

BANGLADESH RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) SURVEY 2019



BANGLADESH RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) SURVEY 2019

Conducted by:

OrQuest



© 2020 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Washington DC 20433. Telephone 202-473-1000; Internet: www.worldbank.org

Some rights reserved

The work is a product of the staff of The World Bank with external contributions. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of The World Bank, its Board of Executive Directors, or the Governments they represent. The World Bank does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work. The boundaries, colors, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply any judgement of the part of The World Bank concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

Nothing herein shall constitute or be considered to be a limitation upon or waiver of the privileges and immunities of The World Bank , all of which are specially reserved.

Rights and Permissions

The work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO license (CC BY 3.0 IGO) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/igo>. Under the Creative Commons Attribution license, you are free to copy, distribute, transmit, and adapt this work, including for commercial purposes, under the following condition:

Attribution-Please cite the work as follows: World Bank (2019). Bangladesh Right to Information (RTI) Survey 2019. Washington DC. © World Bank.

Translations-If you create a translation of this work, please add the following disclaimer along with the attribution: *This translation was not created by The World Bank and should not be considered an official World Bank translation. The World Bank shall not be liable for any content or error in this translation.*

Adaptations-If you create an adaptation of this work, please add the following disclaimer along with the attribution: *This is an adaptation of an original work by The World Bank. Views and opinions expressed in the adaptation are the sole responsibility of the author or authors of the adaptation and are not endorsed by the World Bank.*

Third-party content-The World Bank does not necessarily own each component of the content contained with the work. The World Bank therefore does not warrant that the use of any third-party-owned individual component or part contained in the work will not infringe on the rights of those third parties. The risk of claims resulting from such infringement rests solely with you. If you wish to re-use a component of the work. It is your responsibility to determine whether permission is needed for that re-use and to obtain permission from the copyright owner. Examples of components can include, but are not limited to, tables. Figures, or images.

All queries on retracts and licenses should be addressed to World Bank Publications, The World Bank Group, 1818 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20433, USA; email: pubrights@worldbank.org.

Photo credit: MRDI and RIB

Foreword

The Right to Information Survey 2019 was conducted as part of the Right to Information Results Support Program financed by the DFID and World Bank. It was conducted between January and March 2019. The survey's methodology, selection of samples, and technical reviews of the final output were consulted with the Information Commission. Besides, the team acknowledges the support of the Cabinet Division in carrying out the survey. The survey was conducted by a consortium of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) and Org-Quest Research Limited (OrQuest). Syed Khaled Ahsan, Shahnoor Wahid and Nadee Naboneeta Imran edited the report under the guidance of George A. Larbi.

Abstract

The Right to Information (RTI) Survey was conducted between January and March of 2019. The survey was split into five segments: a) a survey among 768 Designated Officers (DOs) in 64 districts, b) a survey among 768 Heads of Office covering both government and non-government organizations (NGOs) in 64 districts, c) a survey among 359 requesters in 21 districts, d) a survey among 340 complainants to the Information Commission (IC), and finally, e) a nationwide survey among 12,800 citizens.

The survey results reveal that the contribution of the RTI Act 2009 has overall been positive in the last decade. Especially, notable progress has taken place in making the supply side prepared in implementing the RTI Act.

IC's overall operational approaches have been found very effective for DOs, requesters, complainants, and appellants. In contrast to an increased awareness of the RTI Act on the supply side i.e. the DOs and Heads of Office, the awareness level on the demand side i.e. the citizens has been found to be very low. Only 7.7% of the 12,800 citizens surveyed across the country said they were aware of the law.

Meanwhile, about two-third of the 768 government officials surveyed in 64 districts said they did not receive a single application from citizens using RTI Act since they were designated for providing information services. Nonetheless, the survey among 359 requesters in 21 districts revealed that about two-third of them received their desired information, mostly in time.

Keywords:

Right to Information, Transparency, Accountability, Empowerment, Focus Group Discussion, Designated Officer, Heads of Office, Requester, Complainant, Appellants, Governance.

Table of Contents

	Foreword	iii
	Abstract	iv
	List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	vii
	Executive Summary	1
1	INTRODUCTION	13
	1.1 Objective	14
	1.2 Scope of Survey	15
	1.3 Analytical Framework	16
2	RESULTS	17
	Part I - Designated Officers	17
	Part II - Heads of Office	34
	Part - III Hearings and Decisions	46
	Part - IV Citizens' Survey	58
	Part - V Requesters' Survey	79
	Part - VI Complainants' Survey	98
	Part - VII Focus Group Discussions	100
3	CONCLUSIONS	107
	3.1 Recommendations and Takeaways	107
	Annexure 1: Survey Methodology	109
	Annexure 2: Awareness of the RTI Act 2009 among Citizens by District	115
	Annexure 3: Respondents' Profile by Type	116
	Annexure 4: Sampling Procedure and Sample Size Determination of Appellate Authority and Appellant	118
	Annexure 5: Letter from the Information Commission	122
	Annexure 6: Letter from the Cabinet Division	123

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASA	Association for Social Advancement
BDS	Bangladesh Development Society
BPATC	Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center
CAPI	Computer Aided Personal Interview
CD	Cabinet Division
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DO	Designated Officer
DC	Deputy Commissioner
EOI	Expression of Interest
EC	Election Commission
ESOMAR	European Society for Opinion and Market Research
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GO	Government Office
HO	Heads of Office
HSC	Higher Secondary School Certificate
IC	Information Commission

MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MRDI	Management and Resources Development Initiative
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NIMC	National Institute of Mass Communication
NIS	National Integrity Strategy
ODK	Open Data Kit
OrQuest	Org-Quest Research Limited
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
PSU	Primary Sampling Units
RFP	Request for Proposal
RTI	Right to Information
SP	Sampling Point
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
ToR	Terms of Reference
TMSS	ThengamaraMohila Sabuj Sangha
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
WB	The World Bank

Executive Summary

1.1 Background and Rationale

The year 2019 marks the 10th year of the RTI Act enactment in Bangladesh. The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has made good progress in implementing the RTI Act 2009 in the past decade.

The number of RTI requests has been growing and the institutional side of providing the requested information has been satisfactory so far.

The Information Commission (IC) has been playing a crucial role in mobilizing Designated Officers (DOs) across the country and incentivizing them to do their job well. Proper measures have been undertaken to sensitize the citizens and the relevant agencies.

At the end of the decade, it is therefore an opportune moment to focus on the achievements, lessons learned, and the way forward.

The Right to Information (RTI) Survey 2019 is a follow-up action that tracked improvements and identified gaps since the baseline survey of 2012.

Commissioned by the World Bank, this survey was conducted by a consortium, led by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), the front-runner in RTI advocacy which also leads the RTI Forum, a coalition of Civil Society Organization (CSO) activists and able individuals; Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI), another pioneer in sensitizing authorities concerned and beneficiaries on demand for, and supply of information, engaging media and other stakeholders; and Org-Quest Research Limited (OrQuest), a private company specializing in countrywide surveys.

Objective:

The objective of the survey was to take an unbiased account of the current status of implementation of the RTI Act that would eventually enable policymakers and RTI activists to undertake future RTI interventions.

The survey will enable policymakers and RTI activists to identify and seal the pores and bring about the desired changes in perception, behavior, and actions of various stakeholders, including the citizens.

1.2 Scope of survey

The survey was carried out in five segments:

- a) a survey among 768 DOs in 64 districts,
- b) a survey among 768 Heads of Office covering both government and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in 64 districts,
- c) a survey among 359 requesters in 21 districts,
- d) a survey of 340 complainants to the IC, and finally, and
- e) a nationwide survey among 12,800 citizens.

At the same time, two assessments were carried out:

- a) an assessment of 50 appellate authorities to get a picture of RTI appeals and their responses, and
- b) a qualitative assessment of the working of the IC, particularly its key decisions since the promulgation of the RTI Act in 2009.

A total of 24 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with key stakeholders such as media, CSOs, DOs, youth, parents, teachers, RTI activists, senior citizens, and marginalized communities were arranged in a bid to obtain a holistic picture about the challenges of implementation of the RTI Act in Bangladesh.

Timeline:

All survey activities and assessments were carried out between January and March of 2019.

Analytical framework:

The data gathered from this survey were analyzed by combining three aspects of good governance: supply, demand and third sector (CSOs and NGOs, Media, Academics, Private sector) Information contained in public documents, NGO publications, websites of government agencies and international organizations were also used during the analyses of survey data.

1.3 Key findings

The key findings of the national RTI Survey 2019 based on stakeholders covering both supply and demand sides including opinion generated from two dozens of FGDs are highlighted below.

1.4 Supply side

The survey covered two types of supply-side stakeholders: DOs and Heads of Office; while two assessments were also carried out: a) hearings and decisions and b) appellate authority.

Designated Officers (DOs):

Awareness of the RTI Act was almost universal among the DOs, as 99.7% of them were found to be aware, which was 94% in 2012. Overall, training was cited as the most common source of awareness. Other commonly mentioned sources were the Internet, IC initiatives, government memorandum, and newspapers. Training, Internet/website, and IC initiatives have become more prominent in informing the DOs about the RTI Act in 2019 than it was in 2012.

About 60.7% of DOs who are aware of the Act received training on the RTI Act, nearly 33 percentage points up from 2012. About 56% have been in this role for less than a year, and the rest have worked as a DO for more than a year.

Incidence of receiving requests for information by DOs was not very high. Since joining their current offices, two-thirds of the DOs had never received any application for information.

Half of the DOs claimed that their offices have been keeping records of applications for information such as date of receipt, information provided, number of applications denied, reasons for denial, etc.

The number of DOs claiming to have a provision in their office for keeping records of applications for information has increased substantially from 12.0% in 2012 to 50.1% in 2019.

Thus far, 9.5% of DOs had received only one application, 17.8% received between 2 and 10 applications, while the remaining 4.4% received more than 10. However, the number of applications received by the DOs saw a notable increase from 4.0% in 2012 to 31.7% in 2019.

Requesters' lack of understanding of the RTI Act was cited as the most prevalent difficulty faced by the DOs in responding to applications, followed by poor coordination among different government offices.

An overwhelming majority of the DOs did not feel the pressure of additional responsibilities that come with being a DO. Survey found that DOs were easily traceable by any citizen.

Application and appeal forms were available in the majority of organizations as more than half of the DOs reported that they keep application or complaint forms in their offices and provide it free of cost to general citizens seeking information or for lodging complaints.

About half of the DOs could not suggest any ways to improve the procedures of the RTI Act. However, the rest suggested launching an online application system, organizing training for the DOs, improving staff attitude, and making updated information available.

Heads of Office: About 97.9% of Heads of Office were found to be aware of the RTI Act. As per the evaluation of the enumerators, around 40% of them knew about the preamble of the Act along with the procedures to follow.

Around one-fourth just knew the procedures and another one-fourth only knew that under this Act information will have to be provided if requested for. The remaining one-tenth had only heard about the Act.

Overall, training was the most frequently cited source of awareness of the RTI Act by the Heads of Office. The other major sources mentioned were IC initiatives, government memorandum, the Internet and newspapers. The majority (59.4%) of Heads of Office who were aware of the Act received training on the RTI Act.

Among the total Heads of Office interviewed, 16.1% were also acting as DOs in their respective organizations.

Three-fourths of the Heads of Office, who were acting as DOs did not receive any request for information thus far. About a tenth (11.3%) received only one application each, 7.3% received 2 applications, while the remaining 8.1% received more than 2 applications each.

Overall, 60% of Heads of Office said they had undertaken some steps to proactively disclose information of public interest. The other 40% admitted that they did not take any such steps. However, as a practice of proactive disclosure, Heads of Office most often provided information on the website and/or notice-boards, and less frequently disseminated information through meetings, seminars, and workshops in line with the citizen charter.

Heads of Office were asked if they had ever attended an IC hearing. Only 2.2% responded affirmatively.

Major improvements that the RTI Act will bring to service delivery as expected by the Heads of Office were that it will ensure accountability (26.2%) and improve transparency (21.5%), increase staff awareness to provide information (18.9%) and make people get better public services (17.2%).

However, over one-fifth of the Heads of Office could not suggest any improvement that the RTI Act may bring to public service delivery. About 23.7% of Heads of Office had no suggestions for improvement, while another 16% did not know what to suggest.

However, among the suggestions given by the rest, launching an online application system was most prominent, followed by publicizing what type of information can be obtained from where and increasing the awareness of the RTI Act as a whole.

Hearings and decisions:

In the assessments of hearings and decisions, it transpired that it took 73 days on average to dispose of a complaint.

Of the total complaints made, 226 were resolved within 45 days, 523 were resolved within 75 days, and 491 were resolved after more than 75 days.

About 17% of requesters did not get the required information even after a favorable verdict was given by the IC.

Out of 1,284 cases assessed, a third party was summoned in 2.3% of cases. A review of data on the analysis of decisions shows that procedural and process-related issues are a major factor in determining how the cases are dealt with. This applies to both sides – complainants and the IC.

About 74% of the complainants found the overall experience positive while 26% did not. As for the attitude of the IC officials, 88% found it positive and 12% did not.

About 29% of the information received after the hearing process was used for public awareness and service-related issues while 12% was used for media reporting. About 47% was used for personal use.

However, 13% couldn't be used as they arrived too late after application.

Regarding the actions of the IC against DOs for not carrying out its decisions, it has been noted that DOs were fined in 34 cases, rebuked in 3 cases and departmental action was taken in 3 cases.

Assessment of appellate authority:

In the assessment of the appellate authority, it was found that in case of passing orders for full disclosure, procedural factors dominated the decisions in 88.3% of the time. This included ‘if the information was providable or not.’

In case of providing partial information, the same reasons applied. About 60% cases were rejected for procedural reasons and 27% on the ground that they were ‘seeking confidential information’.

As for the assessment of the appellants, it was found that 59% of them did not get any response after applying to the DOs concerned.

Of those who appealed to the Appellate Authority, 55% were given orders to provide the required information. However, 37% did not get any response from the Appellate Authority while about 4% cases were dismissed.

It also turned out that 74% of the appellants faced problems in the appeal process. The primary reasons cited can all be clustered under procedural issues and lack of familiarity with the RTI Act system by the appellants.

The majority of the respondents (80%) said that their experience with the Appellate Authorities was positive.

It was also found that 21% of the respondents who had filed an appeal received threats from the officials.

1.5 Survey interpretation about supply side

In the strategic plan for RTI implementation, a target was set to increase the capacity of DOs by enhancing their skills from 25% in 2012 to 75% in 2021 through receiving training. Survey found that 60.7% of the aware DOs received training on the RTI Act, about 33% points up from 2012.

About two-thirds of the DOs received official letters stating their appointment as DO. About 56% of the total DOs surveyed have been in this role for less than a year, and the rest of them have been doing so for more than a year.

Survey also found that the incidence of receiving requests for information was not very high. Two thirds of the DOs had never received any application for information.

Since DOs are the first public face of the RTI Act, it is important that DOs are motivated to treat citizens and requesters with dignity and respect and any deviation from such norms and behavior is likely to impact the reputation of the government in general.

It is evident that there are ample opportunities for DOs to carry forward social mobilization and citizens’ sensitization within their respective localities to motivate people to use the law for improving service delivery.

On many counts, DOs were found to have a good understanding and awareness of the Act and various aspects of dealing with the public request for information. However, it appears from the findings that there is scope for improvement in terms of DOs’ behavior with the citizens, especially the requesters of information.

IC may also explore why in one-third of applications, DOs did not provide receipts to the requesters. This is a matter of both integrity and accountability which needs closer examination by Heads of Office and IC.

It appears that the IC has a major role to play to apprise citizens about the complaining process as nearly a quarter of complaints were rejected for not following the due process of law.

The assessment on complaints and hearings shows IC should develop a comprehensive guideline for speedy disposal of cases. The delay in providing a verdict also did not help the appellant as they couldn't use the information in time.

About 60% of the public offices were practicing proactive disclosure policy by updating information on website and putting up public notices in front of the offices.

1.6. Demand side

One of the core functions of the IC is to raise public awareness of the Act. The strategy on RTI rightly identified the need for public awareness as one of the four implementation challenges. The RTI survey 2019 covered three types of supply side stakeholders: **citizens, requesters, and complainants to IC.**

From the citizens' survey it was found that the awareness of the RTI Act among the general citizens was low, accounting for only 7.7% nationally. However, it was 23% in 2012.

Citizens: Male respondents were found to be more aware (10.5%) compared to female respondents (4.9%). Age-wise, younger citizens appeared more aware than older ones.

Education appeared to have a direct relationship with awareness as it increased with the level of education and vice versa: graduates and above were most aware of the Act, followed by Secondary School Certificate (SSC)/Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC) pass respondents.

Respondents without education were least aware.

Overall, nearly half of the respondents who were aware of the RTI Act came to know about it

from television. Other important sources of awareness were newspapers (16.4%), books (14.5%), and social media (11.0%), along-with a host of other sources including family/friends, colleagues/classmates, IC meetings, Government publicity, other meetings, NGO's and radio.

Around two-thirds of the respondents who are aware of the Act just heard about it; 16.8% knew that under the RTI Act a citizen could request any government or private organization to provide any information; 10.7% knew that a citizen needs to follow a specified procedure while requesting for information and 3.0% claimed to be aware of the goal and objective along with the procedure for requesting for information.

Out of the 983 respondents who were aware of this Act, only 2.8% had filed applications for information either from the government or other agencies.

Awareness of the RTI Act was higher in urban (11.3%) than in rural areas (6.5%). By division, awareness was most prevalent in Dhaka (12.0%), followed by Mymensingh (9.9%), and Rajshahi (7.7%) and least in Sylhet (4.9%).

The incidences of this is lower in urban (1.9%) than in rural areas (3.4%). Regarding reasons for not filing RTI application by the remaining citizens who were aware of the Act, 74.8% said they did not need any information. Other reasons stated were:

- a. did not know how or to whom to apply to (11.8%),
- b. did not think information would be useful (6.1%),
- c. heard that RTI Act does not work (4.4%),
- d. assumed that RTI Act does not work (4.3%), and
- e. necessary information was already available on websites (0.8%).

When the RTI Act was introduced to all the respondents regardless of whether they were aware or unaware of the Act, most of them spontaneously appreciated the RTI Act when asked to give their opinion.

About 94.1% said that it is a very good Act; 4.8% did not have any opinion; about 1% showed indifference and 0.2% found it not good for the country.

Respondents were asked what they thought the IC or the authorities concerned should do to increase the demand side of the RTI Act. A little more than a fourth could not come up with any suggestion.

Requesters: In this survey, out of 359 requesters, an overwhelming majority was male, relatively young, more educated, students and journalists by occupation and resided mostly in urban areas.

Most applications for information were filed for personal use, public interest, and professional purposes. Public interest as a reason for filing application was more prevalent in rural areas and among females, whereas more of the urban and male requesters needed information for official or professional purposes compared to female requesters.

The three most suggested steps were organizing meetings, seminars, and workshops, publicizing through television/radio and promoting it through social media.

The most common place for filing application for information was the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) Office (43.5%) followed by Municipality (10.9%). The overall experience of finding and meeting the DOs was mostly favorable. 93.9% of the requesters followed the RTI specified format.

Among the requesters, the most common source of awareness of the RTI Act was meetings organized by IC which sensitized them, seminars and workshops, followed closely by NGOs. Other major sources were friends/family members, newspapers, television and colleagues/classmates.

Hand delivery was the dominant mode of delivery as an overwhelming majority (85%) submitted applications in this way. Payment of fee was not quite common as only about a fifth of the requesters paid fees for information under the RTI Act.

The findings reveal that nearly two-thirds of the requesters received response on their application, and around one-fifth did not.

It was found that urban and women requesters had to wait few days more than their rural and male counterparts.

About 86.1% of the requesters were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the information requesting process of the RTI Act. Of all the requesters interviewed, 36.2% stated that officers and staff should improve their attitude in terms of cooperation with requesters. Other suggestions for improvement include providing updated information, introducing online application system, and taking less time to provide information.

Complainants to IC: In the survey of complainants to IC, of 379 complaints (13% of total complaints), 55.41% were accepted, 37.73% were rejected and 6.86% kept pending. Of the total rejected, 40.56% were rejected for not making the requests to the appropriate authorities, 24.48% for failure to follow due process of complaining.

Among those who received a response, 68% received it within the stipulated 20 days; 40.5% received it within 10 days, 27.4% within 10-20 days, and 11.5% within 21-30 days.

1.7 Survey interpretation on demand side

Public awareness is important to increase enthusiasm and support, stimulate self-mobilization and action, and mobilize local knowledge and resources.

Although the level of public awareness about RTI was found to be low compared to that found in the 2012 survey, the survey of 2019 also indicates that raising public awareness is not the sole responsibility of IC as other stakeholders of the Act such as NGOs and media have similar roles to play.

In many countries, the lack of awareness of RTI is still a reality, even years after the enactment of the law. For instance, in India, more than 30% of rural public information officers surveyed in a study in 2013 did not know about the provisions of the RTI law.

An analysis of IC's social mobilization activities over the decade reveals that many public engagement activities were limited only to the urban and semi-urban areas. And various media channels used by IC to carry forward key RTI messages broadcast them during very particular and limited periods, which prevented greater outreach and penetration among the mass audience.

More importantly, in the absence of comprehensive media strategy, IC was constrained by both budget and scope to undertake behavior-changing communication interventions, which require sustained campaigns over a longer period of time to register key messages among a countrywide audience.

A few other external factors outside the IC's scope may have also contributed to the low level of requests for information about the RTI Act 2009 in Bangladesh. These are:

- a) The establishment and successful operation of more than 5,000 union digital centers across Bangladesh has facilitated easier access to various types of public service information by the citizens at their doorsteps;

- b) Proactive disclosure of information by thousands of government websites is helping the citizens to get updated official information; and
- c) Official responses to public grievances channeled through official Facebook pages or the Messenger services and other social media platforms may have provided needed information.

Requesters: Since public awareness about the RTI ACT was limited, the number of requesters was also found low. **The number of requesters was higher in urban areas than in rural areas.**

It is also to be noted that the requesters preferred submitting applications for personal reasons, notably seeking information on public service delivery issues such as land-related services.

IC may consider undertaking targeted campaigns in the field to generate more interest among service recipients to file RTI applications.

1.8. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

A total of 24 FGDs were conducted and clustered in several categories:

- a. RTI activists, promoters or facilitators;
- b. Youth groups;
- c. Media;
- d. NGOs and CSOs;
- e. Social groups;
- f. Academics;
- g. Professionals;
- h. Marginalized community; and
- i. Government officials.

Findings of all FGDs are summarized below:

RTI activists cited the availability of citizen charters in public offices and placement of rate chart at ferry terminals as positive examples of RTI implementation.

NGOs and CSOs observed that concern for security after filing RTI application may have contributed to the low level of RTI applications in rural areas.

Cultural activists were not familiar with the process and unaware of the functions of the Information Commission.

The general social groups were composed of three segments: (a) literate mothers, (b) senior citizens, and (c) guardians. Mothers viewed public information as a facilitator of social goods.

Senior Citizens observed that RTI Act should be able to provide certain information but was limited by state security and secrecy laws.

The guardian groups felt that RTI Act could improve the condition of illiterate women in rural areas by reducing corruption and harassment by public service providers.

The youth cluster was drawn from indigenous youths, debaters, young professionals etc. They valued the need for information on three accounts:

- (a) Forecasting for taking precautionary measures;
- (b) Information can prevent deprivations and ensure rights and
- (c) Corruption can be minimized through free flow of information.

The debater group's perception is that information on government TV channels and radios are less reliable hence the need for the RTI Act.

Young professionals' groups in their FGDs mentioned a link between information and livelihood, which is significant. Specifically, the groups saw the usefulness of RTI as a method of ensuring transparency in governance.

Plainland indigenous youths suggested large scale multi-media campaigns. To Chattogram Hill Tracts youths, RTI Act appears complicated. The marginalized youth group from outside Dhaka felt that distance and monetary considerations were the reasons for the low utilization of the RTI Act.

Local journalists working in national media said that the media don't benefit much from RTI Act due to delay in receiving official information.

The professional group comprising of doctors, lawyers, and teachers felt that RTI Act is not reaching the doorsteps of the people.

While generally appreciating the Act, academics felt it was unfortunate that only the State enjoys sole discretion of clarifying any confusion regarding the law.

The government officials comprising DOs felt that they needed to review Section 7 and exemptions before accepting requests for information from requesters.

The excluded groups were represented by social safety net beneficiaries, tea-garden laborers and micro-credit clients. Social Safety net beneficiaries had little knowledge about RTI. The word 'information' has no meaning to tea-garden laborers. Micro-credit clients have very little knowledge about the law and its usage.

1.9 Interpretation on FGD sessions:

The general tone from FGDs indicates that there exist critical observations of the IC's activities among professional groups, media, and academics.

1.10 Recommendations and takeways

During the last decade, Bangladesh has progressed significantly in making the supply side prepared in implementing the RTI Act.

While the youths appeared to have a more optimistic view about the need and use of information to improve livelihoods and contain corruption, it is also evident that there is a greater need for reaching out immediately to the marginalized and hard-to-reach communities who are yet to receive substantial benefits from the Act.

Except on public awareness, Information Commission's overall operational approaches have been found effective for, a) DOs, b) requesters, c) appellants, and d) complainants. It is now high time to increase public awareness and encourage them to use the Act so that the benefits reach the citizens. Requesters' lack of understanding of the RTI Act was the difficulty faced by the DOs in responding to applications, followed by poor coordination among different government offices.

Government of Bangladesh

As the custodian of the RTI Act 2009, the government has the most important role to play for an impactful implementation of the Act.

- Review the current targets set in the Strategic Plan, 2015-2021.
- Draw up necessary plans to activate demand side actions to generate awareness among the citizens.
- It is evident that there are opportunities for the DOs to carry forward social mobilization and citizens' sensitization within their respective localities to motivate people to use the law for improving service delivery.

Information Commission

The results of the survey have established the Information Commission as a champion for the implementation of the Act. Except on low level public awareness, the IC's overall operational approaches have been found very effective for DOs, requesters, complainants, and appellants.

As the principle implementer of the RTI Act, the Information Commission has a greater scope to play in realizing the full potential of RTI Act.

- Implementing a comprehensive communication strategy which has been lying with Information Commission since 2016, is necessary to increase public awareness about the law including complaints and appeal processes. This communication strategy including social media strategy aim to influence public behavior as well as reach out to the marginalized and hard-to-reach communities.
- The assessment on complaints and hearings shows Information Commission should develop a comprehensive guideline for speedy disposal of cases. The delay in providing a decision also did not help the appellants as they couldn't use the information in time.
- To increase awareness among women, the IC may consider partnering with women-headed organizations to bring positive changes in the livelihoods through the use of RTI.

Civil Society Organizations and NGOs

As important stakeholders of the implementation of the Act, the NGOs and CSOs should accelerate their social mobilization campaigns to generate more interests among the public.

- NGOs should mainstream the RTI issues in all their programmatic interventions.
- Although the level of public awareness about RTI was found to be low compared to that found in the 2012 survey, the survey of 2019 also indicates that raising public awareness is not the sole responsibility of the government or Information Commission as other stakeholders like the CSOs and NGOs (and media) have important roles to play.

Media

As a critical public opinion mobilizer, the media sector of the country should have their own strategy to promote RTI issues in the country.

- Instead of running limited sponsored programs on televisions and radios, or giving scanty space on newspapers, the media should appoint a RTI focal point in their own media houses with specific responsibilities for carrying out public service duties on a regular basis.
- There is a lack of familiarity with the complaints process and procedures of the RTI Act. The media (and CSOs/NGOs) may work closely with the Information Commission to make the citizens familiar with the complaints processes of the Information Commission.

1 Introduction

The enactment of the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2009 is a significant chapter in Bangladesh's legal history. The Act empowers people to apply the law to seek transparency and accountability in all spheres of governance.

Findings show that the number of RTI requests has been growing steadily and the institutional arrangements of providing requested information have been positive and encouraging.

As evident from its annual reports¹, the Information Commission (IC) has undertaken various initiatives to build capacities of the Designated Officers (DOs) while countrywide social mobilization activities by IC has also raised awareness among a section of people.

In consideration of various implementation challenges, the Cabinet Division, in partnership with the IC, has developed a strategic plan 2015-2021 that set out critical actions for the implementation of the RTI Act 2009.

One of the important demand-side actions under the strategic plan is to undertake initiatives to make citizens progressively aware of the RTI Act, the process of using it and to encourage them to file a request for information.

Despite its uniqueness, the RTI Act of Bangladesh is yet to play a vibrant role in the improvement of governance to the expected level.

Different studies suggest that weaknesses of both supply and demand sides are a major reason for this situation. For example, a survey report titled 'An Independent Citizens' Report, RTI Act in Bangladesh: Challenges of Implementation' published jointly by RTI Forum in 2012 found that a significant portion of the respondents were unaware of the RTI Act and the RTI itself.

In 2015, a report titled 'RTI Baseline Survey for Bangladesh' found that none among 2,628 people interviewed had used the RTI Act for accessing information. It also found varying degree of awareness level about the law among different stakeholders.

1 http://www.infocom.gov.bd/site/view/annual_reports/%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B7%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%95-%E0%A6%AA%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%A4%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%A6%E0%A6%A8

Against this backdrop, the World Bank (WB) initiated a second round of RTI Survey to assess the implementation status of the right to information in Bangladesh.

The survey was commissioned to a consortium led by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), together with Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) and Org-Quest Research Limited (OrQuest). All survey activities and assessments were carried out during January to March 2019.

1.1 Objective

The objective of the survey was to take an unbiased account of the current status of RTI that would eventually enable policymakers and RTI activists to undertake future RTI interventions to bring about the desired changes in perception, behavior and actions of the citizens.

Specific objectives include:

- To provide an empirical baseline of information on needs and experience of the people, implementation and use of the RTI Act in Bangladesh that is relevant for policymakers and RTI activists for future use
- To identify the challenges in the use of the RTI Act
- To analyze both quantitative and qualitative data and formulate recommendations to strengthen the implementation of the RTI Act in Bangladesh.

The survey of 2019 was composed of five different components:

- (a) survey among 768 DOs in 64 districts,
- (b) survey among 768 Heads of Office covering both government and NGOs in 64 districts,
- (c) survey among 359 requesters in 21 districts,
- (d) survey among complainants to the IC, and
- (e) nationwide survey among 12,800 citizens.

At the same time, two assessments were carried out in the National RTI Survey in 2019: (a) an assessment of 50 appellate authorities to get a picture of the RTI appeals and their responses and (b) a qualitative assessment of the working of the IC, particularly its key decisions since the promulgation of the RTI Act in 2009.

In addition, 24 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with key stakeholders such as media, civil society organizations (CSOs), DOs, youths, and marginalized communities were carried out to get a holistic view of the challenges to the implementation of the RTI Act in Bangladesh.

1.2 Scope of survey

A country-wide random survey was carried out among 12,800 people in both urban and rural areas in 64 districts, with a male to female ratio of 50:50 covering all socio-demographic groups.

The face-to-face in-house interview with the help of a structured questionnaire was conducted among citizens, using Computer Aided Personal Interview (CAPI) method. The detailed methodology of the survey is available on **Annexure 1**.

For survey among 768 DOs, face-to-face interviews were conducted by visiting target organizations and finding out DOs in the organizations in 64 districts through a structured questionnaire by using CAPI method.

For survey among 768 Heads of Office, similar method, techniques and number of samples were applied in 64 districts.

For survey among requesters, a list was collected from the DOs after which requesters were approached and a total of 359 requesters from 64 districts were interviewed with the help of a structured questionnaire by using CAPI method.

A total of 340 complainants were selected from 2,500 cases lodged with the IC for assessing the perspectives of the complainant, reasons for rejection, level of cooperation, support provided by the IC to the complainants and limitations of complainants.

For qualitative assessment of hearing and decisions, secondary data were collected from the publication on the decisions and annual report and the IC website.

For assessment of appellants and appellate authority, 50 appellants and 50 officials who worked as appellate authority were interviewed using different sets of semi-structured questionnaires.

A total of 24 FGDs were conducted in eight divisions. The total number of participants was 238, comprising members from media, CSOs, DOs, professionals, women, youth, parents, teachers, community leaders and others.

The recordings were transcribed verbatim and those were further checked for accuracy, after which reports for each group was prepared through content analysis.

1.3 Analytical framework

The data gathered from this survey were analyzed by combining three sides involved in good governance: supply, demand and the third sector. In an ideal situation, the quality of tripartite relations among the three sides will determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the RTI Act.

On the second level, interactions between any two sides will contribute significantly in the progress towards effective implementation of the Act.

And finally, actors and stakeholders involved in each side will also play a significant role in determining the overall implementation scenarios. The conceptual framework is presented in the diagram below:



2 Results

PART I - DESIGNATED OFFICERS

Part I presents the assessment of the Designated Officers (DOs) about their engagement in the implementation of the RTI Act.

- a) Awareness of the DOs of the RTI Act; factors contributing to build the awareness.
- b) Training received by the DOs on the RTI Act and related issues.
- c) Experience and motivational factors for a DO.
- d) Suggestions that the DOs have made for the improvements of the implementation of the RTI Act?
- e) Observations of enumerators about the DOs.

Comparisons, where applicable, have been made against the baseline survey conducted in 2012.

I.a Awareness of the DOs of the RTI Act; factors contributing to build the awareness.

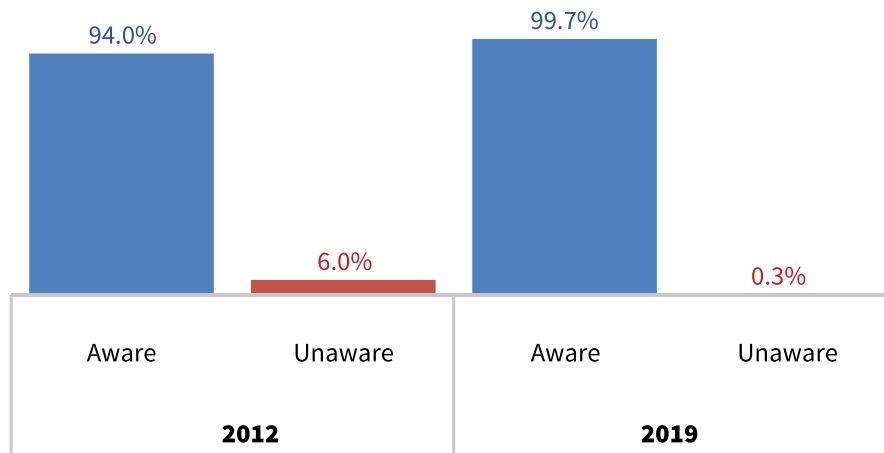
This section describes findings on incidence, quality and source of awareness of the RTI Act among DOs.

Awareness of the RTI Act: Awareness of the RTI Act was almost universal among the DOs, as 99.7% of them were found aware, which was 94% in 2012.

One of the DOs was working with an NGO and the other at an Upazila Social Services Office. Both were very recently designated to their respective positions.

Out of 768 DOs, only 2 DOs were found unaware, who claimed that they came to know about their identity as DO for the first time from the survey enumerators.

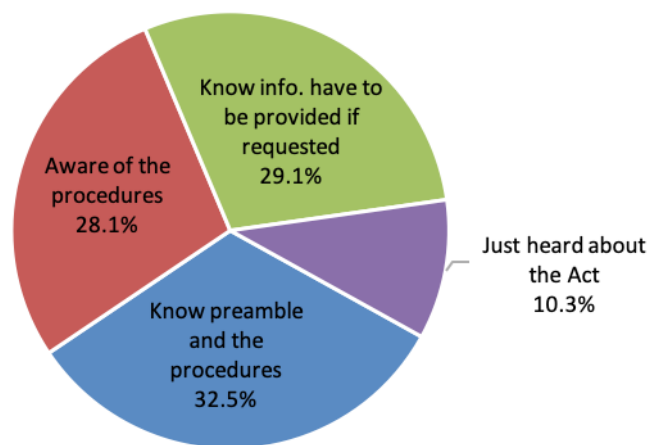
Chart 1.1: Change in awareness of the RTI Act



Base: All respondents (2012 n=507; 2019 n=768)

Quality of awareness: Quality of awareness of the RTI Act among the DOs was assessed by the enumerators based on the response of the DOs when they were asked to describe the Act. According to the enumerators' evaluation, one-third of the aware DOs knew the preamble of the Act along with the procedures to follow. Slightly less than one-third knew just the procedures and a similar number were aware that under this Act information will have to be provided if requested for, and the remaining one-tenth had only heard about the Act.

Chart 1.2: Quality of awareness of the RTI Act



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766)

Sources of awareness: As a whole, training was cited as the most common source of awareness of the RTI Act. Other commonly mentioned sources were the Internet, IC initiatives, government memorandum and newspapers. Some variations by department/organization were observed as seen from the following table.

Table 1.1: Source of awareness of the RTI Act by Department/ Organization (multiple responses)

Source of Awareness	All BD	Department/Organization							
		Education	LGED	Women Affairs	NGO	Upazila Agriculture	Upazila Social Services	UP	Others
Training	40.9%	17.0%	38.5%	59.3%	21.1%	36.0%	35.3%	54.2%	44.1%
Internet/ website	27.2%	35.8%	30.8%	29.6%	15.8%	42.0%	31.4%	13.6%	26.4%
IC initiatives	19.6%	13.2%	9.6%	20.4%	7.0%	12.0%	21.6%	22.0%	23.8%
Government memorandum	19.1%	18.9%	15.4%	24.1%	15.8%	10.0%	15.7%	10.2%	22.3%
Newspaper	18.5%	24.5%	28.8%	16.7%	24.6%	16.0%	13.7%	13.6%	17.4%
DC Office	10.7%	15.1%	17.3%	9.3%	21.1%	4.0%	3.9%	6.8%	10.3%
Own initiative	9.5%	15.1%	7.7%	5.6%	8.8%	6.0%	11.8%	0.0%	11.3%
Colleagues	7.8%	9.4%	3.8%	5.6%	8.8%	2.0%	17.6%	3.4%	8.5%
Workshops and seminars	6.7%	11.3%	5.8%	11.1%	7.0%	2.0%	7.8%	3.4%	6.4%
Others (7 responses with 1.1% to 2.6%)	13.7%	5.7%	9.6%	16.7%	19.3%	30.0%	5.9%	27.1%	11.0%
Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act	766	53	52	54	57	50	51	59	390

Table 1.2: Changes in sources of awareness of the RTI Act (multiple responses)

Sources of Awareness	2012	2019
Training	23.0%	40.9%
Internet/ website	-	27.2%
IC initiatives	-	19.6%
Government memorandum	47.0%	19.1%
Newspapers	72.0%	18.5%
DC Office	-	10.7%
Own initiative	-	9.5%
Colleagues	20.0%	7.8%
Workshops and seminars	-	6.7%
TV/ other media	16.0%	3.0%
SMS	8.0%	-
Others (6 responses with 0.7% to 3.1%)	-	13.7%
Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act	477¹	766

Training, Internet/ websites and IC initiatives appear to have become more prominent sources of awareness of the RTI Act among the DOs in 2019 compared to 2012.

I.b Training received by the DOs on the RTI Act and related issues

- Training issues.
- Experience and motivational factors for a DO.
- Suggestions that the DOs have made for the improvements of the implementation of the RTI Act.
- Observations of enumerators about the DOs.

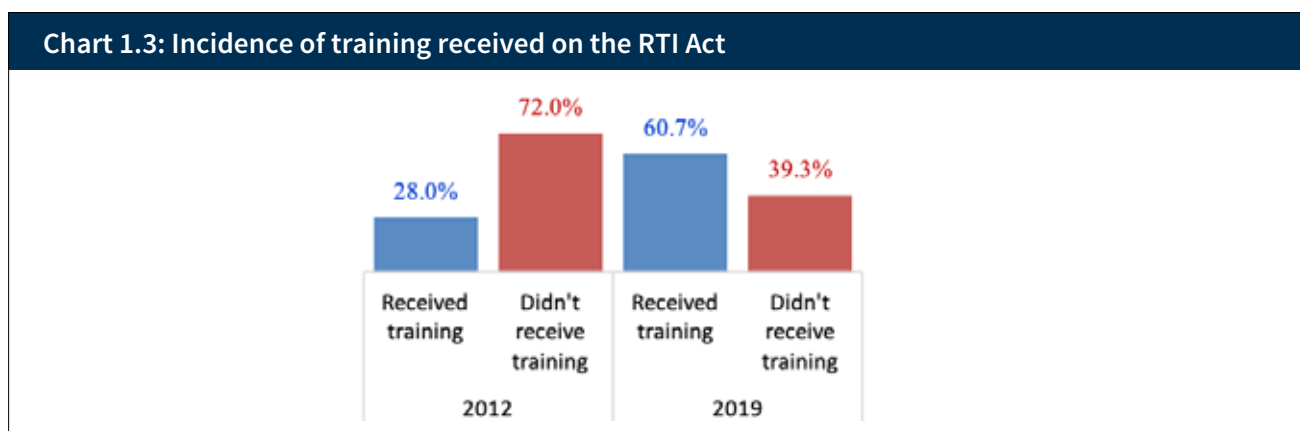
This section describes in detail the incidence, mode, frequency, source and duration of training that DOs received pertinent to the RTI Act, and their perception about the usefulness of the training in terms of handling applications under this Act.

