

The Right to Information and Children
Purkal Youth Development Society and Mountain Children's Foundation, Dehradun
19th September 2009



On the 19th of September Mr Swamy from Purkal Youth Development Society (PYDS) arranged a 2 hour workshop in Purkal Village with 45 children from their school and some teachers. The training started at 5 pm.

Aditi and Dwarika from the Mountain children's Foundation (MCF) facilitated the workshop. The workshop started with asking the children what they knew about the Right to Information. The response was encouraging as quite a few

knew about the Right to Information.

A presentation followed that clarified the Act, and highlighted the procedures and processes regarding filing of RTI applications. The last slide had the most dramatic effect as the children learnt of instances where children in villages across Uttarakhand had used the act and made remarkable changes in their community.

The difference in this workshop from all the other workshops was that it was very brief (only two hours) and in English, as the medium of study in the school is English.

After the presentation the children were divided into 4 groups and asked to list the issues that they felt they would like to use the RTI for.

It was interesting to see how the children linked the RTI with issues that were bothering them. The various presentations highlighted four major issues that were echoed in each presentation. The Road that was being built and had not been completed, Ration from the ration Shop that were of poor quality and the quantity was not standardized, Buses on the route to Purkal that were few and very irregular and street lights in Rajpur that were not working and caused problems for the children when it got dark.



The children were shown how to write an application and the dos and donts that had to be kept in mind while writing the application.

The children went back to their groups to write a finalized application on the one of the four issues. These were fine-tuned and corrections made after they were read out.

By the time the program ended the children had four RTI applications that were ready to be sent.

Even though the time frame for training the children was very short, the children were eager to learn and quick to understand. By the end of the evening most knew how to write an application and the basic points of the RTI Act including when and how to appeal for the first and second time and how complaints are made and time frames for all.

Mr Swammy said “The session went through very well and the children have learnt quite a lot about writing an RTI application”

The school at Purkal is a rural one, yet a large number of children were aware of RTI. As mentioned earlier the training was only for 2 hours but what was impressive was the grasp and comprehension of the children regarding the procedures and processes for filing an RTI. The RTI applications written by the children were well thought of and well written. It is an encouraging thought that awareness amongst the rural youth is increasing.

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