

Centre for Peace and  
Development Initiatives

# Significance of Right to Information Views from the Capital 2012



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Frederik Naumann  
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This E-book has been prepared by Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) with the support of Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit (FNF). It was coordinated by Mr. Amer Ejaz, Executive Director of CPDI, and developed by a team comprising Bilal Saeed, Manager Research, Shahid Jatui, Research Officer and Ms. Ambreen Kanwal, Coordinator at CPDI. Many thanks are owed to Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit (FNF), and especially Mr. Olaf Kellerhoff, Representative head FNF Pakistan, for coming up with the idea of an e-booklet on significance of Right to Information.

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# Introduction

A decade has passed since the enactment of freedom of information ordinance (2002), the legal instrument granting citizens of Pakistan access to public records from the federal government departments. However, both the demand and the supply side mechanisms of information access still lay in an abysmal state.

This survey intends to highlight the perspectives of an assortment of citizens from the Federal Capital, Islamabad on the significance of Right to Information. Citizens from different corners of Islamabad were approached in streets, work places, markets, restaurants and parks and asked a single question: "What do you consider the significance of Right to Information to be?"

Most of the people, with a few exceptions from the scholarly circles, did not know of the legal mechanism available to access information from the government departments, therefore, before asking the question they were first briefly guided on the presence of access to information mechanism with the legal and constitutional cover available so they could be at a better position to provide an answer.

The participants belonged to different social classes, with diverse professions and varying age groups. Their perspectives are presented as they were, except that they are translated in English, with the intention to facilitate the comprehension of the reader, without the comments losing their essence.





**Raheem Bux**  
PhD Scholar,  
QAU

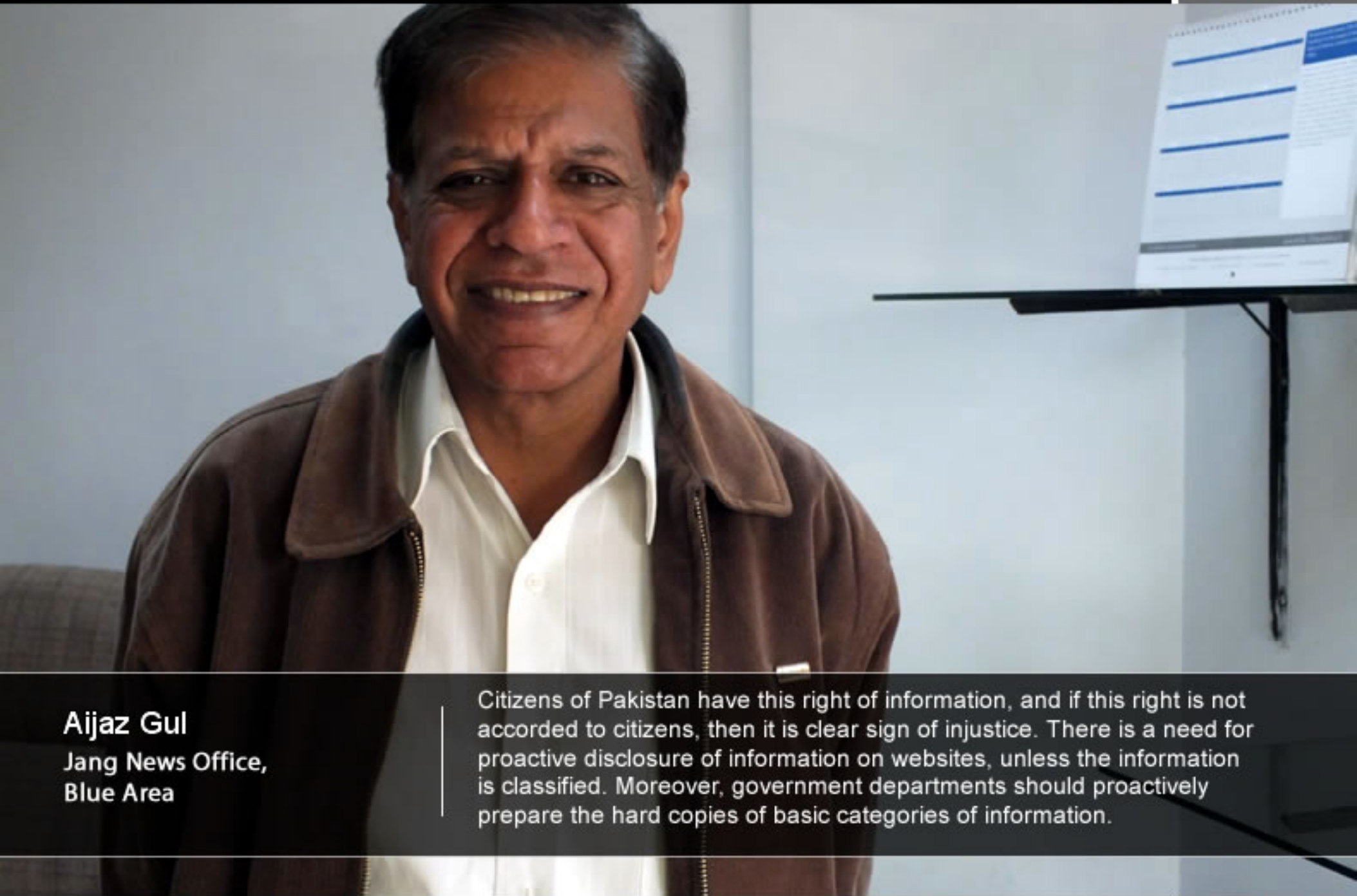
Access to information law is significant because It gives empowerment to society and ends the fears and confusions of the people by providing guidelines to individuals on how to obtain their rights. RTI creates a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens. Moreover, it helps in catharsis.





