



Access to Information for People with Disabilities in Sri Lanka

A Guide to Right to Information Applications



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Introduction

The Right to Information Act (Right to Information Act No. 12 of 2016) - also called RTI - gives Sri Lankan citizens the right to access information about most, but not all, government decision-making.^[1] When individuals exercise that right, it helps make the government more transparent and accountable to people. The Right to Information Act applies to any "public authority", which means either a government or a private body performing government functions.

Using that right, Sri Lankans can find out what specific information about themselves a public authority holds - and correct any inaccurate information. They can also receive general information that impacts their lives (for example, information about the processing of disability allowances). Generally, people do not need to provide any reasons for requesting specific information from the government.^[2]

Most countries now have domestic laws guaranteeing the Right to Information. While RTI laws vary from country to country, there are several common principles:

- **Maximum disclosure:** the government should make as much information public as possible.
- **Proactive publication:** information should be published on government websites before it is requested.
- **Limited exceptions to disclosure:** the government can only refuse to provide information that (a) falls within certain, limited categories (such as national security, public safety, privacy, etc.); and (b) is not in the public interest to disclose.
- **Affordable process:** it should be cheap and easy for people to request information from the government.
- **Fair and timely processing:** the government must process information requests fairly and quickly and provide an appeal process for denied requests.

Sri Lanka's Act is one of the most comprehensive laws worldwide. However, despite mounting evidence of the Act's effectiveness in granting people access to information, the overall number of requests remains low due to a lack of awareness within society.

For further information on Sri Lanka's Right to Information Act, see here: rti.gov.lk

What is "information"?

Information, as defined in Section 43 of the RTI Act, means: "any material recorded in any form including records, documents, memos, emails, opinions, advice, press releases, circulars, orders, log books, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, correspondence, memorandum, draft legislation, book, plan, map, drawing, diagram, pictorial or graphic work, photograph, film, microfilm, sound recording, video tape, machine readable record, computer records and other documentary material, regardless of its physical form or character and any copy of them."

[1] The legislation guarantees each citizen to 'have a right of access to information which is in the possession, custody or control of a public authority' (Art 3(1)). The 'Regulations promulgated under the Right to Information Act, No 12 of 2016' and 'Rules' further solidify the procedural framework.

[2] Art. 24(5)(d).

RTI Process

The Right to Information (RTI) Act established the process for information-seekers (hereafter applicants) and officers in charge (i.e. Information Officer, Designated Officer) of the public authority. The process is divided into several stages. Each has its own timeline (see infographic and table).

RTI stages

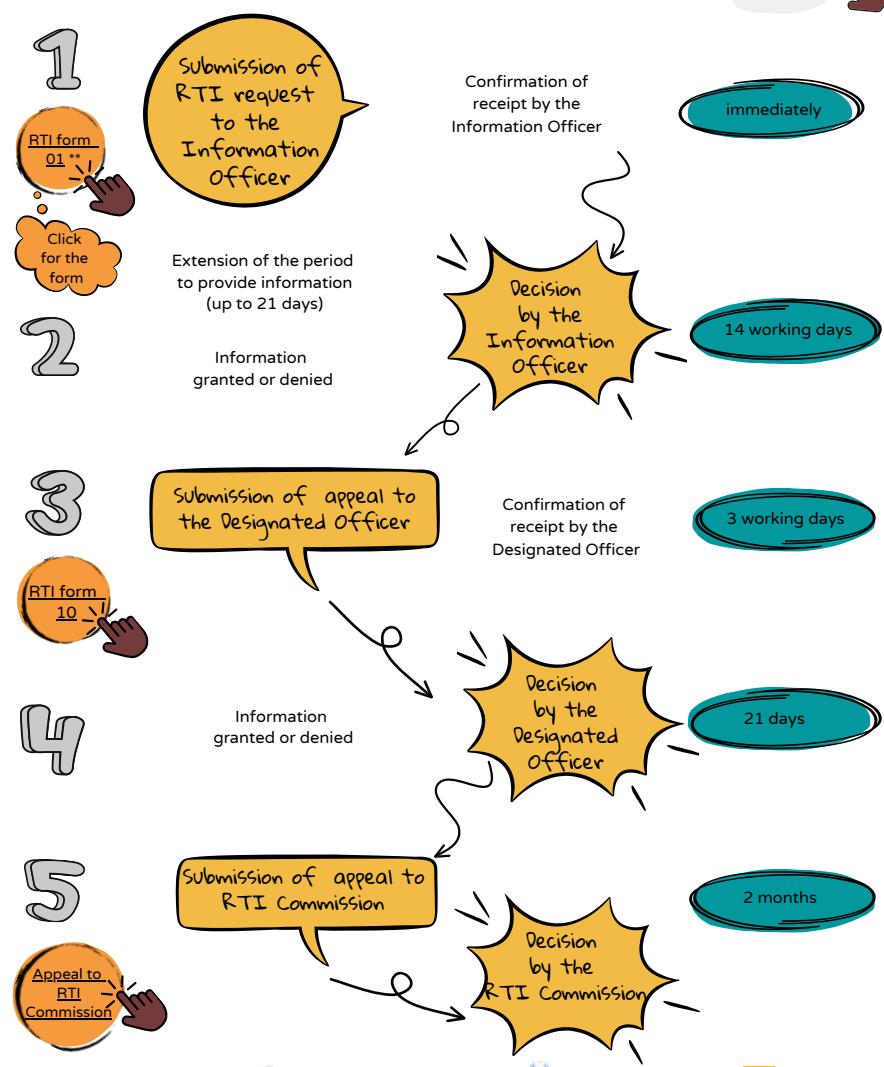
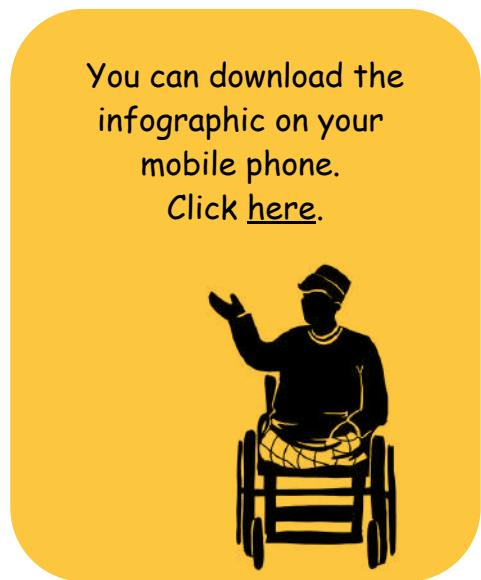
- Identification of the Information Officer (IO)
- Submission of an RTI application to the IO
- Confirmation of receipt by the IO
- Decision outcome by the IO
- If unsatisfied, appeal to the Designated Officer (DO)
- Decision outcome by the DO
- If unsatisfied, appeal to the RTI Commission
- Decision outcome by the RTI Commission
- If unsatisfied, appeal to the Court of Appeal
- Decision outcome by the Court



