)</td>
<td>3612</td>
<td>2924 (80.95%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>3341</td>
<td>2389 (71.50%)</td>
<td>1420</td>
<td>1537 (108.23%)</td>
<td>4761</td>
<td>3926 (82.46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11274</td>
<td>5887 (52.21%)</td>
<td>7318</td>
<td>5304 (72.47%)</td>
<td>18592</td>
<td>11191 (60.19%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: website of Gujarat information Commission www.gic.guj.nic.in

The above mentioned data is very important as they shows the state level picture of Gujarat as far as the performance of the act is concerned. Although the data is not an exclusive picture of the state as far as use of information act is concerned because the office of the State Information Commissioner is 2nd appellate authority or to say the ultimate appellate authority where people approach only if aggrieved or to say not satisfied with the public authority as well as 1st appellate authority. But even then the exclusive usage related data has not been published despite being mandatory under Section – 25 of the Information Act itself these data conveys a lot as far as the performance of the act is concerned.
The available data refers to two stages of the act. 1. Appeal and 2. Complain. Appeal is the stage wherein a citizen has applied for information under this act and either he/she is not satisfied with the information because the information is false, incomplete, irrelevant or misleading or he/she didn’t receive information at all. Complain is the another stage of the act wherein the person has not applied for information but has complain against the public authority pertaining to the implementation of this act in letter and spirit for example a public authority is not disclosing information disclosure, not appointing Public Information Officer, not receiving application etc.

There are two opposite perceptions so far as the interpretation of above data is concerned; firstly the number of appeals and complains shows the level of awareness amongst the people means the act is performing and the second interpretation is the performance of public authorities is not up to the mark so these many appeals and complains are there at State Information Commission level.

So far as the data related to appeal is concerned it is the part of the process under the act wherein any aggrieved citizen who feels that the information is denied or the information provided is incomplete or misleading can appeal wherein the applicant may be right or wrong also. But as far as the number of complains is concerned it is a matter of worry because citizens have to complain the State Information Commission in cases where in public authorities are not implementing the provisions of the act mainly of appointing Public Information Officers, denial of applications, not disclosing proactive disclosure, keeping indifferent attitude towards applicants etc.

Major observations from the above table are as follows:

1. There is an increasing trend as far as the number of appeals is concerned as only 108 appeals were received in the year 2005-06 this number
increased from 108 appeals in the year 2005-06 to 800 appeals in the year 2006-07 followed by 997 appeals in the year 2007-08, 2669 appeals in the year 2008-09 followed by continuously increasing 3359 appeals in the year 2000-10 and 3341 appeals in the year 2010-11.

2. The rate of disposal of appeals is quite dissatisfying as the cumulative disposal rate of appeal is just 52.21% from the year 2005-2011. However there is a trend of increase in disposal rate of appeals along with increasing number of appeals i.e. 22.29% in the year 2008-09 followed by 64.66% in the year 2009-10 and 71.50% in the year 2010-2011.

3. Disposal rate of complains is higher than that of disposal rate of appeal as because the overall disposal rate is 52.21% in case of appeal as against the disposal rate of complain which is noted as 72.47%.

4. The term “Disposal” refers only to bringing the application on table and disposing it off, it doesn’t mean that the applicants received the required information. Many a time’s public authority doesn’t obey even to the order of Information Commission. And in many cases the judgments are given in favor of public authority.

5. The cumulative ratio of number of applications for appeal during the period of 2005 to 2011 is 1879 and the ratio of disposal is 982 means the ratio of disposal rate during this period is 53% which is really very dissatisfying because only 53% of the applications received for appeal are disposed and the remaining are remain unattended.

6. The cumulative ratio of number of complains during the period of 2005 to 2011 is 1219 and the ratio of disposal is 884 means the ratio of disposal rate during this period is 73%

7. The cumulative average of number of applications for appeal and number of complains altogether during the period of 2005 to 2011 is 3098 and the ratio of disposal is 1965 means the ratio of disposal rate during this period is 63% which is really very dissatisfying because only 63% of the applications received for appeal are disposed and the remaining are remain unattended.
Table No – 9.2 Review of Calls received on RTI Helpline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CALLS</th>
<th>% Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REVENUE</td>
<td>2789</td>
<td>16.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSURANCE</td>
<td>1634</td>
<td>9.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROVIDENT FUND</td>
<td>1409</td>
<td>8.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLICE</td>
<td>1378</td>
<td>7.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURTS</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>8.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>7.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO-OPERATIVE BANKS</td>
<td>1145</td>
<td>6.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANKS</td>
<td>1239</td>
<td>7.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAMLET DAR OFFICE</td>
<td>1189</td>
<td>6.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLECTOR OFFICE</td>
<td>1162</td>
<td>6.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORPORATIONS</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>5.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>3.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC UTILITY SERVICE</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>4.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL CALLS</td>
<td>17318</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organizations came forward under the banner of Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahel (Gujarat Initiative for RTI). They have started helpline of RTI. This Right to Information (RTI) helpline helps thousands every month to fight for their rights for only that amount. Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahel (MAGP)'s helpline is managed by a team of volunteers at a monthly expense of just Rs 54. The helpline has recently won a special award for its contribution to RTI activism from Public
Cause Research Foundation (PCRF). The helpline is run by RTI activists Harinesh Pandya, Pankti Jog, Twinkle Mangaonkar, Mital Patel, Sadhna Panday, and Punit Juneja. They take out time from their jobs to run the helpline.

Above table presents DEPARTMENT-WISE data related to number of calls received on this helpline number 9924085000 FROM 12TH MAY 2006 TO 30 SEPT 2007. The data is quite significant from the point that people need information about Right to Information. It is very interesting to note that section – 26 of the act provides for the duty of state to spread awareness on RTI but this voluntary initiative performs well in this direction. The data reveals that large number of people required guidance related to use of RTI. Section – 26 of the act fixes the responsibility of government to spread awareness amongst citizens, despite several initiatives still citizens need to be aware regarding the provisions and usages of the act. It also reveals the positivity of such initiatives through which people were made aware and given guidance on RTI. The table also reveals the wide range of areas i.e. Education, Health, Public Utility Service etc. that people are addressing through Right to Information Act.

Table No – 9.3 Review of RTI at Central Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Applications Received</th>
<th>Total Applications Disposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>6837</td>
<td>4076 (59.61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>11334</td>
<td>7761 (68.47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>15426</td>
<td>13322 (86.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>22800</td>
<td>19482 (85.44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>28875</td>
<td>24071 (83.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>25865</td>
<td>16862 (65.19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>111137</td>
<td>85574 (76.99%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.cic.gov.in

The above mentioned is the information pertaining to the number of applications received and disposed at central information Commission Level. Although the information is about Central Information Commission but it cannot be
misunderstood as national scenario because Central Information commission is neither an apex body of State Information Commissions nor it is a National Level body, but it deals with the departments or to say public authorities coming under Central Government.

The above table gave a picture of Central Information Commission i.e. a general scenario now the below mentioned tables presents a picture of performance in major departments related to rural development. To present the performance data related to following departments are presented.

Table No– 9.4 Performance of RTI at Ministry of Panchayati Raj

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Applications Received During the Year</th>
<th>No. of Requests transferred to other PAs</th>
<th>Decisions where Applications for Information rejected</th>
<th>Number of cases where disciplinary action taken against any officer in respect of administration of RTI Act</th>
<th>No. CPIOs appointed</th>
<th>No. AAs Appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1 (1.5%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Reports of CIC for the Year 2008 to 2011

Ministry of Panchayat is committed mainly to strengthen the grassroots’ governance system in rural areas. It also implements some of the major development schemes like BRGF and RSVY. The above data shows the scenario of RTI act at Ministry of Panchayati Raj. It has appointed one Public Information Officer and one appellate authority. During the year 2008-09 this ministry received 50 applications out of which 11 applications were transferred to other Public Authorities and others can be assumed to be replied. During the year 2009-10 ministry received 72 applications out of that 31 applications were transferred to other departments followed by 67 applications received in the year 2010-11. During this tenure only one application was rejected and in none of the
cases any action was taken against any officer especially for not furnishing the information. It is very interesting to note that in such a big country like India and that too in such a ministry dealing with Panchayati Raj issue which affects masses but the number of applications received at Ministry level is very low.

Table No – 9.5 Performance of RTI at Ministry of Rural Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Applications Received During the Year</th>
<th>No. of Requests transferred to other PAs</th>
<th>Decisions where Applications for Information rejected</th>
<th>Number of cases where disciplinary action taken against any officer in respect of administration of RTI Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1358</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Reports of CIC for the Year 2008 to 2011

The above table gives a review of number of RTI applications received at Ministry of Rural Development from the year 2008 to 2011. Although the ministry is responsible for implementing major rural development in the whole country, the number of request for information is very less. The average yearly ration of the number of recipe of application is 455. Out of 1358 applications received in total 62 applications were transferred to other public authority and 13 such applications were rejected. It is very interesting to note that in not a single case any disciplinary action taken against any officer in respect of administration of RTI Act.

The above data reveals that in a country of 28 states and 640 districts, in view of vast scope of functioning of Ministry of rural development heaving huge amount of funds and financial transaction, the use of such a revolutionary act seems very poor. It seems that the level of awareness about the use of this act is very low.
Table No – 9.6 Performance of RTI at Department of Drinking Water Supply Ministry of Rural Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Applications Received During the Year</th>
<th>No. of Requests transferred to other PAs</th>
<th>Decisions where Applications for Information rejected</th>
<th>Number of cases where disciplinary action taken against any officer in respect of RTI Act</th>
<th>No. CPIOs appointed</th>
<th>No. AAs appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Reports of CIC for the Year 2008 to 2011

The available data from the Department of Drinking Water Supply, Ministry of Rural Development reveals that in the year 2008-09 28 applications were received and in the year 2010-11 the number of applications received were 33. For the implementation of this act the department has appointed 4 Public Information Officers and 4 Appellate Authorities in the year 2008-09 and increased more 2 PIOs and 2 AAs in the year 2010-11 for the better implementation of the act.

Table No – 9.7 Performance of RTI at Department of Land Resources Ministry of Rural Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Applications Received During the Year</th>
<th>No. of Requests transferred to other PAs</th>
<th>Decisions where Applications for Information rejected</th>
<th>Number of cases where disciplinary action taken against any officer in respect of RTI Act</th>
<th>No. CPIOs appointed</th>
<th>No. AAs appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 (6.9%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Reports of CIC for the Year 2008 to 2011
Department of Land Resources received total 186 applications during a period of 2008 to 2011. The department of Land Resources appointed 1 Public Information Officer and 1 Appellate Authority for the implementation of this act.

Table No – 9.8 Performance of RTI at CAPART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Applications Received During the Year</th>
<th>No.of Requests transferred to other PAs</th>
<th>Decisions where Applications for Information rejected</th>
<th>Number of cases where disciplinary action taken against any officer in respect of RTI Act</th>
<th>No. CPIOs appointed</th>
<th>No. AAs appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (11.1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (2.2%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Reports of CIC for the Year 2008 to 2011

CAPART a one of the major Actor in Rural Development received 145 applications during a period of 2008 to 2010.