Incidence of training received: About 60.7% of DOs who are aware of the Act as a whole received training on the RTI Act, against 28% in 2012, up by 33 percentage points.

The highest training was received by the DOs of the Women Affairs department (83.3%), followed by Union Parishad (72.9%) and least being the NGOs (38.6%).

		Received training	Didn't receive training	Base: Those aware of the RTI Act
All BD		60.7%	39.3%	766
Department/ Organization	Women Affairs	83.3%	16.7%	54
	Union Parishad	72.9%	27.1%	59
	Upazila Agriculture	60.0%	40.0%	50
	Education	54.7%	45.3%	53
	LGED	53.8%	46.2%	52
	Upazila Social Services	52.9%	47.1%	51
	NGO	38.6%	61.4%	57
	Others	61.8%	38.2%	390

There has been a notable increase in the incidence of training received by the DOs on the RTI Act in 2019 compared with 2012.



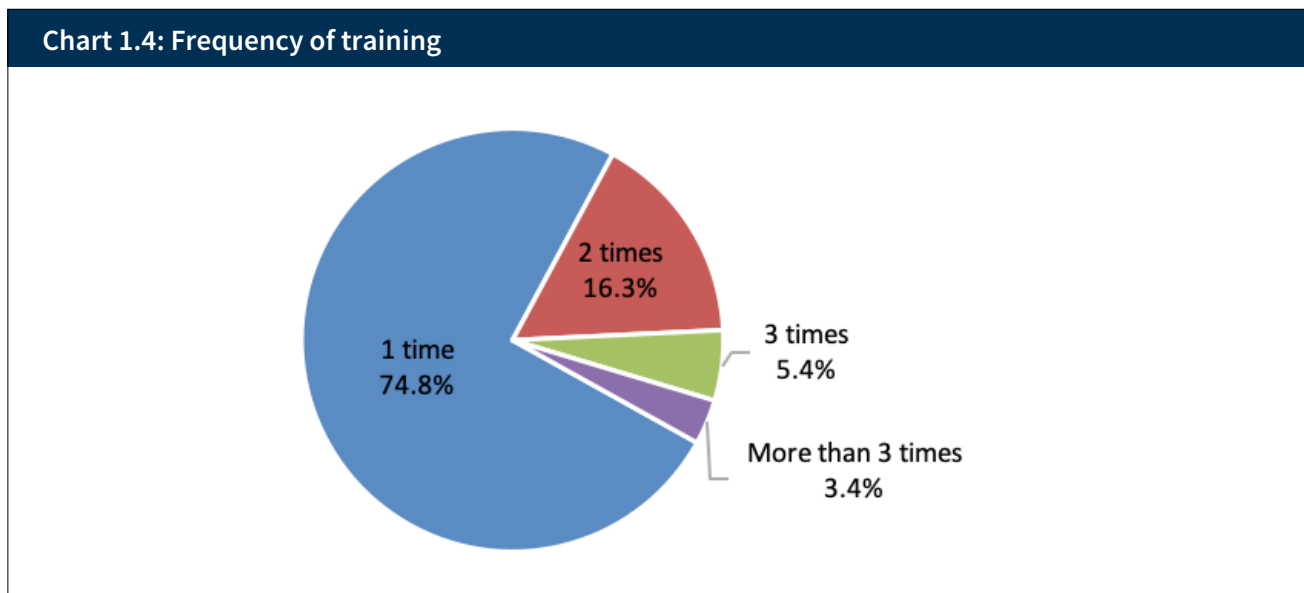
Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (2012 n=477⁵; 2019 n=766)

⁵ It is not conclusive whether the base for 2012 was 'all respondents' or 'those aware of the RTI Act'. It has been assumed that the base was 'those aware of the RTI Act'.

Mode of training: Training had been received by the DOs in two ways: either through classroom sessions or online. Almost half the training had been given through only classroom sessions, nearly two-fifths through online and the remaining 17% through both classroom sessions and online. However, variations were observed by department/organization as can be seen from the following table.

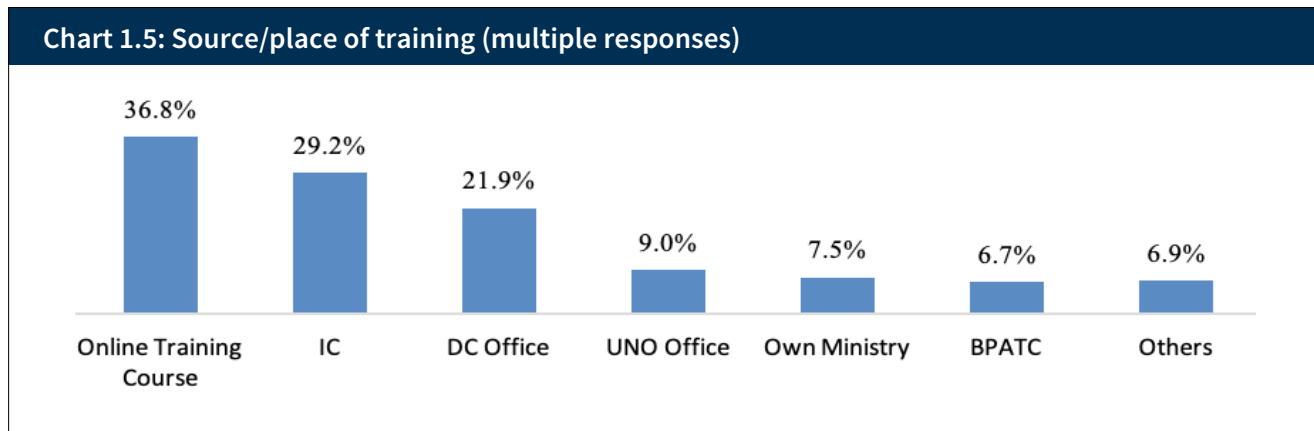
Table 1.4: Mode of training by Department/Organization					
		Classroom	Online	Both classroom and online	Base: Those received training
All BD		44.9%	38.1%	17.0%	465
Department/ Organization	Women Affairs	48.9%	28.9%	22.2%	45
	Union Parishad	79.1%	11.6%	9.3%	43
	Upazila Agriculture	16.7%	70.0%	13.3%	30
	Education	34.5%	58.6%	6.9%	29
	LGED	53.6%	28.6%	17.9%	28
	Upazila Social Services	37.0%	29.6%	33.3%	27
	NGO	50.0%	27.3%	22.7%	22
	Others	42.3%	41.1%	16.6%	241

Frequency of training: A vast majority (three-fourths) of the DOs received training on the RTI Act only once, and the rest received 2-3 times.



Base: Those who received training (n=465)

Source of training: Trainings were received from multiple sources, the most common being online, followed by the IC and DC Office. Other less prominent sources were Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Office, own ministry, and Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center (BPATC).



Base: Those who received training (n=465)

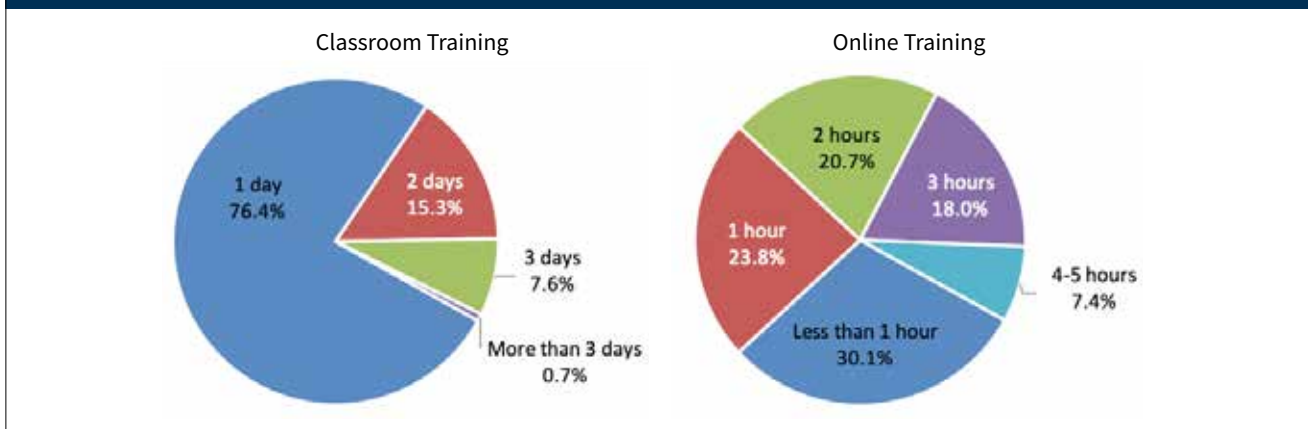
In the initial days, IC and respective ministries were the two main sources of training, which have changed over time to other sources like the Internet, IC and DC Office as can be seen from the following table.

Table 1.5: Change in source/place of training (multiple responses)

Source/ Place of Training	2012	2019
Online Training Course		36.8%
IC	75.0%	29.2%
DC Office	4.0%	21.9%
UNO Office	-	9.0%
Own Ministry	26.0%	7.5%
BPATC	9.0%	6.7%
NGO	4.0%	2.8%
LGED	1.0%	0.6%
NIMC	1.0%	-
Others (7 responses with 0.2% to 1.3%)		3.4%
Base: Those who received training	141	465

Duration of training: About 76.4% of the classroom-based trainings were one-day long, and the rest mostly lasted between 2 and 3 days. Online trainings spanned mostly between less than one hour and three hours.

Chart 1.6: Duration of classroom and online training

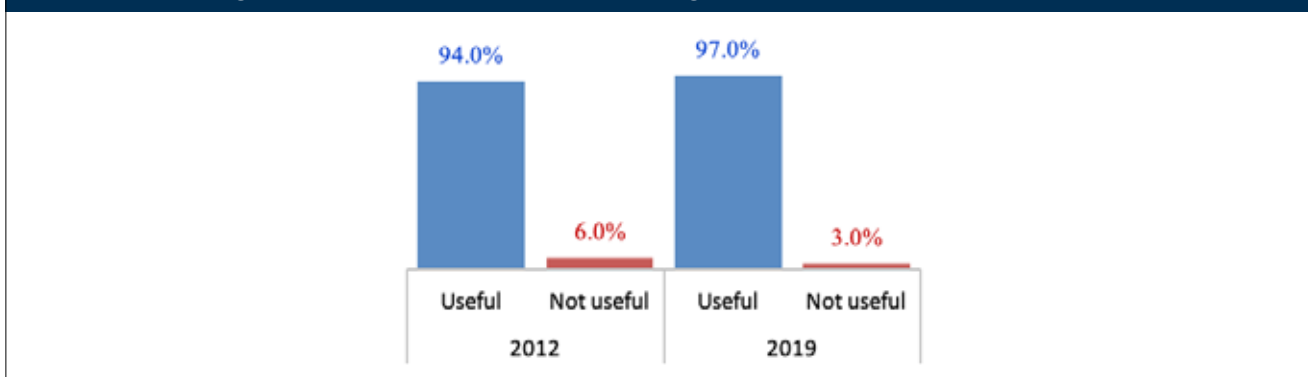


Base: Those who received classroom training (n=288) and online training (n=256)

Perceived usefulness of training: Almost all the trained DOs commented that the training they received helped them to handle RTI Act related work better.

Usefulness of RTI Act related training perceived by DOs has increased slightly in 2019 compared to 2012.

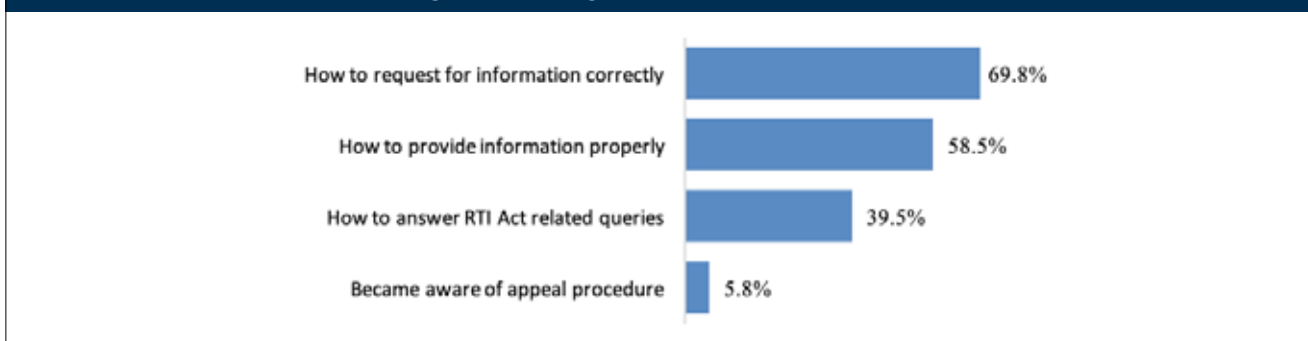
Chart 1.7: Change in perceived usefulness of training on the RTI Act



Base: Those who received training (2012 n=141; 2019 n=465)

Training helped the DOs learn how to make requests correctly, provide information properly, answer RTI-related queries, and the correct procedure to appeal.

Chart 1.8: Usefulness of training on handling RTI Act related issues (multiple responses)



Base: Those who found training useful (n=451)

Few of the DOs who said that training was not useful either attributed it to the briefness or incompleteness of the training, or to the fact that no application for information had been received by them thus far.

Chart 1.9: Reason for training on the RTI Act not being successful



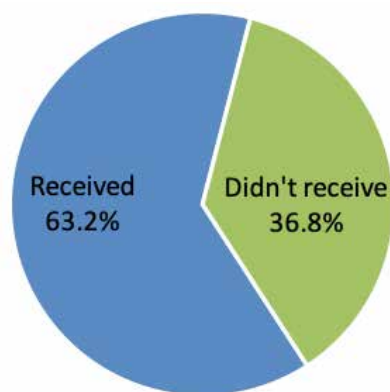
Base: Those who did not find training useful (n=14)

I.c Experience and motivational factors for a DO

This section discusses receiving appointment as a DO, experience of working as a DO, receipt and rejection of applications under the RTI Act, constraint faced to cover the cost of servicing applications, keeping records of applications, difficulties faced in responding to applications, workload, motivational factors, possession of RTI related manuals, visibility of DO's name and designation, and handing application forms over to applicants by DOs.

Receipt of appointment letter: Almost two-thirds of the DOs received official letters stating their appointment as DO, and the rest did not receive any letter.

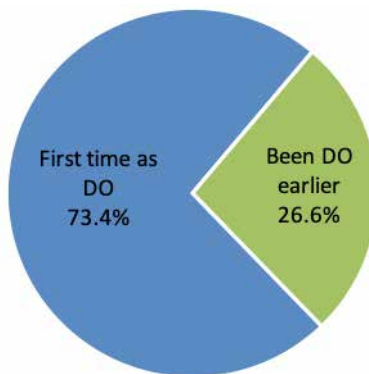
Chart 1.10: Receipt of official appointment letter as DO



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766)

Experience of working as a DO: Almost three-fourths of the DOs were found to be in their first tenure as a DO, while the remaining one-fourth had some prior experience in similar capacity.

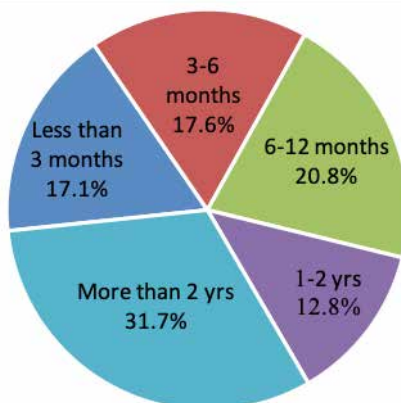
Chart 1.11: First timer or have past experience of working as a DO



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766)

More than half of the DOs had been in this role for less than one year. The rest had experience of working for more than a year, and around one-third, had worked as a DO for more than two years.

Chart 1.12: Length of experience of working as a DO



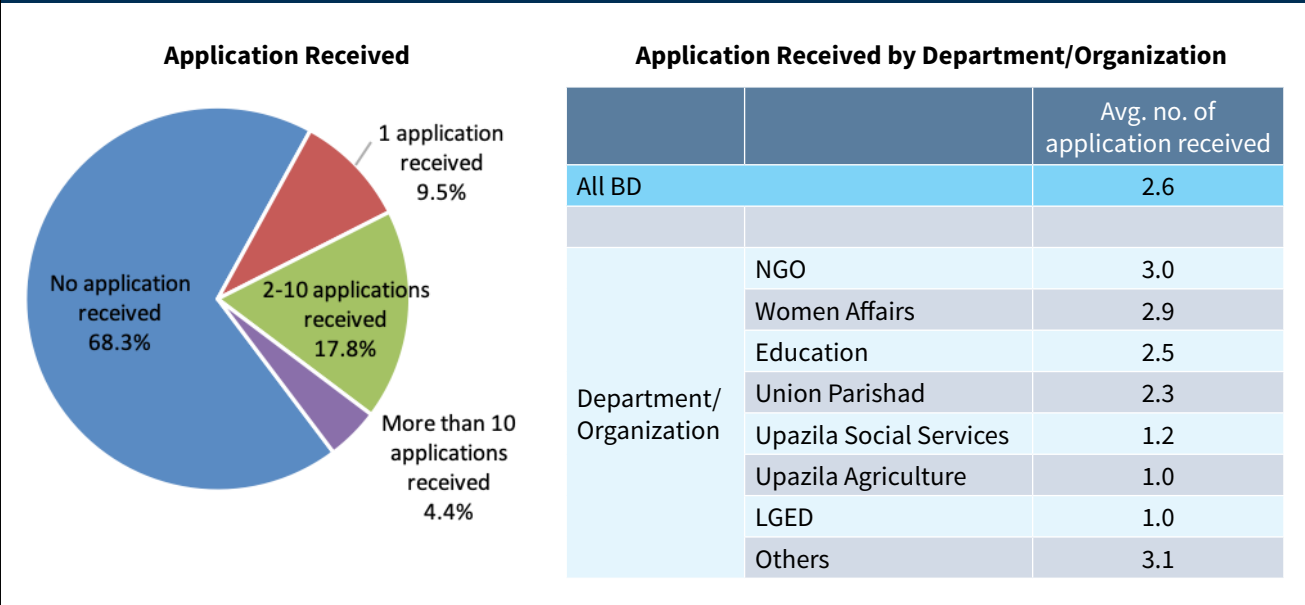
Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766)

Receipt of applications: Since joining their current positions, two-thirds of DOs had never received any application for information.

DOs working at NGOs and Women Affairs offices had received the highest number of applications, while those at Upazila Agriculture and LGED offices had received the lowest.

Some 9.5% received only one application, 17.8% received between 2 to 10 applications, and 4.4% received more than 10 applications.

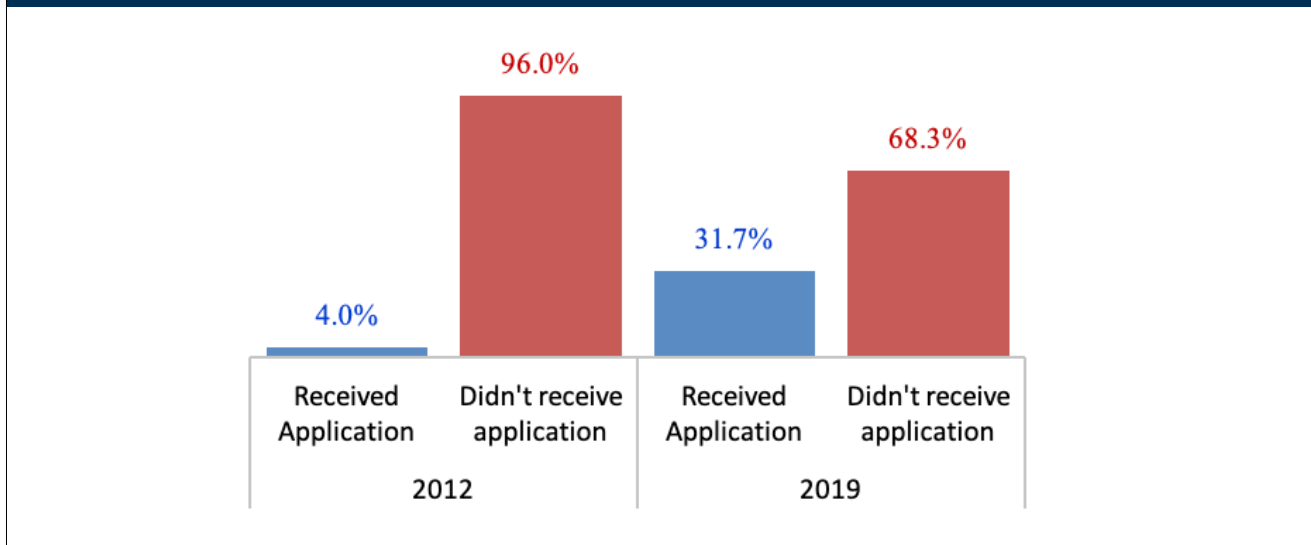
Chart 1.13: Number of applications received by DOs



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act

The incidence of applications received by the DOs increased notably in 2019 compared to 2012 as can be seen from the table below.

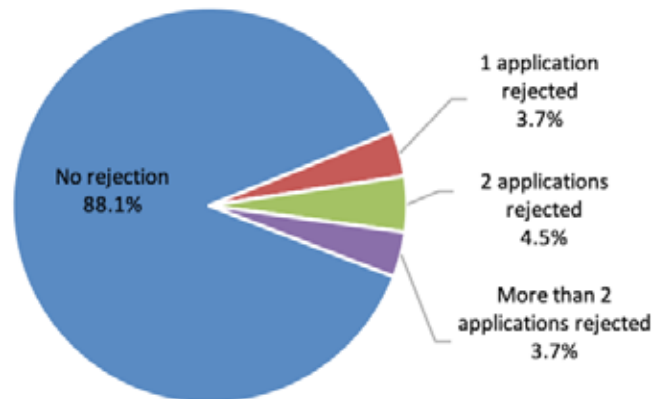
Chart 1.14: Incidence of receiving application for information by the DOs



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (2012 n=477; 2019 n=766)

Number of applications rejected: A majority of those who had received applications for information did not reject any application thus far, as can be seen from the chart below. Only around 12% had rejected some applications.

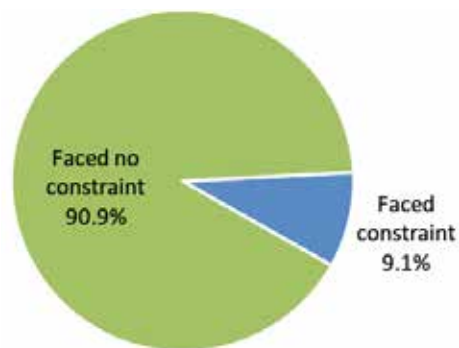
Chart 1.15: Number of applications rejected by DOs



Base: Those who received application (n=243)

Constraints faced to cover the cost of servicing applications: Most of the DOs who had received applications did not face any constraint to cover the cost of servicing requests for information.

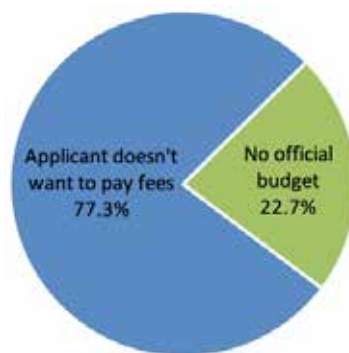
Chart 1.16: Constraint to cover the cost of servicing requests for information



Base: Those who received application (n=243)

Constraints faced by the remaining 9.1% DOs include unwillingness of the applicants to pay application fees and absence of official budget for servicing/processing applications under the RTI Act.

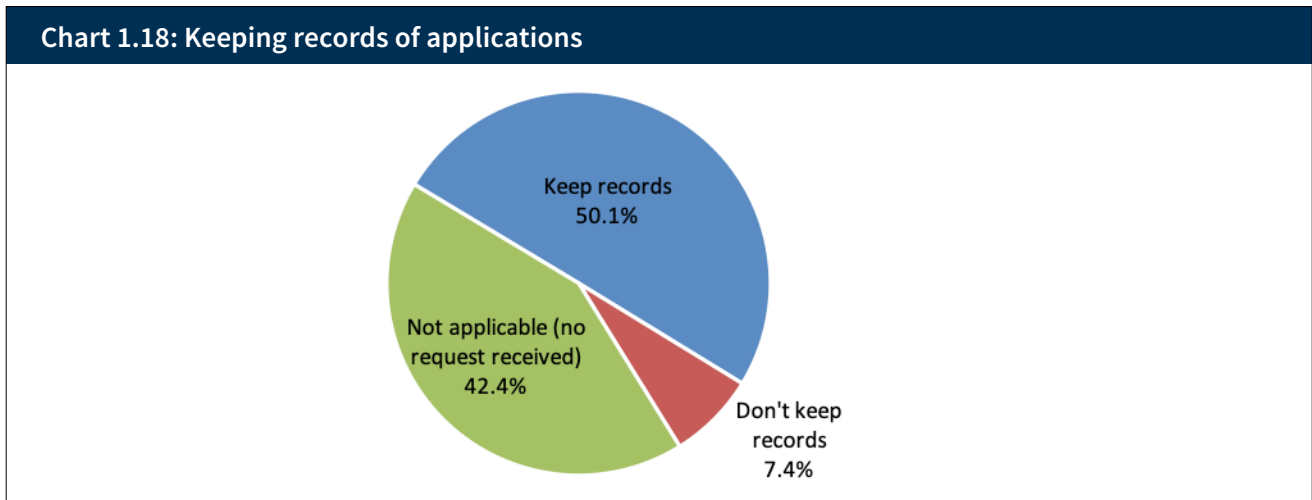
Chart 1.17: Type of constraint faced



Base: Those who faced constraint (n=22)

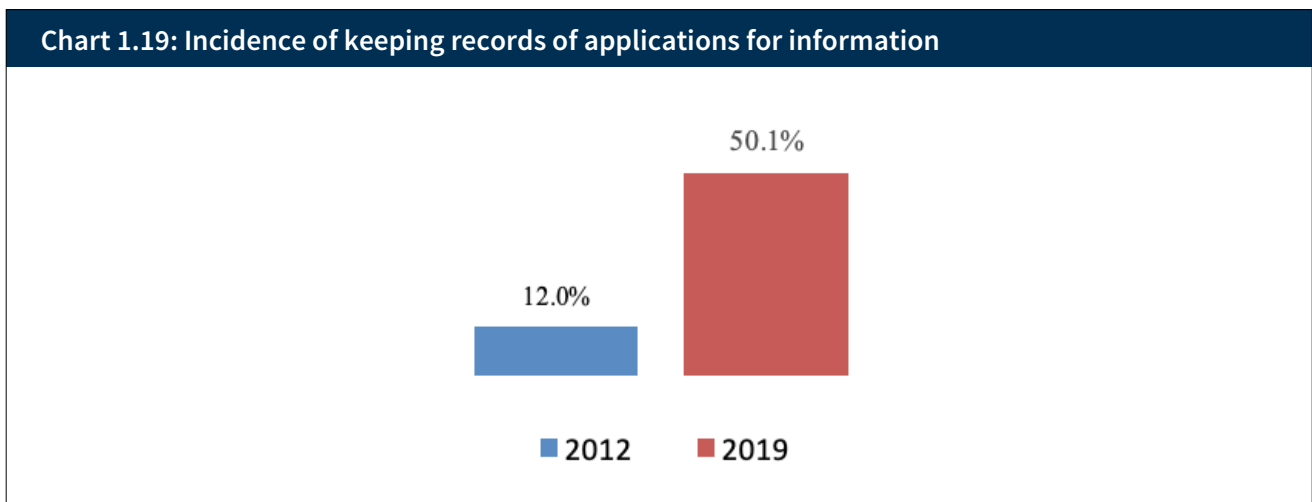
Incidence of keeping application records: Half of the DOs claimed that their offices had been keeping records of applications for information such as date of receipt, information provided, number of applications rejected, reasons for rejection, etc.

Only 7.4% stated that records were not preserved while 42.4% mentioned that it was not applicable for them as no application for information under the RTI Act was received thus far by their offices.



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766)

The number of DOs who claimed that they had provision in their office for keeping records of applications for information have increased many folds when compared with that in 2012.

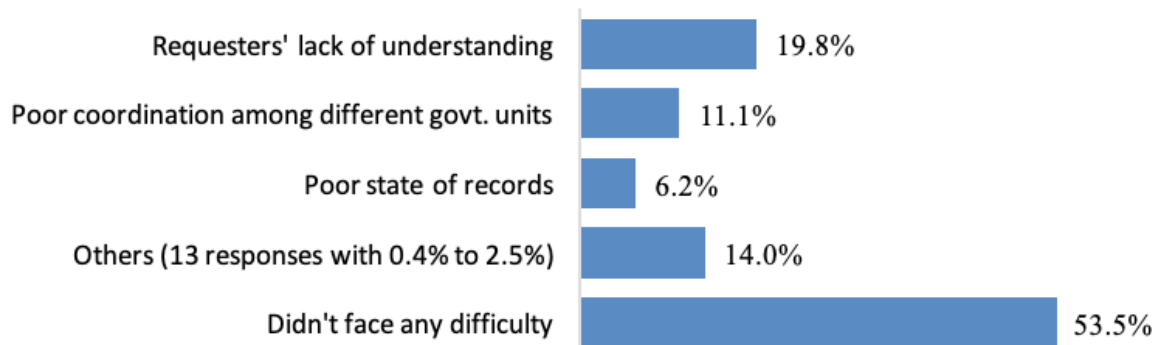


Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (2012 n=477⁶; 2019 n=766)

Difficulties faced in responding to applications: Requesters' lack of understanding of the RTI Act had been cited as the most prevalent difficulty faced by the DOs in responding to applications. The second most prominent difficulty was poor coordination among different government units. Notably, more than half of the DOs mentioned that they did not face any difficulty in dealing with applications for information.

⁶ It is not conclusive whether the base for 2012 was 'all respondents' or 'those aware of the RTI Act'. It has been assumed that the base was 'those aware of the RTI Act'.

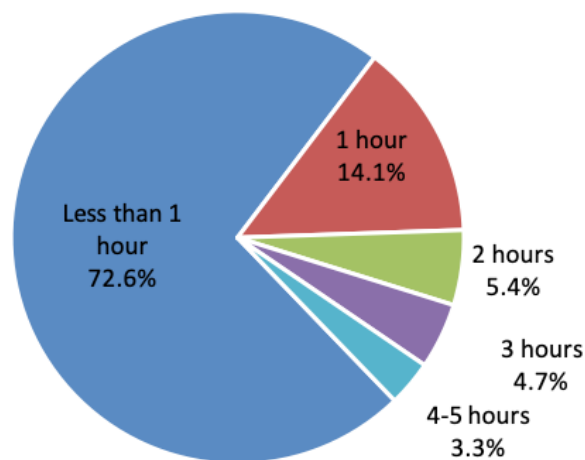
Chart 1.20: Difficulties faced in responding to applications (multiple responses)



Base: Those who received application (n=243)

RTI-related workload: Close to three-fourths of the DOs spent less than one hour per week on RTI-related tasks. Only 13.3% DOs claimed to have spent two to five hours per week for the same as can be seen from the following graph.

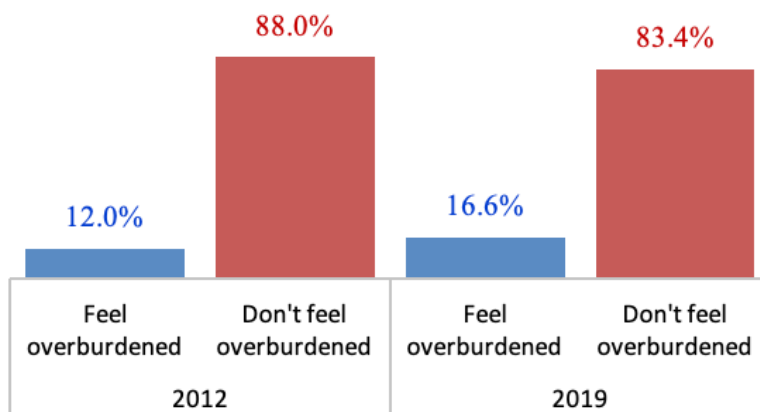
Chart 1.21: Time spent every week for RTI related work



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766)

An overwhelming majority of the DOs didn't feel any burden by additional responsibilities as DO. Compared to 2012, a slightly higher percentage of the DOs now appear to feel overburdened due to DO assignment.

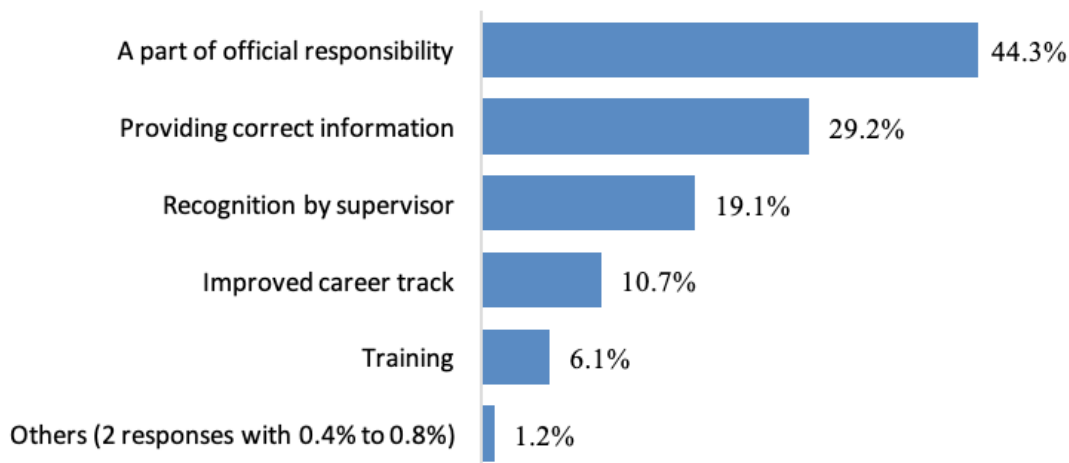
Chart 1.22: Feeling of overburden due to DO assignment



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (2012 n=477⁷; 2019 n=766)

Motivational factors: When asked what would motivate them to act as DOs, the most frequent responses were ‘it is a part of official responsibility; feeling good to be able to provide correct information to the applicants; recognition by the supervisors; opportunity to improve career track record and training prospect’.

Chart 1.23: Motivational factors for performing the role of DO (multiple responses)



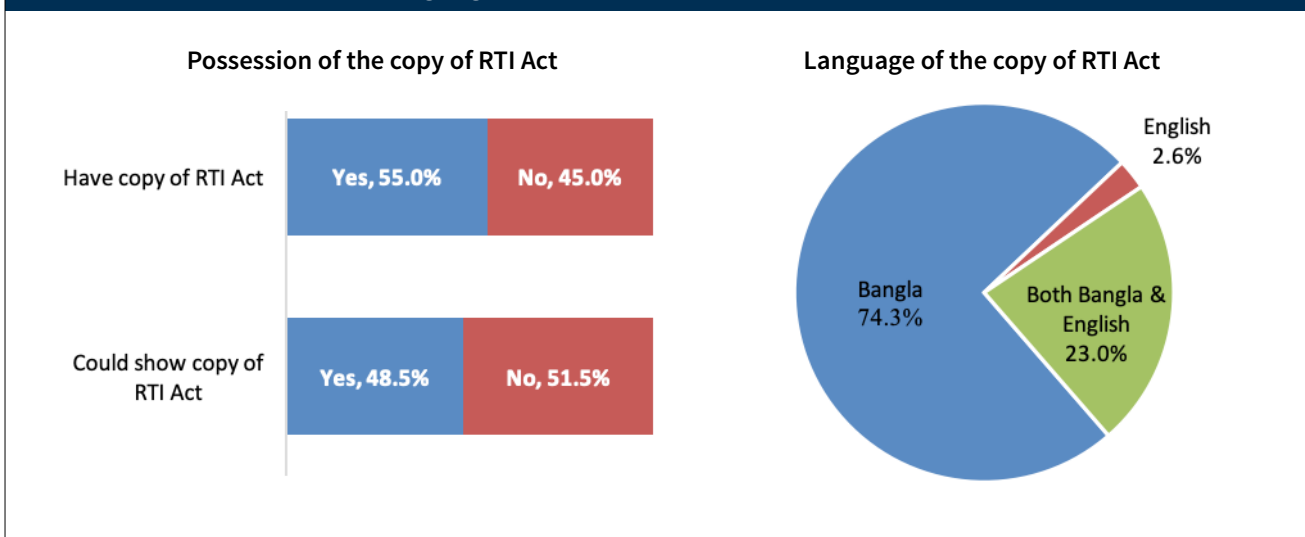
Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766)

Possession of RTI-related manuals: More than half of the DOs claimed that they had copies of the RTI Act, but only around half of them could show those to the enumerators.

Among those who claimed to have copies of the Act, 74.3% had a copy in Bangla, 2.6% in English, and the remaining 23.0% had both Bangla and English copies.

⁷ It is not conclusive whether the base for 2012 was ‘all respondents’ or ‘those aware of the RTI Act’. It has been assumed that the base was ‘those aware of the RTI Act’.

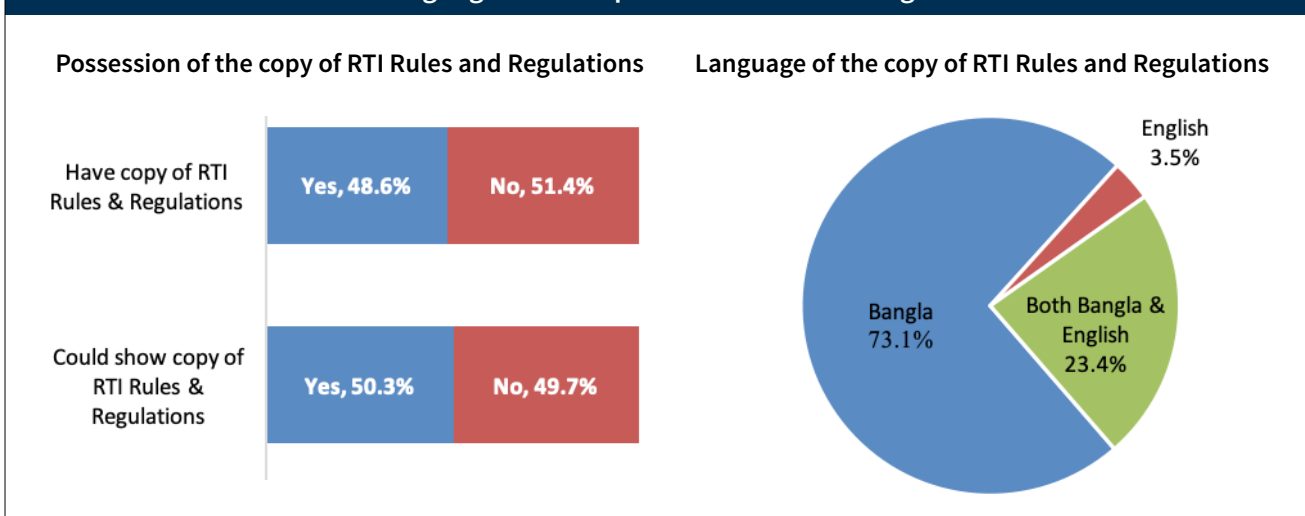
Chart 1.24: Possession and language of the copies of RTI Act



Base: Having copy of RTI Act – those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766); Showing copy of RTI Act and Language of the copy of RTI Act – those said have copy of RTI Act (n=421)

Similarly, nearly half of the DOs claimed that they had copies of RTI Rules & Regulations, but only half of them could show those. Of those who claimed to have copies, 73.1% had copies in Bangla, 3.5% in English, and the remaining 23.4% had both Bangla and English copies.

