



# Transformative Human Rights Education through Dance

## The Right to Information



Sri Lanka

## Foreword

This training resource was iteratively developed through the Performing/Informing Rights project funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) between July 2022 and July 2023. The project aimed to empower disabled people (especially those with conflict-related impairments) in Nepal and Sri Lanka to use the Right to Information (RTI) and its related procedure to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability in government provision of disability benefits and reparations.

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The resource was initially "road-tested" at a training and knowledge exchange workshop in Kathmandu (Nepal) in November 2022. The workshop brought together the German-Sri Lankan non-profit association VisAbility e.V. (supported by the Sri Lankan dance school Meranga Fine Arts Ensemble) with three Nepali organisations: Advocacy Forum – Nepal (AF), the National Network of Disabled Conflict Victims (NNDCV), and the music school Naad Sangeet Pathshala. A revised version of the resource then served as the basis for community-level training workshops in Sri Lanka and Nepal. Feedback from those workshops informed this final version.

Materials helpful in developing this resource were:

- Amnesty International, *Facilitation Manual: A Guide to Using Participatory Methodologies for Human Rights Education* (2011), available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act35/020/2011/en/>
- Article 19, *The Public's Right to Know: Principles on Right to Information Legislation* (2015), available at: [https://www.article19.org/data/files/RTI\\_Principles\\_Updated\\_EN.pdf](https://www.article19.org/data/files/RTI_Principles_Updated_EN.pdf)
- Ananda Breed, *Drama for Conflict Transformation Toolkit: Youth Theater for Peace* (USAID/IREX 2016), available at <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/node/resource/drama-for-conflict-transformation-toolkit.pdf>
- The Carter Center, *Liberia Freedom of Information Act: Training of Trainers Manual* (USAID/IREX), available at <https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/ati/liberia/foi-tot-manual.pdf>
- Equitas and OHCHR, *Bridging Our Diversities: A Compendium of Good Practices in Human Rights Education* (United Nations 2021), available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/training-and-education-publications/bridging-our-diversities-compendium-good-practices>
- Powercube, available at <https://www.powercube.net/>
- Studio Wayne McGregor and SENSE, *Making Sense of Dance*, available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8DtmYMO\\_5s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8DtmYMO_5s)

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## **Abbreviations**

CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DO	Designated Officer
IO	Information Officer
RTI	Right to Information
RTI Commission	Right to Information Commission

## Section 1: Overview of the training resource

### 1.1) Introduction

This training resource offers a set of creative movement exercises to introduce people in Sri Lanka and hopefully beyond to the Right to Information (RTI) (see 1.4). It equips trainers/facilitators with different exercises that can be adapted to the particular needs of workshop participants and specific socio-economic and cultural contexts. While the focus is on training disabled people on RTI, the exercises can be modified to teach other rights to other groups.

The resource combines both the social and human rights models of disability. While the former understands “disability” as a combination of impairment and various environmental and social barriers, the latter emphasises the need for States to embed the rights set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) into national legislation and policies.

The training resource is divided into 5 sections:

- 1) The first section briefly sets out the combined methodology of dance and rights and introduces RTI. It also offers information for organising workshops in different contexts.
- 2) The second describes different movement exercises grouped into various categories (such as icebreakers, energisers, etc.).
- 3) The third teaches key steps in filing RTI applications and appealing adverse decisions in Sri Lanka.
- 4) The fourth section explains how to co-create a short performance at the end of the workshop.
- 5) The fifth is an appendix that provides useful materials for workshops that can be downloaded from the website [www.performinginforming.uk](http://www.performinginforming.uk). Please refer to the website for guiding video clips, too.

### Use of language

The authors had to make difficult choices about terminology when writing this resource. We recommend that facilitators use the terms “disability” and “disabled people”/“people with disabilities” that are preferred by participants and/or Disabled People’s Organisations in your location.

The verb “walk/walking” was chosen to describe specific exercises, but we did not intend to exclude those with limited mobility (i.e. wheelchair users). Facilitators are free to modify the language accordingly (e.g. use “move/moving” instead).

The resource applies the term “public authority” to refer to state institutions in Sri Lanka as outlined by section 43 (a-l) of the Right to Information Act No 12 of 2016 and Regulations from January 2017 (see 5.3).

### 1.2) Learning objectives

This training resource attempts to equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence to exercise their Right to Information. This will help empower participants in future interactions with government officials. While some of the exercises require literacy, they can be adapted for illiteracy levels.

The five learning objectives for participants are

- 1) to express themselves more comfortably through movement
- 2) to co-create a short performance based on movements developed during the workshop
- 3) to understand the RTI process and institutions involved
- 4) to develop the “power within” (self-confidence), “power to” (agency), and “power with” (collaboration) to submit RTI applications
- 5) to motivate participants to train others in the future.

This resource is not meant to be prescriptive; rather, it offers some guidance and examples that facilitators are free to vary in response to specific participants and their own socio-economic and cultural environments.

### 1.3) Connecting rights and dance

Human rights provisions in national law, constitutions, and international treaties provide a powerful language for individuals and marginalised groups to mobilise for greater political, social, cultural, and legal inclusion and demand rights, entitlements, and accountability from their governments.

Like any language, human rights need to be learned. Transformative human rights education does that through playful, participatory, and experiential methods, including the creative arts. Dance can be an especially helpful way to teach human rights. Firstly, dance provides a method of active, embodied learning, which can lead to a greater understanding and retention of rights principles and processes. Secondly, dance can help build self-confidence, agency, and group work necessary for asserting one's rights. Third, dance allows people to reflect on their capacities and the value of diversity. Finally, dance – especially inclusive dance that brings together disabled and non-disabled people – can create more appreciation for human diversity.

### 1.4) Right to Information

The Right to Information gives people (or, in some countries, citizens only) the right to access information about most, but not all, government decision-making. When individuals exercise that right, it helps make governments more transparent and accountable to people. The Right to Information applies to any “public authority” – either a government or a private body performing government functions.

Using that right, people can find out what specific information about themselves a public authority holds – and correct any inaccurate information. They can also find out general information that impacts their lives (for example, draft legislation on disability benefits). In general, people do not need to provide any reasons for why they are requesting specific information from the government.

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 even 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 requests that are denied.





## 1.5) 10 tips for facilitators

Here is a list of potential issues facilitators should consider in preparing and running the workshop.

### 1) Preparing an inclusive workshop

Preparing an inclusive workshop requires time, including creating a budget that allows for sufficient accommodation in terms of transportation, sign language interpreters, etc. The workshop space should also meet everyone's needs (e.g. check all doors' width to guarantee access for wheelchair users).

During the recruitment process, you should inquire about participants' particular disabilities, any required assistive devices, and other personal needs to facilitate their attendance. While some individuals may only need support at the beginning and/or end of the workshop to use transport, others may require a personal assistant (e.g. family member or friend) at every stage. The budget should consider potential expenses for assistants.

It is also essential to inquire about participants' literacy levels and physical ability to write – they may need help to write an RTI request and/or engage in other written exercises. To capture these queries, developing a questionnaire for recruitment is advisable (for example, see 5.5).

To ensure a smooth workshop, build a team with 2-3 assistants who support you and the participants. The assistants should help deliver the dance/rights exercises and other logistics. Participants themselves can also support each other if a mix of people with more and less complex disabilities join the workshop.

*For example: In the Mirror exercise, you can pair up a blind participant with someone else and ask them to touch their fingertips. The pair needs to pretend to touch a mirror gently. This way, the pair can follow the task slowly.*



### 2) Mediating diversity

It is important to create a safe space for participants of differing ages, sex, caste, class, ethnicity, nationality, and/or religious affiliation. Think about approaches to establish and maintain a respectful and tolerant atmosphere.

*For example: Female participants may feel more comfortable (at the beginning) if they dance with females. Caste and disability may also create hesitation to pair up at the start or throughout the workshop.*

### 3) Accommodating disabilities

Make sure you have collected information during the recruitment process to ensure that you accommodate different people's interests and capabilities.

*For example: When you start with the 'name game', check that everyone can make your suggested movement/gesture.*

It can also help to adjust the music tempo to individuals' ability to move by using DJ software on your phone and/or laptop.

If there are hearing-impaired participants, then you will need to hire a sign language interpreter and build in enough time for translations – that is, select fewer exercises to give everyone time to follow the session.

If you are working with visually impaired participants, plan for more time for verbal explanations/descriptions of the movements. In addition, you can also allocate a workshop assistant who supports the participant. Think about creative ways to ensure they are fully included.

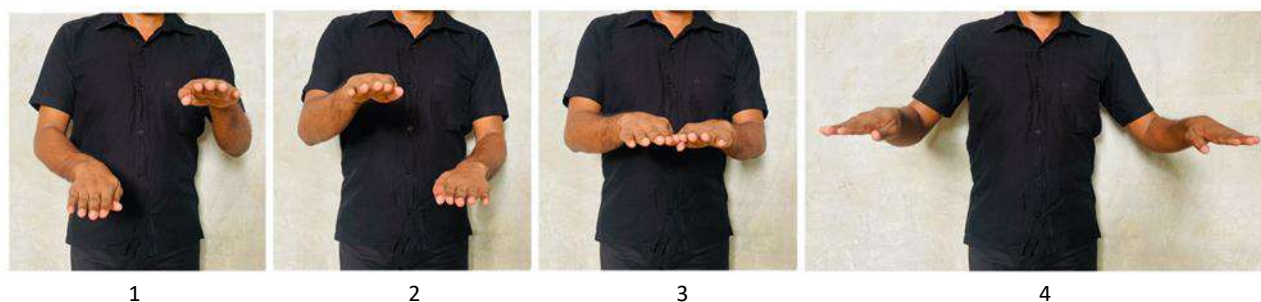
Facilitators also need to give sufficient time for the RTI exercises, particularly those that require participants to read and write. Some people may need more time than others and/or assistance.

#### 4) Introducing exercises

If you are working with a group with little knowledge of laws, rights, and administrative procedures, it may be helpful to use metaphors and gestures in a simple way to explain certain aspects of the Right to Information.

*For example: If you want to explain inequality/equality, think about a scale. Move your hands and arms up and down (photos 1 and 2) to indicate inequality. To show equality, keep both hands next to each other (photo 3).*

*You can relate this gesture to the unequal power relations between people with disabilities and, for example, government officers. To indicate equal power across the board (different groups of society), you can move your hands horizontally (photo 4).*



#### 5) Conducting exercises

The training resource provides different exercises for teaching RTI, but it is up to you to adapt these exercises to fit your working environment and the specific participants in your workshop. You can also choose from the discussion/reflection questions – or come up with your own.

*For example: You can vary the sequencing of exercises rather than following the order set out in this training resource.*

#### 6) Creativity in Dance

The resource is meant to enhance everyone's creativity in moving and expressing themselves. It is not centred around dance aesthetics in structured contexts (i.e. Kandyan dance, ballet). Hence, there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to dance. Movements always look different when done by different bodies. Participants should feel free to develop and/or adapt specific movements to suit their bodies and contexts.

#### 7) Co-creating

The methodology (combining dance and rights education) enhances group co-creation. You will have two roles throughout the workshop: a guiding facilitator and a participant. You will need to promote active engagement and co-creation of movements, gestures, and stories throughout the sessions. This requires active listening, attention to group dynamics, and a clear understanding of the aims of each exercise. You may want to 'collect' the movements, gestures, and parts of some stories to create a public performance at the end of the workshop.

Most movements and stories developed in the workshop should come from the participants directly. You only provide examples for introducing each exercise or guiding people during a task.

Co-creation takes time, so be sure to allocate the necessary slot for that.

