

**GOA STATE INFORMATION COMMISSION**  
'Kamat Towers', Seventh Floor, Patto, Panaji – Goa

Appeal No. 232/2019/SIC-I

Public Information Officer (PIO),  
The Secretary,  
Village Panchayat Anjuna-Caisua,  
Bardez-Goa.

.....Appellant

v/s

1. First Appellate Authority (FAA),  
Block Development Officer, Bardez,  
Mapusa, Bardez-Goa

2. Mr. Surendra S. Govekar,  
R/o. H. NO. 678/5, Soratto Waddo,  
Anjuna, Bardez-Goa.

....Respondents

**CORAM:** Ms. Pratima K. Vernekar, State Information Commissioner.

Filed on: 26/07/2019  
Decided on: 11/12/2019

**ORDER**

1. I dispose of this appeal filed u/s 19(3) of the RTI Act, 2005 against the order dated 06/05/2019 passed by the Respondent no. 1 First Appellate Authority partly allowing the first appeal bearing case No. BDO-1-BAR/RTI/15-2019 filed before him by the Respondent No. 2 Mr. Surendra S. Govekar.
2. The brief facts leading to present appeal are as under:-

a) The information seeker Shri Surendra Govekar, Respondent No. 2 herein had filed application under RTI on 4/1/2019 seeking information in respect of Development work taken in Panchayat jurisdiction by Anjuna–Caisua Panchayat through Panchayat fund from the period 8/7/2017 to 04/1/2019. The said information was sought from the Public Information Officer (PIO) of the Village Panchayat Anjuna–Caisua in exercise of appellant's right in terms of sub section (1) of section 6 of RTI Act, 2005.

- b) That the application of the Respondent no. 2 was responded by the appellant herein on 31/1/2019 requesting the Respondent No.2 to inspect the required information in the Village Panchayat office during any working days as per point 25 of his application.
- c) Being aggrieved by such an conduct of the present appellant PIO, the Respondent No. 2 (information seeker) filed first appeal on 5/3/2019 before Block Development Officer, Mapusa, Bardez-Goa being First Appellate Authority who is the respondent no. 1 herein.
- d) The respondent No.1,the First Appellate Authority vide order dated 6/5/2019 was pleased to partly allow the appeal and vide said order directed the Appellant PIO to furnish the available information to the Respondent No. 2 (information seeker) which is identified by him during inspection of records within a period of 10 day, from the receipt of the order upon payment of fees as intimated by the respondent vide letter dated 1/3/2019.
- e) Being aggrieved by the order of respondent No.1 First Appellate Authority, the present appeal came to be filed by the Public Information Officer(PIO) of the said public authority on the grounds raised in the memo of appeal thereby seeking relief of quashing and setting aside the impugned order dated 6/5/2019 by the first appellate authority in appeal No. BDO-1-BAR/RTI/15-2019.
3. The matter was listed on the board and was taken up for hearing after intimating both the parties. Appellant was represented by Advocate Kapil Kerkar. Respondent No. 1 opted to remain absent Respondent no. 2 Shri Surendra Govekar was present along with Advocate Atish Mandrekar.

4. Reply came to be filed by the Respondent No. 2 on 25/09/2019. The copy of the same was furnished to the Advocate for the appellant.
5. Arguments were advanced by Advocate for the appellant and the Advocate for respondent No.2 submitted to consider his reply as his Arguments .
6. It is contention of appellant Public Information Officer that the impugned order of FAA is totally contrary to the provisions of law and without any reasons to the same. It was further contended that the impugned order is passed by the respondent no. 1 first appellate authority is in total violation of the principles of natural justice as is evident from the facts that the petitioner/Appellant was not heard before passing the impugned order. It was further contended that the respondent No.1 First Appellate Authority (FAA) failed to consider that the Respondent No.2 failed to identify the information sought for and therefore the same was not maintainable. It was further contended that the impugned order is passed without application of mind.
7. On the other hand the Respondent No.2 (information seeker) contended that there is no provision under the RTI Act, 2005 for the SPIO to file second appeal before this Hon'ble authority and the present counter second appeal is illegal, without authority of law and without jurisdiction. It was further contended that the second counter appeal is filed only to axe personal grudge against him as he being Panch Member of Anjuna-Caisua Panchayat . It was further contended that subsequently he filing the second appeal bearing No.212/2019 dated 8/7/2019, the appellant (PIO) filed the present counter second appeal on 26/7/2019 against the order dated 6/5/2019 passed by Respondent no. 1 First appellate authority. It was further contended that the scheme of the RTI Acts provides for disclosure of information by the Public authority

to the citizens and the appellant (PIO) is not a citizen or aggrieved party and hence he cannot approach this commission by the second appeal. It was further contended that the appellant have made several false statement in the second appeal and have also suppressed the material facts and hence the second appeal deserves to be dismissed on that count alone. The respondent no. 2 also vehemently denied the averments made in the memo of appeal.

8. I have the perused the entire records of this proceedings also considered the submission made on behalf of the parties.
9. As the appeal is filed by PIO, before I deal with the merits of the appeal, the point arises for my determination is whether this Commission has jurisdiction to entertain and decide the second appeals filed by the PIOs interms of section 19(3) of RTI Act, 2005?
10. In my considered opinion the appeal process created u/s. 19 of the RTI Act is purely for the use of an aggrieved RTI applicant or any person who may be treated as a third party to an RTI application but not for the purpose of the PIO or FAA. The relevant provisions are reproduced below:

“19.(1)Any person who, does not receive a decision within the time specified in sub section (1) or clause (a) of sub-section (3) of section 7, **or is aggrieved by a decision of the Central Public Information Officer or State Public Information Officer,** as the case may be, may within thirty days from the expiry of such period or from the receipt of such a decision prefer an appeal to such Officer who is senior in rank to the Central Public Information Officer or State Public Information Officer as the case may be, in each public authority;..

