

COMMONWEALTH HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE (CHRI)



COMMONWEALTH HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE
55 A, Third Floor, Siddhartha Chambers-1, Kalu Sarai, New Delhi - 110016
T +91 11 43180200, F + 91 11 43180217
info@humanrightsinitiative.org
www.humanrightsinitiative.org

ROUNDTABLE ON CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN MONITORING PRISONS



23rd December 2015

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, 40, MAX MUELLER MARG, NEW DELHI

Brief Summary

The Prison Reforms Program of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) organized a one day regional roundtable on “Civil Society Participation in Monitoring Prisons” on 23rd December 2015, at India International Center, New Delhi. The focus states were Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and New Delhi. The purpose of this roundtable was to improve public participation in the monitoring of traditionally closed prisons. Through the medium of this workshop CHRI endeavored to bring the insights, experience and good practices of civil society organizations working in these 5 states for strengthening the existing monitoring mechanisms.

The following organizations participated:

1. Center for Dalit Rights, Rajasthan
2. Legal Helpline, Rajasthan
3. Muslim Women's Welfare Society, Rajasthan
4. Center for Social Justice, Gujarat
5. Gujarat Social Watch, Gujarat
6. People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Gujarat
7. SWATI, Gujarat
8. Prison Ministry India, Karnataka
9. Mahiti Adhikar Manch, Maharashtra
10. Prayas, Maharashtra
11. Sahyog Trust, Maharashtra
12. Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and the Allied Trusts, Maharashtra
13. Sahara AIDS Control Society, Maharashtra
14. Tata Institute for Social Sciences (TISS), Maharashtra
15. VARHAD, Maharashtra
16. Madhya Pradesh Right to Food Campaign, Madhya Pradesh
17. Center for Equity Studies, Delhi
18. Human Rights Law Network (HRLN), Delhi
19. International Bridges to Justice, Delhi
20. Liberty Institute, Delhi
21. Multiple Action Research Group (MARG), Delhi
22. Penal Reform and Justice Association (PRAJA), Delhi

Monitoring of undertrial detention, overall prison conditions and access to jails were discussed. Key presentations were made by:

1. Ms. Sugandha Shankar, CHRI
2. Adv. Silvin Kale, PRAYAS, Maharashtra
3. Adv. Ajay Verma, International Bridges to Justice, New Delhi
4. Ms. Mrinal Sharma, CHRI
5. Dr. Vijay Raghavan, TISS
6. Ms. Sana Das, CHRI

Valuable contributions were made by Mr. Gautam Thaker, PUCL, Gujarat; Dr. Vijay Raghavan, TISS, Mumbai; Mr. Chaman Lal, former rapporteur, NHRC; Adv. Nupur Sinha, Center for Social Justice, Gujarat; Mr. R.K Saxena, Retd. IG Prisons, Rajasthan; Mr. Asim Sarode, Sahyog Trust, Maharashtra; Mr. Bhaskar Prabhu, Mahiti Adhikar Manch, Maharashtra; Dr. Rani D. Shankardass, Penal Reform and Justice Association; (Praja), New Delhi; Rev. Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan, Prison Ministry; Mr. P.L. Mimroth, Centre for Dalit Rights, Rajasthan; Mr. Mahesh Pandya, Gujarat Social Watch; Mr. Ravindra Vaidya, VARHAD, Maharashtra; Ms. Maja Daruwala, Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative acted in the position of a moderator.

Introduction

Highlighting the need and purpose of the roundtable, **Ms. Sana Das**¹ pointed out the concerns that are preventing the realization of prisoners' rights and access to justice for undertrials, viz.

- Antique and obsolete Prisons Act and state jail manuals;
- Closed nature of prisons resulting into lack of constructive access to information and data;
- Non-implementation of prison visiting system;
- Incoherent disclosure of statistics by National Crime Record Bureau such as lack of jail wise classifications and presence of amorphous heads such as 'Others' in various data sets;
- Non-existent or content-less prison websites and inconsistent data provided under Right to Information Act

She referred to the recent adoption of the Nelson Mandela Rules for the treatment of prisoners by the United Nations while drawing a parallel to the starkly contrasting ground situation in India. Adding to Ms. Das' statement, **Ms. Maja Daruwala**² put forth her criticism of the existing state of affairs and advocated for making the existing statutory provisions a reality. She objected to the new trend of calling prisons "correctional homes" as they sadly offer no correction. She lamented that the new reforms that the Government plans to bring in by various model manuals become outdated by the time they are implemented. On the other hand, there has been a failure to generate support of the masses and mobilize public opinion on prisons and its reform despite constant hard work of the civil society. With the Government putting a cover of obscurity over prisons by notifying throttling advisories on access to jails, a mutual need for strengthening the existing monitoring mechanisms was echoed.