### **8) Simplify and exaggerate**

Be mindful of the complexity of movements when working with a highly diverse group. Stick to simple movements and gestures when explaining a new exercise and giving an example to the group. It can also help to exaggerate your movements or gestures, for example, making big rather than small circles with your arms.

The same applies to the explanation of legal and administrative provisions. Keep it short and simple.

*For example: If you raise your hand, it should be a simple, natural movement rather than a highly artistic one (see point 6 above).*



### **9) Preparing exercises**

Thinking about possible sample movements/gestures and trying them out before the workshop is advisable. This may especially be helpful for facilitators who are conducting this type of workshop for the first time.

You will need to pay attention to the venue size, flooring, and ventilation.

*For example: 10 participants need 40-60 square feet  
20 participants need 80-120 square feet*

If you are working with disabled and non-disabled people, make sure that the entrance, toilets, and other facilities can accommodate everyone's needs.

### **10) Public performance**

If there is to be a public performance, remember to schedule time for rehearsal and the performance itself!

*For example: 2 hours for rehearsal; 30 minutes max. for performance*

Choose a suitable location in terms of visibility, safety, and accessibility (especially for wheelchair users). Be sure to obtain any required official permission before the performance, including copyright permissions for using (downloaded) music.

To announce the performance and gain people's attention, you can play music (or drum on plastic bottles and boxes at the workshop place). Rehearse drumming before you go to the location. If you have a banner, you could hang it 1-2 days before the performance in a visible spot.



Do not forget to bring water, some snacks, the first aid kit, and a copy of the official permissions!

## 1.6) Workshop materials

- Information sheets and consent forms (as required by ethics)
- Attendance sheet
- Comfortable clothes
- Suitable music
- Items to make music (e.g. drums, empty plastic bottles)
- Music player
- Some chairs
- Pens and papers
- Clipboards
- Ribbons
- Box with objects or image cards
- RTI cards
- Short stories
- RTI forms (applications)
- Sample RTI forms (applications)
- RTI related banners
- Flipchart/whiteboard (if not available, improvise)
- Marker pens
- Water and cups
- First aid kit (urinary pot, diapers, sanitary pad)
- Broom or anything else to clean the space
- Hand sanitiser and masks, if required by the COVID situation



## 1.7) Dance performance

- Suitable location
- Music and a music player
- Electricity supply (if needed)
- Any government permissions needed for public performances
- Props
- Masks or scarves (if people worry about being too publicly visible)
- Water and cups
- Snacks
- First aid kit
- Hand sanitiser and masks, if required by the COVID situation



## Section 2: Movement exercises

### 2.1) Icebreakers

These exercises help participants get to know one another and become more comfortable moving their bodies (including in front of others).

#### Name game

Aim	To get to know each other To overcome shyness about moving in front of others
Length	20 to 30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Ask participants to gather in a circle to get to know each other.
- Introduce yourself with your name and a movement simultaneously.
- Tell participants to pay attention to your name, how you pronounce it (rhythm, tone, etc.), and your chosen movement. Then repeat your name and movement and ask participants to imitate you 2-3 times.
- Turn to the participant next to you and invite her to introduce herself with her name and movement. Invite the group to imitate the name and movement 2-3 times.
- Ask the group to repeat your name and movement and the participant's name and movement to develop a 'name dance'.
- Repeat with each participant until everyone has introduced herself.
- Extension: Once everyone has been introduced, ask participants to walk around the workshop space. Tell them that you will call out the name of a participant. This person needs to perform the 'name dance' before everyone can continue walking. Ask the participant to call on someone else. Repeat as often as you see fit (i.e. time, people's ability to memorise).

#### Suggestions

- Encourage participants to keep their movements as simple as possible to enable others to remember them.
- Invite participants to use different body parts to develop a range of movements.
- Adjust the exercises to accommodate participants' different capabilities.
- If you are working with deaf participants, ask everyone to follow the movement of the lips and pay attention to the accent of people's movement. Start the exercise by exaggerating your lips when spelling your name and your chosen movement.
- Play music at the end (for the 'name dance').
- This game is also suitable as a warm-up exercise at the beginning of any following workshop day.



## Hello, Ayubowan, Vanakkam, Namaste - Different ways to greet

Aim	To get to know each other To promote group cohesion To create awareness about diversity and inclusion
Length	20 to 30 minutes
Materials/ Prop	Music

- Invite participants to walk around the workshop space.
- Tell them to use the whole space and get familiar with each corner and wall. Then, ask them to pay attention to the colours, shapes, and objects in the workshop space.
- After a few minutes, instruct participants to make eye contact while walking around.
- As the next step, ask them to walk around, stop, and shake hands with whomever they encounter (if working with a small group, make sure everyone greets each other).
- If you feel that participants are comfortable with each other, invite them to use different body parts to say hello (subject to cultural appropriateness).

### Example

A participant

- 1) touches another person's shoulder with his/her elbow.
- 2) lifts his/her leg to touch another person's knee.
- 3) uses his/her fist to touch someone else's knee or shoulder.

### **Suggestions**

- *To increase the difficulty level, instruct randomly assembled pairs to walk around in their greeting position (e.g. head/knee, elbow/shoulder).*
- *Encourage participants to greet everyone and not only stick to the same people (mixed groups, i.e. those with disabled and non-disabled people, usually need more time to warm up).*



## 2.2) Warm-ups/Energizers/Releasers

These exercises can be used at various points during the workshop to energize participants and/or explore emotions.

### Walking together

Aim	To become more comfortable with each other To promote group cohesion
Length	15 to 20 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Instruct participants to pick a spot in the workshop space as a starting point for the exercise.
- Ask everyone to follow your movements: start to walk and stop after a few steps. Continue to walk and stop again. Tell participants to imitate your movement and pace as best they can.
- After some repetitions, invite a participant to take the lead. She needs to decide about the movement and pace that the group should imitate, taking into account other participants' bodily capacities. After a few rounds, switch to another participant.
- Encourage the leading persons to express themselves differently during the walk (e.g. vigorous, tired) and walk at a distinct pace (e.g. slow, fast).

### Possible discussion/ reflection

- How did you feel?
- What do you think the exercise tried to convey?



## Butterfly

### i) Beautiful butterfly

Aim	To create a relaxed mood and atmosphere To promote mindfulness
Length	15 to 30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Tell participants to choose a spot in the workshop space. Make sure that they are using the whole space.
- Each participant should close their eyes.
- Describe an image with a calm voice (alongside the music): everyone should imagine walking through a field full of colourful, nice-smelling flowers. They feel the warmth of the sun's rays on their back and arms and the grass tickling their feet. They also hear some birds singing in the trees and can see a bunch of butterflies flying around.
- Now encourage them to focus on one butterfly and let it land on their hand. Tell the participants to open their hands as if they were holding a butterfly.
- Next, request the participants to imagine their hands turning into colourful butterflies flying in the field.
- Then, ask the participants to open their eyes and imagine they are still in the field, flying freely like butterflies. Encourage them to start walking around and getting to know other butterflies. Allow their hands/butterflies to rest on other people's arms and shoulders, etc. (if culturally appropriate).
- In the next step, invite the participants to move their whole body to enable the butterfly to explore the field to its full extent. Remind them that their hands are butterflies that slow down, speed up, and rest. They can also fly loops, etc.

#### **Suggestion**

- *You can play calming music to create a relaxed atmosphere and improve everyone's mood.*
- *If participants are wheelchair users or have other physical impairments, encourage them to carry out the exercise on one spot, move their hands, and turn the wheelchair around as well. Invite others to let their butterflies 'fly', 'pass by', and 'rest' on the wheelchair user's body and wheelchair. However, if the wheelchair users are comfortable leaving their wheelchairs, they may wish to do the exercise on the floor.*



#### **Possible discussion/ reflection**

Invite participants to share their thoughts and emotions after the exercise.



## ii) How does your butterfly feel?

Aim	To release emotions To promote mindfulness
Length	15 to 30 minutes / 45 to 60 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Participants should spread across the entire workshop space and choose a spot.
- If you have done the first exercise ('Beautiful butterfly'), remind participants of the butterflies flying freely in the workshop space.
- Ask participants to imagine a butterfly moving within their bodies. Describe a butterfly (i.e. its colours) with a calm voice.
- Start to play calming, relaxing music.
- Next, ask participants to imagine the butterfly moving around their hands. Then guide the butterfly to move from the hand to the elbow, the elbow to the shoulder, and then to every corner of the body.
- Let the butterfly move freely in everyone's body (e.g. in people's legs, stomach, and neck) at different paces. The pace should represent how the butterfly feels in distinct body parts.
- After some time, instruct participants to replace the flying butterfly with a physical movement. Invite each person to express the emotions they associate with different body parts.

### For example

- One participant makes a movement with his arms to show that the butterfly felt 'love' in both arms.
- Another participant shakes his head to express the feeling of 'disturbance'.

- To encourage participants to express themselves freely and use the whole space, tell them that the butterfly's emotions can even leave their bodies.
- Invite them to investigate different body parts and develop different movements.
- Switch off the music or change it (watch the group dynamics).
- Depending on the time, you can either instruct participants to turn their movements back into butterflies circulating freely around their body, play music, and calm down the group to end the exercise.

### **Continuation**

- You can also continue by asking participants to choose one developed movement/expression that they would like to introduce to each other. However, give people the freedom to decide whether to share their movement and potential explanation with the group (not everyone might be comfortable with it).
- Next, invite each person to present their movement and tell the group to imitate it. Collect the movements by asking each person to contribute and repeat them in sequence.
- If there is time left, you can either ask the group to develop a dance using all the movements or ask everyone to repeat the whole sequence a few times with music.
- You could also request the group develop a common movement/expression representing all movements.

## Seaweed

Aim	To relax To promote mindfulness and self-awareness
Length	15 to 30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music or sea sounds

- Instruct participants to select a spot in the workshop space.
- Ask them to close their eyes and breathe in and out deeply. Keep talking with a calm voice.
- Next, invite participants to imagine being underwater on a reef or at the bottom of the sea. They see the sunshine reflected in the water and the moving seaweed and spot some fish swimming around.
- Now, instruct everyone to become a seaweed moving in the rhythm of the sea. Ask them to incorporate all body parts.
- Start playing sea sounds to make people feel as if they are in the water.
- Continue to speak with a calm voice.
- Tell participants to imagine a couple of colourful fishes swimming between the moving seaweed which make contact with the seaweed here and there.
- Now tell participants that you are turning into one of these fishes swimming between the participants who are moving like seaweed in the space.
- As a fish, you touch different (formerly agreed and culturally appropriate) spots on people's bodies (e.g. with a small finger). This touch should clearly help to identify the swimming direction of the fish.
- Ask participants - who have turned into seaweed - to respond to this touch (e.g. moving in the same direction or getting folded).
- Close the activity by bringing everyone out of the sea into the workshop space.



## Angry jungle, happy jungle

Aim	To release emotions
Length	20 to 30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Instruct participants to choose any spot in the workshop space and close their eyes.
- Ask them to close their eyes and imagine standing in a jungle. Describe the image of the jungle and the sounds to them.
- Tell participants that there is anger in the jungle. Request everyone to turn into an animal of their choice and make some angry movements on the spot.
- Select an animal yourself and start moving on the spot. Then ask everyone to open their eyes while moving around.
- Ask everyone to express their anger through movements and sound, then start walking around the workshop space.
- After a few minutes, tell the group to calm down and move in a relaxed manner.
- Next, ask everyone to select another animal to express their happiness. Tell them to walk around and show their happiness.
- Once everyone has chosen two characters and is comfortable with the exercise, all participants should walk around the space and express anger ('The animals in the jungle are angry.'). Encourage participants to express their feelings (e.g. stamping on the ground, growling).
- After a while, let them slowly transition from an angry animal into a relaxed, happy animal.