Table No – 9.9 Performance of RTI at Department of Rural Development Ministry of Rural Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Applications Received During the Year</th>
<th>No.of Requests transferred to other PAs</th>
<th>Decisions where Applications for Information rejected</th>
<th>Number of cases where disciplinary action taken against any officer in respect of RTI Act</th>
<th>No. CPIOs appointed</th>
<th>No. AAs appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Reports of CIC for the Year 2008 to 2011
The above data reveals that Department of Rural Development implements the act in a very decentralized way as more number of Public Information Officers are appointed. In comparison with other departments this department received more number of applications as shown above.

Some other following factual data related to usage of right to information act especially with the Ministry of Rural Development is as follows:

- During the year 2005 to 2006 which was the first year of RTI. In ministry of Panchayati Raj received only 1 application for information under RTI. And Ministry of Rural Development received only 11 applications under this act. Against total 24436 applications received by all the ministries together.

- During the year 2006 – 2007 Ministry of Panchayati received total 10 applications under RTI. Out of 10 7 requests were disposed by providing information and 3 applications were transferred to other public authority in accordance with the provisions of the act. While in case of Ministry of Rural Development total 179 applications were received out of which 21 requests rejected due to various reasons 1 application was transferred to another department and information provided in case of 163 applications.

Thus we attempted to provide an overview regarding the implementation of Right to Information act in terms of numbers i.e. number of applications received, number of PIOs and AAs appointed. Applications rejected etc. Our subsequent section describe and analyze actual cases wherein the citizens used RTI for the causes of Rural Development are described and an attempt has been made to understand how RTI helps in eliminating the evils or obstacles of rural development and how it facilitates the process of implementing rural development governance, in the end, attempt is also made to show how out of 36 issues, some of the major issues were never attended as documented in our study.
III – Analytical Assessment of Cases Studies related to Usages of RTI:

Citizens used this act widely in redressing the grievances, containing corruption, being informed, monitoring. With the use of this act citizens participated in the day to day governance related affairs. The actual cases mentioned in the following part of the chapter. Each case represents the way RTI can be used and grievances can be redressed. We have attempted to analyze each of these cases to bring out the fact that in what manner the RTI is used what had examined the outcome. For the purpose of comfortable presentation of variety of cases and many more in numbers we had selectively presented these cases in terms of the following classified issues:

A - Policy and Planning Level Issues:
1. Union and State laws are not reviewed and suitably amended in accordance with the 73rd constitutional amendment.
2. Lack of Linkages among Components is a major policy level issue of rural development policy.
3. There are several Interventions which are technically inappropriate, culturally insensitive and institutionally ineffective which are likely to be failed.
4. The programmes (guidelines of the programmes) are not flexible enough to be amended during implementation period.
5. The programe planning "handed down" by experts is counter-productive to mobilizing effective leadership and management.
6. Plan laid out in a step-by-step fashion cannot possibly allow for the flexibility required to overcome the complex challenges of human development.
7. Poor Backward and forward linkages.
8. The conventional approach to planning, with its rigid time frames, its breakdown of planning tasks into sectors and regions, and its centralized and technocratic perspective on plan formulation and implementation.

9. A series of goals and a plan of action (or "blueprint") are created by experts and officials; People are expected to implement the plan; and Outcomes are reviewed periodically, typically once a year, to ensure adherence to the plan It breaks down in the face of enormous "real-world" challenges

10. People become alienated because they feel that they have had no say in planning It does not take proper account of local or changing conditions

B - Management Related Issues:

2. Impractical formats of Reporting.
3. Rural development projects are extremely dependent on their political, economic, socio-cultural, and natural environments, which are typically in a state of flux and uncertainty.
4. Rural development project activities are highly dependent for their successful performance on integration, or the coordination of a set of mutually complementary, interdependent activities.
5. Public bureaucracies as implementers of rural development projects have certain well-known disadvantages.
6. Projects with multi sectoral components implemented by a lead department have had considerable difficulty achieving the required coordination with other compartmentalized departments.
7. There are laid down rules and procedures for every aspect of the government’s functioning and its interaction with the common man but, due to weaknesses of the bureaucracy, growing complexities of administration and absence of commitment and responsiveness, a wide gap has emerged between “Government” and “Governance”.

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8. People are not aware about their rights, duties, roles, benefits, remedies, grievance redressal mechanism, decision making system, responsible and questionable authorities with regard to a particular scheme in general and rural development affairs in particular.

9. The component of capacity building is a missing or inadequate link of most of the rural development programs since the stakeholders are not being equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes required for a successful implementation of a programme.

10. The performance and qualitative changes are not being evaluated prior to commencement of further work.

11. Grant Flows are irregular.

12. Exit/Sustainability Strategy is one of the major elements of management of rural development management.

13. Many a times the Implementation cost is higher than the cost of actual benefit given to poor or the beneficiary.

C - Implementation Level Issues:

1. Selection of wrong set of beneficiaries.

2. Selection of beneficiaries within communities was largely outside of the project’s control.

3. The programmes are least understood even amongst the stakeholders who are going to implement the program.

4. The programmes are least understood amongst the beneficiaries.

5. The real objective is getting lost in the target oriented approach.

6. Rural development programmes are not able to sustain against unscrupulous elements and vested interest.

7. Culture of silence and non-performance is a major hurdle in success of a program.

8. Many of the physical constructions are not technically sound and not even in accordance with the proposed one.
9. Unfavorable socio-political climate
10. Weak enforcement machinery
11. Under financing, Delay in disbursement
12. Corruption and malpractices
13. Delays
14. Overlapping
15. Leakages

A - Policy and Planning Related Case Studies:

In this section following cases are presented which addresses policy and planning level issues in the area of Rural Development. Advent of 73rd Constitutional amendment in the form of Panchayati Raj opened the avenues for resolution in the whole methodology of making public policy and planning i.e. participatory, decentralized governance wherein the people are involved from planning to implementation to monitoring and evaluation. But it was very unfortunate that despite constitutional mandate of peoples plan still the planning is carried out in conventional practice i.e. very centralized in nature. At this juncture of transition from centralized to decentralized approach of planning RTI has very huge potentials with the use of which people can participate in governance process in a very real sense. The below mentioned cases are just examples of such potentials. But used in true spirit people can really influence policy at a great extent.
Case No – 1 RTI Reforms Policy: ¹

Saysabibi Saiyyed was receiving assistance under the government’s ‘Vidhwa Sahay Yojna’. The yojna provides financial assistance to widows from the economically challenged section of society. But, sometime ago, she stopped receiving the assistance. On inquiring, she was told that as she had crossed the age of 60, she would no longer be eligible to receive any assistance. However strange it may sound, but the norms under this programme provide assistance to widows only till the age of 60.

As if the widows don’t need assistance after that or all of a sudden they will attain financial independence. Saysabibi, with the help of RTI, pushed her case to the Gujarat Information Commission (GIC), whose recommendation will not only come to her rescue, but other widows in the state needing continued assistance in old-age will also benefit. GIC’s recommendation of extending the maximum age limit for assistance from 60 years to ‘for life’ has been taken due note of by the women and child development (WCD) department. Department PIO P H Sarvakar has also drawn attention towards a resolution of March 5 passed with the objective of reducing financial hardships for beneficiaries under the scheme. Needless to say, the WCD will have to consult other departments and competent authorities before there is an actual change in the policy. But at least the process has begun.

This is a classic case of RTI impact where in a citizen demanded accountability on a policy which seemed inexplicable. How can after attaining 60 years a widow loose eligibility for continued assistance? GIC, acting in the ‘spirit’ of the act, recommended a change in a policy that was the subject matter of the application, in larger public interest, and the WCD having responded. If this is not participatory governance, then what is? RTI in effect plays a double role when

¹ http://rahulmangaonkar.org
exercised. A citizen while flagging a personal grievance also brings to the table gaps in governance for those who can and want to see it. To acknowledge that a problem exists in a particular system of delivery of governance is well begun. This is an example how people are exercising their right to information (RTI), only making the government accountable, but also triggering a change in policies and programmes.

Case No – 2 RTI Makes the Fair Prize Shops Work.²

Ignoring intimidation and family pressure, Bhadresh Wamja of Saldi village used the RTI to restore foodgrain and fuel rations that were being denied to villagers and spurred a policy decision by the state government. Saldi village is 13 km from the district town of Amreli and about 225 km from Gandhinagar, the Gujarat state capital. This innocuous village has a population of barely 3,000, and very little information is available about it on the internet. But it is from this obscure corner of Gujarat, that a teenager has succeeded in persuading the state government to list fair price shops also under the Right to Information Act, 2005. This, even though the shops are not public authorities, but are privately owned!

Bhadresh Wamja is a second-year B.Com student, who had been bothered for a while that the two fair price shops in his village never seemed to have enough stocks of wheat, rice and kerosene. His family of four members was among those categorised Above the Poverty Line (APL), and this entitled them to 10kg wheat (at Rs10 per kg), 2kg rice (at Rs7.25 a kg) and 2 litre of kerosene per person (at Rs12.53 to Rs13.43 a litre).

"My family is well off and we don't need to buy the ration; but many of my friends complained that they never received it. So, I decided to go to the shop and buy supplies on my family ration card. Predictably, the shopkeeper said that he had

² [http://moneylife.in/article/78/18619.html](http://moneylife.in/article/78/18619.html)
not been getting any stock of wheat, rice or kerosene from the government for the past several months; so from where will he give me?" That ignited the idea of an RTI campaign. "Not for my personal benefit, but for the good of the village," says Bhadresh.

Newspapers publish stories on the RTI and Bhadresh reads these with great curiosity. In January, Gujarat Samachar, Gujarat's leading newspaper, printed a chart about how much foodgrains and kerosene, families of APL and BPL (Below Poverty Line) should receive every month, along with a table giving the prices per kg. Bhadresh says, "That news along with the price chart opened my eyes and I decided to show this to the shopkeeper. But he wasn't impressed. I asked him why he was overpricing the wheat and rice (selling them at Rs15 a kg)," but the shopkeeper reiterated, "what can I do when the government does not send us any supplies."

He decided to apply for this information under the RTI Act. He sent an RTI application to the tehsildar of Lilia taluka (Saldi is in Lilia taluka) on 11 February 2011, asking him the stock supply that the fair price shop has been receiving every month, between August 2010 and January 2011. And the tehsildar ordered the shopkeeper to disclose the details within 15 days. The shopkeeper did not oblige.

Bhadresh informed the tehsildar about this, and while the tehsildar first declared that he would come to inspect the shop on a particular date, he did not turn up. Subsequently, he assured that he would visit the place on Monday; but on Sunday itself the shopkeeper started removing the sacks of grain, to take them elsewhere, so he could show that he did not have any stock.

Bhadresh called Pankti Jog, a member of the Mahit Adhikar Gujarat Pahel in Ahmedabad which runs an RTI helpline, to inform that the shopkeeper was
taking away the ration stock from the shop. Ms Jog asked him to photograph the act with his mobile phone camera.

The tehsildar came to Bhadresh's house on Monday, but instead of inspecting the shop he tried to persuade him to withdraw the RTI application and not to get involved in such activities. The 18-year-old had also been receiving threats from the shopkeeper, which prompted his family to remind him that his career should come first. But Bhadresh had decided not to get swayed and to ensure that the shopkeeper learns a lesson.

