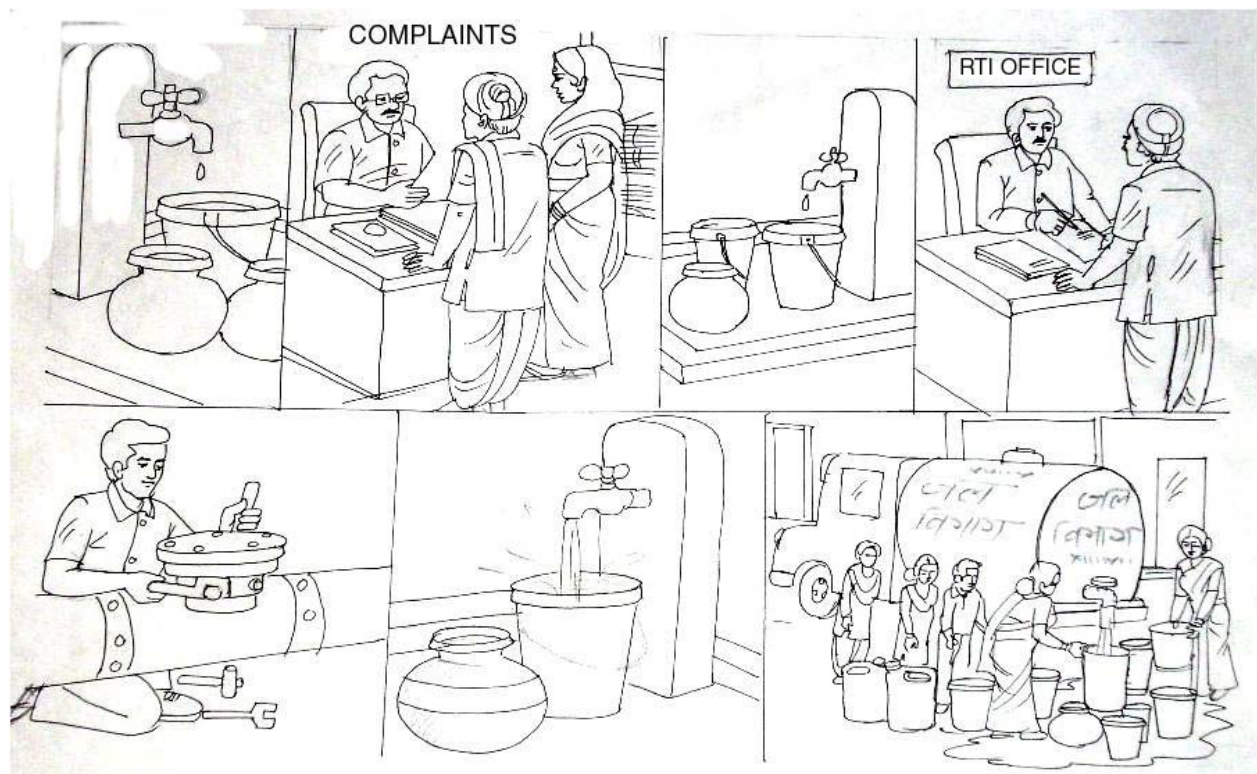


# SAFEGUARDING THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Report of the People's RTI Assessment 2008

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**RTI Assessment & Analysis Group (RaaG)  
and  
National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI)**



July 2009

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Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi  
JANPATH, Ahmedabad  
Meghalaya RTI Movement, Shillong  
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*This assessment was financially supported to a great extent by a grant made by Google.org to Shekhar Singh*

## METHODOLOGY AND COVERAGE

*The goal of this assessment is to ascertain how India's nascent right to information regime might be further strengthened.*

### PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

- Over 17,000 persons were individually interviewed across ten states and the National Capital Region of Delhi, including over 1000 PIOs and heads of offices/departments.
- 630 focus group discussions organised. Of these
  - 487 in 240 sample villages in 30 districts of the ten sample states.
  - 143 focus group discussions in four municipal wards in each of the 30 district headquarters
  - Nearly 19,000 people participated in these focal group discussions (FGDs).

*In total, over 35,000 people were interviewed, in villages, towns and cities across ten states and Delhi.*

- 1027 public authorities' offices were inspected both in the rural and urban areas.

*Over 800 RTI applications were filed in various public authorities across the country.*

- Data regarding over 25,000 RTI applications analysed.
- Over 60 papers and magazines, in English, Hindi and six regional languages analysed for content and coverage.
- Over 5000 case studies extracted, depicting successes, failures and peculiarities of the RTI regime.

### SCOPE AND COVERAGE

- Sample comprised 10 states and Delhi, with 3 districts in each state and 8 villages in each district selected randomly.
  1. Assam – *Dibrugarh, Karbi Anglong, Nalbari*
  2. Andhra Pradesh – *Ananthapur, Nalgonda, Visakhapatnam*
  3. Gujarat – *Kutch, Narmada, Mahesaha*
  4. Karnataka – *Bijapur, Dakshin Kannada, Haveri*

5. Maharashtra – *Aurangabad, Yavatmal, Raigad*
  6. Meghalaya – *South Garo Hills, West Khasi Hills, Ri Bhoi*
  7. Orissa – *Kalahandi, Deogarh, Kendrapara*
  8. Rajasthan – *Dungarpur, Jhunjhunu Karauli*
  9. Uttar Pradesh – *Azamgarh, Bijnor, Jhansi*
  10. West Bengal – *Burdwan, Cooch Behar, Uttar Dinajpur*
- **365** public authorities (PAs) surveyed across the country
    - Ten Central Government,
    - Five each from the 10 sample state governments, and Delhi,
    - Five each from each of the 30 district headquarters, and
    - Five each at the village level in each of the 30 districts.
  - **Rural PAs** included:
    1. Pradhan’s office
    2. Patwari’s office
    3. Village school
    4. Ration shop
    5. Sub-health centre, or village health worker, or Primary Health Centre
  - At the **District level**:
    1. District Collector’s Office
    2. District Education Department
    3. District Civil Supplies Department
    4. District Medical Officer or Hospital
    5. Zila Parishad/ District Council
  - At the **State headquarters**:
    1. Police Department
    2. Department of Land and Revenue
    3. Public Works Department
    4. Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
    5. Department of Women and Child Development

- **Ten Central Government public authorities were:**
  1. Ministry of Home Affairs
  2. Directorate-General of Foreign Trade
  3. Ministry of External Affairs
  4. Ministry of Environment and Forests
  5. Ministry of Culture
  6. Department of Disinvestment
  7. Ministry of Agriculture
  8. Ministry of Railways
  9. National Commission on Backward Classes
  10. Department of Personnel and Training

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## RTI AND THE PUBLIC

### *Awareness*

- Nearly 65% of the randomly selected inhabitants of ten state headquarters, and Delhi, stated that access to information, especially government information, would significantly help them solve many of their basic problems.
- In rural areas and district headquarters the overall percentage was similar, with nearly 65% of the FGDs concluding that access to information was helpful.

*The justification and rationale for the RTI Act is not the demand for the act (as many might not have yet heard of it, or know how to use it), but the demand for information, especially as a means of empowerment to address some of the basic problems facing the people.*

- 45% of our randomly selected **urban respondents** (from state capitals and the national capital) claimed that they knew about the RTI Act. In nearly 40% of the over 140 **FGDs in district headquarters**, at least one or more person knew about the RTI Act. However, in only 20% of the over 400 **FGDs organized in villages** was there even a single person who knew about the RTI Act.
- In the rural areas, most people got to know about the RTI Act through news papers (35%), followed by television and radio, and friends and relatives (10% each), and NGOs (5%).
- Among urban applicants, nearly 30% learnt about the Act from newspapers, 20% from NGOs and a similar number from the TV, and almost 10% learnt about the RTI Act from friends and relatives.
- Unfortunately the government was not a major force in raising public awareness about the RTI Act.

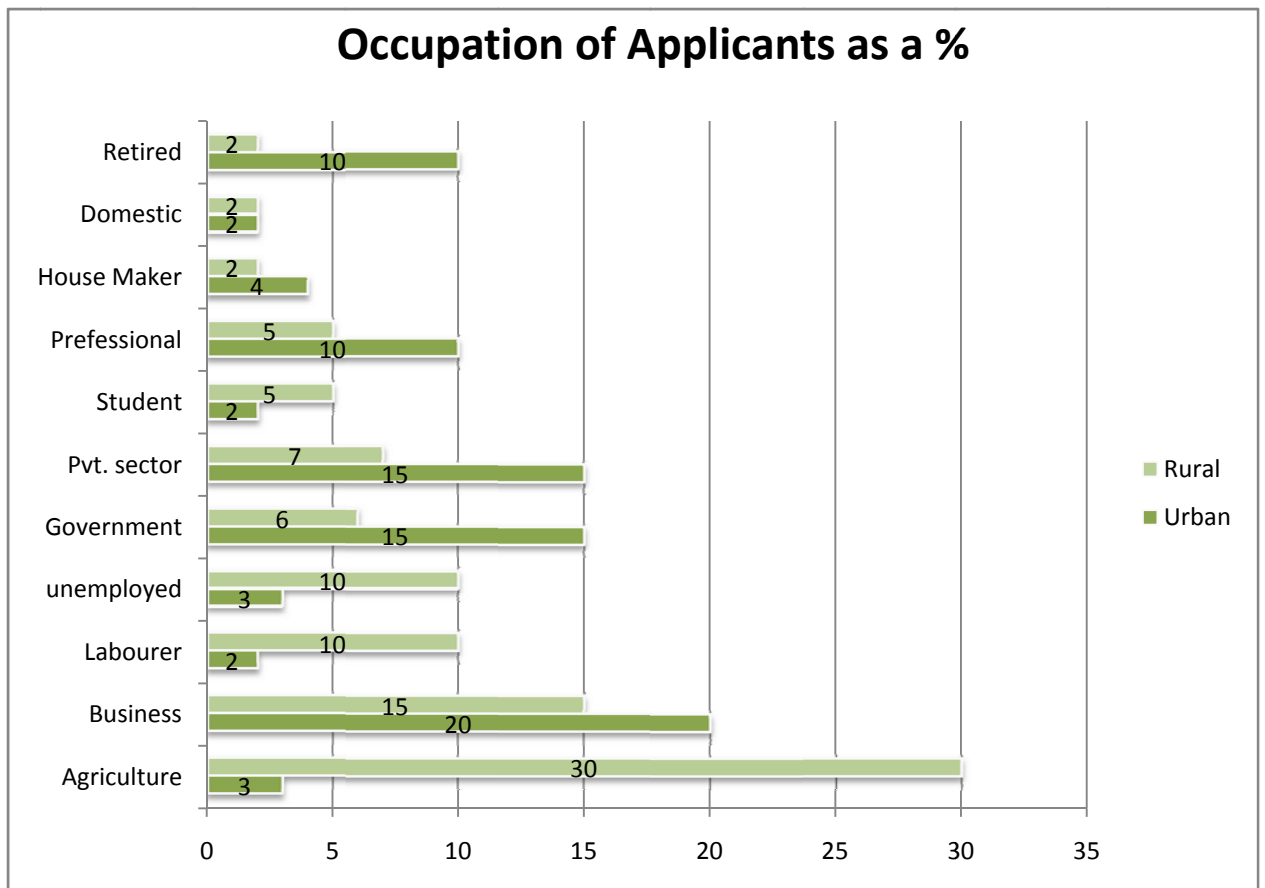
### *Number of RTI Applications Filed*

- An estimated 400,000 applicants from the villages of India filed RTI applications in the first two and a half years of the RTI Act.