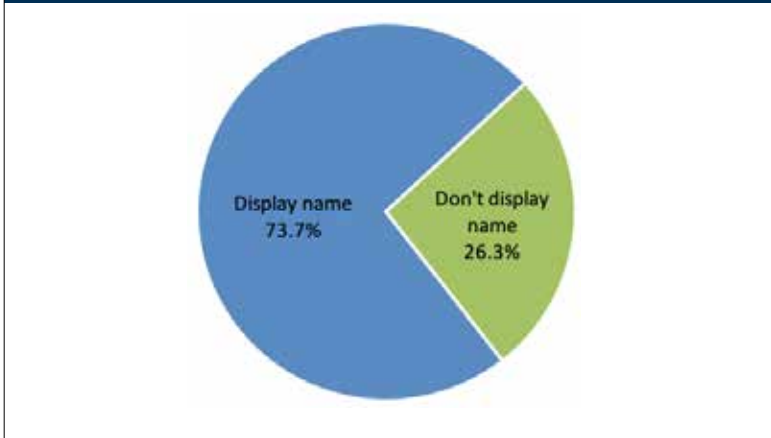
Chart 1.25: Possession and language of the copies of RTI rules and regulations



Base: Having copy of RTI Rules and Regulations – those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766); Showing copy of RTI Rules and Regulations and Language of the copy of RTI Rules and Regulations – those said have copy of RTI Rules and Regulations (n=372)

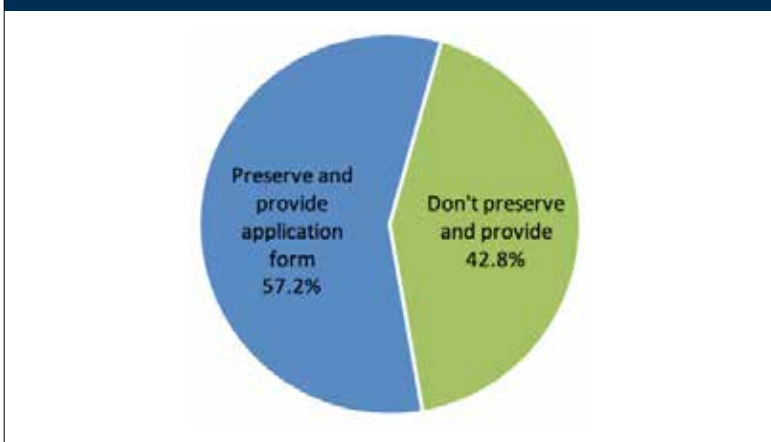
Visibility of DO's name and designation: It appears that DOs are easily traceable by anyone. In order to ascertain how easily one can find the DOs, they were asked whether they displayed their name or names of Appellate Authority or the IC on their website or noticeboards. Nearly three-fourths answered positively.

Chart 1.26: Displaying names of DO/Appellate Authority/ IC in website or notice board



Base: All respondents (n=768)

Chart 1.27: Providing application forms to applicants



Base: All respondents (n=768)

Chart 1.28: Suggestions for improving procedures of the RTI Act (multiple responses)



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766)

Incidence of providing application forms to applicants:

Application and complaint forms are available in majority of the organizations as more than half of the DOs reported that they preserved application or complaint forms in their offices and provided it at free of cost to general citizens seeking information or lodging complaints.

I.d Suggestions that the DOs have made for the improvements of the RTI Act.

This section narrates suggestions from DOs for improving the procedures and effectiveness of the RTI Act.

Suggestions for improving the procedures:

Almost half of the DOs could not suggest any means of improving the procedures of the RTI Act. However, the rest came up with the suggestions of launching an online application system, providing training to the DOs, improving staff attitude, and making updated information available.

Suggestions for improving effectiveness of the RTI Act:

In terms of improving effectiveness of the Act, the top recommendations were: holding of meetings, seminars and workshops; publicizing through television and radio; promoting through posters, banners and billboards; promoting through social media; publishing in newspapers; promoting through street drama and arranging more training for DOs, etc.

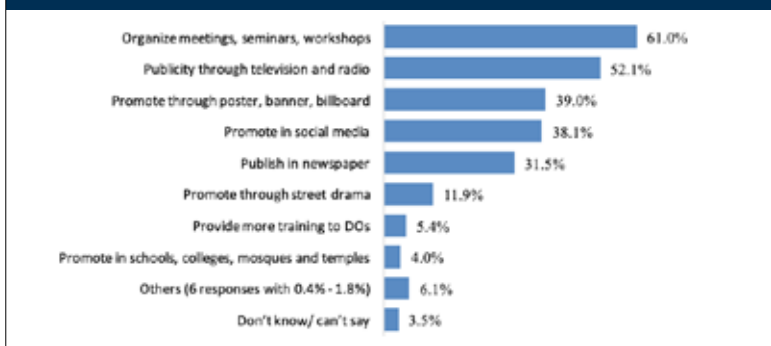
I.e Observations of enumerators about the DOs

At the end of the interview, enumerators recorded their observations on four specific attributes about the DOs who were interviewed. These are:

- if DOs answered survey questions in presence of superior officers,
- if others participated in the survey in addition to the DOs,
- if DOs cooperated with the enumerators and
- if DOs' names and designations were placed or easily visible outside DOs' offices.

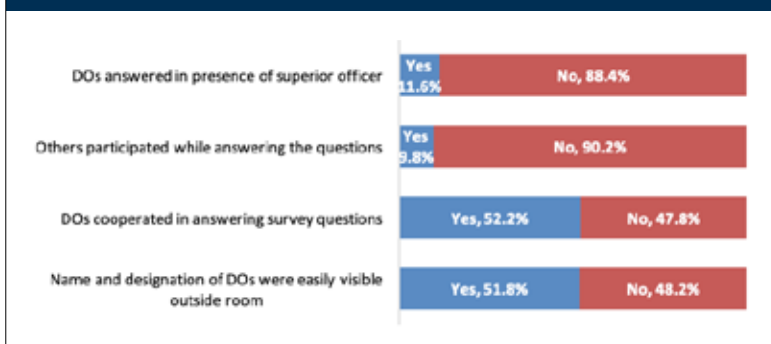
Majority of the DOs were interviewed alone and in the absence of their superior officers. Almost half of the DOs were cooperative in answering survey questions, and about the same number of DOs had their names and designations visible outside of their offices.

Chart 1.29: Suggestions for improving effectiveness of the RTI Act (multiple responses)



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=766)

Chart 1.30: Observations of enumerators on four specific attributes of DO



Base: All respondents (n=768)

PART II - HEADS OF OFFICE

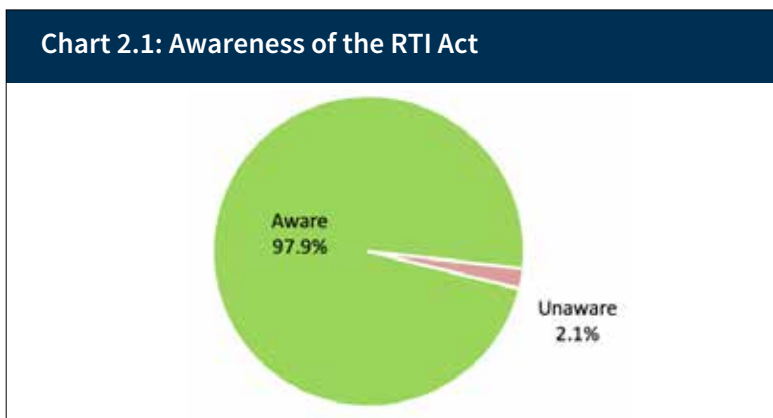
The Part II presents the assesment of the Heads of Office in the implementation of the RTI Act.

- Level of awareness of the Heads of Office of the RTI Act. The factors that contributed to develop the awareness.
- Number of the Heads of Office who have received training on the RTI Act. Available provisions of training.
- Experience of Heads of Office, especially as the have acted as a DO, and related issues.
- Activities of Heads of Office.
- Attendance of Heads of Office in Information Commission hearings and the outcomes.
- Problems identified by the Heads of Office and their suggestions for improvements.

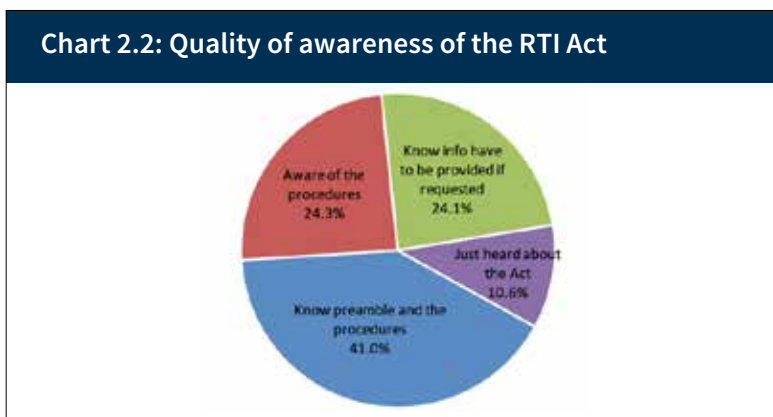
II.a Level of awareness of the Heads of Office of the RTI Act. The factors that contributed to develop the awareness.

This section depicts the incidence, quality and sources of awareness of Heads of Office regarding the RTI Act.

Awareness of the RTI Act: Heads of Office were almost universally aware of the RTI Act. Among the 768 Heads of Office interviewed, 97.9% were found aware. Majority of the Heads of Office who were not aware, were working in Union Parishads.



Base: All respondents (n=768)



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=752)

Quality of awareness: Quality of awareness of the Heads of Office about the RTI Act was assessed by the enumerators based on the response of the Heads of Office when they were asked to describe the Act.

As per the enumerators' evaluation, around 40% of Heads of Office who were aware of the RTI Act knew the preamble of the Act along with the procedures to follow. Around one-fourth knew just the procedures and a similar proportion only knew that under this Act, information will have to be provided if requested for. The remaining one-tenth had only heard about the Act.

Source of awareness: Overall, training was the most frequently cited source of awareness of the RTI Act by the Heads of Office. The other major sources mentioned were IC initiatives, government memorandum, the Internet and newspapers. Some variations by department/organization were observed as shown in the following table.

Table 2.1: Source of awareness of the RTI Act by Department/ Organization (multiple responses)

Source of Awareness	All BD	Department/Organization							
		Education	LGED	Women Affairs	NGO	Upazila Agriculture	Upazila Social Services	Union Parishad	Others
Training	43.0%	39.6%	50.0%	64.8%	21.4%	60.0%	57.7%	9.8%	42.7%
IC Initiatives	29.7%	30.2%	23.1%	35.2%	19.6%	26.0%	42.3%	11.8%	32.3%
Government memorandum	28.5%	26.4%	36.5%	16.7%	8.9%	12.0%	23.1%	31.4%	34.6%
Internet/website	20.6%	13.2%	19.2%	38.9%	8.9%	22.0%	25.0%	7.8%	21.9%
Newspaper	19.7%	11.3%	23.1%	18.5%	19.6%	20.0%	7.7%	23.5%	21.6%
DC Office	10.4%	32.1%	3.8%	11.1%	16.1%	6.0%	3.8%	2.0%	9.9%
Own initiative	10.4%	15.1%	5.8%	5.6%	12.5%	6.0%	11.5%	15.7%	10.4%
Workshops and seminars	8.0%	9.4%	3.8%	7.4%	3.6%	6.0%	3.8%	21.6%	8.1%
Department/Ministry	6.4%	1.9%	1.9%	14.8%	14.3%	4.0%	5.8%	13.7%	4.7%
Colleagues	3.9%	1.9%	1.9%	3.7%	3.6%	8.0%	0.0%	7.8%	3.9%
Others (9 responses with 0.1% to 3.5%)	5.9%	3.8%	3.8%	3.7%	19.6%	4.0%	1.9%	11.8%	4.7%
Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act	752	53	52	54	56	50	52	51	384

II.b Number of Heads of Office who have received training on the RTI Act. Available provisions of training.

This section highlights the incidence and source of training received by Heads of Office on the RTI Act.

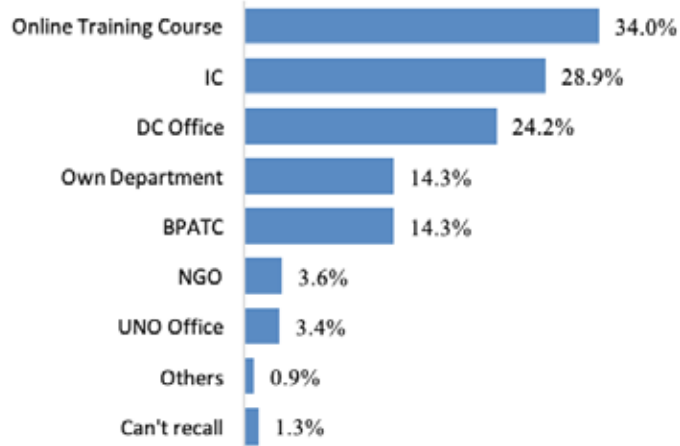
Incidence of training received: Majority (59.4%) of Heads of Office who were aware of the RTI Act received required training. The number of Heads of Office who had received training on the RTI Act was highest at the Women Affairs Department (94.4%), and it was lowest at Union Parishad (21.6%).

Table 2.2: Training received on the RTI Act by Department/Organization

		Received training	Didn't receive training	Base: Those aware of the RTI Act
All BD		59.4%	40.6%	752
Department/ Organization	Women Affairs	94.4%	5.6%	54
	Upazila Social Services	78.8%	21.2%	52
	Upazila Agriculture	76.0%	24.0%	50
	Education	67.9%	32.1%	53
	LGED	53.8%	46.2%	52
	NGO	35.7%	64.3%	56
	Union Parishad	21.6%	78.4%	51
	Others	57.8%	42.2%	384

Source/place of training: Among different sources of trainings, the most common was online training course, followed by the IC and DC Office. Other notable sources were own department and BPATC.

Chart 2.3: Source/place of training (multiple responses)



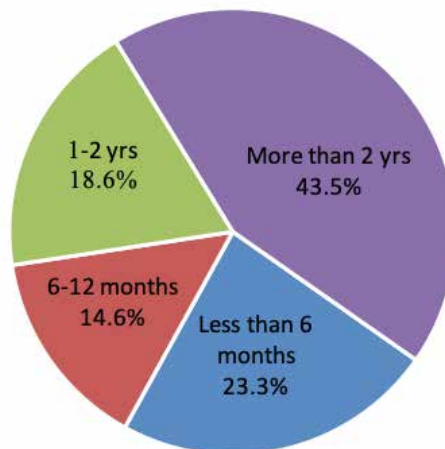
Base: Those who received training (n=447)

II.c Experience of Heads of Office in their role as a DO, and related issues.

This section outlines the experience of Heads of Office, incidence of Heads of Office acting also as DOs, receipt of applications and effect of additional workload from acting as a DO besides regular duties of a Head of Office.

Experience of working as a Head of Office: The largest portion of Heads of Office (43.5%) had been in this role for more than 2 years, about one-fifth for 1-2 years and the remaining 38% had been working as a Head of Office for less than a year.

Chart 2.4: Experience of working as a Head of Office



Base: All respondents (n=768)

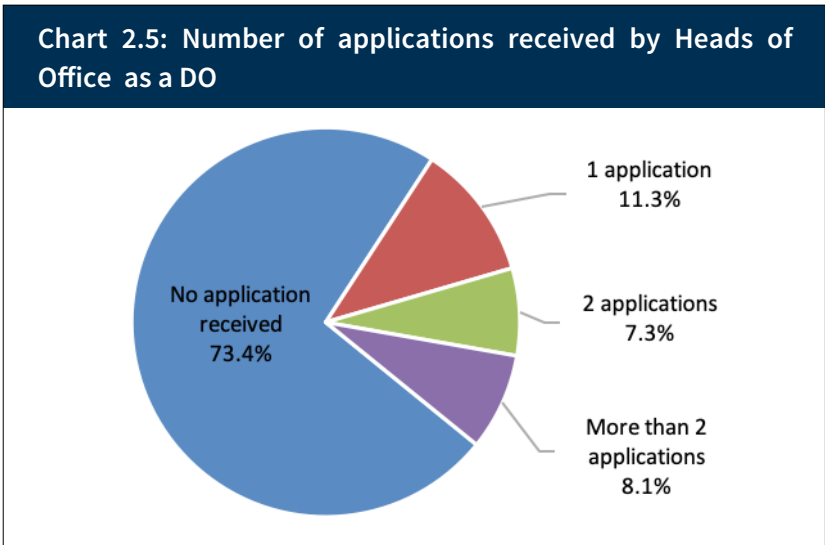
Incidence of acting as DOs: Among the total Heads of Office interviewed, 16.1% were also acting as DO in their respective organizations.

Table 2.3: Identity of the DOs working as Heads of Office

		Heads of Office working as DO	Base: All respondents
All BD		16.1%	768
Department/ Organization	Women Affairs	29.6%	54
	Upazila Social Services	26.9%	52
	NGO	17.5%	57
	Education	9.4%	53
	Upazila Agriculture	8.0%	50
	Union Parishad	3.4%	59
	LGED	1.9%	52
	Others	18.4%	391

Receipt of applications for information: Three-fourth of the Heads of Office who were acting as DOs did not receive any request for information thus far.

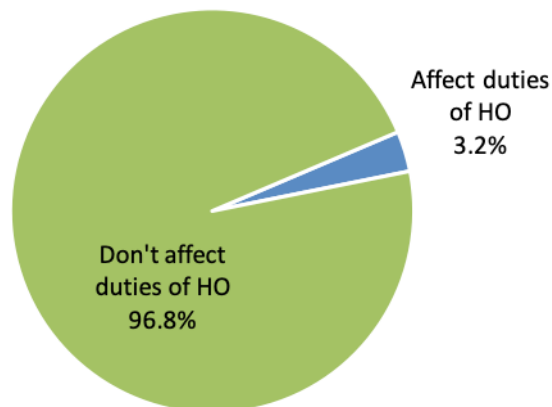
A little more than a tenth (11.3%) received only one application each, 7.3% received 2 applications, while the remaining 8.1% received more than 2 applications each.



Base: Heads of Office acting as DOs (n=124)

Effect of additional workload for acting as DOs: Additional duty of acting as a Head of Office did not seem to have any effect on the workload as most of them mentioned that acting as a DO did not affect their discharging of Head of Office’s routine duties.

Chart 2.6: Effect of additional workload for Heads of Office acting as a DO



Base: Heads of Office plus DOs (n=124)

II. d Activities of Heads of Office

This section outlines incidence of Head of Office appointing a DO, training of DOs on the RTI Act, incidence of Head of Office providing DO's information to IC, departure and replacement of DOs, incidence of Head of Office providing newly appointed DOs information to the IC, and availability of DO's substitute. This section further narrates incidence and type of specific instructions Heads of Office have provided to DOs, displaying DO's name and designation in website/notice boards, and taking steps for proactive disclosure of information to the general citizens.

Incidence of Head of Office appointing a DO: When asked if the Head of Office has appointed or already had a DO in the office, nearly all who were not acting as a DO, replied in the affirmative (99.8%).

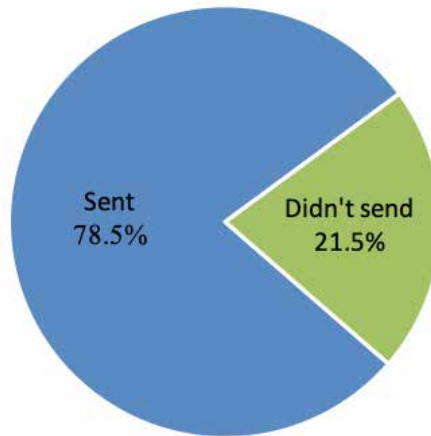
Training of DOs on the RTI Act: Majority (64.5%) of the Heads of Office stated that the DOs in their offices had received training on the RTI Act. However, variations were observed by department/organization as can be seen from the following table.

Table 2.4: Training of DOs on the RTI Act by Department/Organization

		DOs received training	DOs didn't receive training	Base: Those Heads of Office appointed/ have DOs
All BD		64.5%	35.5%	643
Department/ Organization	Women Affairs	84.2%	15.8%	38
	LGED	72.5%	27.5%	51
	Education	68.8%	31.3%	48
	Upazila Agriculture	67.4%	32.6%	46
	Union Parishad	57.9%	42.1%	57
	Upazila Social Services	55.3%	44.7%	38
	NGO	40.4%	59.6%	47
	Others	65.7%	34.3%	318

Providing necessary information about DOs to the IC: A majority of the Heads of Office had sent necessary information on respective DOs to the IC as a little more than three-fourths reported that they had sent the name, designation and contact address of the DOs of their corresponding offices to the IC, while the others admitted to not having done that.

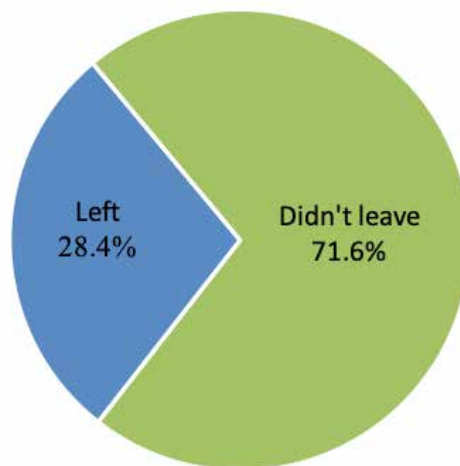
Chart 2.7: Incidence of sending necessary information on DOs to the IC



Base: All respondents (n=768)

Departure and replacement of DOs: A substantial majority, nearly three-fourths, of the Heads of Office had not thus far had any DO leaving the organization during their tenure as Head of Office.

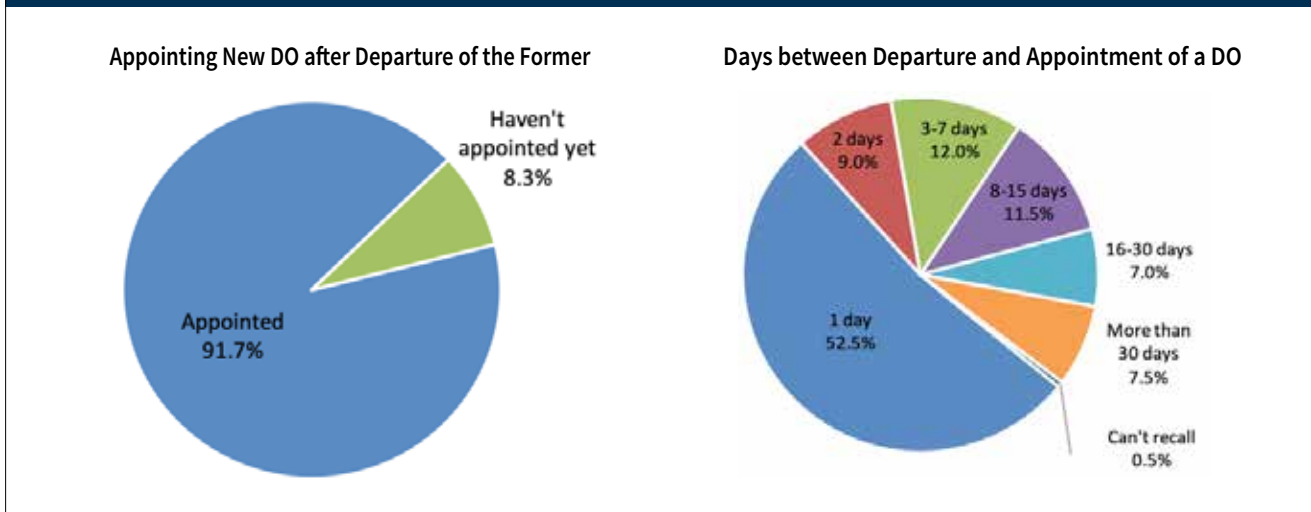
Chart 2.8: Departure of DO during Head of Office's tenure



Base: All respondents (n=768)

Nearly all the Heads of Office, who experienced DOs leaving the organization during their tenure, appointed new DOs. Heads of Office were found prompt in appointing a new DO after the departure of one as half of them claimed to have done so within a day. Nearly one-fifth appointed new DO within a week and a similar number within a month.

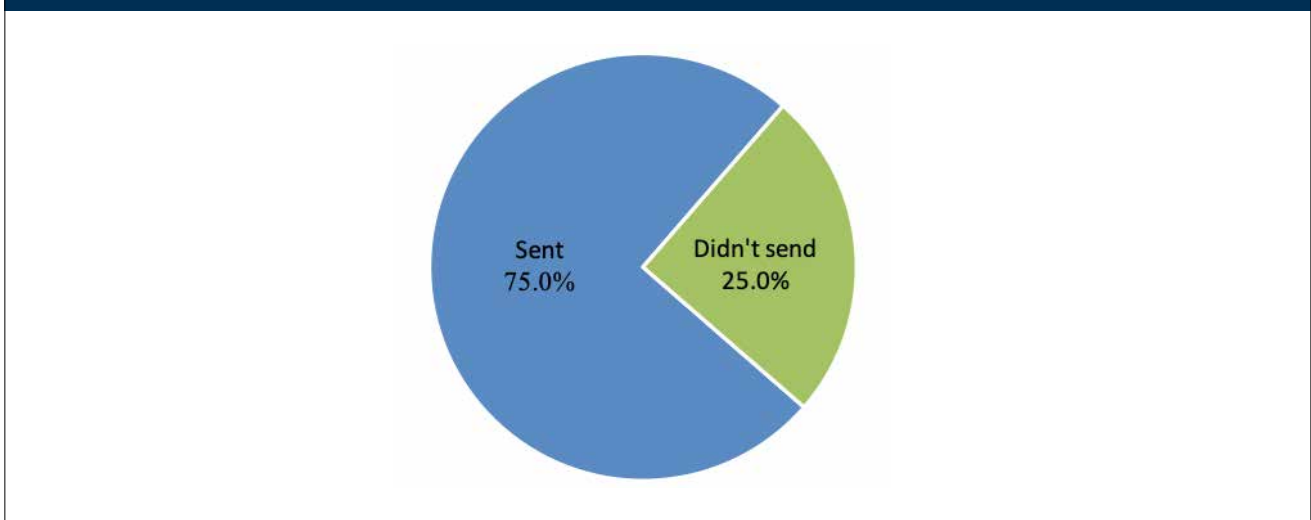
Chart 2.9: A new DO appointed by Heads of Office and time interval



Base: DOs left organization during Heads of Office's tenure (n=218); Appointment of a new DO during their tenure (n=200)

How many of the Heads of Office provided the IC with information about new DOs: Three-fourths of Heads of Office sent the name, designation and contact address of the newly appointed DOs to the IC, and the remaining 25% did not send it.

Chart 2.10: Percentage of Heads of Office sending information on newly appointed DOs to the IC



Base: Those who were appointed DOs during their tenure (n=200)

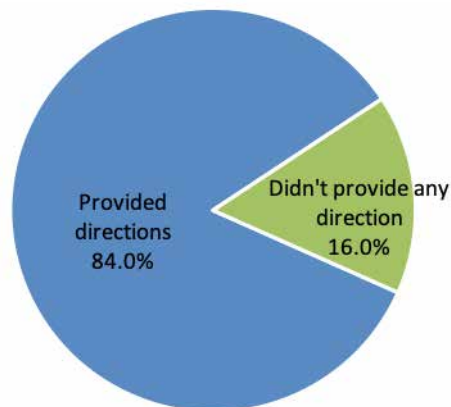
Availability of DO's substitute: Most organizations seemed to have alternative officials to handle RTI matters in the absence of the DO. Among all Heads of Office interviewed, 82.6% reported that there was alternative official in their organization to perform the role of DOs in their absence. However, Union Parishads appeared to have substantially fewer substitute officials compared to all other organizations as shown in the following table.

Table 2.5: Availability of DO's substitute

		Substitute available	Not available	Base: All respondents
All BD		82.6%	17.4%	768
Department/ Organization	NGO	91.2%	8.8%	57
	Education	86.8%	13.2%	53
	Upazila Social Services	84.6%	15.4%	52
	Upazila Agriculture	84.0%	16.0%	50
	LGED	82.7%	17.3%	52
	Women Affairs	79.6%	20.4%	54
	Union Parishad	52.5%	47.5%	59
	Others	85.2%	14.8%	391

How many of the Heads of Office provided instructions to DOs on RTI-related works: Heads of Office appeared to have provided directions to the DOs in most organizations. About 84.0% of the Heads of Office stated they provided specific instructions to the DOs regarding the discharging of their duties pertaining to RTI matters.

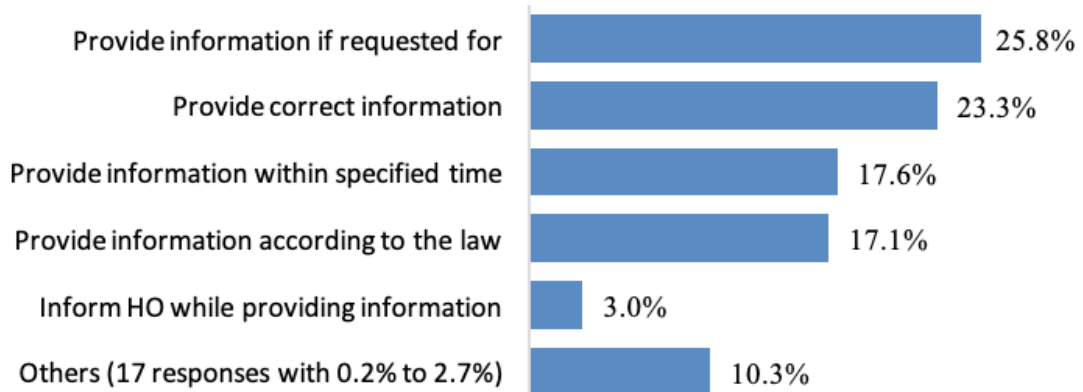
Chart 2.11: Incidence of Heads of Office providing directions to the DOs on RTI related works



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=752)

The common instructions given included providing information when anyone requested for it; providing correct information; providing information within the specified time period and providing information in accordance to the Act.

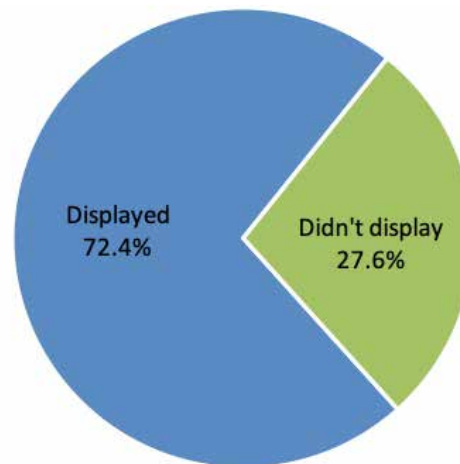
Chart 2.12: Instructions given by Heads of Office to DOs on RTI-related works



Base: Those who provided specific directions to DOs (n=632)

Displaying the names of DO/Appellate Authority/IC: A vast majority (three-fourths) of the Heads of Office claimed that they displayed the names of DO or Appellate Authority or the IC on the website or notice boards of their office. The rest 27.6% admitted that they did not display the same.

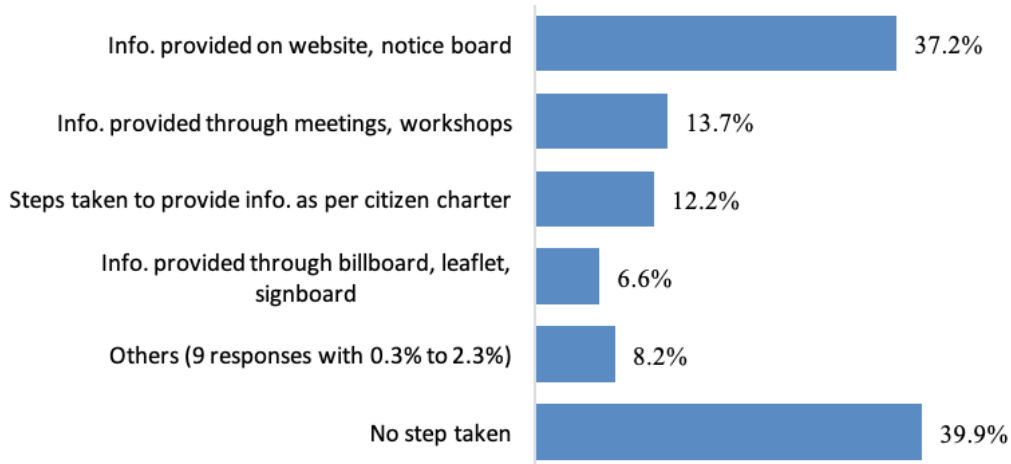
Chart 2.13: Displaying the names of DO/Appellate Authority/IC in website/notice board



Base: All respondents (n=768)

Steps taken by the Heads of Office on proactive disclosure: Overall, about 60% of the Heads of Office claimed that they had taken some steps for proactive disclosure of information of public interest. The other 40% admitted to not having taken any such step. However, as a practice of proactive disclosure, Heads of Office most often provided information on website and/or notice boards, and less frequently, disseminated information through meetings, seminars, workshops in accordance to the citizen charter.

Chart 2.14: Steps taken for proactive disclosure (multiple responses)



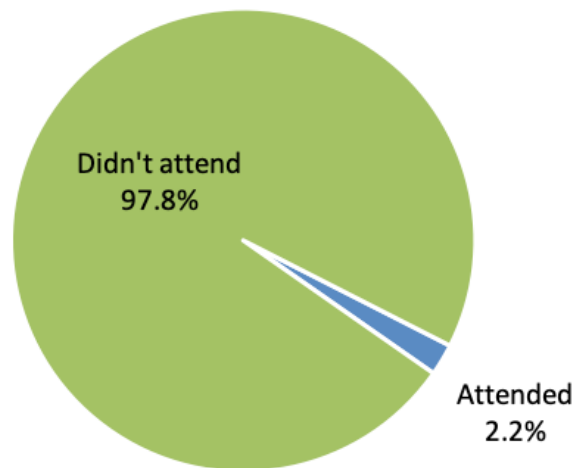
Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=752)

II.e Attendance of Heads of Office in Information Commission hearings and the outcomes

This section outlines the incidence of attending IC hearings by the Heads of Office and the outcome of those hearings.

Incidence of attending IC hearings: Heads of Office were asked if they had ever attended an IC hearing. Only 2.2% responded positively.

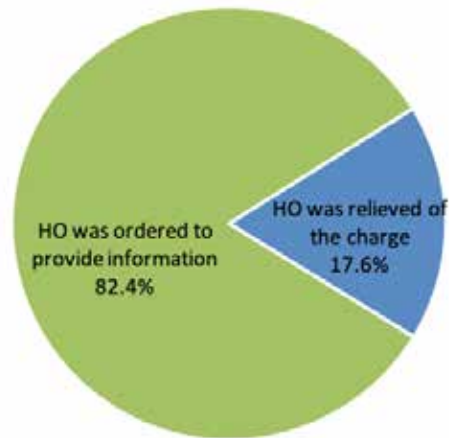
Chart 2.15: Incidence of Heads of Office attending IC hearings



Base: All respondents (n=768)

Outcome of IC hearings: It appears that the majority of outcomes of IC hearings so far have been in favor of the requesters. Out of a total of 17 hearings attended by the Heads of Office, 14 went in favor of the complainants, where the IC instructed that information should be provided to the requesters. Only in 3 cases the IC dismissed charges made against them.

Chart 2.16: Outcome of IC hearings



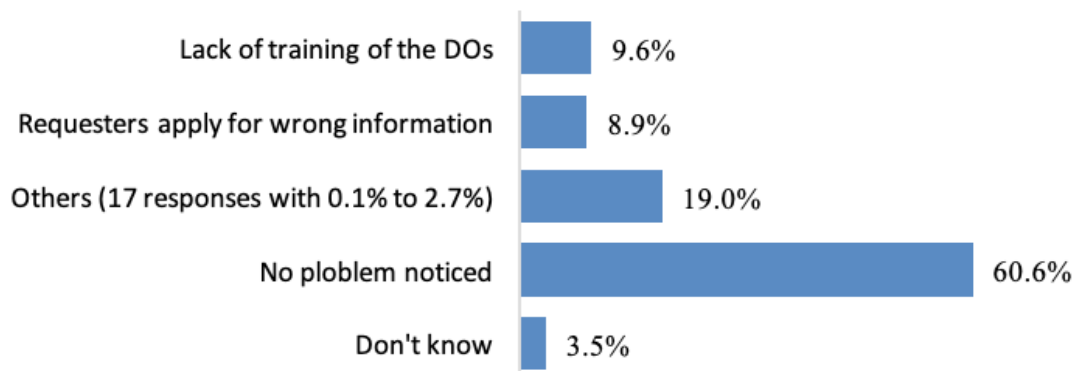
Base: Heads of Office who attended IC hearing (n=17)

II.f Problems identified by the Heads of Office and their suggestions for improvements

This section outlines the problems identified by the Heads of Office in the process of providing information under the RTI Act, perceived improvements that this Act will bring to service delivery, and suggestions to improve the process of providing information.

Identified problems : Around three-fifths of the Heads of Office, did not notice any problem in the process of providing information under this Act. However, two notable problems were identified. Close to one-tenth identified lack of training of the DOs as a problem, and about the same number of Heads of Office highlighted tendency of requesters to seek wrong information (8.9%) as an obstacle in the process of service delivery.

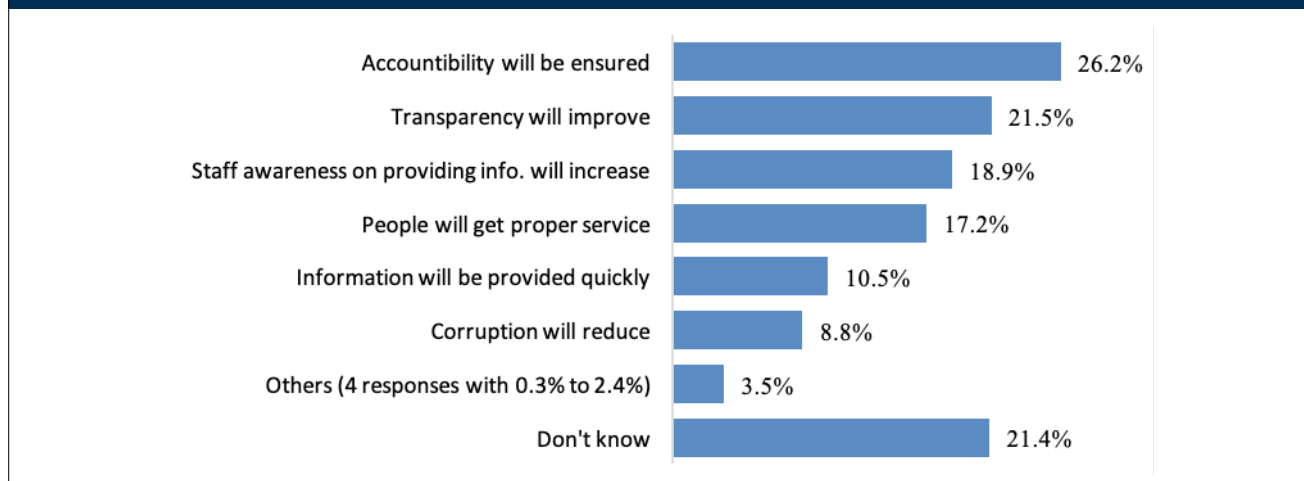
Chart 2.17: Problems identified by Heads of Office in the process of providing information (multiple responses)



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=752)

Perceived improvements that the RTI Act would bring in service delivery: According to the Heads of Office major improvements that the RTI Act would bring in service delivery were that it would ensure accountability (26.2%) and improve transparency (21.5%), increase staff awareness to provide information (18.9%), and make people get better service (17.2%). However, over one-fifth of the Heads of Office could not suggest any improvement that the RTI Act might bring to service delivery.

Chart 2.18: Perceived improvements RTI Act would bring in service delivery (multiple responses)

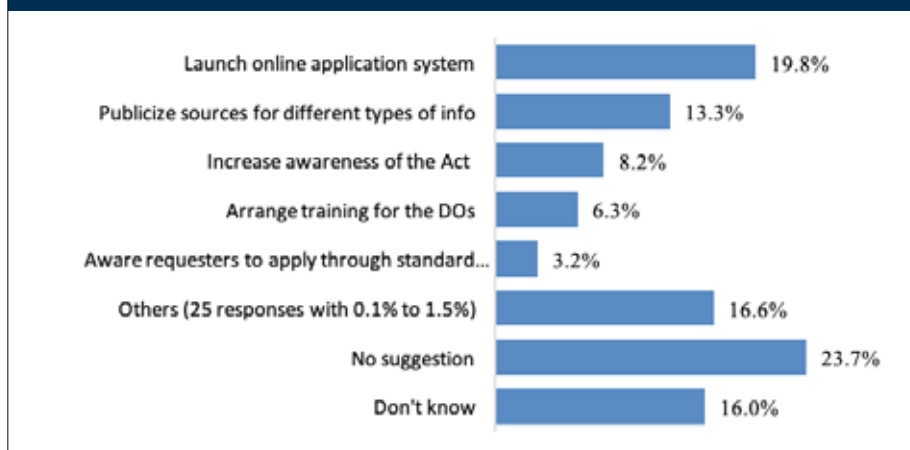


Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=752)

Suggestion for improving the process of providing information: Among the suggestions given, launching online application system was most prominent, followed by publicizing what type of information can be obtained from where and increasing the awareness of the RTI Act as a whole.