¹ Coordinator, Prison Reform Programme, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

² Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

Session I

Monitoring Undertrial Detentions: Regularizing Undertrial Review Committees

Almost 68 per cent of all inmates in the 1,387 jails in the country are undertrials, according to the latest figures released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in its 2014 Prison Statistics.

A. Monitoring Undertrial Review Committee in Rajasthan

Ms. Sugandha Shankar³ presented the Rajasthan model of undertrial review committee and explained CHRI's monitoring model. Briefly, the idea of undertrial review committee was coined in 1979. Alternatively, the Supreme Court in the case of *Hussainara Khatoon vs. State of Bihar*⁴, upheld the right to justice and speedy trial under Article 21 of the Constitution of the prisoners. The 78th Law Commission Report talked about congestion and overcrowding in jails and suggested the formulation of the undertrial review bodies.

In Rajasthan, it is a district level oversight body called as a Periodic Review Committee (*Avadhik Samiksha Samiti*) headed by the Chief Judicial Magistrate, representatives from the department of prosecution, the legal services authority, and senior executive officers from prisons, police and probation services. It is mandated to hold meetings every quarter, review cases of persons who have been detained for longer than necessary and recommend release. It reviews the application of sections 167, 436, 437 and 436A of the CrPC and the provisions of Mental Health Act on such cases.

CHRI extensively and intensively studied and monitored the functioning of these Committees in Rajasthan from 2010-2015 and through constant watch brought its functioning from a regularity of a mere 26.7% in 2010 to that of 50.3% in 2014, thus improving it by 23%. Besides, there was an expansion of the Committee's mandate and increased representation from Department of Prosecution in the meetings. It started looking into cases of prolonged detention owing to non-application of Section 437(6) of CrPC, lack of surety and legal representation, non-production of prisoners at the court and delay in committal to the appropriate court for trial. Further, the number of meetings conducted by Committees district-wise were also proactively disclosed on the Rajasthan Prison Department's website.

However, the problems with the Rajasthan model were aplenty. The proformas used for preparing the list of undertrials eligible for release under various legal provisions were not standardized. Moreover, since the date of first remand is not available with the prisons, it became difficult for the Committee to assess the

³ Senior Programme Officer, Prison Reform Programme, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

⁴ 1979 AIR 1369

eligibility for bail under Section 167 of CrPC. Loose or lack of definitions for 'petty cases' and 'long period' of detention complicated the decision-making process and gave scope to discretion. Importantly, since there was no tracking of releases, it became difficult to objectively assess the impact of the committee.

In 2015, the Supreme Court in the case of *Re Inhuman Conditions in 1382 Jails* made it mandatory for undertrial review committees to be constituted in each and every district. However, it altered the composition and mandate of this committee which now became a 4 member body. Although the order validated the establishment of Undertrial Review Committees on a national level, it did not clarify the fate of the committees which already existed in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh etc. leading to the co-existence of parallel committees.

Ms. Sugandha pressed upon the need for bringing this anomaly before the court in order to broaden the mandate, improve and broaden the composition of the committee and removing a sense of dubiousness over its co-existence. She also added that CHRI's research and monitoring model could be replicated in another states to 'monitor the monitors'.