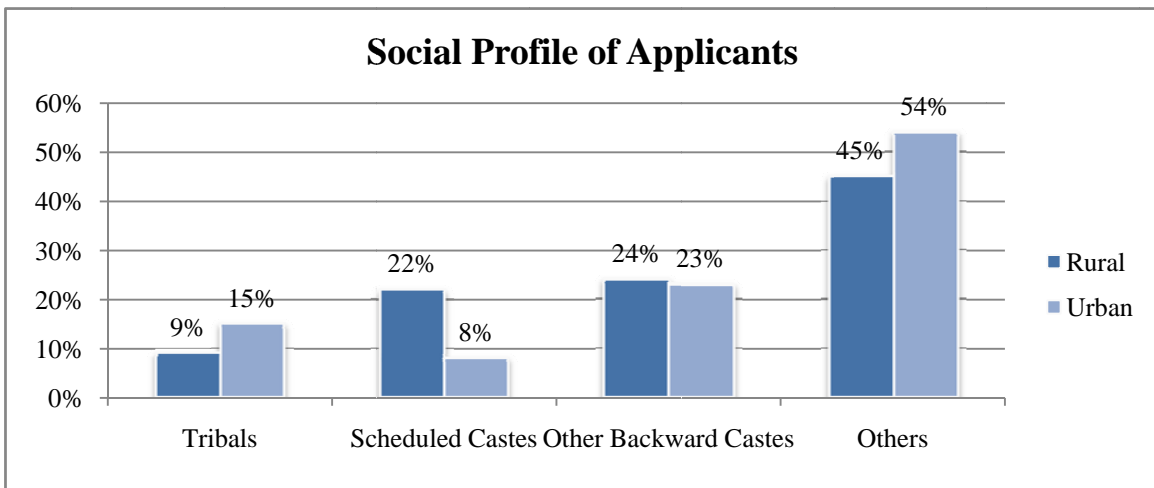
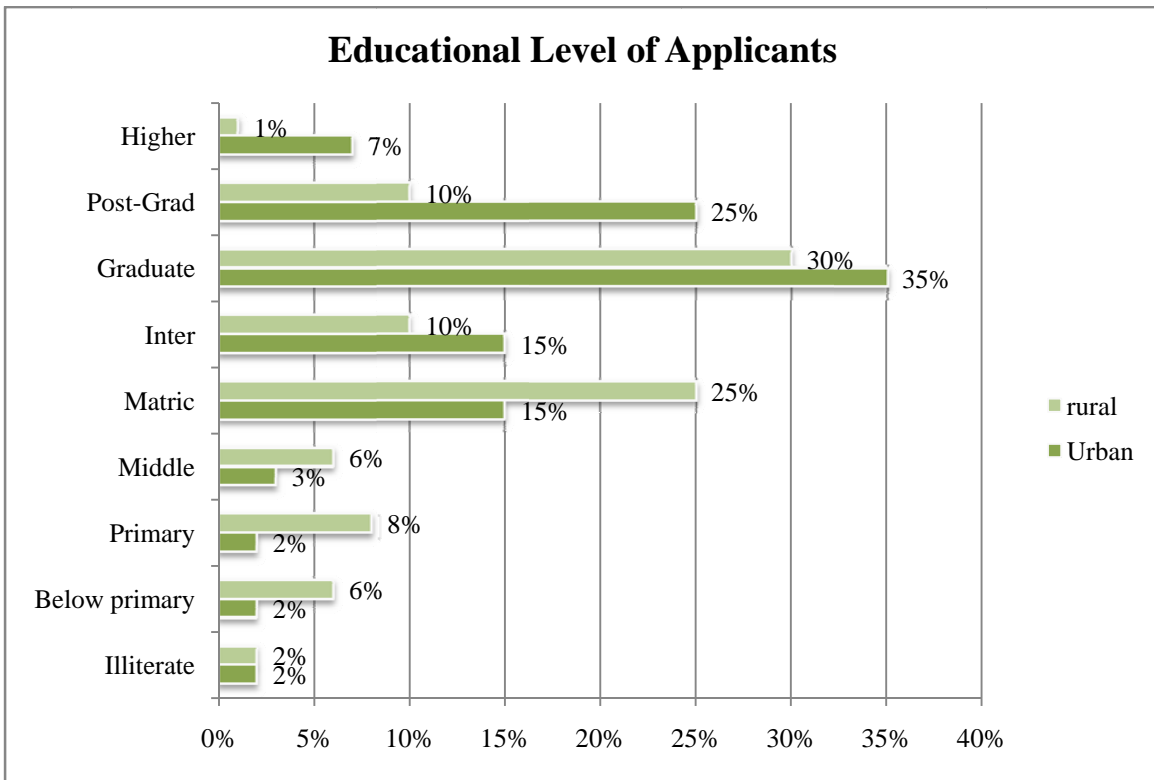
- An estimated 1.6 million applications were filed in urban areas in the first two and a half years of the RTI Act.
- Disturbingly, over 90% of the rural applicants and 85% of the urban applicants were males.

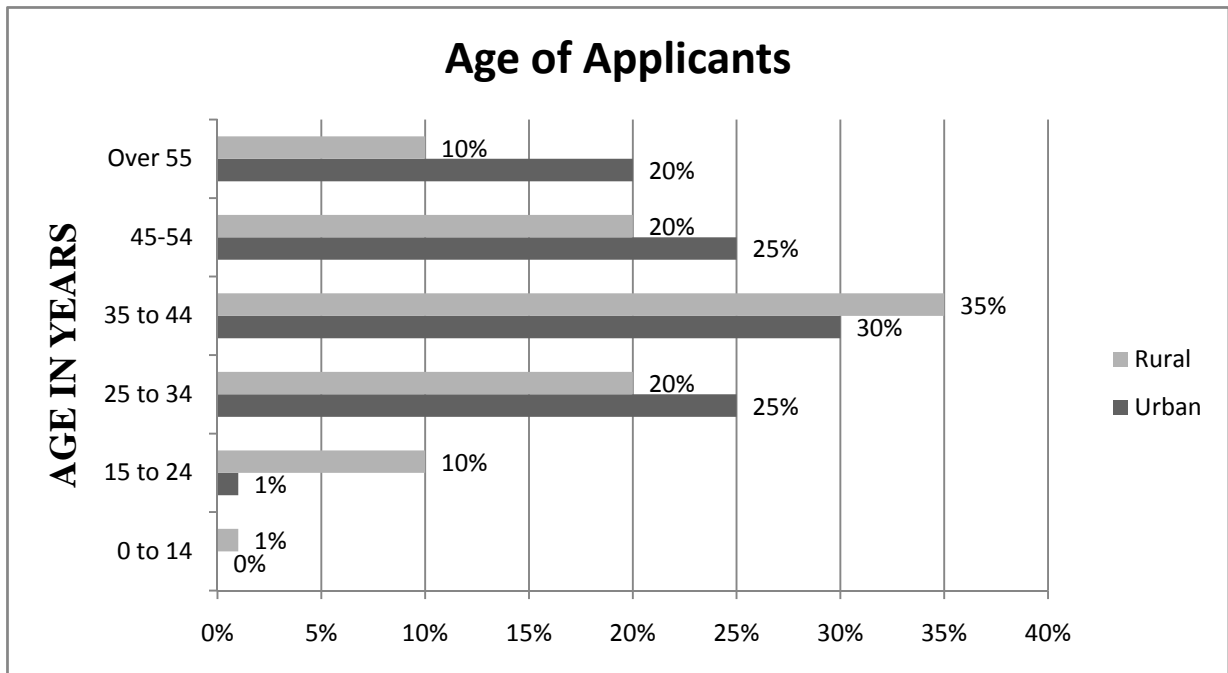
***Profile of the RTI Applicants***

- Among the **rural** participants, about 30% of the sample applicants belonged to the economic weaker class of society, having a below-poverty-line (BPL) or Antyodaya ration card. Nearly 65% had above-poverty-line (APL) cards.
- Among the urban applicants, nearly 15% of the sample applicants belonged to the economic weaker class of society, having a below-poverty-line (BPL) or Antyodaya ration card. Nearly 85% had above-poverty-line (APL) cards.



- ***Note: There are very few government employees, discounting the myth that mainly government servants are using the RTI Act. Surprisingly, there were very few students.***