Any questions? Get in touch: +94 77 763 7572 *** info@visibility *** www.visibility.social



Right to Information





Identification of the Information Officer

Submission of the RTI request to Information Officer

Confirmation of receipt by Information Officer

immediately

Decision outcome by the IO:
Sharing of information

Decision outcome by the IO:
Sharing of information

Decision outcome by the IO:
Information rejected

21 working days

14 working days

Identification of the Designated Officer

Submission of the appeal to Designated Officer

Confirmation of receipt by the Designated Officer

3 working days

Decision outcome by the DO:
Sharing of information

Decision outcome by the DO:
Information rejected

21 days

Within 2 months following the decision:

Submission of appeal to RTI Commission

Decision outcome by the RTI Commission

Submission of appeal to Court of Appeal

Preparation of an RTI application



RTI application form

The Information Officer (IO) has to support any Sri Lankan citizen lodging an RTI application. If you have questions about the RTI procedure or application process, the IO should provide guidance. To submit an RTI application, you can obtain the relevant form (RTI 01) from the IO. Alternatively, you can download it from the official website ([click RTI 01](#)). However, using this form is not mandatory. You may also submit your request in a written letter. For guidance on how to write your letter, refer to the key issues raised in the RTI 01 form.

Filling the form

If you need assistance filling out the form for any reason, the IO is obligated to help you. Additionally, you can seek support from others, such as family members or friends. It is important that you sign the RTI application form! You can either write down your name or add your fingerprint only.

Fees

You may need to pay a small fee for copies if you request a large amount of information (see section "Fees").



Submission of your RTI application to the Information Officer

In-person

To submit your RTI application, you can directly approach the IO of the respective public authority. The IO's name and contact details should be displayed on the notice board or other signs (and, if existing, on the website). If you cannot find this information, do not hesitate to ask for it. Do not forget to make a copy of your RTI application before submission! You may need it if you want to appeal. The IO should immediately provide a confirmation receipt ("Acknowledgement") with the registration number of your RTI application.

Registered post

If sending your RTI application by post is more convenient, opt for registered mail for secure delivery. If you submit multiple RTI applications, it is better to send them separately to obtain a confirmation receipt for each. Do not forget to make a copy of your RTI application before submission! You may need it in the event of an appeal.

Email

Another option is to email your RTI application to the respective authority. However, it is advisable to follow up by phone to ensure that IOs have received your email. Experience shows that some authorities lack fully functional computers or other IT devices. Officers may also struggle with technology, leading to delays or failure in processing RTI applications via email. Do not delete the email until your RTI application has been processed completely!



You should receive a confirmation of receipt ("Acknowledgement") for your RTI application upon submission, regardless of the method used (in person, post or email)! You should receive the receipt immediately or by post. Keep this document in a safe place. You may need it in the event of an appeal!

RTI application form

RTI 01

Note that completion of this Form is not a compulsory requirement to make a request for information and that any written letter, e-mail or a verbal request with the essential information to identify the requested information is sufficient.

Application to receive Information

Information Officer,

01. Name of Requestor -

02. Address –

03. Contact No. (if any) -

04. Email Address (if any) -

05. Details about Information requested

I. Specific Public Authority

II. Information requested

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

III. Specific period information is requested (if applicable).....

06. Manner in which information is requested–

i. inspect relevant work, documents, records

ii. Take notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records

iii. Take certified samples of material

iv. Obtain information in the form of CD/DVD/storage media/tapes/video cassettes/ any other electronic mode/ printouts where such information is stored in a computer or in any other device.

07. Language in which requestor prefers access -.....

08. Does the information request concern the life and personal liberty of a citizen? (Yes/No)

If	Yes,	give	reason	for	belief	-
.....						
.....						
.....						

09. Any other details-.....

10. Relevant documents attached (If any)

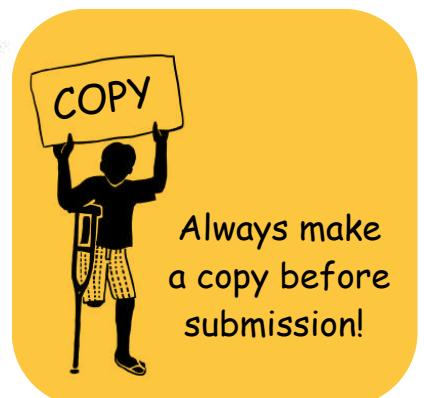
I.