Bhadresh lodged a police complaint. He also visited the office of the district supply officer (DSO) where he found out to his utter shock that the shopkeeper was supplied with 8,306 kg of wheat as regular supply and 1,599 kg as extra wheat between August 2010 and January 2011. According to the documents, the shopkeeper had supplied the entire stock to ration card holders, which indicated that the shopkeeper was lying to the villagers.

Bhadresh spread this information in the village and very soon the villagers started to back him openly. The threats automatically reduced as he built a support group. Twenty villagers even signed an appeal to the tehsildar for an inspection of the shop. The fair price shop is owned by Paresh Shejpal, of Deendayal Grahak Bhandar.

When the tehsildar visited the village he asked 10 villagers to produce their ration cards and found that nine of the ten had not received even a single kilogramme of grain during the last six months, although the shopkeeper had reported that he had supplied the stock according to the rules. The one person who did get some ration managed to do so after a heated argument with the shopkeeper.

The tehsildar was forced to write a report against the shopkeeper, and the district supply officer ordered an inquiry. Immediately after the check, the shopkeeper
began supplying the ration to the villagers without any excuse about not receiving supplies. He has also been made to put up an item-wise list of the supplies that he receives.

Bhadresh's tenacious campaign encouraged the chief information commissioner of Gujarat, RN Das, to dash off a letter (17 February 2011) to the secretary of the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department, to order proactive disclosure of ration supplies not only at tehsildar offices, but also at fair price shops across the state.

The letter stated: "... letter received on 15.2.2011 from the Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahel (MAGP) on the subject of difficulties faced by the citizens regarding obtaining of information on PDS in respect of Fair Price Shops. It appears that in the particular application enclosed with the above-mentioned letter, the applicant Shri Bhadresh Kumar V Wamja sought information related to the APL quota of foodgrain and kerosene issued to the particular fair price shop and alleged diversion of the APL quota by the fair price shopkeeper and that after the said application was made on 11.2.2011 the Vigilance Committee did make necessary inquiry, but as stated in the said letter under reference, neither the details (names, etc, and functions) of the vigilance committee were proactively disclosed at the village level/fair price shop level, nor the stocks issued to the fair price shops were proactively disclosed.

"A copy of the proactive disclosure material at the village level which was prepared during the Panchmahal's district abhiyaan in active collaboration with the Panchmahals district administration, the civil society groups, in particular the MAGP, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) and Anandi, is enclosed herein for your easy reference. The proactive disclosure material is in two parts. Part I deals with critical information which is more or less static and is required to be painted on the walls. While Part II deals with substantial information which may be dynamic and is therefore required to be revised
periodically. "I would request you to consider the above-mentioned proactive disclosure material for its adoption and implementation by your department and to issue necessary administrative instructions to the district supply officers, mamlatdars and the fair price shop licensees."

The Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department in an order, dated 4 March 2011, to all tehsildars and fair price shop licensees in Gujarat directed them to proactively disclose ration supply information on the walls of fair price shops as well as at the tehsil level. Have shopkeepers been abiding by the order? Ms Jog says, "We had made a template of how to declare information about the ration in shops and adopted it in 22 model villages. This has been replicated in many other villages after the information commission's order. We have been conducting a mass campaign through distribution of pamphlets and advertisements through the media. So villagers are aware about the proactive disclosure of ration supply in their respective fair price shops. They take the pamphlets and show it to the shopkeeper to demand information. Thanks to Bhadresh, the ball is in now in the shopkeeper's court. And this time big brother (the Food and Civil Supplies department) is watching and the villagers are not relenting." Villagers are now demanding village vigilance committees for the public distribution system.

It's great illustration of the success of an individual, just 18 years old, in bringing about a mini social revolution through the RTI, in a hitherto little-known village. It reveals that it is nothing but information that can make wonders in making the governance function in order.
When Mahatma Gandhi broke the salt law at Dandi in 1930, it was a momentous chapter in India’s freedom movement. In the 60th year of Independence though, the original salt makers of Gujarat were given marching orders. These inhabitants of ‘Survey Number Zero’ faced eviction, with the forest department serving notices to them.

The Agariyas, who are the traditional salt makers, are nobody’s people. How else can one explain their absence from the survey carried out by the revenue department of the Gujarat government, years ago? Ironically, the area inhabited by these people was numbered not for its human inhabitants, but due to the wildlife there.

The Agariyas as a community have been traditionally making salt in pockets of the 5,000 sq km spread of Little Rann of Kutch, for centuries. Little Rann is also home to the wild ass. For years, both man and animal have peacefully co-existed in this area, with hardly any conflict.

Only when foresters wanted to declare the area as a wild ass sanctuary that it dawned upon babus that this area had never been accounted for all these years, nobody cared for the condition of people living here. It required the presence of wild asses to draw attention to the Agariyas. When the need to name this stretch arose, so as to notify it as a sanctuary, the powers-that-be declared the area as ‘Survey Number Zero’!

The Agariya Heet Rakshak Manch (AHRM) has been championing the cause of the community by making them aware about their fundamental rights. AHRM has been relentlessly lobbying with the government at various levels. AHRM,
supported by Janpath, also created awareness amongst Agariyas about their Right to Information (RTI).

Now faced with eviction notices, residents of Survey Number Zero are using the RTI Act to demand accountability on the question of their very existence and basic fundamental right to pursue their livelihood, employment and sustenance. Additional collector, settlement, appointed to rehabilitate those who stand to be displaced, was supposed to give an opportunity to the affected people to argue why they shouldn’t be displaced. In this case, the Agariyas had to prove that traditionally, they have been dependent upon the Little Rann of Kutch for making salt, which was their sustenance. They would not be able to sustain themselves anywhere else, bereft of their salt pans. How many Agariyas make salt on Survey Number Zero? Responding to a RTI query, the salt department stated that approximately 15,000 Agariyas depend on their traditional occupation of salt making. Whereas another RTI query revealed that 1,776 applications were received for verification of rights. Moreover, the Agariyas had no idea for long that they had been served eviction notices.

Now they have filed RTI applications demanding to know how and when eviction notices were sent and how awareness, if at all, was created about the verification of rights process.

Thus this act is useful for the community groups in solving their problems by getting background authentic information pertaining to the problem they are facing.
Case No – 4 Revelation of Socio Economic Tragedies:

Around 400 farmers committed suicide in the state since 2003, for reasons ranging from financial debts, failed crop, health ailments to jilted relationships and 6,055 died ‘accidentally’ or for ‘unexplained reasons’, as per the data released by the office of the Director General of Police under RTI.

Some reasons explained under ‘accidental’ deaths include, ‘consuming pesticide by mistake to cure a headache’ or ‘dropping dead while spraying insecticide’.

Social activist Bharatsinh Jhala, who sought this information, insisted that all police of all districts, furnish data from their respective jurisdictions. He said this before the Gujarat Information Commission (GIC), which was hearing his complaint against the DGP office today.

Jhala had sought details on farmers’ suicides and deaths from the DGP Office and on compensation given to them from the Agriculture department, under RTI. He was informed that 387 farmers had committed suicide since 2003.

Pointing at variance in the data provided by both these public authorities, Jhala said, “According to agriculture department, compensation has been given to 1,909 families. Which means 4,146 families haven’t been compensated for their loss, if compared to the police data. There are areas where compensation has been given, but the police officials have no in-formation on farmers deaths in these areas.”

Not convinced by the explanation given for accidental deaths, Gujarat Information Commissioner R N Das has asked the police to get complete details

4 http://rahulmangaonkar.org
as sought by Jhala, which include the addresses, reasons, and details on how the accidental deaths actually happened.

Das said, “This is a very important issue to which we cannot turn a blind eye. Complete quality information will have to be collected and disseminated so that there is a change in the system for the better.”

Thus the above case is an example that how this act can be used to find out the data and facts related to crucial acts like farmer’s suicide such data and information ones presented and analyzed can draw attention of the policy makers as well as society so that actions can be initiated towards such dangerous developments.

Case No – 5 Accountability of Governance Ensured:

Gujarat government, under its Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), provides subsidized wheat, rice and kerosene to the poorest sections of society. Under RTI, Anil Ghoda sought information from public information officer (PIO) of the mamlatdar’s office, about the AAY beneficiaries in his town and how much has been provided to them in the last six months.

He followed it up for the next three months with five visits to the PIO’s office. Instead of providing information, he was told to obtain the list of AAY beneficiaries from the fair price shopkeepers in his town.

With no reply to his query in sight, he filed another RTI. This time he also demanded to know which officials were responsible for not providing information to him. Forced to be accountable, the PIO sent two letters to four fair price shopkeepers to provide the information.

5 http://rahulmangaonkar.org
Appearing before state chief information commissioner (SCIC) R N Das, the PIO tried to pass the buck to fair price shopkeepers. He also blamed inadequate staff strength in the clerk and deputy mamlatdar cadre for the failure to reply. The SCIC, however, was not amused.

Das noted, “Almost nine months have passed since the application was filed and yet the applicant awaits information. This speaks of absolute callousness on the part of the PIO on an important area of government activity.” SCIC demanded to know why the list of beneficiaries had not been made a part of the voluntary disclosure under section 4(1) of RTI and why the applicant had been asked to collect information from shopkeepers when it was the duty of the public authority to provide it.

Ordering that the information be provided free of charge within seven days, SCIC asked the PIO to show cause as to why penalty should not be imposed. Also, why the applicant should not be financially compensated for the harassment suffered by him in making frequent trips to his office as well as in coming from all the way from Kutch to Gandhinagar for the hearing.

Das did not just enforce accountability in the ranks, he also ordered principal secretary, food, civil supplies and consumer affairs to ensure that the list of beneficiaries of AAY be displayed and widely publicised in each fair price shop, village panchayat office, mamlatdar’s office, district supply office in the collectorate, and their website.

Citizens using RTI can help correct the system and fill in the gaps in governance as well. No need to run from pillar to post, use RTI instead. For years now, some government officers have become adept at making citizens, who approach them for work, run from pillar to post. But now, armed with the Right to Information (RTI) Act, citizens are demanding accountability and bringing about positive changes. They have managed to shake the entire system up, right from a mamlatdar to principal secretary of the government, and are getting results.
Case No – 6 Improved Working of Anganwadies through RTI Process: 6

Veenaben Baria filed an application under RTI on December 14 last year after noticing that the preschool anganwadi was not functioning in her village Jabuvania in Ghogambha taluka.

She demanded a list of workers at the anganwadi, including a copy of the attendance register, date-wise details of meals served and quantity of serving, persons who prepared the meals, where the food grains were stored, datewise details of how much allotted food grains came in for the taluka, number of undernourished children up to the age of six and when and where were they last weighed. Similar questions were raised about the adolescent girls.

The anganwadi closed down as the co-ordinator did not come. There were no facilities for children and food coupons were distributed in 2006 but nothing was given. So she decided to use RTI,” says Veenaben.

Not getting a reply, Baria lodged a complaint with the Gujarat Information Commission (GIC) on February 15, 2008. GIC told the child development project officer to provide information within 15 days but on March 3 the CDPO sent a reply to Veenaben saying that the information she had sought was consistent with the provisions of RTI and hence not considerable.