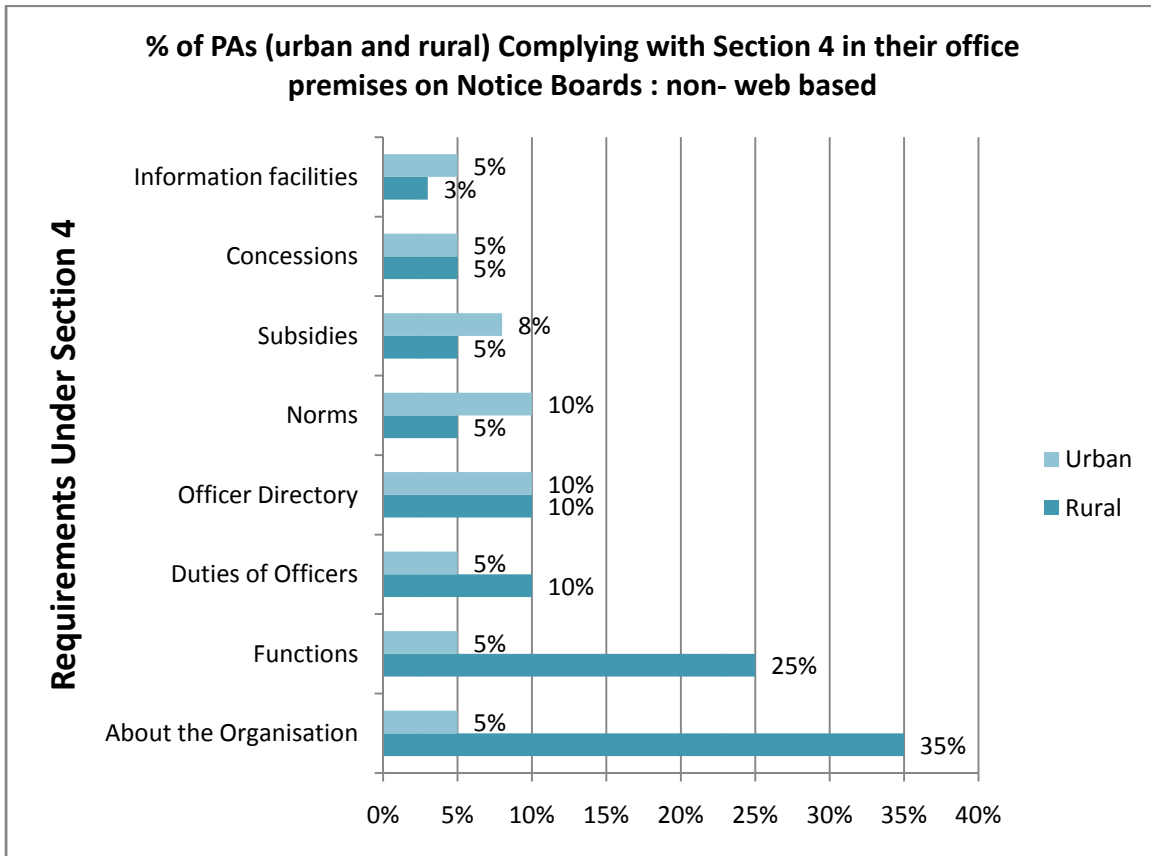
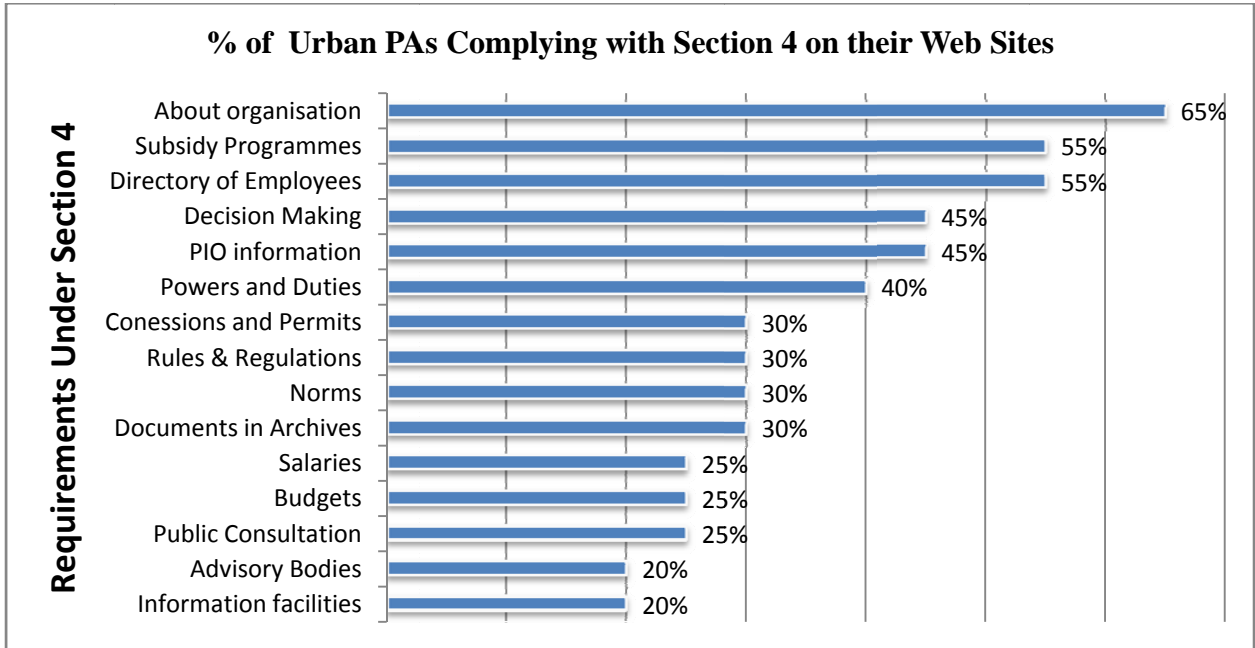




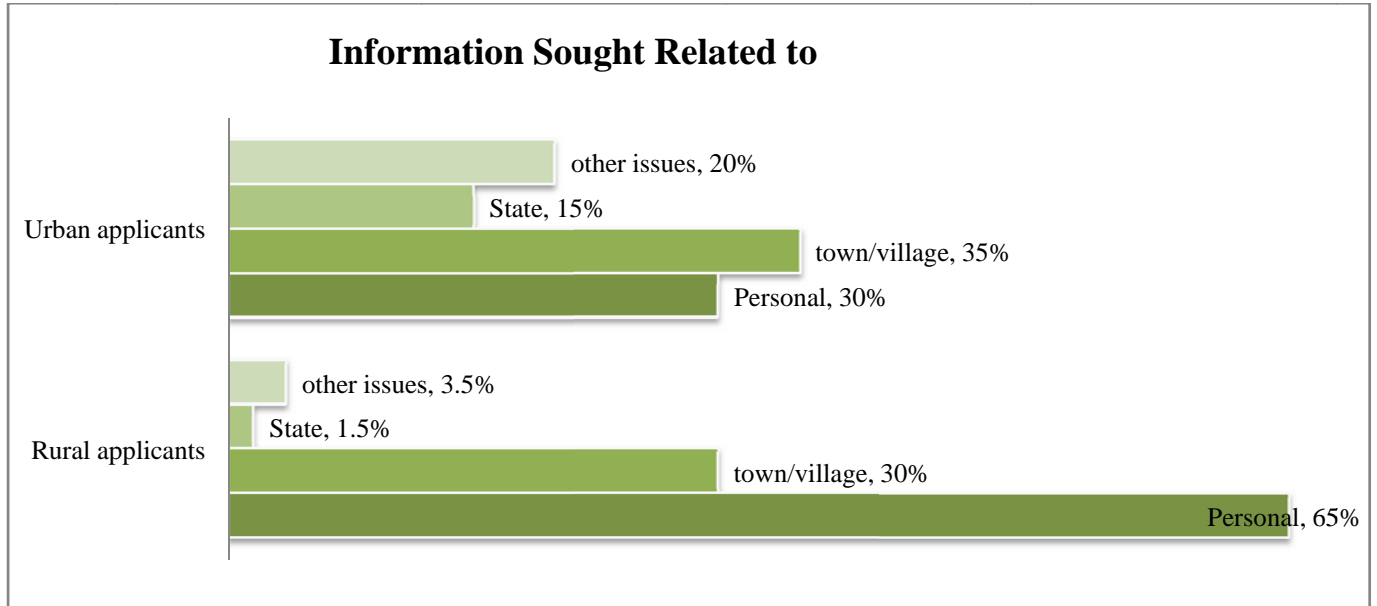
#### ***Constraints in Filing RTI Applications***

- Over 40% of the rural respondents stated that the most important constraint they faced in exercising their right to information was harassment and threats from officials.
- Nearly 15% of urban respondents cited harassment from officials and uncooperative officials as the most important constraint.
- In many of the villages across the country there was a threat perception among the villagers and they were hesitant to file RTI applications even when requested to by the research team.
- Nearly 30% of the villagers filing RTI applications for us reported that they were discouraged by the PIO from filing the application.
- Very difficult to get addresses of PIOs, especially for district and sub-district levels.
- There are 88 different sets of RTI rules in India and no one place where they are all available. Differing rules mean differing amounts of fee to be paid, different modes of payment and even of filing applications.
- Some states insist on sending even letters in the state's language, making it impossible for people from other states to access information (despite section 4(4) of the RTI Act).