**Sehrish Ayaz**  
Administrator, Public School

It is important to have Right to Information as it plays an important role by allowing Citizens to know all the affairs of the government. RTI could assist in ensuring transparency and accountability in government.



**Aijaz Gul**

Jang News Office,  
Blue Area

Citizens of Pakistan have this right of information, and if this right is not accorded to citizens, then it is clear sign of injustice. There is a need for proactive disclosure of information on websites, unless the information is classified. Moreover, government departments should proactively prepare the hard copies of basic categories of information.





**Shakeel Riaz Ahmed**  
Property Businessperson,  
Super Market

The biggest problem is awareness. When all the citizens will be aware of this law, only then will they be in a position to exercise RTI. Neither individuals nor the society knows how to take their rights.



**Muhammad Qadeer**  
Barber,  
in front of Poly Clinic

Frustrated while referring to a recent setback faced by a near relative while applying for a job, Mr. Qadeer complained of the poor man's inability to access information from the government departments.





**Shahnaz Begum**

House wife,  
Islamabad

If the citizens are accorded with the Right to Information, then they may get much useful information from the government departments. Further, RTI would help in reducing corruption and malpractices in the government departments and officers will be answerable to citizens of the state.



**Romaan Abbar**  
Student,  
Super Market

The biggest problem of our country is corruption and, therefore, to reduce corruption in government departments RTI law could be beneficial. Moreover, if citizens have access to authentic public information, then wrongly held impression of the honest officers and departments could also be rectified.





**Akbar Hussain**  
Shopkeeper,  
Jinnah Super Market

Citizens need every sort of information for self and public interest. Citizens need information about the services' quality and procedures. However, officers in the government department would not cooperate even if this law is implemented. There is a need of public awareness through the media.





**Saad**

Senior Executive, U-Phone,  
Super market

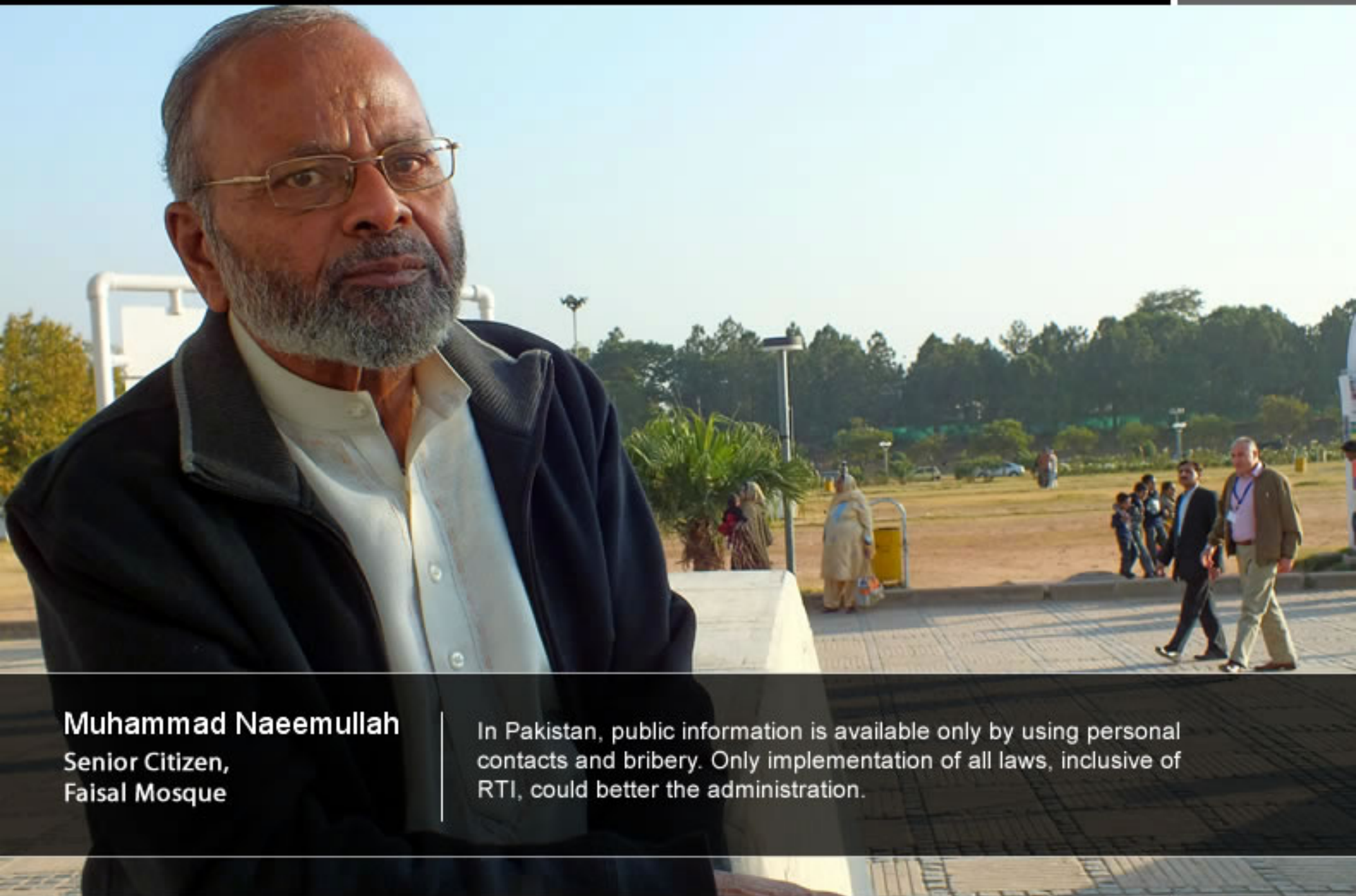
RTI laws could be used in knowing the government policies regarding business and transfer of plots. It could help in identifying the malpractices in government departments, whereby corruption can be reduced.