A significant portion of the Heads of Office either had no suggestions for improvements (23.7%) or did not know what to suggest (16.0%).

Chart 2.19: Suggestions for improving the process of providing information under RTI Act (multiple responses)



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=752)

PART III - HEARINGS AND DECISIONS

III. a Time required to issue a verdict/decision

The results varied regarding duration for disposal of complaints. It took 73 days on average and a maximum of 453 days. Some 226 complaints were resolved within 45 days, 523 within 75 days and 491 were resolved after more than 75 Days.

Row Labels	Within 45 Days	Within 75 Days	More 75 Days	No data
Number of Application	226	523	491	44
% of Application	17.6	40.7	38.2	3.4

Min	Median	Max	Average
0	69	453	73

Number of hearings required for decision per case: Most of the decisions were taken after one hearing (75.14%)

Row Labels	# Number of hearing	% of Number of hearing
Once	946	75.14%
Twice	221	17.55%
Thrice	57	4.53%
Fourth	17	1.35%
Fifth	9	0.71%
Sixth	2	0.16%
Seventh	1	0.08%
Eighth	4	0.32%
Tenth	1	0.08%
Eleventh	1	0.08%
Total	1,259	100%

(Not identified 25, as of 1,284 assessed hearing decisions)

Complainants who received information that they sought after a favorable verdict by the IC: About 16.89% of requesters did not get the required information even after a favorable verdict given by the IC.

Table 3.4: Complainants who got information from DO after hearing based on a favorable verdict

Row Labels	Count	Percentage
No	25	16.89
Yes	123	83.11
Total	148	100

(216 interviewees)

Incidences when a third party was summoned

In 29 cases, out of the 1284 cases assessed, the third party was summoned (2.3%).

A review of decisions shows that procedural and process related issues are a major factor in determining how the cases are dealt with.

This applies to both sides, complainants and the IC (see observations) and no negative intention can be securely established. Greater familiarity will increase more and better complain transactions.

Table 3.5: Third party summoned

Row Labels	Third party summoned	
	Number	Percentage
No	1255	97.74
Yes	29	2.26
Total	1,284	100

(1284 hearing decision assessed)

Types of decision

Some 64.88% decisions went in favor of the complainant, 23.9% were dismissed and 6.07% against the complainant. The reason for decisions going against the complainant was for not following proper procedures.

Table 3.6: Reasons for decision (as of 1,284 assessed hearing decisions)		
Row Labels	Decisions	
	Number	Percentage
Against complainant	78	6.07%
Process of appeal was not properly followed	1	0.08%
Process of application was not properly followed	5	0.39%
The complaint was not justified	1	0.08%
The information was not providable	71	5.53%
Dismissed	307	23.91%
Complainant received the information before the decision	1	0.08%
DO provided information in courier but complainant failed to receive it	1	0.08%
Both the parties were absent in the hearing	4	0.31%
Process of application was not properly followed	2	0.16%
Complainant received the information before the decision	3	0.23%
Complainant was reluctant to run the complaint	1	0.08%
Complaint was not justified	12	0.93%
DO agreed to provide information	1	0.08%
The information was not providable	280	21.81%
The Information was providable	2	0.16%
In favor of complainant	833	64.88%
DO ensured to provide available information	2	0.16%
Process of application was not properly followed	1	0.08%
Complainant received the information before the decision	17	1.32%
DO ensured to provide all information	49	3.82%
The information was not providable	746	58.10%
The information was providable	18	1.40%
Partially in favor of complainant	66	5.14%
DO ensured to provide available information	2	0.16%
Process of application was not properly followed	1	0.08%
The information was not providable	63	4.91%
Total	1284	100%

Chart 3.1: Decisions

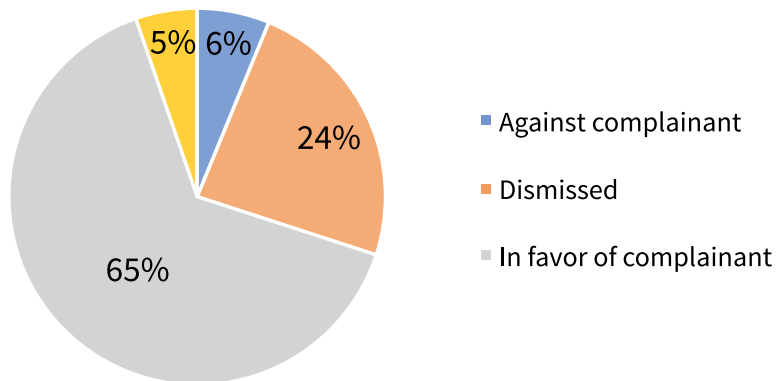
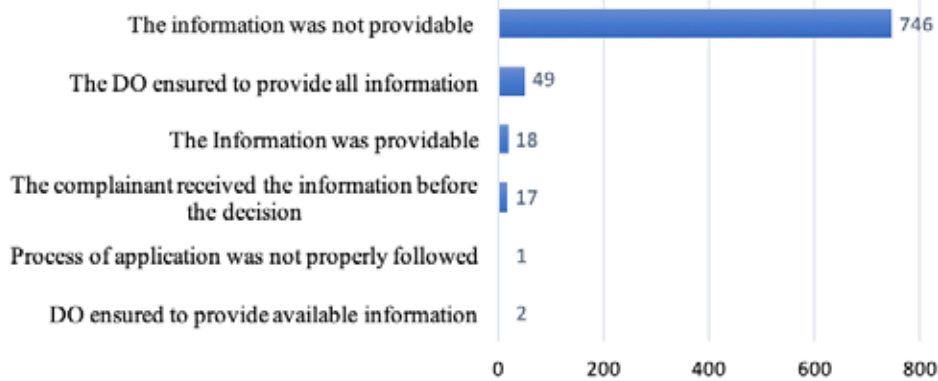
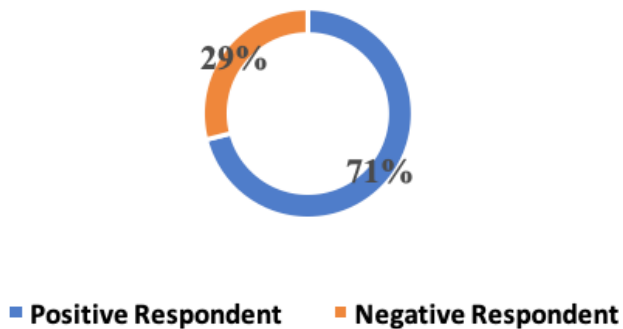


Chart 3.2: Decisions in favor of a complainant

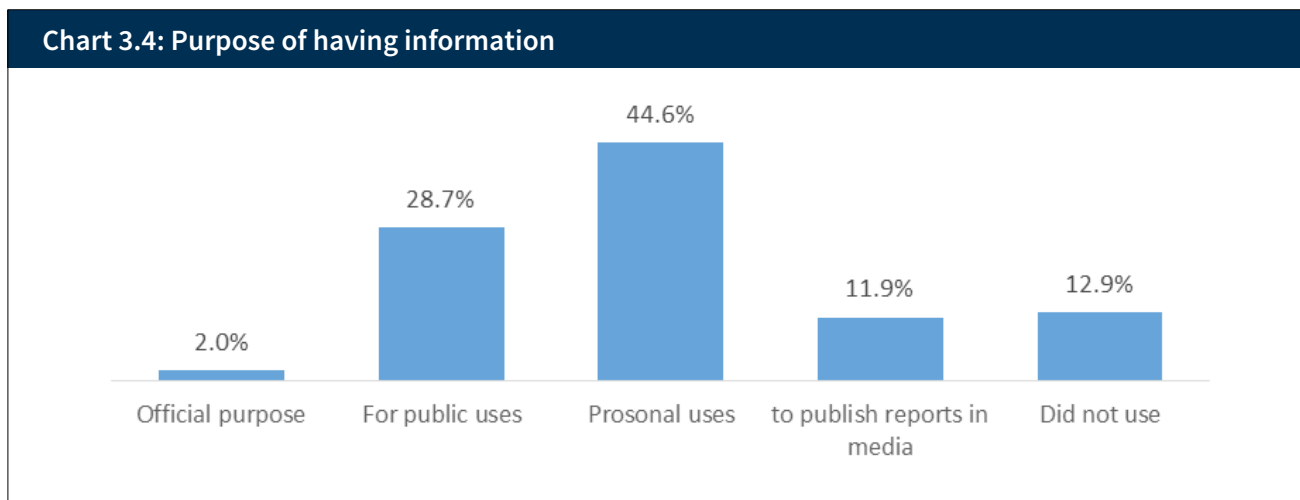


Overall experience of a complainant of the process: Data shows the experience of 74% of the complainants was overall positive, while 26% was not. The attitude of the IC officials, 88% found it positive and 12% did not.

Chart 3.3: Overall experience of complaint process



Purpose of having information: Data on how the information sought was used show that 28.7% were used for public awareness and service-related issues, while 11.9% were used for media reporting. Another 44.6% were used for personal use and 2% for official purpose. However, 12.9% couldn't use the data as those arrived too late after the application was filed (Chart 3.4).



Incidences where third party was summoned. Number of writ petitions filed against the IC's decision: One case required an enquiry and a third party was summoned in 29 cases.

Not getting the information after the verdict: Data show that 16.89% of respondents who got a positive verdict did not get the information, which becomes a challenge of sorts to the full establishment of the RTI Act. Some 15 writ petitions were filed against the verdicts of the IC.

DOs penalized for not complying with the RTI Act: As regards the actions of the IC against the DOs for not complying with its decisions, it was noted that DOs were fined in 34 cases, reprimanded in 3 cases, and departmental actions were taken in 3 cases.

Table 3.6: DOs penalized for not complying with the Act

Row Labels	Actions	
	Number	Percentage
Departmental action	3	3.41
Fined	34	38.64
Reprimanded	3	3.41
No action	48	54.55
Total	88	100

(1284 hearing decision assessed)

Supplementary Observations

- Errors in decision papers such as missing application dates, appeal dates, incorrect dates of application and appeal, hearing date etc. were noted.
- In a number of cases, the IC fixed a hearing date and dismissed the complaint when the complainant was absent.
- It was assumed that the complainant was not interested in pursuing the same. However, in other cases, the IC allowed fresh hearing dates several times assuming that the complainant was interested. No reasons were given for such a decision.
- In some cases, the IC fined the DOs when they failed to provide information within the stipulated timeframe. The IC also instructed the DOs to pay compensation to the complainants on the same ground. However, in other cases, DOs were neither fined nor instructed to pay compensation. Reasons for taking different decisions were not found.
- Causes for rejection showing conflict with section 7 has not been properly clarified.
- In some cases, IC directed DOs to provide information as per IC's meeting decisions not at hearings. However, hearing/s were held although the information sought was simple. Thus, justification for hearings is not always clear.
- Granting time sought by any party and fixing repeated hearing dates due to absence of any party is the discretion of the IC. But such types of action have not always been consistent in practice.

Appellate authority and appellants

Appellate Authority

Appellate Authority stated that in case of passing orders for full disclosure, procedural issues played an important role. About 88.3% (Table 3.7) of the respondents gave this reason. This involved reasons such as 'if the information was providable or not.' In case of partial providing of information, the same issues dominated but matters concerning 'if they are providable or not' is the concern for 64% respondents. (Table 3.8)

Table 3.7: Considerations while passing order to provide full information

Row Labels	Considerations while passing order to provide full information	
	Number	Percentage
Was the procedure correct or not (from both ends)	9	26.5
Was the information providable or not (time, Source and act & rule)	21	61.8
Were completely correct information given to the applicant instead of partially true or false information or not	2	5.9
Is there any lack of transparency about payment	2	5.9
Total	34	100

Chart 3.5: Considerations while passing order to provide full information

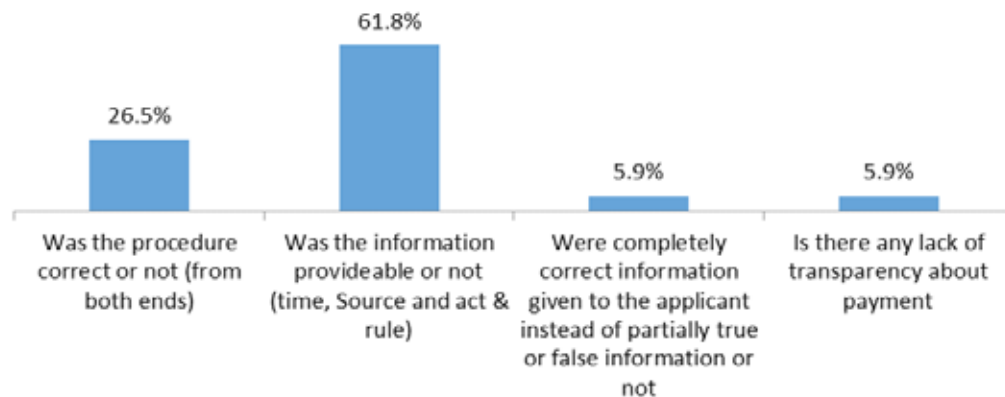


Table 3.8: Considerations while passing order to provide partial information

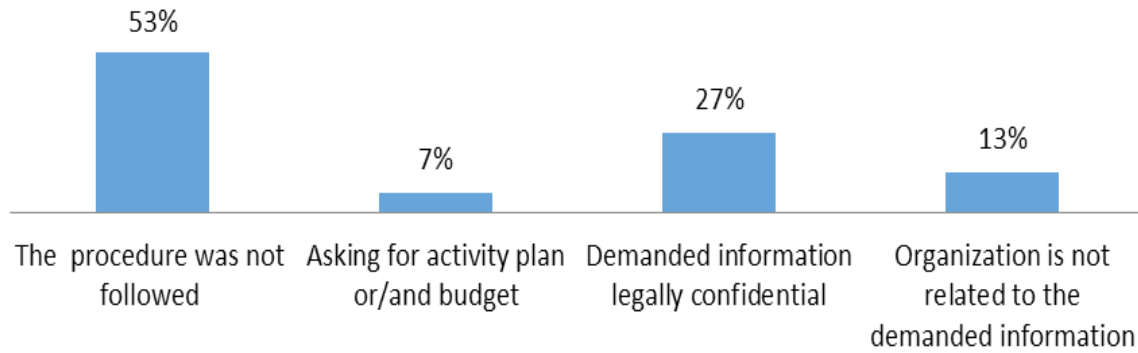
Row Labels	Considerations while passing order to provide partial information	
	Number	Percentage
Was the procedure correct or not (from both ends)	3	12
Providing complete information instead of partial information is the priority.	5	20
Is there any lack of transparency about payment	1	4
Was the information providable or not (time, Source and act & rule)	16	64
Total	25	100

For the most common reason for rejection, 53% cited procedural reasons and 27% mentioned ‘seeking confidential information’.

Table 3.9: Common reasons of rejection

Row Labels	common reasons of rejection
	In percentage
The procedure was not followed	16
Asking for activity plan or/and budget	2
Demanded information legally confidential	8
Organization is not related to the demanded information	4
Total	30

Chart 3.6: Common reasons for rejection (%)

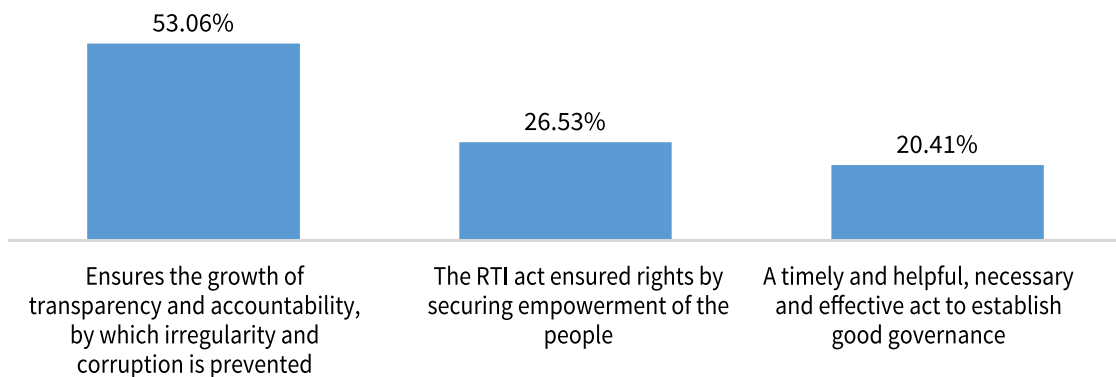


Respondents said the RTI Act contributed to good governance. About 53.06% said it enhances transparency and can reduce irregularity and corruption. Around 26.53% mentioned its role in empowering people and 20.41% said that it has a general positive impact on good governance.

Table 3.10: RTI Act contributes to good governance

Row Labels	Number
Ensures the growth of transparency and accountability, by which irregularity and corruption is prevented	26
The RTI act ensured rights by securing empowerment of the people	13
A timely and helpful, necessary and effective act to establish good governance	10
Total	49

Chart 3.7: RTI Act and good governance (%)

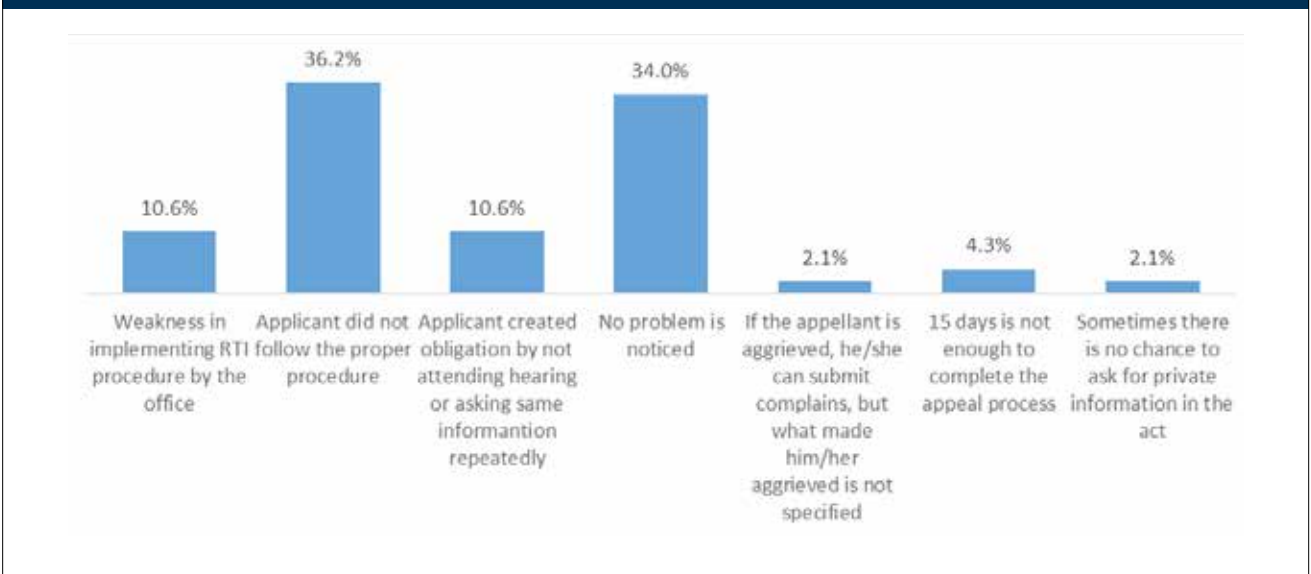


About 68% mentioned procedural weakness as the most significant gap/obstacle in the appeal process. About 34% did not see any problem with the implementation of the RTI Act. The response accordingly was to improve the procedural aspect for improvement of its implementation.

Table 3.11: Types of loophole/gap in the appeal process

Row Labels	Types of loophole/gap in the appeal process
Weakness in implementing RTI procedure by the office	5
Applicant did not follow the proper procedure	17
Applicant created obligation by not attending hearing or asking same information repeatedly	5
No problem is noticed	16
If the appellant is aggrieved, he/she can submit complains, but what made him/her aggrieved is not specified	1
15 days is not enough to complete the appeal process	2
Sometimes there is no chance to ask for private information in the act	1
Total	47

Chart 3.8: Types of loophole/gap in the appeal process (%)



Appellants

Purpose of an appeal and challenges: Some 59% did not get any response (Chart 3.9) as they applied to a DO. Those who appealed to the appellate authority, 55% got an order to receive the information. However, 37% did not get any response from the appellate authority. About 4% of cases were dismissed (Table 3.13). Data show 21% of the respondents who had filed an appeal received threats from the officials (Chart 3.10).

Table 3.12: Reasons for an appeal

Why did you appeal?	Number
Incomplete, incorrect, confusing, distorted information provided	5
The application was not accepted	1
Aggrieved by the inability to provide information	10
Irrelevant price claims for information and interruption	3
Payment of information / misleading information provided	1
The Designated Officer did not provide information or give any reply	29
Total	49

Chart 3.9: Reasons for an appeal (%)

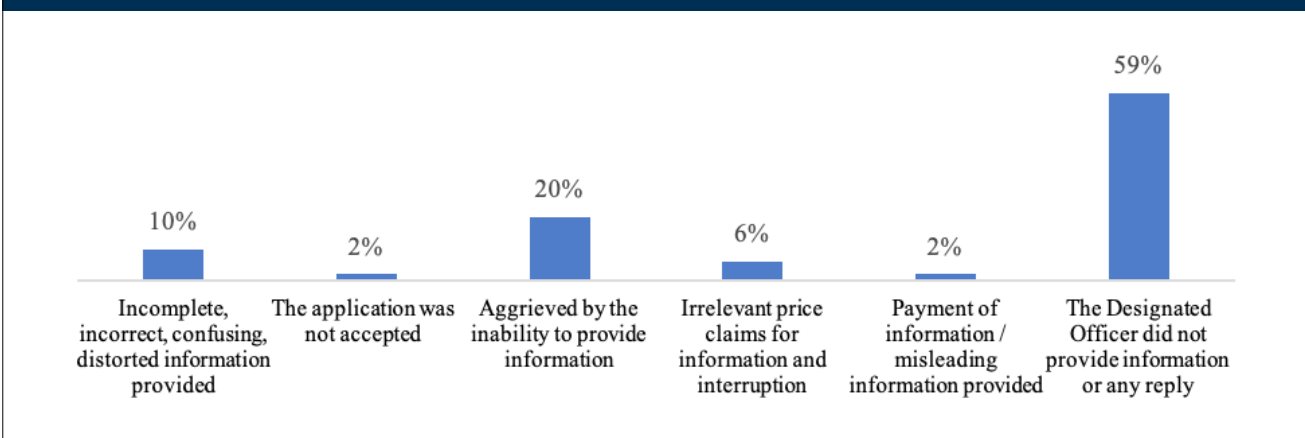
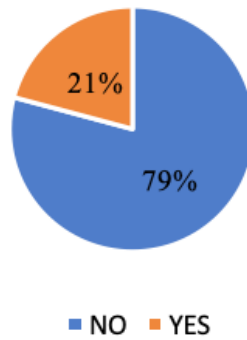


Table 3.13: Types of decision from the appeal authority

Types of decision received	Number	Percentage
Gave instructions to provide partial information	2	4
Dismissed the appeal	2	4
No response found	18	37
Ordered to provide complete information	27	55
Total	49	100

Chart 3.10: Obstacles/ threats from the official after the appeal was accepted

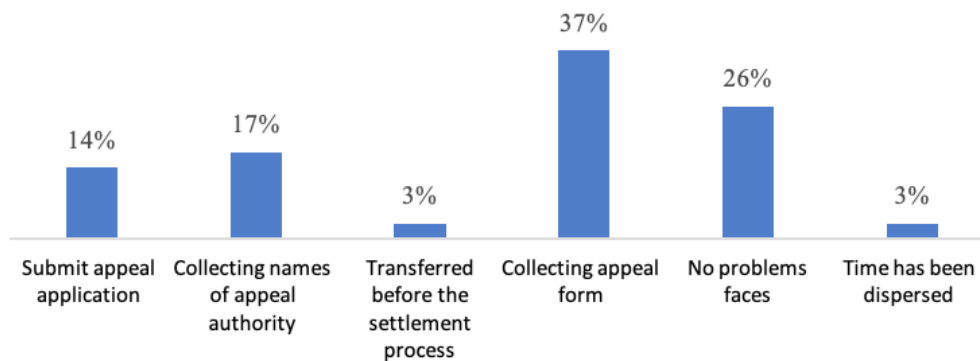


Problems faced in the appeal process: During the appeal process, 26% did not face any problem, while 74% did. The primary reasons cited can all be clustered under procedural issues and lack of familiarity with the RTI Act system.

Table 3.14: Types of problem faced in the appeal process

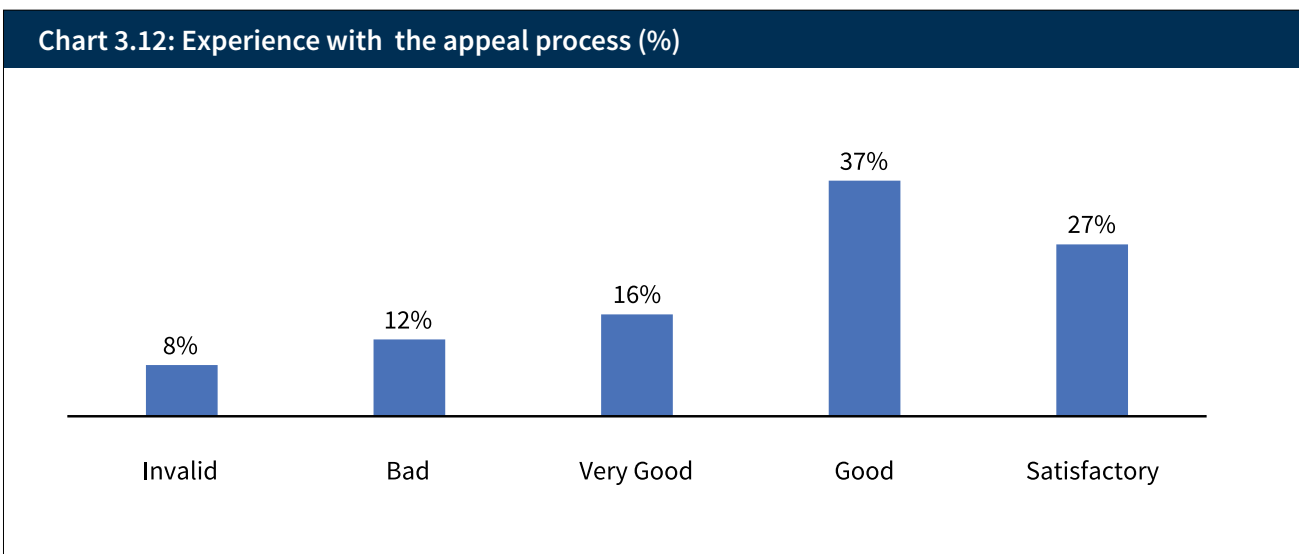
Types of problems	Counting
Submit appeal application	5
Collecting names of appeal authority	6
Transferred before the settlement process	1
Collecting appeal form	13
No problems faced	9
Time has been dispersed	1
Total	35

Chart 3.11: Types of problem faced in the appeal process (%)



Experience with the appeal process: Majority of the respondents (80%) said that their experience with the Appellate Authority was positive while 20% cited negative feelings (Chart 3.12).

Table 3.15: Experience with the appeal process	
Experience in the appeal process	Number
Invalid	4
Bad	6
Very Good	8
Good	18
Satisfactory	13
Total	49



PART IV – CITIZENS’ SURVEY

Citizens’ survey highlights findings on the following:

- Problems faced in the locality and perceived role of information in redressing those.
- Awareness and knowledge about the RTI Act; source of awareness; and knowledge about application process.
- Experience of the use of the RTI Act.
- Opinions and perceptions about the RTI Act.

Comparisons, where applicable, have been made against the baseline survey conducted in 2012.

IV.a Problems faced in the locality and perceived role of an information in redressing those

This section discusses findings on major public problems faced by the citizens, if access to information would help resolve public problems, type of information that could help resolve these problems and related topics.

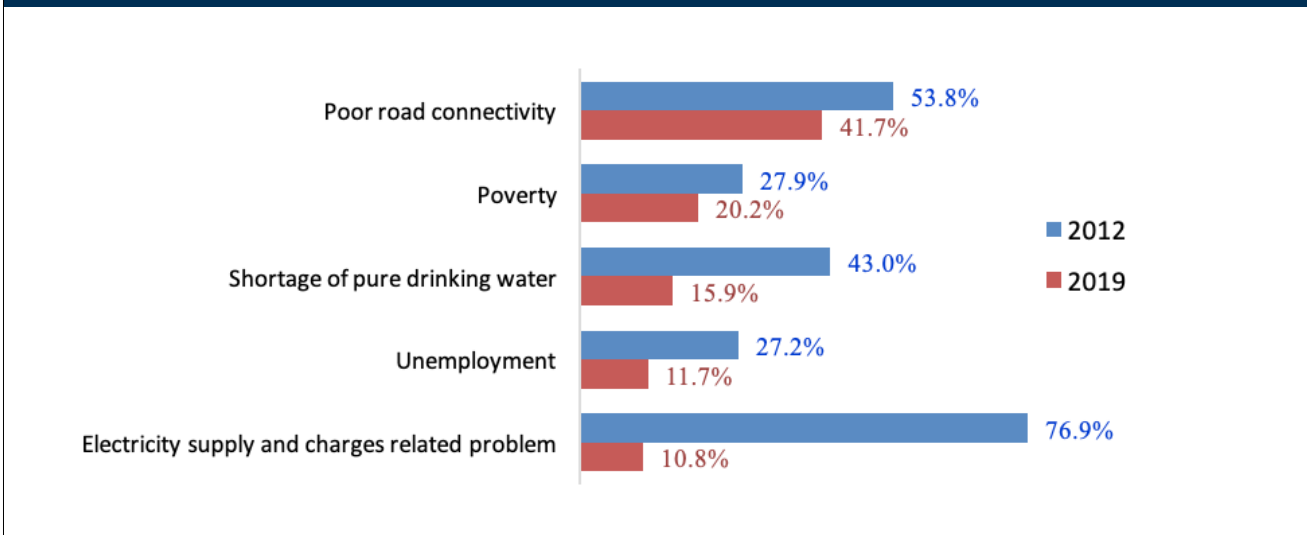
Major problems faced: The most cited problem faced by the citizens of Bangladesh in their areas was poor road connectivity, followed by poverty. The other notable problems were shortage of pure drinking water, unemployment, electricity supply and charges related problem, and inadequate infrastructure of educational institutions.

As can be seen from the table below, poor road connectivity, poverty, unemployment, and inadequate infrastructure of educational institutions were found more pressing in the rural area, while lack of drainage facility and gas supply problems appeared to be more of an urban issue. About one-fifth of the respondents said there were no problems in their localities.

Public Problems	All BD	Urban	Rural
Poor road connectivity	41.7%	32.8%	44.6%
Poverty	20.2%	11.9%	23.0%
Shortage of pure drinking water	15.9%	16.1%	15.8%
Unemployment	11.7%	8.6%	12.7%
Electricity supply and charges related problem	10.8%	10.6%	10.9%
Inadequate infrastructure of educational institutions	7.8%	3.9%	9.1%
Lack of drainage facility	5.7%	10.5%	4.1%
Inadequate healthcare facilities	5.2%	2.5%	6.1%
Gas supply problem	4.0%	8.0%	2.7%
Shortage of irrigation facility	4.0%	3.7%	4.1%
Others (62 responses with 0.01% to 3.9%)	26.9%	24.8%	27.5%
There is no problem	21.0%	24.4%	19.9%
do not know/ can't say	9.1%	10.0%	8.8%
Base: All respondents	12,774	3,174	9,599

Changes in responses of citizens citing major public problems faced in the locality from 2012 survey can be seen in the following chart at aggregate level. It appears, the intensity of problems has declined!

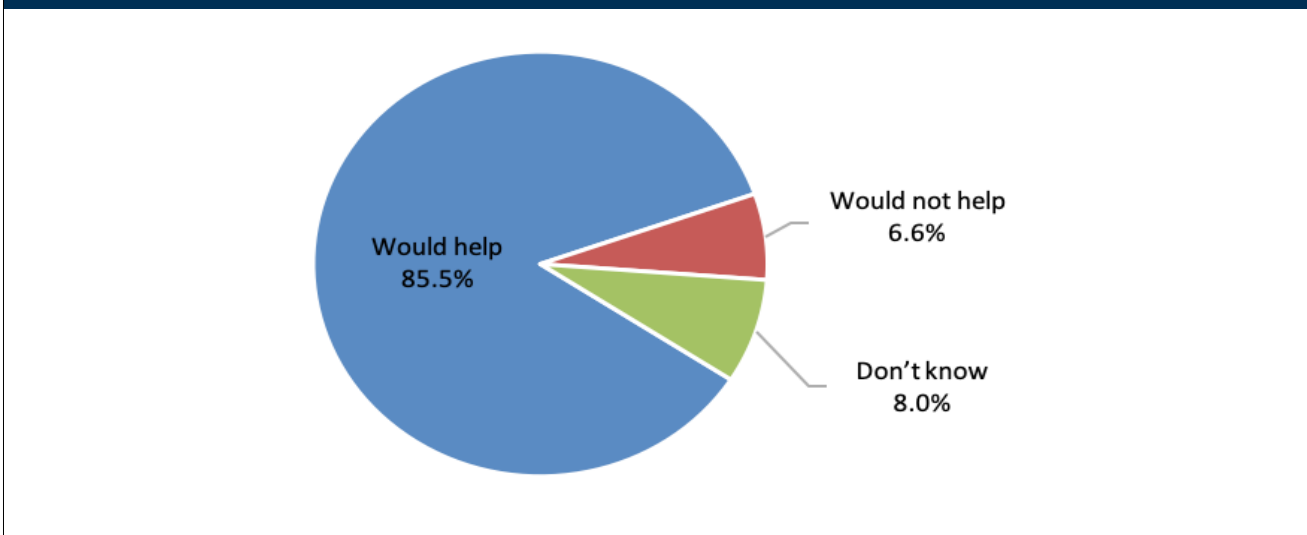
Chart 4.1: Comparison of major public problems faced in the locality (multiple responses)



Base: All respondents (2012 n=2,628; 2019 n=12,774)

If access to information would help resolve citizens’ problems: An overwhelming majority of the respondents (85.5%) who reported facing problem in their locality felt that access to information would help resolve many of the problems that they faced.

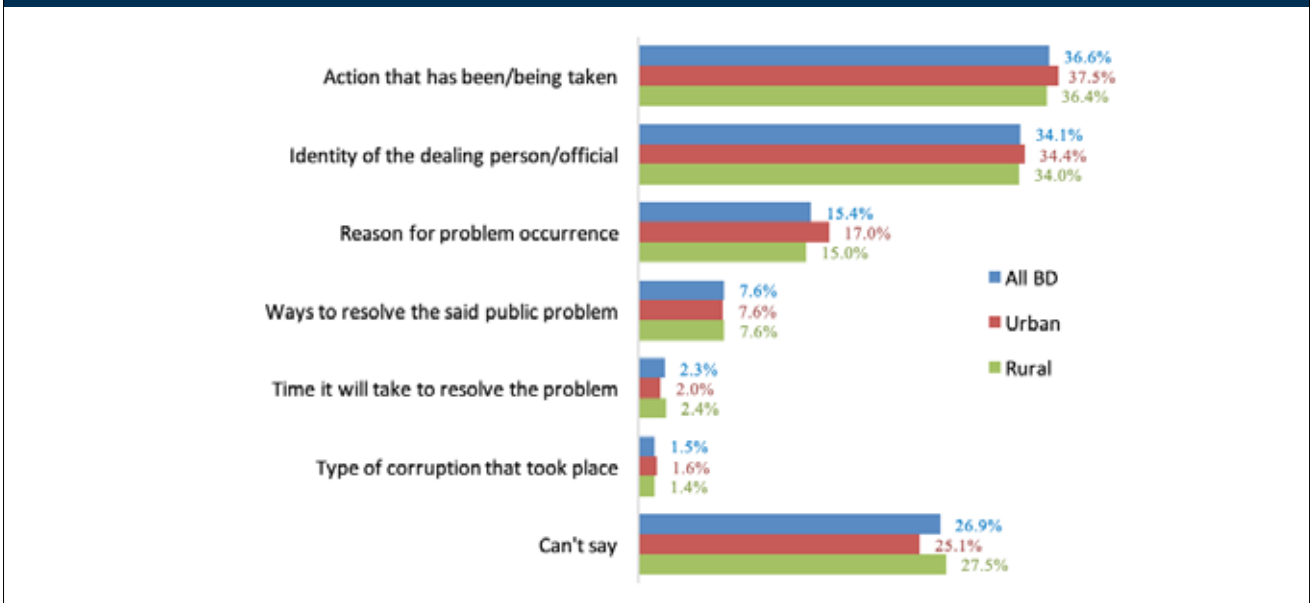
Chart 4.2: Whether access to information would help resolve public problems



Base: Those who reported problems in their locality (n=8,921)

Types of information that could help resolve the problems: The two most mentioned information that could help resolve the problems faced were on action taken or being taken and knowing the identity of the official dealing with the cases mentioned by more than one-third of the respondents. However, around a fourth (26.9%) admitted that they did not know what type of information would help resolve their problems. Responses were more or less similar across urban and rural areas as can be seen from the following graph.

Chart 4.3: Types of information that could help resolve citizens' problems (multiple responses)



Base: Those who thought access to information could resolve citizens' problems (All BD n=7,625; Urban n=1,757; Rural n=5,868)

Importance of necessary information that could help resolve citizens' problems appear to have changed over the time (from 2012 to 2019) as we can see in the chart below.

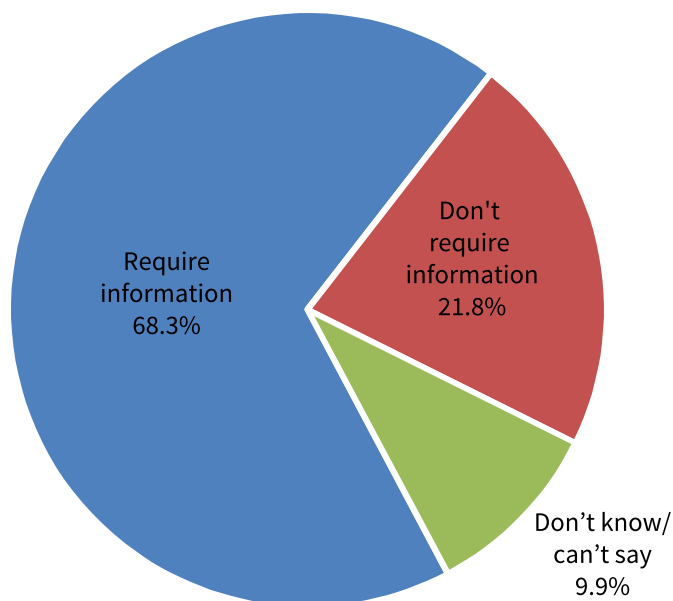
Chart 4.4: Change in responses to types of information that could help resolve citizens' problems (multiple responses)



Base: Those who thought access to information could resolve citizens' problems (2012 n=1,928; 2019 n=7,625)

Incidence of requiring information from the authorities: When asked if the respondents required or might require information from the authorities in future, around two-thirds answered in the affirmative, nearly one-fourth responded negatively, and about 10% did not know. The response pattern in urban and rural areas was similar.

