



Centre for Peace and  
Development Initiatives

# **Struggle for Predicating Investigative Journalism on RTI in Pakistan**

# **Struggle for Predicating Investigative Journalism on RTI in Pakistan**

## Contents

Acknowledgements.....	1
Introduction:.....	1
Trainings of Journalists on the Use of RTI Legislation for Investigative Reporting:.....	2
Clarifying Misconceptions about RTI for Investigative Reporting: .....	2
Sharing Critical Information Retrieved through RTI Legislation with Journalists:.....	2
Exposing Secret Funds in Ministry of Information and Broadcasting:.....	3
RTI exposing nexus between Some Legal Eagles and the Ministry of Law and Justice:.....	6
RTI Exposing Prime Minister’s Expensive Foreign Trips:.....	8
RTI as a Tool for Unearthing Inefficient Practices in Public Bodies: .....	9
Establishment of RTI Helpline for Journalists:.....	10
Establishment of Information Clearing House: .....	10
RTI Champion Award: .....	10
RTI for Investigative reporting in Health Sector: .....	11
Using RTI for Investigative Reporting to Determine Implementation Status of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab RTI Laws: .....	12
Using RTI for Investigative Reporting to Prove Ineffectiveness of Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002: .....	12
Using RTI for Investigative Reporting on Utilization of Public Funds: .....	12
Investigative Reporting and CPDI RTI Requests: .....	13
Conclusion: .....	22

## Acknowledgements

Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, (CPDI) acknowledges contribution of the following staff to this research report.

Mr. Zahid Abdullah for write-up of the report and coordinating the research;

Ms. Ambreen Kanwal and Ms. Mahrukh Hasan for their assistance in this research;

Mr. Naveed Ashraf for designing this report;

## Introduction:

Right to information legislation has immense potential to be used as a tool for investigative reporting.

This report gives an account of how persistently CPDI has advocated for the use of RTI legislation for investigative reporting in Pakistan over the years and how successfully journalists have started using right to information laws of Pakistan for investigative reporting in 2014. First section of the report is based on the description of CPDI initiatives undertaken to promote the use of RTI legislation for investigative reporting and the 2<sup>nd</sup> section describes how journalists have used RTI laws for investigative reporting in 2014. It goes to the credit of journalists that they have been able to use RTI for investigative reporting despite the fact that media houses do not allocate funds to build capacity of journalists to learn how to use RTI for investigative reporting and filing information requests.

# CPDI Engagement with Journalists on the Use of RTI for Investigative Reporting

---

CPDI engagement with journalists to promote and popularize the use of RTI legislation for investigative reporting has been at multiple levels ever since this engagement was started in 2006. Following is the detail of this engagement.

## **Trainings of Journalists on the Use of RTI Legislation for Investigative Reporting:**

CPDI has been imparting training to journalists on the use of RTI legislation for investigative reporting since 2007. These trainings have been held exclusively for journalists in Islamabad, Quetta, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Abbotabad. At the same time, trainings have also been imparted to those journalists who are part of District Right to Information Networks that CPDI has helped established in Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Lahore, Sargodha, Khushab, Jhang and Multan.

## **Clarifying Misconceptions about RTI for Investigative Reporting:**

Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives has consistently maintained that RTI can be a very potent and powerful tool for investigative reporting. Journalist would argue that they have to meet deadlines while retrieving information by submitting information is a time consuming process. Furthermore, some journalists would maintain that they are able to get access to information through their sources. Our position has been that filing information requests for investigative stories and meeting deadlines are not mutually exclusive. We have always argued that while there is no denying the fact that journalists have to constantly meet deadlines but at the same time filing an information request does not take much time. If a journalist continues filing information request, in the fullness of time he starts gathering enough data to work with to file investigative reports. Furthermore, there is certain type of information which cannot be gathered by a journalist no matter how well connected the journalist might be but RTI helps gather such information

## **Sharing Critical Information Retrieved through RTI Legislation with Journalists:**

Ever since 2006, CPDI has been setting example by using RTI laws and sharing with journalists information gathered through the use of RTI laws. As a result, CPDI was able to practically demonstrate how RTI laws could be used for investigative reporting. Following are some of the case studies in this regard.

## Exposing Secret Funds in Ministry of Information and Broadcasting:

**Issue:** utilization of public funds by ministries as secret funds without proper scrutiny and public accountability

**Background:** it is a common knowledge in Pakistan that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting operates a secret fund. Allegations have been leveled against successive governments that this fund is used to buy loyalties of journalists and media houses. Even term 'Lifafa journalist' (implying that money is given to certain journalists in 'envelopes' to toe the government line) has been used for quite some time. CPDI submitted information request to know why Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was operating a secret fund and also sought details of the beneficiaries of this fund.