### **Suggestion**

- *If you have done the butterfly exercise before, and people enjoyed it, you can ask everyone to turn into a 'happy butterfly' (instead of picking their 'happy animal'). This may save some time, too.*

### **Possible discussion/ reflection**

- Ask participants to explain their choice of animals and emotions.



## Breathing

Aim	To relax participants To promote mindfulness
Length	15 to 20 minutes (each exercise)
Materials/ Props	Music

### i) Shake your body

- Instruct participants to position themselves anywhere in the workshop space. Start to play calm music.
- Start the breathing exercise by asking participants to
  - focus on breathing
  - inhale and stretch their arms up
  - shake their raised hands
  - exhale and lower their hands
- After the initial run-through, tell them to take one step forward and repeat the sequence.
- Continue with the sequence by moving one step backwards and one to each side.

#### **Suggestion**

- *To extend the exercise, choose another part of their body and repeat the sequence.  
For example: Breathe in and move your chest forward. Exhale and shake your chest.  
Breathe in and move your hip to the side. Exhale and shake it.*

### ii) Picture Frames

- Ask participants to comfortably position themselves anywhere in the workshop space (they can sit or stand).
- Instruct participants to paint the frame of a picture in the air. During the exercise, they can either close their eyes or trace them around the picture frame. This will help them to focus.
- Start to play calm music.
- Ask everyone to breathe slowly and draw the right side of their picture frame with one hand into the air.
- Tell them to slowly count from 1 to 4 while drawing the first side and hold the position of their arm on count 4 (count 4 represents the first corner of the frame).
- Next, they continue to draw the upper part of the frame, counting from 1 to 4 and holding the position on 4 again.
- Go on with the remaining parts.
- Continue to draw 2-3 picture frames (at least) to give people time to calm down and start focusing.

### iii) Breathing through emotions

- Ask participants to position themselves comfortably anywhere in the workshop space (they can sit or stand).
- Tell participants to slowly count from 1 to 4 while breathing in and stretching their bodies. Tell them to hold their breath on count 4 before they exhale and shrink their bodies.
- Repeat it 4 times as a calming exercise.
- Next, modify the exercise slightly. Instruct participants to make a sound (e.g. 'aaaaahhhhhh') while they breathe out and ask them to throw all body parts in different directions. Individuals can sit or stand during the activity (whatever is best for them).
- Repeat it as much as needed (adjust to the group dynamic).
- You can also play calm music in the background after the initial rounds.



## Mirror

Aim	To promote awareness of diverse bodies and their capacities To promote mindfulness
Length	20 to 30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Pair off participants and ask each pair to pick a spot in the workshop space.
- Explain that one person in each pair is a mirror, and the other person is standing in front of it and looking at their reflection. Both participants need to work together to create an image of an individual moving in front of this mirror. Instruct participants to choose their roles and starting position.
- Ask the pairs to look at each other. If you decide to play music, start the music now.
- Instruct participants (particularly those looking into the mirror) to start with slow and simple movements to become familiar with their roles and perspectives. Remind them to focus on the body part that is moving and also pay attention to the details (e.g. outstretched fingers).
- After some time, participants switch roles.
- Next, participants need to form new pairs and repeat the task. This will help participants to become familiar with different bodies and their capacities.

### Suggestions

- *Remind participants that movements look different on different bodies. Tell participants to adapt the movement(s) to one another's bodies.*
- *Encourage participants to be creative when working with diverse bodies. For example: If someone is paired with a wheelchair user, they should do the mirroring seated in a chair and be aware of the wheelchair user's mobility.*
- *If you are working with blind participants or individuals with other visual impairments, you can modify the task as follows: ask the pair to touch their fingertips to pretend to touch a mirror gently. Encourage them to move this way slowly.*



## 2.3) Introducing empowerment

These exercises are designed to help empower participants with respect to “power within” (self-confidence), “power to” (agency), and “power with” (collective action).

### Yes and No

Aim	To promote “power within” and “power to” To make people aware of the power of their voice as an individual and collective
Length	15 to 20 minutes
Materials/ Props	---

- Tell participants to gather on one side of the workshop space, looking towards you.
- Position yourself in front of the group.
- Ask everyone to react to your movement, tone, and statement. Now, take one step forward and say 'yes' in a soft, relaxed voice. Stretch the word 'yes' into a long 'yeeeeees' and step back onto your starting spot.
- Request participants to imitate your movement (i.e. taking one step forward) and to respond 'no' in the same tone and manner (i.e. a long 'noooooo'). The group needs to step back as well.
- For the next round, raise your voice and say 'no' in an energetic-sounding way. Move one step forward more energetically, too. The group reacts similarly to your movement and statement by saying 'yes'.
- Continue to switch between 'yes' and 'no' for 4 rounds, applying different voices (e.g. relaxed, angry, sad, surprised) and body movements (e.g. stepping forward or backwards; raising or lowering your arm).
- Once the participants are familiar with the exercise, invite one person to come forward to do the 'yes-no' to the group. Switch again after 3-4 rounds. Continue for as long as it fits with your time.



### Possible discussion/reflection

- What type of situations in life come to their mind when they think about this exercise?
- How did they feel in terms of power?
- Have they ever shouted this loud? When and why?
- Discuss what participants can do to communicate confidence through body language to address potential power imbalances in meetings (e.g. between the citizen and government officer).

*For example:*

- *maintain an assertive posture*
- *be mindful of your facial expressions*
- *keep a calm but firm voice*
- *hold eye contact*
- *mirror the other person's body language*

### Power (im)balances (Ribbon dance)

Aim	To promote “power to” To understand the interplay of power between people and government officials
Length	30-40 minutes
Materials/ Props	Two 1 to 1.5m long ribbons for 2 participants Three ribbons for 3 participants

- Divide participants into pairs and give each pair 2 equally long ribbons.
- Tell participants that they need to hold the ribbons in their hands and pull them in opposite directions while moving along and trying to balance their bodies.
- Explain that the ribbons represent the perceived power of each person. None of the participants should feel pulled over (‘overpowered’). Instead, they need to pull in a balanced way to allow both participants to stand/move.

#### Suggestions

- *To add to the level of difficulty, create groups of three people standing in a triangle formation. Each person should hold a ribbon in her hands. Next, ask participants to twist all the ribbons and move together while keeping the ‘power balance’ (the ribbons should not be loose). Tell participants to pay attention to potential knots (‘power deadlocks’) and try to untie any of them.*

#### Possible discussion/ reflection

- This ribbon exercise illustrates the social interplay between a person and a government official. It conveys:
  - (1) the need to maintain a more balanced power relationship between both parties,
  - (2) the responsibility of each individual to keep a balanced relationship/dynamic, and
  - (3) the awareness that each of them can exercise power.
- Invite participants to share their thoughts on the exercise.
- Direct the discussion towards their experiences with public servants of the social welfare system. Does the exercise relate to their story/stories? And if so, how?





## Performing change

Aim	To discuss challenges in a group To promote “power with” through collective problem-solving
Length	30 to 45 minutes
Materials/ Props	---

This exercise is based on forum theatre, introduced by Augusto Boal.

- To carry out this exercise, make notes of previously shared stories (e.g. people’s challenges with government officials). Select those that match the workshop topic (e.g. the Right to Information on disability benefits).
- Start the activity by reminding people of the workshop’s focus and shared stories. Ask participants to select one or two of the summarised stories.
- Invite them to act the story. Identify the characters involved (e.g. government officer, disabled person seeking support) and ask participants to role-play.
- Encourage participants to play the story up to the point of conflict. Then, tell them ‘to freeze the scene’ by freezing in position.
- Now, turn to the group and ask them about possible actions each character could take to change the situation and potential consequences.
- Invite those participants who have shared their suggestions to take over the role of the respective characters and then continue to act the story.
- If the group comes up with more than one alternative approach, the story can be acted with different participants and alternatives.

### **Suggestions**

- *This activity should occur during the second half of a workshop (i.e. after the discussion and reflection on challenges with government agencies and officials).*
- *You can also split the workshop group into smaller ones and ask them to discuss suggestions to change the situation. Each group needs to decide the approach they want to share with everyone and select the players.*



### **Possible discussion/reflection**

- Invite participants to comment on the suggestions.

## Changemakers

Aim	To promote “power to” To make individuals aware of their abilities to create change
Length	30 to 45 minutes (each exercise)
Materials/ Props	2 short stories (see examples in Appendix)

### i) Picturing change

This activity draws on Augusto Boal’s image theatre.

- Tell participants to gather on one side of the workshop venue and sit down.
- Hand out a story and read it together (either aloud or individually).
- Next, invite one participant to the middle of the workshop space and select one character mentioned in the story.
- Then tell her to indicate the character’s activity in the story in a frozen position.
- Ask a second participant to come forward and adopt another character that appeared in the story.
- Continue to invite as many characters as needed to set a scene.
- Finally, invite one participant to change the story – the person needs to come forward, show the proposed activity to bring about change, and freeze. The character can either be from the story or be invented by the participant.
- Keep adding 2-3 characters and/or activities that could help change the story.

### Possible discussion/ reflection

- Invite everyone, including the participants in the frozen scene, to discuss their perceptions.
  - How would they feel if this was a situation in real life?

### ii) Solve the problem

- Divide participants into small groups.
- Hand out a story to each group and ask them to solve the presented problem.
- Give groups 15 minutes to discuss their ideas to address the problem and come up with frozen images.
- Invite each group to present their approach in images.



## Leadership triangle

Aim	To promote “power with” To enhance responsible leadership To create team spirit
Length	30 to 45 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Create small groups (3 participants minimum) and ask them to stand in the shape of a triangle.
- Tell the groups that their members should face one direction (e.g. everyone shall turn to the right).
- Nominate the leaders of each group to initiate the exercise.
- Instruct the leaders to make a slow movement on the spot. Each leader can do any movement; they do not need to be similar.
- Now, ask the other group members to ‘follow the leader’ by imitating her first movement. Let them repeat the movement 2 to 3 times.
- Ask the leaders to develop another movement that the group needs to imitate. Remind the leaders that it is their responsibility to ensure that each group member can follow the movement and pace.
- After three movements, ask the groups to switch leaders until everyone has guided the group. By taking turns to the right, the actual leader passes on the lead to another group member.

### **Suggestion**

*- To increase the difficulty level, encourage the leaders to make the group triangles ‘move’ or ‘dance’ together as a triangle. Tell them to move forward, backwards, or sideways, using the whole workshop space.*

### **Possible discussion/ reflection**

- Based on the exercises, were there any challenges being the leader?
- What did they learn from being the leader?
- How can a leader support building and maintaining an inclusive group?
- Do participants feel that they are/can be leaders in daily life?



## 2.4) Introducing rights

These exercises introduce participants to the concept of rights and how they are relevant to daily life.

### Rights in everyday life

Aim	To make participants aware of their rights To connect rights and daily life To create an understanding of a right violation
Length	45 to 60 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Instruct everyone to position themselves anywhere in the workshop space.
- Ask participants about their activities in the morning or day before the workshop.
- Pick one response and invite the group to show the movement hinting the activity mentioned.

#### Example

Facilitator: What was the first thing you did this morning?

Participant 1: I woke up.

Facilitator: Can you show me a movement you do when you wake up?

Participants (some of them may stretch their bodies or arms or pretend to yawn)

Facilitator: What did you do next?

Participant 2: I washed my face.