**Saima Kiani**  
Banker,  
Citibank

Right to information is somewhat a basic right and empowers the public. RTI is important for the accountability of government bodies.



**Muhammad Naeemullah**  
Senior Citizen,  
Faisal Mosque

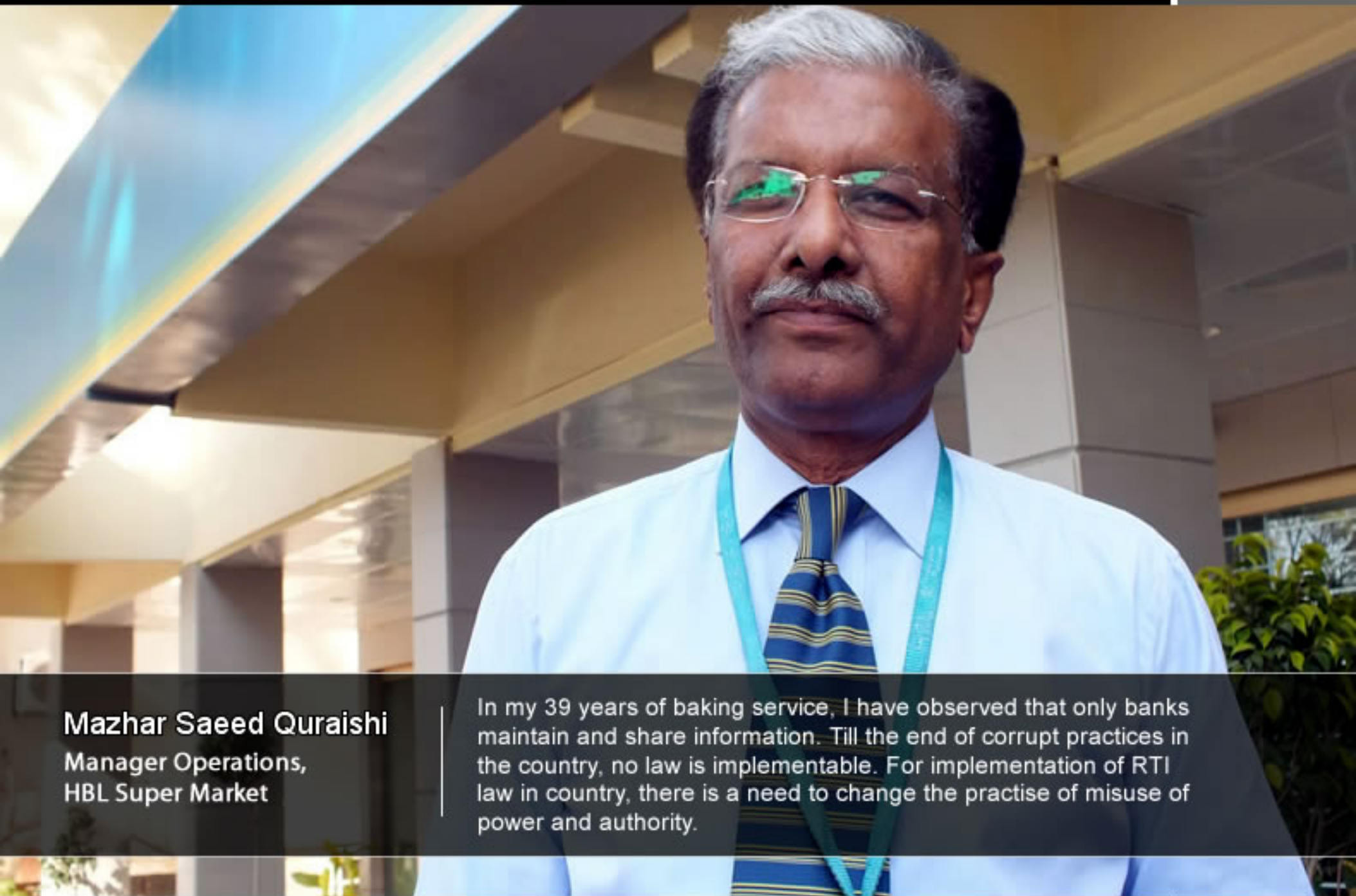
In Pakistan, public information is available only by using personal contacts and bribery. Only implementation of all laws, inclusive of RTI, could better the administration.





**Siddique Ahmed**  
Teacher,  
Government School

Citizens should have right to check and balance the activities of the government. If RTI law is used positively, it will be much fruitful for the country.