At the GIC hearing, the CDPO revealed that there were 116 children on the anganwadi list. This included 53 girls in the age-group of 11 to 19 years and 35 girls of this group, found to be malnourished, had been given food coupons in 2006. The CDPO Toralben Wada admitted, “No wheat came in the entire district

6 http://rahulmangaonkar.org
after 2006 so there was nothing to distribute and hence the girls were not weighed and also not given coupons after that year.”

After Veenaben’s RTI brought the matter to light, supply resumed that month. This is an example exhibiting how an application filed under RTI by a villager Veenaben Baria not only forced agencies to start wheat supply but also bared the government claims of helping adolescent girls and undernourished children get fortified food.

Case No – 7 Planning Gaps in Rural Development Programme and Consequent Losses of Finance:  

Parched tribal village Mangran in South Gujarat had everything it required to fight water scarcity — storage tanks and pipeline network since the last 10 years. And yet, all’s not well here. The administration spent about Rs 4 lakh for creating support infrastructure but forgot to dig a well. Moreover, an existing well in the village was filled up.

Like many others living in tribal areas in the state who are demanding accountability on the issues of power supply, road linkages and water supply, Bhimsing Vasava of Mangran village too decided to use Right to Information (RTI) Act. Vasava demanded to know the grant estimates of the lift irrigation scheme announced in 1997 by the then minister of forests, Motilal Vasava, under the World Food Program.

He also wanted to know the reasons for not completing the work after beginning it and when would farmers in the village finally get the benefits of the scheme. And, who would compensate him for the financial loss incurred by him every year as his well in survey number 14 was filled up.

7 http://rahulmangaonkar.org
Before Gujarat Information Commission (GIC) heard his complaint, Vasava contended that in 1997 he had agreed that the well which was on his land be filled up and a new well be constructed as it would benefit the entire village. But since then his well was filled up but no new well has been constructed.

The range forest officer of Nesu Purva in Uchhal taluka submitted that the forest department had got approval of estimates of Rs 3,91,827 under the World Food Programme’s phase-I for the purpose of implementing a lift irrigation project in the village.

An overhead tank for storage of water, air vent outlet, outlet water tank, water tank and pipeline of 300 mm of 1,200 running meters was installed at the cost of Rs 3,91,663. But for construction of the well there was no provision under the World Food Programme. The deputy engineer, small irrigation project, Songadh was asked to make the plan and estimates for it and get the approval for it but as this was not done construction of the well could not take place.

Now, of the works done only the overhead tank is in a fit condition to be used, the pipeline laid 2 to 3 feet below the surface is filled with earth. Hence even if a well is constructed and the lift irrigation program is made operational it is doubtful if the pipeline could be used.

The above case shows the example of improper planning and management of rural development that how a plan for the benefit of the people could not be implemented for lack of co-ordination between relevant departments. A situation has so arisen that the expenditure of Rs 3,91,663 has almost become waste as a result of not making a well at the cost of Rs 61,000. Now this is the best example of how RTI can be used to find the facts which are major obstacles in rural development.
Social organisation in Meghalaya has unearthed that wheat worth crores of rupees under the Targeted Public Distribution System has been allegedly diverted for the past several years.

Under a Right to Information application the Food Corporation of India (FCI) has given information that the State has been receiving wheat from 2008. Every month the State receives its quota of 1,403 metric tonnes of wheat, but none of the fair price shops are distributing it. A kilogram of wheat costs Rs 6.10. “Where is this wheat going when the FCI has been supplying it to the State under TPDS,” Michael Syiem, who filed the RTI, said at a public hearing today.

Syiem said, he has requested representatives from the Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) department and also FCI officials for the hearing. Although the FCI sent its representatives, none of the State Government officials from FCS&CA turned up.

It has been alleged that the wheat is directly sent to local Chaki mills here and is grinded into Atta, Maida (flour) and other items for sale in the open market. The practice has been on for years now.

FCI officials said that the State Government would be in a better position to answer where the wheat was disappearing over the years.

FCS&CA Public Information Officer, P Ch Sangma claimed in response to RTI queries that wheat was being distributed in those districts of the State where there is demand.

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8 http://www.assamtribune.com
He added, since tribal people’s food habit does not constitute atta in their diet, fair price shops here don’t lift it from FCI and hence the non-availability.

Syiem, moreover, pointed out that quality of rice and sugar in fair price shops was far worse than those lifted from FCI godowns.

“The quality of rice supplied from FCI godowns are of ‘A’ category, however, those sold at fair price shops are not fit for human consumption,” he said showing samples of PDS items supplied by the FCI.

Social organisations today said that similar complaints of poor quality rice, sugar being distributed at Fair Price shops have been reported from various parts of the State.

They said that after further discussion they would decide whether to initiate a criminal case against the State Government.

The above case provides an illustration of how this revolutionary act of information can be used for advocacy purposes to solve major problem like food security that affects rural masses.

B – Case Studies Addressing Management Related Issues:

Management of Rural Development Programmes is a major concern as far as poverty alleviation and Rural Development is concerned. RTI has huge potentials to identify and resolve such issues. The following actual cases wherein citizens used this revolutionary tool of RTI in addressing Management Related issues are presented in this section.
Shailesh Patel, from Agariya Heet Rakshak Manch, filed an application of seeking following information:

1. Details of the each of the patient attended by Comprehensive Mobile health Van Unit, in the last six months from Surendranagar district of Gujarat. (This mobile health van are allotted for health check-up for salt pan workers)

2. The details asked were: (Name of the patient, address, type of disease, medicine given, treatment given, follow-up done)

3. Copy of the route plan and logbooks of the mobile health Van

He didn’t receive the information within thirty days. After thirty days, he receives intimation from the authority, to pay Rs.3600 which includes the charge for making data entry of the information and cost of photocopying. Shailesh, calls up the PIO, learns that PIO have not received any training for the same Shailesh, thus made him understand about various provisions of the act. PIO apologize to Shailesh for not providing information. Soon, he gives all the required information on CD free of cost, as per provision of act. PIO also asks Shailesh to help him out in future if needed any guidance. The information received was circulated amongst the saltpan workers, which created awareness and local monitoring system. The Comprehensive mobile health van now started visiting the workplaces. Agariya Heet Rakshak Manch offered free announcements of the health van visits in their weekly Radio programmes. This helped in making the services more effective and accountable. The Salt-pan workers of Gujarat, stays in little Run of Kutch, for more than 8 to 10 months. The worksites are generally 20 to 30 km away from the revenue villages. The availability of health check-up and treatment services reduced their expenses on medicines. Their workdays were saved and thus adding to their income.

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9 www.janpathnetwork.org/
The above case addresses the very crucial issues of rural development administration and management major amongst them are **citizen’s (beneficiaries’) awareness**, and **Monitoring System**. It was through right to information that the people become aware and started monitoring system which ultimately resulted in improvement of health services which leads to betterment of life. It addresses the issue of **Rural Health**.

**Case No – 2 Benefit Without Corruption (IAY):**

*Mazloom Nadaf is a 60 year old rickshaw puller, he lives in Machdhi village, block Jhanjharpur, district Madhubani, Bihar. Mazloom lost his young son in 2002. As a result Mazloom had to start pulling rickshaws to feed his family. In order to help his family (mainly wife and daughter) he decided to file an application to avail of the benefits under the National Social Protection Scheme. His family comes under the Below Poverty Line category and is also entitled for the national housing scheme (Indira Awas Yojana). The village Panchayat also held that Mazloom’s family is entitled to the benefits of the scheme but five years later he still had not received anything instead he was asked to pay a bribe of Rs. 5,000. Mazloom simultaneously made applications to avail of the old age pension and Annapurna Yojana. However, each time he visited the concerned government office to check the status of his applications he was turned away rudely. Then Mazloom approached the legal aid centre of an NGO working in Madhubani and sought their assistance in drafting and filing a RTI application. Mazloom filed his application with the Circle officer for his block who forwarded the same to the block development officer (BDO). The BDO on receiving the RTI application sent for Mazloom and treated him very warmly and with a lot of respect and handed him a cheque of Rs. 15,000 (first installment payment) under the Indira Awas Yojna. The BDO then reverted back to the circle officer intimating that he had prepared all the paper work for the cheque a month ago on 30.3.06 and had handed Mazloom the cheque on 28.4.06. Mazloom’s house was constructed.*
The above case is an example of RTI addressing the issue of Housing and management and administration level issues like deliberate delays and corruption.

**Case No – 3 Improved Rural Administration Through RTI:**

Kalol taluka in Panchmahals district belongs to one of the less developed parts of Gujarat. In Kalol, however, a large computer printed sign pasted prominently on the walls of the Mamlatdar’s office warned people to visit the office only on Saturdays for ration card related work. State government offices in Gujarat work on the first and third Saturday every month. The other two Saturdays are holidays. In effect this meant that applicants from more than 60 villages of Kalol taluka had only a window of two days every month to put in their applications for ration cards every month. Those who could not simply had to wait their turn to arrive and if it did not come before closing time, they were simply chased away. They would come back the next working Saturday and go through the process all over again. Fed up by this system, Aslambhai, a resident of Kalol decided to find out if the two Saturday limit had any legal basis. He drafted an information request asking for the Government Resolution (GR) that said that applications for ration card related matters would be received only on Saturdays. Besides he also requested for all GRs that listed the procedural requirements for ration card related work.

The Mamlatdar is the designated Public Information Officer at the taluka level in Gujarat. When Aslambhai visited his office to submit his RTI application in person, the Mamlatdar refused to even read it let alone accept it. He told Aslambhai that there were no orders for giving information to people at the taluka level. People would get whatever information they wanted from the district level. Aslambhai knew that the Mamlatdar was lying. He also knew that he could send the application by post. He sent his application to the Mamlatdar by Registered

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10 [http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org](http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org)
Post with Acknowledgement Due (RPAD). Needless to say the application was delivered to the Mamlatdar’s office.

Fifteen days later Aslambhai was asked to visit the Dy. Mamlatdar to discuss his information request. Aslambhai refused to meet him as he saw no reason for doing the same. The Dy. Mamlatdar then pressurized Aslambhai’s father to advise his son to withdraw that part of the application which inquired about the Saturday limit. He was assured access to all other GRs. He was told that there was no GR requiring them to do ration card related work only on Saturdays. It was only an informal arrangement they had adopted for administrative convenience. If this matter reached his superiors the Dy. Mamlatdar was afraid he might lose his job. Aslambhai stood his ground and refused to concede. He advised the Dy. Mamlatdar to issue a rejection letter if he did not want to give the information as he could then go on appeal or send a complaint to the State Information Commission. Ultimately, the Dy. Mamlatdar was forced to issue a reply on his letterhead clarifying the matter. Aslambhai was told that there was no GR as such and that Saturdays were fixed for summoning applicants to collect their ration cards. This was done so that applicants would be free from work on Saturdays and would not have to forego a day’s wages by visiting the office on a working day. Aslambhai was assured that henceforth they would receive applications for ration card related work on all working days at all working hours.