II.

III.

11. Is the requestor a citizen of Sri Lanka? (Yes/No)

Date: -



Potential challenges and suggestions

Struggles to formulate questions for RTI applications

Applicants often need help to formulate clear and precise questions to request information.



Suggestion: Write down your question and discuss it with a friend, family member, or someone from an organisation (e.g. Disabled People's Organisation) to ensure clarity. Do they understand what you want to say? It might take a few attempts until your question is clear enough.

Lack of awareness among government officers about the Right to Information Act

Many government officers in Sri Lanka are not familiar with the Right to Information Act.



Suggestion: It could be useful to download the law on your phone or print it and share it with the respective IO. Alternatively, ask a member of an organisation or activist who knows the law to accompany you.

Government officers are reluctant to share information

Some officers ignore RTI applications and do not provide confirmation of receipts ("Acknowledgements") and/or decision outcomes.



Suggestion: Pay attention to the timeline (14 to 21 days maximum) and make sure that you have kept all evidence possible (e.g. postal receipt, copy of the RTI application form) to file an appeal to the Designated Officer.

Delays in response to RTI applications

In some instances, the IOs do not respond to the RTI application (RTI 01) within the required 14-day period (or 21-day period upon notified extension). They only take action after the applicant files an appeal (RTI 10).



Suggestions: Keep all receipts, such as those from the registered post or confirmation of receipt by the IO! If you have not received a confirmation of receipt by the IO upon your RTI application submission, you can simply attach the registered post receipt to the appeal form.

Delivery (delays) of registered post

Sometimes, registered posts from the postal service can arrive later than expected. Bear in mind that the timeline (14 days) for responding to your RTI application begins only after the IO receives your application.



Suggestion: Approach the post office with your post receipt and inquire about the date of delivery of your RTI application. Start counting down the days from the indicated delivery day.

Harassment of RTI applicants by officers

Experience shows that some officers are not willing to share information and may call applicants on mobile phones and question their motives for seeking information or ask them to withdraw their application. Some even threaten to terminate the applicant's benefits.



Suggestions: If you are concerned about potential backlash from the IO and/or other officers of the public authority, you could try to build a support network before submitting your RTI application. Reach out to your Disabled People's Organisation, activist groups, or other NGOs and ask for an intervention (i.e. making a complaint to the Divisional Secretary alongside the RTI Act) if needed. Another strategy is organising group RTIs with peers with the same question/ problem. In severe scenarios, approach the police if you feel comfortable about it.

Non-receipt of a confirmation of receipt ("Acknowledgement")

IOs do not always send a confirmation of receipt (RTI 02: "Acknowledgement") to RTI applicants. Instead, people receive the requested information within the set timeline (14 days).



Suggestion: Consider waiting for up to 14 days before appealing, and if you have not received a response from the IO by then, make your appeal the next day.

Confirmation of receipt ("Acknowledgement")

RTI 02

Acknowledgment

Mr./Ms.

Registration Number:

.....

Date Request Received :

This is to inform you under Section 24 (3) of the Right to Information Act, No 12 of 2016 that we have received your information request datedrequesting the following information

We will inform you of our decision on your request within 14 days.

For further details, please contact the following officer during working hours. Please mention the Registration Number provided regarding your request when contacting.



Keep the
document in a
safe place

Date:
Office:
Contact Number:
Email:

Information Officer's
Name :
Designation:

Preparation of an RTI appeal

RTI appeal form

If you are not satisfied with the Information Officer's (IO) response (e.g. the information provided is incomplete or the IO refuses to share it) or if you have not received any response from the IO, you can file an appeal to the Designated Officer (DO). The DO is the first appellate authority in the respective public authority. The name of the DO should appear on the response from the IO to you. If not, do not hesitate to inquire with the public authority. Please note: if no DO has been appointed by a State institution, the head of a department or body becomes the DO.

You can either request the RTI appeal form (RTI 10) from the IO or download it [here](#): [RTI 10](#). However, the form is not compulsory. You can also write an appeal letter with the information required (check out the appeal form) justifying the appeal.

Filling the form

Ask friends, family members, or an NGO for help. Remember: you must sign the form with your name or fingerprint!

Keep your documents safe and organised!

It is important that you keep any evidence in a safe place (e.g. waterproof folder) until your RTI request has been fully processed. This includes:

- a copy of your RTI application form
- the confirmation of receipt ("Acknowledgement")
- the postal receipt (if you sent your RTI application via registered post)
- the response by the IO



If you make a mistake during the RTI application process, the IO cannot just reject your application. Instead, the IO has to let you know immediately about any mistake or discrepancy and help you fix the issue ([RTI Regulation 2004/66](#)).



If you send your RTI application to the IO, and the IO knows that another public authority has that information, the IO has to send your RTI request to that other public authority and inform you about it. The IO has 7 days (starting from the day of receipt of your RTI application) to review your request and pass it on to that other authority. Remember: the days it takes to deliver your RTI application by registered post do not count in this 7-day period! ([RTI Regulation 2004/66](#)).