*Proactively Available Information*

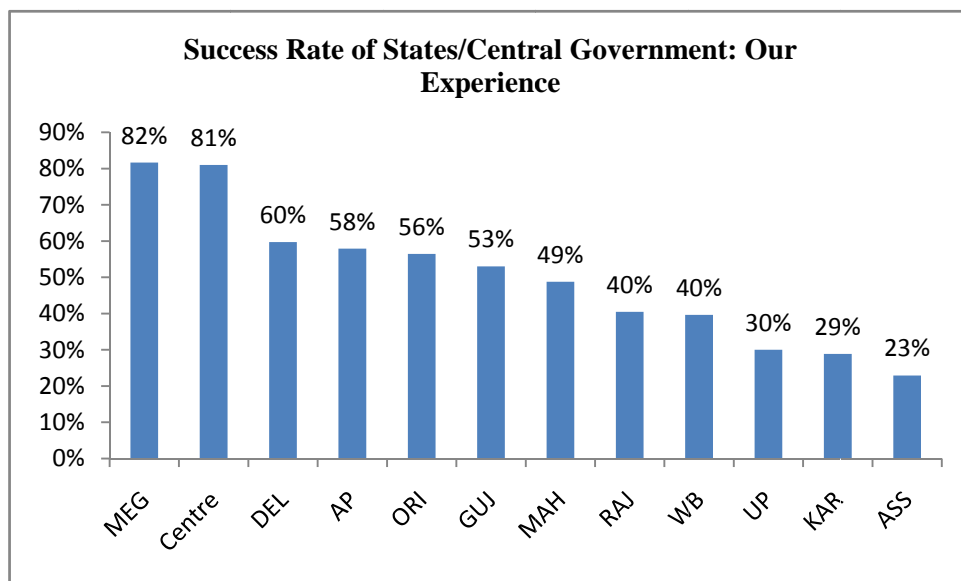


**Type of Information Sought**



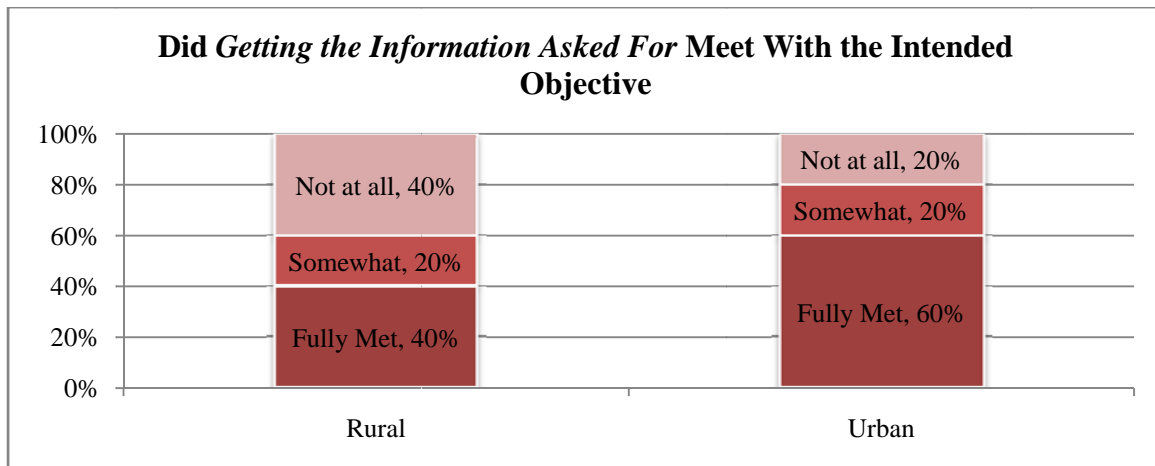
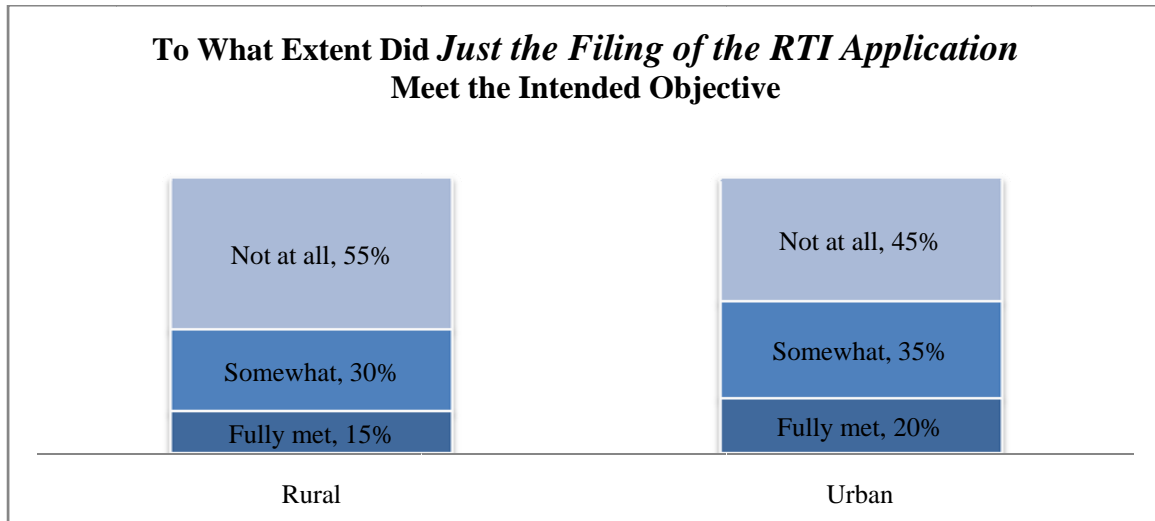
**Success Rates**

- Data supplied by the government indicates a success rate of 70/100, with a full mark for providing complete information and half a mark for part information.
- The actual applicants who were interviewed reported a success rate of around 60/100.
- Our own experience with the RTI applications we filed indicated a success rate of 55/100. There was, of course, variation between states (see table below).



- Government claimed that 90% of the time information was provided in time.
- Applicants' data suggested that 50% of the time that information was received, it was received in time.
- Our experience suggested 40%.

***Impact of the RTI Act***



- Case studies are another source of information regarding the impact that the filing of an RTI application has and the use that information can be put to. The types of impacts they illustrate can be classified into at least ten types:

- Ensuring open information is actually open.
  - Preventing corruption.
  - Exposing corruption.
  - Curtailing wasteful public expenditure.
  - Exposing misuse of power and influence
  - Accessing justice.
  - Accessing entitlements.
  - Redressing grievances.
  - Supporting good officials.
  - Empowerment of the Public.
- Over 20% of the rural and 45% of the urban PIOs claimed that changes had been made in the functioning of their offices because of RTI. Over 60% of these changes pertained to improving record maintenance, but interestingly in 10% of the rural PAs and 25% of the urban PAs what had resulted were changes in procedures of functioning and decision making.

### ***First Appeal***

- Our experience was that for over 80% of the 213 first appeals we filed, there was no response from the first appellate and we either had to go for second appeal or abandon the case. Another 11% were rejected, and only 9% were allowed partly or wholly.

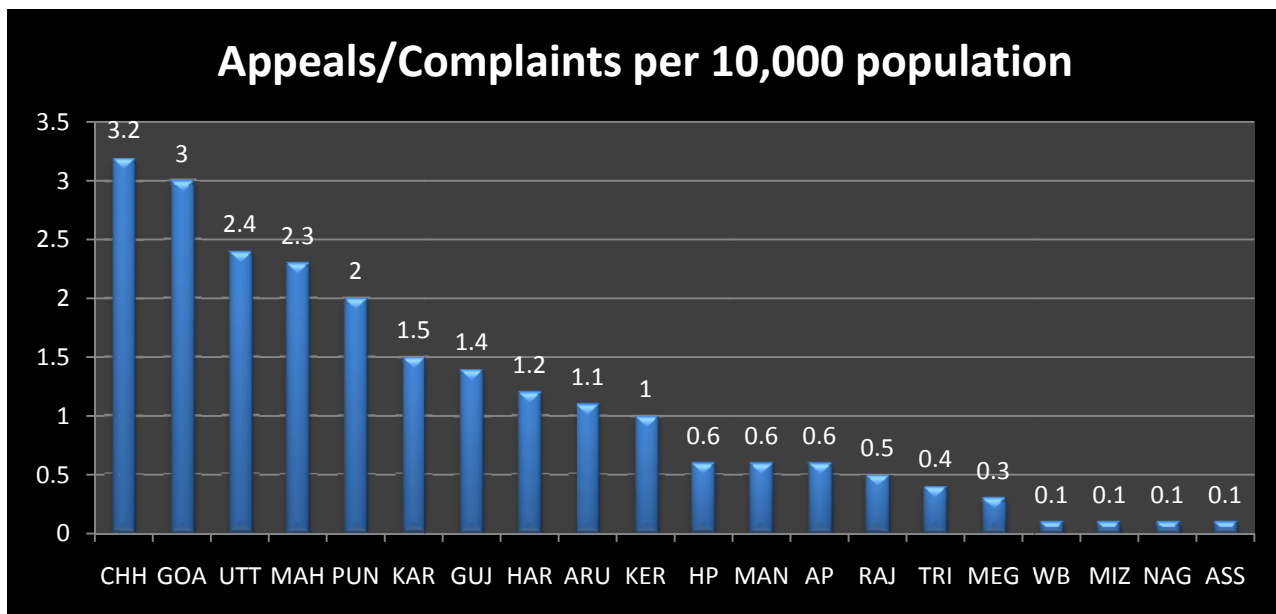
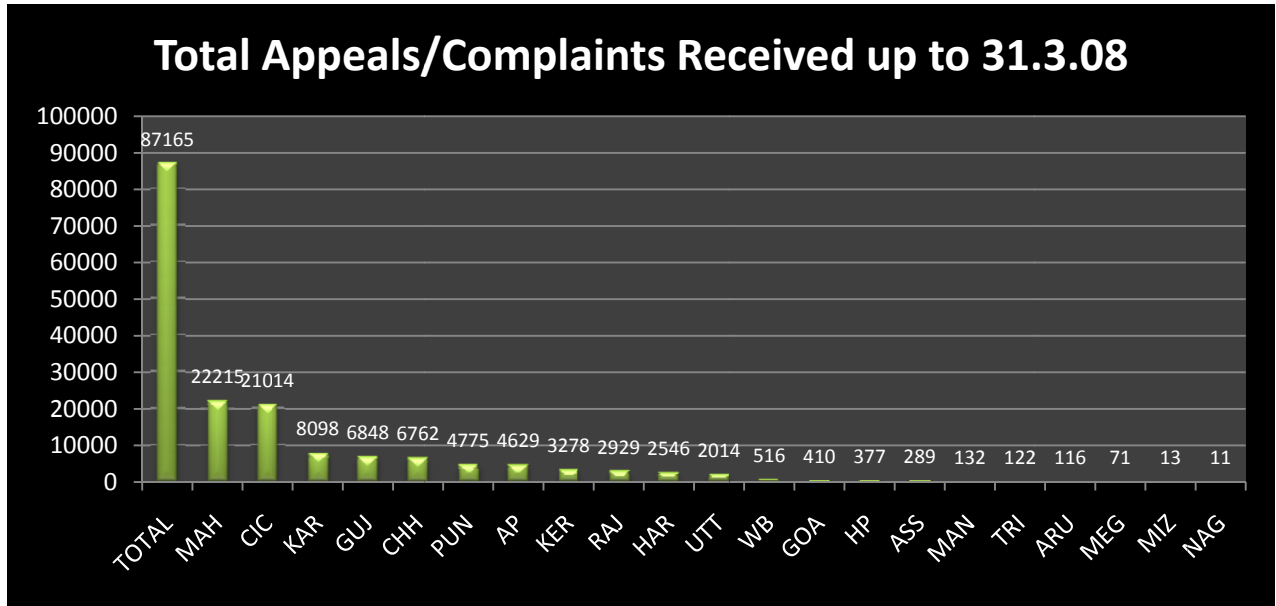
## **INFORMATION COMMISSIONS**

### ***Composition***

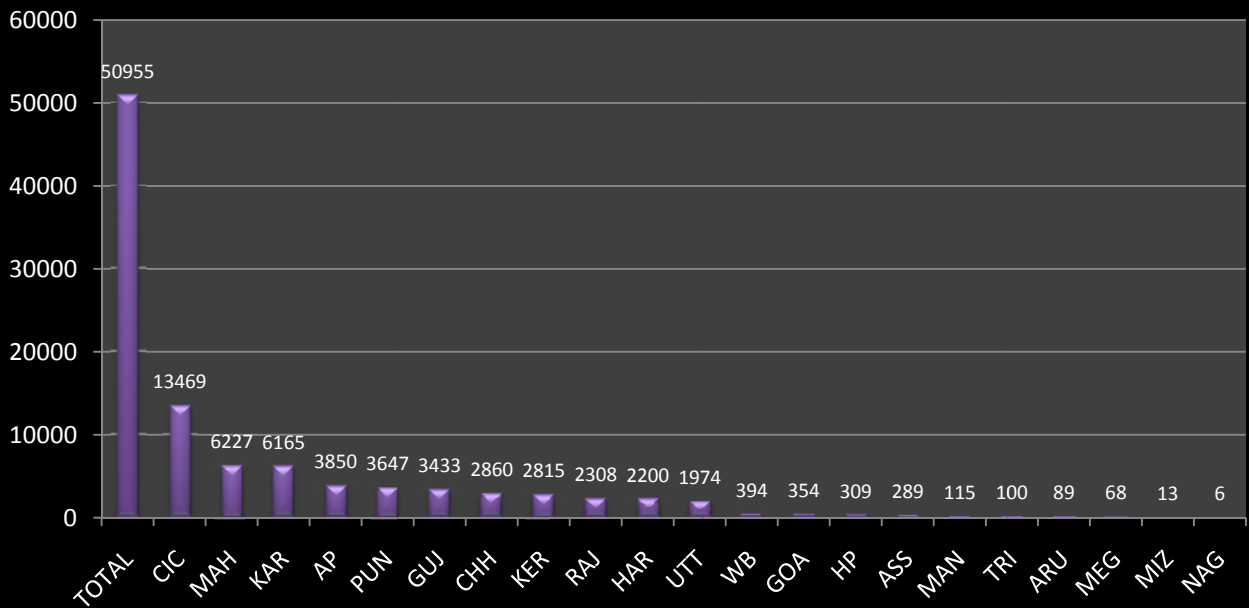
- Of the one central and 27 state Chief Information Commissioners initially appointed, 23 were retired IAS officers, 3 were retired judges (UP, Bihar and Jharkand), one a retired IPS officer (Assam), and one a former Member of Parliament (Arunachal Pradesh).
- The first four states to operationalise their information commissions were Karnataka (July 2005), Madhya Pradesh (August 2005), and Punjab and Maharashtra (October 2005), even before the RTI Act came into full effect. Uttarakhand and the CIC followed soon after, in October 2005 itself. The last state to set up an information commission was Arunachal Pradesh, a year after the RTI Act came into effect, in October 2006.

