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Abstract

This study deals with implementation of Right to Information at grass roots and how RTI is a measure to claim other socio-economic rights that are a part of the rights based paradigm. Beginning with the conceptual framework of the study, it deals with the concepts like empowerment, participation, transparency, accountability and responsiveness. Further, this work deals with the struggle that led to the legislation of the RTI Act, 2005. How the struggle began in a small village and took shape of a country wide legislation has seen many phases in the long journey of the RTI- beginning from small struggles at grass roots to the formulation of different drafts by different organizations and working groups. Next it deals with the institutions of local governance in India in general and in Uttar Pradesh in particular. Further the fifth section deals with the socio-economic rights- RTE and MGNREGA which is followed by the chapter on the implementation and linkages between RTI, RTE and MGNREGA. The study lastly underlines some of the very significant future prospects of the RTI.

Right to Information has existed as a right, implicitly in article 19 (1) (a) of chapter III of the constitution of India. However, right to information legislated as a separate legal law in the country on 12th October 2005. Right information is an empowering tool for millions of citizens to claim their rightful entitlements. It challenges corruption while discouraging abuse of public office for private gains. At the cost of repetition, it can be said that in a country like

India benefits of governance should mean for the weaker and disadvantaged sections of society. It is needless to say that majority of these people reside in the country-side. Hence the fruits of the various welfare and developmental programs should be directed towards the betterment of these people. But unfortunately we find the rampant prevalence of corruption, hence, mal-administration in the grass-roots level institutions. As a result, the economic, political and social powerlessness of these people get exacerbated. Because as we know benefits meant for the poorer sections of the people do not reach them. In fact, the public funds meant for serving the causes of the poor and down-trodden are eaten up by more influential sets of people. For e.g., the contractor, the *sarpanch* and other so-called petty-leaders. But with the proper implementation of the Right to Information the above said problems can be solved. Because the Right to Information empowers the poor and the weaker section of the society to compel the public authority to make sure that the various rural development and social welfare schemes deliver benefits to the people as intended. More above the Right to Information will create the condition of transparency and accountability of the grass-roots level and reduce wider-spread corruption.

The findings of this research work has discussed the role that RTI has played at grass roots. It has been found through this research work that -firstly, filing of an RTI is not sufficient people have to go for first appeal, second appeal and complaint in order to obtain information. Secondly, there are procedural delays in providing information. Thirdly, there is lack of expertise among PIOs to entertain an RTI application. Fourthly, there is an unsupportive attitude of Pradhans and Babus towards the concept of RTI. Fifthly, there are financial constraints. There is no separate budget for RTI apparatus which causes issues in terms of maintenance and dissemination of information at grass roots. And lastly, weak civil society and social movement. It has been found that there is weak civil society at grass roots in UP because of which there is weak awareness among people as well as PIOs.