Believe it or not, Aslambhai and his friends swear that the working of the Dy. Mamlatdar’s office has really improved since this little adventure of theirs. People are able to visit the office whenever they wish and submit their applications any time during working hours. Aslambhai believes, the RTI Act has finally changed the power equations for the underprivileged people. They have in their hands a tool for making government offices work according to the law.

Since Ration Card is very essential document for the rural people it is a very common work rural people have to do i.e. getting new ration card, ting a
duplicate made, have the names of new family members added in the Ration card or that of the deceased deleted or get a card divided if a joint family wishes to have separate cards for its members. Hence the above is very important example that is addressing the day to day problem of rural masses it addresses the issue of deliberate delays and red tapism as far as administration management of Rural development is concerned.

**Case No – 4 Awareness Amongst Rural Citizens:**

*In four tribal blocks of Vadodara District, wall paintings keep tabs on health check-ups and visits by officials, which have helped to boost mother and child care. The 600 odd villages in four tribal blocks of Vadodara have a different kind of writing on their walls now. A village woman notes down the number of pregnant as well as lactating mothers, number of health check-ups, birth and death registrations and, most importantly, the number of talati visits, along with the days the Aanganwadi remains open. In an innovative experiment of the RTI Act, where health data is put up in the public realm, the efforts of a NGO - Deepak Foundation's health workers has led to the monitoring of as well as the creating of a demand for health services. It has been around a year that in addition to Aanganwadi workers, a village-level health worker, usually a women from the village, appointed by Deepak Foundation, notes down each birth and death as well as details of expectant mothers, and puts the data on a ‘wall painting’ each month. The painting is put up by contributions from village women and many times the sarpanch as chipped in half of the approximately Rs 200 required for it. Thereafter, the painting is in a public space, be it the Aanganwadi, the health centre or a panchayat wall. Though literacy is not too high in these tribal blocks, the writings on the wall are beginning to have an impact. The grassroots innovation of the RTI Act, to give a boost to mother and child care, has village walls sporting the 15-point data, which are put up every month, with the comparative account of three months available at a glance. However, it has*

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11 deepakfoundation.org
not been a cakewalk. Predictably, the most resistance came from Aanganwadi workers and even nurses. At some places, village children took to rubbing off the data, and in one village, the painting found its way into a cowshed. Yet, by and large, nurses as well as talatis have become more regular in their village visits. Manjula Tadvi, a health worker in Bharosewadi village, recounts an interesting spin off after a year long exercise. "We needed to fill up below poverty line (BPL) forms. This time the talati himself came and gave me the forms for all the villagers and now listens to us. Earlier, we had to go searching for him," said Tadvi. Also, with the emergency mobile number for seeking ambulance services jointly run by Deepak Foundation and the state health department displayed on each of these paintings, the number of emergency calls has gone up wherein ambulances take expectant mothers to government or private hospitals in record time. This helps to reduce both maternal and infant mortality rates. Also, with the parallel compilation of the data, the Aanganwadi worker has become more particular as both the data are compared and cross-checked in government health meetings too. The Vadodara District Development Officer (DDO) M Thennaresan said, "The demand for emergency services has picked up. Also, it has given the village community monitoring powers over the system."

The above case is an example how transparency leads to better development practices. This case is also a step in the direction of administrative reform through display of information proactively. Proactive disclosure is one of the important components of Right to Information Act wherein the authority has to display certain categories of information whether the citizens ask for it or not. Such display automatically regularizes the things.
Case No – 5 Misuse of CM’s Relief Fund: 12

Shocking details of violations in the Chief Minister Relief Fund now open to public scrutiny, have been revealed. Not only was the fund, meant for relief and aid during calamities, used for trivial ventures like cricket matches, documents from an RTI application show that the sanctions were given despite strong objections from state bureaucrats. Huge amounts of money have been diverted from the fund in Maharashtra for trivial reasons like cricket matches, by violating the fund’s bylaws. Documents retrieved through an RTI application show that money from the fund was diverted by former Chief Ministers Manohar Joshi and Sushil Kumar Shinde. Even though officials strongly advised against it in 1997, Manohar Joshi sanctioned Rs five lakh to the Press Club of India, even though it didn't fit with the fund’s objectives. In 2003, Sushil Kumar Shinde gave Rs 10 lakh for a Gandhi Film Foundation documentary though it was a commercial venture. The next year, he sanctioned Rs five lakh for a cricket tournament though enough had been spent on non-calamities that year. “Money has been sanctioned just because the CM made some announcement somewhere although it does not fit in the objective of the fund,” said Shailesh Gandhi, an RTI activist. The RTI also details a government order in 2001 that made the fund open to non calamities. And his cleared the path for diverting the CM’s fund. The government might have covered its bases by bringing out GRs making the fund free for all. However, the feeling of being taken for a ride will make well meaning citizens think twice before donating to this fund ever again.

The above case shows the example of how RTI is working in detecting the diversion of funds from its real purpose.

12 NDTV, Friday, May 23, 2008
Case No – 6 Transparency in NREGA:¹³

Mrs. Beena Devi was a sarpanch of Gehali Maksudpur Gram Panchayat, Narnaul Block, Mahendergarh District. The Programme cum Block Development and Panchayat Officer took over charge of the National Rural Employment Scheme from the gram panchayat sarpanch and handed it over to another gram panchayat member who was very close to the Programme Officer. The sarpanch of the village was shocked by his action. She then filed an application under the RTI Act to the Programme Officer-cum-Block Development and Panchayat Officer asking for the reasons why she was deprived of her responsibilities of the National Rural Employment Scheme. As she did not receive any reply from his end, she then complained about the matter to Sh. G.Madhvan, Chief Information Commissioner, Haryana. When the Programme Officer heard from some one that Mrs. Beena Devi had filed an application against him with the CIC, Haryana., he immediately handed over some documents to the sarpanch that had to be provided under the RTI application. In pursuance of the Appeal filed by her, the CIC called both parties for a hearing at Chandigarh and ordered the Programme Officer-cum-Block Development and Panchayat Officer to provide all the information as soon as possible to the sarpanch. The CIC also assured Mrs. Beena Devi that non-compliance of the Commission’s orders would invite penalty. Thereafter, the Programme Officer provided her all the information.

This case addresses the issue of transparency which is one of the major vices of Rural Development administration and Management.

¹³ Haryana State Report; 2007-08
Case No – 7 Awareness Generation Through RTI:14

Gangadhar Jatav, a resident of Gadholi Village, Karauli District, was an old age pensioner whose old age pension was suddenly and arbitrarily stopped by the Block Development Officer. It put him to a lot of hardship and he decided to find out the reason as to why his old age benefits had been discontinued. He filed an application under RTI to the concerned Public Authority on 29th August 2006. However, no information was provided to the applicant, which left Gangadhar Jatav with no option other than to move a First Appeal with the Appellate Authority on July 16, 2007. This also did not yield any results. The applicant thereafter filed a Second Appeal with the State Information Commissioner on 20th August, 2007 in which the SIC ordered that the information sought by the applicant should be provided by the BDO. As a result, the PIO provided him the reasons for the discontinuation of the old age pension which are as follows:

• The Investigating Officer had declared the applicant to be ineligible for the old age pension.
• Birth certificate was not furnished to the concerned Competent Authority by the applicant.

Thanks to the RTI Act, Gangadhar Jatav is now aware of the grounds on which a beneficiary of old age pension forfeits his / her right to avail the benefits. He is also clear now as to the steps he needs to take in order to restore his privileges.

The above case set an example of RTI's potential in availing one’s right by getting the exact details of the criteria of government schemes.

14 Rajasthan State Report; 2007-08
Case No – 8 Red-tapism Turns into Accountability in PMSGY:  

Ladhna Panchayat is 16 kilometres away from Jamtara District headquarters. One of the main roads used to reach Ladhana, Sahardal to Ladhana Road is nine kilometers long. This road is completely damaged and has not been repaired for ten years. As a result of this, people face a lot of problem in travelling to Jamtara. A one-day RTI camp was organised by PRIA-Jamtara on 16th May 2007 at Ladhna Panchayat. Mr. Umapad Pal who is a citizen of Ladhna Panchayat received all the necessary information about the RTI Act at the camp. He filed an application under the RTI Act with the Rural Engineering Organisation (R.E.O.), Jamtara on 18th May 2007 to find out the department’s procedure for repairing damaged roads. He also wanted to know the time taken to make repairs after the damage as per the rules. He also wanted to know how much money had come in the department to repair this road, whether the funds had been sanctioned to repair this road and the name of the official responsible for the delay. This information was provided to the applicant by the department and soon the department took prompt action by starting the repair of the road.

This case addresses the issue of delays in development of rural areas.

Case No –9 Informed Citizens Through RTI:  

Sushma Devi (37), belongs to Amroh Panchayat of Hamirpur Block. She decided to ask for information under the RTI Act about the various schemes and the criteria for the selection of beneficiaries of the Horticulture Department. She filed an application to know the procedure for getting plants and pesticides/medicines from the department. When she went with the application to the department, the officials ignored her. She again visited the APIO of the department, but he

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15 Jharkhand State Report; 2007-08
16 Himachal Pradesh State Report; 2007-08
refused to take her application. She then threatened to complain to the higher authorities. Her threat seemed to have had an impact as the PIO sent a government official from the department to her house along with the plants and pesticides for her, free of cost and requested her not to go to the higher authorities and complain about them.

The above incident is also a proof in the direction of peoples’ initiative for asking information to be aware about the scheme. There is lot of schemes of the government but people are not aware about them. RTI provides an opportunity in the form of never failing instrument through which people can get the information whenever they need to get information of their requirement.

Case No – 10 RTI helps Gram Sabha in Getting the Hat for Village:¹⁷

Chandradeepa is a village near Jamtara, which comprises of 12 hamlets, but there is no market or Haat in or around the village. The people of Chandradeepa have to buy and sell their goods at other markets at either Mihijam or Jamtara, which are around 10 to 15 kilometres away from Chandradeepa. A meeting of the gram sabha was called in November 2005 to discuss this issue. During the discussion in the gram sabha, they realised that a weekly Haat was a necessity in their village. Due to the lack of a Haat, they were facing many problems in their daily routines. A weekly Haat in their village itself would solve most of their problems automatically and would also make them financially sound. During the meeting, a Haat Committee was formed in the gram sabha, which was entrusted with getting permission for a weekly Haat, (which included a place for the Haat, the site map of the place, day on which the Haat would be organised etc.) from the concerned authorities. A proposal was submitted to the Tax and Revenue

¹⁷ Jharkhand State Report; 2007-08
Department, Jamtara along with the consent and signatures of 60 villagers. The department however refused to grant permission for organising the weekly Haat.

Mr. Shamsuddin Ansari, who was appointed the Secretary of the Haat Committee, took the initiative to file an application under RTI. He drafted an RTI application regarding the issue and also attached a Xerox copy of the application for organizing the Haat and submitted it to Mr. Gaurav Mukherjee, the APIO of Jamtara on 22nd January 2007.