B. Jail Court Project and Review Committees in Mumbai

Advocate Silvin Kale of PRAYAS, Maharashtra shared his experience of the Jail Court Project and also reviewed the functioning of Inter-Departmental Committees (IDCs) in Mumbai. He said that the working, functioning and creation of the IDCs at the district level in Maharashtra was a result of an intervention in the case of *PUCL vs State of Maharashtra* that was being heard in Bombay High Court. In 2009, the committees were actually set up. It composed of the District and Session Judge as the Chairperson, and other members such as District Superintendent of Police, District Civil Surgeon, District Legal Services Authority, Police Superintendent Railways, District Education Officer, District Probation Officer, Commissioner, Municipal Corporation/Chief Executive Officer, Zilla Parishad, Social organization working in the field of prisons and Superintendent Central Jail/ District Prison as member secretary. Mr. Kale drew attention of the assemblage to the apathetic demeanor of the Magistrates towards the purpose of this committee – fair trial. Case in point: Magistrates would visit the prison and counsel the prisoners to plead guilty without getting into the factual and legal detail. Bail would indeed be granted but the bail amount would be set too high. None of the Magistrates ever carried case files. Alternatives such as acquittal in case of lack of evidence and release on personal bond would not be explored. Adding to the problem, there was a massive shortage of escorts in Maharashtra.

With the constructive intervention of social organizations, around 300-400 prisoners are being released every month through the Jail Court Project. To maneuver the problem of escorts, efforts are made to allow recording of statements and evidence in prisons.

C. Structure of Undertrial Detentions in Delhi Prisons

Advocate Ajay Verma of International Bridges to Justice (IBJ) presented on the existence of a huge undertrial population in Delhi Prisons despite an adequate administrative structure. Welfare Officer, Superintendent of Police, Deputy Superintendent of Police and Law Officers are duly appointed in Delhi prisons. Board of Visitors and Undertrial Review Committee have also been constituted. However, the problem here is more systemic. The insincerity of lawyers in trial courts, rampant corruption, low prison wages, lack of assessment of welfare officers, medical officers and jail superintendents and appointment of prison officials as prison visitors were dubbed as the primary problems. Certain key dilemmas were also explained - pending the Delhi High Court case instituted by MARG, the composition of Board of Visitors is not yet decided. Alternatively, at present the profit received by the prison through TJs is not yet shared with the prisoners.

D. Effective Strategies to Track Detention and Releases: Comments from Interlocutors

Mr. Gautam Thaker of PUCL, Gujarat highlighted the deplorable conditions of the undertrials in the Sabarmati prison in Gujarat. Gujarat prisons have over 7000 undertrials. There are many undertrials languishing in the prison for over 5 years without any charges against them. After the 2002 carnage in Gujarat, there is a sentiment to banish the civil society. An air of fear and suspicion hovers around the members of the civil society thus making the access to jails for the civil society organizations very difficult. Jail security is heavily compromised with no watch towers, binoculars, jammers and CCTV cameras despite due allocation of funds. However, the problem here is more to do with non-utilization of funds than allocation of funds that severely restricts the welfare of the inmates. The fact that Gujarat still does not have a jail manual is telling of the lack of attention it receives from the State.

Ms. Nupur Sinha of Center for Social Justice, Ahmedabad shared her experience of struggling with the bureaucratic set up of jails for an overriding public interest. She shared that 90% of undertrials in the prisons were inside for bailable offences. She and her team were invited by the then Minister of Jails to help the families of the prisoners languishing in jails. She acknowledged that her experience of working in 13 prisons has been helpful in bringing out practical solutions for effecting releases of the undertrials. She implemented the *Quboolat* process where the prisoners confessed to a minor guilt and were released on personal bonds with or without security. She facilitated the formulation of a committee based on the Jyotsanabehan Shah report focusing on jails in Gujarat and focused on the recommendations that could be positively implemented.

However, she also discovered the need of a forum where the three key departments: police, jails and judges could meet to discuss the problems and reach solutions. As a result, she attempted to initiate *jail adalats* but faced resentment from the District Legal Services Authority lawyers who took this as an interference with their independence. She also pointed out the members of the visitorial committee viz., magistrate, district judges and police officials, had to be provided orientation of their specific role as a member of the committee. Case in point: Magistrates would often focus on tasting the dal instead of looking into the reasons of prolonged detention.

Another workable model that Ms. Sinha suggested for replication was that of *Kaida Sahayak* or *Kanoon Sahayak*. This mechanism was supported by National Human Rights Commission where life convicts were trained to identify cases where prisoners charged with bailable offence have over stayed. These *Sahayaks* had access to the registers and were trained to calculate the backlog. Resultantly, it was noted that the prison population significantly came down. Criticizing the Right to Information Act, she stated that many a times the information provided is forged and unfortunately there exists no mechanisms to cross-check such information.