**Date of Submitting Information Request:** August 29, 2008

**RTI Law Referred:** Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002

### RTI Request and Action Taken:

1. Certified copies of the strategy/advertisement plans to spend funds under Special Publicity Fund budget head from October 01, 2002 to March 20, 2008.
2. Certified information about the names and addresses of media houses/PR firms/consultants/journalists/individuals that received funds under Special Publicity Fund from October 01, 2002 to March 20, 2008.
3. Certified copies of the contracts under which Ministry of Information and Broadcasting released funds to media houses/PR firms/consultants/journalists/individuals from Special Publicity Fund from October 01, 2002 to March 20, 2008.

On 25 September, 2008 the Ministry denied the information saying that: 'the whole operation of Special Publicity Fund falls under category of classified information. It is, therefore, exempted under Section 8, 14, 17 of Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002.' In a letter to Federal Ombudsman dated October 24, 2008, the ministry took the plea before the Wafaqi Mohtasib that that the Special Publicity Fund is and allocation made under the Head of the Account "A 03914-Secret Services Expenditure" similar to Secret Fund provided to any organization of the government. On 25th November, 2008 Zahid Abdullah wrote a rejoinder to the Ombudsman stating that Special Publicity Fund is put in 'Others' category in budget for 2008-9. Furthermore, there were some other allocations in 'Others' category such as 'Pakistan Institute of National Affairs', 'Internews', 'Institute of Regional Studies' and 'News Network International' were also put in this 'Others' category. Zahid Abdullah maintained that he saw no reason why the information pertaining to the utilization of 'Special Publicity Fund' could be termed as classified and that if it indeed was classified information, then by the same token, there should not be access to information on the expenditure of Pakistan Institute National Affairs, Internews,

Institute of Regional Studies and News Network International. In its response on December 17, 2008, the ministry maintained that the fund was declared by the Finance Division as secret through its letter dated April 29, 1976. The ministry also stated that the Secretary had declared the information sought by the complainant as secret in exercise of the powers given to him in terms of Chapter 4 of the booklets titled ‘Security of Classified Matter in government Departments’ issued by the Cabinet Division. This letter makes a very interesting reading. Justifying the reason for the existing of this fund, the letter says this fund is to counter the ‘hostile propaganda’ and ‘for wider dissemination of government’s policies and activities. Terming the Special Publicity Fund as secret, the letter says: “the account will not be subject scrutiny by even the Audit Authority”. On October 27, 2010, deciding on this information request, Federal Ombudsman wrote: “It is not the function of this office to call for and scrutinize the expenditure met from allocations made under the head ‘Special Publicity Fund’ to see whether it was really made for the stated objectives and that the disclosure of which could be against national interest. The parliament has approved the allocations made. In view of the fact that NIS identifies the Special Publicity fund as Secret Service Expenditure, the contention of the ministry seems to be correct. In view of the foregoing, the refusal by the ministry to provide the information sought by the complainant was justified. Consequently, the complaint is rejected”. Zahid Abdullah filed representation to the president of Pakistan against this decision on November 29, 2010. However, President of Pakistan has not taken up this matter yet.

#### **Action Taken:**

CPDI organizational ability to mount a sustained media campaign and belief in diversity in the workforce helped inform the national debate on secret funds as well as created awareness about the rights of the disabled. We contributed an Opinion-Editorial pages article to daily Dawn titled ‘Public and Secret Funds’ which was published on December 07, 2010. The link is <http://dawn.com/2010/12/07/public-and-secret-funds-by-zahid-abdullah/>. This article helped generate debate on this issue. Mati Ullah Jan, one of the leading journalist in Pakistan contacted CPDI to get the background information about our information requests pertaining to secret funds. He conducted one hour exclusive talk show on this issue at prime time on Dawn TV. CPDI representative, one former information minister and retired bureaucrats were invited to this talk show and there was exhaustive debate on secret funds. The link of this program is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KLEm6rOKkk>

As CPDI was campaigning against the secret fund being operated by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and its alleged use to buy loyalties of journalists, another development occurred in June 2011, which contributed, to our cause. An email started circulating containing names of prominent journalists and the number of plots and the amount they had received from one media tycoon Malik Riaz. Hamid Mir and Absar Alam, two senior journalists moved Supreme Court on July 18, 2012. They also raised the issue of secret fun and included Ministry of Information and Broadcasting as one of the respondents. CPDI decided to be a party in this case as we thought we could contribute to issue raised in this petition regarding the secret funds