**Second Appeal/Complaint**

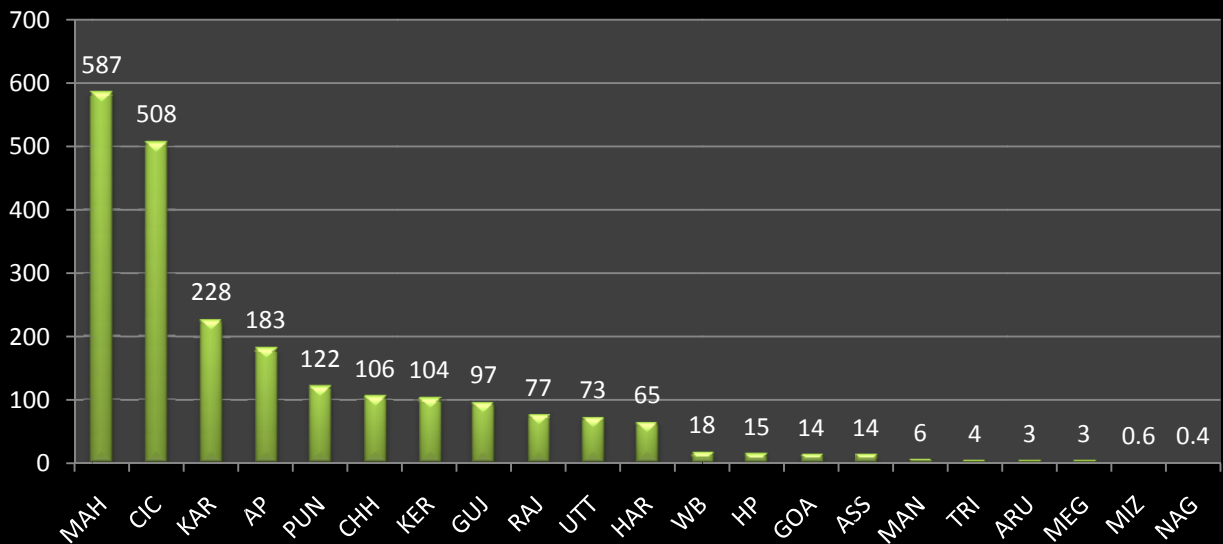
- The most important issue regarding many Information Commissions is the delay in disposing of complaints and appeals. Given below are the data collected on this aspect of the functioning of the ICs.