Mr. Asim Sarode of Sahyog Trust suggested that doctors, lawyers, police officers etc. convicts can be trained as paralegals to identify cases of overstaying undertrials and offer them help. A dialogue could be initiated with authorities to consider such help as good behavior for the purpose of remission.

Dr. Vijay Raghavan of TISS proposed to include identification of cases of prolonged detention of undertrials and affording their releases in the field work and internship of social work and law students.

Mr. Chamanlal, former rapporteur with NHRC also expressed his concern over the pathetic condition of undertrials and strongly recommend the need to address the power of arrest of the police. Case in point: National Police Commission disclosed that more than 67% arrest are unnecessary and unjustified and incur 46.2% of the jail expenditure. Taking it forward, he pointed to the need for issuing guidelines to this effect. He ridiculed the criminal justice system which ensures prolonged suffering for the innocent and provides easy escapes for the guilty on technical grounds.

Session II

Opening Up Prisons and Civil Society Access to Jails

Dr. Vijay Raghavan of TISS/Prayas opened the session by underlining the closed nature of prisons that renders it prone to violations. He pointed out to the common concerns and problems found in jails all over the country thus requiring regular and robust monitoring. Some of the core concerns were:

1. Appalling standards of quality of food served to the inmates which is far from being “nutritious”
2. No potable water as there is a common source of water for drinking and for other purpose
3. Unavailability of basic medical facilities and health care
4. Immense overcrowding that results in prisoners sleeping in shifts since all of them cannot sleep at the same together owing to lack of space
5. Special treatment meted out to VIP inmates
6. Over representation of prisoners from the Dalit, tribal or minority community or from the lowest of income groups in our society
7. Non-reporting of incidents of physical torture inside the mystified confines of the prisons
8. Non-segregation of convicts and undertrials, young offenders and hardened and habitual criminals
9. Compromised security for prisoners, in particular women prisoners
10. Inadequate wages paid to the inmates
11. Lack of post-release rehabilitation

A. The Big Picture on the Status of Prison Visiting System in India

Ms. Mrinal Sharma⁵ presented the dismal and bleak findings on compliance by states on monitoring of jails. She focused on the Board of Visitors which are mandated to be constituted in each jail by every state jail manual in accordance with Section 59(25)⁶ of Prisons Act. As of 2015, not even 1% of jails were being monitored according to the law. Most of the states still follow outdated jail manuals that do not have any semblance of reality. The selection criteria for lay visitors is unbecoming and the periodicity of visits is at best tailored to meet all the standards of a casual and manufactured inspection. What is worrying is that as the number of jail inspections go down, poverty, morbidity, mental illness, suicide rate, representation of minorities, period of pre-trial detention and staff shortages inside Indian prisons are touching the sky. It is all there in the Prison Statistics of India published by National Crime Record Bureau every year.

In order to change the status quo, she recommended the following:

1. Constitution of Board of Visitors every 2 years.
2. All official and non- official visitors to be a part of it so that every visitor can attend meetings.
3. Basic quorum to validate the meetings comprising District Magistrate, Chief Judicial Magistrate and 3 NOVs (one of them must be a women)

⁵ Project Officer, Prison Reform Programme, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

⁶ The State Government may by notification in the Official Gazette make rules consistent with this Act for the appointment and guidance of visitors of prisons

4. Selection criteria for NOVs to be diverse and inclusive in reference to the 2011 MHA Advisory on appointment and working of NOVs.
5. Need for specific provision cancellation criteria for the visitors
6. Re-appointment of the visitors only on the basis of number of inspection visits made, nature of remarks recorded in the visitors book and change brought during their tenure
7. Training and sensitization of visitors in collaboration with state human rights commissions
8. Dissemination of BPR&D guidelines for interviewers and copy of prison rules to the visitors
9. Amendment to the jail rules to include unannounced and surprise visits
10. Decent remuneration to NOVs at least covering their travel costs for basic incentivization
11. Standardized basic format for recording inspection notes for ensuring comprehensive reporting

B. Effective Strategies to Enhance Access and Accountability: Comments from Interlocutors and Open Discussion

Dr. Vijay Raghavan of TISS reiterated that schools and colleges are more open to intervention in prisons as compared to the civil society organizations. Pro-active participation of the social work students and law students in the Prison Visiting System as part of their field work and internships must be sought and encouraged. Fellowships must be provided to young scholars at a decent stipend so that they may devote at least 2 years of their professional life working in and understanding the field of criminal justice.

