

**Training on
Right to Information Act:
Pioneering Efforts by YASHADA**

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About YASHADA

Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA), whose roots can be traced as far back as 1963, is a premier training institute of the Government of Maharashtra. The Academy conducts training programmes and carries out research projects on various subjects related to Public Administration in India. The Academy's activities are sponsored by various departments of Govt. of India and Maharashtra and international agencies like UNDP, UNICEF, World Bank, ILO, Ford Foundation, etc.

The Right to Information Cell

In March 2004, this special cell for RTI was set up at YASHADA. The Maharashtra Right to Information Act 2002 came in to force and for its implementation, the need had emerged to undertake training programmes for Public Information Officers (PIOs) and Appellate Authorities (AA s) from various public offices. To cover major government departments at Divisional and District levels, YASHADA carried out 6 State level workshops on RTI Maharashtra Act at its campus and 6 more were conducted at various divisions in collaboration with Divisional Commissioners' offices. In addition to this, exclusive training for Women and Child Development, Social Welfare, Mumbai sub urban Collectorate was also conducted.

Till the Central Act came in to force in June 2005, YASHADA had conducted 4 special workshops, even on section 4 of the State Act.

YASHADA's Contribution for Training on RTI

Since 2004, YASHADA has been an active participant and a keen observer of the RTI Act on national, state and regional levels. In addition to these levels, YASHADA has gained experience in various other segments of the society as far as RTI is concerned.

Being an apex body of State Government, YASHADA is aware of responsibilities as well as problems of Government officers as Public Information Officers or Appellate Authorities. While organizing workshops or other activities, YASHADA has always given due participation to NGOs. While conducting ToTs and sponsored workshops on RTI, YASHADA always made it a point to keep in touch with common people. For workshops, YASHADA always invited RTI activists as visiting faculty so that a common platform can be made available for experience sharing.

Dissemination and training on RTI

Designing Training modules for PIO – AAs and Trainers was the first step. Association with all these stakeholders of RTI like Government officers, citizens, NGOs, RTI activists, helped in the Training Need Analysis (TNA), Various Departments approached YASHADA for training on RTI, which helped develop proper insight of field level problems in implementation of the Act.

Thus, three ToT modules were developed as

1. 1 day module For PIOs
2. 2 days module For Appellate Authority
3. 3 days module For Trainers

A Material Development Workshop was organized and after discussions with experts and persons related to RTI, training material for all these modules was developed. Eventually, the material was further developed as per the needs. At present, following training material is available with YASHADA.

1. Power point presentation on RTI in English and Marathi
2. Case Studies
3. A Poster show to display in or near training halls
4. Distribution Material

Developing trainers was the next step. Two types of trainers were needed, National level and State level. Trainers were identified from various sources. More than 150 people were trained and tested keeping the goal of 100 trainers in mind. Selected trainers had to undergo rigorous training workshops.

In the second round, intricacies of the Act were discussed where national level RTI experts and RTI Activists were invited for discussion sessions.

Today, YASHADA has 100 trainers including both National and State level on whom YASHADA can bank on and will reach the gigantic dream figure of training programmes.

YASHADA knows that this Act is a paradigm shift and hence, 'attitudinal change' is the most crucial issue. In all these training modules, this point is emphasized directly or indirectly. Another important point is 'being responsible'. May it be a demand for information or supply of information, both should be handled with 'responsibility' is another message that is given through YASHADA's training programmes. Thus, YASHADA always tries to maintain balance of the demand and supply sides.

YASHADA, National Implementing Agency by DoPT, Gol

The grass root experience and hands on both National and state RTI Acts, had always an edge over for YASHADA. In 2005, YASHADA is declared as National Implementing Agency along with CGG, Hyderabad, by DoPT, Gol. The Programme is funded by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for capacity building for access to information in 12 States, viz. Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, West Bengal and Uttaranchal. In addition to these States, the responsibility of conducting training programmes for the Central Government officers was also entrusted to YASHADA.

Training Programmes as NIA

Initially, as National Implementing Agency, training programmes under UNDP project were conducted at YASHADA's own premises. However, as the awareness of the Act started increasing, it became necessary to develop the supply side - the Govt. side fast. The Govt. of India emphasized on finishing the target as early as possible and hence YASHADA took initiative in approaching various State Administrative Training Institutes (ATIs) and conducted training programmes at the Head Quarters of these states. The total target was training 920 persons (60 persons per state and 200 Central Government officers), out of which target of 841 candidates is met so far.

Sr.No.	Name of the State	No.of RP *
1	Chattisgarh	85
2	Karnataka	77
3	Assam	73
4	Gujarat	12
5	Kerala	81
6	Madhya Pradesh	76
7	Maharashtra	65
8	Rajasthan	60
9	Tamilnadu	6
10	Uttaranchal	10
11	West Bengal	46
12	Andhra Pradesh	56
13	Central Government	194
	Total	841

*RP : Number of Resource Persons trained.