Facilitator: Can everyone wash their face? What did you do next?

Participant 3: I had breakfast....

- Once the group has responded with different movements, ask about the participants' second activity in the morning.
- Turn to the group again and ask individuals to pretend, for example, to wash their faces (movement).
- Continue to collect 4 activities and related movements and ask the group to repeat all movements in the corresponding sequence.
- Depending on the pace of the exercise, keep on 'collecting' activities and movements (develop at least 5 movements), and repeat the sequence a few times.
- Play music and ask participants to dance the sequence in line with the rhythm.
- After 2-3 rounds, let the group follow the sequence and ask individuals to freeze/unfreeze from time to time (e.g. ask them to freeze whenever the music stops). This variation will help explain the violation of laws and rights later.

#### **Suggestions**

- *To enhance 'democratic consensus', ask the group to vote for one of each proposed movement per activity. Tell the group to stick to the chosen movement throughout the exercise (and, if needed, the workshop).*
- *Encourage everyone to be creative.*

## Introduction to human rights

- Wrap up the exercise and ask people to come together in a circle.
- Introduce people to the terms and meaning of the 'law' and a 'human right' and make the connection between a right (e.g. the right to life, the right to adequate food, the right to social protection as a source of income for people with disabilities) and the participants' movements.
- Explain that freezing the movement represents a violation of a particular right.
- Ask them if they have experienced a situation that they identify as a violation of a right/rights. Clarify their stories if needed.
- This stage of the exercise invites discussion on the relevance of rights and the authorities' role in respecting them and protecting different groups of society. It also leads to other parts of the workshop, e.g. sessions surrounding the authorities' responsibility, the existence of different public authorities, and the laws regulating different institutions, public servants, and citizens.
- By the end of the discussion, instruct participants to dance their rights in the discussed sequence again.
- Play music and let them perform their rights for a few minutes.



### My rights, your rights, our rights

Aim	To create awareness about people's rights in everyday life To make people understand that human rights are for everyone everywhere To introduce and identify rights in international human rights treaties
Length	30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Poster, booklet about the rights of people with disabilities (forthcoming)

- Invite participants to talk about issues, difficulties, or struggles that they or people they know have faced in their daily life.
- Use those stories to identify certain rights. For example, if someone talks about the difficulty of affording school materials for their children, ask the group if this relates to a particular right.
- Depending on the answers, move ahead by explaining how the right to education appears in several international human rights treaties (the International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).
- To enhance people's understanding of different international human rights treaties, you can ask participants to either develop a movement or develop a frozen scene that pictures the respective treaty.
- Next, mention how international human rights law is embedded in national law (i.e. ratification of treaties).
- Encourage participants to brainstorm how they can find out if their country has ratified the discussed treaties and whether the right(s) have been incorporated into the national constitution or domestic law.



## Performing Rights

Aim	To introduce rights To connect rights and movements
Length	45 to 60 minutes
Materials/ Props	Copy of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (see Appendix)

- Name a significant right contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (such as the right to education and the right to health) and invite participants to come up with possible movements that express or represent that right.
- Invite the group to vote on what movement they think best captures that specific right.
- Repeat with 3-5 other rights in the Convention.
- Once the group has voted on 4-6 movements representing rights, put them together in a choreographed sequence with music and rehearse several times.

### Suggestion

- *You may want to select rights that are easier to represent with movements.*

### Possible discussion/ reflection

- Ask participants what rights they think are most important to them and why.



## Section 3: Right to Information

This section trains participants on the Right to Information in Sri Lanka.

### The relevance of specific information

Aim	To create awareness of the relevance of information To emphasise the need for specific and detailed information
Length	30 to 40 minutes
Materials/ Props	---

- Invite 4 participants to come forward.
- Instruct the rest of the group to position themselves so that they form a solid wall in the middle of the workshop space. They should be able to turn around on one spot and see both sides of the wall.
- Next, split the 4 invited participants into 2 pairs and ask them to stand in the middle on either side of the wall (at least 1 metre away from the wall).
- One participant in each group needs to turn into a frozen sculpture with their arms hanging down.
- The others become artists who have to finalise their work. The 'artists' need to stand between the wall and the sculpture, with their facing the wall (they should not see each other nor the wall).
- Now choose a lead artist on the right side of the wall and explain that the artist has to describe what he/she is doing in order to finalise the work (gesture of the sculpture).

#### Example

'I lift the right arm of my sculpture and point the index finger.'

- The artist on the wall's left side must follow the instructions. However, this participant is not allowed to clarify anything (e.g., how high the artist on the right has lifted the arm).
- The participants forming the wall are only allowed to observe the process by moving around on the spot.
- Continue for a few minutes. Then invite others to act as the artists and sculptures.



#### **Possible discussion/ reflection**

- Ask the 'wall members' what they observed.
- Then turn to the artists and invite them to share their thoughts on the challenges they encountered.
- Discuss how the instructions/information was shared (e.g. in terms of accuracy and speed).
- Ask participants if they can think of any situations in life when they relied on having specific or accurate information.
- Discuss why specific information matters.

#### Example

Many people struggle to understand the guidance provided by public servants (e.g. social welfare officers).

- What can participants do to make them share information in an understandable/ accessible manner?



## Why the Right to Information matters

Aim	To explain the importance of the right to information To relate RTI to other rights, needs, and concerns in daily life
Length	30 to 40 minutes
Materials/ Props	Cards 'communication formats' (Appendix)

- Invite participants to sit in a circle.
- Recall some stories participants shared on everyday life issues, difficulties, or struggles and how they related to specific rights that you might have mentioned before (see subsection 2.4)
- Ask them what information from the government would have been for them to tackle those issues and pursue those rights (e.g. social protection schemes).
- You can also discuss the format (e.g. newspaper article, infographic, information sheet, radio) people think is best to access the required information.
- Place the example cards alongside some blank cards (you might add some issues not mentioned in the example cards) on two spots in the centre of the circle and ask people to organise them in two categories:
  - 1) The information they would like to receive.
  - 2) The format of the information.
- Encourage participants to discuss potential questions they would like to ask the government through RTI requests to address their issues.

### Example

- How did people with disabilities in Sri Lanka receive information about disability benefits?
  - How was the information about determining the percentage of disability communicated to people with disabilities?
- Make notes throughout the process and take photos of the clustered cards!

### **Suggestion**

- *To kick off the discussion, you could ask the following:*
  - *What have you learned in the sessions so far, including during discussions with others, that you would have liked to know earlier? Why do you think it would have made a difference?*
    - *What is my position on the waiting list for lifelong support?*
    - *What happened to my application for a wheelchair?*
- *This exercise might also serve as a focus group discussion.*

### Info box

Aim	To introduce different types of information recognised by law
Length	45 to 60 minutes
Materials/ Props	Box and cards 'info box' (see Appendix)

#### i) Types of information

- Take a box and fill it with objects/cards that can be categorised as 'information'.
- In some countries, like Sri Lanka, 'information' is defined by law (see below). Check out the law in your country and put any suitable objects into the box. If the law is silent on what is classified as different kinds of information, select objects that fit the workshop topic and purpose. Add one object per participant.

#### Examples

Sri Lanka's Right to Information Act No 12 of 2016, section 43:

'information' includes any material which is recorded in any form, including records, documents, memos, emails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, log books, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, correspondence, memorandums, draft legislations, books, plans, maps, drawings, diagrams, pictorial or graphic work, photographs, films, microfilms, sound recordings, videotapes, machine readable records, computer records and other documentary material, regardless of its physical form or character and any copy thereof.'

- Instruct participants to sit in a circle and place the box in the middle.
- Ask each person to take out one object of her choice.
- Let each participant explain whether their object is 'information' or not.
- Turn to the group and invite them to comment. Correct the responses if needed.
- To wrap up, present an example from daily life. Hand out familiar biscuit packages and tell participants to check out the information provided in small letters. Explain that companies must share this information with the consumer who pays for it. Likewise, governments are obliged to reveal certain information to the public. They have the right to inquire about different types of information (e.g. distribution of social welfare benefits across the division) from the government in various formats (e.g. sign language).



## ii) Finding relevant information

Aim	To find relevant information
Length	45-60 minutes
Materials/ Props	Papers and pens

- Tell participants to come together in a circle and share their stories related to the workshop's topic (e.g. social protection and benefits for disabled persons).
- Inquire about the participants' experiences, particularly their pathways to obtain, for example, lifelong support as a disabled person in Sri Lanka.
- Invite 2 to 3 participants to outline their stories in detail. Each person should try to explain the steps they took to obtain relevant information from different public bodies (e.g. the social welfare officer) or other organisations (e.g. local Disabled People's Organisation).
- Encourage them to share their challenges. For example, some may not have received the information from an officer because the person was constantly 'busy'.
- After listening to the stories, divide the workshop participants into 2-3 groups to draw the pathways of each story on a piece of paper (one group per story).
- Instruct them to work out the relevant public authorities or other organisations that need to be approached to apply for a lifelong allowance, for instance.
- In addition, have them identify the information they can ask for from the relevant public authorities or other organisations.
- Invite each group to present their papers to everyone and discuss their pathways and identified public authorities or other organisations.
- Rectify and/or provide additional information where necessary.

### **Suggestion**

- *To get a sense of people's experiences with public bodies and other organisations, it is recommended to collect the data in a survey before the start of the workshop (see subsections 1.5 and 5.5).*



## Introducing RTI principles

Aim	To introduce the key principles of the RTI process
Length	20-30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Infographic (Appendix)

### Principle 1 - Maximum disclosure

The principle of maximum disclosure means that all information held by public authorities in Sri Lanka should be accessible. Access to information can only be restricted under certain circumstances.

### Principle 2 - Proactive publication

Freedom of information means that public authorities have a responsibility to not only respond to requests for information but also to proactively make important public documents widely available even before anyone asks for them. In other words, it is not just about being responsive to specific requests but also about actively sharing information that is important to the public.

### Principle 3 - Limited exceptions to disclosure

Governments have the right to restrict access to official documents under certain circumstances. These limitations should be clearly defined by law, necessary in a democratic society, and proportionate to the goal of protecting various interests. These interests include, among others:

However, it is not acceptable to deny access to information simply because it relates to one of these interests. A disclosure can only be refused if there is an actual risk of serious harm to any of these interests. Access can be denied if the information it contains would likely harm any of the mentioned interests unless there is an overriding public interest in making the information public.



### Principle 4 - Affordable process

Most laws allow public authorities to charge the public for accessing information. Some laws limit charges to the actual cost of reproducing documents, possibly along with a fixed application fee. Other charge lower fees for requests that serve the public interest or involve personal matters. This approach acknowledges the importance of access to information that benefits the community or relates to individual rights and privacy. There are also laws that provide a certain amount of information for free, such as a specific number of pages, and then start charging fees beyond that limit. This ensures that a basic amount of information is accessible without cost, while more extensive requests incur charges.

**Principle 5 - Fair and timely processing of information requests**

To ensure that people can easily access information, two important factors are needed: a clear process defined by the law or regulation for handling requests made to public authorities, and an independent review system to assess their decisions. Generally, requests should be made in writing, but the law should accommodate those who are unable to do so, like people with literacy issues, by requiring the public body to assist them in putting their requests in writing. regarding the format in which applicants would like to access the information, such as inspecting the original record or obtaining a copy or transcript (including in braille).

The law should also establish reasonable and specific timelines for responding to requests. When responding, the public body should provide a written notice that mentions any applicable fees. If access to some or all of the information is denied, the reasons for denial should be clearly stated, along with information about the right to appeal.