**Mazhar Saeed Quraishi**  
Manager Operations,  
HBL Super Market

In my 39 years of banking service, I have observed that only banks maintain and share information. Till the end of corrupt practices in the country, no law is implementable. For implementation of RTI law in country, there is a need to change the practise of misuse of power and authority.





**Waseem Abbasi**  
Finance Secretary Traders Union  
/Shopkeeper,  
Barakahu Market

No law is fruitful unless implemented. No government officer pays heed to the poor man's application unless bribed. Poor people cannot get anything in this country from admission to medicine. If RTI law is implemented, it could address the grievances of the poor people of Pakistan.



**Mehreen Raja**  
Student

I think RTI is a great right because it helps us to be aware of all the things happening in government institutions. Through RTI, all the government officers will feel responsible in front of the public.





**Shakir Ali**  
Shopkeeper,  
Barakahu Market

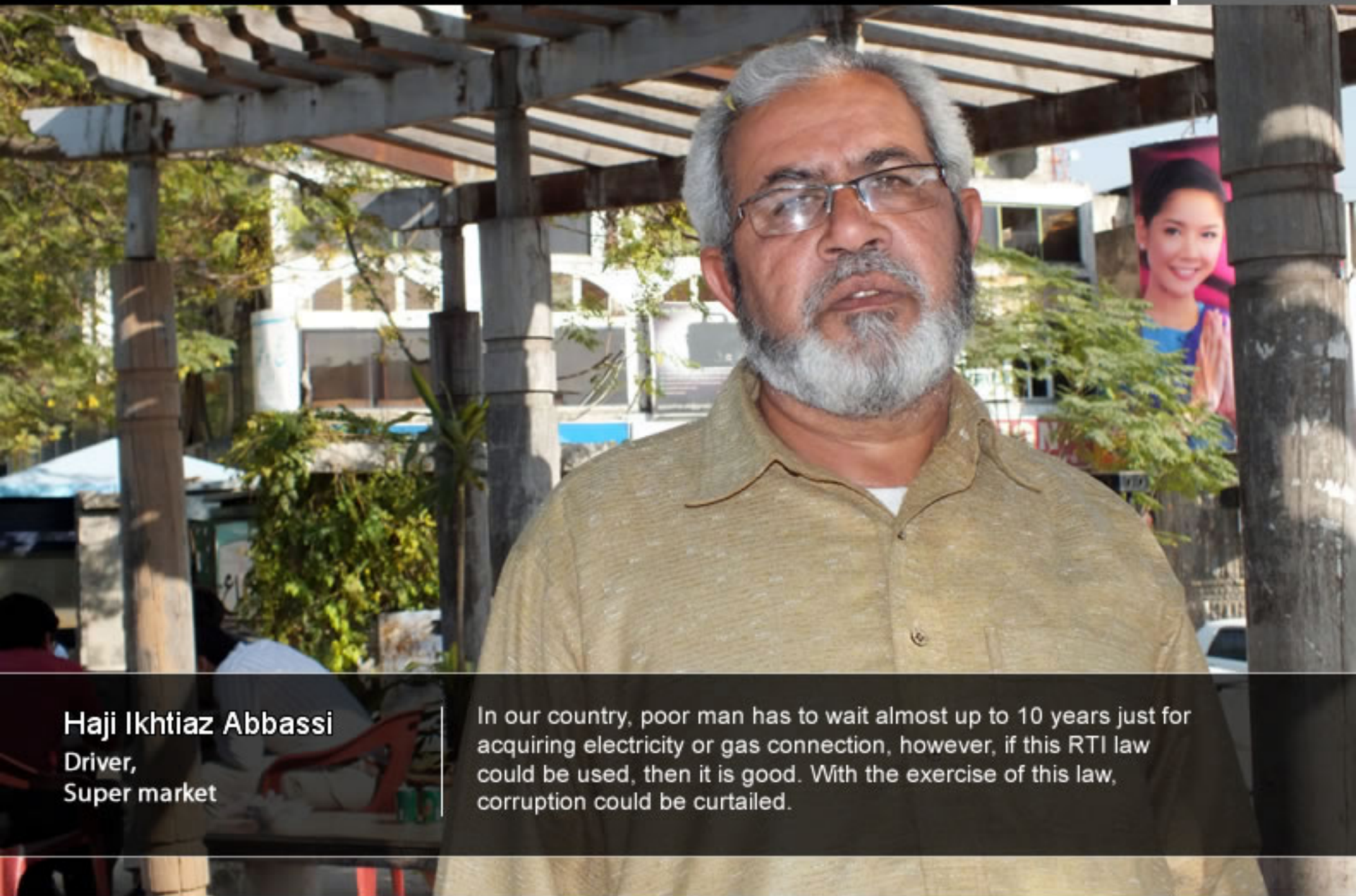
If RTI law is implemented, taxpayers could know where their money is spent and corruption could be reduced.