Recently YASHADA has organized Training Programme for the Central GOI Officers between 23 - 27 April 2007 at Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi. Director General, YASHADA has written to 40 GOI Secretaries to send the participants. Joint Secretary, DOPT, Old JNU Campus, New Delhi has also made written request to all Govt. of India

Departments to send their participants for the training specially organized by YASHADA at New Delhi.

In addition to responsibility of conducting TOT training of the 12 original States, the responsibility of 16 newly added States namely Punjab, Hariyana, Orissa, Bihar, Zharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Delhi & Goa has been entrusted to YASHADA. The Advisor, RTI, YASHADA has paid visit to Lucknow and discussed with Director General, ATI, Lucknow and others about training programme to be organized in Uttar Pradesh.

Special initiative has been taken by YASHADA to organize the meeting of North Eastern States at Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati, Assam on 15th May 2007 to discuss the details of the training programmes to be organized in these States. A training Programme of 69 participants is fixed at Aizwal in Mizoram during 23 - 25 May 2007.

YASHADA has formed Evaluation Teams to asses the impact of training given earlier under UNDP GOI assisted project "Capacity Building for Access to Information". The teams already visited States of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Maharashtra and last round of Evaluation of the training in Assam has been fixed on 16.5.2007. The report of the same will be submitted to DOPT, GOI, New Delhi after our round of evaluation is over in Assam.

Accomplishing responsibility as SIA in the State

On the orbit of training and capacity building for Access to Information, YASHADA has been nominated as State Implementing Agency (SIA) for the state of Maharashtra by DoPT, Government of India.

In Maharashtra, two districts were selected for capacity building for RTI. This task was something more than training the Government officers. Only training programmes or details and intricacies of the Act could not have been the focus in these districts because it was for total capacity building. Chandrapur and Nandurbar are that way underdeveloped districts in Maharashtra and if the model used in these districts is successful, then it can be used all over Maharashtra.

The methodology was different. In both these districts, Maharashtra's official language Marathi is generally understood, however, colloquial languages are different. In Chandrapur, 'Zadi Boli' is used and in Nandurbar, being the Adiwasi prominent area, 2-3 Adiwasi languages are in use.

YASHADA decided to take help of local artists in this regard. A creative workshop was arranged in YASHADA in July 2006 for about 30 artists from these 2 districts and from Pune. The motto was to discuss on various methods – ways to reach to the people in these areas and to know about their fairs and festivals to have a clear insight about their lifestyle and beliefs to make the penetration effective. Sessions were arranged for these artists to make them aware about the fundamentals of the Act. The thrust was on the 'message to be delivered.'

The results were fantastic. Street plays, Songs, Songadya scripts (local folk art in Nandurbar), puppet shows, posters, etc. were developed on sample basis. Ideas and experiences were shared from artists from all these different schools. This exercise for the same cause and from the same platform of YASHADA, enriched every participant in the workshop including YASHADA's staff. This was a pioneering effort of using art and artists for building Awareness of an Act.

Using the material so created specially for the two districts, 7 training programmes were conducted covering 424 participants including Govt. officials as well as NGOs Media and social workers in the field of RTI.

The State Project

The Government of Maharashtra has sanctioned an amount of Rs. 1,06,00,000/- to train participants from 35 districts of Maharashtra and officers from various Directorates and Departments from State Secretariat. Yashada has trained 12748 resource persons during the financial year 2006-2007

Sr.No.	Name of Division	RP *
1	Amaravati	1605
2	Nasik	1617
3	Aurangabad	2784
4	Nagpur	1767
5	Pune	1673
6	Konkan	2001
7	Secretariat of M.S.& various Directorates	1310
Total Participants		12748

* RP: Target Number of Resource persons.,

Sponsored Programmes

Various Government undertakings in Maharashtra have approached YASHADA to impart training to their officers. YASHADA has developed 1 or 2 days training modules for such departments considering their specific needs.

Details of those sponsored training programmes undertaken so far are as under:

Sr.No.	Name of Agency	Days	No. of Trainees
1	CIDCO	2	30
2	MMRDA	1	33
3	CIDCO	2	30
4	Mahapareshan	2	28
5	Mahapareshan	2	13
6	M.S. Warehousing Corporation	1	26
7	Mahapareshan	2	38
8	Mahavitaran	40	2197
9	MIDC	2	60
10	Solapur Municipal. Corporation	2	40
11	National Informatic Centre	1	30
12	Vijay Reddi Instt. Hyderabad	1	40
13	Director Gen. Police, Mah. Mumbai	1	100
14	Social Forestry, Ratnagiri	1	30
15	Punjab Coop. Instt, Chandigarh	5	115

Sr.No.	Name of Agency	Days	No. of Trainees
16	Railway Police, Pune	1	10
17	Pune University	1	98
18	One Day Workshop Citizens	4	263
19	Khadi Gram Udyog	1	24
20	Pimpri Chinchwad New Town Development Authority	1	16
21	Cooperative Deptt. Pune	1	25
22	B & C Division, Nasik	1	48
	Total		3294

Publications on RTI

YASHADA is working for the Government as well as for common people for implementation and awareness of the RTI Act. Taking into consideration needs of both the segments, YASHADA has published a list of books, material for training programmes, ToT programmes, Articles both in English and Marathi on the subject.