## Introducing RTI law and key persons and authorities

Aim	To introduce the key persons and institutions for the RTI process
Length	20-30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Cards 'key persons and authorities' (see Appendix)

Several states have implemented 'Right to Information' laws to date. Sri Lanka introduced the Right to Information Act No 12 in 2016. Several rules and regulations are formulated under the Act (see subsection 5.3).

A couple of key people play important roles in the RTI process in Sri Lanka. This exercise introduces the key people and the key bodies they work for.

### i) Key persons and authorities

- Divide participants into groups of 3-5 people and hand over a set of RTI cards.
- Each group needs to set out the RTI process in the correct sequence using the cards. Tell participants to organise the key persons that will be encountered along the process of making an RTI information request.
- Next, ask everyone to place the corresponding institution next to the key persons.
- Walk around and check the group discussion.
- After 15 minutes, ask everyone to come to an end and review the order along with the RTI poster.

#### Example

- 1) Organise the persons in the sequence of making an RTI request.

Information Officer
Designated Officer
RTI Commissioners
Judge

- 2) Next to each person, list the institution they belong to. Depending on the workshop's focus (e.g. social welfare system,) you may want to specifically name the public authority.

Key persons	Key authorities
Information Officer	Public authority
Designated Officer	
RTI Commissioners	RTI Commission
Judge	Court of Appeal
	Magistrate's Court

## ii) Join!

Aim	To enhance the recalling of the key persons and key body
Length	15-20 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Depending on the number of workshop participants, assign 2-3 people to represent a key person and 2-3 people to be a key body. Each key person and key body should be represented twice (at least) to allow people to join in different pairs.
- Ask participants to remember their assigned persons and bodies while walking around.
- Now play music and tell them to keep walking around.
- Instruct them to join as the corresponding pairs (key person and key body) when the music stops.
- Continue for 5-10 minutes until participants remember their counterparts.
- If there is time left, you can instruct participants to keep on joining in the respective pairs you suggest.
- Shout out the key person or key body and stop playing the music. Only the respective participants should join in pairs.

### Examples

Facilitator: Information Officer!

The participants representing the Information Officer and public authorities join only.

Facilitator: Public authority!

The participants being the Information Officer, Designated Officer, and public authorities join.

Facilitator: Judge!

The participants representing the Court of Appeal and the judge pair up.

## Who is left?

- To extend and/or vary the exercise, take out one person (or rather a participant representing a key person or body) after some time.
- Ask participants to continue walking and joining in pairs when the music stops.
- The person who cannot find someone to join needs to leave the group.
- Keep on joining pairs until no one is left.

### **Suggestion**

*This exercise also serves as an energizer.*



### iii) The RTI journey

Aim	To recall the key persons and key bodies To remind people of the steps involved in making an RTI request
Length	20-30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Cards 'Key persons and authorities' (Appendix), chairs (if available)

- Invite three people from your team (and/or participants) to be the key authority (public authority, RTI Commission, Court).

- Now place three chairs (if available) in front of the group.

- Hand out the respective card to the assigned individuals and invite them to sit on the chair (starting with the 'public authority' on the left).

- Ask the rest of the group to check if the order is fine.

- Now encourage 4 people to be the key persons (e.g. RTI Commissioner) and hand over the cards to them.



- Instruct them to position themselves (either standing or sitting) in front of the 'key authority'.

- Again: ask the rest of the group to check if the order is fine.

- Now recall the RTI process with the group. Take a paper or file and walk through the RTI process. Approach each key person and institution and simply explain the order (i.e. 'RTI journey'). Do not mention any details at this stage!

#### Example:

- First, we go to the Information Officer to hand over the RTI request (pretend to submit your file).
- If we do not receive a response, take the file, and approach the Designated Officer to obtain the information.
- Next, if we are still not getting the information requested, we move ahead to the RTI Commission.
- And if we are still unsatisfied with the outcome, we approach the Court of Appeal.

#### **Suggestion**

*You can pretend to enter the public authority, etc., as if you were doing a little theatre play.*

- Following your explanation, invite everyone to ask questions for clarification.

- Next, ask the people representing the key persons and key institutions to sit somewhere (randomly) in the workshop space.

- Invite 2-3 participants to come forward to 'walk through' the RTI journey.

#### **Suggestion**

*You can expand this exercise by merging the RTI process (see RTI process) and journey later.*



## RTI process 1 (Key stages, officers, and public authorities)

### i) Give me five!

Aim	To introduce the first 5 key stages of the RTI application process To support recall
Length	30 to 45 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Tell participants to gather in a circle.
- Set out the first 5 key stages of the RTI application process in Sri Lanka at the local level and ask them to repeat the sequence out loud.
- Next, ask them to propose a movement for the first stage and, if there are multiple suggestions, have the group vote on which movement they think either best represents the stage or is easiest to remember. Once a movement is selected, ask the group to repeat it 3-4 times and tell them they will need to remember it for future exercises and any dance performance.
- Turn to the second stage and let the participants develop a movement. Repeat it 3-4 times.
- Instruct the group to do the first movement followed by the second.
- Repeat the process until the group has co-created movements for all five stages and performed them in sequence.

No	Stage
1	Identification of the Information Officer (IO)
2	Submission of RTI request to the IO
3	Confirmation of receipt by the IO
4	Decision outcome by the IO
5	If unsatisfied, complain to the Designated Officer (DO)

Example: Possible movements for each stage (All movements should be developed by the participants!)

No	Stage	Movement
1	Identification of the IO	Walk around in the room and 'search' for the officer
2	Submission of the RTI request to the IO	Roll your shoulders
3	Confirmation of receipt by the IO	Pretend to stamp a document
4	Decision outcome	Open both hands (as you were receiving an item)
5	If unsatisfied, complain to the DO	Lift right arm and shake the hand (=protest, complain)

**Suggestion**

- Feel free to extend the exercise to capture all stages of the RTI process (Give me 10!).
- Embed the developed movements into the RTI dance.

No	Stage
1	Identification of the Information Officer (IO)
2	Submission of RTI request to the IO
3	Confirmation of receipt by the IO
4	Decision outcome by the IO
5	If unsatisfied, appeal with the Designated Officer (DO)
6	Decision outcome by the DO
7	If unsatisfied, appeal with the RTI Commission
8	Decision outcome by the RTI Commission
9	If unsatisfied, appeal to the Court of Appeal
10	Decision outcome by the Court



## ii) 5,4,3,2,1 .... run!

Aim	To improve recall of the key stages of the RTI process
Length	20 to 30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- Before the start of this activity, ask participants to repeat the 5 key stages of the RTI request and complaint process (see exercise 'Give me Five!') and the related movements and shout the ordinal number of each stage.

No	Stage
1	Identification of the IO
2	Submission of RTI request to the IO
3	Confirmation of receipt by the IO
4	Decision outcome by the IO
5	If unsatisfied, complain to DO

- Explain the activity for participants to remember the ordinal number and name of each stage and associated movement. Remind participants to remember the number of the RTI stage and name.
- Instruct everyone to walk around the workshop space until you call out a stage in the RTI process, for example, 'Decision outcome'!
- All participants should hurry to form a group of 4 people - the ordinal number of that stage - and make the related movement.
- If a participant has not found a group on time and is left out, he/she should take the lead and call the next stage.
- Take turns until all 5 RTI stages of the first part of the process have been mentioned.

### **Suggestion**

- *This activity is suitable as a warm-up/ recap exercise for any session after introducing the RTI stages and the exercise 'Give me five!'*
- *You can extend the exercise by adding all 10 RTI stages (i.e. the appeal process; see exercise 'Process cards'). Participants will need to form larger groups.*



### iii) Process cards

Aim	To remind participants of the RTI process, the persons and the institutions
Length	30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Process cards; RTI process in Sri Lanka (see Appendix)

- Divide the participants into groups and hand out the 'Process cards'.
- Ask them to organise them in the right order (the stage cards and timelines).
- Check in with the groups.

No	Stage	Timeline
1	Identification of the IO	
2	Submission of the RTI request to the IO	
3	Confirmation of receipt by the IO	immediately
4	Decision outcome by the IO: Sharing of information	within 14 working days
	Decision outcome by the IO: Sharing of information upon a 7-day extension	within 21 working days
	Decision outcome by the IO: Rejection to provide information	within 14 or 21 working days
5	Identification of the DO	
6	Submission of the complaint to the DO	within 14 days
7	Confirmation of receipt by the DO	within 3 working days
8	Decision outcome by DO: Sharing of information	within 21 days
	Decision outcome by DO: Information rejected	within 21 days
9	Appeal to RTI Commission	within 2 months
10	Decision outcome by the RTI Commission	
11	Appeal to the Court of Appeal	within 30 days
12	Decision by the Court	



RTI Process

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 the Designated Officer

3 working days

Decision outcome by the DO:  
Sharing of information

Decision outcome by the DO:  
Information rejected

21 days

2 months

Submission of appeal to RTI Commission

Decision outcome by the RTI Commission

Submission of appeal to Court of Appeal

## RTI process 2 (Key stages, responsibilities of officers and applicants)

Aim	To develop awareness of the responsibilities of the RTI officers and RTI applicants at each stage
Length	30 to 45 minutes
Materials/ Props	Responsibility cards (forthcoming) and/ or 1-2 short stories

### i) Responsibility cards

- Explain the responsibilities of the Information and Designated Officers alongside the responsibilities of the RTI applicant at each RTI stage. Give time for questions, comments, and clarifications (see table below).

- Divide participants into groups and hand out the responsibility cards (separated into stages, responsibilities of the RTI officer, and responsibilities of the RTI applicant).

- Ask the groups to organise the cards in the correct order.

- At the end of the exercise, inquire about the potential challenges participants faced and why.



### ii) Which RTI stage and responsibility?

Aim	To identify the RTI stages in different contexts
Length	30 minutes
Materials/ Props	2-3 short scenarios

- Develop 2-3 short scenarios related to the workshop topic (e.g. a disabled person's RTI application gets rejected on an unreasonable ground that leads to the complaint). The stories should hint at several RTI stages and responsibilities.

- Tell participants to pick a spot in the workshop space.

- Ask them to make the previously developed movement whenever they identify an RTI stage and particular responsibilities mentioned in the stories.

- Start narrating the stories and check if participants can follow.

- Invite participants to correct each other if needed.

### iii) Performing stories

Aim	To identify the RTI stages in different contexts
Length	30 minutes
Materials/ Props	2-3 short scenarios

- Prepare 1 or 2 short stories that consider several RTI stages. The stories should relate to the workshop topic (e.g. a disabled person inquiring about the status of their disability benefit application).
- Read the story to everyone and check if everything is clear.
- Divide the group into pairs (1 pair for each stage mentioned in the story) and hand out the story for their reference.
- Allocate one of the RTI stages to each pair and ask them to prepare movements (a mini dance) for the responsibilities of the RTI officer and RTI applicant.
- Line up the pairs from right to left. All participants should be able to see each other.
- Now read the story slowly again and ask each pair to come forward and perform their allocated scene.

### iv) Where is the mistake?

Aim	To recall the RTI stages and responsibilities
Length	20-30 minutes
Materials/ Props	1-2 short scenarios

 *This is an activity for individuals with solid knowledge of the RTI process!*

- Develop 2-3 short scenarios related to the workshop topic. The scenarios should hint at several RTI stages and responsibilities but, this time, they should contain some errors (e.g. the RTI stage does not match with the responsibilities).
- Tell participants to stand in a circle, and carefully listen to the scenario. Ask them to make the corresponding movement whenever they identify a stage or responsibility.
- They also need to shout 'stop' when they recognize an error in the story.
- Pause for a moment and give participants time to move and discuss the stage/responsibility.
- Continue when the correct responses have been given.
- Invite participants to correct each other if needed.