as we had the documentary evidence that such fund was being operated by the ministry-a fact specifically denied by the Information Minister on September 08, 2012. Furthermore, we were not satisfied with one of the grounds for filing the petition. The ground B of the petition said: “That a strict adherence to section 7 of the Freedom of Information Ordinance, 2002, read with Article 19 A of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, would render most sources of public information verified and true thereby leaving no room for one sided reporting/journalism.”. Apart from other well documented weaknesses, FOI Ordinance 2002 contains list of information to be provided and three separate lists of exempted information. A good information law contains clearly and narrowly defined exempted information and the rest of the information is considered to be public information-something clearly overlooked by the drafters and the movers of the petition. CPDI has been advocating for the repeal of this law whereas this petition seeks strict adherence to Section 7 of the FOI Ordinance 2002. On October 08, 2012, a day before CPDI was going to file petition to be made party in Hamid Mir and Absar Alam petition, we share our intention with the media through a press release. ‘CPDI to give evidence of secret fund in SC’ carried a headline the News International on October 09, 2012 <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-136585-CDPI-to-give-evidence-of-secret-fund-in-SC>

**Innovation: Intertwining of Right to Information with Right of Access to Justice for All:**

The saga of our campaign on secret funds took another twist when Zahid Abdullah went to file the petition on October 11, 2012. Despite repeated requests by Zahid Abdullah who happens to be blind, that he had the right to represent himself in person before the court, the official at the Registrar’s Office remained adamant that Abdullah could only represent himself before the Supreme Court through ‘next friend’ or through ‘Advocate-on-Record’. He could have easily filed the petition through a friend or through Advocate-on-Record but he stood his ground, as it was violation of his right of access to justice, on equal basis with others. The same day, CPDI issued a press release deploring the fact that Supreme Court had disallowed a person to represent himself before the court on the basis of blindness. This press release was carried by national press as well as blogs dedicated to the rights of persons with disabilities. The coverage by a newspaper to this press release can be seen at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-136924-SC-refuses-blind-person-to-become-party-in-media-case>. The press release specifically mentioned Article 13 of UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities which is as under:

1. States Parties shall ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations, in order to facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect participants, including as witnesses, in all legal proceedings, including at investigative and other preliminary stages.



2. In order to help to ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities, States Parties shall promote appropriate training for those working in the field of administration of justice, including police and prison staff.

As a logical sequence of the events as they unfolded, in our campaign on secret funds, the right to information and the right of access to justice for all were intertwined. Zahid Abdullah filed appeal against the decision of Registrar's office on October 22, 2012 and the matter is still pending with the Supreme Court.

### **Lesson Learnt:**

There was informed debate about secret funds after information request brought to the fore evidence based information about the fact that Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was operating secret fund. Furthermore, keeping alive this debate on sustained basis helped issue of secret funds being included in the Hamid Mir and Absar Alam petition. Ultimately these secret/discretionary funds were abolished by PML-N government when it presented the budget for financial year 2013-14.

### **RTI exposing nexus between Some Legal Eagles and the Ministry of Law and Justice:**

#### **CPDI RTI Case Study**

**Issue:** Misuse of public funds by Ministry of Law and Justice.

**Background:** During General Musharraf rule, many leading lawyers of the country would defend his policies in TV talk shows. CPDI decided to investigate this matter to determine whether there existed patron-client relationship between lawyers and the Ministry of Law and Justice.

**Date of Submitting Information Request:** May 05, 2008

**RTI Law Referred:** Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002

### **RTI Request:**

1. Certified copy of the list containing the names and addresses of lawyers hired by Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights to represent Federal Government/ Federation in Supreme Court of Pakistan from October 01, 2002 to March 20, 2008.
2. Certified information about the total amount paid by Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights as fee or in other heads to the lawyers who represented Federal Government/ Federation in Supreme Court of Pakistan during the same tenure.
3. Certified information about the fee paid by Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights to each lawyer from October 01, 2002 to March 20, 2008, to represent the Federal Government/ Federation in Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Ministry denied the information request, saying it would open a 'Pandora box'. The ministry also maintained that it was 'indirect interference into the working of the government on the part of Mr. Abdullah. Seeking this information.

### **Action Taken:**

CPDI remained undeterred and persisted to open this 'Pandora box'. We shared all the details with Ansar Abbasi, reporter 'The News International' and there was a front page story in 'Jang' and 'The News' on Monday, July 14, 2008 titled 'Law ministry protecting Musharraf's legal extravagance. This investigative initiative through RTI request finally paid off when MNA Begum Nuzhat Siddiqi asked the minister for law, justice and human rights the same question Zahid had been raising:" to show the names of lawyers, who pleaded the cases on behalf of the government cases in the Supreme Court during the last five years and the total amounts of fees paid to them in each case". The Minister provided the information and details of scandalous amounts paid to the lawyers were divulged, injudicious use of public funds was exposed. The news item pertaining to these revelations was a major story carried by print and electronic on Tuesday, August 12, 2008.