Advocate Kiran Singh⁷ cautioned about the practice of including members from inside the prison on the Board of Visitors as mentioned by Advocate Ajay Verma in the last session.

Dr. Rani D. Shankardass of PRAJA contended that prisons damage people and stressed on the need to adopt the Nelson Mandela rules. She belabored that following the old acts, manuals and notifications is just not sufficient and hence the State must undertake timely updating of the rules bearing in mind the international best practices and instruments. She pointed out to the lack of prestige and incentive associated with the prison service which leads to large number of vacancies. She disputed the appointment of only 'persons of eminence' as NOVs and instead highlighted the need of appointing 'concerned citizens' who could even be educated homemakers interested in management of prison and prisoners. Further, she advocated for vesting of maximum

⁷ Legally represented MARG in Delhi High Court regarding prison conditions in Tihar Jail

inspectorial and visitorial powers with NOVs. She promoted improvement of spirit inside prisons through strengthening prison official-prisoner relationship and improving the general prison atmosphere.

Father Sebastian of Prison Ministry India said that prisoners should be looked at as the victims of the prison system rather than as culprits. He suggested that NHRC must play close attention to the visits to observational homes for juveniles while stressing on their strict segregation with hardened criminals. He also stressed on the need for setting up pre-release and post release rehabilitation centers for prisoners where they can stay for a buffer period of 6 months to 1 year for mental preparation of their integration into the mainstream.

Mr. Ravindra Vaidya of VARHAD shared his success story of facilitating prisons with laptops, printers and internet dongles which were used to keep the prisoners informed of the status of their cases and appeals pending in the courts while also providing them hard copies of basic yet important case related information such as appeal number, next date of hearing and court order.

Mr. Chamanlal acknowledged the positive correlation between intervention by NGOs and improvement in prison conditions. He indicated that NGOs can offer valuable data and research on prison visiting system via field work. Their role has proved to be effective with the mobilization of the competent government authorities as a result of publishing of reports and research papers by NGOs.

Mr. Bhaskar Prabhu of Mahiti Adhikar Manch put great emphasis on the effective use of RTI to gather state generated data and information and advised to work like a 'chameleon' and adapt to the colors of the government for extracting maximum information. He strongly recommended the implementation of Section 4(4) and 2(j)(i) of the Right to Information Act. He also recommended proactive disclosure of information under Sec 4(1)(b)(iii),(iv) and (vi) on government websites. He also pointed out that citizens' interest in prison could be mobilized by active use of RTI. He appealed to all the participants to use RTI for reforming the penal system.

MHA Advisory on Access to Jails

Dr. Vijay Raghavan spearheaded the discussion towards the need to take up the recent MHA advisory⁸ on regulation of jail visits by individuals/NGOs/Company/Press with the Government. He stated that the subject advisory is invested in killing the civil society efforts and will inevitably prove to be an obstacle in accessing prisons. He termed this document "atrocious" and argued that it raises an apprehension about the intention of prison authorities as

⁸ Issued on 24th July, 2015

most of the work done by the civil society is legal and benign. Moreover, he contended that MHA has little role to play in matters concerning the prisons as it is a state subject and the elaborate rules in the jail manuals and the guidelines are sufficient to keep a check on the actions of civil society in prisons. The advisory comes in the background of the formulation of a new model prison manual and is against the UN Standard Minimum Rules. In fact, he and his team were denied permission to work in the jails of Odisha and Uttar Pradesh citing the subject advisory. **Rev. Father Sebastian** also held that this advisory must be challenged after looking into all legal possibilities as it has been a massive hurdle in accessing prisons in Maharashtra and Odisha. Thus, a common distress was echoed by the participants that found a mutual cause in advocating for rescinding of the advisory. **Advocate Ajay Verma** offered to take up any litigation challenging this advisory on pro bono basis.

Legal Aid

Dr. Vijay Raghavan suggested that trained paralegal volunteers could be replaced with duty lawyers who find it unsustainable to work with lower remunerations. He also pointed out that paralegals must also be paid honorarium and at least their travel costs must be reimbursed. Adding to that, specific training needs to be provided to the paralegals for identifying undertrials eligible for bail under Sec 436 and 436A of CrPC.