After 21 days, the Circle Officer of Jamtara Mr. Ashok Kumar Jha took action. He called Mr. Shamsuddin Ansari to his office and accepted the departmental responsibility for refusing the proposal sent by the Haat Committee. He sent a Circle Inspector and one of the staff members for an inspection of the proposed place where the Haat would be situated and took the villagers’ signatures for a no objection certificate. He then prepared a report and forwarded it to the Assistant Commissioner so that he could grant permission for the organisation of the weekly Haat. The Assistant Commissioner agreed to grant permission for the Haat with some modifications related to the proposed site for the Haat, as it was classified as ‘grazing land’. This was resolved by a meeting of the gram sabha.

The above case study shows that RTI can bring accountability in government departments about their work. Cases which fail due to sheer callousness can be promptly resolved.
Case No – 11 Forests Rights Act (FRA) Monitored Through RTI:¹⁸

The report of Laheri committee inquiring into the violent incidents of February 13 at Antarsuba forests of Vijaynagar taluka of Gujarat was given to Vadodara-based activist Ambrish Mehta, who had sought a copy under RTI following an interim order of the Gujarat Information Commission. The report asked for immediate implementation of the Forests Rights Act (FRA) to prevent further such incidents.

The Laheri committee in its recommendations to the government noted that while tribal areas in Gujarat are peaceful compared to other states, the possibilities of them being instigated can’t be overlooked. It calls for immediate review of the schemes for tribal development with focused attention towards providing employment to them and increasing their incomes.

At the same time it has also recommended legal steps against any individual or organization if it is found to be spreading false information among the beneficiaries or are instigating them towards violence. It has asked the forest department to create a harmonious atmosphere for a dialogue with the scheduled tribes and to assure them that they would be assisted in enforcing their rights under FRA by its officers. Also, it needed to take constructive steps towards resolution of the current mistrust that exists between tribal citizens and its officers.

For ensuring effective implementation, it calls for a permanent consultative framework between the tribal and the forest department. All officers concerned have been asked to be trained on the provisions and rules of FRA.

¹⁸ http://rahulmangaonkar.org
This is an example of how an act is helpful in effective implementation of another act and that too related to tribal development. This shows RTI as an important instrument for getting evidences and documents that are helpful in advocacy for better implementation of rural development programmes.

Case N0 – 12 RTI as Watch Dog of Democracy:19

Around 35 residents of Rangpar village in Wankaner taluka had moved to Rajkot some 20 years ago. But if the voters' list is to be believed, they still reside in the village. The error was brought to the notice of the state election commission authorities by Ratna Ala, 30, who is visually challenged. He filed an RTI application inquiring why names of people who have left the village are not removed from the voters' list. Ala’s RTI queries forced the authorities to remove the names of the people.

"A friend told me that when he went to correct his name on the election card, he saw many names in the voters' list without a photograph. I got a list of voters from my village and found out that of the 615 voters, 35 had left the village," Ala said.

In August 2010, Ala filed an RTI application asking village authorities why these 35 people enjoyed a place in voters' list. "I was told that these people were staying in the village and if I had doubts, I should bring the necessary proofs. To this, I replied back saying it was their job," Ala said. He then filed a second application in October, asking if these people stay in village and how much tax have the 35 people paid to the village panchayat in the last five years.

Ala's second application shocked the authorities. "There are other people in the village who know that these 35 names are used by various parties during election for bogus voting. I wanted to stop this," said Ala. Later, the village mamlatdar

19 Ankur Jain, TNN Feb 2, 2011, 06.42am IST
verified the claim that these 35 people did not stay in the village and requested the state election commission to remove their names from the voters' list.

Ala has been using RTI as a tool to play a watchdog and ensure that the work done in his gram panchayat is corruption free. In 2008, Ala had got a 2 km road built in his village with the help of RTI. This also earned him the Rahul Mangaonkar Award in 2009, instituted by The Times of India, Ahmedabad, for best use of RTI for common cause.

Case No – 13 Blind man shows the way using RTI:20

Rangpar villagers are happy to see that there is a two km road connecting their village to the highway. The Gando Baval (babool) shrubs along the roadside have been cleared by the gram panchayat authorities. But it was not all that simple to get these basics to this small village of Wankaner taluka in Rajkot district. It took a visually challenged Ratna Ala, 26, to open the eyes of the authorities through the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

TOI had reported the dilapidated condition of this village and the struggle of this man to get the system to work.

"At last some development work has been started by gram panchayat. For the last two years I have been using RTI to get information regarding how many schemes panchayat implemented and how much money they spent on each work. Although I did not get accurate information, it helped them realize that their inefficiency would be exposed," Ala told TOI.

Ala's struggle is on, but he is happy that the road has been constructed and the dense shrubs which were a hindrance to passers-by, is cleared. "I can't see, but I

can feel the joy of villagers,” says Ala. Ala is a farmer and has studied up to Class X.

Rangpar is a tiny village of 750 people, 25 km from Wankaner in Rajkot district. When Ala first confronted the panchayat, it humiliated him. He then met several officials but no one took note. But Ala was determined to carry on till the village got all facilities it’s entitled to under different government schemes.

"Ala’s work is praiseworthy. People support him but not openly as no one wants to confront local authorities. But Ratna stood firm and results are there," says villager Bhurabhai Barot.

Case No – 14 Village Rights Realized.\textsuperscript{21}

For about two years, Suvarana Bhagyawant made rounds of the panchayat office to get her grandfather’s death certificate. Every time, the official there would tell her to come later or pay a bribe of Rs 500 to get the work done.

Suvarana, a resident of the Ambhegaon village, needed the certificate so that her grandmother could apply for the widow pension scheme. Finally, Suvarana filed a query under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. She got the certificate within eight days.

"This piece of paper is like a weapon for the powerless to fight against corrupt establishment," says Suvarana, pointing to an RTI application.

For the villagers of Ambhegaon, the RTI Act has come as long-awaited rain in a drought-prone area, where government files moved only when the villagers were ready to pay bribes.

“Today, we tell the officials that if they do not look at our problems, we will file an RTI query,” says Archana Bhagyawant. She was forced to file an RTI query after the officer demanded a bribe of Rs 150 for the issuance of a new ration card. "I waited for a year and finally when I filed an RTI query, I got it within three weeks. The sarpanch personally delivered it at my home," said Archana.

The villagers then used the Act to get more teachers appointed at two primary schools in Ambhegoan, solved the shortage of water, and got the damaged electric cable repaired. "We also filed RTI queries asking for the health centre's status. Now, doctors have started visiting the centre."

Case no – 15 RTI makes housing dream come true for villager:22

Kashiram Kamabhai Sevana, a resident of Keshavpura village of Viragam taluka in Ahmedabad district, now swears by the Right to Information (RTI) Act. His dream to own a house under Ambedkar Avas Yojana (AAY) has come true after 10 years through RTI.

In 1997-98, Sevana had applied for a house under the AAY scheme, but he did not get any reply from the government till 2004. Later that year, Sevana was shocked to receive a notice from the Department of Social Welfare, asking him why he did not submit a certificate of the work completed for the house he had applied for. The notice further mentioned that the department had already given around Rs 10,000 for the same. After two months the department sent another notice to Sevana asking him to deposit (Rs 10,000) the amount sanctioned by the department in the State Bank of India.

A three-year-long ordeal to prove that he never got any money from the government then started. This ended with the RTI being filed by an NGO in various governments departments.

With the help of Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahel (MAGP), Sevana filed two RTIs with the Social Welfare Department asking for a copy of the work order, date of the cheque posted and the outward copy of the same. “The department couldn’t find any information of what was asked in the RTI,” said Sadhna Pandya of MAGP.

No order was passed in the first appeal. Sevana then approached the State Information Commission, which then directed the concerned authority to pass an order within 15 days. Kashiram was called for the hearing of first appeal in April 2008.

“He was also pressurised by the authorities to withdraw the RTI application, and was even lured with promises of housing benefits. But Kashiram was firm in his decision and didn’t want to withdraw,” said Pandya. While the second appeal is still pending for hearing, the department has already sanctioned a house for Sevana.

“Construction of the house is on in full swing. I am happy with whatever money I have got. Earlier, I didn’t know about the RTI, but I tell people now that it has a lot of power.”
C – Case Studies Addressing Implementation Level Issues:

Implementation is the crux of the success of any programme, because the actual performance of the scheme or programme is nothing but its implementation. If planned excellently with high hopes but the implementation may alters the gamut of plan if implemented worthy. RTI has huge potentials to monitor and regulate the implementation of any programme. It is through RTI that people can help improving implementation.

Case No – 1 Food Security Through the Antyodaya Scheme in Rural Areas:

Shri Anil Ghoda, a volunteer of Sneha Samudaay in Kutch, once visited a family in Rapar block where in male member of the family has turned blind after earthquake, living with his three children and aged mother. His wife had died in earthquake of 2001. His elder son of just 10 yrs age would go for a work to get of Rs.10. The old mother use to beg in the village to feed her grandchildren. Anil was volunteering for an organization called Sneha Samudaay, which was committed for rights of marginalized. He knew that poorest family should get benefit of Antyodaya scheme of the government. Thus, he demanded for information about the Antodaya Anna Yojana in Rapar town and howmuch ration has been provided to Antodaya families in the last six months at PIO, Mamlatdar office.

After a month he again applied asking why he being not given information. He was advice by the mamaletdar to go to fair price shop and get the list. Finally Anil went to commitsssioner with a complaint. It was struggle of 9 months from the day he applied. Finally Anil got the letter form commissioner about the hearing. Anil was pressurized by fare price shop keepers and mamaletdar for not attending the hearing. His parents were given lure of Rs. 20,000 for not sending Anil for hearing. Anil ran away from the house 6 days before the date of the
hearing. He stayed at several places in these six days to reach finally to Gandhinagar in the date of hearing.

Appearing state chief Information commissioner RN Das the Mamlatdar tried to shift the blame to the PDS owners. He also blamed inadequate staff strength in the clerk and deputy Mamlatdar cadre for the failure to reply. State information commissioner demanded why this information was not proactively disclosed under section 4(1) of the act. And show cause as to penalty should not be imposed. Also, why the applicant should not be financially compensate for the harassment suffered by him in making frequent trips to his office as well as in coming all the way from Kutch to Gandhi Nagar for the hearing. SCIC ordered to principal secretary food and civil supply and chief secretary Gujarat and consumer affair to ensure that the list of Antodaya and BPL families be displayed and widely publicized in each fair price shop, Panchayat office, District supply office in the collectorate, along with their web side.

Because of which Government has passed an order to District collector to Mamlatdars of all Taluka of Kutch district ordered to verify the list of Antyodaya families and submit the report within a month. Mamlatdars personally visited each family and verified the Antyodaya families he also ordered that eligible poor people should be included in the Antyodaya and BPL list and rich people should be deleted from the list. Because of this, fake names were found in the list. Mamlatdar sealed the five fair price shops in Rapar taluka and the verification process is going on.