## RTI dance

Aim	To improve recall of the RTI process through movements To develop short RTI group dance performances
Length	30 to 45 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music

- After sorting the RTI cards, each group needs to develop their movement for each stage of the RTI process, which they will then present to everyone.
- Remind the groups to ensure that their members can follow the movements.
- Give them time to rehearse.
- For the mini-performance, one group member should say out loud which movement is being represented.





## RTI applications 1 (Formulating clear requests)

### Asking specific questions on the RTI application form

Aim	To practice formulating clear questions To make RTI applications more effective To introduce the RTI form
Length	45 to 60 minutes
Materials/ Props	Paper, pens, RTI application form 01 (Appendix)

- Before the start of this exercise, remind people of the exercise 'Why specific information matters'.
- Hand out the RTI application form (RTI 01) to participants. You can either give them time to read it or read it out to them depending on their preference. Explain the form (purpose of each section) and give time for questions and answers.
- Next, emphasise the importance of a clear and explicit question to prevent any confusion or delays by the Information Officer or the rejection of the RTI application. Tell them that they will practice the clear and precise phrasing of questions in this session.
- Now invite the participants to discuss potential issues they would like to address in their RTI requests (in line with the workshop topic).
- Collect a couple of suggestions and create 3-4 topical groups (depending on the size of the entire workshop group).
- Instruct each group to work on 3-4 related questions to the group's topic. Remind them to develop clear and explicit questions that others can immediately understand.
- Finally, each group needs to identify the public authority they need to address.
- Ask each group to present their questions and invite the rest to comment on them. Offer additional comments/clarifications if needed.

#### **Suggestion**

- *Ask participants to remember their groups for future activities and leave their papers in one spot in the workshop space.*
- *You can do energizer exercises between the RTI exercises.*

#### **Possible discussion/reflection**

- What have you learned?
- What would you do differently now?



## RTI applications 2 (Gathering information)

Aim	To help participants collect background information that can help them formulate more effective questions
Length	45 to 60 minutes
Materials/ Props	Sample of informative materials

### i) Gathering information

- Participants need to return to their RTI groups.
- Ask groups to discuss what publicly available information would be helpful in strengthening one of the questions in their RTI applications.
- If participants have mobile phones with internet data, ask them to run a quick search and make suggestions on websites, institutions, individuals, etc. You can also provide additional printed materials for research (e.g. NGO fact sheets).
- Tell them to write down/formulate the required background information.
- Each group needs to present their work and receive comments.

#### Possible discussion/ reflection

- What were the challenges?
- What did they learn?



## ii) Spotting issues

Aim	To practice formulating clear questions To make RTI applications effective
Length	45 to 60 minutes
Materials/ Props	Sample newspapers (articles) or scenarios, paper, pens, RTI form 01 (Appendix)

This exercise draws on the acquired skills and knowledge developed during the 'RTI applications 1 and 2' exercises.

- Have participants rejoin the same RTI groups and hand out different newspaper articles related to the workshop topic. You can also use the scenarios developed based on their participants' stories (see examples of the exercise 'Changemakers' in the Appendix).
- Each group needs to read them and discuss the content:
  - What relevant information is provided?
  - What relevant information seems to be missing?
- Following the group discussion, each group needs to frame one or two clear question(s) for an RTI application. These questions need to be backed up with additional background information.
- Next, each group presents their work to everyone and gets comments from the group.



### RTI applications 3 (Appealing)

Aim	To promote patience and persistence in pursuing RTI To get familiar with the appeal process to the Designated Officer
Length	30 to 45 minutes (i); 30 to 45 minutes (ii)
Materials/ Props	Example RTI requests; paper; pens; RTI forms 01, 05, 10 (Appendix)

#### i) Rejection by the Information Officer

- Ask participants to return to their groups and now role-play being Information Officers in the public authority reviewing the incoming RTI requests/questions they had previously drafted.
- Have the 'Information Officers' set out potential reasons for rejecting their RTI applications. Make sure the distinction is made between reasonable rejections (e.g. the question is not very clear) and unreasonable rejections (e.g. the Information Officer is on leave or busy).
- Hand out 2-4 sample RTI applications (see form RTI 01) with unclear questions, insufficient background information, and other errors to each group.
- Then hand out and discuss the document the Information Officer needs to use to provide her reasoning (see RTI 05).
- Next, each group needs to go through the RTI applications and discuss potential reasons that led to their rejections.
- Ask the groups to provide the reasons in the form (RTI 05).

#### ii) Appealing to the Designated Officer

- Finally, circulate the appeal form to the Designated Officer (see RTI 10) and review it with the group.
- Tell the groups to switch roles. Now they are RTI applicants dealing with appealing the rejection of their RTI request to the Designated Officer.
- Each group receives a rejected RTI request and needs to discuss how to fill out the appeal form.



#### Possible discussion/ reflection

- Discuss any potential challenges and/or lessons learned.

#### Suggestion

- *These appeal exercises can be skipped if time is short, but then participants should be advised how they can get advice, assistance, and/or accompaniment if their initial applications are rejected.*

## Section 4: Performing in public

There are advantages and disadvantages to ending the workshop with a public performance. The advantages are that a performance can increase solidarity among participants, empower participants as individuals and as a group, and give them a chance to communicate their messages to a public audience. The main disadvantage is that performances (and the accompanying rehearsals and logistics) take time away from other workshop activities.

### Co-creating a short dance performance

Aim	- To co-create a short performance by the end of the workshop - To foster “power within”, “power to”, and “power with” - To make participants’ voices (stories) heard - To raise public awareness of RTI
Length	2-3 hours (rehearsal) Travel time (depending on the location) Setting up the place for the performance (depending on location and pre-logistics) Performance (including announcement): max. 30 minutes
Materials/ Props	Music, items for drumming, selected props, masks/scarfs, water, first aid kit

- Introduce participants to the idea of public performance and ask them their views (willingness to participate, concerns, etc.) by the end of the first or second day of the workshop. If there is a consensus in favour of a performance, then you may decide to go ahead – with the understanding that anyone who is not comfortable can opt out at any time.
- Pay attention to the movement exercises that work well and that participants like the most or remember best.
- By the end of most exercises, participants will have co-created a new set of movements and gestures. These should be noted so they can be remembered and used for a performance.
- Listen to the stories and common challenges/issues raised during the sessions and make notes.
- Ask participants about the message(s) they want to transmit to the public through the performance. In the end, it is them who are addressing the public.
- If wanted, discuss the use of props that you can find easily (e.g. crutches, cardboard boxes).
- Develop meaningful sequences of the ‘collected’ movements/gestures that indicate the selected message(s). This part takes time!
- Think about suitable transitions (perhaps spoken word or music) between the different ‘sequences’. Incorporate participants into this creative process, but avoid creating new movements/gestures at this late stage as that could be confusing.



### **Suggestions**

- *Build in time for rehearsal, transport to the location and setting up the place for the performance!*
- *If you are doing a public performance for the first time, you may need longer for each stage task.*
- *Choose a suitable location in terms of visibility, safety, and accessibility (especially for wheelchair users).*
- *Make sure to obtain any required official permission to perform in this location beforehand!*
- *Pay attention to the ground – remove any big stones that could obstruct wheelchairs, fill in holes, and perhaps sweep the ground.*
- *If you want to use music and require electricity, choose a spot close to shops, etc. You might want to build some money for the electricity into the budget (i.e. reimburse shop owners).*
- *To announce the performance and gain people’s attention, you can play music and/or drum on any items you have found at the workshop place (e.g. plastic bottles and boxes). Rehearse drumming before you go to the location.*
- *Do not forget to bring water, snacks, a first aid kit, and a copy of the official permission!*
- *Store your belongings in a safe place during the performance.*
- *If some participants do not want to show their faces in public, you can suggest they use masks, scarves, or face paint. Invite additional participants to cover their faces so that this becomes part of the performance.*
- *If some participants do not want to perform in public, make sure they don’t feel any pressure to do so – perhaps by creating other roles for them “behind the scenes.”*

## Section 5: Appendix

### 5.1) Exercise Materials

#### Changemakers

##### Story 1

Dinesh is a wheelchair user living in a village. He has been receiving lifelong disability allowance for 3 years, but suddenly the payment stopped. After a first inquiry with the village officer, who could not provide any information, Dinesh asks a friend to give him a lift to the Divisional Secretariat. The social service officer is quite impatient when Dinesh enters and does not seem to pay much attention to his case. However, Dinesh remains calm and tries to obtain information about the lack of payment. The officer explains that many people are waiting at the moment and that he cannot check every single payment. Dinesh insists that he needs the payments as he cannot work. The officer is annoyed about Dinesh's persistence and tells him to go home and wait. Dinesh leaves the office.

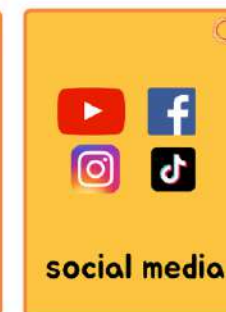
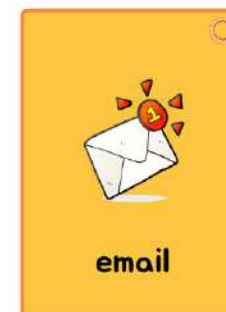
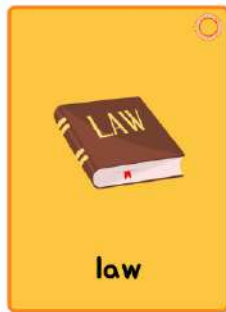
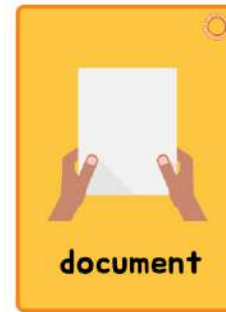
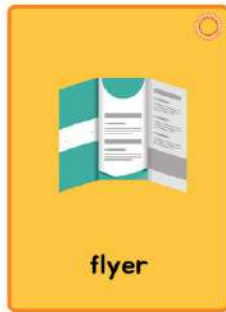
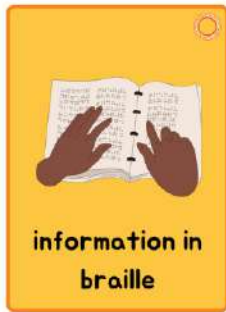
*How can the situation be addressed?*

##### Story 2

The members of a disabled network hold their monthly meeting. Many members express their frustration with the slow processing of several administrative matters in the Divisional Secretariat. Nine people say they are waiting for an update on their lifelong allowance and toilet applications. Six experienced a sudden stop in their lifelong payments. Four people do not understand why others received their lifelong allowances earlier – they submitted their applications much later. And others want to know why officers in the Divisional Secretariat note a decline in governmental support this year.