RTI appeal form

RTI 10

Appeal to the Designated Officer

Designated Officer,

Public Authority:

Appeal Form

01. Name of Person Appealing:

02. Address:

03. Contact Number (if any):

04. Email Address (if any):

05. Date request made to Information Officer
and Registration Number :

06. Did you receive a reply from the Information Officer ? Yes/No :

(if Yes and you have a copy, please attach; otherwise provide details of reply)

07. Grounds for Appeal:

- i. The Information Officer refuses a request made for information
- ii. The Information Officer refuses access to the information on the ground that such information is exempted from being granted under Section 5
- iii. Non-compliance with time frames specified in the Act
- iv. The Information Officer granted incomplete, misleading or false information
- v. The Information Officer charged excessive fees
- vi. The Information Officer refused to provide information in the form requested
- vii. The requestor has reasonable grounds to believe that information has been deformed, destroyed or misplaced to prevent the requestor from having access to the information

Details:

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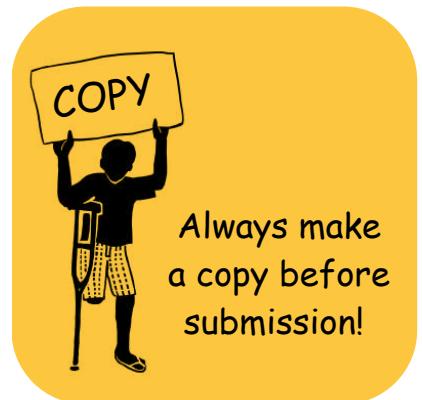
.....

08. Brief description of information requested:

09. If Appeal has not been submitted within the specified time period, cause of delay [s. 31(5)]:

10. Any other details:

Date:



Submission of your appeal to the Designated Officer



You can submit your RTI appeal in person, via registered post or by email to the Designated Officer (DO).

In-person

You can directly approach the DO when submitting your appeal to the public authority. Like with the IO, the DO's name and contact information should be visible on the notice board or other signs and, if available, on the authority's website. Remember to keep a copy of your RTI appeal before handing it in! This copy might be necessary later if you decide to appeal to the RTI Commission in Colombo. The DO must acknowledge receipt of your appeal ("Acceptance of Appeal") in writing within 3 working days.

Registered post

You also have the option to send your appeal via registered mail. If you have submitted multiple RTI applications separately to the IO, it is advisable to send your appeals for each RTI application separately as well. Be sure to retain the postal receipt as evidence of your submission. Apart from that, you may need to follow up with the postal service to confirm the delivery date of the appeal and get a sense of the timeline related to the confirmation of receipt ("Acceptance of Appeal") by the DO (3 working days). Do not forget to make a copy of your RTI appeal before submission! This copy may be necessary if you want to appeal to the RTI Commission.

Email

You can email the appeal to the respective authority's DO if you obtain the necessary details (e.g. they can be displayed on the website). Similar to your initial RTI application, it is advisable to follow up by phone to ensure the email has been received. Keep the email saved until your RTI application has been fully processed. This email also serves as evidence of your appeal submission. It also helps establish the timeline for the pending confirmation of receipt ("Acceptance of Appeal") from the DO, which should be issued within 3 working days.



You should receive a confirmation of receipt of the appeal ("Acceptance of Appeal"), regardless of the method used (in person, post or email)! You should receive the receipt within 3 working days. Keep this document in a safe place. You may need it in the event of an appeal to the RTI Commission!

Confirmation of receipt ("Acceptance of Appeal")

RTI 08

Mr./Ms.

Appeal No:

Date Request Received :

Public Authority:.....

In accordance with the Right to Information Act No. 12 of 2016

We write to inform you of the acceptance of your Appeal.

We have received your appeal under Section 31 (1) of the Act against the decision of the Information Officer regarding your request for information with Reg. No.....

Your Appeal has been registered as Appeal No.dated.....and instructions have been given for necessary action to be taken. In this respect, we draw your attention to Section 31 (3) of the Act which states that a decision on an appeal is to be taken within 3 weeks of its receipt.

I will inform you the time and date to meet me in case if your presence is deemed necessary for the inquiry.

Hereinafter, when contacting us regarding this Appeal or to provide more details please mention the Appeal No. provided above.

Yours,
Faithfully,

(signed.)
Designation Officer (Name & Designation)
Contact Number:
Email:

!!

Keep the
document in a
safe place

Possible challenges and suggestions

Delivery delays of registered post

- 1) Sometimes, registered posts can arrive later than expected. Bear in mind that the timeline (21 days) for responding to your RTI appeal begins only after the DO receives your appeal.
- 2) If your appeal arrives on delay or rather after the expiry of the 14-day period, the DO can still accept it if he/she finds reasonable cause for the late delivery.

Suggestions:



- 1) Approach the post office with your post receipt and inquire about the date of delivery of your RTI appeal. Start counting down the days from the indicated delivery day.
- 2) Given the potential delays with registered post deliveries, make sure to send your appeal a couple of days before the expiry of the 14-day timeline!

Getting hold of the appeal form

There are a few options if you cannot access the internet to download and print the appeal form or if you find it uncomfortable to approach the IO.



Suggestion: Ask your family members, friends, activists, or members of a Disabled People's Organisation for help (either to download and print the form or accompany you to the IO's office to retrieve the document). You can also write an appeal letter with the information required (see appeal form RTI 10).

Preparing an appeal to the RTI Commission

If you are not satisfied with the response you got from the Designated Officer (DO), or if you have not obtained any response from the DO within 21 days, you can appeal to the RTI Commission within 2 months. The RTI Commission is composed of 5 Commissioners, including a Chairperson, who will review your appeal.

