

## RTI Stories

### Almora - SUDHA

- **Someshwar** - Everyone in my village had a ration card but after the village panchayat elections two years ago all the ration cards were collected and sent to the block office and we were told that new ration cards would be issued. But even after two years the cards hadn't reached, which was causing problems for the community as well as the ration-shop owners.

The biggest sufferers were the people who had BPL and Antyodaya cards (people who are very poor and live below the poverty line). Finally Devendra Singh Rawat from the Josh Bal Panchayat got tired and went to talk to the Village Pradhan and ask him to help, but it was of no use.

He then filed an RTI application at the Block Development Office asking for information as to why the cards had not been made. After 26-27 days the Village Pradhan and the Village Development officer came to visit Devendra and said "If you had told us that you were going to ask for information I would have made your ration card earlier." The work that had not happened for two years was completed in 2 days.

### Nainital - CHESTHA

- **Bhoomiadar** - For the last 2 years there has been no commerce teacher at the Government Junior High School, Bhoomiadar. Instead these classes were allocated to a language teacher who taught Sanskrit. Even though the parents and students protested there was no response from the school authorities. Finally Inder, who studies in class VIII decided to highlight this issue during the RTI workshop. As he was a student of the school it was decided that the RTI would not be filed by him – so Monika who was now studying in BA 2<sup>nd</sup> year at the Govt. college and had graduated from the school decided to file the RTI application on the issue. Within twelve days a commerce teacher was appointed to the school and classes have commenced. The entire community was very happy with the outcome of filing the RTI.

### Bageshwar-SIMAR

- **Bageshwar** - Tara Dutt's name had been removed from the BPL list during the BPL survey. He was not told why his name had been removed. His children, attended an MCF-sponsored RTI workshop and they told him he could write the application to ask about this change. He then filed an RTI to which he received a response, but it was not complete. So he filed an appeal with Block Development Officer with the help of Bhuvan Chandra Pandey the SIMAR facilitator. The decision given at the appeal was that within 2 months Tara Dutt will get his BPL number and the "Kanya Dhan" ( A government scheme, where Rs 12000/- is given in stages to the girl child as a fixed deposit which she gets when she completes class 12) money that had been stopped (because of the removal of his name from the BPL list) was restarted with immediate effect.

### **Udhamsingh Nagar – NGVSS (Naina Gramin Vikas Seva Samiti)**

- Khatima - Priya Gupta is a librarian, she had moved to a new house about 15 years ago. During the process of moving she had paid all her outstanding dues including the electricity bills for which she had fortunately kept all the receipts. The electricity department had suddenly sent her a bill of Rs 75,000/- citing unpaid bills from the old connection. While discussing her problem with Vinod Chandra Pathak the facilitator of NGVSS from Udhamsingh Nagar she realized that she could file an RTI application to find out why she had received such a large bill. When she visited the electricity department and mentioned it to them the bill was cancelled and the amount waived.
- Harsh Chandra Joshi was not being given a domestic gas connection despite having all the paper work in order. He just mentioned that he would file an application and got his gas connection within a week.
- Gudiya Rani (17 years old)– Attended the RTI workshop in Nagwadungo Patiya. During the workshop she wrote an application asking about the availability of medicine in the community health center (i.e. how many medicines had come and how many are distributed). This did not go down well with the Local Auxiliary Nurse Midwife as there are many medicines that have not been distributed. She went into the village and said that Gudiya was playing politics and as the entire village is tribal they tend to go with a person in authority. The entire village went against Gudiya, who is an orphan and lives with her maternal uncle. She buckled under the pressure and was very scared. Vinod Chandra Pandey and Dwarika visited the village. It was difficult to enter the village as they faced a lot of hostility. They spent over 4 hours at the village trying to convince Gudiya and her family members that what Gudiya had done was correct. Finally the uncle forgave Gudiya but Gudiya was too scared and refused to pursue her RTI. Vinod and Dwarika supported her stand but now 5 more people (adults from the organization and adults from other villages) have filed the same RTI for information on the medicines, so that Gudiya's RTI questions would still have to be answered and the ANM would not think that it is possible to pressurize anyone to take back the complaint. Vinod has convinced almost half the village that Gudiya was correct, he has visited the village often and has spoken with most community members. We await the answer to the other 5 applications.
- Khetalsanda Udhamsingh Nagar – Madan Singh Adhikari got to know about the RTI act from Vinod Pathak (facilitator). His name was in the BPL list he asked about the numbers of Indira Vikas Yojna (Housing for BPL families) houses that were sanctioned in 2009-2010. The Panchayat secretary and the block pramukh came to visit him and told him not to ask for written information and they would give him Rs 45,000/-. Madan took the money and started building his house. Vinod Chandra Pathak realizing what had happened has had other people file the same RTI applications.

- Jagdish from Khetalsand had a BPL card that after a survey was turned into an APL(Above Poverty Line) card. Jagdish went up to the SDM to complain about it but to no avail. He then filed an RTI application with the Block Development Officer. He has not received an answer as yet but he was given an Antyodyaya card which is for people who are poorer than the poor and get more facilities than even BPL card holders. (All this has happened within the month of filing the application.)

### **Pithoragarh – ARPAN**

- Dunga Toli - Rekha asked for information about games material in their school. When ARPAN facilitator Ganga went to the school, the teachers told her that the games material had reached the school. This was within a month of the RTI application.
- Deval – During the RTI survey that the children conducted Hansa Devi ( a villager) asked about RTI and the children and Ganga replied that you can ask for any information in government departments and there was a certain process that had to be followed. Hansa Devi said that there was a path close to their house that had to be concretized but even though the MLA had sanctioned the funds there was no evidence of any work moving forward. She asked how to file an application and then filed an application asking for the information on the village road. The RTI application was transferred to the BDO under section 6 (3) of the act. When the BDO saw that Hansa Devi had asked for the information he told the postman not to give Hansa Devi the post that would come in reply to the application. The postman while handing over the letter to Hansa Devi informed her that the BDO was trying to prevent the mail from reaching her. The answer to the application says that 2 lakhs were sanctioned of which 1.5 lakhs had been received and the rest would be sent shortly. Hansa Devi has said that if work does not start soon she will file another RTI application.
- Jauljeebi – Shakuntla asked for information from the Commerce Department as there was a construction project underway but there was no involvement of the villagers either as beneficiaries or as workers, and they had no idea about the project. She got detailed information about the project and now members of the community are also getting jobs at that project site.

### **Tehri – Mount Valley**

- Ajay Kumar filed an application asking about the amount of Ration that each card holder would get and at what regularity. His application has sparked off an investigation that is underway on the amount of ration that is being given to the card holders. Once the investigation is completed Ajay will be given the information.