Chart 4.5: Requirement of information from the authorities



Base: All respondents (n=12,774)

Types of information needed:

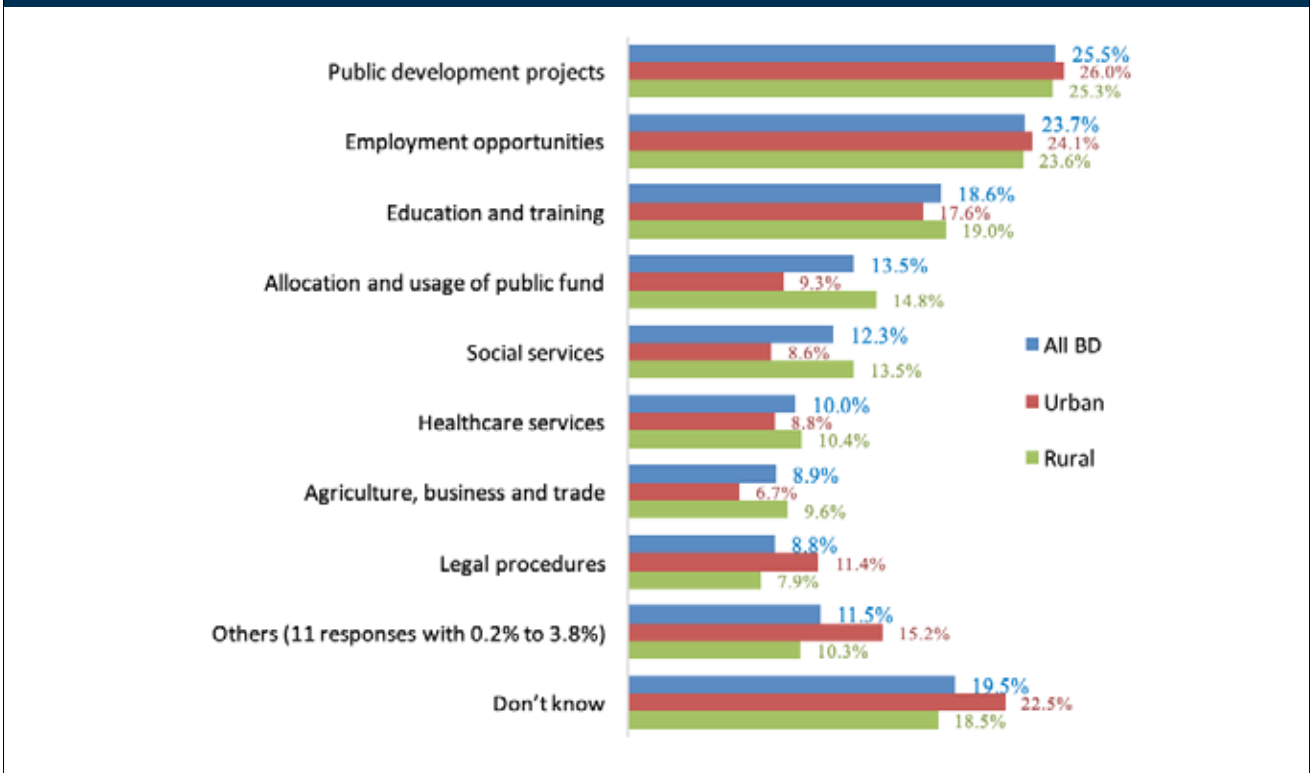
The other notable ones include: information relating to allocation and use of public fund, social services, healthcare services, agriculture and business, and legal procedures.

The need for information on education and training, allocation and use of public fund, social and healthcare services, agriculture and business featured comparatively higher among rural citizens.

On the other hand, information requirement on legal procedure was mentioned more by the urban citizens. Requirement of public development projects and employment opportunities related information appeared more or less the same in urban and rural areas.

The three most common types of information that citizens would require are on public development projects, employment opportunities and education and training.

Chart 4.6: Types of information required by the citizens from the authorities (multiple responses)



Base: Those who required information from the authorities (All BD n=8,723; Urban n=2,118; Rural n=6,605)

IV.b Awareness and knowledge about the RTI Act; source of awareness; and knowledge about application process

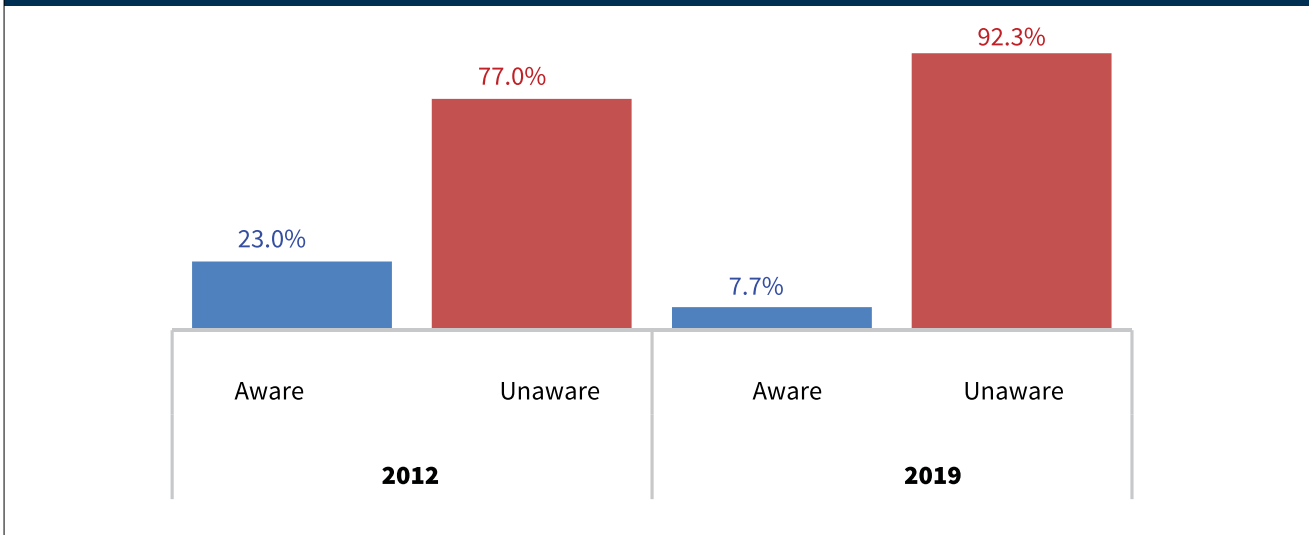
This section highlights findings on awareness of the RTI Act, quality of awareness, source of awareness, awareness of campaign on the Act, knowledge about the request procedure and redress.

Awareness of the RTI Act: The RTI Act 2009 was initiated to make provisions for ensuring free flow of information and people’s right to information.

In order to realize the objective of the RTI Act, there is no option but to make the target audience aware of it and clarify its functionality and benefit. Keeping this in mind, it may be stated that the awareness of the RTI Act among the general citizens was low, accounting for only 7.7% nationally, as can be seen from the following graph. As per the baseline survey, conducted in 2012, the awareness was reported to be 23%.

If the right to information of people is ensured, transparency and accountability of all public, autonomous and statutory organizations and of other private institutions constituted or run by the government or foreign financing shall increase; corruption of the same shall decrease and good governance of the same shall be established.

Chart 4.7: Change in awareness of the RTI Act

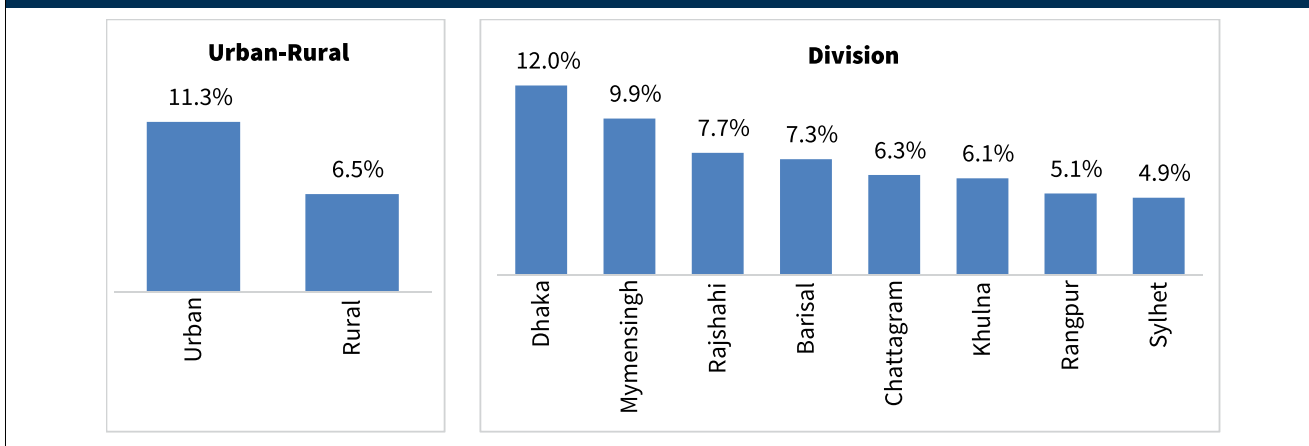


Base: All respondents (2012 n=2,628; 2019 n=12,774)

Incidence of awareness was higher in urban (11.3%) than in rural areas (6.5%). Please see **Annexure 2** for district-wise awareness of the RTI Act.

By division, awareness was most prevalent in Dhaka (12.0%), followed by Mymensingh (9.9%), and Rajshahi (7.7%) and the least was in Sylhet (4.9%)

Chart 4.8: Awareness of the RTI Act by urban-rural and division



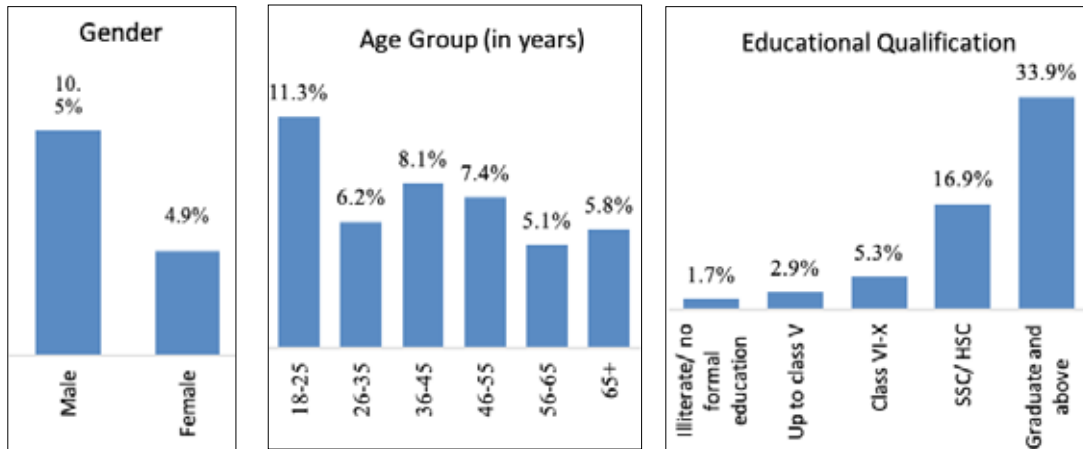
Base: Respective all respondents

Male respondents were found to be more aware (10.5%) compared to female respondents (4.9%).

As can be seen from the following graph, graduates and above were most aware of the Act, followed by SSC/HSC segment, and those who were illiterate were least aware.

Age-wise, younger citizens appeared more aware than older ones. By education, it was also found that awareness increased with level of education.

Chart 4.9: Awareness of the RTI Act by gender, age and education

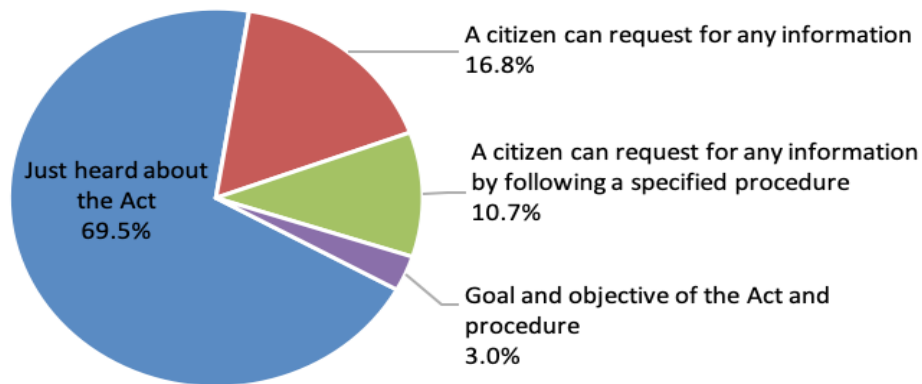


Base: All respondents

Note: Awareness of the RTI Act by 64 districts and the profile of respondents by type (all respondents, aware, unaware and requester) can be seen in **Annexure 1** and **Annexure 2** respectively.

Depth of awareness/ knowledge about the Act: When asked, ‘how much do you know about the RTI Act, around two-thirds of the respondents said they just heard about the Act’, 16.8% knew that under the RTI Act a citizen could request any government or private organization for any information; 10.7% stated that a citizen needs to follow a specified procedure while requesting for information and 3.0% claimed to be aware of the goal and objective along with the procedure for requesting for information.

Chart 4.10: Knowledge about the RTI Act



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=983)

Source of awareness: Nearly half of the respondents who were aware had learned about it from television. The other important sources of awareness were newspapers (16.4%), books (14.5%), and social media (11.0%), along-with a host of other sources including family/friends, colleagues/classmates, IC meetings, Government publicity, other meetings, NGO and radio.

In terms of reaching out with the RTI Act, some differences appear to exist in terms of location of residence and gender as can be seen from the following table.

Table 4.2: Sources of awareness of the RTI Act (multiple responses)

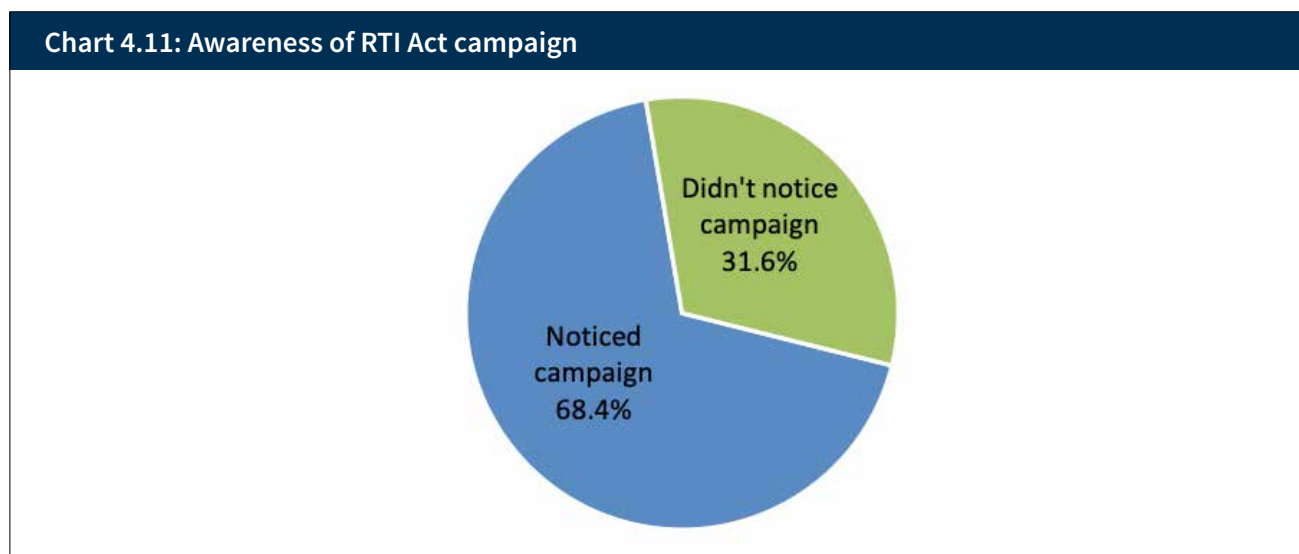
Sources of Awareness	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Television	47.7%	51.7%	45.4%	49.8%	43.0%
Newspapers	16.4%	23.6%	12.2%	19.9%	8.8%
Books	14.5%	12.7%	15.5%	11.0%	22.0%
Social media	11.0%	11.2%	10.9%	12.8%	7.2%
Family/friends	8.1%	9.0%	7.7%	7.0%	10.7%
Colleagues/classmates	6.6%	2.2%	9.1%	6.2%	7.6%
IC meetings	6.5%	7.9%	5.7%	7.7%	3.9%
Government publicity	6.1%	7.9%	5.0%	7.3%	3.4%
Other meetings	4.9%	3.4%	5.7%	5.1%	4.3%
NGO	3.8%	1.5%	5.2%	3.8%	4.0%
Radio	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%	4.6%	1.8%
SMS	2.3%	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.2%
Others (2 responses with 1.5% to 2.8%)	4.3%	3.7%	4.6%	2.3%	8.6%
Can't remember	1.9%	1.5%	2.2%	1.6%	2.8%
Base: Those who aware of the RTI Act	983	359	624	673	310

Media, particularly TV and newspapers, had been the biggest source of awareness of the RTI Act among the citizens.

As a source of awareness TV and newspapers were more prominent in 2012 than in 2019. On the other hand, citizens' awareness about RTI from books and social media increased in 2019 compared to 2012.

Table 4.3: Change in sources of awareness of the RTI Act (multiple responses)		
Sources of Awareness	2012	2019
Television	67.0%	47.7%
Newspapers	31.0%	16.4%
Book	2.0%	14.5%
Social media	-	11.0%
Friends/ family members	16.0%	8.1%
Colleagues/ classmates	7.0%	6.6%
IC meetings	-	6.5%
Government publicity	-	6.1%
Other meetings	5.0%	4.9%
NGO	3.0%	3.8%
Radio	9.0%	3.7%
SMS	15.0%	2.3%
Word of mouth	2.0%	-
Internet	1.0%	-
Others (2 responses with 1.5% to 2.8%)	-	4.3%
Can't remember	-	1.9%
Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act	603	983

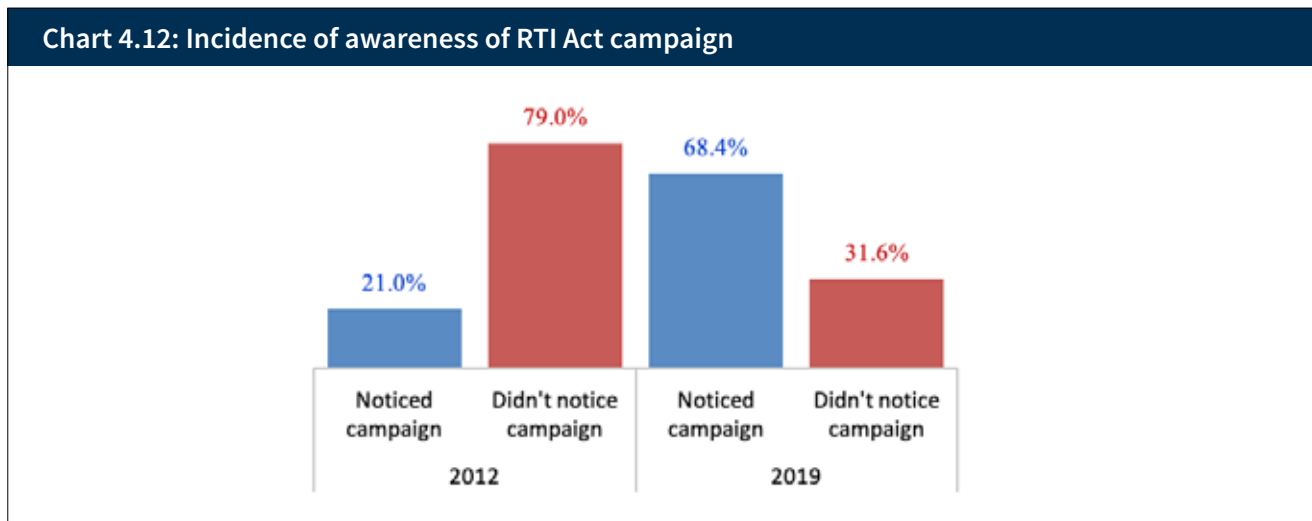
Awareness of RTI campaign in media and other sources: Close to two-thirds of the general citizens could remember noticing some campaigns or discussions on this Act in the media; in the Internet or at the IC Office, which goes in line with the sources of awareness discussed above.



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=983)

Among those who were aware of the RTI Act, about four-fifths did not notice any campaign on the RTI Act in the media or anywhere else in 2012.

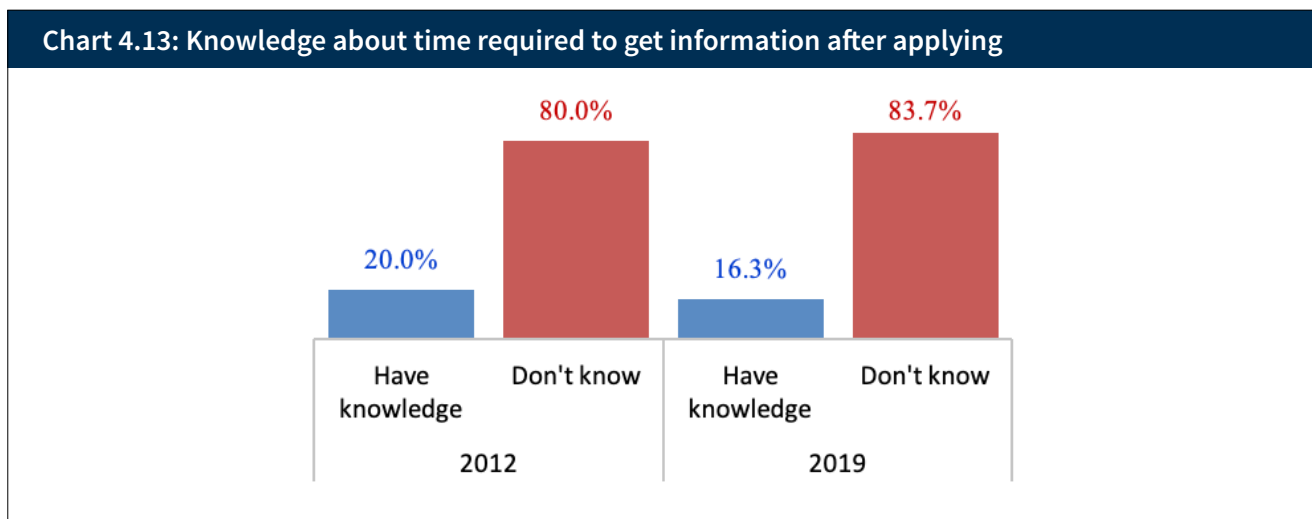
This contradicts with earlier findings where media, mainly TV and newspapers, were mentioned as the most prominent sources of awareness by the same respondents. However, in 2019, a substantially larger number of respondents have noticed campaigns on the RTI Act compared to 2012, which remained consistent with the sources of awareness mentioned earlier.



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (2012 n=603; 2019 n=983)

Knowledge on request procedure: Among those who were aware of the RTI Act, only 16.3% claimed that they knew the number of days it should take to get the information requested for after submission of application in 2019.

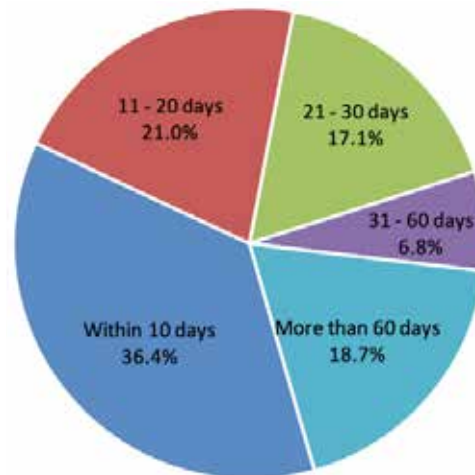
The ratio of the citizens who claimed to have knowledge about the time required to obtain information declined a little in 2019 compared to 2012.



Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (2012 n=603; 2019 n=983)

When asked, how many days it should take, a third of the informed citizens said it should take 10 days, one-fifth said 11-20 days, 17.1% said 21-30 days, and about another fifth said more than 60 days. These indicate an erratic knowledge pattern about the time it should take to receive information after submitting an application, which is actually 20-30 days.

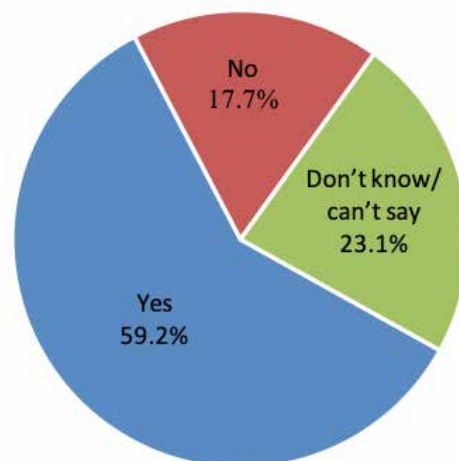
Chart 4.14: Time required to get information after applying



Base: Those who claimed to know about stipulated time for getting information (n=160)

Knowledge on redressal: A large majority of the respondents (59.2%) who were aware of the RTI Act stated that they could approach someone for redressal if they did not get information within the stipulated time.

Chart 4.15: Knowledge on redressal of the RTI Act

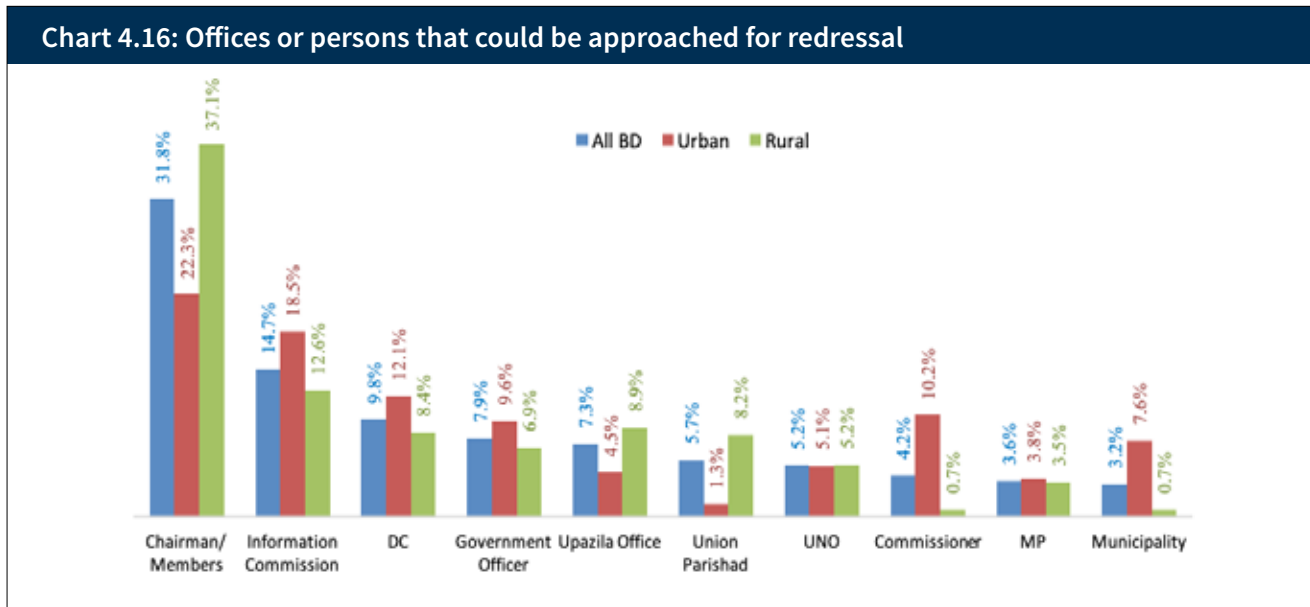


Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (n=983)

Of those who knew that they could approach someone for redressal, close to one-third (31.8%) mentioned the UP Chairmen or UP Members, followed by Information Commission (14.7%), DC (9.8%).

Other respondents or offices mentioned were Government Officer (7.9%), Upazila Office (7.3%), Union Parishad (5.7%), UNO (5.2%), Commissioner (4.2%), MP (3.6%), and Municipality (3.2%).

As expected, UP Chairmen or Members, Upazila Office and Union Parishad were mentioned more by rural than urban citizens. On the contrary, more urban citizens cited IC, DC, Government Officer, and Commissioner who can be approached for redressal.



Base: Those who said they could approach someone for redressal if information is not received within stipulated time (All BD n=583; Urban n=211; Rural n=372)

IV.c Experience with use of the RTI Act

Experience with procedure delineates findings on incidence of requesting for information, place of requests made, post application experience, if a DO followed three specified procedures, source of information before RTI Act came into operation and reasons for not filing any application for information under the RTI Act by the aware respondents.

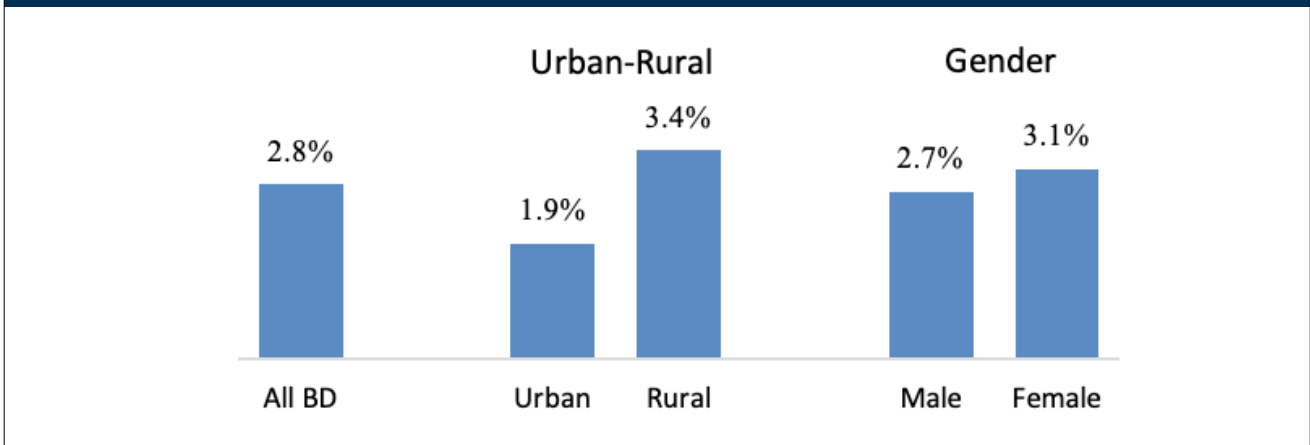
Incidence of requesting for information: In order to evaluate the functionality of the RTI Act, experiences of respondents who had sought information under this Act were assessed.

A very small portion of citizens interviewed had requested for information under the RTI Act. Of the 983 respondents who were aware of this Act, only 28 (2.8%) had filed applications for information from the government or other agencies under this Act.

Among RTI Act aware respondents, the incidence rates for urban and rural area were 1.9% and 3.4% respectively (indicating higher submissions in rural areas), and 2.7% among males against 3.1% amongst females.

Since the number of requesters found was very small, the inferences drawn may not be statistically valid. However, a separate survey was conducted on the requesters as a part of this study, which appears later.

Chart 4.17: Incidence rate of filing application for information under the RTI Act



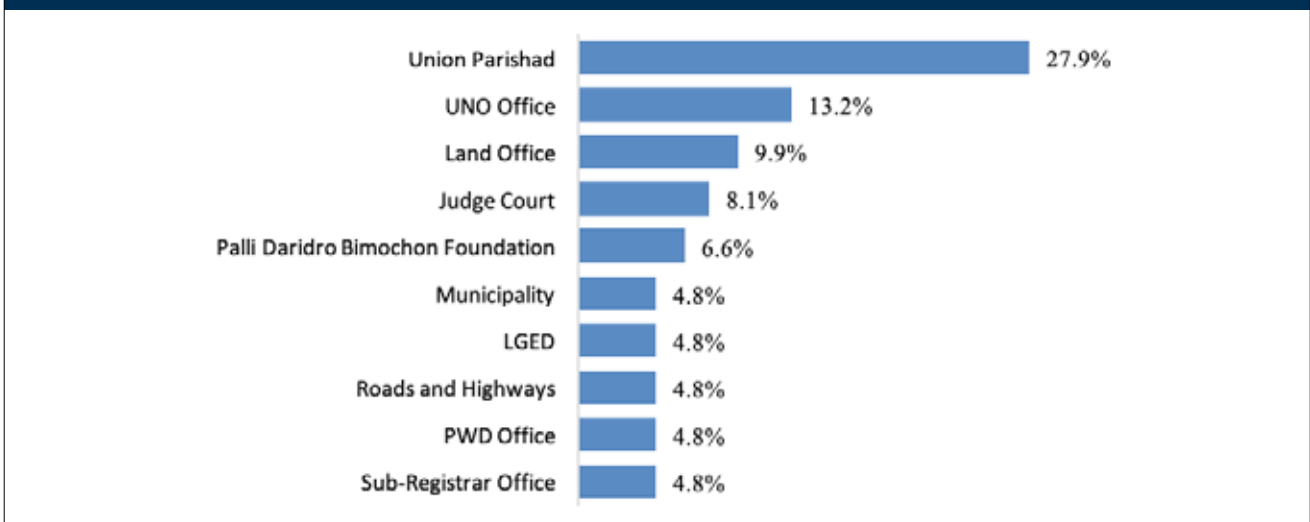
Base: Those who were aware of the RTI Act (All BD n=983; Urban n=359; Rural n=624; Male n=673; Female n=310)

Places where requests made:

The pattern shows that the majority of the requests were made at the rural based offices.

Of the total requests made, about 27.9% were filed for information at the Union Parishad Office, followed by UNO Office (13.2%), Land Office (9.9%) and District Judge Court (8.1%).

Chart 4.18: Offices where applications were filed requesting for information under the RTI Act (multiple responses)

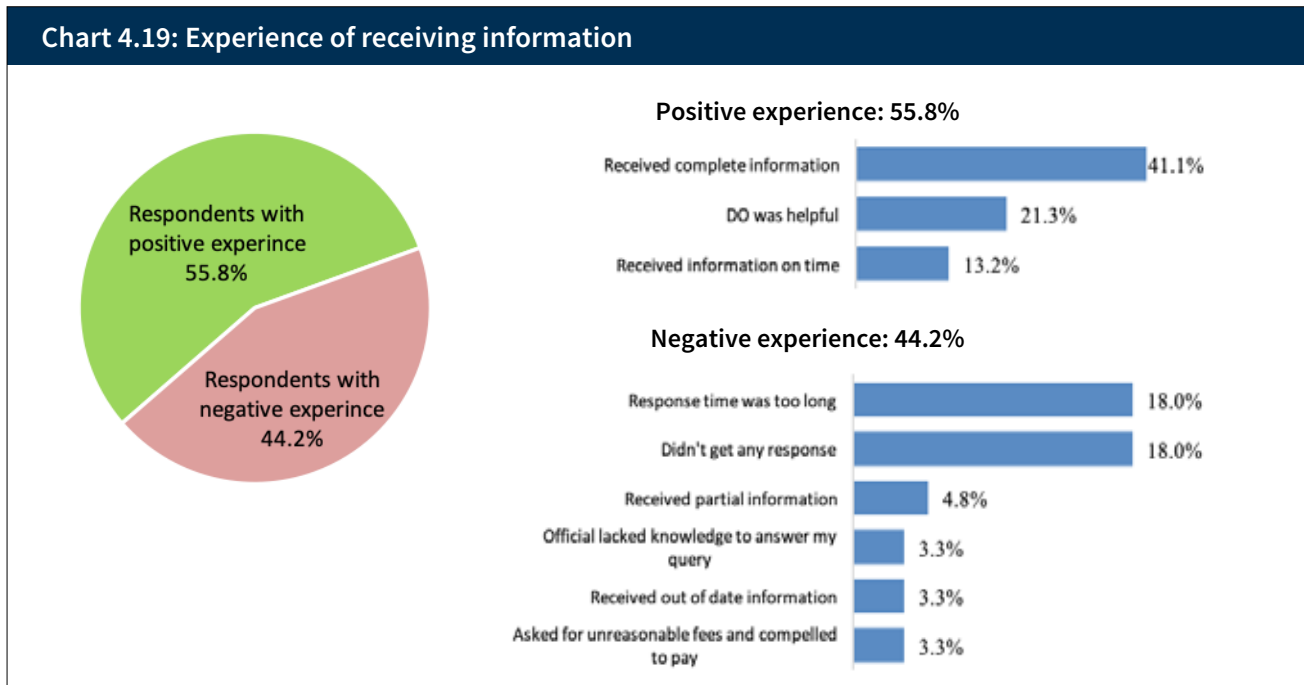


Base: Those who requested for information (n=28)

Post application experience: Out of the 28 respondents who had requested for information, 16 (55.8%) had positive experience and 12 (44.2%) had negative experience with the relevant authorities during the process.

The most mentioned positive experience came from receiving complete information (41.1%), followed by supportive attitude of the DOs (21.3%) and received information timely (13.2%).

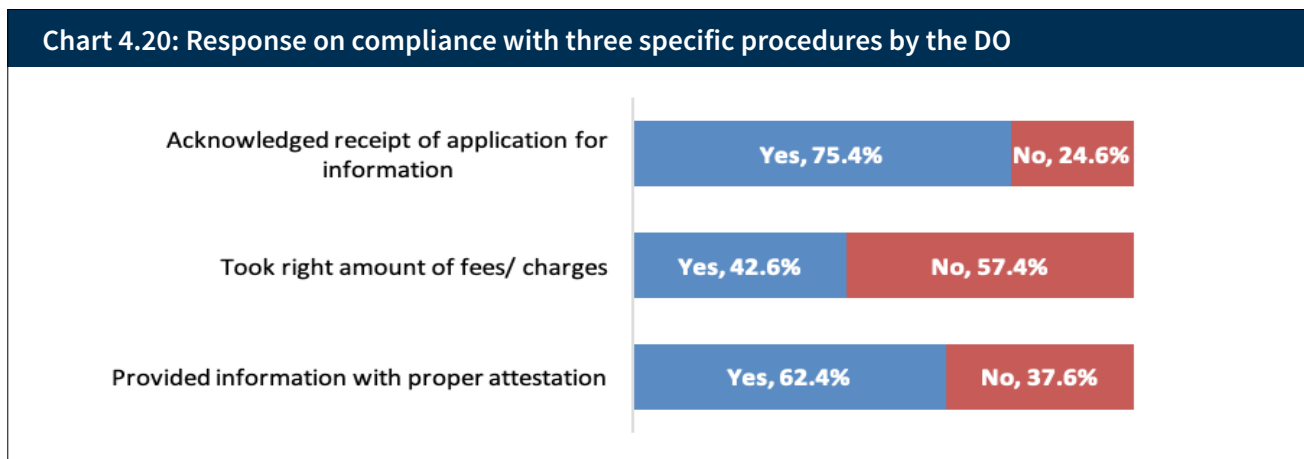
Long response time and not receiving any response at all were the most mentioned negative experiences encountered.



Base: Those who requested for information (n=28)

If DOs followed three specified procedures: Requesters were asked if DOs followed three specified procedures that they are supposed to.

Findings reveal that a substantial majority of times (75.4%), the DOs acknowledged receipt of applications, less than half (42.6%) took right amount of fees and a large majority (62.4%) provided information with proper attestation.

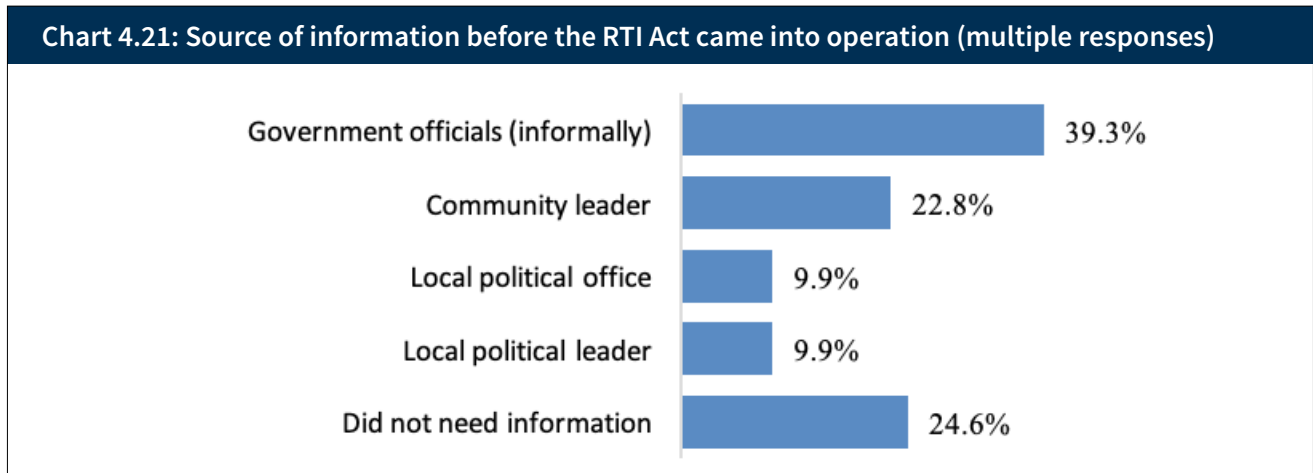


Base: Those who requested for information (n=28)

Sources of information before RTI Act came into effect:

When requesters were asked about the sources of information before the RTI Act came into effect, they mentioned, government officials (39.3%), community leaders (22.8%), local political office (9.9%) and local political leaders (9.9%) as sources.