**Fakhar Bilal**  
Lecturer,  
QAU

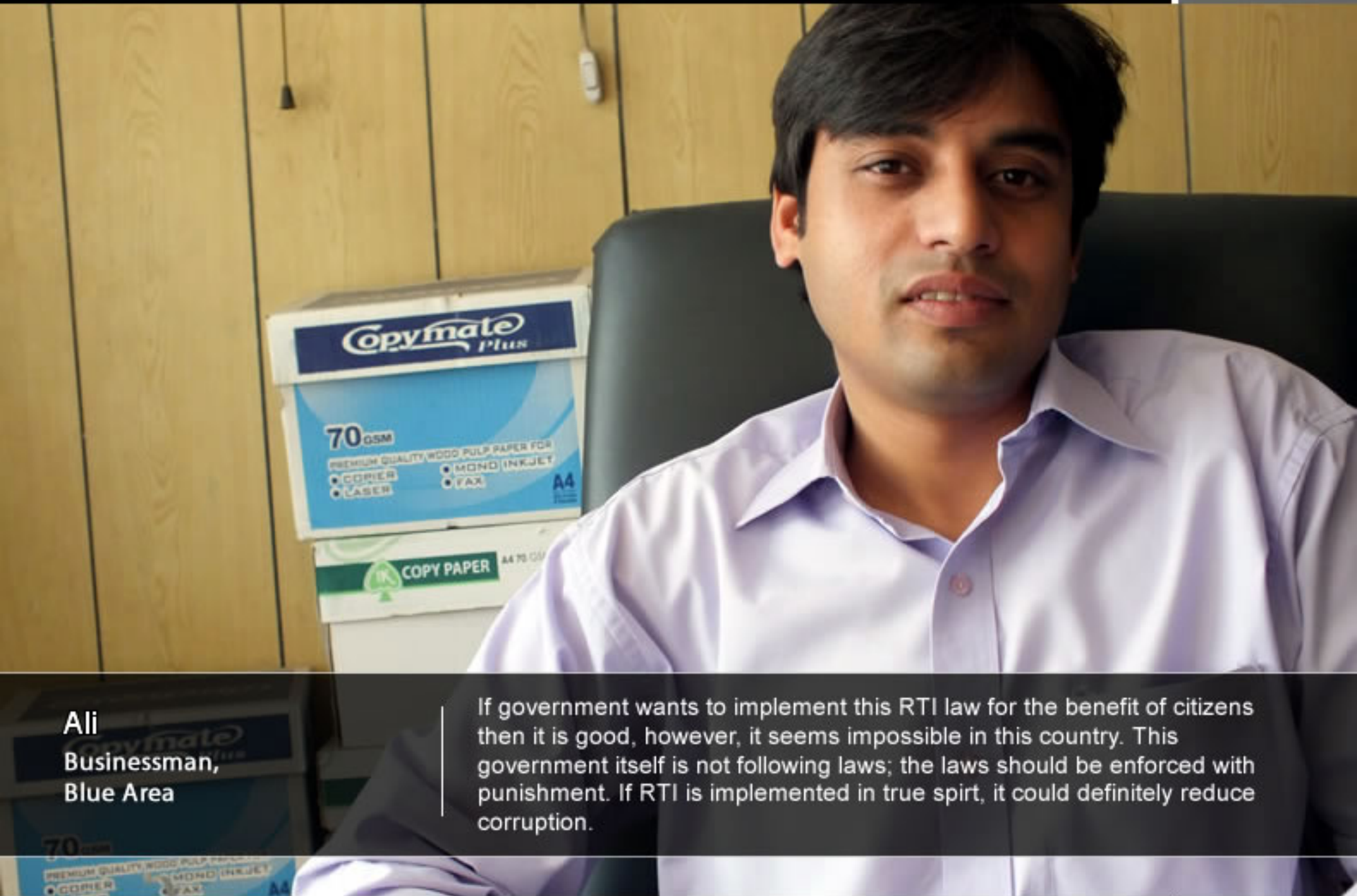
Right to information law is necessary to guarantee other human rights. This law is helpful for scientific research. RTI ensures the accountability of government functionaries.





**Haji Ikhtiaz Abbassi**  
Driver,  
Super market

In our country, poor man has to wait almost up to 10 years just for acquiring electricity or gas connection, however, if this RTI law could be used, then it is good. With the exercise of this law, corruption could be curtailed.



**Ali**  
Businessman,  
Blue Area

If government wants to implement this RTI law for the benefit of citizens then it is good, however, it seems impossible in this country. This government itself is not following laws; the laws should be enforced with punishment. If RTI is implemented in true spirit, it could definitely reduce corruption.





**Efat Hameeda**  
Lecturer,  
Government Degree College

We are living in age of communication, and it is necessarily important to keep all the means of information open. RTI is one way of communication through which citizens can be aware of the problems faced at large and government's efforts to solve them.



**Zaheer Ahmed**  
Business Software Developer,  
Blue Area

If citizens are aware of RTI law, they can ask the concerned departments for annual allocated budget for construction of roads, streets, and sanitary system.