You can get the appeal form [here](#). If you cannot download and print the form, you can write an appeal letter instead that covers all the necessary aspects (check the form below for key information required). Please note that you must file 2 copies of your appeal form/ letter along with the required documents listed below:

- your RTI application (RTI 01 or letter)
- the reply, if any, received from the Information Officer
- your appeal made to the Designated Officer (RTI 10 or appeal letter)
- the order, if any, received by the Designated Officer
- copies of other documents relied upon by you and referred to in your appeal to the RTI Commission, along with an index of all documents mentioned

!! If you do not follow these guidelines, the RTI Commission will not admit your appeal!
!! Do not forget to make a third copy of the appeal for yourself before submission.

Submission of your appeal to the RTI Commission

You have two options to send your appeal: you can either mail it through registered post or bring it in person to the RTI Commission office in Colombo.

RTI Commission
Room No 203
BMICH Premises
Bouddhalola Mawatha
Colombo-07



In-person

You can directly approach the RTI Commission and turn in your appeal alongside the supporting documents (two versions!). Remember to keep a third copy of the appeal for yourself before handing it in! This copy might be necessary later if you decide to appeal to the Court of Appeal.

Registered post

You also have the option to send your appeal through registered mail. Make sure to post your appeal several days before the expiry of the timeline (2 months) and keep the receipt in a safe place. Remember: the day of delivery of your appeal is the day of receipt of the appeal.



You should receive a confirmation of receipt of the appeal ("Acknowledgement")! If you submit the appeal in person, you will get the Acknowledgement immediately. However, if you send it through registered post, you will only receive it via mail after a couple of days.

Appeal form for the RTI Commission

1

Appeal to the RTI Commission

RTI Commission,
Room No 203,
BMICH Premises,
Bouddhalola Mawatha
Colombo-07

Appeal Form

01. Name of Person Appealing:

02. Address:

03. Contact Number (if any):

04. E-mail Address (if any):

05. Name, Address and Contact details of authorized representative (if any):
.....

06. Name of Public Authority concerned:.....

07. Name, Address and Contact Details of Information Officer concerned:
.....

08. Date request made to Information Officer
and Registration Number :

(Attach copy of request)

09. Did you receive a reply from the Information Officer ? Yes/No:
.....

(If Yes, attach copy of reply)

10. Date of receipt of decision from the Information Officer:

11. Name, Address and Contact Details of Designated Officer whose decision is appealed
against:

12. Date Appeal made to Designated Officer and Appeal Number:.....

13. Did you receive a decision from the Designated Officer? Yes/No:

(If Yes, attach copy of decision)

14. Date of receipt of decision from the Designated Authority:

15. Grounds of Appeal :

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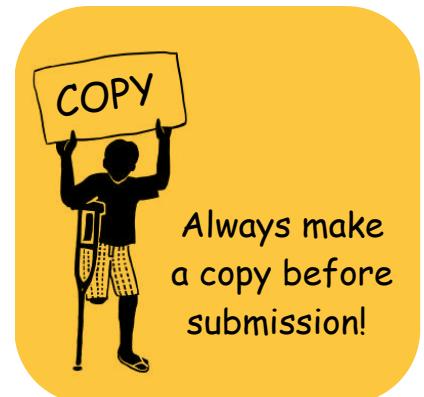
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Confirmation of receipt ("Acknowledgement")

Right to Information Commission

Notice to the Appellant

Appeal Registration Number:

..... Vs.

From: Right to Information Commission,
Colombo.

To :

Whereas an appeal has been presented by resident of (address) and has been registered in this Commission as above;

And whereas the aforesaid appeal is being considered/heard by the Commission at (location of hearing)

And whereas consideration/hearing on the aforesaid appeal shall be conducted on the of 20.....

Now therefore it is hereby ordered as under; (Note: Delete from the below that portion which is not applicable):

- You are summoned to appear before the aforesaid Information Commissioner/s in person (or through an authorized representative) or through video-conferencing (if the facility is available), on the aforesaid date of hearing at am/ pm (time) to participate in the hearing on the above appeal under Rule 20 of the Commission's Rules on Appeals. You are directed to file your Written Submissions (if any) before the Commission at least seven days before the aforesaid date of hearing. The relevant Public Authority and/or any relevant third party(ies) have been directed to serve their statement of objections and/or other documentation relied on to you within seven days of being notified of the same by the Commission.
- The appeal will be heard by way of documentary proceedings under Rule 19 of the Commission's Rules on Appeals. You are directed to submit the Written Submissions to be relied upon (if any) to reach the aforesaid Information Commissioner/s at least seven days before the aforesaid date of consideration of the documentation. The relevant Public Authority and/or any relevant third party(ies) have been directed to serve their statement of objections and/or other documentation relied on to you within seven days of being notified of the same by the Commission.
- The Appeal will be heard by way of Initial Assessment under Rule 18 of the Commission's Rules on Appeals. You are directed to show cause within seven days of this Notice as to why the Appeal should not be dismissed.
- You are directed to produce the following documents/ things before the aforesaid Information Commissioner/s on the aforesaid date of hearing/consideration:

.....
.....

Take notice that in default of your appearance on the above mentioned date, the appeal may be heard and determined in your absence.

Date:

.....
For and on Behalf of the
Right to Information Commission



Keep the
document in a
safe place

Potential challenges and suggestions

Delivery (delays) of registered post

- 1) Sometimes, registered posts can arrive later than expected. Bear in mind that the timeline (2 months) for responding to your RTI appeal begins after you have received a response from the Designated Officer (DO) or have not obtained any reply at all.
- 2) If your appeal to the RTI Commission is delivered on delay (i.e. after the expiry of the 2-month period), despite a timely posting, the RTI Commission may still admit your appeal due to reasons beyond your control.