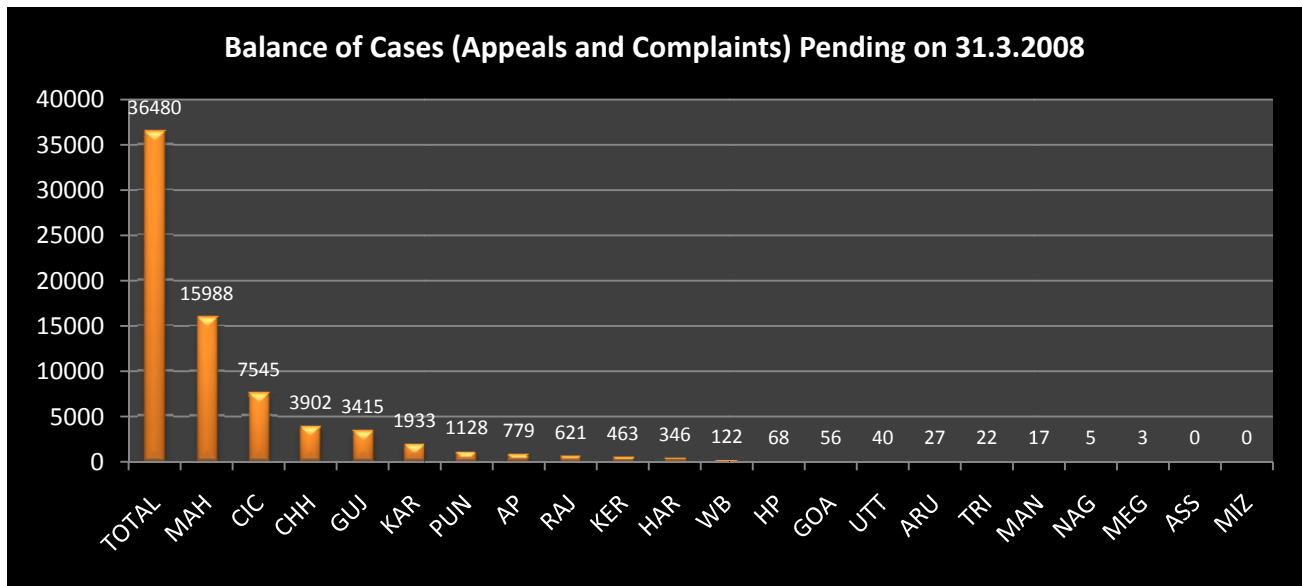


## Total Appeals/Complaints Disposed up to 31.3.09

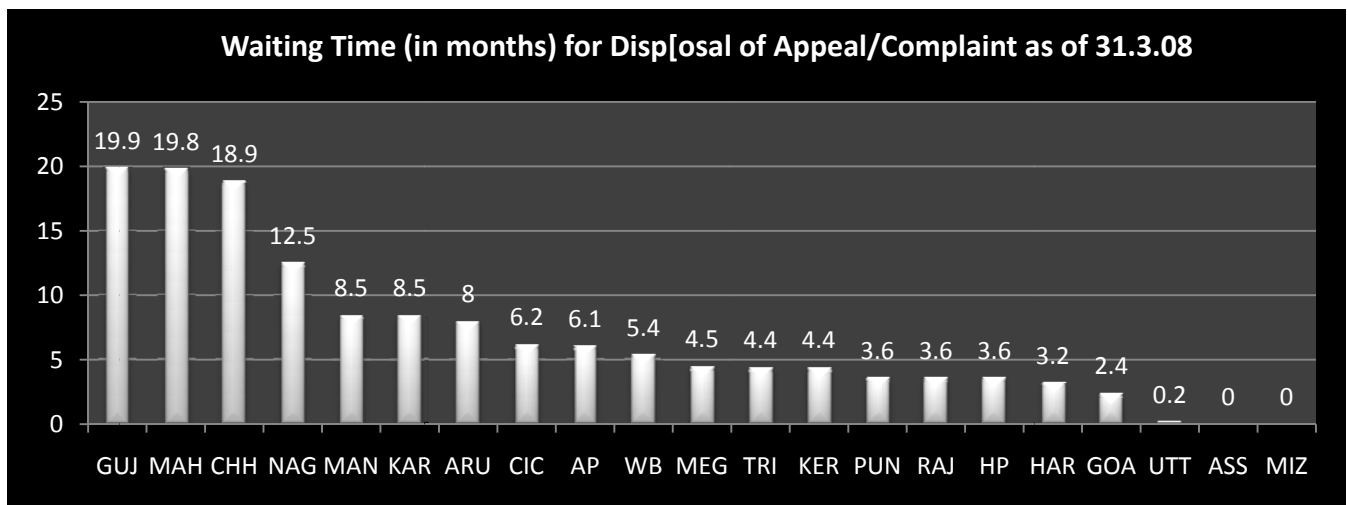


## Monthly Rate of Disposal of Cases



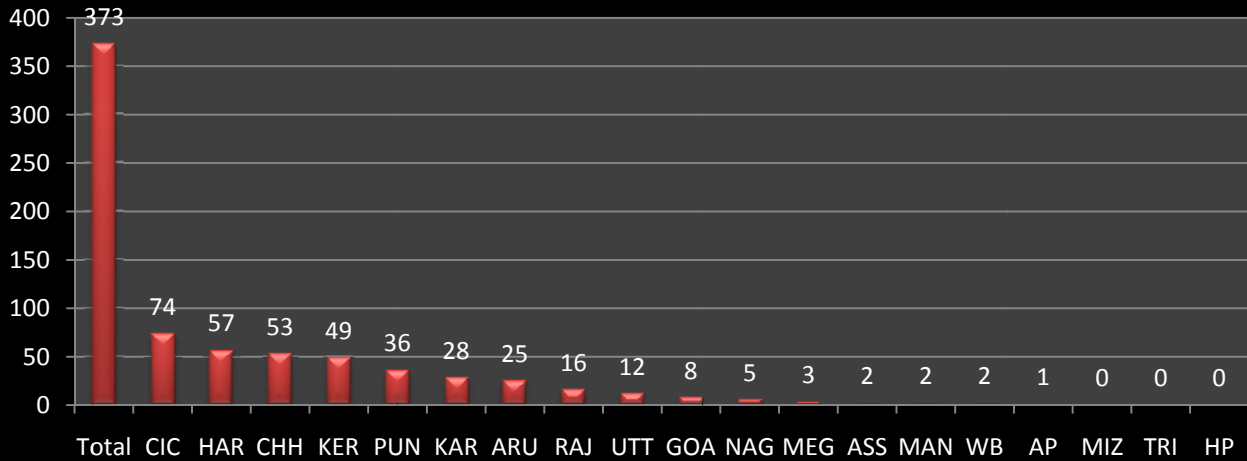


*Note: zero means less than one.*

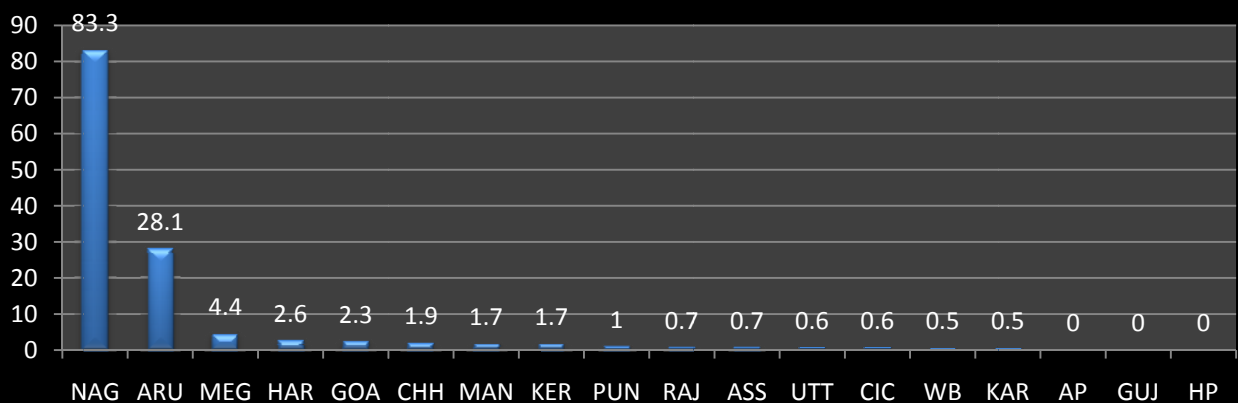


*Interestingly, if the interpretation of the RTI Act done by the Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India, that only full benches of all information commissioners together can hear cases, is accepted then the worst hit would be the CIC and the ICs of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and Goa, as they all have multiple benches and heavy work load. Waiting time will climb up to six years or more in Maharashtra, three years or more at the CIC and in Punjab, and nearly two years in the others. And considering that the number of appeals and complaints are going up every year, as time goes along this will get worse and the appointment of additional commissioners will not help.*

## Number of Penalties imposed till 31.3.08

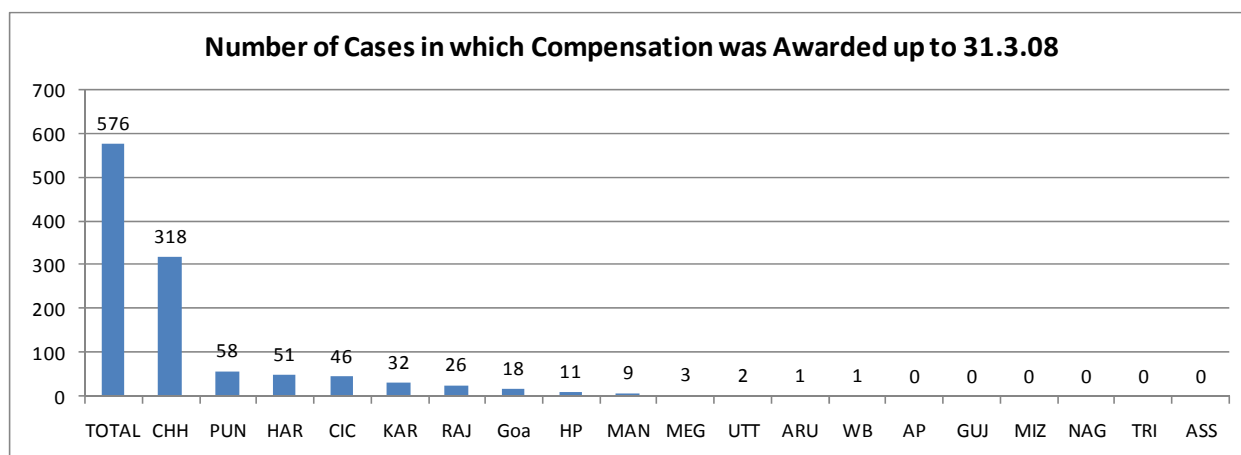


## Penalty Imposed as % Of Cases Disposed



**Note: zero means less than 0.1**

- The number of cases where some penalty should have been imposed (just for delyed supply of information), by very conservative estimation, would be 22,500 in the 18 commissions for which the relevant data was available. Let us round it off to 20,000. The actual penalties imposed were 373, or in about 1.9% of the cases where it should have been imposed!!



### ***Budget and Infrastructure***

- Almost all the information commissions responding complained about the inadequate financial and infrastructural support provided by the government. There were complaints about inadequate budgets, shortage of staff, poor infrastructure support, inadequate office space, and many other such.

#### **Budgets of some Information Commissions**

State	2005-2006 Budget in Lakhs of Rs.	2006-2007 Budget in Lakhs of Rs	2007-2008 Budget in Lakhs of Rs	Average annual Budget in Lakhs of Rs	Average expenditure per case (Rs.)
Assam	38.51	47.02	38.51	41.35	42,920
Bihar	NA	37.64	164.35	100.99	NA
Haryana	26.79	126.00	135.05	95.95	11,306
Karnataka	50.00	100.00	100.00	83.33	3,087
Kerala	100.65	278.74	NA	189.68	NA
Tripura	84.43	127.95	129.46	113.95	280,197
Uttarakhand	100.00	301.79	156.81	186.20	27,736
West Bengal	NA	5.28	31.73	18.51	7,172

- Half of the information commissions responding stated that the budgets allocated to them were not adequate.
- 85% of them thought that the staff sanctioned to them was not adequate.
- A back of the envelope calculation shows the great variance in the staffing patterns of information commissions.

IC	Sanctioned Posts	No. of cases	No. of Ics	No. of cases per post	No. of posts per IC
Assam	31	289	2	9.3	15.5
Bihar	67				
Haryana	80	2546	2	31.8	40
Karnataka	34	8098	3	238.2	11.3
Kerala	48				
Manipur	0	132	1		
Meghalaya	11	71	1	6.5	11
Tripura	7	122	1	17.4	7
Uttarakhand	18	2014	1	111.9	18
West Bengal	15	516	1	34.4	15

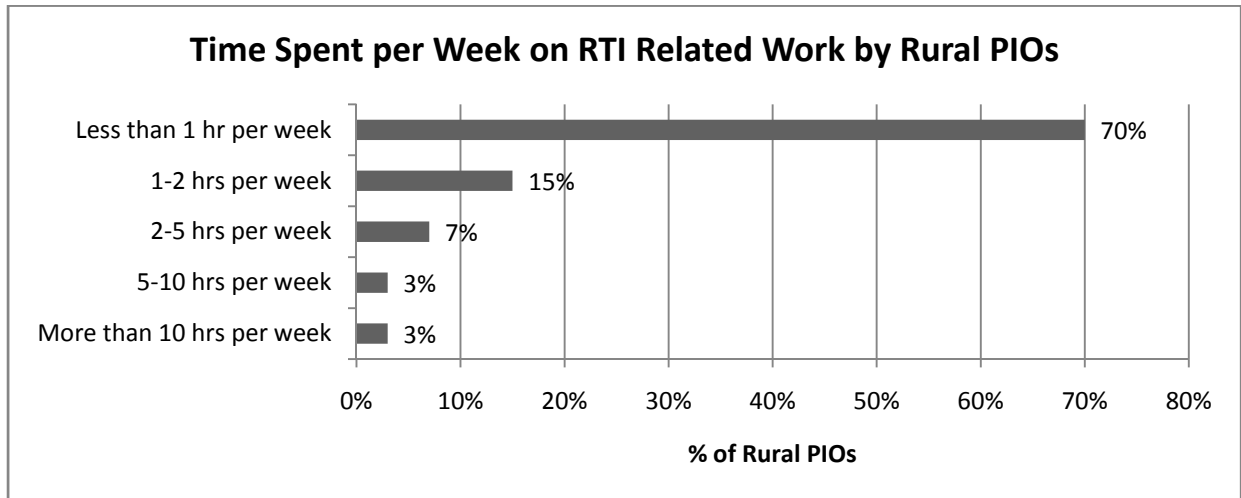
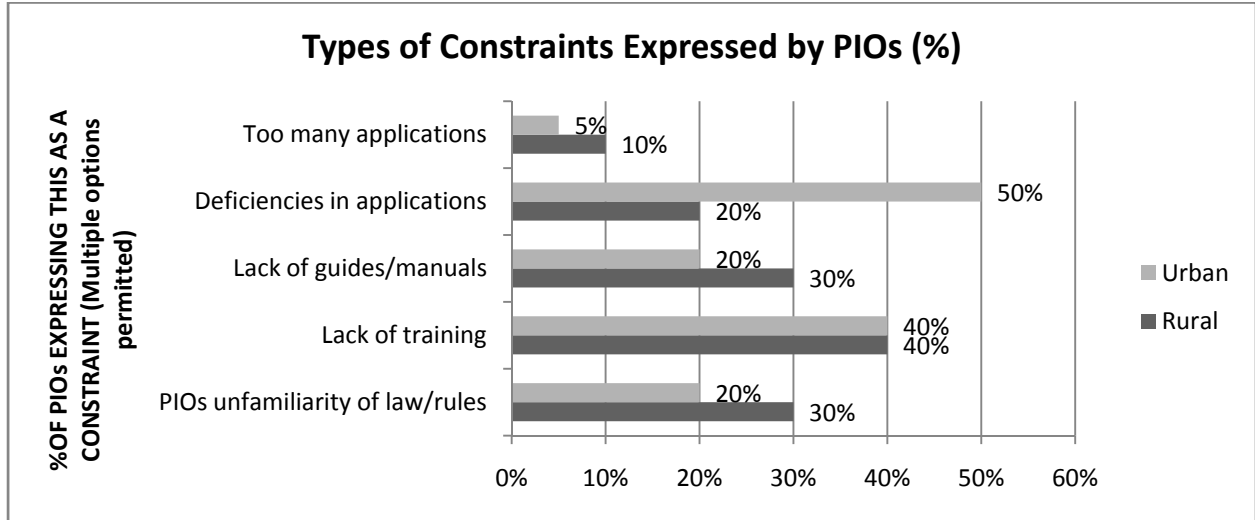
- Nearly 60% of the commissions did not have what they considered to be adequate infrastructure.
- The point that emerges from all these statistics is that there is no uniformity in the funding or staffing patterns of information commissions. Considering their work is similar, if not identical, it should not be difficult to develop norms of staffing and funding that could be applicable across the country.