*How can the situation be addressed?*


Communication formats





## Types of information

Print the example cards on solid paper. Cut and place them into a box.

 book	 newspaper	 photo	 map	 drawing
 email	 letter	 legislation	 contract	 document
 plan	 video tape	 film	 diagram	 press release
 sound recording	 graphic work	 circular	 report	 social media
 correspondence	 log book	 opinion	 advice	 order

# RTI Principles

- ① Maximum disclosure
- ② Proactive publication
- ③ Limited exceptions to disclosure
- ④ Affordable process
- ⑤ Fair and timely processing of information requests

## Key persons and authorities



Process cards



**Identification  
of the  
Information Officer**



**Confirmation of  
receipt by the  
Information Officer**



**Submission of the  
RTI request to the  
Information Officer**



**Decision outcome  
by the  
Information Officer:  
Sharing of information**



**Decision outcome  
by the  
Information Officer:  
Information denied**



**Identification  
of the  
Designated Officer**



**Decision outcome  
by the  
Information Officer:  
Sharing of information following  
an extension of the timeline**



**Submission of the  
appeal to the  
Designated Officer**



**Confirmation of receipt by the Designated Officer**



**Decision outcome by the Designated Officer: Information denied**



**Decision outcome by the Designated Officer: Sharing of information**



**Submission of the appeal to Right to Information Commission**



**Decision outcome by the Right to Information Commission**



**Judgment by the Court of Appeal**



**Submission of the appeal to the Court of Appeal**

**immediately**

**14 working days**

**14 working days**

**21 working days**

**3 working days**

**21 days**

**21 days**

**2 months**

## **Stages and responsibilities of RTI officers and RTI applicants - scenarios**

### **Scenario 1 (extended version for facilitator – feel free to adjust)**

#### **Problem**

Manisha submitted her application for a housing scheme for disabled people to the Divisional Secretariat some time ago. However, she has not received any update on her application status. Manisha wants to know what has happened to her documents.

When she inquires with the officer in charge, she is told that she needs to wait until the Divisional Secretariat hears back from the Provincial Department. Manisha says she needs support urgently and wants to know when this will happen. However, the officer only repeats that she needs to wait.

Manisha walks home and consults a disabled neighbour who is a member of a network of people with disabilities. The member informs her about a right-to-information request (RTI request) that Manisha can submit to public authorities to inquire about public matters that also concern her life.

#### **RTI process**

Manisha returns to the Divisional Secretariat and tries to find the information officer to get further guidance on the RTI request and process. She eventually finds his name and office number on the information board in the hall.

Manisha has never submitted an RTI request before. She is not aware of the steps of the process. She is a bit nervous. She knocks on the door and enters the office. The information officer greets her and offers her a seat. Manisha explains her issue and asks if she can submit an RTI request. She also wants to know how it works and what information she needs to provide.

The information officer is a bit slow and hesitant to answer, but Manisha insists and asks about each stage of the process. Due to her disability, Manisha needs help filling out the form. She asks the officer to fill it out for her.

Manisha has many questions concerning the status of her application, but the information officer explains that she needs to be very clear and precise with the RTI request. Otherwise, it cannot be processed (it will be rejected). Manisha decides to inquire about the exact status of her application. She requests to receive the response in written format (letter). The information officer writes down everything, reads out loud the content of the application and hands the document to Manisha, who double-checks all the details before she signs and receives a receipt that serves as evidence for submission.

The information officer explains that he cannot provide the information immediately but needs to make inquiries with the corresponding department in the Divisional Secretariat. By law, he has to share the information within 14 working days. Manisha understands the reasoning of the officer and returns home.

After 14 working days, Manisha has yet to receive a letter from the information officer. She is upset and shares her experience with the member of the disabled network again. The network member tells Manisha that she can appeal with the designated officer within 14 days whenever the information officer has not fulfilled his duty on time.

Manisha returns to the Divisional Secretariat to speak to the information officer. The officer is not very polite and shouts that everyone has a lot of work and cannot act quickly. Manisha is disappointed and frustrated.

She remembers the words of her neighbour and walks down to the information board in the hall to find the name and office of the designated officer to submit an appeal. The board points her to the office upstairs.

Manisha knocks on the door. The designated officer is a lady of Manisha's age. Manisha feels more comfortable immediately and explains the situation. The designated officer listens to her and asks her to submit an appeal. Once this is done, the designated officer will inquire about her RTI request. Manisha was told to bring any possible evidence of her submitting the RTI application with her. Manisha remembers the confirmation receipt she kept in a folder and presents the confirmation receipt. She also informs the type of information requested (the status of her application for lifelong support). The designated officer tells Manisha that she needs to wait for a response for up to 21 days. Manisha returns home.

### **Outcome**

After 21 days, Manisha receives a letter from the Divisional Secretariat stating that

- 1) she has entered a waiting list for processing. She appears as number 37 on the list.
- 2) further supporting documents required need to be submitted.

*The end of the story invites further discussions on possible actions upon receiving the requested information.*



## Scenario 2 (extended version for facilitator – feel free adjust)

### Problem

Umakanth lives with his disabled daughter Siva in a remote village far from the Divisional Secretariat. To support his daughter, he applied for the government's monthly allowance for disabled people. However, after 1.5 years, he still has not received any update on the application status or payment.

Umakanth asks his neighbour Vasantha to give him a lift with the motorbike to inquire personally with the officer in the Divisional Secretariat. After 1 hour of waiting in the queue, he can finally speak to the officer and ask about the status of the application process. The officer states that Umakanth needs to wait and that he cannot respond to each person coming to his office to inquire about their application. He has a lot of work and cannot pay attention to every single application. Umakanth is quite frustrated and concerned about the future of his daughter and family. Everyone is struggling to pay for food and other necessities.

### RTI process

When Umakanth walks out of the Divisional Secretariat and shares the officer's response with his neighbour Vasantha, Vasantha recalls a law that allows citizens to inquire about public matters through a specific procedure with public authorities – the right to information. Vasantha takes down his helmet and encourages Umakanth to come with him to the hall of the Divisional Secretariat to see if they can find someone to help them. At the reception, they are told to look for the information officer. Vasantha and Umakanth walk to the board in the hall to identify the name and office number of the information officer, Mrs Nuwanthika Saleen.

Umakanth and Vasantha knock on her door, enter the office, greet the information officer, and take a seat. Mrs Saleen asks them about their query. Umakanth explains that he has been waiting for a response to the monthly allowance application of his disabled daughter for 1.5 years. He also narrates the event of his unsuccessful inquiry with the officer in charge. When he finishes, Vasantha steps in to ask about the Right to Information law and related procedures.

The information officer explains that every citizen can submit a right-to-information request to the public authorities, including the Divisional Secretariat. She recommends that Umakanth writes an RTI request to clarify the status of Siva's application. Umakanth is a bit nervous – this is news to him. He has never filled out an RTI request and is unfamiliar with the format and details required. Vasantha asks Mrs Saleen if she can guide them in the process. Mrs Saleen takes out a paper and notes down the relevant points (e.g. Umakanth's full name and address, a clear question asking about the status of the application and the format – a letter - in which the information shall be given). Umakanth provides all the details while the information officer is writing the request. Towards the end, the information officer reads out the content of the document out loud, and passes the document to Umakanth, who double-checks all the details and signs it. Umakanth receives a confirmation receipt for his payment. The information officer tells him to save this document. She also states that she cannot provide the requested information immediately as she needs to make internal queries. She will get back to him within 14 working days. Umakanth and Vasantha return home.

After 14 working days, Umakanth has not received a letter from Mrs Saleen. He decides to go back to speak to her. Vasantha accompanies him to the Divisional Secretariat. The information officer is busy and cannot receive them – they need to queue. Vasantha decides to approach the reception again to explain the situation and see if the receptionist can guide them again. He is lucky. The receptionist states they should submit an appeal with the designated officer, Mr Rathnayake, on the first floor. Umakanth and Vasantha walk to his office, greet Mr Rathnayake, and explain the situation.

The designated officer, Mr Rathnayake, listens to both men. He explains that the information officer should have responded within 14 working days and has not fulfilled her duty. Due to this delay, Umakanth is allowed to appeal. Once this is done, Mr Rathnayake will inquire with the information officer and share his decision with Umakanth (whether the information shall be shared or not). Since Umakanth is unfamiliar with this procedure, the designated officer helps the two men to fill out the form. He informs them that it can take up

to 21 days to get a decision. When walking home, they meet Mrs Saleen on the stairs and inform her about the appeal. They show her the confirmation of receipt. Mrs Saleen states that she was sick and then on leave. She is not very happy about Umakanth's decision to appeal.

After 21 days, however, Umakanth is still waiting for the letter. Now, is very upset and runs to Vasantha's shop to vent. Umakanth shouts that this RTI process is just another example of nonsense bureaucracy and that he cannot trust the officers anymore. Vasantha is disappointed and angry, too, but can convince Umakanth not to give up. They return to the Divisional Secretariat and approach the receptionist again. The staff who helped them out over the last weeks is not in. Thus, they try to get the information from another staff member behind the counter. The receptionist listens to Vasantha's explanations. He suggests writing a letter to the RTI Commission within 2 months and listing all the process details (the measures taken with the information and designated officer and lack of responses). While he is looking for the address on the website of the RTI Commission, he cautions that it can take quite some time to get a response from the RTI Commissioners. Umakanth and Vasantha do not know what to say. The receptionist understands Umakanth's situation and stresses that many disabled people are waiting for a response concerning the processing of their social welfare applications.

Umakanth and Vasantha return home. Umakanth drafts the letter and asks Vasantha to double-check all the details. He also attaches a copy of the confirmation of receipt of his RTI request. Then he posts the letter to the RTI Commission. Umakanth is quite nervous now.

### **Outcome**

After 6 months, Umakanth receives a letter from the RTI Commission indicating that his request had been received and approved. The Divisional Secretariat has to provide the information about Siva's monthly allowance application over the next 14 days. After 10 days, Umakanth gets another letter from the information officer. It states that Siva has entered the waiting list. She is in position 4. Umakanth returns to the Divisional Secretariat to inquire about the potential start of the monthly payment to his daughter.

*The end of the story invites further discussions on possible actions upon receiving the requested information.*

## 5.2) RTI process in Sri Lanka - Stages and responsibilities

No	Stage	Responsibilities - Applicant	Responsibilities - Information Officer (IO) and Designated Officer (DO)	Form
1	Identification of the IO in the corresponding institution	The citizen shall approach the corresponding public authority and identify the Information Officer (IO) on the notice board. He/she can also try to figure out the name and office number through the authority's website.	The IO has to display his/her name and contact details on the notice board (and, if existing, on the website).	<a href="#">RTI 12</a>
2	Submission of the RTI request to the IO	The RTI application can be submitted by post, email or personally to the IO. If the citizen needs help filling out the RTI application form, he/she shall approach the IO.	The IO must support the citizen in lodging an RTI request. He/she must provide the relevant form(s) and fill out the form if the citizen needs help.	<a href="#">RTI 01</a>
3	Confirmation of receipt by the IO	The citizen shall receive confirmation of receipt of his/her RTI request. If this is not provided immediately, he/she can ask for it verbally.	The IO must confirm the receipt of the RTI application in writing immediately. The IO also needs to enter the application into the public records.	<a href="#">RTI 02</a> <a href="#">RTI 03</a>
4	Decision outcome			
	1.) Sharing of information	If a decision is not provided within 14 working days, the citizen can submit an appeal to the Designated Officer (DO) within 14 days.	The IO has to inform the citizen about the decision outcome within 14 working days of receiving the RTI request.	<a href="#">RTI 04</a>
	2.) Extension of the period to provide information	The citizen can refuse the extension and file an appeal within 14 days. He/she can also follow up verbally with the IO to see if the IO is processing the request.	Within 14 working days, the IO can ask for an extension of up to 21 days under the following circumstances: 1.) The information requested should be provided by another government body/ institution in charge. 2.) The IO needs to provide much information.	<a href="#">RTI 06</a>
	3.) Rejection to provide information	The citizen needs to check the reasons provided by the IO carefully. If dissatisfied, he/she can appeal within 14 days.	The IO needs to provide the reasons for rejection in writing and provide a copy to the citizen.	<a href="#">RTI 05</a> <a href="#">RTI 11</a>
5	Identification of the DO in the corresponding institution	If the citizen is not satisfied with the decision (RTI request is rejected) or information received, he/she can appeal. To submit the appeal, the citizen needs to identify the DO in the institution (see details on the RTI decision form).	The IO needs to share the contact details of the DO when providing the decision (see RTI 04, 05, 06). The DO has to display his/her name and contact details on the notice board (and if existing, on the website).	