Suggestions:



- 1) Approach the post office with your post receipt and inquire about the date of delivery of your RTI appeal to the DO. Start counting down the days from the indicated delivery day.
- 2) Given the potential delays with registered post deliveries, make sure to send your appeal to the RTI Commission at least a week before the expiry of the 2-month timeline!

Failure to comply with the guidelines/ other deficiencies

If you have missed a document and/or not provided the required information in the appeal form, the RTI Commission may return the appeal to you. Do not worry about it! The RTI Commission will let you know about the problem and the date by when you should resubmit your revised appeal.

Your appeal will be returned through hand delivery, registered post (subject to confirmation of receipt) or service by email (if you have indicated your email address on the appeal form or letter).

Suggestions:



- 1) Ask a friend, family member or a person you trust to help you revise your appeal and collate all the information required. Before re-submission, double-check everything, including with the help of someone else!
- 2) Remember to send your revised appeal on time (ideally a couple of days before the set date of submission)!

Things that could happen before and after your RTI submission

Personal interactions

If you want to prepare an RTI application and do not get the necessary support from the Information Officer (IO), you can take the following actions:

- Complain to the Head of Department or Public Authority

If the IO is not helping you, you can complain to their head (e.g. head of department, head of public authority). These people are in charge of the operations and should ensure you get the support you need as prescribed by law (RTI Act and its regulations).

- Seek help from a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO)

If you cannot tackle the problem with the public authority alone, try reaching out to a local DPO. The staff might be able to assist you or guide you on what to do next.

- Stay calm in tense conversations

If things get tense when talking to the IO or DO, try to stay calm. Remember, they have a duty to help you with your RTI request.

- Ask for Accompaniment

If you are feeling uncomfortable dealing with the officers, reach out to someone to come with you for support. This could be a friend, family member, or a person from a support group (e.g. DPO). Having someone there might make the process easier for you.

Threats over the phone

If someone calls you, claiming to be an officer, and threatens to stop your disability allowance because you filed an RTI application, try to stay calm. This threat is against the law! Experience shows that on some occasions, people may try to pressure you to withdraw your RTI application or appeal - however, this is illegal. Here is what you can do:

- Stay calm and gather the following information:

- Write down the officer's name.
- Note down their phone number.
- Record the date and time of the call.
- Try to remember exactly what the officer said.

- If needed, ask someone to help you with taking notes after the phone call.

- Once you have all the details, you can:

- Officially complain to the relevant public authority. You can write a letter about what happened.
- Seek support from a local Disabled People's Organisation.

- In serious situations, like if the officer or other people keep calling despite your complaint, you can go to the police. However, make sure you have all the information (i.e. evidence like screenshots of the phone calls) before you approach the police station. Remember, it is important to keep calm and gather all the necessary details before taking any action.

Recommendations - Questions for RTI applications

These questions are only recommendations and not mandatory. They were gathered through a number of workshops for/with people with disabilities over the last years:

Disability lifelong allowance

- What are the selection criteria for disability lifelong allowance? Please share the regulation.
- What is the application procedure for a disability lifelong allowance? Please provide information regarding the institutions, departments and officers involved and indicate timelines. Add any relevant regulations as well.
- Which institution (name and contact details) and officer (name and contact details of the officer) are currently processing my disability lifelong allowance application?
- What is the budget for disability lifelong allowance allocated to the province [PLEASE ADD] and division [PLEASE ADD] over the past 3 years?
- Why did the monthly payment of my disability lifelong allowance stop last [PLEASE ADD month or year]?
- Under what conditions can my disability lifelong allowance be terminated? Please provide the regulations.
- In which position is my application on the waiting list for disability lifelong support?
- What has the average waiting time been to receive disability lifelong allowance over the past 3 years?
- How many people are receiving disability lifelong support in the division [PLEASE ADD]? Please provide information on gender and age.
- How many people are on the waiting list for disability lifelong support?

Housing

- What are the selection criteria for the housing scheme for disabled people?
- What is the application procedure for housing allowance for disabled people? Please provide information regarding the institutions, departments and officers involved and indicate timelines. Please provide information regarding the institutions, departments and officers involved and indicate timelines. Add any relevant regulations as well.
- What is the budget for housing allowance for disabled people allocated to the province [PLEASE ADD] and division [PLEASE ADD] over the past 3 year?
- What has the average waiting time been to receive [PLEASE ADD housing allowance/ instalment 1/ instalment 2] over the past 3 years?
- What is the reason/ are the reasons that I have not received the [PLEASE ADD first/second] instalment of the housing scheme yet?
- How many people are currently receiving the housing allowance for disabled people in the division [PLEASE ADD]? Please break down the number of people (including gender and age) and payments (instalments) made.

Samurdhi

- What are the selection criteria for Samurdhi?
- Why do I not get Samurdhi despite meeting all the criteria?
- Can I receive Samurdhi and disability lifelong allowance at the same time? Please share the relevant regulation.
- Why did the monthly payment of my Samurdhi payment disability stop two months ago?
- At what stage is my Samurdhi application?
- How many people are receiving Samurdhi in the division [PLEASE ADD]?

RTI activities

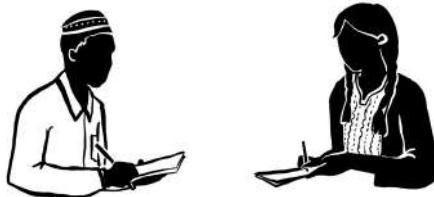
Group RTI applications

Submitting group RTI applications can be really useful in spreading information among members of society and also in making public authorities improve their data sets on issues related to people with disabilities. Instead of just one person asking for information, several people ask the same question in separate RTI applications under their own names. These groups can be small, with as few as three people or more.