The details submitted in the National Assembly during the question hour showed that Musharraf had hired a huge team of 23 lawyers who were paid a total sum of about Rs30 million as fees. It transpired that Wasim Sajjad got Rs 8.2 million, Malik Qayyum Rs 8.2 million and Khalid Ranjha Rs 4 million to defend the presidential reference against the then Chief Justice of Pakistan.

### **Lessons Learnt:**

This case study shows that there exists nexus between some of the lawyers and the Ministry of Law and Justice. In this particular instance, the information request was filed when PPP coalition government was at the helm of affairs. Even then information about fee paid to the lawyers by Ministry of Law and Justice by the previous government was only partially shared after lot of feet-dragging on this issue. Interestingly, the same pattern has emerged again when PML-N is in power. The Ministry of Law and Justice was asked through information request filed under Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 on December 09, 2013 to provide information about the fee paid to lawyers to represent federation of Pakistan from November 01, 002 to November 01, 2013. On January 01, 2014, Iftikhar ul Hassan, Section Officer, DAS informed that no contract was signed by his division and lawyers. This information is being kept hidden despite letters and repeated reminders to the ministry and lodging complaint with Federal Ombudsman that information about the contracts between lawyers and the ministry has not been sought from a particular division but from the Ministry of Law and Justice. The dilly-dallying on the part of Ministry of Law and Justice continues. However, we are determined to throw sunshine on contracts between lawyers and the Ministry of Law and Justice.

## RTI Exposing Prime Minister's Expensive Foreign Trips:

### CPDI Case Study

**Issue:** Misuse of public funds on foreign trips.

**The Problem: Prime Minister's Expensive Foreign Trips:** It is often alleged that politicians take their cronies and favorite journalists on foreign trips wasting exorbitant amount of public funds. This was first of its kind information request that brought into the public domain huge expenses incurred on foreign trips undertaken by a Prime Minister during his tenure.

**RTI Law Referred:** Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002

#### **RTI Request and Action Taken:**

1. Information about total number of foreign trips of Prime Minister from April 01, 2008 to March 31, 2012.
2. Information about total amount spent on trips during the same period on account of Prime Minister's air travel, accommodation, local travel, daily allowance and miscellaneous expenses.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided the requested information on the intervention of Federal Ombudsman on March 18, 2013. Yousaf Raza Gillani, as Prime Minister of Pakistan, visited 50 countries from March 2008 to 2012 and total cost incurred on these trips amounted to Rs. 491,023,130.00.

#### **Action taken:**

Information was shared with media and it led to an investigative piece published in 'The News International' on April 03, 2013 with following headline:

[Gillani almost flew to the moon as PM](#)

#### **Lessons learnt:**

This case study shows that RTI is a great tool for investigative reporting. Umar Cheema filed an investigative report based on data provided by an RTI activist. Journalists can file investigative stories on their own by filing information requests.

#### **RTI Power:**

This case study shows power of right to information legislation. It is a common knowledge that public funds are squandered away on foreign trips. However, it was for the first time that exact amount was revealed on foreign trips undertaken by a Prime Minister.

## RTI as a Tool for Unearthing Inefficient Practices in Public Bodies:

**Issue:** Misuse of official vehicles.

**Background:** The misuse of official vehicles is a common knowledge. The log-book gives true account of the whereabouts of an official vehicle. CPDI has submitted information requests to all the Deputy Commissioners of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan and District Coordination Officers of Punjab under relevant laws of the land to have access to copies of the official vehicles under their use. The purpose of these information requests is to see how these log-books are being maintained by public officials. This case study is based on one such information request to Deputy Commissioner, Karachi East.

**Date of Submitting Information Request:** 29 March, 2013

**RTI Law Referred:** Sindh Freedom of Information Ordinance 2006

### **RTI Request and Action Taken:**

Certified copies of log book of each vehicle under the use of the Deputy Commissioner

Responding to the Ombudsman's order, DC Karachi (East) Sami Siddiqui submitted: "Since about last 12/13 years, the practice of maintenance of Log Book in respect of any government vehicle has been discontinued on the one hand and the Government of Sindh is not providing printed Log Books on the other hand. Hence this office is unable to provide certified copies of the Log Books in the present circumstances".

### **Action Taken:**

Information was shared with media and it led to an investigative piece published in 'The News International' on October 23, 2013 with following headline:

['No logbooks of thousands of official cars in Sindh helping criminals'](#)

Letter was sent to Sindh Ombudsman on December 02, 2013 asking Ombudsman to direct Sindh government to publish log-books and ensure proper maintenance of log-book for each official vehicle.

