

## **Using the RTI the children have changed the picture of their village**

In Uttarakhand, the way the children of “PABAM” (the Mountain Children’s Forum) have used the RTI to change the face of their villages is truly worthy of praise is an inspiration. Using this law, the children have sent the entire country a message that children, too, have an important role in changing this country’s rusted systems. I learned from attending [the MCF’s 2 day RTI workshop] that if children begin to use this law then it won’t take very long before this country becomes free in the truest sense.

After using the RTI, the sense of self confidence and the passion to change their villages is clearly visible on the children’s faces. Sapna, Priti, Kavita, Devrat, Manish, and many other children have solved problems in their villages and in their schools using the RTI. I believe this is the first time in the four years since the RTI law was passed that children have used the RTI in a cooperative way such as this. It is a great inspiration for the entire country that a law that adults have been behind in using, has been used by the children to strike a blow against corruption. In most places in the country where the RTI is used, people are primarily using it to solve their own personal problems. But these children, by using the RTI to address problems in their community, have along with giving something to society, have also jolted it. In these children, the ability to represent their community is clearly evident.

In the last 63 years since independence all the acts/laws that have been passed have been made to rule the people. But in 2005 due to public pressure there were 2 Acts / laws that were passed of which one was The Right to Information Act 2005. This act was historic as it allowed the ordinary people of the country to understand that they were actually the rulers of the country. After the act was passed people have started using the act as a weapon against corruption. What used to take years to complete and people had to bribe to get done, people were now able to ask questions about. The government suddenly felt that they by passing the act now had a sword hanging over their heads. They immediately tried to change the act but were prevented by the pressure of the people and activists. The government had to take back the proposed changes to the Act. The greater amount the RTI can be used as a legal weapon will sharpen and make effective the act even more. The children have shown a new way through using this weapon, using this act. Today the future is going to assist the present situation change - this is a happy “accident.” The path ahead is still full of difficulties but, if our community that still does not acknowledge children, works with the children for this social change one can say that it would be a successful second fight for independence.

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