The above mentioned case is nothing but a tried and tested example that how this revolutionary act is useful in addressing issues like ‘corruption’ and ‘selection of wrong set of beneficiaries’. Since the inception of policies and programmes addressing poverty it has been a very common and unsolvable problem that the real poor excluded but the above case proves the potentials of RTI in addressing such issues. It addresses the issue of Food security. It proves that RTI is a very helpful tool for advocacy.
Case No – 2 NREGA Regularized:

Sabarkantha is one of the Districts of Gujarat where NREGA was launched in the very first phase. In Balisana village of its Prantij block, workers got the payment as low as Rs.3 to Rs.7 per day for their work. Sabar Ekata Manch1 and Janpath2 did fact-finding survey in Prantij block and where in, similar situations were found in all the works that were done in February and March after enactment of NREG. Mr. Natu Barot of Sabar Ekata Manch contacted, Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahel for guidance, about how to acquire Muster Roll and Payment Sheets of the works. Since this information comes under pro-active disclosure category, he was advised to just file an application asking the copy of the muster and payment sheets under RTI. He got the information immediately after filing an application by paying actual photocopy charges. When this muster rolls were studied it came into light that, the amount calculated based on the quantum of work is being written in column 7 of the muster Rolls and that which needs to be paid as per minimum wages is being noted in column 10. There is clear instruction in the printed muster rolls to pay whichever is less from column 7 and column 10. These irregularities and violations were brought to the notice of media through press conference. A small video film was produced with the help of Janpath, which screened for the media. The issue was highlighted. The gaps in the state government scheme for implementation of NREG were submitted to the government. This built pressure on the government. The payments made afterwards were all done as per minimum wage provision. And where quantum of work was more the payment doe is more than the minimum wages.

The above mentioned case addresses the issues of irregularities, improper implementation of the schemes and crucial issues like minimum wage. It reveals that RTI is a powerful tool to monitor the proper implementation of any schemes of Rural development.
Case No – 3 RTI Regulates Educational Corruption In Rural Areas:

3–4 students approached Aslambhai a resident of Kalol with a complaint. They said they were being pressurised by their teachers every month to pay money as fees. The demands varied from Rs.10/- to Rs.35/-. If the students did not pay up teachers would turn up at their homes to collect the money. However no receipt was issued against such fee payments. This School is managed by a private trust but receives aid from the State Government. Aslambhai visited the Principal of the high school to enquire why the teachers charged fees from students. The Principal assured him that they had the power to collect whatever fees they wanted at any time. Aslambhai had learnt about the Right to Information Act (RTI Act) recently. He knew that any private body substantially funded by the government was a deemed public authority under the RTI Act and was duty bound to give information on request. Aslambhai drafted an information request and submitted it to the Principal of the high school demanding to know –

1) How much fees can be legitimately collected from students?
2) For what purposes can the high school collect fees from students?
3) Copies of circulars or government orders giving details of the above information.

The Principal was taken aback when he received the information request. He requested Aslambhai to visit his office to discuss the application. He assured Aslambhai that no such fees would be collected from those students who had complained to him. Aslambhai was not content with this assurance. He insisted that the Principal give him a reply in writing that the school did not have any authority to collect any fees except fees for computer classes which the trust had begun at its own expense. The students of this school are happy now because their teachers are no longer demanding any fees from them.

The above mentioned case addresses the issue of education, monitoring and corruption.
Case No – 4 NREGA Implementation Strengthened:

For the first time in the country, a State Information Commission has summoned 21 IAS officers together. These IAS officers had to appear in person before the Jharkhand State Information Commission on January 4th 2007. The State Information Commission summoned these officials, as they did not provide information related to NREGS in the blocks of the state, as sought by Vishnu Rajgadia under the RTI Act. During the second hearing on 9th December 2006, the Commission felt that the Rural Development Department (Jharkhand) did not have the information at the Block level regarding NREGS. Therefore, the Commission summoned the 20 Deputy Commissioners on 4th January 2007 to ask whether they had the Block level information sought by the applicant or not. The Commission also wanted to know from the Principal Secretary of the Rural Development Department (Jharkhand) whether he gets the reports on the implementation of NREGS in the Blocks or not.

The above case addresses the issues like non-adherence to the guidelines, improper maintenance of data and so lesser chances for effective monitoring, redtapism etc. and it exhibits the potentials of RTI in addressing such issues that can accelerate the process of rural development.

Case No – 5 RTI Ensured Implementation of Panchayat Act:23

According to the Gujarat Panchayat Act it is mandatory for every Panchayat to set up Social Justice Committees (SJC). These Committees are statutory bodies meant to ensure the participation of weaker sections of society such as women, dalits and tribals in the decision-making process of the Gram Panchayat. The elected members of the Panchayat nominate adult representatives belonging to these communities to the SJC in every village. The SJC has a distinct identity

23 http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org
within the Panchayat structure. It is empowered to identify developmental requirements in the village with particular emphasis on the needs of these marginalized communities and make recommendations to the Gram Panchayat to include these demands in its budget. The Panchayat has a duty to undertake the implementation of these projects upon receiving sanction from the administration. During the three decades since the passing of the Panchayat Act, these committees have at best remained inactive or at worst exist only on paper. In hundreds of villages these committees just do not exist at all.

A few years ago CHRI started working with a few rural communities in Panchmahals district aimed at increasing awareness about their rights and entitlements and the laws and procedures that relate to their everyday lives. The larger objective of this intervention is to make access to justice a reality for people who need it most. Some of the people we were working with emerged as natural leaders and decided to take on the work of spreading awareness in a similar manner. They are also assisting the larger community with everyday problem solving.

In the course of their work they realized that a large number of problems were related to the working of panchayats and could in fact be addressed at that level itself. So people sat together and brainstormed about solving village level problems. The solution in this case was to increase people’s participation in gram sabhas to make them aware of what welfare schemes were being made for them and what entitlements were available to them. During this period we learnt about the SJC, its roles and responsibilities and the powers with which the SJC members were vested. However we also learnt that these committees were nonfunctional almost everywhere. The brainstorming pointed to the need for activating SJC's mandated to work towards securing equality and social justice within villages.
We undertook a survey in 13 villages to ascertain the existence of the SJC and assess its working. The survey revealed that SJCs were formed only in four villages. In two villages the Talatis (revenue officials) informed us that the names of the members of the SJCs were not readily available with them. They promised to provide us with these names the following week. We collected the list of SJC members the following week. Believe it or not, in three villages, members of the upper castes had been nominated to the SJC in place of dalits and adivasis. In the remaining villages there was no SJC at all. Our curiosity did not end there. With the names of committee members in hand we quizzed them about their roles and responsibilities. It was no surprise that they appeared clueless about the existence of the SJC and had no idea that they were actually members of such a committee.

This survey prompted us to find out the status of these committees in the whole taluka. By this time the new Right to Information (RTI) Act was in place. The easiest way of obtaining the above information would be to make an application under the Act rather than go to every village conducting a survey. Zakir filed the RTI application before the Taluka Development Officer (TDO) who is the designated Public Information Officer (PIO). Zakir asked for the names and addresses of the SJC members in all villages falling within the Kalol Taluka. He also asked for copies of the minutes of the Taluka level meetings of the chairpersons of the SJC. Such meetings are required to be conducted once in six months.

Zakir received a response to his application a week later but not in writing. The TDO’s secretary telephoned Zakir and asked him to visit the office personally. This is contrary to the spirit of the Act which requires nothing more than an application (and fees) from the requestor to get information. Nowhere in the Act or in the rules is there a provision which requires the applicant to appear before the PIO to justify his application. Nevertheless Zakir decided to meet the PIO.
When Zakir met the TDO he was not in the least forthcoming or open. He told Zakir that the formation of the SJC was not the responsibility of the TDO. Instead Zakir was advised to collect the information from the talati of each village if he was so interested. Zakir however argued his case by saying that the Panchayat Act very clearly states that the overall responsibility of ensuring formation and smooth running of the SJC lies with the TDO. The TDO was taken aback. When he realized that the law required him to give the information requested, he agreed. However the information was not available with him so he asked Zakir to come back after a few days. He assured Zakir that he would issue a circular to all the talatis of the taluka asking them to provide him with the necessary information regarding the SJC and the meetings held so far.

After this circular was issued the talatis got busy. As expected the committees in most villages were not even formed. The talatis started forming the committees and completed the required formalities. A mere application under the RTI Act has brought these committees into existence - almost three and a half years after the last Panchayat elections.

Once the committees were formed and the names of members were available, the talatis provided the information to the TDO. The TDO, in turn, got busy compiling this information. He realized that he would not be able to provide the information within the stipulated 30 days. He informed Zakir that he was compiling the information and that it would take some time and requested him not to file an appeal against the delay. He guaranteed Zakir that the information would be provided to him.

After 45 days of filing the application Zakir got the list of SJC members across the taluka. However the minutes of the SJC meetings held at taluka level were not provided. What was in fact provided was merely a copy of the concerned pages of the Panchayat resolution book. This contained a list of names of people who attended the meeting and the dates when these meetings were held. This
information definitely did not qualify as minutes of the meetings. However the TDO was in no position to provide the minutes because in reality these minutes did not exist. This was simply because meetings of the SJC's had never taken place. The entries in the resolution book were a mere formality that was completed to show that meetings were held. When we asked the TDO about the meetings he said that the resolution book was all that was available with him. And for sure he was not lying.

Today across the taluka these committees have become functional. Of the initial 13 villages that we targeted we continue to work in those villages raising awareness amongst its members about the functions of these committees, the motive behind the creation of these committees and the roles, responsibilities and duties of committee members. It will take a long time before anything changes. It is going to be a long journey but we are glad it has begun.

The above case reveal that there are several incidents where even the constitutional provisions are not being implemented here also RTI plays its role even in monitoring the implementation of constitutional provisions related to rural development.

**Case No – 6 RTI Monitors Cooperative Sector:**

The Right to Information (RTI) Act has brought to the fore financial bungling worth approximately Rs 42 crore committed by the employees of Sitapur Cooperative Bank Ltd., Uttar Pradesh. The bungling is shown in the special audit report for the period 1989-90 to 2005-06. The information has been provided by the office of the District Assistant Registrar, Cooperative Societies, Uttar Pradesh, Sitapur. An application addressed to the Public Information Officer (PIO)/ District Assistant Registrar Khalik Ahmad, in October 2007, had sought information on the total embezzled amount; misappropriated amount and

24 The Times of India, June 28, 2008
irregular amount shown in the special audit report from the year 1989-90 to 2005-06 in the District Cooperative Bank Ltd, Sitapur (headquarters). The applicant had sought details about the action taken against the officers and staff, who were held responsible in the special audit report for the mentioned time period. Ahmad had also asked the PIO to provide information about the name and designation of officers and staff against whom a FIR was registered or any departmental action was initiated. The information released by the PIO in November, 2007, showed embezzlement worth Rs 57,201,142.71, misappropriation worth Rs 25,27,91,306.41 and irregular amount to the tune of Rs 10,61,55,390.08, for the bank as pointed out in the special audit report for the years 1989-90 to 2005-06. RC Dubey, PIO, has also revealed that a FIR has been registered against six officials and the services of three of the employees have been terminated. Ahmad, in his application, had also asked for certified photocopies of the special audit report for the said period. "I have not got the copies yet and now I have submitted an appeal in the Commission to ask the department concerned to provide me the copies of the report", said Ahmad. The date of hearing into the matter has been fixed for July 8, 2008.

The above case shows that RTI is helping monitoring and exposing not only government sector but it can help in monitoring the cooperative sector also.