### **Lessons Learnt:**

This case study shows that RTI is a great tool for investigative reporting. Umar Cheema filed an investigative report based on data provided by an RTI activist. Journalists can file investigative stories on their own by filing information requests. This case study reveals how RTI can be an effective tool for unearthing inefficient practices in public bodies. RTI request revealed that log-books of official vehicles were not being maintained by public bodies in Sindh. It also revealed that the government of Sindh had not printed log-books for 12—13 years.

### **Establishment of RTI Helpline for Journalists:**

It is exceedingly important that journalists have a support mechanism available which facilitates them in filing information requests under different RTI laws of the country for their investigative reporting.

Keeping this in mind, CPDI established RTI helpline for journalists and citizens to facilitate them in drafting RTI requests and in order to answer their queries about RTI laws. The RTI Helpline has been functioning since February 27, 2014. CPDI procured two numbers for this purpose. These numbers are: 0092 51 2224496 and 0092 336 2224496. At the same time [rtihelpline@cpdi-pakistan.org](mailto:rtihelpline@cpdi-pakistan.org) email has also been created to share material with journalists and interact with them. CPDI trained staff manages RTI Helpline, queries of journalists are answered and proper data is maintained.

### **Establishment of Information Clearing House:**

It is extremely important that journalists have strong knowledge base with regard to RTI legislation. CPDI is maintaining a dedicated web site for journalists at [ich.cpdi-pakistan.org](http://ich.cpdi-pakistan.org) since January 27, 2014. This web site contains material pertaining to RTI laws and their use for investigative reporting. CPDI constantly updates this web site.

### **RTI Champion Award:**

CPDI as partner organization holding Secretariat of Coalition on Right to Information, (CRTI) constituted Annual RTI Champion Award to protect and promote citizens' right to information held by public bodies. The 1<sup>st</sup> award ceremony was held on 25th September 2014. Award was given in 3 categories: a citizen, a journalist and a NGO. The Award Committee comprising of Mr. Adnan Rehman, Mr. Zafar Ullah Khan and Ms. Sana Saleem awarded RTI Champion Award 2014 in the journalist category to Mr. Umar Cheema for contributing excellent analytical reports on RTI, perhaps, more than any other reporter.

# 2014: RTI for Investigative Reporting in Pakistan

---

As a result of CPDI's multi-pronged engagement with journalists spanning over 7 years coupled with the fact that the process of filing information requests under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab right to information laws is both cost-effective and easy, some truly remarkable stories were filed by journalists in Pakistan using these laws in 2014. It would not be wrong to conclude that 2014 has been an RTI for investigative reporting year in Pakistan. Journalists have used RTI laws in Pakistan in 2014 to report on social issues and to investigate claims of austerity by politicians. At the same time, they have also reported on the implementation status and the quality of RTI laws. In fact, some of the stories filed by journalists would perhaps not have been possible otherwise.

## **RTI for Investigative reporting in Health Sector:**

It is often alleged that health is an area of least concern for the governments in Pakistan. Politicians have generally shown interest in mega projects pertaining to infrastructure development that are more tangible at the expense of investing in long-term projects pertaining to health and education. Mr. Waseem Abbasi, 'The News International', through the strategic use of RTI, established negligence of government in the health sector. He submitted information request to all Executive District Officers, Health Department of all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab seeking certified information about the total number of Basic Health Units in the District, total number of sanctioned posts of doctors for all Basic Health Unit of the districts and total number of vacant posts of doctors and lastly, certified information about total number of sanctioned posts of doctors for each Basic Health Units and total number of vacant posts of doctors in each Basic Health Unit of the district. He established with certified information received through information requests submitted under the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013 that [out of 732 Basic Health Units in 10 districts of Punjab, 310 Basic Health Units were functioning without doctors.](#)

Based on information received through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013, he filed another story sharing that [there were no doctors in 70% of Basic Health Units in just 3 districts](#) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Similarly education is also not a priority area for provincial governments and it was proven through certified information received through RTI laws of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. Umar Cheema contributed an excellent investigative story headlined: [Education not top priority of Punjab, KP govts.](#) He revealed that approximately 42,000 positions of teachers were lying vacant in the Punjab and 4,550 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## **Using RTI for Investigative Reporting to Determine Implementation Status of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab RTI Laws:**

Despite the appointment of Information Commissioners in April, 2014, Punjab government continued dragging its feet on the issue of releasing funds for the establishment of Punjab Information Commission for a long time. As a result, Information Commissioners were forced to work from homes without any secretarial support. Umar Cheema came up with a brilliant idea of using RTI laws for investigating the progress on the implementation of Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013. He submitted information requests under RTI laws of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab to both commissions and Information Departments of KPK and Punjab asking about 17 questions pertaining to the establishment, funds and working of information commission. Punjab bureaucracy did not provide him complete information unlike Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information. He filed an excellent investigative story headlined: [Punjab conceals facts while KP provides requested details.](#)