### ***Autonomy of Information Commissions***

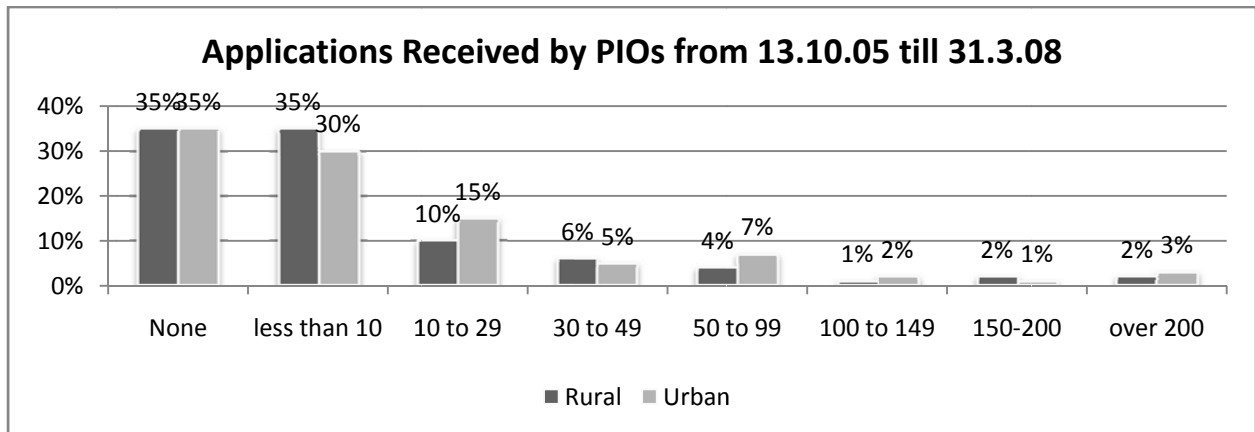
- 75% of the ICs responding to our questionnaire admitted that they were not financially independent.
- Only half of the ICs responding had offices independent of other government offices.
- Only four of the 13 responding ICs: Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya, Tripura and Uttarakhand, were satisfied with the manner in which state governments were following the orders of the state information commission.

GOVERNMENT AND THE RTI

*Public Information Officers (PIOs)*

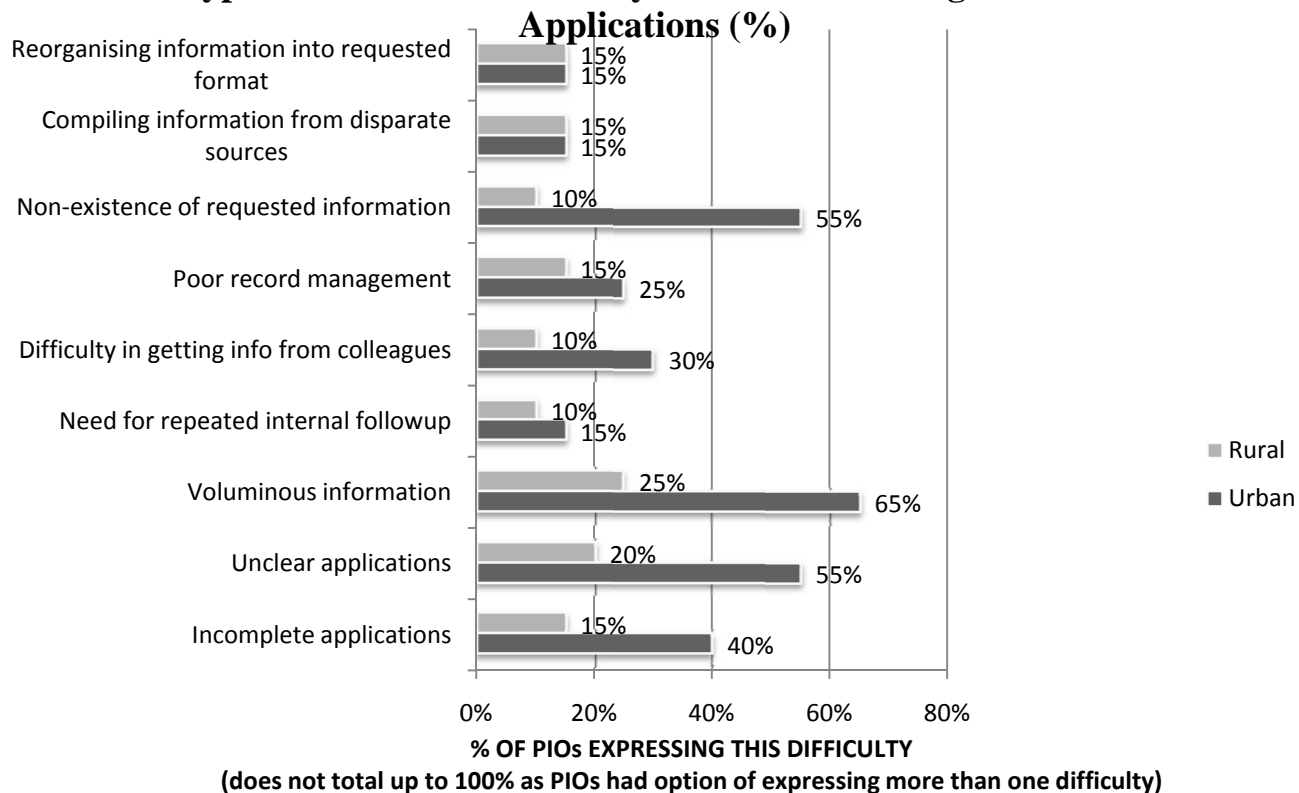


- Though comparable data was not available for urban PIOs, by and large the average load was not dissimilar (see table below).



- Over 30% of the **rural** PIOs candidly admitted that they did not want to be PIOs, while nearly 50% said they wanted to be PIOs. The rest had no comments.
- Their **urban** counterparts were more discreet, with nearly 75% refusing to comment, over 15% saying they wanted to be PIOs and less than 10% willing to admit that they did not want to be PIOs.
- Over 10% of the PIOs cited the lack of financial or other incentives for not wanting to be PIOs, nearly 7% cited poor record management and difficulties in record management, 6% were afraid of penalties, 4% complained about lack of cooperation from colleagues, 3% felt that there was a lack of support systems, and the remaining 20% cited various other reasons.

## Types of Difficulties Faced by PIOs while Dealing With RTI



- Interestingly, over 30% of the **rural** PIOs admitted that they did not know the provisions of the RTI Act. All of the **urban** PIOs claimed that they knew the RTI Act well.
- Nearly 60% of the **rural** and a similar proportion of **urban** PIOs responding stated that they had not been trained.
- In order to understand the problems that PIOs might face in dealing with RTI applications, they were asked in an open ended question to indicate what their main difficulties were. Interestingly, rural PIOs indicated much lower levels of difficulties than the urban PIOs. had received no training on the RTI Act.

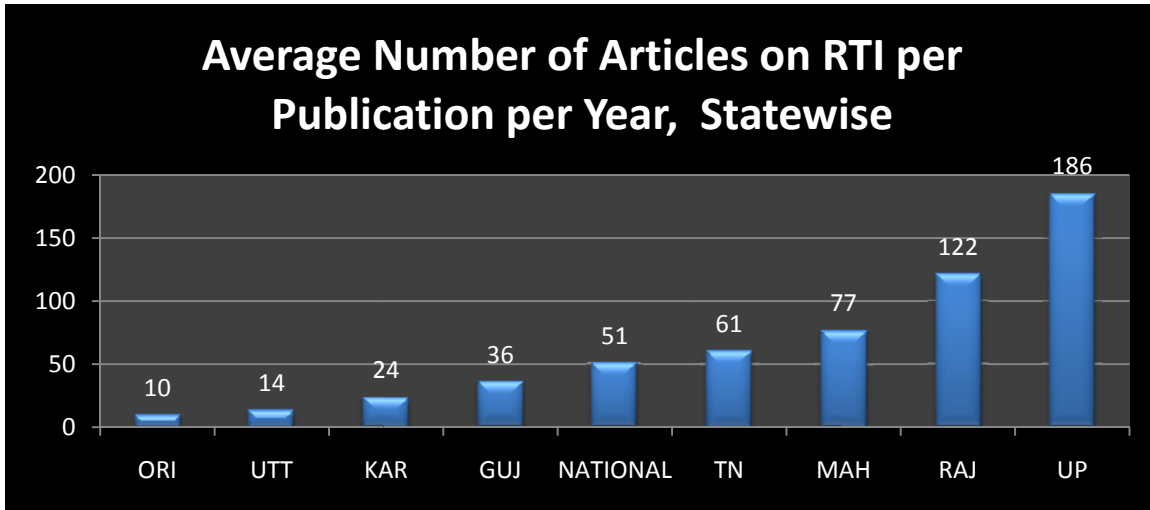
*Interestingly, in response to another question, it emerged that 50% of the rural PIOs and 5% of the urban PIOs do not have a copy of the RTI act available to them!*

### MEDIA AND THE RTI

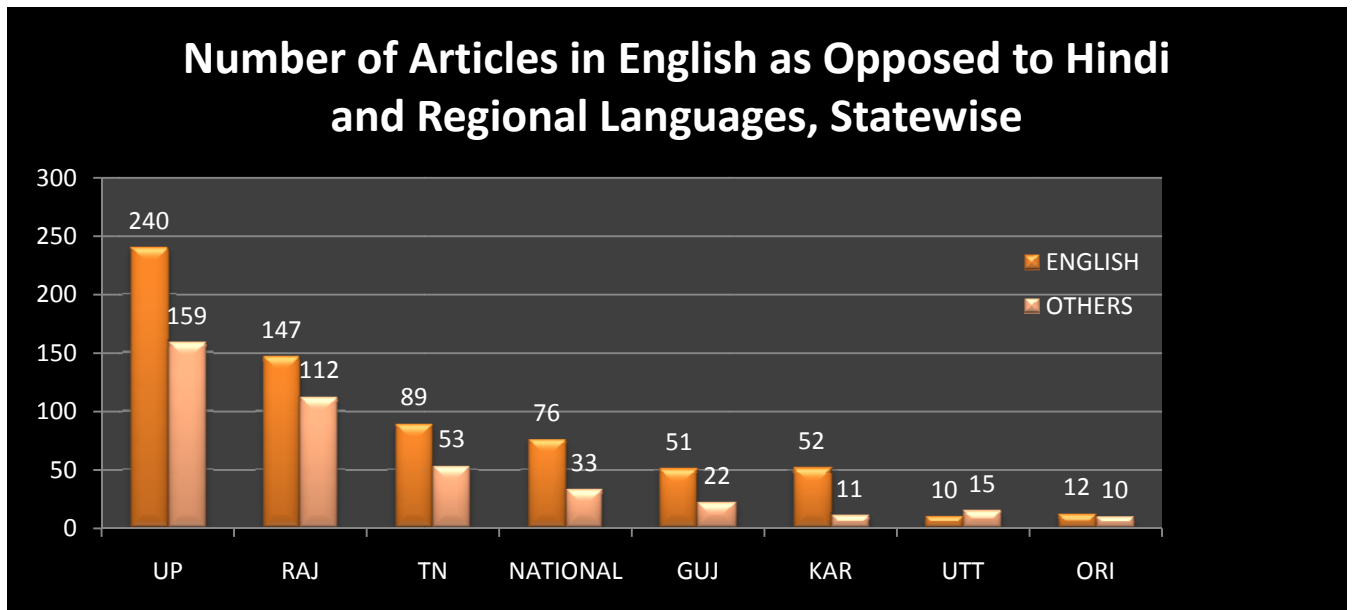
#### *Coverage*

- As a national average, there were 65 items on the RTI per publication per year, making it an average of 1.25 items per week. Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra were above

the national average, while national publications and publications from Gujarat, Karnataka, Uttarakhand and Orissa were below the national average.



to have printed an average of two times as many RTI articles as their Hindi and regional language counterparts.