The idea behind group RTIs is that when more people ask for the same information, it becomes harder for authorities to ignore or deny it. Plus, there is strength in numbers. If one person faces harassment or needs to follow up or appeal, having others involved provides mutual support.

Group RTIs can be particularly effective when dealing with authorities who are hesitant to share information. When you are considering appealing to the RTI Commission, using a group RTI can add extra pressure and increase the chances of getting the information you are seeking.

Suggestion: Make sure that everyone monitors the RTI timelines and collects the relevant receipts and other evidence (e.g. copy of RTI application forms). This will be essential in the event of appeals.



Example

A group of 11 individuals with disabilities from Wattala submitted their RTI applications to the respective Divisional Secretariat. They sought details regarding the Selection Criteria for the Lifelong Disability Allowance, including any pertinent Circulars. The group RTI was supported by a nonprofit organisation that provided guidance and assistance to those who required help completing the RTI application form.

None of the group members received any confirmation of receipt or decision from the Information Officer. Consequently, the group proceeded to lodge appeals to the Designated Officer. Eventually, they received the requested information via postal mail within the timeframe stipulated by the RTI Act.

RTI circular submission



Submitting RTI applications together ("RTI circular submission") can be a beneficial approach for familiarising disabled people with the procedure. The RTI circular submission involves repeating the same process in a group multiple times, helping applicants gradually become more comfortable with it. With each repetition, individuals are likely to feel more at ease and capable of ensuring that all necessary details are addressed from the outset of their inquiry.

Moreover, circular submissions can enhance accountability by prompting Information Officers (IOs) to adhere to the RTI Act and Regulations. This includes IOs issuing confirming receipts with application numbers and accurately recording RTI applications in the public authority's RTI recording system.

To prepare for an RTI circular submission, you will need a group of 8 to 20 people who prepare several RTI applications (see RTI 01) to the same public authority, either individually or as a group or both. Next, identify 4-8 people who are willing to submit all RTI applications in person - including on behalf of the rest of the group.

Preparation

- Print the RTI Act or download it on your phone (just in case you get questioned).
- Check out the name and office of the IO before the day of submission!
- Plan the order of submission (who goes first, who is next, etc.).

Submission Process

- Divide all RTI applications evenly among the people who are taking part in the circular submission (e.g. if you have 5 people and 25 RTI requests, each person gets 5 documents).
- Remind everyone of the queue order (who submits first, who is next, etc.).
- Each person submits 1 RTI application at a time, waiting for the "Acknowledgment".
- Once the last person submits his/her first application, the first person starts again with their second RTI application. This cycle continues until all 25 RTI applications are submitted, with each person taking their turn each time.
- Instruct everyone to carefully check the details on the "Acknowledgement form" before leaving the office. If there is a mistake, they need to talk to the IO!
- Tell everyone to stay calm throughout the process and not to enter into any discussions.

Suggestions:

- 1) Depending on the accessibility and space of the public authority, you may want to adapt this approach.
- 2) You can combine this approach with Group RTI applications and a flash mob (see next page) to increase the visibility of your action.
- 3) If people feel uncomfortable approaching the IO of the public authority operating in their division, they could seek support from peers residing in another division.



RTI flash mob

Flash mobs are a simple way for a group of people to gather (seemingly) abruptly in public and draw attention to the predetermined topic. The group performs an act for a short time and then disperse. The planning process is straightforward, taking only about 20 to 60 minutes, depending on factors such as the number of participants and the method of spreading the message to bystanders.

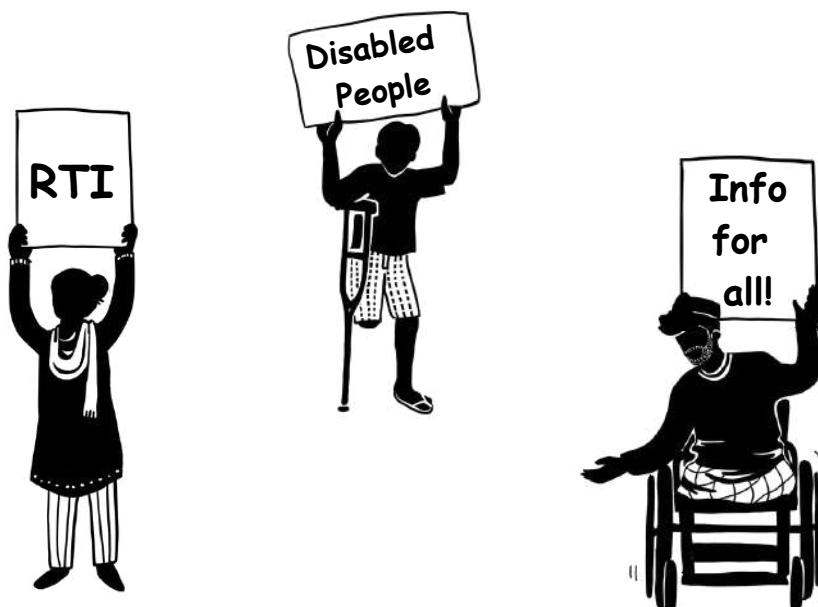
Here is an example of a potential flash mob, but you can certainly develop your own activity:

Preparation

- If you have a group of eight or more individuals interested in submitting RTI applications, you can utilise the paper folders each person carries to contain their application.
- On the back of each folder, participants can write statements related to the group's chosen topic, such as "Information for all!" For instance, you could designate 2 people to write "Information for all!" while others put down phrases like "Right to Information", group identifiers like "disabled people", RTI application topics such as "housing scheme", and specific information desired like "policies" and "selection criteria".
- To ensure maximum visibility, select good positions along pathways or in front of the respective public authority for each participating person (this can happen a day before submission of the RTI applications or right before submission).
- Select a person who makes an agreed sign to start the flash mob.