**Case No – 7 Corruption Addressed Through RTI:**

Siyaram Meena from Gram Needar, Karauli District wanted copies of the muster rolls of all the development programmes being executed by the Gram Panchayat of Nidar. To access the information, he approached the Secretary of the gram panchayat on August 1, 2006 under RTI. However, the Secretary did not provide him with the relevant information. The applicant next filed a First Appeal with the First Appellate Authority who happened to be the sarpanch of the gram panchayat, but in vain. The First Appellate Authority also turned a deaf ear to his

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25 Rajasthan State Report; 2007-08
plea and did not provide him the information he sought. Left with little choice, Siyaram filed a Second Appeal with the State Information Commission on October 18, 2006. The SIC took action and directed the gram panchayat to provide the information sought by the appellant. However, the 81 Sachiv gave the appellant wrong and fabricated information, and the applicant again complained about this to the SIC. Under tremendous pressure, the Sachiv at last gave in and provided the correct information to the applicant. The copies of the muster rolls showed serious discrepancies due to which the Sachiv and sarpanch were exposed and jailed. Siyaram’s initiative in filing a RTI application resulted in the unearthing of the underhand dealings being conducted by the gram panchayat in the implementation of the development programmes and schemes.

The above case exhibits the potential of Right to Information in addressing the issue of corruption which is a major vice of rural development management and practice.

**Case No – 8 Getting the Authority Work through RTI:**

Permanand Puri is a priest in a hamlet of Neveda Gram Panchayat situated in Sitapur District. A heated argument over a land dispute led to his being assaulted and injured by local goons. Permanand rushed to the nearest police station to lodge a FIR against the miscreants. The police officials did not pay any attention to his complaint and asked him to leave. A few days later Permanand again went to the police station to get a FIR lodged and this time he carried his medical certificate along. Once again, he was turned away from the police station. The aggrieved then posted a letter to the Asst. Police Commissioner highlighting the details of the injustice done to him. Even this did not work and no help was forth coming from the department. A few days later, he happened to attend a RTI camp organised by Sahbhagi Shikshan at Sitapur. He narrated his experiences there and the SSK workers drafted a letter on his behalf under RTI, demanding

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26 Uttar Pradesh State Report; 2007-08
an explanation from the concerned police officials as to why his complaint was not lodged when he had first reported the matter to them. The next day he reached the police station and handed over the RTI application to the police authorities. On receiving the application, they lodged a FIR with immediate effect assuring him of timely action. The officials, who had earlier turned him out of the police station, not only received him courteously, but also lodged his FIR without much ado.

The above mentioned story addresses the role of right to information in redressing grievances at any level.

Case No – 9 RTI Shakes Delayed Actions:27

Ms. Rita Badyakar is a physically challenged woman from Chandradeepa Panchayat of Jamtara District. She submitted an application for a stipend under the “Swami Vivekanand Powerless Encouragement Scheme” on 19th February 2007 to the Welfare Department. She received neither the stipend nor did she get any information about her application. She filed the application under RTI and asked for information related to her application filed with the Social Welfare Department, like the Daily Progress Report on her application from 19th February 2007 to 15th May 2007, the process followed by the department to solve such matters (provide conduct rule copy), she also wanted the name of the official who was the responsible for the delay and how the department would punish him. When she went to the office to submit this application, the officials were surprised by the content of the application and the department took prompt action and provided all the information related to her application for the stipend within an hour and forwarded the case for further action.

This case is indicates that the RTI makes the people aware in fighting for their right. People can address such issues through RTI

27 Jharkhand State Report; 2007-08
Case No – 10 RTI Exposes Wrong Selection of Beneficiaries: 28

Meera Devi (39), an active member of the women’s network at Hamirpur resides at Darogan Pattikot, Panchayat of Hamirpur Block. After receiving an orientation on RTI in the network meeting organised by PRIA, she shared the issue of disparity in the selection of IRDP beneficiaries in her panchayat. It was suggested that she file an application under RTI. She immediately decided to file an application under the RTI Act to check the same. Meera Devi filed the application at the Block Office and asked for a list of IRDP beneficiaries in her panchayat. After 20 days, she received a letter asking for a fee of Rs. 660/- for the desired information. She was stunned to see the letter and the amount mentioned in the letter as there were very few beneficiaries in her gram panchayat. She appealed under the RTI Act and got the IRDP list free of cost as the Block Office had taken more than 30 days to give her the desired information.

This case addresses the trends amongst the rural community i.e. how rural people started using RTI to monitor the rural development process. The information is not available regarding what she did with the information? Whether the beneficiary selection is ok or not? etc. but it is clear that RTI can be used very effectively to for people’s participation and monitoring.

Case No – 11 RTI Resolves the Hurdles of Procedural Lapses and Delays 29

The members of the block level network of Social Justice Committees of Viramgam Taluka of Ahmedabad District in Gujarat were oriented on the provisions of the RTI Act by Unnati (NGO functioning in Gujarat). The

28 Himachal Pradesh State Report; 2007-08
29 Gujarat State Report; 2007-08
Chairperson of Village Khengaria decided to use the RTI Act to find out the status of the construction of houses for schedule castes after four years of issuance of the work order. They came to know that a total of 422 work orders for the construction of the houses had been issued in the entire district, but money for the same had not been made available. When the Chairperson took up the issue with higher authorities, the District Development Officer (DDO) assured them that all obstacles in releasing the money would be resolved within fifteen days.

This case addresses the issue of procedural lapses and delays and it reveals the fact that RTI act can be used positively in accelerating the process of rural development by influencing the rural development governance.

Case No – 12 RTI Ensures Electricity Connection:30

Munshi Fakeer from Rampur Dabhaee, Karauli District used the RTI Act for the first time, to get information and was successful in his very first attempt. He was a BPL category person who had applied for an electricity connection under the BPL list, but did not get the connection. He repeatedly questioned the concerned Public Authority, but to no avail. Finally, he filed an RTI application on 27th May, 2007 with the concerned department - Assistant Engineer (Electricity Distribution), seeking information about the status of his connection. The applicant got the required information under RTI and also got information on the present position of his electricity connection. Soon after, he was provided an electricity connection in his name.

This case proves that how this act can be used in availing the basic necessities of life which are denied for almost no reason.

30 Rajasthan State Report; 2007-08
Mohini Devi is a resident of Sonasar Panchayat in the Alsisar Panchayat Samiti of Jhunjhunu District in Rajasthan. She was the sarpanch of Sonasar Panchayat from 1996-2000. When she was Sarpanch, in the year 1997, through the gram sabha a proposal for the construction of a road was passed. Rs. 25,000 was released for the work as an advance, but due to some local conflict, the work was stopped. After some time the work was resumed, but under JRY. Finally, the road was constructed and the Junior Engineer submitted the report with all the papers to the Panchayat Samiti, but the Panchayat Samiti did not release the remaining amount of Rs. 75,000. Mohini Devi ran from pillar to post for almost eight to nine years, but neither did she get any information nor the payment. She saw a glimmer of hope in RTI and did he the application. The response that she received from the PS was not adequate and the information given was incomplete. When she confronted the BDO, he told her that the records were old and were not with them. Mohini then went for the First Appeal at the Zila Parishad, but the situation there was no better. She kept pursuing the matter and the response again was not satisfactory. She filed a complaint and finally the District Collector called her in the month of August 2007 and assured her about her payment, but said that she may not get support if she keeps pressure mounted through RTI. After a gap of two months, she managed to get the amount of Rs. 75,000 for which she had waited for almost a decade. However, the battle is half won; she is now waging a fresh struggle to get the interest due on the amount of Rs. 75000.

This case addresses the issue of leakages and deliberate delays which are major hurdle in the process of rural development.

31 Rajasthan State Report; 2007-08
Case No – 14 RTI proves to be a Weapon to Fight Corruption.

For about two years, Suvarana Bhagyawant made rounds of the panchayat office to get her grandfather's death certificate. Every time, the official there would tell her to come later or pay a bribe of Rs 500 to get the work done. Suvarana, a resident of the Ambhegaon village, needed the certificate so that her grandmother could apply for the widow pension scheme. Finally, Suvarana filed a query under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. She got the certificate within eight days. "This piece of paper is like a weapon for the powerless to fight against corrupt establishment," says Suvarana, pointing to an RTI application.

For the villagers of Ambhegaon, the RTI Act has come as long-awaited rain in a drought-prone area, where government files moved only when the villagers were ready to pay bribes. "Today, we tell the officials that if they do not look at our problems, we will file an RTI query," says Archana Bhagyawant. She was forced to file an RTI query after the officer demanded a bribe of Rs 150 for the issuance of a new ration card. "I waited for a year and finally when I filed an RTI query, I got it within three weeks. The sarpanch personally delivered it at my home," said Archana.

The villagers then used the Act to get more teachers appointed at two primary schools in Ambhegoan, solved the shortage of water, and got the damaged electric cable repaired. "We also filed RTI queries asking for the health centre's status. Now, doctors have started visiting the centre." The initiative-supported by the Ratan Tata Trust-now aims to take it to the next level and stop corruption. "We have found out that the ration shops here are always in short supply for rice and wheat. After filing an RTI query, we found out that the government agencies had distributed adequate stock. This means that pilferage is happening on a large scale.

32 http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Mumbai/This-village-has-finally-tasted-the-power-of-RTI/articleshow/4586278.cms
IV – Concluding Note:

We have presented cases covering different areas of rural development governance. The above case shows that RTI can have meaningful intervention in each and every issue of rural administration and management of rural development.

Each and every case mentioned above is significant not only because it describes the solution of particular problem but also it reveals the potentials lied in this revolutionary act to reform the governance system. It is through RTI that people can participate in the planning process and can know exactly how things are being done. They not only can participate but can review whether certain plans and schemes are useful for them or not, people can get sufficient information about the nature of the projects and programmes. This ultimately enables them to give their opinion well in time for required changes or modifications. This will reduce project costs and will increase project outputs manifold. A Right to Information ensures that people can hold public bodies accountable on a regular basis, without having to lay the entire burden on their elected representatives who are themselves often unable to get the information sought in spite of all the resources at their command. Above cases also describe how RTI can bring about transparency and Transparency help people to hold the officials accountable for their mishandling of public time and money. Transparency helps to expose the corrupt and allowing the honest to do their jobs without fear or favor. The right to information is important to check abuse of administrative discretion and to ensure fair process. The right to information is essential for protecting liberties of citizens by making it easier for civil society groups to monitor wrongdoings. In rural areas, numerous schemes for providing food, housing, employment and education are run by the central and State government. These schemes meant for the poorest of the poor in the rural areas are routed through the network of government setup. There is wide spread...
criticism that these funds have been routinely misappropriated or misused on a large scale. In most cases, people do not know about the existence of these schemes, even if they know they do not their entitlements under the scheme, paving the way for them to accept less than their allocation. Furthermore, records are often tampered because no one outside the administration has access to them. By providing entire information on these schemes to the public would make the administration more accountable.

The areas of corruption/inefficiencies were known earlier in the Government, but citizens especially rural citizens could not take recourse. However with the advent of the RTI Act, citizens have found a tool to bring in transparency and accountability at all levels of Governance. In particular, the RTI Act has a much higher impact on the quality of life of the poor and marginalized section of the society.