(2) Where an appeal is preferred against an order made by a Central Public Information Officer or a State Public Information Officer, as the case may be, u/s. 11 to disclose third party information, the appeal by the concerned third party shall be made within thirty days from the date of the order.

(3) A second appeal against the decision under section 19 (3) shall lie within ninety days from the date on which the decision should have been made or was actually received, with the Central Information Commission or the State Information Commission:

11. Thus scope of section 19 implies that only two categories of persons may challenge the decision of a PIO
  - a) an aggrieved RTI applicant and
  - b) a third party who is aggrieved by a PIO's decision to disclose information pertaining to he/she/it which is treated as being confidential by that third party.
- 12 . Further, section 19(1) only permits an aggrieved RTI applicant to submit a first appeal to an FAA on two grounds only, *i.e.*, if no decision has been received from the PIO or if he is aggrieved by a decision of the PIO, namely, rejection of the request or partial disclosure. A third party to an RTI application may also submit a first appeal to the FAA u/s. 19(2). Therefore the First Appeal process does not contemplate any other right of appeal vesting in any other person except to an aggrieved RTI applicant, third party or public authority.
13. Section 19 (3) of Right to Information Act, deals with the appeal procedure and the above provisions are made in the interest and for the benefit of information seeker or a third party. PIO is **the information provider, and not the seeker of the information** Further PIO is also not covered u/s 19(2) as a third

party. This is so because the third party as defined u/s 2(n) and section 11 should be a person or a public authority who's information which was of confidential nature has been directed to be furnished, clearly, it does not include the PIO himself in its ambit. There is also no provision in the Right to Information Act to consider an Appeal filed by PIO's against the order of FAA as the very purpose of this Act is to provide the information.

14. In the matter of Chief Information Commissioner And Another vs. State of Manipur and Another [(2011)15 SCC 1], the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India explained the scheme of appeals provided for in the RTI Act in the following words:

*"35. ... Section 19 is an appellate procedure and a person who is aggrieved by refusal in receiving the information which he has sought for can only seek redress in the manner provided in the statute, namely, by following the procedure under Section 19. This Court is, therefore, of the opinion that Section 7 read with Section 19 provides a complete statutory mechanism to a person who is aggrieved by refusal to receive information. Apart from that the procedure under Section 19 of the Act, when compared to Section 18, has several safeguards for protecting the interest of the person who has been refused the information he has sought. Section 19(5), in this connection, may be referred to. Section 19(5) puts the onus to justify the denial of request on the information officer. Therefore, it is for the officer to justify the denial. ...*

At para 43 it has been held.

*"There is another aspect also. The procedure under Section 19 is an appellate procedure. A right of appeal is always a creature of statute. A right of appeal is a right*

*of entering a superior forum for invoking its aid and interposition to correct errors of the inferior forum. It is a very valuable right. Therefore, when the statute confers such a right of appeal that must be exercised by a person who is aggrieved by reason of refusal to be furnished with the information.” [emphasis supplied]*

15. Hence, nowhere in its detailed explanation of the scheme of section 19 does the Hon’ble Supreme Court recognize the right of a PIO or any of its officers to challenge a decision of FAA made under the RTI Act.
16. A similar issue was decided by this Commission in appeal No. 07/2006, PIO Under Secretary (Revenue)V/s. V.B. Prabhu Verlekar where in it was held by this commission;

“The PIO cannot be said to be aggrieved person and cannot file second appeal against the decision of the First appellate authority before the commission u/s 19(3) of the RTI Act.”
17. The Division Bench of this commission in Appeal No. 12/SCIC/2015, Public Information Officer V/s First Appellate Authority and Shri Suryakant B Naik has adopted a similar view and has held

“The order passed by the FAA does not give any scope to the PIO to challenge the order passed by his senior officer to the second appellate authority. In the circumstances we hold that the second appeal is not maintainable as the PIO has no locus standie to challenge the said order of his superior .i.e FAA.”
18. The present appeal is not filed by the third party who is aggrieved by the PIO’s or First Appellate Authority’s decision to disclose the information pertaining to he/she/it which is treated as been confidential by the third party. The said appeal is also not filed by

the public authority, who has got right to prefer an appeal against the decision of PIO as u/s 2(n) of the RTI Act, "Third party" includes "A Public Authority". In the present case the appeal is preferred by the PIO and not by the public authority.

19. The appellant PIO could not point out any provision under which they came in appeal against the order of FAA.
20. In view of above discussion, I am of the opinion that the order passed by the First Appellate Authority does not give any scope to PIO and he has no locus standie to challenge the order passed by his own senior before the second appellate authority. Hence I hold that the present second appeal filed by the Public Information Officer is not maintainable and liable to be dismissed which I hereby do.
21. Nevertheless, the appellant (PIO) herein since has furnished the information during the proceedings in counter Appeal Bearing No. 212/2019 filed by Respondent No. 2 Shri Surendra Govekar herein pertaining to same Subject matter i.e RTI application Dated 4/1/2019, the present Appeal proceedings also stands infructuous.

Proceeding are accordingly closed.

Notify the parties.

Authenticated copies of the Order should be given to the parties free of cost.

Aggrieved party if any may move against this order by way of a Writ Petition as no further Appeal is provided under the Right to Information Act 2005.

Sd/-

( Ms. Pratima K. Vernekar)  
State Information Commissioner  
Goa State Information Commission,  
Panaji-Goa