The list itself will explain the scope of the work that YASHADA has accomplished.

Books and Articles on RTI for all

1. Handbook on Right to Information (Marathi / English)
2. Template for the Publication under Sect. 4 of the RIT Act (Marathi / English)
3. Users' Guide (Marathi / English)
4. Handbook on RTI with Tata Macgraw Hill, Delhi (English)
5. Handbook on RTI with Rajahans Prakashan, Pune (Marathi)

6. Table Calender 2007 (English)
7. Tila Tila Dar Ughad (Marathi Book based on Radio Programme)
8. Jansamvad (Marathi book containing script for street play, one act play etc.)
9. Diary of State Resource Persons.
10. Articles in various newspapers & magazines – 30 (Marathi / English)

Publications under UNDP with Centre for Good Governance, Hyderabad

- 1 A Manual for Public Authorities Information Officers & Appellate Authorities
- 2 The Right to Information Act 2005 : A guide for media
- 3 The Right to Information Act 2005 : A guide for Civil Society Organisation
- 4 Annual Report of Information Commission – A guide
- 5 A Handbook for Trainers. The Right to Information Act, 2005

REACHING OUT TO PEOPLE

Radio Programme

The credit of broadcasting first serial radio programme goes to YASHADA. From January 2006, YASHADA has sponsored a 30 minutes radio programme from Aakashwani, Pune on Right to Information. Programme writing and technical support is given by YASHADA. 52 episodes have been broadcast and feed back tells that this programme is very popular. The time slot chosen is 7.16 to 7.46 am on every Saturday. Being it is just after the Morning News, it can not be skipped. Very simple language and focus on actual use of the Act by common man are the attributes to make the programme so popular. It is planned for 52 episodes.

In response to the inquiries to translate this programme into Hindi, YASHADA is now taking initiative to make script of this programme available in Hindi also which can reach countrywide.

Documentary Film on RTI

Films Division, Gol has agreed to take out a film on RTI in 14 regional languages. YASHADA is actively associated with the production of this film and has provided the script for the film. Making of this film is in active process and may be ready within very short time..

National level activities

- In February 2006, YASHADA had organized a 2 days workshop for Information Commissioners. This was attended by the Central & State Chief Information Commissioners and Information Commissioners.
- In January 2006, a one day workshop for Use of RTI for Effective Implementation of NREGS was held in YASHADA partnering with NIRD.
- In September 2006, YASHADA organized a meet of RTI activists and people related to the RTI movement, to share their experiences of the first year of the Central RTI Act. This meeting was chaired by the CIC, Maharashtra State.

A list of requests regarding effective implementation of the RTI Act and suggestions on operational problems was submitted to the CIC and the State Government during this meet.

- A National Convention on RTI was held at New Delhi between 13th and 15th October 2006, which was inaugurated at the hands of H.E. the President of India and concluded at the hands of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

A stall was also erected by YASHADA for exhibiting its publications on RTI as well as YASHADA's efforts made so far to create mass awareness through Electronic and Print Media. YASHADA's contribution on RTI training was appreciated by one and all.

- A workshop of 12 original States and newly added States was organized at YASHADA, Pune under the chairmanship of Shri Ajay Sawhney, IAS, Joint Secretary, DOPT between 13 - 14 Feb 2007 to take review of RTI activities in 12 original States and apprise the newly added States about RTI activities to be undertaken in these States.
- YASHADA has organized "National Trainers Meet" between 11 - 12 April 2007 to discuss intricacies of RTI Act like "Public Authority", "Further Fees" etc. and TOT Module for the next year. The Module, which was prepared in the year 2006 is to be continued for further

TOT programmes for these newly added States. YASHADA is in constant touch with these newly added 16 States and have shown willingness to undertake training activities by paying visit to these States and organizing training programmes at convenient places in respective States.

Support Activities

- National Institute for Open School (NIOS), New Delhi has requested YASHADA to work as content provider for developing curriculum for Open Schools throughout the country for traditional courses, regular courses and correspondence courses.
- YASHADA has prepared Users' Guide as per section 26(3) of the RTI Act at the instance of the Jt. Secretary, DoPT, Govt. of India. The work of finalization of Users' Guide and its translation in various regional languages is in progress.
- Since Feb 2007, we have been organizing "Video Conferencing" for officers from Maharashtra, on every Thursday to clarify their doubts on RTI Act.
- The special feature of the YASHADA is RTI workshop for Citizens, which is held on 2nd Saturday of every month. The response is phenomenal and every Saturday about 50 - 70 participants take part in this programme.

Future Plans

- YASHADA is planning to start an RTI Newsletter, which will be circulated to various ATIs and other stakeholders.
- For various TV channels, 5 television programmes on RTI have been planned.

Thus, with full faith in success of the RTI Act, YASHADA is performing its responsibility of capacity building for access to information and working as a common platform for the demand and supply side with confidence.