

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON KARNATAKA RIGHT TO
INFORMATION ACT HELD AT MAGADI TOWN, BANGALORE
RURAL DISTRICT ON 31ST JULY 2004

The First workshop under the CREAT/CHRI campaign on Right to Information (RTI) was held on 31st July 2004 at the Hosur Shetty Kalyana Mantapa, Magadi Town, Bangalore. The program was organised by CREAT, Bangalore, CHRI, New Delhi and Chiguru Balavikasa Samsthe, Magadi. More than 50 participated in the workshop.

The objective of the workshop was to create awareness among the rural citizens about the basic concepts of RTI in general and the Karnataka Right to Information Act (KRIA) in particular. The program was started with a welcome and introductory remarks by Smt.Saroja, President of Chiguru Balavikasa Samsthe. She explained the need for right to information in a democracy and also the legal basis of RTI. Smr.Saroja explained the activities of CREAT and CHRI and the campaign that has been launched in Karnataka to promote awareness about KRIA.

Mr.Y.G.Muralidharan, CREAT, made a presentation on the provisions of KRIA and also the various areas where it can be used. He said that unless people have information about the working of the Government they cannot participate effectively in the decision making process. He said that representative democracy is being replaced by participatory democracy and people have to make use of KRIA to participate in all developmental activities.

Mr.Muralidharan said that Karnataka was one of the first states to make an attempt to bring in the legislation on RTI. He said that KRIA was enacted in 2000 and the rules were framed in 2002. Explaining the provisions of KRIA he said that KRIA is applicable to all government departments, offices, institutions and also all those which have been funded by the State Government. Mr.Muralidharan said that there is a need to include some private institutions using government money in the KRIA.

Mr.Muralidharan explained the various concepts used in KRIA and also the procedure to be followed for obtaining information. He said RTI was intended to bring in more transparency and accountability in government working. He explained the concept of Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) and urged the participants to make use of KRIA for their benefit.

Considering the educational background of the participants Mr.Muralidharan laid more emphasis on the various issues where KRIA can be used to their benefit. Most of the participants were women and representatives of other NGOs, self help groups and those working as Anganawadi Workers. Mr.Muralidharan called upon the participants to file applications and seek information. He said that CREAT and CHRI would assist the citizens in getting

information. He cited the examples of MKSS and Parivartan and said Magadi should be a model town in Karnataka as far as RTI is concerned. He said CREAT and CHRI have selected Magadi as a pilot project for KRIA.

Prof (Miss) Manu, Coordinator, CREAT, explained the procedure for filing applications and also the various columns in Form A. She said that mere filing applications will not be sufficient. We need to follow it up to the logical end. She said that there are many areas for which KRIA can be used. But we need to start with small issues and achieve success. She asked the participants to identify major problem areas of Magadi and then file applications.

Mr. Maranna, Reporter, Prajavani and also a teacher spoke about the many problems of Magadi Town. He said that even press reporters are not allowed in the meetings of Town Municipality. The details of budget and development works are not available to the press, let alone the public. He said that CREAT and CHRI should be thanked for having taken up an important project in Magadi. He said he will be ready to work with the organisers. He also said that KRIA is unknown to government officials and the peoples representatives. There is a need to educate them about KRIA.

Ms. Jayalakshmi, President of the Magadi Taluk Consumers Association, thanked CHRI, CREAT and Chiguru Balavikasa Samsthe for having organised this programme.

After a brief discussion and question and answer session it was decided to file applications under KRIA seeking information on the following issues:

Budget details of Magadi Taluk Municipality
Details under Local Area MLA/MP Fund
Details of expenses under Sarvashikshana Abhayan
Details of food grain allotment to Fair Price Shops in Magadi Town

It was also decided that the participants will meet again to discuss the modalities and fill up the applications with the assistance of CREAT.