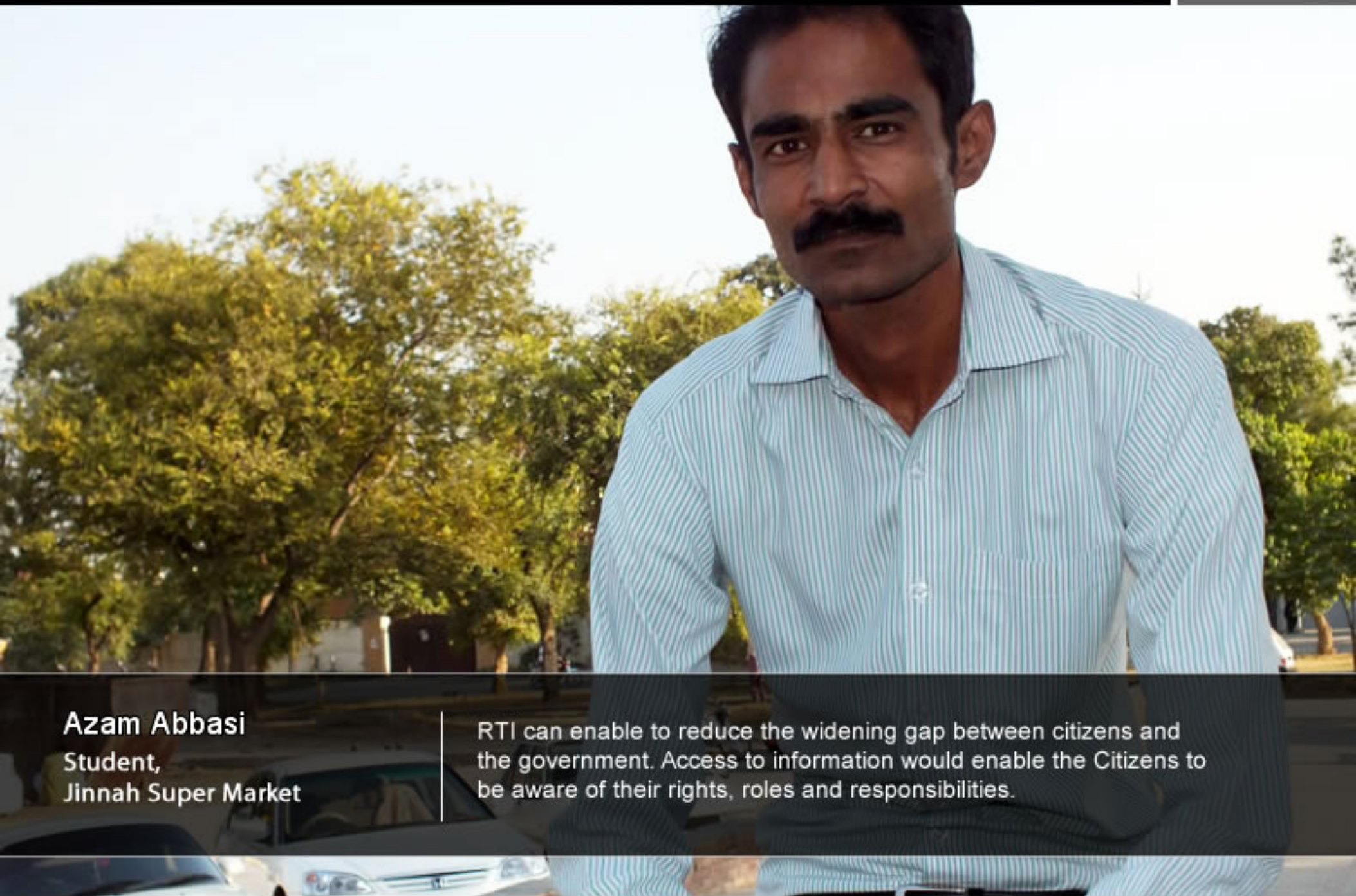




**Khizer Iqbal**  
Shopkeeper, Data Masala,  
Barakahu Market

In our country, no law is implemented. Even to change an electricity transformer in our community, we gave money to officers. Even if RTI can assist us to obtain information, what would be its use when nobody listens?