## **Using RTI for Investigative Reporting to Prove Ineffectiveness of Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002:**

Interestingly, it was also established through RTI requests filed by journalists under Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 that it is a hopelessly ineffective law. In the case of RTI filed by Umar Cheema, it emerged that it is not the law but the persons asking the access to information determines whether the official will provide the requested information or not. The Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) chose not to provide requested information to Umar Cheema but the same request was entertained when a Member of National Assembly sought access to the same information. Mr. Cheema filed a story headlined: [FPSC also has double standards in giving information.](#) The second case, Sohaib Jamali filed information request to Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, asking about the list of companies registered with SECP. Instead of charging him for the fee for providing the requested information, SECP demanded him to deposit fee for the maintenance and production of the information. In his article, he shared not only how he was asked to deposit fee of [Rs. 0.2 million in bank to get requested information](#) but also highlighted the need for new robust RTI Law at Federal level. In the meanwhile, Mr. Jamali has lodged complaint with Federal Ombudsman and is awaiting decision. Azaz Syed also found Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 useless and contributed a story based on his experience of using this law with headline [Does access to information law not apply to Presidency?](#)

## **Using RTI for Investigative Reporting on Utilization of Public Funds:**

Journalists have also started using RTI laws for keeping track of the way public funds are being utilized. Riaz Khan Daudzai filed an investigative story based on the information received through the use of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa RTI law in which he shared that [The Khyber](#)

[Pakhtunkhwa government has spent Rs21.9 million on POL charges for planes, helicopters, other protocol](#), ministers and advisors to the chief minister during the first six months of the current financial year. Waseem Abbasi filed an information request to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government seeking certified information about the number of flights taken by the official helicopter of the chief minister of KPK from July 01 2013 to October 1, 2014, expenses incurred on fuel of the official helicopter of CM during the period from July 1, 2013 to October 1, 2014 and the list of passengers who travelled on CM's official helicopter during the above mentioned period along with their portfolio's and designations. Through this RTI request, he was able to [confirm that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf \(PTI\) chief Imran Khan has used a government helicopter fueled by the taxpayers money](#). Apart from this one, he also filed another investigative story on the use of helicopters based on information retrieved through the use of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa right to information law headlined: [KP govt using helicopters in violation of rules](#). He filed yet another investigative story headlined: [KP CM spends Rs2.6m on entertainment, bakery items](#).

### **Investigative Reporting and CPDI RTI Requests:**

Apart from using right to information laws for certified information for their investigative stories, journalists also filed stories on the implementation status of RTI laws and on the information received by CPDI through the use of RTI laws. Some such stories were headlined as [Most DCOs continue to jealously guard 'information'](#), [Punjab commission for review of laws against right to information](#), [Rs2.6 million spent on moon sighting in one year](#), [KPK govt better than Punjab in access to information](#), [No CT scan machines in 16 districts of Punjab, seven of KPK Right to Information Act](#) and [Article 19-A — freedom of information 'on paper, not in practice'](#). In this connection, an outstanding story was filed by Umar Cheema headlined [Freedom of Information law being violated; NA, Presidency reject any violation; Election Commission stands out by placing information on web](#).



### Detail of Investigative Stories Published in 2014 Using Right to Information Laws

S. No.	Date of filing Information Request	Information Requested	RTI Law	Date of story published	Story Headline	Newspaper	Link
1	02-01-2014	1. Certified copy of the log-book of each vehicle under the use of the District Coordination Officer from January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013?	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013	20-11-2014	Most DCOs continue to jealously guard 'information'	Dawn	<a href="#">Most DCOs continue to jealously guard 'information'</a>
2	25-03-2014	1. How many candidates appeared in CSS examination from 2003 to 2013. 2. How many candidates appeared each year 2003-2013? 3. District wise breakup of candidates appeared in CSS examination from 2003 to 2013. 4. What was the ratio of successful candidates during the said period? 5. What was their qualification (Specify their highest degree e.g. MA English etc.)? 6. District wise breakup of successful candidates along with their names?	Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002	16-11-2014	FPSC also has double standards in giving information	The News	<a href="#">FPSC also has double standards in giving information</a>
3	21-10-2014	1. Certified information about the total number of basic health units in the District. 2. Certified information about the total number of sanctioned posts of doctors for all basic health units of the districts and total number of vacant posts of doctors. 3. Certified information about total number of sanctioned posts of doctors in each basic health unit of district.	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013	16-11-2014	310 out of 732 Punjab BHUs working sans doctors 310 out of 732 Punjab BHUs working sans doctors	The News	<a href="#">310 out of 732 Punjab BHUs working sans doctors</a>

