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Government of India
Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
Department of Personnel and Training

North Block, New Delhi
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REPORT ON THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON RTI HELD ON 9.1.2014

The National Workshop on RTI was held at Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi on 9th January, 2014. The workshop was inaugurated by Shri V.Narayanasamy, Hon'ble Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions and PMO. The gathering was addressed by Shri T.Chatterjee, Director(IIPA), Dr. S. K. Sarkar, Secretary (Personnel), Smt.Sushma Singh, Chief Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission and Hon'ble MOS(PP).

2. The inaugural session was followed by two sessions. The first session had a panel discussion. The panellists were-

- (1) Shri Satyananda Mishra, former Chief Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission
- (2) Shri Rajinder Singh, Magsaysay award winner
- (3) Shri Prabhu Chawla, Editorial Director-New Indian Express
- (4) Smt. Maja Daruwala, Director-CHRI
- (5) Shri Manoj Joshi, former Joint Secretary (RTI) in DOPT

Dr R. K. Verma, Addl. Commissioner Central Excise, Customs and Service Tax-Indore was the moderator.

3. The second session comprised of presentations on best practices on RTI, success stories and reports of RTI fellows 2012. Following were the presenters:-

Presenter on best practises on RTI	Topic
Rakshita Swamy, New Delhi	Indira Awaas Yojana, MGNREGA
Dr. Ganatre & Dr. Derashri, Gujarat	Digitization of Records, Gujarat Vidhan Sabha
Shrikar Pardeshi (IAS), Pune	SARATHI, Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal corporation
Anil Kumar Bharadwaj & Payal Mittal, New Delhi	MCA21, Ministry of Corporate Affairs
Sanjeev Saxena, New Delhi	RTI Online web portal, DOPT

Kunal Shaw, New Delhi	RTI Kiosks
Sunaina S Valecha, Bangalore	Central Monitoring Mechanism, Odisha
Bhaskar Prabhu, Pune	An experiment of Citizens & Public Authority handshake, Maharashtra

4. Presentations of success stories were made by Shri Kamal Tak, Shri Gautam Kothari, Shri Nadeemuddin, Shri P.Kachare on behalf of Shri Vivek Velankar and Ms.Dhvani Desai. The RTI fellows of 2012 viz. Shri Manu Moudgil and Shri Harsha Raj Gatty made the presentations of their fellowship reports.

5. The learnings from the workshop are as follows:-

(1) From the inaugural session:

- (1) There is a need to have a key resource centre- a hand holding centre which can help in reducing the pendency of RTI applications.
- (2) The role for CIC to monitor compliance of Section 4 of RTI Act has been increased. A separate section on the compliance mechanism of the guidelines on suo motu disclosure needs to be included in the annual report of CIC.
- (3) Hard work has to be done by not only the Government of India, but also State governments including various PSUs to strengthen the proactive disclosure, dissemination of information, to adopt and learn new means of disposing of applications like through online mode. Combined efforts of NGOs and civil society organisations are required to help State Governments whose performance is not satisfactory.

(2) From the Panel discussion (Views of the Panellists):

- (1) Digitization for legacy/old records has to be done. Since everything these days is typed on a word processor, it can be easily uploaded. Every piece of paper that is generated in the Public Authority should be directly uploaded to the website, then there would be nothing left to disclose.
- (2) All Public Authorities should publish a list of information that they would NOT be disclosing, in the form of a negative list of non disclosure.
- (3) There is a need of proper disclosure of information on government websites. The functioning and quality of websites should be improved, as many websites are not functioning properly.
- (4) Concealing information is also a crime. Punishment for hiding information should be decided if it is discovered that the official has an ulterior motive in hiding it.
- (5) Every organization should be ready to disclose its DNA i.e. information about the organisation.

- (6) The Tarun Bharat Sangh, an NGO, does not avail any grants from government but it discloses all information about the organization on its website.
- (7) Proactive disclosure is not possible without a constant spur from civil society and also the threats that the civil society has to bear with.
- (8) Other nations such as Maldives, Bangladesh and Nepal are now trying to replicate our Act.
- (9) In Gujarat, 70 police stations have adopted the suo motu disclosure template for section 4.1.b.
- (10) A good mechanism could be to list out the departments that are not disclosing the mandatory information. This could then, through the medium of a committee, be generated as a report. This will be a reasonable mechanism to put pressure on the govt departments to comply.
- (11) A public audit is essential and if these reports are made public, it will play a large role in compliance.

(3) From presentations of Best Practices on RTI:

- 1) Ms Rakshita Swamy in her presentation tried to explain that apart from making RTI suo motu disclosure under section 4, efforts of Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) are to make those disclosure understood by the citizen in a better way. MORD is putting efforts in shifting the approach from **Management information system (MIS)** to **Janta Information System (JIS)**, where the information stored in the database is accessible to citizen without any restrictions. This empowers the citizens giving them opportunity not only to know how programmes are implemented but also facilitated them to ask questions & issues related to them. The schemes of MORD like PMGSY and MGNREGA have features like open MIS, entitlement cards, wall paintings and social audit.
- 2) Dr Ganatra & Dr Derashri in their presentation described the digitization initiatives of Gujarat state administration to ensure preservation and maintenance of public records of historical & Archival importance. In the presentation, they mainly described the document handling and archiving practices of the two Public Authorities viz Gujarat Vidhan Sabha and Gujarat Archival Department.
- 3) Shri Shrikar Pardeshi, Commissioner Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation made a presentation on SARATHI. This Initiative is named as SARATHI, which is the acronym for **S**ystem of **A**ssisting **R**esidents **A**nd **T**ourist through **H**elpline **I**nformation, the aim of which is to overcome communication barriers and expeditiously provide complete and standardized information to the citizens, to access basic services of Municipal Corporation, using modern tools of Information Technology.
- 4) Shri Anil Kumar Bharadwaj of Ministry of Corporate Affairs made a presentation on MCA 21. It is a secure portal that offers availability of all

registry related services and public access to corporate information. The information can be accessed/ availed from anywhere, at any time that best suits the corporate entities, professionals and public at large

- 5) Shri Sanjeev Saxena of NIC made a presentation of RTI online portal of DOPT. It is a facility to file RTI applications and appeals online with the provision to make payment of RTI fees through credit/debit cards and internet banking through SBI and its 5 associate banks. The replies to the applications and appeals are also given online.
- 6) Shri Kunal Shaw made a presentation on RTI information kiosks in various states such as e-soochna-Himachal Pradesh, lok vani project- Uttar Pradesh, bhoomi project-Karnataka, e-mitra- Rajasthan, e-jan sampark project- Chandigarh.
- 7) Shri Bhaskar Prabhu made a presentation of the joint initiative of CSOs and government departments in awareness generation on RTI. His presentations were on mass awareness campaign on Right to Information Act, 2005 at western railway- Mumbai and at *ward offices* of Brihan Mumbai Mahanagarपालikas.
- 8) Sunaina S. Valecha made a presentation on RTI Central Monitoring Mechanism by Information and Public Relations Department, Government of Odisha. This is a web-based centralized database system hosted on web server provided by NIC, Govt. of India that provides information on RTI to citizens for accessing all the Public Authorities.

(4) From presentations on success stories on RTI :-

- 1) A success story by Shri Vivek Velankar was presented by Shri P. Kachare of YASHADA. The success story was about making public the model answer sheets of State Secondary School examination board, Maharashtra after the exams are over. He also presented a success story on publishing on website of the professional educational institutions, the basis for charging of fees by them. A reputed university in Pune told its students that the retention period of evaluated answer sheets will be 6 months but allowed access to the answer sheets only till 10 days in accordance with an ordinance of the University. This was got revised to 6 months with the efforts of Shri Velankar.
- 2) Ms. Dhvani Desai presented an animation film which showed the problems faced by four different people in four different parts of India and how RTI could have helped them. The film is slated for release in movie theatres and is also on Youtube in the films divisions Youtube channel. It will also be shown on Doordarshan.
- 3) Shri Gautam Kothari presented a success story relating to an IT park that was coming up in his region (MP). He investigated the matter and got the tender for supply of tiles cancelled which could have resulted in loss of funds. He presented another success story of SEZ, Pritampur

district in Madhya Pradesh where electricity is supplied by Madhya Pradesh Audyogik Kendriya Vikas Nigam. He took out all the information through RTI and did some calculations of his own and put forward the case in appropriate regulatory body as a result of which price came down from Rs.5.05 to Rs 3.75 per unit. In another case in an industrial area, the Municipal Corporation imposed a new export rate due to which industries there had to pay around Rs 75 crores. He took out information through RTI and put forward the case in front of government explaining that municipal corporation does not need this much money as the current budget is meeting all its present and future expenditures. The case was ruled in favour of the industries, thanks to RTI.

- 4) Shri Kamal Kumar Tak presented success stories of an Anganwadi in Rajasthan and a case of Raj Kumar working in Gujarat in ISRO who had completed polytechnic engineering from Jaipur but had not received his certificate yet. He had been working for almost a year and had been issued a notice that if he was unable to produce his certificate he would be fired from his job. He made many trips to his college, wrote to many officials, but in vain. But as soon as he filed an RTI, his certificate was received and he also saved his job.
- 5) Shri Nadeem Udeen presented success stories where with his efforts it was established that information related to not only of the applicant but any person's life and liberty is applicable. In another case, with his efforts, the Grah Dikshit report of Rajdhani Chayan Ayog of Himachal Pradesh which was kept undisclosed for almost 8 years has been ordered by SIC for uploading on website.

(5) From presentation of fellowship reports :-

- 1) Manu Moudgil, an RTI fellow of 2012 presented his fellowship report on "Analyzing victimization of RTI Applicants and strategies for their protection".
- 2) Harsha Rajgatty, another fellow of 2012 presented his fellowship report on "Study of capacity building interventions among the marginalized to utilize RTI effectively".

6. The presenters of the case studies on best practices on RTI and success stories have been issued certificates. The write ups on the best practices have been included in the compendium of best practices on RTI (Volume – I) which has been uploaded on the website of DOPT.

******* DISCLAIMER *******

The views expressed by the Panellists and presenters are their personal views and do not necessarily conform to the views of the Government in general and Department of Personnel and Training in particular in so far as they relate to the Right to Information Act, 2005 and rules thereunder.

Department of Personnel and Training