About a fourth (24.6%) stated that they did not need any information before the RTI Act was enacted. However, as we have seen earlier under subheading ‘places where requests were made’, the sources of information have changed after the Act came into effect.



Base: Those who requested for information (n=28)

Reasons for not filing any application for information under the RTI Act: Those who knew about the RTI Act but did not request for information were asked, why they never did so despite being aware of the Act. An overwhelming majority (74.8%) said they did not need any information. Other reasons stated were: did not know how or to whom to apply (11.8%), did not think information would be useful (6.1%), heard that RTI Act does not work (4.4%), assumed that RTI Act does not work (4.3%), and necessary information already available from websites (0.8%).

Table 4.4: Reasons for not filing any application for information under the RTI Act (multiple responses)

Reasons	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Never needed information	74.8%	78.6%	72.6%	74.9%	74.6%
Do not know how/to whom / where to apply	11.8%	9.2%	13.4%	11.7%	12.1%
Didn't think information would be useful	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%	5.6%	7.1%
Have heard RTI Act does not work	4.4%	2.7%	5.5%	4.8%	3.6%
Didn't think RTI Act works	4.3%	4.2%	4.4%	4.5%	4.0%
Information available from website	0.8%	1.1%	0.6%	1.2%	0.0%
Base: Those who were aware of RTI Act but did not file any application for information	955	352	603	655	300

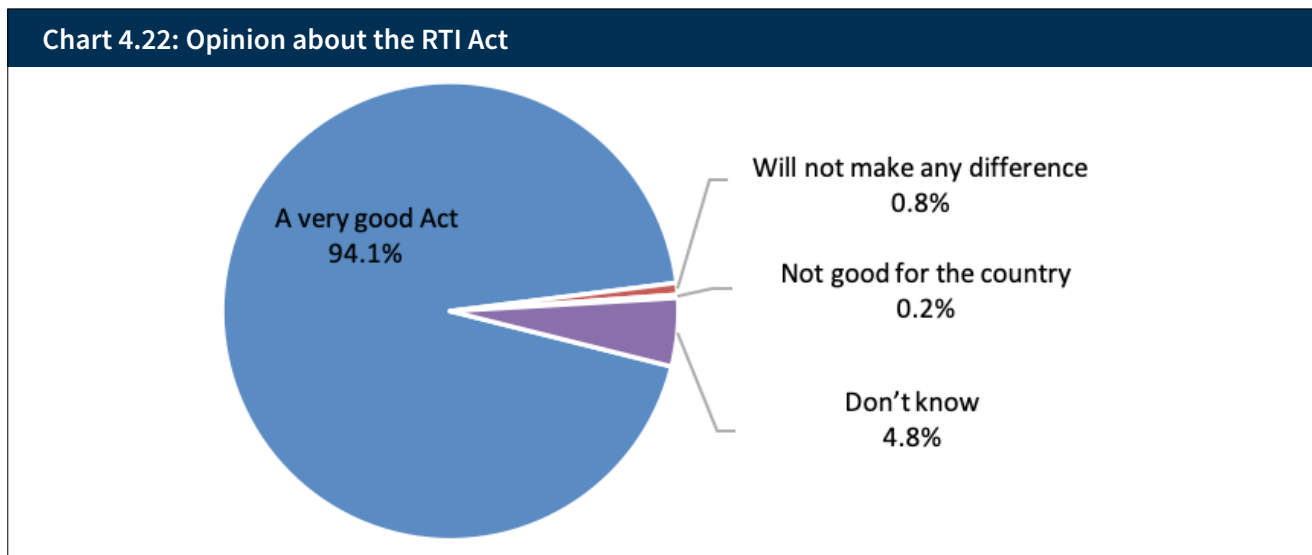
IV.d Opinions and perceptions about the RTI Act

This section discusses spontaneous opinion on the RTI Act, citizens’ expectations from the Act, perceived obstacles in implementing the Act, suggestions for improving the rules and procedures, possible contribution to sustainable development of the country and steps to augmenting the demand side.

Spontaneous opinion on RTI Act: When the RTI Act was introduced, the respondents regardless of whether they were aware or unaware of the Act, most of them spontaneously appreciated the RTI Act.

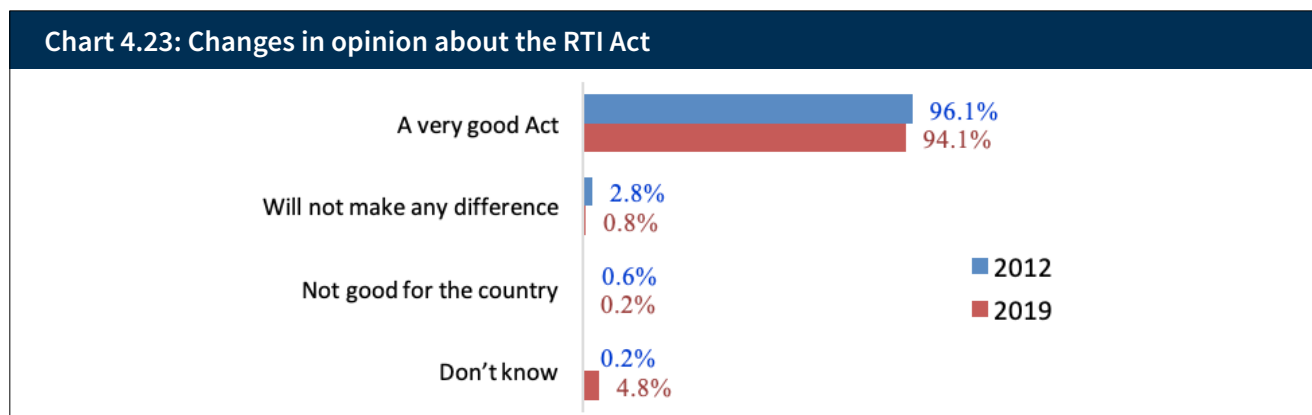
In order to obtain their opinion all respondents were told ‘Anyone can request for any information to any government and non-government organization following the specified procedure. The government has set up a special office, the IC, for the implementation and monitoring of this Act’.

Having read this statement, the respondents were asked to give their opinion about the Act. Spontaneously, about 94.1% said that it was a very good Act; 4.8% did not have any opinion; about 1% showed indifference and a meagre 0.2% found it not good for the country.



Base: All respondents (n=12,774)

Respondents’ spontaneous opinion about the RTI Act as being a very good Act has remained largely at the same high level over time.



Base: All respondents (2012 n=2,628; 2019 n=12,774)

Public expectations on implementation of the RTI Act: The main benefit expected by the citizens from the implementation of the Act is that the quality of service will improve, as mentioned by more than half (57.3%) of the respondents.

About one-fifth (19.9%) of the respondents said that the citizens would be more aware and conscious about their rights.

However, about a third (29.7%) were unable to mention anything. Responses varied by gender and educational qualification. More of males and higher educated respondents were found better informed than their counterparts as can be seen from the following table.

Compared to 2012, substantially more respondents expected that the implementation of the RTI Act would result in improvement in service quality, while substantially fewer anticipated it to reduce corruption.

Table 4.5: Expectations after the implementation of the RTI Act (multiple responses)

Expectations	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender		Educational Qualification				
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Illiterate/ no formal education	Up to class V	Class VI-X	SSC/ HSC	Graduate and above
Quality of service will improve	57.3%	56.6%	57.5%	61.1%	53.4%	51.4%	56.2%	59.4%	63.3%	61.9%
Citizens will be more aware and conscious about their rights	19.9%	22.3%	19.2%	25.5%	14.4%	12.3%	16.1%	18.9%	29.3%	45.0%
Updated information will be provided on time	2.9%	3.2%	2.8%	3.3%	2.5%	1.1%	2.6%	3.4%	5.1%	4.5%
Corruption will decrease	2.7%	3.6%	2.5%	3.6%	1.9%	1.3%	1.5%	1.8%	5.1%	9.7%
Staff behavior will improve	1.8%	2.5%	1.6%	2.0%	1.7%	1.6%	1.4%	1.3%	2.7%	3.7%
Others (12 responses with 0.01% to 0.9%)	2.7%	3.0%	2.6%	2.5%	2.9%	2.3%	2.7%	3.6%	2.5%	3.2%
do not know/ can't say	29.7%	27.8%	30.3%	23.6%	35.7%	39.5%	33.5%	28.7%	17.7%	10.4%
Base: All respondents	12,774	3,174	9,599	6,387	6,387	3,645	3,297	2,446	2,658	727

Variations in respondents' expectations from 2012 to 2019 can be seen in the following table.

Table 4.6: Changes in expectations after the implementation of the RTI Act (multiple responses)		
Expectations	2012	2019
Quality of service will improve	20.0%	57.3%
Citizens will be more aware and conscious about their rights	15.0%	19.9%
Updated information will be provided on time	2.2%	2.9%
Corruption will decrease	27.2%	2.7%
Staff behavior will improve	3.1%	1.8%
Others (11 responses with 0.01% to 0.4%)	-	2.4%
Nothing will change	2.4%	0.9%
Do not know/ can't say	37.9%	29.7%
Base: All respondents	2,628	12,774

Perceived obstacles in implementing the Act: Citizens did not seem to foresee any major obstacles in implementing the Act, as vast majority of the respondents (80%) either stated that there was no obstacle or could not mention any. **The only notable obstacle perceived was, bureaucracy/lack of positive attitude of the officials, as mentioned by 12.8% of the respondents.** A few other less prominent obstacles were also mentioned as can be seen from the following table.

Table 4.7: Obstacles to proper implementation of the RTI Act (multiple responses)

Obstacles	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender		Educational Qualification				
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Illiterate/ no formal education	Up to class V	Class VI-X	SSC/ HSC	Graduate and above
Lack of positive attitude of officials/ bureaucracy	12.8%	16.6%	11.5%	13.9%	11.6%	7.2%	8.5%	11.7%	20.3%	35.6%
Lack of interest of general citizen	5.6%	5.3%	5.7%	3.9%	7.3%	3.4%	3.8%	5.4%	8.9%	13.3%
Lack of political will	3.8%	4.8%	3.5%	5.7%	1.9%	2.2%	2.7%	3.0%	6.1%	11.3%
Fear of being exposed as corrupt official	3.3%	3.9%	3.0%	4.0%	2.5%	1.7%	2.8%	2.9%	5.0%	8.1%
Others (6 responses with 0.1% to 1.4%)	2.9%	3.4%	2.7%	2.4%	3.4%	1.8%	1.9%	2.4%	5.2%	6.6%
There is no obstacle	36.0%	34.2%	36.6%	48.0%	24.1%	39.8%	37.3%	35.9%	32.1%	26.6%
Don't know/ can't say	43.7%	42.4%	44.1%	31.5%	55.8%	47.6%	48.0%	45.3%	37.1%	22.9%
Base: All respondents	12,774	3,174	9,599	6,387	6,387	3,645	3,297	2,446	2,658	727

Although bureaucracy or lack of positive attitude of the officials and fear of being exposed as corrupt official was found to have declined considerably from 2012 to 2019, yet it remained as the biggest hurdle.

On the other hand, a substantially larger proportion of the citizens said that there was no obstacle to the proper implementation of the RTI Act in 2019 compared with 2012.

Table 4.8: Changes in terms of obstacles to implement the RTI Act (multiple responses)

Obstacles	2012	2019
Lack of positive attitude of officials/ bureaucracy	30.7%	12.8%
Lack of interest of general citizen	-	5.6%
Lack of political will	0.8%	3.8%
Fear of being exposed as corrupt official	13.1%	3.3%
Lack of time of staff/official	7.0%	1.4%
Lack of understanding of staff/official	3.8%	1.4%
Others (4 responses with 0.1% to 0.7%)	1.5%	1.6%
There is no obstacle	16.1%	36.0%
Don't know/ can't say	35.0%	43.7%
Base: All respondents	2,628	12,774

Suggestions for improvement: Respondents were asked to suggest improvement of the rules and procedure of the Act.

Findings revealed that it was difficult for the general citizens to come up with such suggestions on a specialized subject like this Act, as nearly three-fourths (73.3%) could not suggest anything.

However, those who could suggest any improvement were mostly for changing staff attitude and providing updated information.

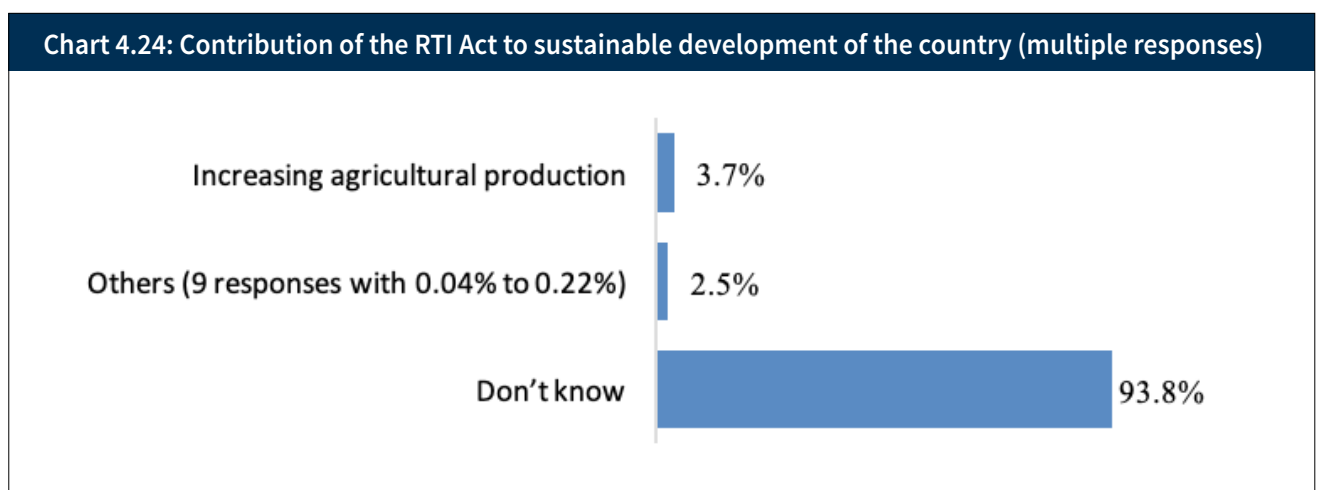
Urban people, males and higher educated respondents appeared relatively more informed compared to their counterparts, as can be seen from the table below.

Table 4.9: Suggestion for improving the rules and procedures of the RTI Act (multiple responses)

Suggestions	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender		Educational Qualification				
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Illiterate/ no formal education	Up to class V	Class VI-X	SSC/ HSC	Graduate and above
Change staff attitude	14.7%	16.9%	13.9%	17.5%	11.8%	11.9%	13.5%	13.2%	18.4%	24.8%
Provide updated information	9.3%	8.8%	9.5%	13.4%	5.3%	6.2%	8.9%	8.4%	12.4%	19.4%
Others (4 responses with 0.02% to 1.62%)	3.6%	4.2%	3.3%	3.1%	4.0%	1.3%	1.8%	4.1%	6.9%	8.9%
Do not know	73.3%	70.8%	74.1%	67.3%	79.3%	80.9%	76.7%	75.1%	63.6%	49.1%
Base: All respondents	12,774	3,174	9,599	6,387	6,387	3,645	3,297	2,446	2,658	727

Contribution of RTI Act to development of the country:

Like the suggestions for improvement, most of the respondents (93.8%) failed to comprehend how the RTI Act could contribute to sustainable development of the country. However, a small segment thought it will contribute to increasing agricultural production (3.7%).



Base: All respondents (n=12,774)

A little more than a fourth could not come up with any suggestions. However, the three most suggested steps were organizing meetings, seminars and workshops, publicizing through television/radio and promotion through social media.

Steps to increase the demand side: Respondents were asked what they thought the IC or the authorities concerned should do in augmenting the demand side of the RTI Act.

A smaller segment mentioned promoting it through newspapers, door to door promotion and mobile SMS. The pattern of suggestions appeared more or less the same across gender and place of residence as can be seen from the following table.

Table 4.10: Steps the IC or authority should take to augment the demand side of the RTI Act (multiple responses)

Steps Taken	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Organize meetings, seminars, workshops	31.4%	32.9%	31.0%	34.5%	28.4%
Publicize through television/radio	27.3%	31.0%	26.1%	28.0%	26.6%
Promote in social media	21.1%	21.8%	20.8%	23.7%	18.4%
Publicize in newspapers	7.6%	10.2%	6.7%	8.7%	6.4%
Door to door promotion	7.5%	7.2%	7.6%	6.4%	8.5%
Promote through mobile SMS	6.9%	6.7%	7.0%	4.0%	9.8%
Promote through posters, banners, billboard	4.3%	6.4%	3.6%	6.5%	2.1%
Appoint representatives of IC in Mohalla	3.3%	3.8%	3.2%	5.1%	1.6%
Others (5 responses with 0.01% to 2.7%)	2.7%	2.8%	2.7%	3.8%	1.7%
Do not know/ can't say	28.5%	24.9%	29.7%	26.8%	30.3%
Base: All respondents	12,774	3,174	9,599	6,387	6,387

PART V - REQUESTERS' SURVEY

Requesters' part of the RTI report includes the following sections:

- Profile of requesters;
- Source of awareness of the RTI Act and details of applications filed;
- Pre-submission experience of requesters;
- Submission of and payments for application for information;
- Responses received and appeals filed by requesters, and;
- Requesters' level of satisfaction and suggestions for improvement

V. a Profile of requesters

The requesters were mostly male, relatively younger, more educated, students, journalists by occupation, and more from urban areas.

In citizens' survey it was found that the tendency of submitting request for information was more in rural than in urban areas, which contradicts this finding.

The number of requesters among the citizens was, very small and hence statistically not valid. Nonetheless, many student requesters requested for information on behalf of NGOs and not for their own use.

Journalists also formed a major requester group, who are not intended target audience of the RTI Act.

Table 5.1: Respondent profile of requesters

Gender		Occupation	
Male	81.9%	Student	20.9%
Female	18.1%	Journalist	13.1%
		Small Businessman	7.0%
		Farmer	5.8%
		Retired	5.8%
		Senior/Mid-level Officer/Executive	4.7%
		Businessman/Industrialist with 1-9 employees	4.2%
		Junior Officer/Executive	4.2%
		School Teacher/Imam/Muazjzin	4.2%
		Skilled Labor	3.9%
		Shop Owner	3.3%
		Government Officer	3.3%
		Unemployed	3.1%
		Housewife	3.1%
		Businessman/Industrialist with no employee	2.5%
		Clerk/Salesman	2.5%
		Employed in Supervisory Position	2.5%
		Self Employed	2.2%
		Veterinary/Homeopathy Doctor	1.1%
		Police/Security Service/Postman/Unskilled Labor	1.1%
		Businessman/Industrialist with 10 or more employees	0.8%
		College/University Teacher	0.6%

Age	
17 - 25 years	24.0%
26 - 35 years	20.1%
36 - 45 years	20.1%
46 - 55 years	21.2%
56 - 65 years	11.1%
65 years+	3.6%

Educational Qualification	
Illiterate/ no formal education	3.3%
Up to class V	4.5%
Class VI - X	6.4%
SSC/HSC	32.9%
Graduate and above	52.9%

Place of Residence	
Urban	73.8%
Rural	26.2%

V.b Source of awareness of the RTI Act and details of applications filed

This section describes findings on source of awareness of the RTI Act, number of requests filed by each requester, place of filing application and reasons for filing applications.

Source of awareness of the RTI Act: As a whole, meetings, seminars and workshops were cited as the most common source of awareness of the RTI Act, followed closely by NGOs.

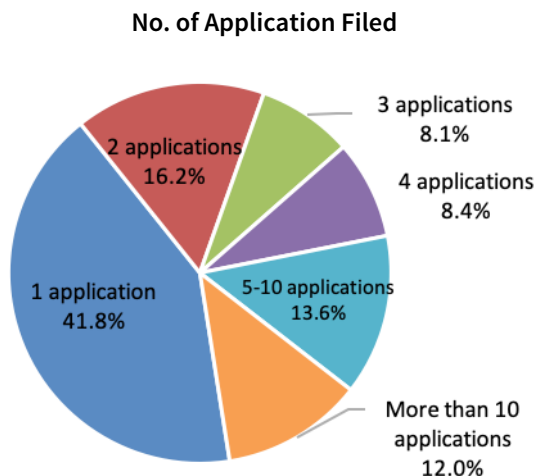
Other major sources were friends/family members, newspapers, television and colleagues/classmates. However, in terms of reach, some differences appeared to exist by location of residence and gender as shown in the following table.

Table 5.2: Source of awareness of the RTI Act by place of residence and gender (multiple responses)

Source of Awareness	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
IC meetings, seminars, workshops	23.1%	28.7%	7.4%	22.4%	26.2%
NGOs	21.4%	18.5%	29.8%	17.7%	38.5%
Family/friends	17.0%	15.5%	21.3%	17.3%	15.4%
Newspapers	15.0%	18.5%	5.3%	17.0%	6.2%
Television	11.1%	11.7%	9.6%	12.6%	4.6%
Colleagues/classmates	9.7%	8.7%	12.8%	10.5%	6.2%
Other meetings	8.4%	8.3%	8.5%	9.2%	4.6%
DC Office	7.2%	7.5%	6.4%	7.5%	6.2%
Government circulars	6.4%	6.0%	7.4%	7.1%	3.1%
Books	3.6%	3.8%	3.2%	4.4%	0.0%
Others (11 responses with 0.3% to 2.8%)	12.3%	10.6%	17.0%	11.9%	13.8%
Base: All respondents	359	265	94	294	65

Number of applications filed: A large majority of the requesters (58%) had submitted multiple applications for information, and the remaining 42% made the request only once so far. Some 13.6% requesters submitted more than 10 applications each, to date. However, on average 8.8 applications were made by each requester, more by urban requesters compared to rural ones as can be seen from the following table.

Chart 5.1: Number of applications filed



Avg. No. of Application Filed by Place of Residence and Gender

		Avg. no. of application filed
All BD		8.8
Place of Residence	Urban	10.3
	Rural	4.3
Gender	Male	9.1
	Female	7.1

Base: All respondents (n=359)

Place of filing application: The most common place for filing application for information was the DC office, accounting for 43.5% of requests followed by Municipality (10.9%).

Other notable places for requesting information were Women Affairs department, Union Parishad and UNO Office. However, some variations by place of residence and gender exist, as can be seen from the following table.

Table 5.3: Place of filing application by place of residence and gender (multiple responses)

Name of Office/ Department	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
DC Office	43.5%	42.6%	45.7%	46.3%	30.8%
Municipality	10.9%	13.2%	4.3%	9.9%	15.4%
Women Affairs Office	7.2%	7.5%	6.4%	3.7%	23.1%
Union Parishad	5.3%	2.6%	12.8%	5.4%	4.6%
UNO Office	4.7%	4.9%	4.3%	5.8%	0.0%
Land Office	2.5%	2.3%	3.2%	2.7%	1.5%
Social Services Office	2.5%	1.9%	4.3%	1.0%	9.2%
Education Office	2.5%	2.3%	3.2%	2.7%	1.5%
Others (27 responses with 0.3% to 1.9%)	22.0%	23.0%	19.1%	23.8%	13.8%
Base: All respondents	359	265	94	294	65

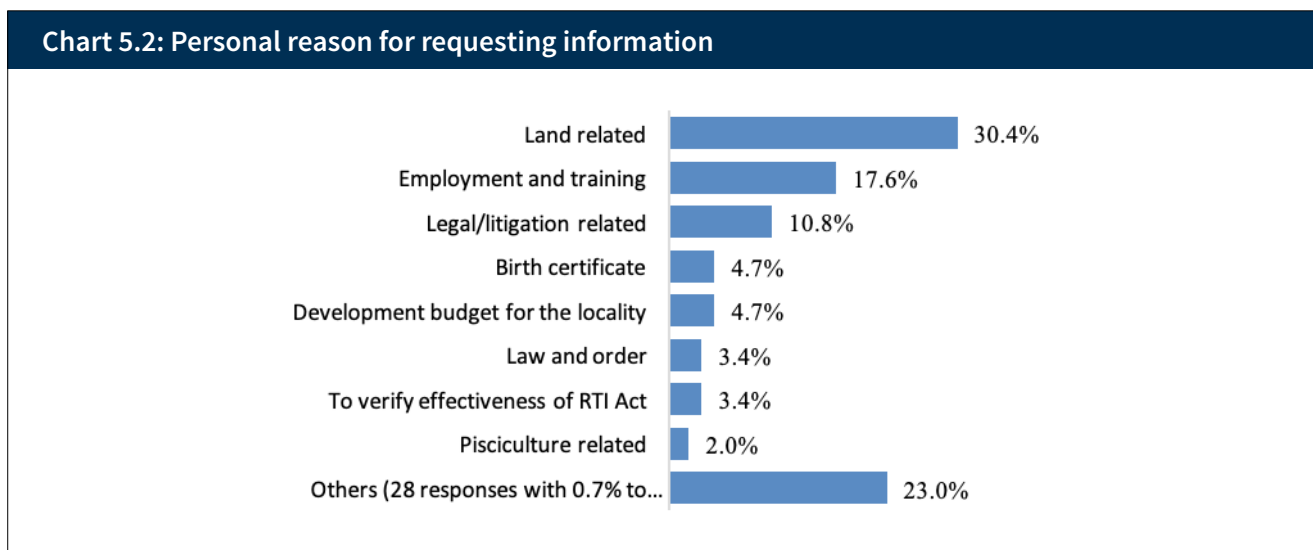
Purpose of filing application for information: Most applications for information were filed for three purposes, namely, 1) personal purpose, 2) public interest, and 3) professional purposes. Public interest as a reason for filing application was more prevalent in rural areas and among females whereas urban male

requesters needed more information for official or professional purposes than their rural counterparts. No such variations were observed regarding requests for personal purpose.

Table 5.4: Reasons for filing application (multiple responses)

	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Personal purpose	41.2%	40.8%	42.6%	40.8%	43.1%
Public interest	39.8%	36.2%	50.0%	37.1%	52.3%
Official/professional purpose	20.1%	24.5%	7.4%	23.5%	4.6%
Others (3 responses with 0.3% to 1.4%)	2.2%	1.5%	4.3%	2.0%	3.1%
Base: All respondents	359	265	94	294	65

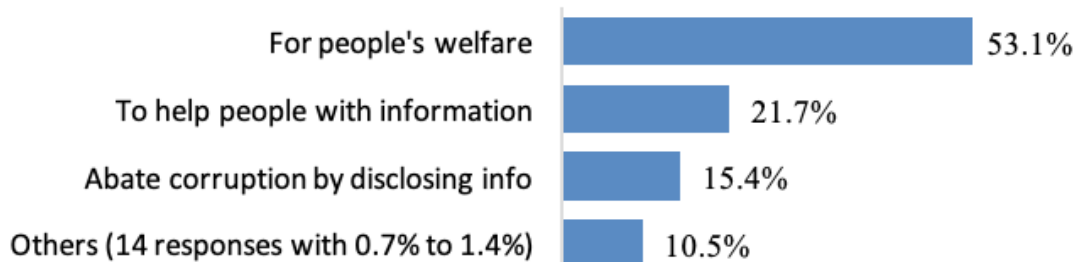
Reasons for requesting information for personal purpose: A diverse range of purposes were cited by the requesters for requesting information for personal use. The most mentioned purpose was land related. The other two notable ones were related to employment and training and legal/litigation.



Base: Those who mentioned information was needed for personal purpose (n=148)

Reasons for requesting information on public interest: Among requesters who applied for information on public interest, more than half did so for people’s welfare, while one-fifth wanted to help people by providing them with necessary information. Some also requested for information to disclose/publicize it with the intent to reducing corruption.

Chart 5.3: Reasons for requesting information on public interest



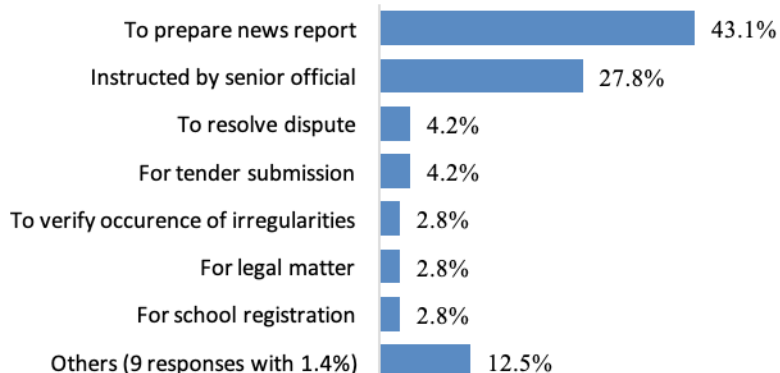
Base: Those who mentioned information was needed for public interest (n=143)

Reasons for requesting information for official/professional purpose:

Around a fifth also sought information for official purposes as instructed by their senior officials.

Journalists appear to make use of the RTI Act to seek information with the intent of publishing news report as mentioned by 43.1% of those who requested information for official purpose.

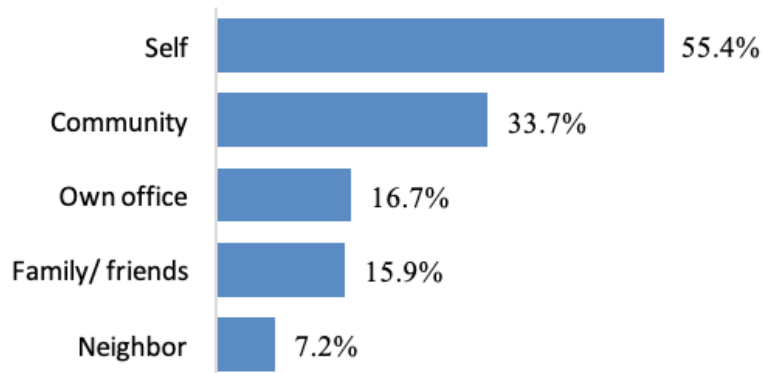
Chart 5.4: Reasons for requesting information for official/professional purpose



Base: Those who mentioned information was needed for official/professional purpose (n=72)

Beneficiary of information: Respondents were asked about the beneficiary of information they had requested for. In the majority of cases (55.4%) it was the applicants themselves, followed by the community. Own office (16.7%), family/friends (15.9%) and neighbor (7.2%) were also common.

Chart 5.5: Beneficiary of information requested (multiple responses)



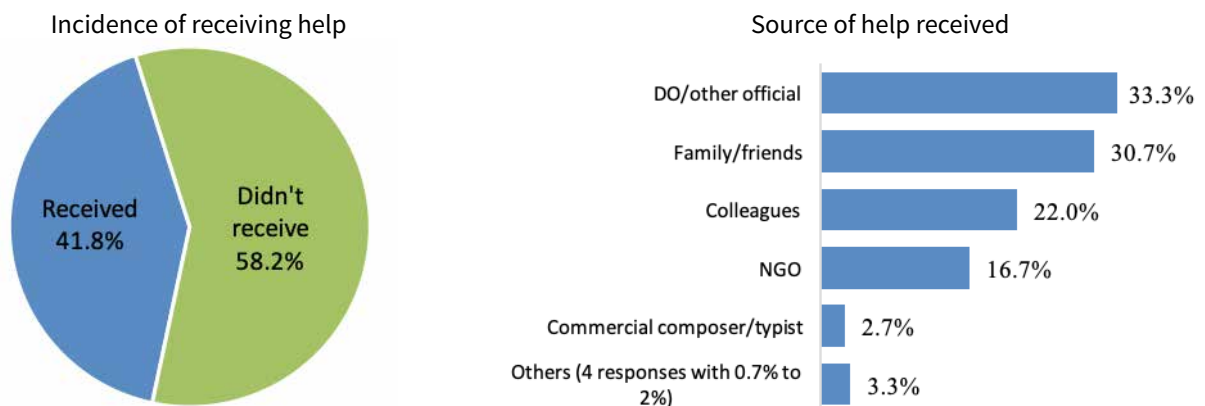
Base: All respondents (n=359)

V. c Pre-submission experience of requesters

This section describes the incidence and source of help received by requesters in filling up application form and their experience of meeting the DO.

Incidence and source of receiving help in filling up application form: A substantial majority (58.2%) of requesters did not receive help from anybody for filling up their application forms under the RTI Act, and the remaining 41.8% did take help. Among those who did, mostly received help from the respective DO/other official, family and friends, colleagues and NGOs.

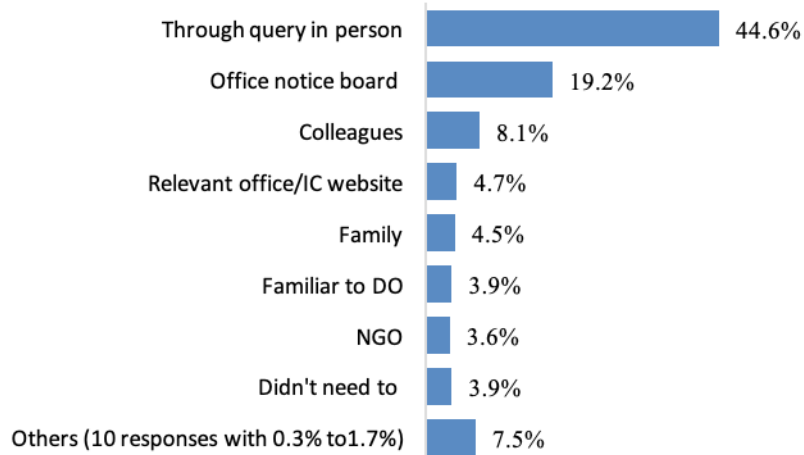
Chart 5.6: Incidence and source of help received in filling up application form



Base: All respondents (n=359); those who received help in filling up the application (n=150)

Experience of meeting the DOs: Overall experience of meeting DOs appear to be mostly favorable. Requesters were asked how they had traced the relevant DOs. The most common method was through visiting the relevant office, from office notice board along with a host of other methods as can be seen from the following chart.

Chart 5.7: How DOs were identified by requesters

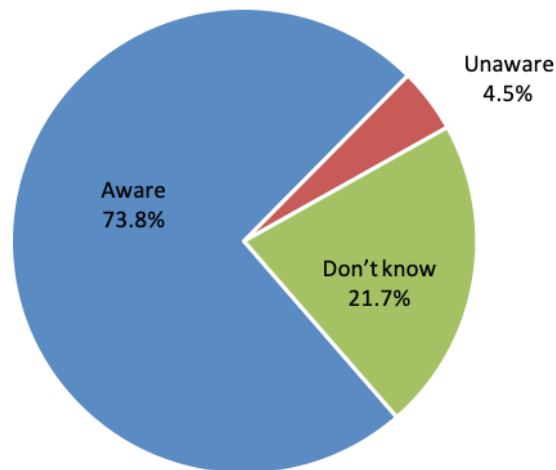


Base: All respondents (n=359)

Those who came to know about the DOs name from the IC website stated that the name was correct.

A substantial majority (73.8%) of requesters said that the DOs they interacted with were aware of the RTI Act. Only 4.5% perceived them to be unaware. The remaining one-fifth did not know whether the DOs were aware or not.

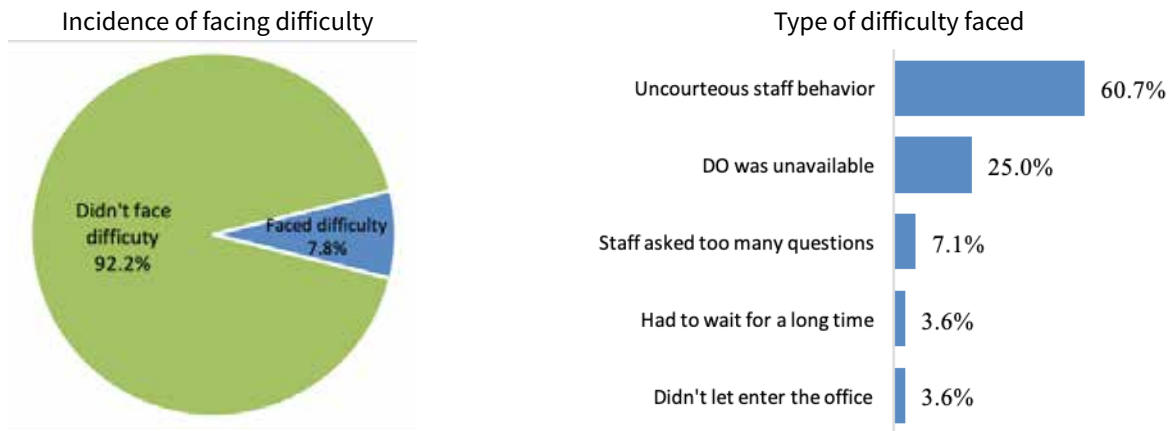
Chart 5.8: Perception of requesters on DOs' awareness of the RTI Act



Base: All respondents (n=359)

An overwhelming majority (92.2%) did not face any difficulty in meeting DOs. Those who faced problems mentioned uncourteous behavior of office staff and unavailability of the DOs as the biggest difficulties.

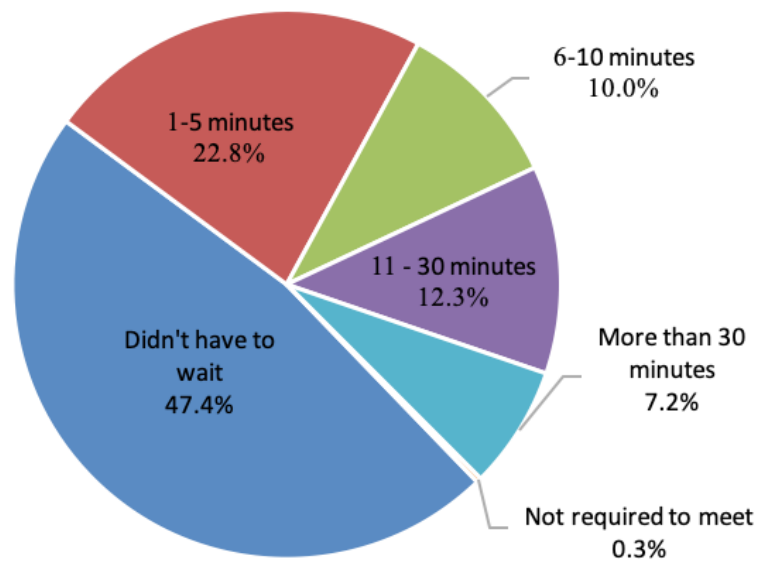
Chart 5.9: Difficulties faced in meeting DO



Base: All respondents (n=359); those who faced difficulty in meeting DO (n=28)

Nearly half of the requesters did not have to wait at all to see the DO. Close to a fourth waited for not more than 5 minutes, 10% for 6-10 minutes, 10% for 6-10 minutes and 12.3% for 11-30 minutes. Only 7.2% of requesters had to wait for more than an hour before they could meet the DO.

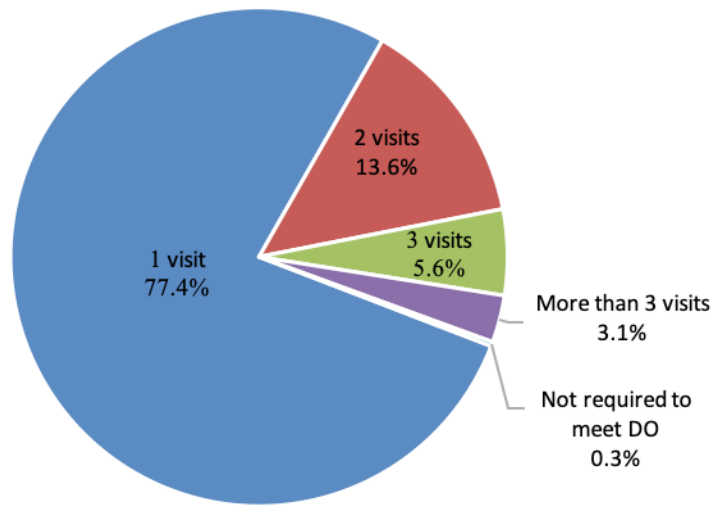
Chart 5.10: Time required for meeting DO



Base: All respondents (n=359)

Majority (77.4%) of the requesters were able to meet the DOs on the very first visit. Close to a fifth needed to make 2 to 3 visits. Only 3.1% had to visit more than 3 times.

