

Information Access in the Digital Age - the case of RTI & Open Data

Rakesh Dubbudu

Founder – FACTLY & Co-Convenor of NCPRI



- 🔍 Information/Data access is limited by varied factors
- 🔍 RTI & Open Data have contributed a great deal to democratization of access
- 🔍 Information Asymmetry leads to multiple issues
- 🔍 You are at the forefront of enabling access

Movement for Transparency





RTI – 16 years on

- 🔍 ~ 7 million applications annually (only 10% women applicants)
- 🔍 Varied Users & user groups
- 🔍 Few public authorities receive bulk of the applications
- 🔍 Better implementation directly linked to Political & Bureaucratic Intent
- 🔍 Most applications for grievances & proactive disclosure related issues
- 🔍 Only reactive disclosure, very little progress on proactive



Numbers related to RTI applications

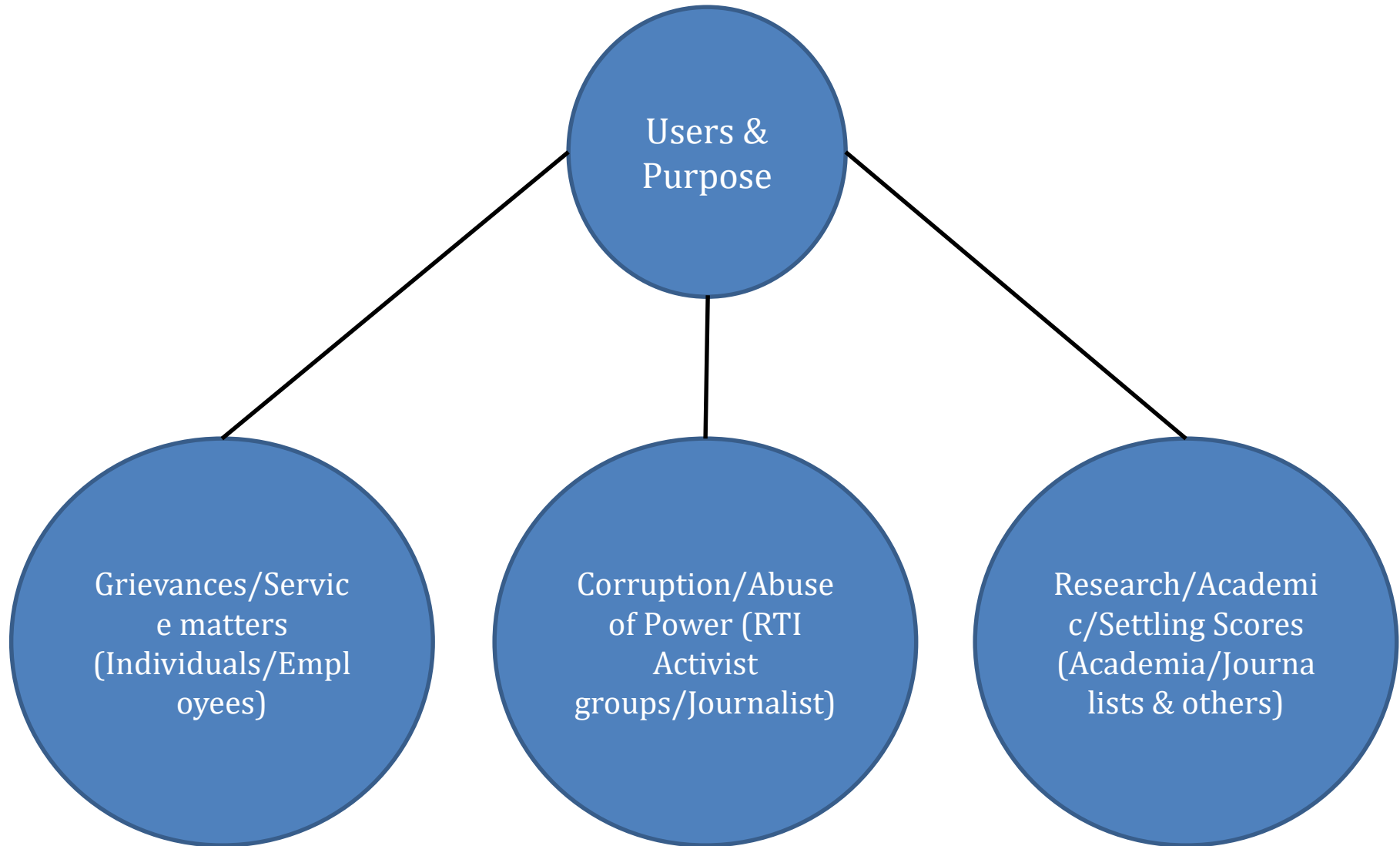
- 🔍 Ministry of Finance (1.7 lakh in 2020-21)
- 🔍 Ministry of Communications, Railways , Labour & Employment, MHRD (close to a lakh each in 2020-21)
- 🔍 At the state level – Revenue, School Education, Panchayati Raj, Municipal Administration etc.