6	Submission of the appeal	The citizen shall submit his/her appeal within 14 days. The appeal can be submitted by post, email or personally to the DO.	The IO can support the citizen in lodging an appeal if the citizen has problems to fill the form (not stipulated by law, though). He/she needs to provide the relevant form(s).	<a href="#">RTI 10</a>
7	Confirmation of receipt by the DO	The citizen shall ensure that he/she receives a confirmation of receipt. He/she can also inquire with the DO in writing.	The DO must confirm the receipt of the appeal in writing within 3 working days. The DO shall enter the appeal into the public records.	<a href="#">RTI 08</a> <a href="#">RTI 09</a>
8	Decision outcome	The citizen has to cooperate with the DO in the hearings and discussions regarding the appeal.	The DO has to make a decision within 21 days. He/she needs to conduct hearings and discuss the appeal with the citizen and IO.	
	Granting of the appeal	If the DO does not provide the information within 21 days, the citizen can file an appeal with the RTI Commission.	The DO shall share the information with the citizen within 21 days in a letter.	Letter
	Rejection of the appeal	The citizen needs to check the reasons provided by the DO carefully. If dissatisfied, he/she can appeal.	The DO needs to enter the rejection into the public records.	<a href="#">RTI 11</a>
9	Appeal to RTI Commission	If not satisfied with the decision of the DO, the citizen can file an appeal with the RTI Commission within 2 months. The appeal can be submitted by post, email or personally.	The DO needs to share the contact details of the RTI Commission.	<a href="#">Appeal to RTI Commission</a>
10	Decision outcome	The citizen needs to check the reasons provided by the Commission carefully. If dissatisfied, he/she can appeal.	The 5 RTI Commissioners need to issue their decision in writing to the appellant, the IO, and the public authority concerned.	
11	Appeal to the Court of Appeal/ Court of Magistrate	If the citizen is not satisfied with the decision of the RTI Commission, the case can be filed to the Court of Appeal within 30 days from the date of receipt of the decision.	The RTI Commission can approach the Magistrate's Court if the public authority does not obey the Commission's order.	Appeal

### **5.3) Relevant laws, regulations, and forms**

#### **International law**

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

[English](#)

[Sinhala](#)

[Tamil](#)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

[English](#)

[Sinhala](#)

#### **National laws, regulations, and forms**

Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No 28 of 1996

[English](#)

Right to Information Act, No 12 of 2016

[English](#)

[Sinhala](#)

[Tamil](#)

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](#)

RTI forms

[English, Tamil and Sinhala](#)

## 5.4) Sample workshops

### 2-day workshop

Day 1		Day 2	
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome + Introduction</b> Workshop logistics	<b>1</b>	<b>Warm-Up</b> 5,4,3,2,1 .... run! (20-30 min, p. 37)
<b>2</b>	<b>Icebreaker</b> Name game (20-30 min, p. 7)	<b>2</b>	<b>Right to Information</b> Introducing RTI principles (20-30 min, p. 30)
<b>3</b>	<b>Introducing rights</b> Rights in everyday life (45-60 min, p. 22)	<b>3</b>	<b>Right to Information</b> Asking specific questions on the RTI application form (45-60 min, p. 43)
<b>4</b>	<b>Right to Information</b> Key persons and bodies (20-30 min, p. 32)	<b>4</b>	<b>Energizer</b> Yes and No (15-20 min, p. 17)
<b>5</b>	<b>Right to Information</b> Give me five! (30-45 min, p. 35)	<b>5</b>	<b>Right to Information</b> Gathering information (45-60 min, p. 44)
<b>6</b>	<b>Right of Information</b> Process cards (30 min, p. 38)	<b>6</b>	<b>Right to Information</b> The relevance of information (30-40 min, p. 26)
<b>7</b>	<b>My story</b> Sharing of experiences	<b>7</b>	<b>Right to Information</b> Appealing with the Designated Officer (30-45 min, p. 46)
<b>8</b>	<b>Releaser</b> Beautiful butterfly (15-30 min, p. 10)	<b>8</b>	<b>Right to Information</b> Filing RTI requests
<b>9</b>	<b>Closing discussion</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Closing discussion</b>

### 3-day workshop

Day 1		Day 2		Day 3	
1	<b>Welcome + Introduction</b>  Workshop logistics	1	<b>Warm-Up</b>  Hello, Ayubowan, Vanakkam, Namaste - Different ways to greet (20-30 min, p. 8)	1	<b>Warm-Up</b>  Mirror (20-30 min, p. 16)
2	<b>Icebreaker</b>  Name game (20-30 min, p. 7)	2	<b>Warm-Up</b>  5,4,3,2,1 .... run! (20-30 min, p. 37)	2	<b>Introducing empowerment</b>  Power (im)balances (Ribbon dance) (30-40 min, p. 18)
<b>Water/ tea break</b>					
3	<b>Introducing rights</b>  Rights in everyday life (45-60 min, p. 22)	3	<b>Right to Information</b>  Responsibility cards (30-45 min, p. 40)	3	<b>Right to Information</b>  Appealing with the Designated Officer (30-45 min, p. 46)
4	<b>Right to Information</b>  The relevance of specific information (30-40 min, p. 26)	4	<b>Right to Information</b>  Asking specific questions on the RTI application form (45-60 min, p. 43)	4	<b>Releaser</b>  Angry jungle, happy jungle (20-30 min, p. 13)
<b>Lunch break</b>					
5	<b>Right to Information</b>  Introducing RTI principles (20-30 min, p. 30)	5	<b>Right to Information</b>  RTI dance (30-45 min, p. 42)	5	<b>Introducing empowerment</b>  Changemakers (30-45 min, p. 20)
6	<b>Right to Information</b>  Give me five! (30-45 min, p. 35)	6	<b>My story</b>  Sharing of experiences	6	<b>Final discussion</b>
7	<b>Right to Information</b>  Process cards (30 min, p. 38)	7	<b>Right to Information</b>  Gathering information (45-60 min, p. 44)	7	<b>Releaser</b>  Beautiful butterfly (15-30 min, p. 10)
<b>Water/ tea break</b>					
8	<b>Closing discussion</b>	8	<b>Closing discussion</b>	8	<b>Closing</b>

### 4-day workshop

Day 1		Day 2		Day 3		Day 4	
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome + Introduction</b>  Workshop logistics	<b>1</b>	<b>Icebreaker</b>  Hello, Ayubowan, Vanakkam - Different ways to greet (20-30 min, p. 8)	<b>1</b>	<b>Warm-Up</b>  Walking together (15-20 min, p. 9)	<b>1</b>	<b>Warm-Up</b>  How does your butterfly feel? (15-30 min, p. 11)
<b>2</b>	<b>Icebreaker</b>  Name game (20-30 min, p. 7)	<b>2</b>	<b>Warm-Up</b>  5,4,3,2,1 .... run! (20-30 min, p. 37)	<b>2</b>	<b>Right to Information/Performance</b>  RTI dance (repetition)	<b>2</b>	<b>Right to Information/Performance</b>  RTI dance (repetition)
<b>Water/ tea break</b>							
<b>3</b>	<b>Introducing rights</b>  Rights in everyday life (45-60 min, p. 22)	<b>3</b>	<b>Introducing empowerment</b>  Power (im)balances (Ribbon dance) (30-45 min, p. 18)	<b>3</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Gathering information (45-60 min, p. 44)	<b>3</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Group discussion on topics for RTI requests
<b>4</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  The relevance of specific information (30-40 min, p. 26)	<b>4</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Introducing RTI principles (20-30 min, p. 30)	<b>4</b>	<b>Energizer</b>  Beautiful butterfly (15-30 min, p. 10)	<b>4</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Filing of RTI requests as a group and individual
<b>5</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Types of information (40-60 min, p. 28)	<b>5</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Process cards (30 min, p. 38)	<b>5</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Appealing with the Designated Officer (30-45 min, p. 46)		
<b>Lunch break</b>							
<b>6</b>	<b>Introducing empowerment</b>  Yes and No (15 to 20 min, p. 17)	<b>6</b>	<b>Right to Information/Performance</b>  RTI dance (30-45 min, p. 42)	<b>6</b>	<b>My story</b>  Sharing of experiences	<b>5</b>	<b>Performance/ Rehearsal</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Key persons and bodies (20-30 min, p. 32)	<b>7</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Responsibility cards (30-45 min, p. 40)	<b>7</b>	<b>Releaser</b>  Angry jungle, happy jungle (20-30 min, p. 13)		



<b>8</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Give me five! (30-45 min, p. 35)	<b>8</b>	<b>Right to Information</b>  Asking specific questions on the RTI application form (45-60 min, p. 43)	<b>8</b>	<b>Introducing empowerment</b>  Changemakers (30-45 min, p. 20)	<b>6</b>	<b>Final discussion</b>
<b>Water/ tea break</b>							
	<b>Closing discussion</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Releaser</b>  Mirror (20-30 min, p. 16)	<b>9</b>	<b>Releaser</b>  Seaweed (15-30 min, p. 12)	<b>7</b>	<b>Performance</b>
			<b>Closing discussion</b>		<b>Closing discussion</b>		<b>Closing</b>

## 5.5) Recruitment

[Project name]

[Logos]

### Contact details

This information is used to contact you for the workshop and, if needed, for transport purposes. Your contact details are treated confidentially by [NAME] and will not be shared.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number only  Phone/WhatsApp number

### Background information

This information is sought to help us tailor the design and delivery of the workshop to participants. This information may be anonymised (by removing your contact details) and shared with third parties (e.g. external facilitators).

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex F  M

Type of disability (e.g. missing limb) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you rely on any assistive device(s)/ support? Yes  No

If so, please specify: Wheelchair  Crutch(es)  Sign language  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Cause of disability  
Birth   
Accident  What type of accident (e.g. traffic)? \_\_\_\_\_ How old were you? \_\_\_\_\_  
War  What kind of event (e.g. landmine)? \_\_\_\_\_ How old were you? \_\_\_\_\_

Civil status Single  Married  Divorced  Spouse deceased

Do you have children? Yes  No  If so, how many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you attended school? Yes  No  If so, at what grade did you leave? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you attended vocational training? Yes  No  If so, what type of training did you receive? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

What was your occupation before you became disabled? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever applied for social welfare/ government benefits? Yes  No

For what did you apply and when? 1) \_\_\_\_\_ Have you received it? Yes  No

2) \_\_\_\_\_ Have you received it? Yes  No

3) \_\_\_\_\_ Have you received it? Yes  No

4) \_\_\_\_\_ Have you received it? Yes  No

Have you ever attended a rights awareness workshop? Yes  No  If so, when (year: \_\_\_\_\_) and by whom was it provided? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you any knowledge of rights and laws? Yes  No

If so, what do you know? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever submitted an application based on the Right to Information Act? Yes  No  If so, when (month and year: \_\_\_\_\_)?

If so, about what (e.g. Samurdhi payment was not made for several months)? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything about rights, laws, and benefits programs that you would like to learn in this workshop? Do you have any questions that government officers or other people could not answer satisfactorily?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Workshop**

What type of food do you prefer? Vegetarian... Non-vegetarian... Other... If so, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Do you need any particular support to attend the workshop? Yes  No

If so, please specify \_\_\_\_\_



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