Chart 5.11: Number of visits needed for meeting a DO



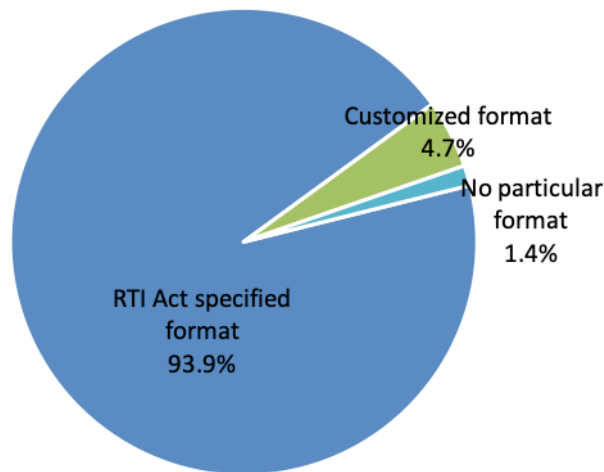
Base: All respondents (n=359)

V. d Submission of and payments for application for information

This section narrates findings on specific aspects of submission of applications under the RTI Act, and payments made for it.

Submission of application: Most requesters (93.9%) stated that they followed the RTI specified format, and only 4.7% used customized formats for request applications.

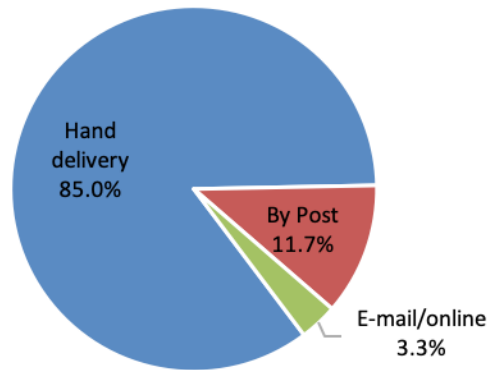
Chart 5.12: Format of submitted application



Base: All respondents (n=359)

Hand delivery was the dominant mode of delivery as majority (85%) submitted applications in this way, 11.7% by post, and 3.3% by e-mail/online.

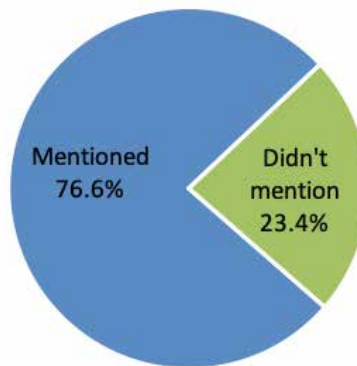
Chart 5.13: Medium of submitting application



Base: All respondents (n=359)

A vast majority (76.6%) of the requesters mentioned the name of the DOs in their applications, and the rest did not.

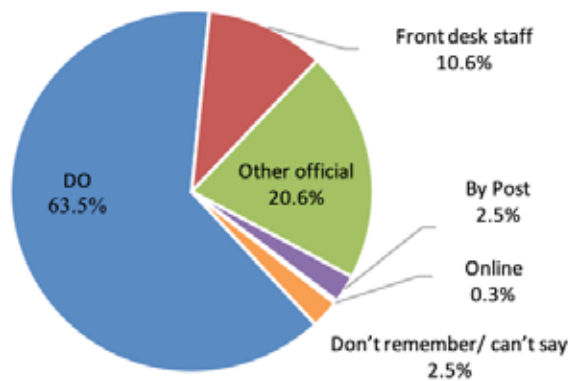
Chart 5.14: Mentioning name of DO in application



Base: All respondents (n=359)

About two-thirds of the requesters submitted applications to the DO directly, followed by other officials and front desk in the same organization in the absence of the DO. A few also sent by post and online.

Chart 5.15: Person application was submitted to



Base: All respondents (n=359)

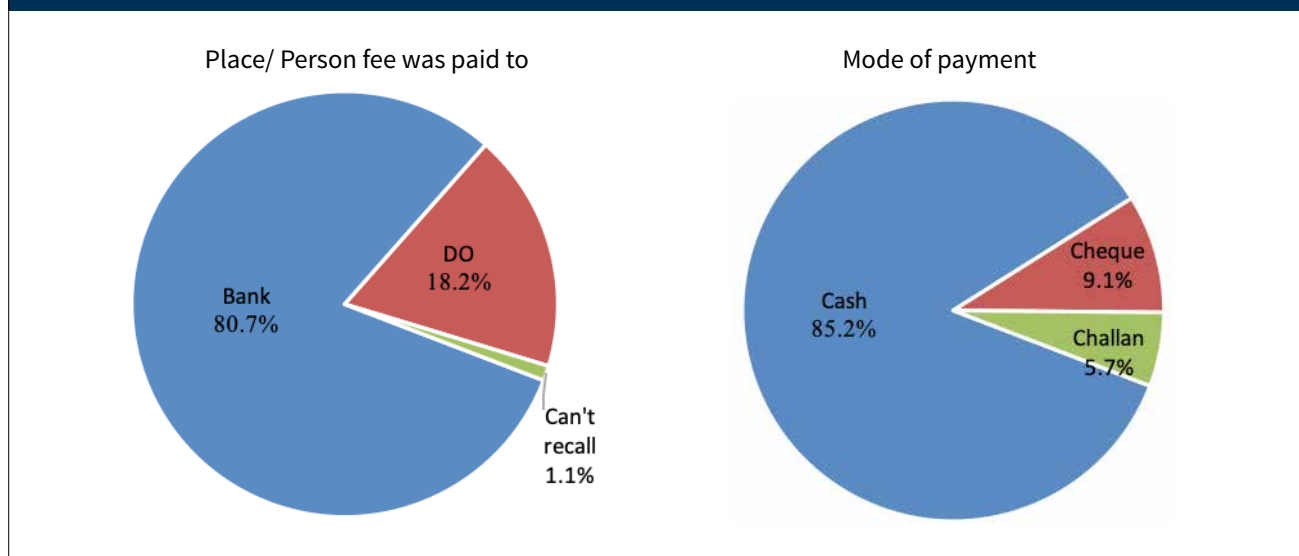
Fee payment: Payment of fee was not quite common as only about a fifth of the requesters paid fee for information under the RTI Act. However, the incidence of payment of fee was higher in urban than in rural areas, and among males than among females.

Table 5.5: Incidence of fee payment by place of residence and gender

	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Paid fee	24.5%	27.2%	17.0%	27.2%	12.3%
Didn't pay fee	75.5%	72.8%	83.0%	72.8%	87.7%
Base: All respondents	359	265	94	294	65

Among those who paid the fee, an overwhelming majority (80.7%) paid through banks, 18.2% paid directly to the DO, and a very small portion could not recall to whom they paid. When asked about medium of payment, 85.2% claimed to have paid in cash, while the remaining requesters paid through cheque or chalan.

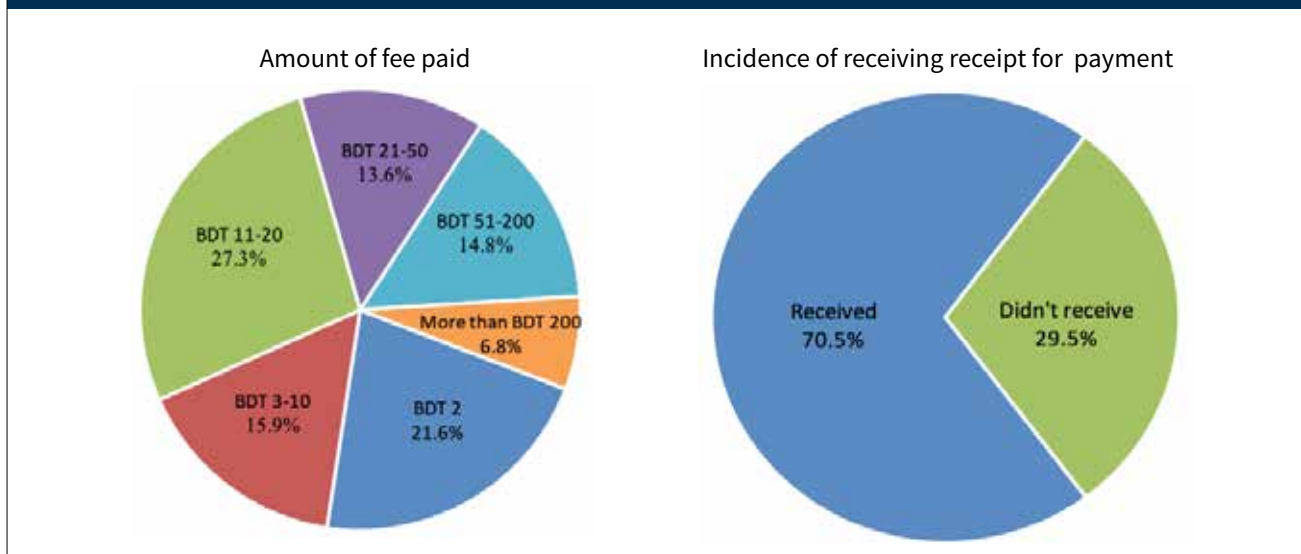
Chart 5.16: Place or person fee was paid to and mode of payment



Base: Those who paid for required information (n=88)

Requesters appeared to have paid the fee in varying amounts as can be seen from the following chart. However, the average amount paid was BDT 52. Among those who paid fee, 70.5% were given receipts of payment.

Chart 5.17: Amount of fee paid and receipt received for payment



Base: Those who paid for required information (n=88)

When asked if requesters had received receipts against their applications for information, 68.2% replied in the affirmative, while the rest replied in the negative. Incidence of not receiving receipt was higher in rural than in urban areas, and among females than males.

Table 5.6: Incidence of receiving receipt against application by place of residence and gender

	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Received	68.2%	71.3%	59.6%	71.4%	53.8%
Didn't receive	31.8%	28.7%	40.4%	28.6%	46.2%
Base: All respondents	359	265	94	294	65

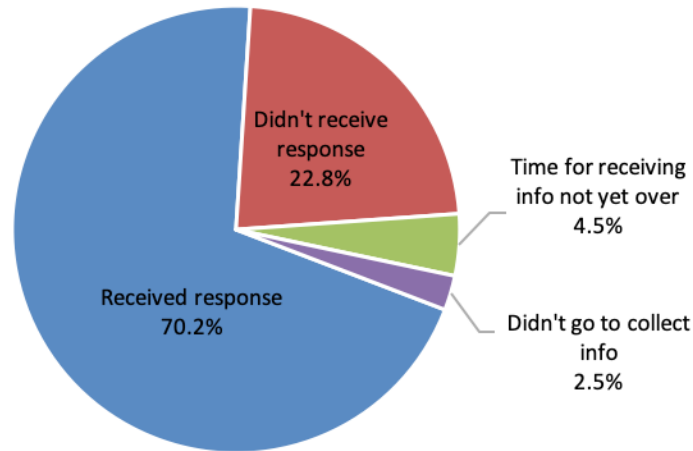
V. e Responses received and appeal filed by requesters

This section reveals findings on the incidence and waiting time for receiving response to applications filed, facts and opinion of requesters about information received, explanation for not receiving response and incidence and consequence of filing appeal.

Incidence for receiving response and waiting time: While ideally every requester should receive a response, findings reveal that nearly two-thirds received it, and around a fifth did not.

A few requests did not mature and another few applicants did not collect the response.

Chart 5.18: Incidence of receiving response to application



Base: All respondents (n=359)

Among those who received a response, majority (68%) received it within the stipulated 20 days. 40.5% received it within 10 days, 27.4% within 10-20 days, and 11.5% within 21-30 days.

It was found that urban and women requesters had to wait longer than their respective counterparts as shown in the following table.

Table 5.7: Number of days taken to receive response to application by place of residence and gender

	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Within 10 days	40.5%	45.0%	27.0%	37.9%	52.2%
11-20 days	27.4%	28.0%	25.4%	30.1%	15.2%
21-30 days	11.5%	7.4%	23.8%	11.2%	13.0%
31-60 days	9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	9.7%	8.7%
More than 60 days	11.1%	10.1%	14.3%	11.2%	10.9%
Average (in days)	36	31	48	38	28
Base: Those who received response to their application	252	189	63	206	46

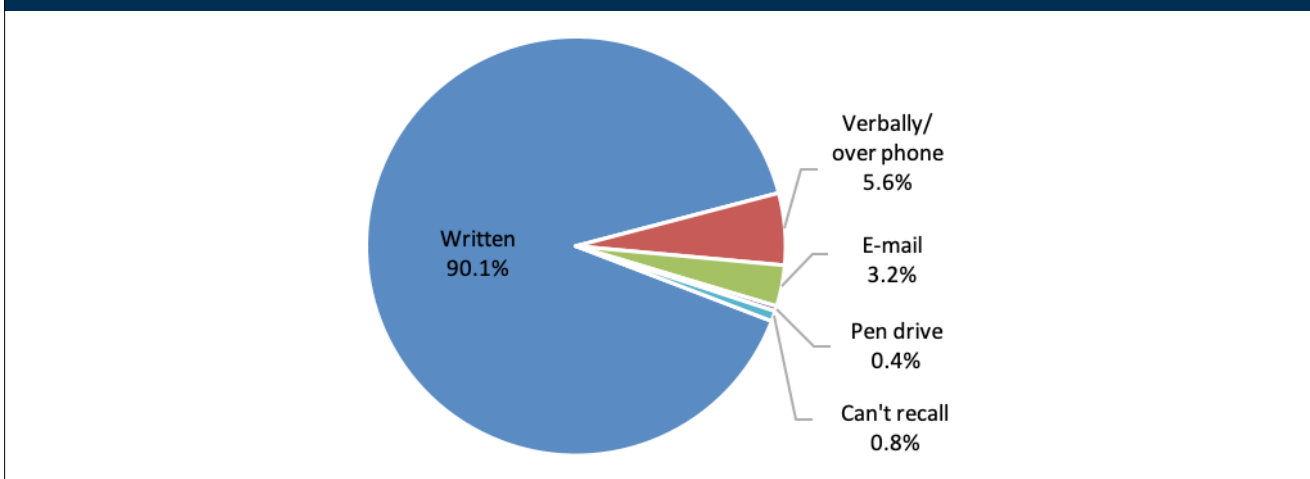
Feedback on information received: Overall performance of the DOs appeared satisfactory. Among those who received the information, a vast majority (four-fifths) reported to have received it in their desired form.

Table 5.8: Incidence of receiving information in desired form

	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Received	81.7%	78.8%	90.5%	78.2%	97.8%
Didn't receive	18.3%	21.2%	9.5%	21.8%	2.2%
Base: Those who received response to their application	252	189	63	206	46

Most people received information in written form, while 5.6% received it verbally/over phone, and 3.2% via e-mail.

Chart 5.19: Form of receiving information

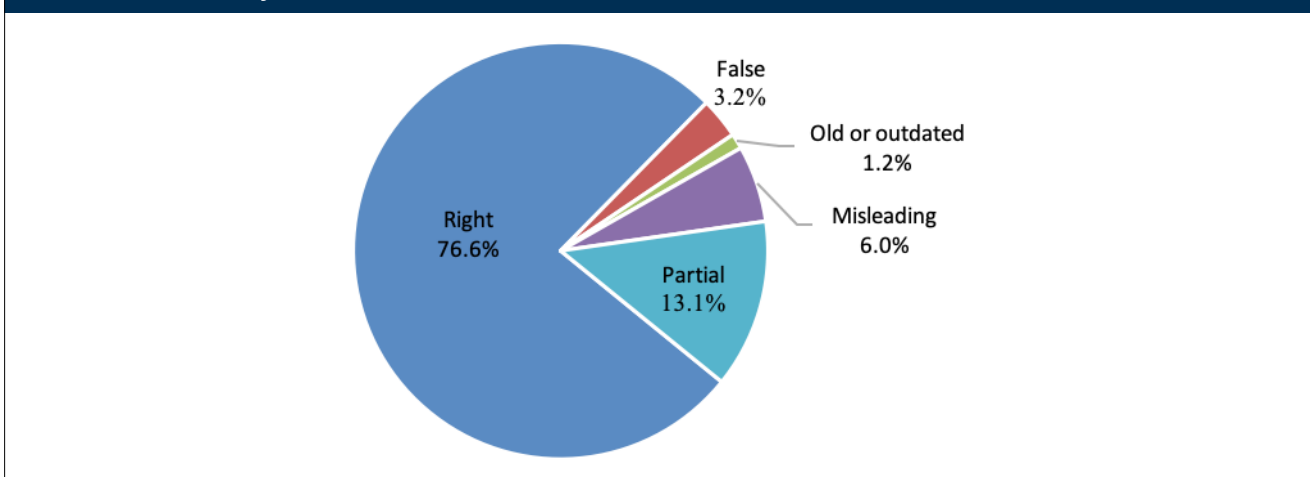


Base: Those who received response to their application (n=252)

Regarding quality of information, 76.6% people acknowledged receiving right information, while 13.1% got partial information.

About 10% said the information received was either false, outdated or misleading.

Chart 5.20: Quality of information received



Base: Those who received response to their application (n=252)

Majority of those who received response were satisfied with the information provided.

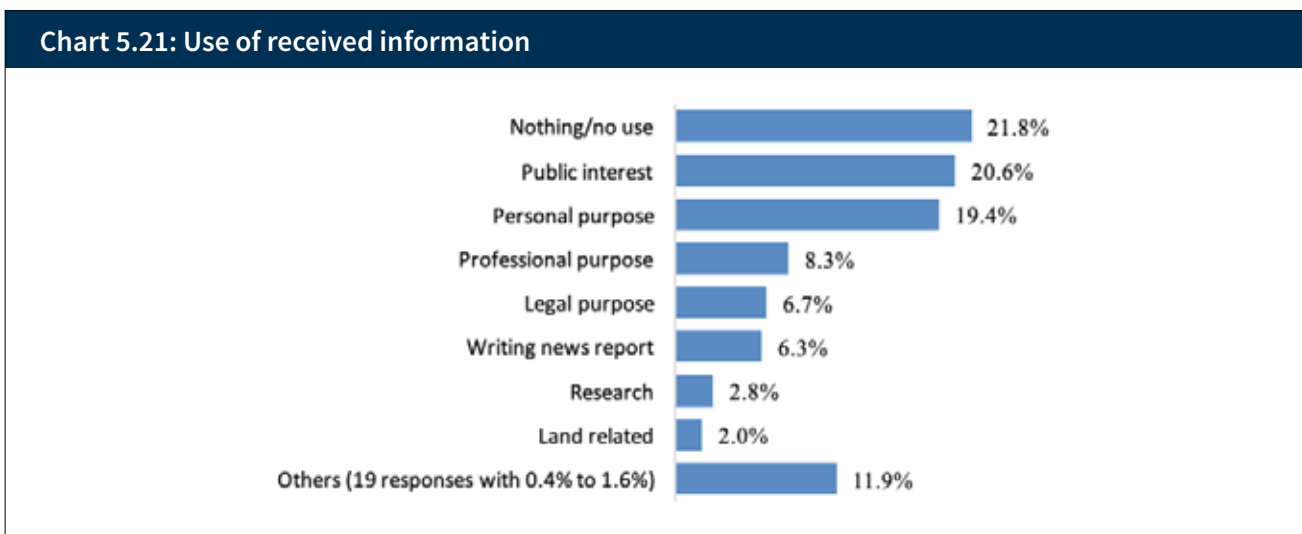
More than half (58.3%) said their expectations were fulfilled completely. Close to a fourth (22.6%) were somewhat satisfied, while in case of 17% it was either very little or not at all fulfilling.

Some variations by place of residence and gender were observed as can be seen from the following table.

Table 5.9: Fulfilment of expectation by information received

	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Not at all	10.7%	12.2%	6.3%	12.6%	2.2%
Very little	6.3%	4.8%	11.1%	7.8%	0.0%
Somewhat	22.6%	23.8%	19.0%	24.3%	15.2%
Completely	58.3%	57.7%	60.3%	52.9%	82.6%
Didn't get information	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.9%	0.0%
Do not know/ can't say	0.4%	0.0%	1.6%	0.5%	0.0%
Base: Those who received response to their application	252	189	63	206	46

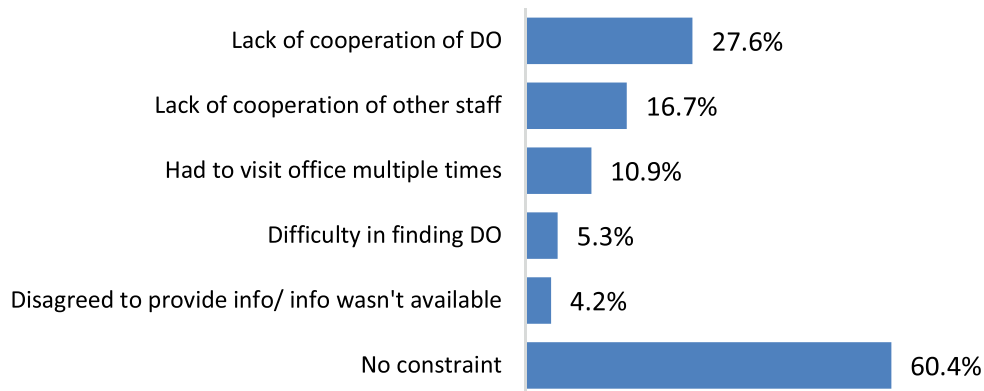
When probed further about how the obtained information was used by requesters, around one-fifth said they did nothing with the information, while around the same number used it in public interest and for personal purpose. Some other uses included professional, legal and writing news reports as can be found from the chart below.



Base: Those who received response to their application (n=252)

When asked about constraints faced in the process of getting information, three-fifths found none. However, the biggest constraints faced were lack of cooperation of the DOs and other staff, and the need for multiple visits.

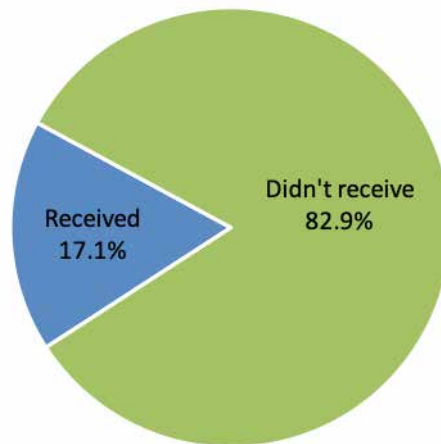
Chart 5.22: Constraints in the process of obtaining information (multiple responses)



Base: All respondents (n=359)

Incidence of receiving explanation and perceived reasons for no response: Only less than a fifth of the requesters, who had not received response to their application, did receive explanation for no response from the authority, and the others did not.

Chart 5.23: Incidence of receiving explanation for no response

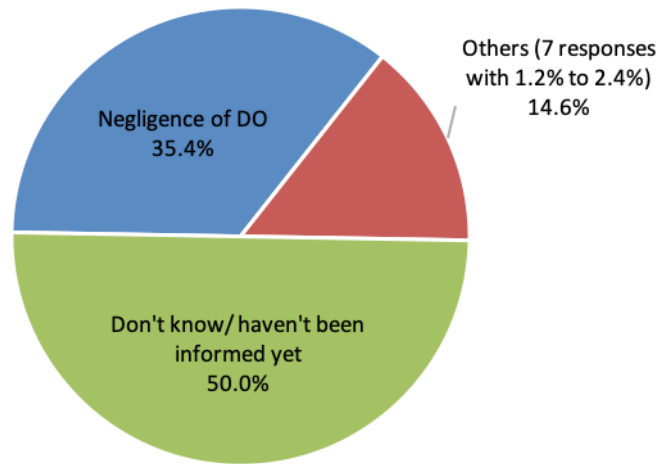


Base: Those who did not receive response to their application (n=82)

When asked about the reasons for non-receipt of explanation, half of those who did not receive response either did not know or were not informed by the authority why they had not received any response.

However, more than one-third (35.4%) attributed it to the negligence of the DO.

Chart 5.24: Explanation for not receiving response



Base: Those who did not receive response to their application (n=82)

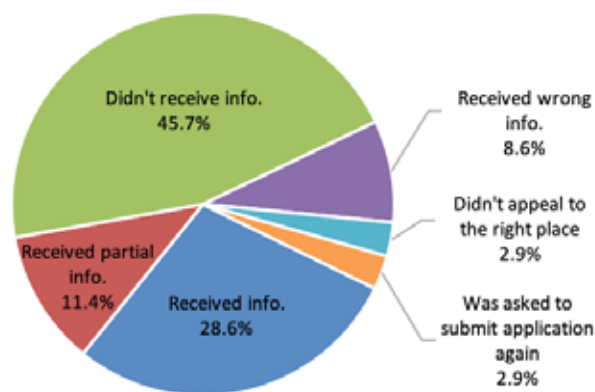
Incidence and consequence of filing appeal: Only a small number of respondents, about a tenth, had filed for appeals.

Table 5.10: Incidence of filing appeal

	All BD	Place of Residence		Gender	
		Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Filed	9.7%	11.3%	5.3%	10.5%	6.2%
Didn't file	42.3%	42.3%	42.6%	40.8%	49.2%
No need to file	47.9%	46.4%	52.1%	48.6%	44.6%
Base: All respondents	359	265	94	294	65

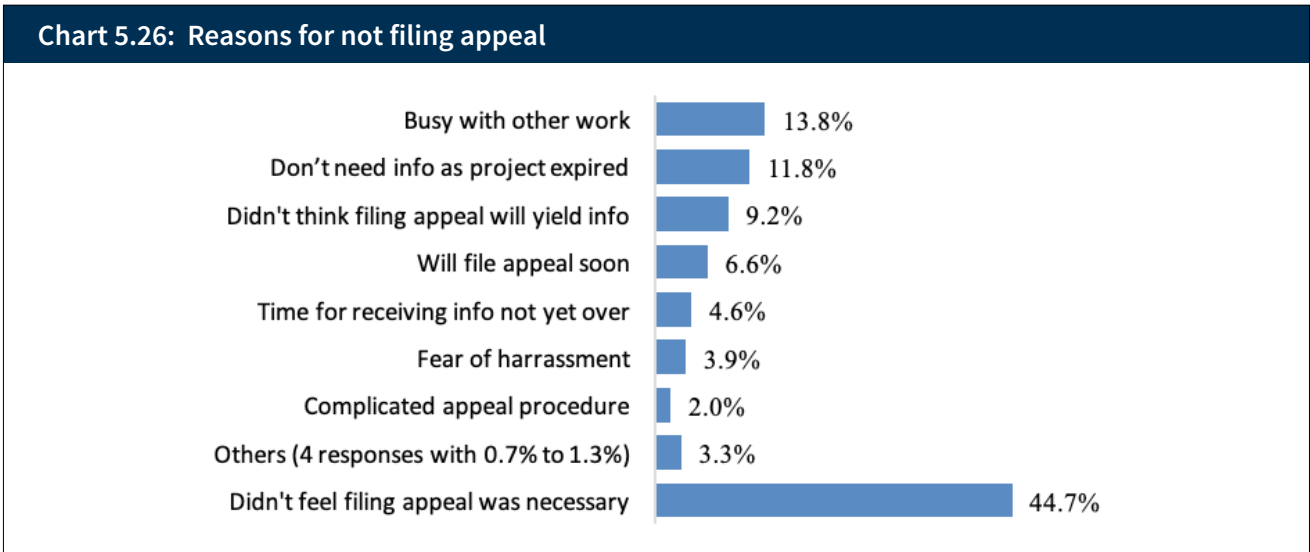
Of those who filed for appeals, two-fifths received complete or partial information. The largest portion (45.7%) did not receive any information.

Chart 5.25: Consequence of filing appeal



Base: Those who filed an appeal (n=35)

Close to half of those who did not file appeal, did not do so because they thought it was unnecessary. Other common reasons cited for not filing appeal were being busy with other work, not needing the information anymore due to expiry of project, and not thinking that filing an appeal will yield required information.



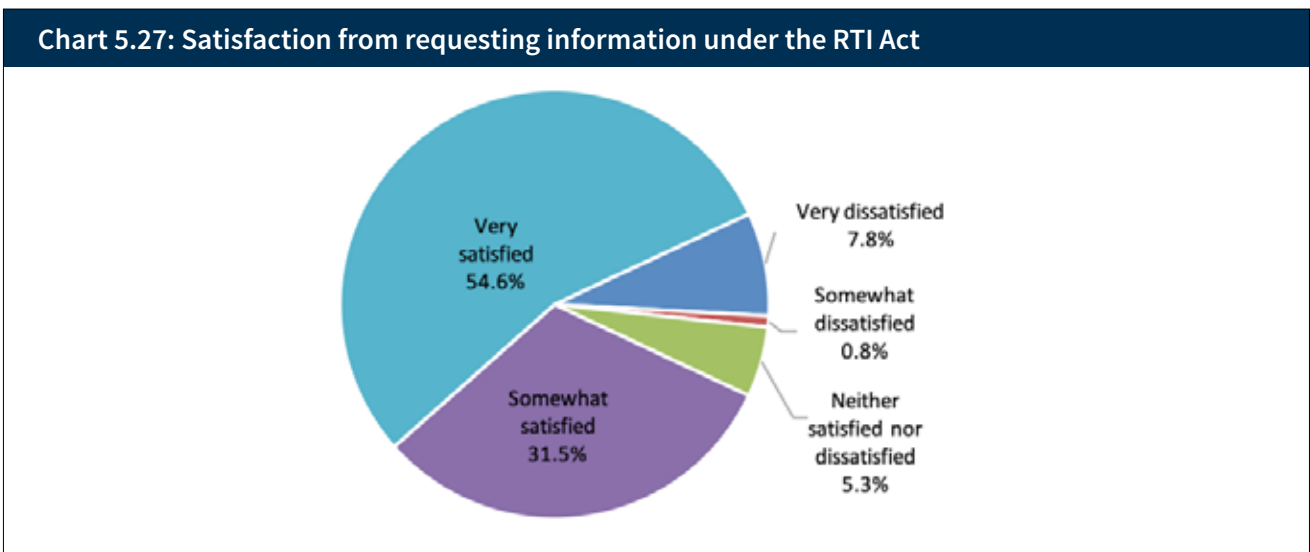
Base: Those who did not file an appeal (n=152)

V.f Requesters' level of satisfaction and suggestions for improvement

This section ascertains requesters' satisfaction from requesting information under RTI Act, and their suggestions for improving RTI Act or rules or procedures.

Satisfaction from requesting information under the RTI Act:

An overwhelming majority (86.1%) of the requesters were either very or somewhat satisfied with the information requesting process of the RTI Act. Only 8.6% were somewhat or very dissatisfied.

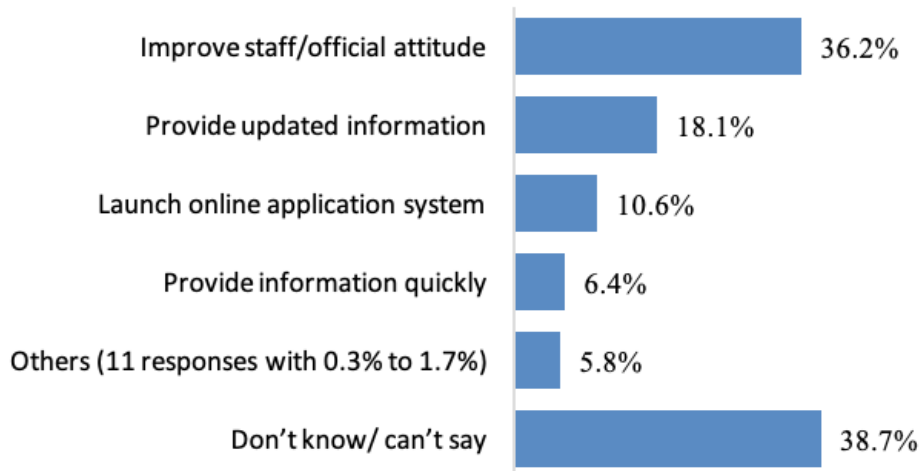


Base: All respondents (n=359)

Suggestions for improvement: Improvements to RTI Act/rules/procedures are largely associated with improvement of attitude of staff and officials.

Of all requesters interviewed, 36.2% stated that officers and staff should improve their attitude in terms of cooperation to requesters. Other suggestions for improvement include providing updated information, introducing online application system, and taking less time to provide information. Around two-fifths of requesters could not suggest any improvement.

Chart 5.28: Suggestions for improving RTI Act/rules/procedures (multiple responses)



Base: All respondents (n=359)

PART VI - COMPLAINANTS' SURVEY

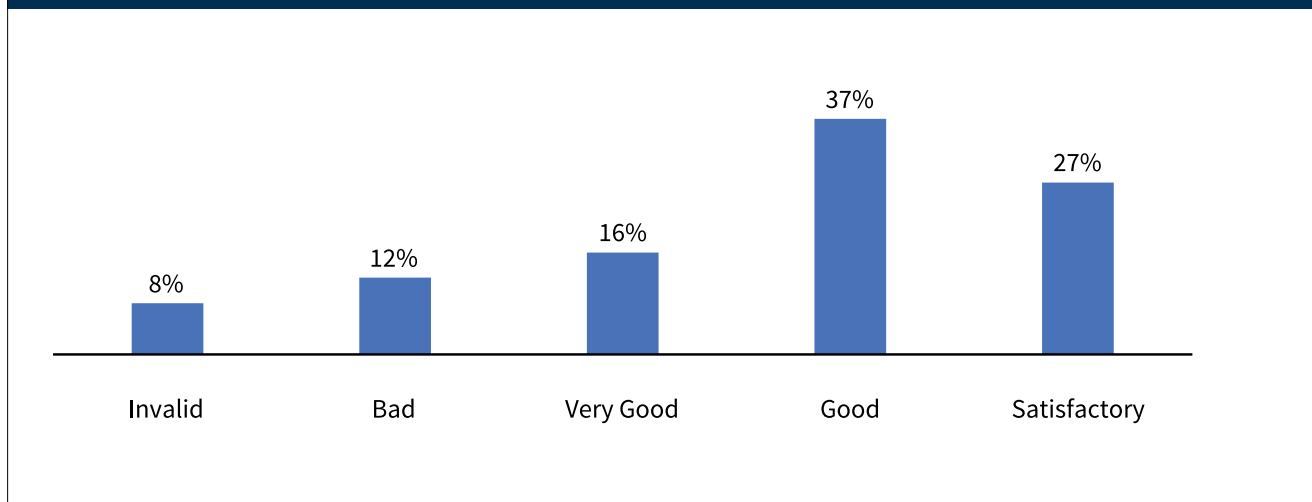
In total, 2987 complaints were made to the Information Commission between September 4, 2010 and December 31, 2018. Out of those, the survey picked 379 complaints (13% of total complaints) on scientifically random basis (by year and administrative division) for analyzing the complaints.

Ratio of acceptance and rejection of complaints: The IC accepted 55.41% and rejected 37.73% of complaints. Some 6.86% are pending there.

Table 6.1: Complaint Status (379 assessed complaints)

Row Labels	Complaints	
	Number	Percentage
Accepted	210	55.41
Pending	26	6.86
Rejected	143	37.73
Total	379	100

Chart 6.1 Complainants' experience of the appeal process



Base: All respondents (n=359)

After analyzing the causes of rejection, it was found that 40.56% were rejected for requesting non-designated DOs and/or appellate authority for the information. About 24.48% of complaints were rejected for not following due process that is they complained to the IC without applying to the appellant authority first. The rest were rejected for other reasons (Table 5.2).

Row Labels	Cause of rejection	
	Number	Percentage
Appealed/registered complaint before the allocated time	2	1.40
Because of 3 (Ka)	1	0.70
Didn't add proofs of application and/or appeal	9	6.29
Didn't apply and/or appeal	35	24.48
Information served before registering complaint are deemed as sufficient	1	0.70
Information was not to be disclosed under RTI act 2009 section 7	5	3.50
Not an issue of RTI	12	8.39
Requested to wrong DO and/or appellate authority	58	40.56
Same case was decided before	4	2.80
Used wrong form for application/appeal	12	8.39
One can't appeal/register complaint on behalf of others.	1	0.70
Appealed/registered complaint before the allocated time period	2	1.40
Because of section 2 (Kha)	1	0.70
Total	143	100

Scopes for overlooking minor reasons for rejection: It appears that there is a lack of familiarity with the complaints process and procedures of the RTI Act.

It is important to create greater understanding of the system to enhance capacity of both the demand and the supply sides.

In fact, 29 requests were called for rectifying the procedure before selecting cases for hearing. It shows that IC is also aware of the procedural barriers and has been pro-active.

PART VII - FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The objective of the review of the implementation of the RTI Act 2009 is to facilitate understanding of its effectiveness; to identify gaps if any; to describe its implementation process; capacity of the appellants, appellant-authorities and DOs; and to illustrate the process through which the RTI operates. It is a review of the process which will hopefully expand and sharpen its implementation.

The 24 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) provided similar responses within a wider range except for the marginalized groups (Cluster 7) and for the government officials who were operators of the RTI Act.

In general, a summarization shows some basic ideas, objectives and involvements. In case of major variations, they are noted. The significance of the group responses is the same, but they vary according to the access and capacity they have in society.

The FGD participants comprised of as many types of potential users as possible. They have been clustered into following categories:

- a) RTI activists, promoters or facilitators;
- b) Youth groups;
- c) Media;
- d) NGOs and CSOs
- e) Social groups;
- f) Academics;
- g) Professionals;
- h) Marginalized community; and
- i) Government officials.

FGDs were held in different parts of Bangladesh on RTI knowledge, attitude and experience if applied. Recommendations were also added.

Each cluster was put under a common head and significant findings were mentioned. Where possible, comparisons were made within each cluster. Finally, a summary of common findings and trends were mentioned.

Directly involved as an activist

This first cluster dealt with those directly involved as RTI activists and facilitators including NGOs and cultural workers.

VII.a RTI activists, promoters or facilitators

RTI Activists said in their FGD, perception of information can be expressed as ‘Information empowers people and the community. Information can raise people’s voice against any exploitation.’

On the other hand, he participants expressed that due to poor social marketing of the RTI Act; it remained much less utilized thus reducing the number of achievements. Most people think that RTI was for use by journalists.

There was a problem, both with information seekers and providers, as none were aware of its appropriate functioning. A general culture of fear also acted as a barrier to better implementation. Some felt, NGOs were not very different from the GoB officials regarding transparency.

However, the situation has improved since 2009, the base year, when the RTI Act came into effect. ‘NGOs are working for popularizing this law, but integrated approach needs to be adopted.’

Positive examples cited were that (a) The Citizen Charter is now available in urban areas. (b) A rate chart has been installed in the ferry *ghat* (platform); the result of information provided by the RTI Act implementation.

It recommends greater marketing of the Act, more advocacy and formation of support committees and groups.

VII.a Youth Groups

A broad cluster of youths has been drawn together from different segments including indigenous youths, debaters, young professionals etc. The common factor is their representation as a stakeholder in the future of the RTI Act.

The youth group (FGD 21) mentions three major reasons for the need for information among others. They are; (a) forecast regarding anything to help take precautionary measures. (b) Information can prevent deprivations and ensure rights. (c) Corruption can be minimized through free flow of information.

The youth group said on the RTI Act that the number of DOs should be increased. The need for greater familiarity with RTI was stressed.

‘One person applied but he did not get the information. He applied and appealed but did not get response’. He has now complained to the IC but is yet to get a response.

The group recommended that teachers should be more informed about the RTI Act to inform students about its use. Measures must be taken to stop misuse of information.

The Debaters group response was general in nature which shows that society holds the view that information is a facilitator of good governance and rights.

The perception is that official information that come through the media is less reliable. Hence, there is a need for the RTI Act.

The common social objective of corruption reduction is reiterated. However, the group came across as one less familiar with RTI functioning which indicates that it is still not socially very familiar legal/service product.

Young Professionals group in their FGD mentioned a link between information and livelihood which is significant. It shows the potential for the RTI Act’s social relevance.

Specifically, the group saw the usefulness of RTI as a method of ensuring governance transparency. Their focus was on greater awareness raising programs through media channels. Educational institutions should also be brought within this network.

Plainland Indigenous Youth FGDs were held at the union level. It was stated that they had heard about the RTI Act from various NGOs and similar groups and also local government agencies.

Basically, the conclusion is that it is a good law which is underutilized due to lack of knowledge, facilitation and confidence in the system.

They had obtained information about forestry – but not tube wells – by using the RTI Act - but felt more could be learnt which was held back due to lack of awareness.

The groups suggested large scale multimedia campaigns. ‘Indigenous people have their own culture. So, songs, dramas, movies or posters must be made according to their languages or culture to get a clear idea regarding the RTI Act. Every government as well as NGO office must have a designated officer.’

Youth FGD participants of the Chattogram Hill Tracts emphasized the need of information for their livelihoods, and finding a sense of direction in life.

There are different sources of information ranging from society to the government. RTI appears complicated to many and workshops are needed for its orientation.

The marginal area Youth group which is located away from Dhaka felt that distance and monetary considerations contributed to low utilization of the RTI Act.

The youth groups had low knowledge but were learning about it. There was curiosity and some idea but not enough to interact on the topic.

Strong advocacy of the RTI Act benefits and application process are needed. ‘Publicity regarding this law is very poor.