**Azam Abbasi**  
Student,  
Jinnah Super Market

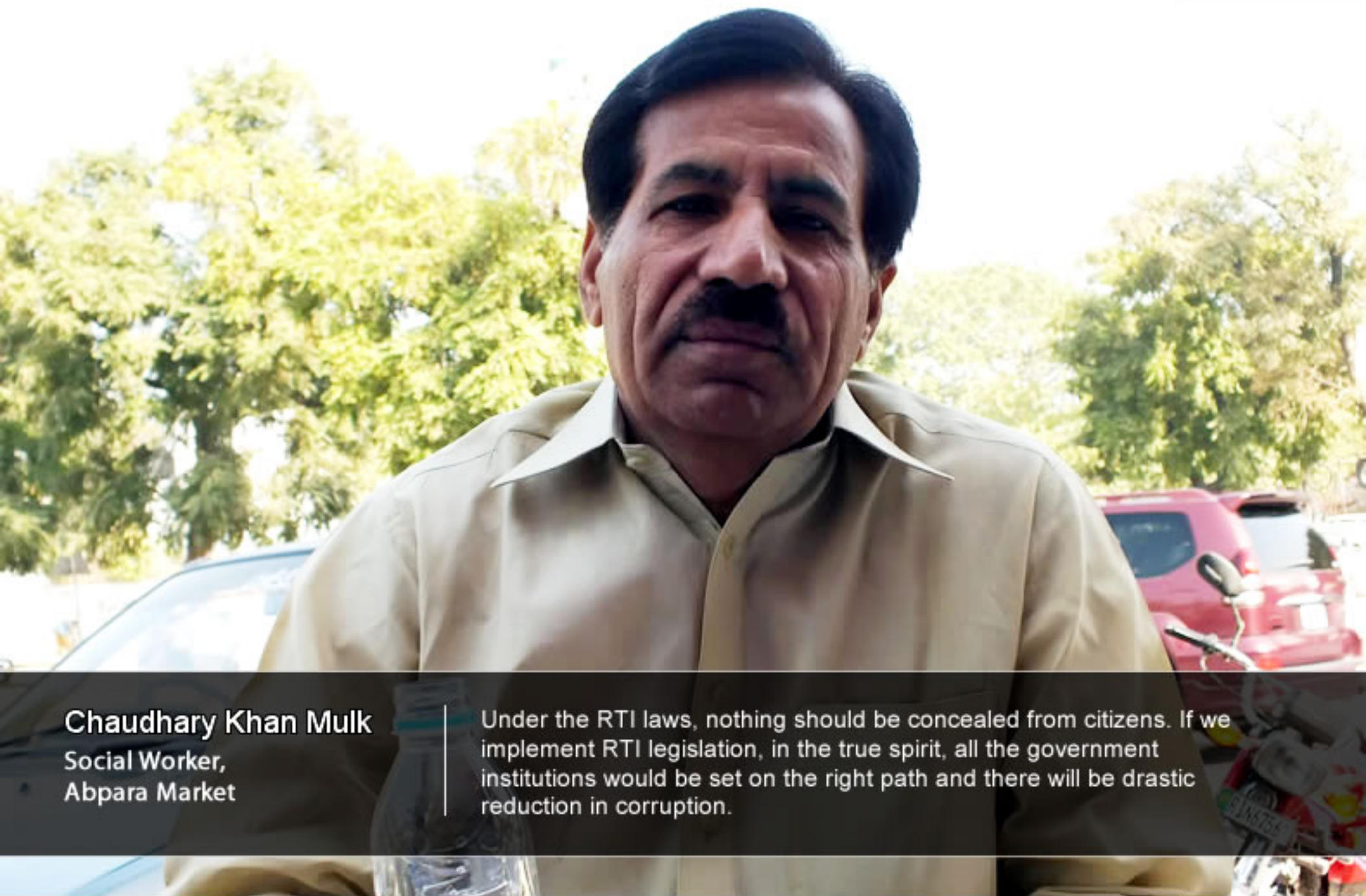
RTI can enable to reduce the widening gap between citizens and the government. Access to information would enable the Citizens to be aware of their rights, roles and responsibilities.





Lala Ghafoor  
Tea Shop keeper,  
QAU Huts

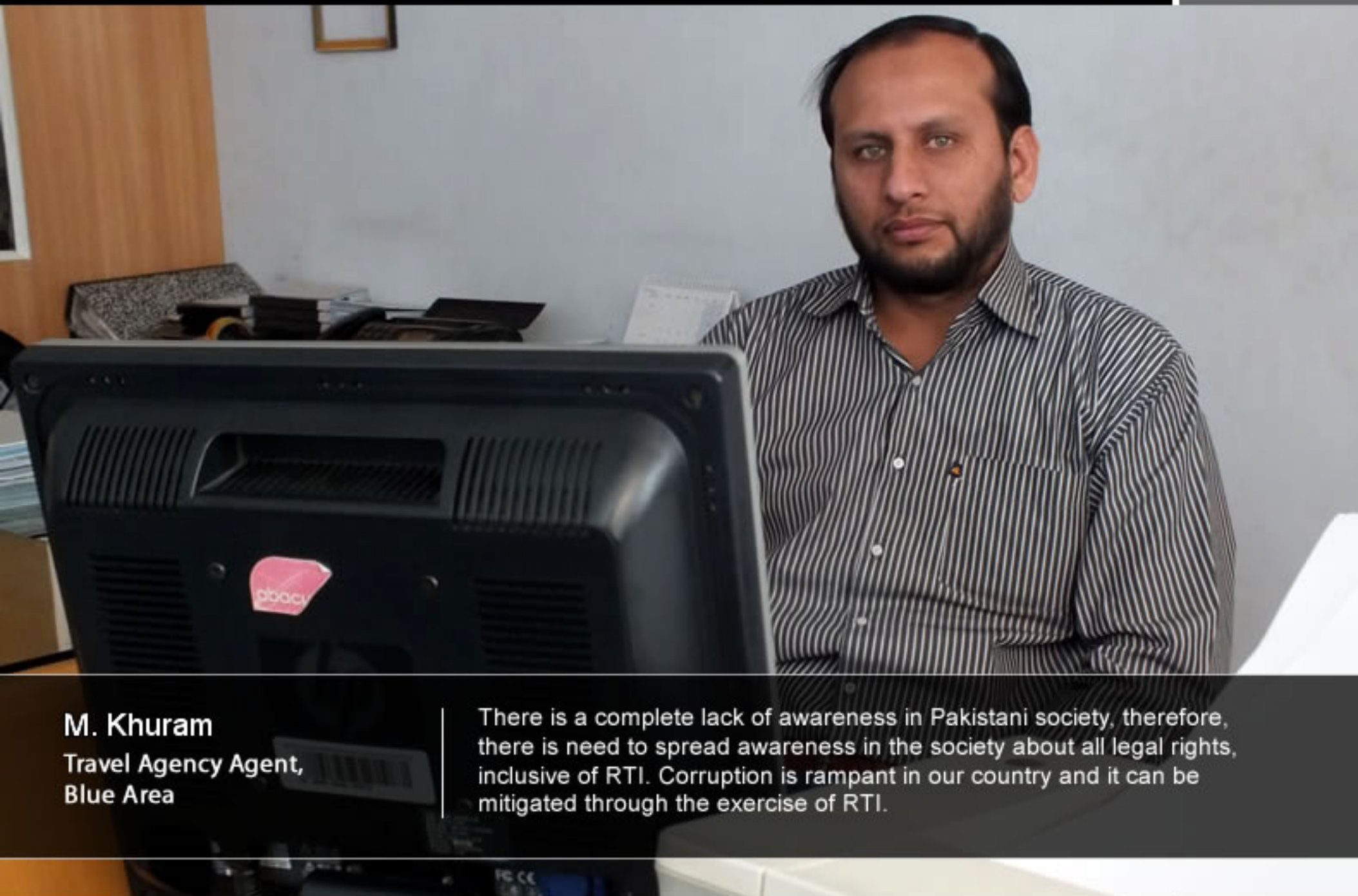
No law is beneficial for the poor in Pakistan. Poor people are not able to utilize any law in this country to their advantage.



