

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) ACT IN SRI
LANKA: A STUDY OF IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN
THE VAVUNIYA DIVISIONAL SECRETARIAT OF THE VAVUNIYA
DISTRICT SECRETARIAT**

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The Right to Information (RTI) Act was enacted in the year 2016, forecasting a country free from corruption, a culture of transparency and high public participation in governance. The annual progress report of the RTI commission and the existing literature revealed that national level impediments in implementing the RTI from the uppermost level, and the requirement of the pathway is identified for proper implementation from the perspective of grassroots level. Therefore, this research is designed to find the factors affecting the proper implementation of the RTI Act in the Vavuniya divisional secretariat of Vavuniya District, Sri Lanka. The findings of the research are thematically analyzed and summarized from the qualitative data collected from focused group discussions (FGD) with RTI applicants and Key Informant Interviews (KII) with Information and designation officers from the public and local authorities in the Vavuniya Divisional Secretariat. The KII showed inadequate and infrequency of training on RTI mechanism as one of the significant factors. Recession of action against applicants who misappropriated the RTI against the local authority was emphasized as the impediment from the perspective of local authorities. The better allocation of resources to update the website promptly to foster a culture of transparency was suggested. Encouraging non-government organizations that engaged towards the better implementation of the RTI was also a valid recommendation from the KIIs. FGD pointed out the behavior of the relevant officers in the form of Delay or negligence of acknowledging RTI requests, revenge taken personally by the relevant government officers, negligence of RTI requests, ball passing, disrespectful behavior of the information officer, threatening, as the factors affected the community to use the RTI properly. FGD appreciates the existing service extended by third-party organizations such as Transparency International in terms of conducting awareness programs at village level which provided proper guidance to get the information through the RTI mechanism. The FGD suggests the RTIC should take measures to exercise section 14 and 15 of the RTI Act. The FGD reveals that despite the order issued by the RTIC, there is negligence in providing information when the community needs further legal advice..

Keywords: RTI mechanism, Implementation, Impediments, Vavuniya

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