- RTI coverage in the national periodicals within the sample was very limited both in English and Hindi. Although *Tehelka* and *Outlook Saptahik* were the top performers, they only had 9 and 7 RTI stories for the entire 3 year period.

- English magazines appeared to contain more items on RTI than the Hindi ones. This is especially true of niche magazines such as *Tehelka* or *Down to Earth*.
- While most magazine articles were news stories, they were longer and more analytical than those in the newspapers, elaborating on the impact of RTI on corruption, on fundamental changes to government institutions, and the like.
- At the state level, mainstream magazines had far less RTI coverage than niche magazines. When niche magazines that promote civil society empowerment took up the cause of the RTI, there was a manifold increase in RTI articles. Thus, magazines, such as *Diamond India* and *Vividha Features* in Rajasthan, published 121 and 64 articles, respectively. Often, these magazines worked in association with NGOs to push for better functioning of RTI rules, such as the lowering of RTI application fees or the creation of more venues for the payment of these fees.
- Other magazines with higher-than-average RTI coverage at the state level are *Frontline* and *Kudimakkal Murasu* in Tamil Nadu, and *Pavat Piyush* in Uttarakhand.

### ***Raising Awareness***

- Separate from news items about RTI, for awareness raising what was required were special features on the RTI Act explaining its features, its relevance to the common citizen, and how to make the best use of it.
- In this sense, the Gujarat and the Karnataka media appeared to be promoting the RTI most extensively, with the ratio of special features to news items far in excess of others. Thus, while the media in these states might not be covering the RTI as intensively as the media in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, they appear to be investing far greater energy in promoting it.

### ***Tone and Perspective***

- The coverage of both success and failure stories relating to citizen's attempts to access information was far greater in the state, than at the national level. This suggested that state level media was more focused on people's use of the RTI while national media tended to focus more on RTI issues and developments.

- Interestingly, among at least at the national level, the English media seemed to highlight successes far more than the Hindi media, which appeared to dwell more on the failures.

### *Using the RTI Act for Investigative Journalism*

- Judging by the small number of RTI-based investigative stories we found, it appears that the Indian media is not yet using the RTI Act much for unearthing stories and investigating issues.
- Surprisingly, even magazines, which are generally in the business of longer, more in-depth exclusives, have not used RTI Act very often to gather material for stories.
- Only three RTI based stories were found in the national sample, one each in the Indian Express, the India Today (English), and the Times of India.
- The state sample offered more investigative stories using the RTI Act, although numbers were still small. Orissa and Gujarat appeared to have the highest, followed by Goa. Tamil Nadu's best-known story based on an RTI application was relating to Priyanka Gandhi's visit to the Vellore prison.
- In Karnataka, the New Indian Express had two stories emanating from RTI applications, but in Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, no examples of investigative stories could be found amongst the sample of dailies and periodicals.

### NGOS AND THE RTI

- For those NGOs who received substantive funding from governments and therefore were public authorities, their web sites were checked to see how closely they met with the requirements of section 4.
- A list of 38 NGOs was culled from the website of the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), which is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. These were all those who had received substantial funding from CAPART.
- The names of another 16 NGOs were taken from the website of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, as being those that had received funds as environment information (ENVIS) centres.

- Of the 38 NGOs culled out from the CAPART list, only 21 had websites. No judgement is being made regarding the others as they might well have been disseminating the required information by some other means.
- Of those 21 who had web sites, only one (PRAVA) had an RTI link on its website. The others gave no information, not even the basic information regarding the name and address of the PIO.
- Similarly, of the 16 NGOs culled from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, all of whom had received substantial funds from the Ministry, 14 had websites but only one (Environment Protection Training and Research Institute) had an RTI link in its website.

## PERCEPTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT THE RTI REGIME

### *People's Perceptions and Suggestions*

- The most common suggestion for improvement from the **rural areas** was that people's awareness should be enhanced (30%). This was followed by the demand that punitive powers under the Act should be enhanced (20%), that the 30 days period for providing information should be shortened (10%) and that there should be more training (5%).
- Other suggestions from rural applicants included the setting up of a citizen forum to ensure compliance with the law, improvement in record keeping, the complaint mechanism should have public oversight, organizational infrastructure should be enhanced, and there should be proper signage.
- From the **urban areas**, the most popular demand was for raising awareness (35%), followed by enhancement of penalties (20%) and shorten time limit for providing information (15%).
- Some of the other suggestions from the urban applicants included better use of technology, decentralization of information commissioners, improving communications between applicants and PIO, improving information delivery mechanisms, improving signage, increasing staff, giving information in local languages, information commissioners should play a pro-active role, *suo moto* disclosures should be

strengthened, PIOs should not be a part of the public authority, training should be strengthened, and the law should be strengthened.

### ***Media's Perceptions***

- Interviews with editors and journalists across the country yielded two primary messages.
  - The press sees the RTI primarily as a boon for citizens, rather than itself.
  - Newspapers and magazines do not see the spirit and the letter of the RTI Act as being relevant to them, in terms of their internal transparency and accountability.

### ***Information Commission's Suggestions***

- Improve and strengthen the infrastructure in the commissions.
- Give commissions the power to enforce their decisions.
- Enhance the budgets of the commissions.
- Give greater financial and administrative autonomy to commissions.
- Give commissions the ability to monitor compliance by public authorities.
- Increase training for the staff of public authorities.
- Improve record management at public authorities.
- Make much greater efforts to raise awareness about the RTI Act.

### ***PIOs Suggestions***

- A large majority of the PIOs stressed on enhanced training and the raising of awareness.
- Other suggestions included: substantially increase the fee, punish those seeking malafide/malicious information, restrict timeframe of information that can be sought, provide additional staff, increase the time allowed for processing application, stop misuse of the Act, restrict scope of RTI applications, provide additional finances, create separate RTI cells, provide financial incentive for PIOs, promote e-processing, remove fee exemption for those below the poverty line.

### *Heads-of-Departments' Perceptions and Suggestions*

- The **district and sub-district** heads of departments/offices (HoD/Os) were asked to list the difficulties that their departments or offices were facing in implementing the RTI Act. An encouraging 60% said that they were having no problems.
- Another 10% identified the lack of training as the main problem, followed by paucity of staff (6%), request for old records and information (4%), paucity of funds (3%), and demand for voluminous information (2%).
- The HoD/Os were also asked to "... suggest any improvements in how the 'right to information' is currently serviced". Nearly 25% had no suggestions, another 30% thought that there must be more training, and 10% wanted awareness to be raised. There was a demand for a separate RTI cell from 5% of the respondents, and for increase in staff and in the time frame for supplying information from 4%.
- There was a clear consensus amongst HoDs at the **Central and State Governments** that transparency was crucial to effective governance.
- There was also a recognition of the fact that the government's architecture for responding to the RTI was inadequate. Amongst the key issues cited were:
  - Poor record management
  - Inadequate budgets
  - Wrong mind set of civil servants
  - Lack of human resources
  - Lack of Training and knowledge about the provisions of the Act
- The Positive Aspects of RTI included
  - Citizen empowerment
  - Faster decision making
  - A boon for honest officers
  - Some Improvement in record management
- The negative aspects of RTI included
  - Misuse
  - Use mainly by the elite

- Little impact on the decision making process
- Undermined the authority of the executive
- Opinion was divided as to whether the RTI Act has had an impact on politicians.
- Has greater transparency resulted in greater accountability of the government? On balance, HoDs felt that the jury was still out as the Act was young and its full potential had not yet been realized.

### *Our Perceptions*

- In the final analysis, what seems to emerge from the discussions is that the RTI Act has had mixed results. While the awareness of the importance of transparency has indeed increased manifold, infrastructure needs to be built around it to allow it to work better. At the same time, the key to increasing accountability of public authorities lies in bringing about attitudinal changes – which is something that takes time. The RTI Act, being all of three years ‘young’, is generally welcomed as a step in the right direction. However, there was concern regarding the negative spinoffs of the RTI Act.
- The HoDs seem susceptible to some of the rumours about the RTI Act being used mainly by the educated and the privileged. Our findings do not support this conclusion.
- HoDs also seem to think that a major use of the RTI is by “...aggrieved government employees who used the RTI Act to redress their grievances, particularly with regard to promotions, postings and disciplinary action.” Again, our findings do not support this belief.
- There is the concern that the RTI Act, especially access to file notings, would inhibit civil servants from expressing their views honestly. In our survey there was almost no complaint about access to file notings, except from a few HoDs.
- Besides, officers are pressured to record notings contrary to their convictions or opinions, or contrary to public interest or the law, NOT by the public but by their bureaucratic and political bosses (who already have access to file notings independent of the RTI Act).
- The possibility that such file notings will become public would actually put a counter pressure on officials to give advice that is in public interest and in accordance with law. It would also inhibit the bosses from irrationally or self-servingly overruling such advice. It

would allow honest and upright officers to put counter pressure on their bosses by reminding them that their decisions and the basis of their decisions would all be up for public scrutiny.

- The spectre of harassment, and vexatious and frivolous applications, is also often raised. Admittedly, frequent requests for the supply of telephone bills, or travel claims, or other expense details, could be tedious. But this problem is easily solved by putting all such items (that could possibly interest the public) on the web and making them proactively available in other appropriate ways. This would remove the potential of harassment.
- An understandable fear is that people will not understand or appreciate the conditions under which certain decisions were taken, especially when there was insufficient information. Consequently, “hind sight” analysis would show the concerned officials in bad light and might even question their motivation or competence.
- Another danger is that of the bureaucracy becoming totally “rule bound”, as discretionary action is difficult to explain objectively. Are we then salvaging governments from arbitrary functioning just to plunge them into rigidity and rule-boundedness?
- If the basis on which (and the circumstances under which) decisions are made or discretion exercised, is regularly shared with the people, they will educate themselves. They will understand and appreciate the conditions under which government functions, and begin to recognize the efforts that honest and sincere government servants are putting in, even if they sometimes falter, or make mistakes.
- Our findings suggest that the government is at present in no danger of getting swamped by RTI applications. However, this could become a problem in the future, especially if current trends continue unabated. But as governments begin to understand what types of information the people mainly wanted, they could start putting these out proactively. This would significantly reduce their work load.
- Additionally, if governments analysed what grievances were behind most of the RTI requests (delays, seemingly unfair decisions, inaction, corruption, lack of response) and started tackling these, the number of RTI applications would go down further.