Delivery

- Once the group has turned in their RTI application and exits the building, make sure to keep the confirmation receipts ("Acknowledgement") in a safe place or securely hold them in folders.
- Position yourselves as agreed upon.
- Wait for the selected person to make the agreed sign to everyone to kick off the flash mob.
- Now, raise the folders, displaying the statements to passersby.
- Together, chant a phrase like "Access to information for everyone, access to information for people with disabilities" three times before leaving the scene.



RTI performance

Public dance performances can be a powerful tool to engage with society and create awareness about the RTI Act and disabled people's need to access essential information. Here are some suggestions on how to put together a brief dance performance.



First steps

- The time needed to prepare a short public performance varies based on the group.
- Begin by discussing ideas collectively.
- Evaluate the potential performance spot for accessibility and choreography needs.
- Consider outlining the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved, such as dancers and logistics helpers.
- Obtain necessary permits from the authorities for your public performance and the use of loudspeakers if you would like to play music.

Preparation

- Discuss the message: Within the group, explore the intended message of the performance and ways to communicate it to the audience effectively.
- Movement development: Develop a choreography to show the RTI procedure to the audience.
- Other methods to communicate your message: Explore the use of posters with messages like "Access to Information for All" or short phrases to be spoken during the performance.
- Props: Decide on the use of additional props if necessary (choose items you can find at home).
- Music selection: If permitted, choose music for the performance. Alternatively, consider creating rhythms using household items like empty bottles.
- Logistics: Arrange transportation to the performance location and remind participants to bring water and snacks.

Day of the Performance

- Punctuality: Ensure everyone arrives on time, including those submitting RTI applications, if this is part of the plan.
- Location setup: Inspect the performance area for safety hazards, removing any potential obstacles like rocks or debris.

For more detailed information, please take a look at the training resource
"Transformative Human Rights Education through Dance. The Right to Information. Sri Lanka".



Fees

3. Application Fees:

(1) No Public Authority shall charge any fee to provide a Right to Information Application Form to a citizen making an information request.

(2) No Public Authority shall charge any fee to process a Right to Information request.

4. Fees for Information: Unless otherwise prescribed, the following Fees may be charged by a Public Authority for the provision of information in response to an RTI request:

(i) Photocopying:

(a) Rs. 2/- (one side) and 4/- (both sides) of one paper, for the information provided on A4 (21 cm x 29.7 cm) and smaller size paper

(b) Rs. 4/- (one side) and 8/- (both sides) of one paper for the information provided on paper that is Legal size (21.59 cm x 35.56 cm) and up to A3 (29.7 cm x 42 cm)

(c) Information provided on paper bigger than those mentioned above will be at actual cost.

(ii) Printout

(a) Rs. 4/- (one side) and 8/- (both sides) of one paper, for the information provided on A4 (21 cm x 29.7 cm) and smaller size paper

(b) Rs. 5/- (one side) and 10/- (both sides) of one paper for the information provided on paper that is Legal size (21.59 cm x 35.56 cm) and up to A3 (29.7 cm x 42 cm)

(c) Information printed on paper bigger than those mentioned above will be at actual cost.

(iii) Rs. 20/- for copying information onto a Diskette, Compact Disc, USB mass drive, or similar electronic device, provided by the citizen making the request.

(iv) Actual cost for copying information onto a Diskette, Compact Disc, USB mass drive, or similar electronic device provided by the Public Authority.

(v) Rs. 50/- per hour for the study or inspection of any document or material, or inspection of a construction site, if this takes longer than one hour, with the first hour of study/inspection being provided free of charge. This shall be without prejudice to the practice of public authorities which previously provided such inspection free of charge and which practice shall continue notwithstanding this sub-rule.

(vi) Samples or models will be charged the actual cost.

(vii) Information provided via e-mail will be free of charge.

See also: Regulation 2004/66 (3 February 2017)

National laws, regulations and RTI forms

Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No 28 of 1996
[English](#)

Right to Information Act, No 12 of 2016
[English](#)

Right to Information Regulations Gazette No 2002/42 (20 January 2017)
[English](#)

Right to Information Regulations Gazette No 2004/66 (3 February 2017)
[English](#)

Right to Information Regulations Gazette No 2006/43 (17 February 2017)
[English](#)

Circular No RTI/01/2022 (17 August 2022)
[Sinhala only](#)

RTI forms
[English](#), [Tamil](#) and [Sinhala](#)

Guide

This guide is designed to facilitate the submission of Right to Information (RTI) applications by people with disabilities in Sri Lanka. It is intended for use by disabled people's organisations, activists, researchers, and other practitioners who assist RTI applicants.

The guide offers insights to both (disabled) individuals and organisations supporting disabled applicants, as well as applicants themselves, on navigating the submission and appeal process. It shares lessons learned and provides advice on overcoming challenges in obtaining information. It also offers recommendations for strategic application approaches and examples of questions commonly posed by people with disabilities in rights awareness workshops.

The guide draws on the project "Performing/ Informing Rights - Dance, Right to Information & Sustainable Development for Disabled People" (2021-2023) funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council.



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