Audit of Proactive Disclosures

- 🔍 To assess, quantitative and qualitative compliance by PAs of the mandated suo motu disclosures under Section 4 of the RTI Act;
- 🔍 To identify the areas for improvement in information disclosure by PAs; and,
- 🔍 To suggest measures for improving the content and quality of the disclosures as well as to identify the areas requiring special focus or impetus in terms of disclosures.

RTI – Users & Purpose





Issues

- 🔍 Allegations of Misuse
- 🔍 Record Management
- 🔍 Understanding Information needs. Towards customized
'Proactive Disclosure' – even to counter 'Misinformation'
- 🔍 Grievance Redressal/Service matters & other such
expectations from RTI
- 🔍 Basket of Measures – Need of the hour
- 🔍 Role of 'Open Data'



Essential elements of Proactive Disclosure

- 🔍 Available through multiple channels (forms)
- 🔍 Findable/Searchable
- 🔍 Relevant
- 🔍 Comprehensible
- 🔍 Cost of access
- 🔍 Up to Date
- 🔍 Examples: [Jan Soochna](#) (RAJ), [Mahiti Kanaja](#) (KAR)



Open Data

🔍 The GoI Policy & other State Policies

🔍 Challenges

- Culture of Secrecy
- Lack of the big picture
- Lack of Capacity & Understanding
- Fear
- Reliability
- Lack of Granularity & Localization
- Lack of Standards



Government & Official Data Sources

- 🔍 The Census
- 🔍 The Agricultural Census
- 🔍 Representative Surveys
 - NFHS - National Family Health Survey
 - DHS – Demographic Health Survey
 - NSS – National Sample Survey
 - SRS – Sample Registration System
 - CRS – Civil Registration System
 - PLFS – Periodic Labour Force Survey
- 🔍 Annual Surveys or Reports
 - Annual Survey of Industries
 - Annual Employment –Unemployment Survey
 - Statistical Year book of MoSPI
 - National Accounts Data
 - NCRB Reports
 - Annual Reports of Ministries/Departments/Organizations
 - Annual Statistical Publications by States
 - CACP reports for MSP



Government & Official Data Sources

- 🔍 Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha Questions (more than 5 lakh)
- 🔍 Parliament Standing Committee reports
- 🔍 Ministry/Department Websites (MHA – padma, casualties, IAS IPR etc.)
- 🔍 Press Information Bureau & NITI Aayog (aspirational districts)
- 🔍 Official Gazette
- 🔍 CAG Reports & annual reports/outcome budget reports of ministries
- 🔍 Large scheme specific websites and relevant reports
- 🔍 State Level
 - Directorate of Economic & Statistics (Eco Stat)
 - State Archives & State Gazettes & Legislative Assembly Questions
 - State Level reports & DISE Data
 - Scheme specific websites
 - Department websites & annual reports
- 🔍 Open Data portals



Way Forward

- 🔍 Have an 'Open Mind'
- 🔍 Follow the 'Spirit' not the 'Letter'
- 🔍 Put yourself in the applicant's shoe
- 🔍 Provide comprehensive information not piecemeal, think of the potential conflicting information
- 🔍 Always prioritize 'Public Interest'
- 🔍 Focus on customized 'Proactive Disclosure' – don't limit yourself to Section 4



Find Us



www.factly.in



www.fb.com/FactlyIndia



[@FactlyIndia](https://twitter.com/FactlyIndia)



rakesh@factly.in