**Chaudhary Khan Mulk**  
Social Worker,  
Abpara Market

Under the RTI laws, nothing should be concealed from citizens. If we implement RTI legislation, in the true spirit, all the government institutions would be set on the right path and there will be drastic reduction in corruption.





**M. Khuram**  
Travel Agency Agent,  
Blue Area

There is a complete lack of awareness in Pakistani society, therefore, there is need to spread awareness in the society about all legal rights, inclusive of RTI. Corruption is rampant in our country and it can be mitigated through the exercise of RTI.



**Ms. Aliya**  
Lecturer,  
Government College for Women

When I got the knowledge of Right to Information, it sensitized me a lot. Certainly, RTI will bring transparency and accountability in the public bodies. I strongly believe that people should have access to information regarding all affairs affecting their lives.





**Hassan Baluch**  
Research Fellow,  
NIHCR

There is no encouragement and resources available for usage of this law; the supply side of information is not encouraged and oriented on the importance of this law. The persons seeking information in Baluchistan are murdered, if people get information through such means, then what is importance of that information? Nevertheless, RTI law is important for research and implementation of the research because even the government information departments like National Document Centre and Press Information Department do not provide access to information.



**Siab Khan**  
Security Guard,  
Blue Area Market

All laws, including RTI law, are good and for the benefit of citizens, but if implemented by letter and spirit rather than just lip service. If citizens are still suffering from myriad problems in Pakistan, then what is need and significance of these laws and democracy? All laws would be effective if enforced with strictness coupled with punishment for violators and without discrimination.





**Ayesha Shafiq**  
Research Fellow,  
NIHCR

Taxpayers should know the information required for the betterment of the administrative services in the country. As there is a civil contract between citizens and state, RTI law provides opportunities to citizens to know the violation of their rights. By having access to information, researchers can obtain information relevant to their studies. Through RTI, accountability and transparency in government departments would be ensured.



**Aamir Rafiq & Sumair Ali**  
Students/ Sportsmen,  
Pak-China Friendship Centre

If the RTI law is fully implemented in country, it could reduce corrupt practices by ensuring transparency. Having access to facts and authentic information, blame game would end and Government's function as a public service provider would elevate.





**Naqash Ahmed Abbasi**  
Mobile Shopkeeper,  
Abpara Market

In government offices, citizens have to visit again and again for small pieces of business like electricity and gas connections, transfer of property, and other issues related with CDA. If this law is implemented in spirit, citizens can know the status of their applications. Therefore, RTI would provide respect to the citizens.



**Abdul Qadus**  
Information Officer,  
IIUI

There is no culture of implementation of laws in Pakistan, however, if RTI is implemented in country, then it would produce outstanding results. RTI is also significant for personal services like electricity and gas meter connection and solving other administrative issues.





**Muhammad Imran Zeb**

Software Developer,  
Alaichi Soft (Pvt) Ltd.

RTI legislation would be significant to obtain guidelines about Government rules, regulations and policies. It would enable us to obtain information about our rights and would, further, give a sense of ownership to every citizen.



**Tazeem Akhtar**  
House wife,  
Islamabad

Right to Information legislation can be helpful to know all information from those departments where citizens have to approach daily, such as WAPDA and Sui Gas, for overcharging of bills and other issues.



**Naeem Ashraf**  
Director (Biodiversity),  
ENERCON

RTI law is significant to end the yellow journalism on the one hand, and for exposure of citizens to their rights on the other. Government servants also need orientation regarding the importance of RTI law.

**Faryal & Abeeha**  
Students,  
National Institute of Psychology

The situation of access to information is so dismal here that even access to information from libraries is not available to students. If RTI law is implemented in the true spirit, it would ensure accountability of the government departments, whereby, Citizens would be more aware, active and empowered against the malpractices and maladministration in their Country.

**Saleha Tabassum**  
Research Student,  
QAU Cafe

If the law of access to information is implemented and practiced in our society, then it is definitely an important law. If truly implemented, RTI would allow every citizen to have access to information he or she may seek.

**Dr. Sadia**  
Assistant Professor,  
QAU

In our country there is a discouraging attitude towards knowing, each information comes as a news; even in the university, all faculty members and other non-faculty employees work without knowing the employment TORs. RTI as a subject should be introduced at grass root level in schools. Moreover, there is need of awareness regarding the significance of this law.