It is also not utilized due to fear. Mass people think that this law is for the Journalists. Recommendations include that the IC should be more active to encourage people to use the RTI Act. Both mass and grass roots advocacy should be utilized.

Decentralization of the IC is necessary for the proper implementation of the RTI Act.

The group participants said that the positive aspect of the law is, it can ensure transparency and accountability, reduce corruption and ensure good governance.

VII.c Media

Media is perceived in the public domain as directly linked to the RTI Act.

Two groups were involved in the FGD process.

A significant observation regarding the supply side is that the high officials of the government have no idea regarding this law.

Local Journalist Working in National Media said that media doesn’t benefit much from RTI Act. ‘Government has made this law for the benefit of the people but this is a time-consuming process. It will take much time to produce news through using this law. However, this law proves that corruption exists in Bangladesh.’

They do not know what to do about this law or how to do it. That’s why the journalists do not get much help from this law. Those officials concerned must be trained about this law.’

Media persons in this FGD felt that GoB officials are not keen and often because they do not know much about the law. ‘To make this law more transparent, government officials’ sincerity is of importance here. When someone asks for

information through a proper process then it is the authority's responsibility to provide information. If someone lacks sincerity, there will be delay.

'Both demand side and supply side party do not know which information can be asked for and which can be given.' The group said that only by generating demand for information supply side can be improved.

Local level journalists working in national media houses mentioned that three journalists used the law to gather information. Out of a total of 14 pieces of information sought, 2 pieces of information have been collected.

The main causes why the Act is barely used were, a) journalists are not interested in investigative reporting, b) threat and fear of filing false cases, c) lack of practice of this law, d) the Act conflicts with the Digital Security Act, e) office/ media house does not provide expenses for using this law, f) lack of knowledge about the Act, g) the process is too time consuming.

This FGD made it clear that problems exist on both demand and supply sides. Journalists are not interested and many are concerned about the consequences of applying for information that may hurt the powerful.

VII.d CSOs and NGOs

The FGDs with the NGOs and CSOs did not add much, which is very general. It follows the basic idea about RTI expanding the information world.

'It can ensure transparency and accountability, helps make decisions and increases knowledge.' Participants stated that some farmers have benefitted using agriculture related apps which is positive.

On specific response to RTI, participants focused on it as a right and there is some understanding of the process too. 'There is a clear method of applying for information, if anyone is denied, he/she can go to appellate authority and finally to IC and there is a provision of giving punishment to the violators.'

RTI is discussed 'at the DC's meeting, everyone has to submit report of RTI.' On application, it was stated that 2 people applied.

The applicant has yet to get the information from the IC after submitting complaint. The other one was on managing waste products from the Election Commission (EC) during election campaigns.

The concern for security is there as it might mean conflict with the authorities.

Cultural activists

This group felt that information was needed for learning how the state was run by the government and to ensure transparency.

However, their knowledge of the RTI Act was somewhat limited. 'Citizens of the state have the right to know about the functionalities of the government. And government is mandated to give information to the information seekers.'

They were not familiar with the process and unaware of the functions of Information Commission.

Summing up the last 10 years of RTI, the feeling was that its use is increasing but not extensively. 'People tend to apply social knowledge in daily life rather than a new law or policy.'

Response from beneficiaries of the RTI Act

They responded to queries on the effectiveness of the RTI Act and the benefits gained which included increase of medicine supply and increase of social welfare budget.

Done at the Union level, they felt that initiatives were needed to make it effective but the current local government chief of the area was not interested.

VII.e Social groups

Three social groups were selected, (a) mothers who are literate (b) senior citizens and (c) guardians.

Though not strictly homogenous as a category they represent three segments that have a strong stake in society that is transparent and rights driven.

The mothers' group held a general view about information and said that the most useful aspect was its capacity to inform about governance-related issues.

They recommended a mass media campaign and awareness programs of different types to familiarize people with the RTI Act.

The RTI Act will help to reduce corruption and through this Act we will be able to know about the state of corruption in different sectors of the country.

The group said that the Act can help them learn about the activities of the government and the NGOs.

Senior Citizens Group FGD participants mentioned that they saw the RTI Act as being able to provide certain information but was limited by state security and secrecy laws.

However, information was available on violation of human rights. While the role of RTI in reducing corruption was recognized, the limits of it were accepted given the all-pervasive nature of corruption.

The Government will show what kind of proactive disclosure which will not harm the government.

The group also agreed with the descending approach of authority in the RTI Act. However, the general sense is one of guarded optimism. 'We need to sensitize all officers from the lower level to upper level. We believe this law can bring changes in society.'

The Guardians group perceived information as a right to seek answers from the state. 'Right to Information is as close as fundamental rights'.

They felt it can improve the condition of illiterate women in rural areas; reduce waste of time; reduce harassment by service providers and reduce corruption. However, only 3 in the group knew about the RTI Act making its application and useful assessment vague. One person did seek information from AC land using the Act and got on-time positive response.

Social media interestingly was considered an increasingly potent force in battling corruption by this group.

VII.f Academics

Teachers and intellectuals offer their opinion and wisdom. In view of that, the FGD should be seen as reflection of thinkers not practitioners. Main points are noted below.

‘Mainstream media is more credible as it has some checks and balances. However social media is less so: lying between truths and lies.’

‘Information is derived from the official power structure and it has its own agenda. So, official information is also biased. Lot depends on the perception of those who receive information.’

The academic group’s participants had the following observations of the RTI Act:

- Participants had a clear idea about what the RTI Act was. It is taught in several university classes.
- This law will not be very effective as our state, civil society and media are still not advanced enough.
- News is a product and time worthiness is its main phenomenon; so, information sought for news purpose would often be invalid due to limitation of the RTI Act relating to time pressure/breaking news.
- As per the RTI Act, in some cases we can’t differentiate public and private information. They should be clearly distinguished.
- This is not an efficient law and it is rather a bit obscure. The big problem that only the state has the right to give explanation when confusion arises is a problem. Proactive disclosure is a good thing. It is happening more now than before.
- It is a law for higher and middle-class people, not for lower classes. In our country, land related disputes are more prevalent. Rural people are mostly victimized in such types of disputes. Information is mostly needed for them.
- There should be mechanism to make the people aware about the RTI Act. There is no branch of IC addressing people’s reluctance to lodge complaints to the commission.
- One person who tried to apply for information relating to the armed forces did not get the information. He appealed but was denied.
- College teachers group said that free flow of information would prevent rights deprivation, and can reduce corruption.
- On the RTI Act, they said that it wasn’t taught in the school or college curriculum. One person applied under the Act did not get the information from the first place. He appealed but did not get a response; finally, last month he complained to the IC, but is yet to receive any response.
- The recommendations are for orienting teachers with the RTI Act so that they can transfer their knowledge to the students. Measures must be taken to stop misuse of information.

The group recommended that the RTI Act has to be made popular at the grassroots, and a hotline number dedicated to providing information must be set up.

VII.g Professionals

Lawyers, doctors, journalists, government officials, teachers, NGO/CSO representatives, etc., or other professionals were represented in an FGD.

Land issues/disputes can be easily resolved if the parties get appropriate information. Mainstream media was considered having higher credibility as they have policies and accountability. While social media often acts more quickly, they lack policy and control which reduces reliability.

On RTI, they said it is a constitutional right and it is a law that people can apply against authority. It is a very powerful tool, but fails to reach general people's doorsteps.

Experience of obtaining information is mixed. The recommendation is to mobilize political will without which this law won't be effective. They also counseled patience as such a law takes time to be implemented.

According to them Information leads to maximization of services and victims of violence can act in defense or seek legal aid if needed.

VII.h Marginalized community

Three vulnerable groups also participated in FGDs who could be described as from the fringes. They are, a) social safety-net beneficiaries, b) tea garden laborers, and c) micro credit clients.

Social safety-net beneficiaries had little knowledge of RTI. One person had however heard of it. Their main source of information was the Union Parishad Office.

Tea garden laborers were similarly marginalized. The word 'information' had no meaning to them. Their main source of information is the Union Parishad Office. They thought information was good for life and livelihood. No one can deceive them if they are informed. Their lives are confined to the tea gardens and they have never heard of RTI Act.

Opinion of Micro Credit Beneficiaries Group

Micro credit clients were better off and said that they heard about it in a meeting. 'The RTI Act is a law which helps to seek information through government offices as well as from NGOs.' Beyond this they had little knowledge about it.

VII.i Government officials

Participants were DOs from government offices. They said that proactive disclosure meant providing information voluntarily. The government officials said that information is given as per criteria. It was provided by the DC's office which also preserved information chronologically. 'Section 7 should be explained to all. We work on the basis of Section 7. We did not understand much about the law. It used to be difficult before but hearings are not scary anymore.'

The DOs clearly felt they needed to review Section 7 and exemptions should be reduced, so that mass people would get more information through this law.

3 Conclusions

This study demonstrates that during the last decade, Bangladesh has progressed well in making the supply side prepared for implementing the RTI Act. The stakeholders of Bangladesh have high expectations from the RTI Act 2009. It is now high time that the general public are made aware of the Act, and are encouraged to use it as and when necessary.

As demonstrated by various international studies, an RTI Act is unlikely to bring about sustainable changes if it is not effectively implemented in tandem with other measures, such as guaranteed freedom of press, effective checks and balance mechanisms, and coherent policy responses to problems detected in public service delivery.

3.1 Recommendations and takeaways

During the last decade, Bangladesh has progressed significantly in making the supply side prepared in implementing the RTI Act. Except on public awareness, Information Commission's overall operational approaches have been found effective for, a) DOs, b) requesters, c) appellants, and d) complainants. It is now high time to increase public awareness and encourage them to use the Act so that the benefits reach the citizens. Requesters' lack of understanding of the RTI Act was the difficulty faced by the DOs in responding to applications, followed by poor coordination among different government offices. The following actor-specific recommendations are placed before the policymakers to decide on the next course of actions for effective implementation of the RTI Act 2009.

Government of Bangladesh

As the custodian of the RTI Act 2009, the government has the most important role to play for an impactful implementation of the Act.

- Review the current targets set in the Strategic Plan, 2015-2021.
- Draw up necessary plans to activate demand side actions to generate awareness among the citizens.
- It is evident that there are opportunities for the DOs to carry forward social mobilization and citizens' sensitization within their respective localities to motivate people to use the law for improving service delivery.

Information Commission

The results of the survey have established the Information Commission as a champion for the implementation of the Act. Except on low level public awareness, the IC's overall operational approaches have been found very effective for DOs, requesters, complainants, and appellants.

As the principle implementer of the RTI Act, the Information Commission has a greater scope to play in realizing the full potential of RTI Act.

- Implementing a comprehensive communication strategy which has been lying with Information Commission since 2016, is necessary to increase public awareness about the law including complaints and appeal processes. This communication strategy including social media strategy aim to influence public behavior as well as reach out to the marginalized and hard-to-reach communities.
- The assessment on complaints and hearings shows Information Commission should develop a comprehensive guideline for speedy disposal of cases. The delay in providing a decision also did not help the appellants as they couldn't use the information in time.
- To increase awareness among women, the IC may consider partnering with women-headed organizations to bring positive changes in the livelihoods through the use of RTI.

Civil Society Organizations and NGOs

As important stakeholders of the implementation of the Act, the NGOs and CSOs should accelerate their social mobilization campaigns to generate more interests among the public.

- NGOs should mainstream the RTI issues in all their programmatic interventions.
- Although the level of public awareness about RTI was found to be low compared to that found in the 2012 survey, the survey of 2019 also indicates that raising public awareness is not the sole responsibility of Information Commission as other stakeholders like the CSOs and NGOs (and media) have similar roles to play.

Media

As a critical public opinion mobilizer, the media sector of the country should have their own strategy to promote RTI issues in the country.

- Instead of running limited sponsored programs on televisions and radios, or giving scanty space on newspapers, the media should appoint a RTI focal point in their own media houses with specific responsibilities for carrying out public service duties on a regular basis.
- There is a lack of familiarity with the complaints process and procedures of the RTI Act. The media (and CSOs/NGOs) may work closely with the Information Commission to make the citizens familiar with the complaints processes of the Information Commission.

Annexures

Annexure 1: Survey Methodology

1. SURVEY APPROACH:

It was a comprehensive survey consisting broadly of two parts: (i) the quantitative survey and (ii) a qualitative study/analysis. This section delineates approaches and methodology for both quantitative and qualitative surveys separately. Qualitative survey includes scenario of requests, appeal and responses, complaint to IC, hearing and decisions of the IC, case studies, essays, and status reports. Quantitative surveys include (1) Citizens' Survey, (2) Designated Officers' (DOs) Survey, (3) Heads of Office (HO) Survey, (4) Requesters' Survey, and (5) Complainants' Survey to the IC. The questions used in the earlier survey questionnaire were retained so that the earlier survey can work as the baseline. However, there were additions to the existing questionnaire to meet the additional objectives of this survey, such as understanding the legal implications of the act, the appellate procedure, the role of the IC, etc.

In contrast to the earlier survey, the new survey undertook a more focused approach on an analysis and assessment of the actual cases that have been dealt with by the IC to resolve disputes between information-seekers and information-providers, on the legal side of RTI, and on the appellate procedure.

The survey consists of the following elements/ activities:

1. A survey among citizens to understand their perceptions of the Bangladesh RTI Act 2009, including their levels of awareness, their view of the role of the IC, their satisfaction with the quality of proactive disclosure on government websites, for example, and the utility of RTI as an instrument to address their problems.
2. A survey among Designated Officers (DOs) to identify issues relating to their administration of the RTI Act 2009 (e.g., their knowledge of the law, ability to process requests efficiently, attitude towards RTI, and key constraints that affect their functioning).
3. A survey among requesters under the Bangladesh RTI Act 2009 to understand their experience of the process of making requests for information.

4. Assessment of appellate authority to get a scenario of the RTI appeals and their responses through in-depth interviews throughout the country
5. A survey among complainants to the IC, relying on the Commission's database to identify respondents.
6. A survey among HO to understand the progress made in implementing the RTI Act at the local level, especially in districts and upazilas, as well as the operational constraints faced by them in implementing the RTI Act (e.g. poor record-keeping).
7. A qualitative assessment of the working of the IC, particularly its key decisions since the promulgation of the RTI Act in 2009.
8. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with key stakeholders to be identified in discussions with the bank to understand their perceptions of the Bangladesh RTI Act 2009. Such groups may include elements of the media, CSOs, DOs, and so forth.
9. Consultation workshops with experts at key stages of the work, particularly the finalization of questionnaires as well as the draft report.

As an ESOMAR member, we follow its guideline for conducting any opinion and market surveys, including privacy laws. This survey collected sensitive personal information. Therefore, the respondents' identity will not be published or otherwise released in a form that would allow any person's identity to be disclosed or inferred. Professional codes of ethics, such as ESOMAR/ICC were practiced throughout this research project.

1.1 Citizens' Survey

Survey approach method: A quantitative methodology was applied to conduct the survey, using face-to-face in-house interview technique with the help of a structured questionnaire.

Geographical coverage: The sample was nationally representative covering all 64 districts of the country, covering both urban and rural areas.

Target respondents: Males and females from all socio-demographic groups across urban and rural Bangladesh in each of the 64 districts, aged 18 years and above (the same age definition was used in the baseline survey). The male to female ratio was 50:50 as per the national distribution (rounded).

Interview technique: The survey was conducted by employing a face-to-face, house-to-house interview by using Computer Aided Personal Interview (CAPI) method.

Sample size: The sample size was 200 per district, totaling 12,800 (64 x 200) for the whole country.

Urban-rural split: Since urbanization varies by district, the sample for each district was also divided proportionately based on its urban-rural general population distribution. Since the total sample was not distributed among the districts proportionately, during analysis population weight of each district as per population distribution was used to arrive at the aggregate (national) figures.

Sampling technique

The survey was conducted through stratified random sampling technique by using Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) method at primary sampling unit (PSU) level as described step by step below. In a selected PSU 20 respondents were interviewed, equally divided between males and females. Therefore, there were 10 PSUs per district, and 640 in total for the whole country. A PSU was a **Mohalla** in urban and **Village** in rural areas.

Step 1 – Selection of PSU

PSUs in each district were selected randomly through PPS method from the list of PSUs of a whole district, urban (*Mohalla*) and rural (Village) separately.

Step 2 - Selection of households

Households in the selected PSUs were selected by following systematic random sampling technique to maintain objectivity by field investigators, as follows:

- Select pre-determined number of Sampling Points (SP) with the help of the latest electoral roll pertaining to the sample PSU randomly.
- Around each randomly selected SP, contacted 5 households, leaving four intervening households in between (i.e. contact every fifth household from the starting point).
- Followed the Right Hand Rule other than the SP household. This rule states that after reaching the SP, the investigator will have to go to the households falling on the right hand side.

Step 3 - Selection of respondents

- Within each selected household, the names of all 18 years and above persons listed down in descending order of their age.
- If there was only one eligible person in the selected household, he/she was approached for interview. If there were more than one person in a household, one of them was selected randomly by using KISH table⁹ for interview.
- If the target respondent was unavailable at home, one call back was made based on possible time of availability, failing which the next fifth household from the last contacted household were visited to randomly select another respondent.
- No more than **ONE** person was interviewed from one household and in **NO** case a respondent was substituted from the same household, in order to strictly maintain randomness of the survey.

1.2. Designated Officers' (DOs) Survey

Survey approach/method: A quantitative methodology was applied to conduct the survey, using face-to-face interview technique with the help of a structured questionnaire by using CAPI method.

Geographical coverage: The survey covered all 64 districts of the country.

Sample size: The sample size was 768, (12 per district).

Sample selection: In each district, the target respondents were selected by visiting target organizations and looking for the DO in the organization.

1.3. Heads of Office Survey

Survey approach/method: Similar to the survey among DOs, a quantitative methodology was employed to conduct this survey, using face-to-face in-house interview technique with the help of a structured questionnaire by using CAPI method.

⁹ Kish Table: Use of Kish Table (a randomized selection method) helps selecting the right respondents from the right household with multiple eligible respondents. The Kish Table was developed by statistician L. Kish.

Geographical coverage: The survey covered all 64 districts of the country.

Sample size: Since this group corresponds to the offices where DOs are located, the sample size was 768 (12 per district).

Sample selection: Heads of the same offices where selected DOs are located.

1.4. Requesters' Survey

Survey approach/method: A quantitative methodology was employed to conduct the survey, using face-to-face in-house interview technique with the help of a structured questionnaire by using CAPI method.

Geographical coverage: This survey also covered all 64 districts of the country.

Sample size: Achieved sample size was 359 across the country.

Sample selection: List of requesters was collected from the interviewed DOs and covered all the requesters who could be contacted and interviewed.

1.5. Complainants' Survey

If an applicant fails to receive or is not satisfied with the information in application and appeal or in case of unavailability of DOs or if authority denies receiving application, then under the Section 25 (1) citizens can file complaint to the IC for requested information.

Annual report of IC provides among other details, an account of the RTI complaints received by the commission. Website of the commission also contains relevant data and information. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data will create an opportunity to find how the complaints can contribute more to the better use of the RTI Act.

An analytical study has been done through reviewing secondary data. To carry out the study, a detailed plan was developed keeping the RTI complaint scenario in mind which is depicted in the annual report and website of IC. Before commissioning the survey, representatives of IC, CD, WB and MRDI had a meeting to share the plan, methodology, contents and sources of data. Responding to the request, IC agreed to allow access to its data required for the study. Accordingly, the study team used data preserved by IC and went for deeper analysis of the perspectives of the complainant, reasons for rejection, level of cooperation, support provided by IC to the complainant and limitations of complainants. 379 randomly selected complaints were analyzed.

The following areas related to complaints filed to the IC were examined.

- How many complaints have been lodged to IC so far?
- Ratio of acceptance and rejection.
- Why was it rejected? Analysis of the reasons.
- If rejected for a minor reason, could it be overlooked and accepted for hearing? Analysis of the reason.
- Nature of information sought in the rejected complaints.
- How many complainants were called by the IC for rectifying the procedure before selecting cases for hearing? An analysis of the proactive and pro-people attitudes of the IC.

- Analysis of gender, professions, geo location, offices (both GoB and NGOs), issue of information.
- Analysis of complainants whose complaints are not being accepted for hearing.
- Any individual complainant getting frequently rejected? Why? Nature of information. Analysis of the reasons of rejection.

2. QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF HEARING AND DECISIONS

In compliance with the sub-section 8 of section 25 of the RTI Act 2009 and Right to Information (complain and disposal) Regulation, 2011 section 8, the IC sits for hearing of complaints within the purview of the timeframe of the Act. After receiving the complaints, the Commission sits to select the cases for hearing. The hearing takes place in presence of the Commission, the complainant and the concerned DO and decision is announced.

The qualitative assessment made an in-depth analysis of the hearings and decisions from the perspectives of the complainant, cooperation of the commissioners and IC staff, environment of the hearing and whether these decisions help people's access to information and how through secondary research.

Secondary data for the assessment were collected from the publication on the decisions, annual report and the IC website. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data will facilitate finding options on how these can contribute more to the better use of RTI Act. A total of 1284 hearing decisions were analyzed.

The following areas related to the assessment were examined:

- How many days did it take to give the verdict – 45 days, 75 days or more?
- How many hearings are required for decision per case on average?
- Did the complainant get information after the favorable verdict?
- How many cases required inquiry?
- How many inquiry committees have been formed?
- In how many cases was the third party summoned?
- How did s/he use the information?
- How many writ petitions were filed against the commission's decision? Analysis of the writ petitions.
- In how many cases did the complainant request for a review of decision
- How many DOs have so far been penalized for not complying with the Act? Analysis of such complaints
- How many of them have faced departmental actions?
- What are the results of penalty/action?
- Why did IC's decision go against the complainant? Analysis of reasons
- What is the reaction of the complainant for not getting information even from the highest authority?
- How do the complainants feel about the environment of the hearing and attitude of the Commissioners and staff of IC?
- How many times did the IC on its own accord conduct enquiry?
- How many cases were settled arbitrarily in absence of one party? Analysis of such cases
- Analysis of the time-gap between the verdict date and the date when the decision was sent from IC to the party.

3. ASSESSMENT OF APPELLANT AND APPELLATE AUTHORITY

50 appellants were identified from different offices around the country for in-depth interview (One appellant from district cannot recall any information related to his appeal). Also, 50 officials functioning as appellate authority, selected from ministries and districts were interviewed. A set of semi-structured questionnaire was developed in consultation with IC, CD and WB to conduct the interview.

4. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

FGD sessions involving homogeneous group of stakeholders were conducted in eight divisions. A total of 24 sessions, 3 in each division, were organized. 7 to 12 participants took part in each session. The participant groups include media, CSOs, DOs, professionals, RTI activist, women, youth, parents, debaters, teachers, community leaders, micro-credit beneficiaries, social safety net beneficiaries, tea laborers and others to be identified by the team in consultation with the Bank. FGD sessions were conducted simultaneously with other interventions of the survey.

Only those respondents who fulfill all eligibility criteria were selected to participate in the group discussion. No respondent who has ever attended a group discussion was selected. All selected respondents were scrutinized by the supervisors and matched with their profile before entering the FGD room.

All group discussions were audio-recorded. This not only ensured a complete recording of the discussion, but also allowed the group moderator to concentrate on both the spoken and unspoken reactions of the participants, and to cover adequately all aspects of the subject within the given time limit. It was explained to participants that all recordings of the proceedings are used for analytical purposes only. The recording was transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were checked for accuracy by an executive.

Each record is content-analyzed. The report incorporated all the findings, analyses and interpretations.

Questionnaires and FGD Guide:

Separate questionnaires and FGD guides for the seven different surveys were prepared and used in the field for data collection after pretesting and approval of the WB team.

Fieldwork/survey period: The field survey was carried out between January and March 2019

Annexure 2: Awareness of the RTI Act 2009 among Citizens by District

Serial #	Name of District	RTI Awareness
1	Munshiganj	16.7%
2	Tangail	14.6%
3	Faridpur	14.5%
4	Narayanganj	13.6%
5	Rajshahi	13.6%
6	Madaripur	13.4%
7	Dhaka	13.2%
8	Rangamati	11.9%
9	Joypurhat	11.8%
10	Gopalganj	11.7%
11	Netrakona	11.7%
12	Khulna	10.8%
13	Patuakhali	10.6%
14	Mymensingh	10.4%
15	Jhalakathi	10.2%
16	Jamalpur	10.2%
17	Kishoreganj	10.0%
18	Shariatpur	10.0%
19	Gazipur	10.0%
20	Naogaon	9.7%
21	Bagerhat	9.6%
22	Rangpur	9.6%
23	Rajbari	9.5%
24	Narsingdi	9.3%
25	Chuadanga	8.7%
26	Manikganj	8.6%
27	Gaibandha	8.3%
28	Brahmanbaria	8.1%
29	Barguna	7.9%
30	Lakshmipur	7.6%
31	Lalmonirhat	7.6%
32	Magura	7.6%

Serial #	Name of District	RTI Awareness
33	Sylhet	7.5%
34	Cox's Bazar	7.3%
35	Sherpur	7.2%
36	Chandpur	7.0%
37	Natore	6.9%
38	Moulvibazar	6.7%
39	Feni	6.6%
40	Pirojpur	6.2%
41	Satkhira	5.9%
42	Nilphamari	5.5%
43	Cumilla	5.5%
44	Jhenaidah	5.5%
45	Khagrachhari	5.3%
46	Narail	5.3%
47	Pabna	5.3%
48	Bogura	5.0%
49	Sirajganj	4.9%
50	Barishal	4.7%
51	Bhola	4.4%
52	Jashore	4.1%
53	Chattogram	4.1%
54	Chapainawabganj	4.1%
55	Noakhali	3.7%
56	Sunamganj	3.1%
57	Dinajpur	2.8%
58	Kurigram	2.6%
59	Panchagarh	2.4%
60	Thakurgaon	2.4%
61	Bandarban	2.2%
62	Habiganj	2.1%
63	Kushtia	2.1%
64	Meherpur	0.9%

Annexure 3: Respondents' Profile of Citizen by Type

	All Respondents	Aware of RTI Act	Unaware of RTI Act	Requester of information
Gender				
Male	50.0%	68.5%	48.5%	65.7%
Female	50.0%	31.5%	51.5%	34.3%
Age				
18 - 25 years	21.7%	31.9%	20.9%	18.0%
26 - 35 years	29.4%	23.6%	29.8%	9.9%
36 - 45 years	19.8%	20.7%	19.7%	37.6%
46 - 55 years	14.2%	13.5%	14.2%	9.9%
56 - 65 years	10.0%	6.5%	10.2%	14.7%
65 years+	5.0%	3.8%	5.1%	9.9%
Educational Qualification				
Illiterate/ no formal education	28.5%	6.2%	30.4%	14.7%
Up to class V	25.8%	9.7%	27.2%	3.3%
Class VI - X	19.1%	13.3%	19.6%	6.6%
SSC/HSC	20.8%	45.7%	18.7%	57.4%
Graduate and above	5.7%	25.1%	4.1%	18.0%
Occupation of the Respondents				
Housewife	43.8%	22.5%	45.6%	32.0%
Farmer	16.6%	9.9%	17.1%	20.5%
Skilled Labor	6.5%	4.8%	6.7%	0.0%
Small Businessman	6.3%	7.7%	6.2%	6.8%
Unskilled Labor	5.4%	2.8%	5.6%	0.0%
Student	5.2%	18.0%	4.1%	10.2%

	All Respondents	Aware of RTI Act	Unaware of RTI Act	Requester of information
Unemployed	4.1%	8.1%	3.8%	8.4%
Retired	3.7%	5.0%	3.6%	3.4%
Shop Owner	1.7%	2.3%	1.7%	3.4%
School Teacher/Imam/Muazjjiin	1.3%	4.9%	1.0%	3.4%
Self Employed	1.2%	0.9%	1.3%	0.0%
Clerk/Salesman	0.8%	2.3%	0.6%	0.0%
Employed in Supervisory Position	0.6%	1.2%	0.6%	0.0%
Businessman/Industrialist with 1-9 employees	0.5%	1.5%	0.5%	0.0%
Businessman/Industrialist with no employee	0.5%	1.0%	0.5%	0.0%
Government Officer	0.4%	2.4%	0.2%	6.8%
Police/Ansar/Traffic/Army/Security Service	0.4%	0.9%	0.3%	0.0%
Village Doctor/Veterinary/ Homeopathy Doctor	0.3%	1.1%	0.2%	0.0%
Junior Officer/Executive	0.2%	0.6%	0.2%	0.0%
Peon/Postman	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%
Senior/Mid-level Officer/Executive	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%
College/University Teacher	0.1%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Businessman/Industrialist with 10 or more employees	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%
Others	0.1%	0.4%	0.0%	5.0%
Place of Residence				
Urban	24.9%	36.5%	23.9%	24.1%
Rural	75.1%	63.5%	76.1%	75.9%

Annexure 4: Sampling Procedure and Sample Size Determination of Appellate Authority and Appellant

Appellate Authority Selection

In the study, it will be impossible to study all the categories in the selected area. Stratified random purposive sampling technique would be used to select the respondents. Population will stratify in 10 strata and the required number of samples from each stratum will be selected. The whole data will be collected based on the study objectives and the total sample size was 50 respondents.

SL	Name of categories	Calculation	Respondents number
1.	NGO	10 District x 1 NGO	10
2.	DC	5 District from 5 separate division x 1 DC office	5
3.	Other GOV offices at district level	11 GoB offices from 2 different categories from 6 districts under 3 separate divisions	11
4.	Divisional Commissioner's Office	1 Division x 1 Commissioner's Office	1
5.	Other Divisional offices	2 Division * 2 GoB office	4
6.	Local Government Offices	6 District from 6 separate division * 1 different categories Local Government Offices (UP-2, Upazila-1, ZP-1, Purashava-1, City Cor-1)	6
7.	Regional office (agriculture & others)	2 Region * 1 Regional office	2
8.	Ministries	3 Ministries * 1 different categories	3
9.	Directorates' offices	4 Directorates' offices * 1 different category	4
10.	Autonomous	4 Autonomous institution* 1 different categories	4
	Total		50

Under this circumstance, the offices selected are furnished below.

Type of Office	Office	Appellate Authority	District	Remarks
Ministries	Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs	Secretary	Dhaka	
	ICT Division	Secretary	Dhaka	
	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	Secretary	Dhaka	
Directorate Office	Bangladesh Police	IGP	Dhaka	
	Directorate General of Family Planning	Directorate General	Dhaka	
	Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha	Chairman	Dhaka	
	Local Government Engineering Department (LGED)	Chief Engineer, LGED	Dhaka	
Autonomous	Shahjalal University of Science and Technology	VC	Sylhet	
	University Grants commission	Chairman	Dhaka	
	Bangladesh Oil, Gas & Mineral Corporation (PETROBANGLA)	Chairman	Dhaka	
	Biman Bangladesh Airlines	CEO	Dhaka	
Divisional Commissioner	Office of Divisional Commissioner	Divisional Commissioner	Rajshahi	
Other Divisional Offices	Directorate of Primary Education,	Deputy Director	Barishal	
	Bangladesh Jail, Mymensingh Division	DIG (Prisons)	Mymensingh	
	Department of Narcotics Control	Deputy Director	Barishal	
	Divisional Livestock office	Deputy Director	Mymensingh	
Regional Office	Food Office	Regional Controller of Food Office	Dhaka	
	Regional Passport Office, Comilla	Deputy Director	Cumilla	
DC Office	Office of District Commissioner	Deputy Commissioner	Jashore	
	Office of District Commissioner	Deputy Commissioner	Cox'sbazar	
	Office of District Commissioner	Deputy Commissioner	Munshiganj	
	Office of District Commissioner	Deputy Commissioner	Bogura	
	Office of District Commissioner	Deputy Commissioner	Gaibandha	

Type of Office	Office	Appellate Authority	District	Remarks
Other District level office	District Education Office	District Education Officer	Meherpur	
	District office of Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments	Deputy inspector of general	Chattogram	
	District Primary Education Office	District Education Officer	Bogura	
	District Primary Education Office	District Education Officer	Chattogram	
	Bangladesh Power Development Board	Executive Engineer	Sirajganj	
	District Judge Court	District Judge	Sirajganj	
	District Registrar	Office of The District Registrar	Jashore	
	Office of Police Super	Police Super	Narayanganj	
	District Social Services Office, LGED	Deputy Director	Jashore	
		Executive Engineer	Narayanganj	
		District Commandant	Meherpur	
Local Government	Panchbibi Upazila Parishad	Chairman	Joypurhat	
	BarishalZila Parishad	Chairman	Barishal	
	NetrokonaPourashava	Mayor	Netrokona	
	Sylhet City Corporation	Mayor	Sylhet	
	Shinghajhuli, Chougacha	Chairman	Jashore	
	Nilkamal Union Parishad, Charfasion	Chairman	Bhola	
NGO	Ain O Shalish Kendra	Executive Director	Dhaka	
	Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO)	Executive Director	Thakurgaon	
	ARBAN	Executive Director	Netrokona	
	NGO Forum Regional Office & Training Centre	Regional Manager	Rangpur	
	Paraspor	Executive Director	Panchagarh	
	Maisha	Executive Director	Chattogram	
	Society Development Agency	Executive Director	Patuakhali	
	Programme for Women Development	Executive Director	Sirajganj	
	ManadUnnayan Kendra	Executive Director	Meherpur	
	ALO	Executive Director	Natore	

Appellant Selection:

Select the districts (division wise) where the submission of RTI Application is higher.

Appellant Sampling:

- a) Appellant who was in IC's hearing: 18 Appellants.
- b) Appellant whose complaint was not accepted by IC: 16 Appellants.
- c) Appellant who did not file any complaint to IC to get the information: 16 Appellants.

Interviews:

Based on year and division, the interviewees are selected scientifically random.

Sample Size Measurement:

Assuming that, we will use 95% confidence interval, the error level is 0.065 based on research condition.

The required sample size is calculated by using the Yamane formula.

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where,

n = Corrected sample size

N = Population size=1423

e = Margin of Error (MoE), e = 0.065 based on the research condition.

The calculation follows:

$$= 1423 / (1 + 1423(0.004225))$$

$$= 1423 / 7.012175$$

$$= 203$$

For 10% extra sample the total will be 223. The roundup sample will be considered as 225.

Annexure 5: Letter from the Information Commission

তথ্য কমিশন

প্রত্নতত্ত্ব ভবন (তৃতীয় তলা)
এফ-৪/এ, আগারগাঁও প্রশাসনিক এলাকা
শেরে বাংলা নগর, ঢাকা-১২০৭
www.infocom.gov.bd

স্মারক নং-১৫.৫১.০০০০.৬০৪.০৫.০০২.১৬- ৩৮৩৩

১২ পৌষ, ১৪২৫ বাং
তারিখঃ -----
২৬ ডিসেম্বর, ২০১৮ খ্রিঃ

বিষয় : Request for granting permission to conduct a country wide RTI survey 2018 and approval of Draft Survey Questionnaires.

সূত্র : ০৬/১১/২০১৮ তারিখে তাঁর কার্যালয়ের পত্র নং MJF/631/2018

উপর্যুক্ত বিষয়ে সূত্রোক্ত পত্রের প্রেক্ষিতে জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, তথ্য অধিকার আইন, ২০০৯ এর উপর নিম্ন বর্ণিত কার্যক্রম গ্রহণপূর্বক "তথ্য অধিকার ২০১৮" শীর্ষক জরিপ কার্য পরিচালনা করা যেতে পারে।

০১। যে সকল ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানকে জরিপের আওতায় আনা হবে সেটির একটি সুনির্দিষ্ট ভিত্তিসহ কার্যকর Methodology প্রণয়নপূর্বক তথ্য কমিশনকে অবহিতকরত জরিপ পরিচালনা করতে হবে;

০২। জরিপ পরিচালনাকারী টিম এর একটি প্রশিক্ষণ/ওরিয়েন্টেশন কর্মসূচিকল্পনা তৈরি করে তথ্য কমিশনকে অবহিত রেখে জরিপ পরিচালনা করা যেতে পারে;

০৩। জরিপে প্রাপ্ত তথ্যাদিসহ প্রণীতব্য খসড়া প্রতিবেদন তথ্য কমিশনের সাথে শেয়ার করতে হবে; এবং

০৪। অধিকন্তু এতদসঙ্গে সংযুক্ত (তাঁর কার্যালয় কর্তৃক প্রেরিত) খসড়া প্রশ্রমালার গারে প্রদত্ত সংশোধনী অনুযায়ী প্রয়োজনীয় সংশোধনপূর্বক জরিপ কার্য পরিচালনা করা যেতে পারে।

সংযুক্তি বর্ণনামতে -----^{১০} পৃষ্ঠা।


(মোঃ মুহিবুল হোসেইন)
সচিব
তথ্য কমিশন
ফোনঃ ০২-৯১১১৫৯০।

নির্বাহী পরিচালক

মানুষের জন্য ফাউন্ডেশন
বাড়ি নং-২২, রোড-৪, ব্লক-এফ
বনানী, ঢাকা-১২১৩।

অনুলিপিঃ সদয় অবগতি ও কার্যার্থে-

- ০১। সৈয়দ খালেদ হাসান, সিনিয়র পাবলিক সেক্টর স্পেশালিস্ট, ওয়ার্ড ব্যাংক, শেরে বাংলা নগর, আগারগাঁও, ঢাকা-১২০৭
- ০২। অফিস কপি।

Annexure 6: Letter from the Cabinet Division

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
মন্ত্রিপরিষদ বিভাগ
তথ্য অধিকার অধিশাখা
www.cabinet.gov.bd

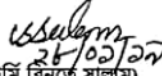
স্মারক নম্বর: ০৪.০০.০০০০.৮২৩.৭৯.০১৭.১৯.০৯১

তারিখ: ১৫ মাঘ ১৪২৫
২৮ জানুয়ারি ২০১৯

বিষয়: বেসরকারি সংস্থা 'মানুষের জন্য ফাউন্ডেশন' কর্তৃক তথ্য অধিকার জরিপ ২০১৮-১৯ সংক্রান্ত।

জনসাধারণের তথ্য অধিকার আইন সম্পর্কে ধারণা, আবেদনকারীর তথ্যের জন্য আবেদন, আপিলকারীর আপিল প্রক্রিয়া, আপিল কর্মকর্তা ও কার্যালয় প্রধানের প্রস্থুতি, তথ্য কমিশনে অভিযোগ এবং সিদ্ধান্তের ওপর সংখ্যাভিত্তিক ও গুণগত গবেষণা সংক্রান্ত ধারণা সমৃদ্ধকরণের লক্ষ্যে বেসরকারি সংস্থা মানুষের জন্য ফাউন্ডেশন, এমআরডিআই এবং ওরকোয়েস্ট আগামী ২৭ জানুয়ারি হতে ২১ মার্চ ২০১৯ তারিখ পর্যন্ত বাংলাদেশের জেলা ও উপজেলা পর্যায়ে তথ্য অধিকার জরিপ ২০১৮-১৯ কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা করবে।

২। এমতবাস্তায়, জেলা ও উপজেলা পর্যায়ে জরিপ ২০১৮-১৯ কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা করার নিমিত্ত বেসরকারি সংস্থা মানুষের জন্য ফাউন্ডেশন, এমআরডিআই এবং ওরকোয়েস্ট-কে সহায়তা প্রদানের লক্ষ্যে তাকে এবং জীর আওতাধীন উপজেলা নির্বাহী অফিসারকৃদ-কে সহায়তা প্রদানের নিমিত্ত প্রয়োজনীয় নির্দেশনা প্রদানের জন্য নির্দেশক্রমে অনুরোধ করা হল।


(ড. উম্মি বিনতে সালম)
উপসচিব
ফোন: ৪১০৫০১২৩
ই-মেইল: rti_sec@cabinet.gov.bd

জেলাপ্রশাসক (সকল)।

অনুলিপি (সদয় অবগতি ও কার্যার্থে):

- ১। বিভাগীয় কমিশনার (সকল)
- ২। মন্ত্রিপরিষদ সচিব মহোদয়ের একান্ত সচিব, মন্ত্রিপরিষদ বিভাগ, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা
- ৩। সচিব, সমন্বয় ও সংস্কার মহোদয়ের একান্ত সচিব, মন্ত্রিপরিষদ বিভাগ, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা
- ৪/নির্বাহী পরিচালক, 'মানুষের জন্য ফাউন্ডেশন', বনানী, ঢাকা।



THE WORLD BANK
IBRD • IDA | WORLD BANK GROUP

The World Bank Dhaka Office

E-32, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar
Dhaka 1207
Bangladesh

Tel: (880-2) 5566-7777
Fax: (880-2) 5566-7778
www.worldbank.org/bd