

**Right To Information Act 2005:  
Educating The Public On Their Rights Under The New Law**

Concept Note Produced by the  
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This note seeks to provide some initial ideas and suggestions on developing a public education strategy for promoting use of the new Right to Information Act 2005.

**Developing Partnerships**

- Publicity / Public Relations / Information Sections in each Ministry – target them with public education materials and encourage them to use their own networks to disseminate information.
- All Ministries – target them with public education materials and encourage them to use their own networks to disseminate information about the RTI Act. For example-
  - Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Department of Audio-Visual Publicity could spearhead the awareness campaign in collaboration with DOPT
  - Ministry of Information Technology – can assist with web-based public education products
  - Ministry of Panchayats – good linkages into the villages – consider also as a target for training, ie. Incorporate RTI into training courses run by the Panchayat department
  - Ministry of Consumer Affairs & Public Distribution – PDS has been a key RTI issue – encourage this Ministry to produce specific public education materials on RTI and PDS and RTI and other consumer issues
  - Ministry of Rural Development – good linkages into the villages
  - Department of Development of North-Eastern Region – could be a good entry-point for targeting a region that can be difficult to reach with conventional public education strategies
- State Governments – need to be brought on board early – liaise with State Government GAD Secretaries as nodal agencies and collaborate on the production of public education materials, eg. DOPT could provide a model Users Guide / How-To brochure which could then be contextualised, published and disseminated by State Government agencies. The field offices of the Department of Information and Publicity should be the vector for disseminating these brochures.
- Partnering with civil society organisations
  - Provide small grant funding for CSO-run public awareness workshops and other outputs (eg. production and/or distribution of Users Guides, street plays, information sessions, RTI newsletter, etc)
  - CHRI has email network of more than 200 RTI advocates – can easily keep them updated and encourage them to spread the word
  - The National Campaign on the People’s Right to Information also has State-based networks that can be tapped to raise public awareness

**Promotion & Dissemination Channels**

- **Newspapers**
  - The Indian Express and Times of India have already been very supportive of State RTI campaigns (eg. in Delhi in 2004, the Indian Express formally partnered

- with Parivartan on the “Tell Them You Know” campaign) – DOPT could try to formally collaborate with one or two national papers in Hindi and English on a public education campaign
- Publish advertisements in leading dailies (English and Hindi) on key issues of implementation like names and addresses of PIOs, Appellate Authorities and the Central Information Commission – the help of DAVP can be enlisted for this purpose.
- **Television and Radio**
    - Develop radio jingles and educational programmes on RTI for broadcast in the major regional languages through AIR.
    - Develop television spots announcing the implementation of the RTI Act through Doordarshan network along the lines of advertisements developed by various Ministries on themes like sexual harassment, prenatal sex determination, water conservation, HIV/AIDS etc. Private channels may be targeted in due course.
    - Feed stories to the electronic news media on implementation – ideally, you should offer try to organise interviews with the Prime Minister and/or Minister in charge of Personnel and Training Department because the media would be keen to get useful news sound-bites from such key players
    - Develop key current affairs programmes – get them to report on progress in implementing the RTI Act– encourage them to run panel discussions with RTI users, activists and government officials
  - **Internet**
    - DOPT’s RTI website – this should be launched as a matter of priority and its launch should be accompanied by fanfare to ensure it is covered by the media – the site needs to be kept updated to encourage people to use it regularly – as much information as possible should be uploaded onto the site (including the DOPT Implementation Action Plan and key DOPT circulars) b/c this will also encourage people to check the site more regularly as this information will be of interest to the public and of practical use to CSOs campaigning around implementation in their own local jurisdictions
    - Links to other portals and websites is important – Feed information to key websites like the new National CSO RTI site ([www.righttoinformation.org](http://www.righttoinformation.org)) India Together ([www.indiatogether.org](http://www.indiatogether.org)) and popular portals like IndiaTimes.com, Rediff.com
    - All departmental websites should develop an RTI section of their own as well as a link to the DOPT website.
  - **Other Vectors**
    - Organise national competitions to draw attention to the issue – Poster and Essay competitions should be held in institutes of creative arts such as JJ School of Arts, National Institute of Design etc. The best entries in the poster competitions could be used in the poster campaign.
    - Spread awareness about RTI using posters through the post offices network, telecom offices at the field level and public sector banks. The help desk in these offices should be supplied with simple pamphlets on RTI.
    - Organise exhibition of short films on RTI through cinema halls.
    - DOPT should encourage States to target all community information centers in the districts and tehsils (taluks) for the poster campaigns. RTI pamphlets and

- brochures should be available in these centers along with directory of PIOs, APIOs, AAs and the relevant Information Commissions.
- Poster campaigns should target all long distance railway coaches to start with in the manner of tourism departments which have promoted tourist spots in their states and gradually spread to all trains running in the country.
  - Poster campaigns should target railway stations and airports in all urban centers to increase visibility and outreach.
  - Lobby for inclusion of RTI into school and college syllabus in the medium-term to inculcate values of transparency, accountability and responsibility amongst youth.

### **Products**

All products should be produced in multiple languages to encourage the widest uptake by disseminators as well as the public themselves:

- Weekly press releases updating on progress
- How-to Brochures / Users Guides - recognising that DOPT has substantial implementation responsibilities already, production of these products could be outsourced immediately (eg. to CSOs with experience in this area at the State level) and DOPT could then be responsible for disseminating the products through government channels
- Radio jingles / TV spots – these have been shown to be very effective in other social awareness campaigns (eg. HIV/AIDS awareness) – production could be outsourced (CHRI will develop a few TV spots and radio programmes on RTI by the end of 2005)
- Short films of five minute duration to be commissioned in Hindi and the regional languages (CHRI is already planning to make one short film and one documentary on RTI.).

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