S. No.	Date of filing Information Request	Information Requested	RTI Law	Date of story published	Story Headline	Newspaper	Link
4	21-10-2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Certified information about the total number of basic health units in the District.</li> <li>2. Certified information about the total number of sanctioned posts of doctors for all basic health units of the districts and total number of vacant posts of doctors.</li> <li>3. Certified information about total number of sanctioned posts of doctors in each basic health unit of district.</li> </ol>	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013	28-11-2014	No doctor for 70pc BHUs in three KP districts	The News	<a href="#">No doctor for 70pc BHUs in three KP districts</a>
5	28-10-2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Certified information about the number of flights taken by the official helicopter of the chief minister of KPK from 1 July 2013 to 1 October 2014.</li> <li>2. The expenses incurred on fuel of the official helicopter of CM during the period from July 2013 to October 1, 2014.</li> <li>3. List of passengers who travelled on CM's official helicopter during the above mentioned period along with their portfolio's and designations?</li> </ol>	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013	29-11-2014	Imran used govt helicopter four times: KP govt	The News	<a href="#">Imran used govt helicopter four times: KP govt</a>
6	02-09-2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Certified information about total number of applications submitted against illegal clinics and medical stores in district from January 1, 2013 to September 1, 2014.</li> <li>2. Total number of raids made against illegal clinics and medical stores in the district from January 1, 2013 to September 1, 2014.</li> <li>3. Total number of drug inspectors appointed in district.</li> </ol>	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013	22-11-2014	Punjab commission for review of laws against right to information	The News	<a href="#">Punjab commission for review of laws against right to information</a>



S. No.	Date of filing Information Request	Information Requested	RTI Law	Date of story published	Story Headline	Newspaper	Link
7	18-09-2014	1. Certified information about month wise expenditure of Chief Minister House from August 1, 2013 to August 31, 2014? 2. Certified information about month wise expenditure of bakery items procured for Chief Minister House from August 1, 2013 to August 31, 2014 (different bakery items and expenditure incurred)? 3. Certified information about gifts/presents given by Chief Minister to people from August 1, 2013 to August 31, 2014 (Name/Description of the gifts/presents, price and name of the individual each present was given to by the Chief Minister)?	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013	18-10-2014	KP CM spends Rs2.6m on entertainment, bakery items	The News	<a href="#">KP CM spends Rs2.6m on entertainment, bakery items</a>
8	08-07-2014	1. Total number of Royat e Halal committee meeting held in Islamabad from January 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014? 2. Detail of expenditure incurred on each meeting held in Islamabad from January 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014?	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013/ Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002	30-09-2014	Rs2.6 million spent on moon sighting in one year	The News	<a href="#">Rs2.6 million spent on moon sighting in one year</a>



S. No.	Date of filing Information Request	Information Requested	RTI Law	Date of story published	Story Headline	Newspaper	Link
9	02-09-2014	1. Certified information about total number of applications submitted against illegal clinics and medical stores in district from January 1, 2013 to September 1, 2014. 2. Total number of raids made against illegal clinics and medical stores in the district from January 1, 2013 to September 1, 2014. 3. Total number of drug inspectors appointed in district.	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013	18-09-2014	KPK govt better than Punjab in access to information	The News	<a href="#">KPK govt better than Punjab in access to information</a>

S. No.	Date of filing Information Request	Information Requested	RTI Law	Date of story published	Story Headline	Newspaper	Link
10	16-10-2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Please tell the date when Punjab's Information Commission was set up?</li> <li>2. Postal/email address of the Commission and their official contact numbers</li> <li>3. Address of the website</li> <li>4. Number of staff of the Commission along with their names, designation and duties</li> <li>5. Salaries of each staff member</li> <li>6. Mode of transport if being offered to the staff</li> <li>7. If Public Information Officers have been appointed?</li> <li>8. If yes, the name of PIOs and departments they represent</li> <li>9. Name of the departments who's PIOs have not been appointed yet</li> <li>10. If PIOs have been imparted any training about their job?</li> <li>11. Date when training given and its duration?</li> <li>12. Name of the trainers of PIOs?</li> <li>13. How many complaints have been received to the Commission?</li> <li>14. Any public awareness advertisement for letting public know about the establishment of commission along with postal/email address and phone numbers for contact?</li> <li>15. How many complaints have been disposed off by the Commission?</li> <li>16. If any officer has ever been penalized for denying information?</li> <li>17. If yes, the number of cases and names of penalized officers?</li> </ol>	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013	06-11-2014	Punjab conceals facts while KP provides requested details	The News	<a href="#">Punjab conceals facts while KP provides requested details</a>

S. No.	Date of filing Information Request	Information Requested	RTI Law	Date of story published	Story Headline	Newspaper	Link
11	02-09-2014	1. Certified information about the total number of shopkeepers in the district fine was imposed upon for violation of price list from January 1, 2013 to September 1, 2014. 2. Certified information about total amount of fine collected from shopkeepers in the district for violation of price list from January 1, 2013 to September 1, 2014.	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013	29-09-2014	کی پنجاب، پختونخوا اہم بیوروکریسی سے دینے معلومات انکاری	Dunya News	<a href="#">پنجاب، پختونخوا بیوروکریسی کی دینے معلومات اہم سے انکاری</a>
12	02-04-2014	1. Total number of helicopters available with Punjab Government. 2. Total number of flights of each helicopter from July 1, 2013 to April 2, 2014. 3. Names of passengers of each flight of each helicopter of Punjab government from July 1, 2013 to April 2, 2014.	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013	16-11-2014	KP govt using helicopters in violation of rules	The News	<a href="#">KP govt using helicopters in violation of rules</a>
13	20-10-2014	1. Certified Information about names of all the registered companies from June 2013 to date and the sector they belong to?	Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002	20-11-2014	A right step towards Right to Information	Business recorder	<a href="#">A right step towards Right to Information</a>
14	15-04-2014	1. Information about Total, Functional and Non-Functional Oxygen Cylinders, Ultra Sound Machines, ECG Machines, CT Scans Machines and X-Ray Machines.	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013	04-12-2014	No CT scan machines in 16 districts of Punjab, seven of KPK	The News	<a href="#">No CT scan machines in 16 districts of Punjab, seven of KPK</a>



S. No.	Date of filing Information Request	Information Requested	RTI Law	Date of story published	Story Headline	Newspaper	Link
15	24-06-2014	1. Information about total number of sanctioned posts of teachers for all primary/middle/ high schools in district 2. Information about total number of posts of teachers lying vacant for all primary/ middle/high schools in district	The Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013	10-12-2014	Education not top priority of Punjab, KP govts	The News	<a href="#">Education not top priority of Punjab, KP govts</a>
16	15-10-2014	1. Certified copy of the executive order under which post of the Military Secretary to the President was created? 2. Certified information about the perks and privileges of the Military Secretary to the President. 3. Certified information about the process pertaining to the appointment of Military Secretary to the President. 4. Total number of subordinates of the Military Secretary to the President. 5. List containing names and designation of military secretaries since the creation of the post of Military Secretary.	Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002	28-12-2014	Does access to information law not apply to Presidency?	The News	<a href="#">Does access to information law not apply to Presidency?</a>
17	N/A	Based on CPDI Information Requests filed during the project cycle	N/A	02-11-2014	Article 19-A — freedom of information ‘on paper, not in practice’	Dawn	<a href="#">Article 19-A — freedom of information ‘on paper, not in practice’</a>



S. No.	Date of filing Information Request	Information Requested	RTI Law	Date of story published	Story Headline	Newspaper	Link
18	02-09-2014	1. Certified information about total number of applications submitted against illegal clinics and medical stores in district from January 1, 2013 to September 1, 2014. 2. Total number of raids made against illegal clinics and medical stores in the district from January 1, 2013 to September 1, 2014. 3. Total number of drug inspectors appointed in district.	The Punjab Transparency and RTI Act 2013	12-12-2014	Right to Information Act	The News	<a href="#">Right to Information Act</a>



## **Conclusion:**

Importance of RTI for investigative reporting can hardly be exaggerated and has been beautifully summed up by Umar Cheema, one of Pakistan’s most outstanding investigative journalists in these words: “Without effective RTI law, investigative journalism is leak journalism. RTI law empowers a journalist to make his own choice of which issue to follow and collect information accordingly instead of waiting for somebody to share information of his choice.” Will journalists in general, and in Pakistan in particular, pay heed to what their senior colleague has to say about making their own choices for investigative reporting and use RTI for investigative reporting in greater frequency in 2015?

Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, (CPDI) is an independent, non-partisan and a not-for-profit civil society organization working on issues of peace and development in Pakistan. It is registered Under Section 42 of the Companies Ordinance, 1984 (XLVII of 1984). It was established in September 2003 by a group of concerned citizens who realized that there was a need to approach the issue of peace and development in a an integrated manner. CPDI is a first initiative of its kind in Pakistan. It seeks to inform and influence public policies and civil society initiatives through research-based advocacy and capacity building in order to promote citizenship, build peace and achieve inclusive and sustainable development. Areas of special sectoral focus include promotion of peace and tolerance, rule of law, transparency and access to information, budget watch, legislative watch and development.



## Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives

House # 370, Street # 75, E-11/3, MPCHS, Islamabad

t: +92 51 237 5158-9, 431 94 30

e: [info@cpdi-pakistan.org](mailto:info@cpdi-pakistan.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cpdi.pakistan>

A Company setup under Section 42 of the Companies Ordinance, 1984

[www.cpdi-pakistan.org](http://www.cpdi-pakistan.org)