Ms. Poonam Kathuria emphasized on the need to check the quality of lawyers provided to the prisoners and undertrials under the garb of legal aid. She said it is imperative that the services of at least above average professional proficiency lawyers must be provided to the prisoners.

Mr. Asim Sarode stressed on the need of increased coordination between bar and bench to make legal aid more accessible and expressed his concern over lack of coordination between DSLA, SLSA, judges and prison. He suggested that convicts can be trained as paralegals to work from inside the prison. He also shared that qualified prisoners serving life sentence in the jail such as doctors, lawyers, police officers, teachers etc. must be identified for training. They may also be trained to use RTI from within the jails.

Mr. P.L Mimroth said that legal aid for underprivileged must be improved to effectuate the fundamental requirement under Articles 38(1) and 39 of the Constitution of India. He also reiterated Dr. Raghavan's suggestion on approaching students for filling in the gap in legal aid delivery and improving civil society action towards undertrial prisoners. Case in point: A group of students collected the surety amount of Rs 50000 to release 14 undertrial prisoners in Rajasthan.

Conclusion

Ms. Daruwala concluded the session by voicing that efforts of the government will always be insufficient to improve the present conditions of the prisoners without community participation. For the optimum involvement of the civil society in monitoring the prisons, it is imperative to generate awareness about what possibly may be called the most neglected institution of our society. The realities of behind the bars should be brought to meet the eyes of the civil society. A greater adherence is required to the provisions of CrPC. A need is felt for the proper implementation of the provision and an evaluation of its impact and how effective it has been. An assessment should be made of how effective the legislations, notifications, guidelines have been in achieving its desired or promised objective.

Prison reforms and police reforms must occur simultaneously for an overhaul in the system as there are many common grounds for both in terms of problems and solutions. Their complimentary relationship would offer improvement in both the areas, a reform in one would lead to a reform in the other, if the issues are addressed on the basis of priority. There is no reason why prison reforms cannot reap the fruits from the advancement in technology. Prisons should be equipped with the latest and modern technology and the staff must be trained to exploit the technology to bring about optimal functioning of the prison system.

An effective method of generating data from the system and giving it back to the system must be chiseled out for an increased accountability and transparency. For this the efficient use of RTI can act as a possible tool.

Strongly advocating with the executive is a must to ensure regular inspections, improvement in holding the review meetings and to get the concerned authorities running on their toes. An extensive scrutiny of the MHA advisory is a dire need as it is proving to be a massive hurdle for the civil society organizations in accessing the prisons. Any patent deficiency in it should be examined and challenged in the court of law.

It cannot be stressed enough that the reform in the deplorable conditions of the prisoners cannot be realized unless and until their basic necessities of life are taken care of like nutritious food, adequate primary health care and legal aid. A positive development will be seen if quality legal aid is made available to the ones actually in need of it in a reasonable time and as efficiently as possible.

It is a matter of concern that there are no proper rehabilitation provisions for the prisoners who complete their sentence and are released out of the correctional facilities. Employment opportunities should be generated for the released so that they do not again resort to the means which landed them in prison in the first place.

It is important that we see the human being in the prisoner.

AGENDA

9:00 – 9.30 am	Tea and Registration of Participants	
9.30 – 9.40 am	Welcome Address <i>Sana Das, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative</i>	
9.40 - 10:00 am	Self-Introduction by Participants	
10.00 – 1:00 pm	Monitoring Undertrial Detentions: Regularising Undertrial Review Committees <i>Moderator: Maja Daruwala, Director Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative</i>	
10:00 – 11:30 am	<p>1. <i>Monitoring the Avadbik Samiksha Samitis/ Undertrial Review Committees in Rajasthan</i> <i>Speaker: Ms. Sugandha Shankar, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative</i></p> <p>2. <i>The Jail Court Project and Review Committees in Mumbai</i> <i>Speaker: Adv. Silvin Kale, PRAYAS, Maharashtra</i></p> <p>3. <i>Structure of Undertrial Detentions in Delhi's Prisons</i> <i>Speaker: Adv. Ajay Verma, International Bridges to Justice, New Delhi</i></p>	
11.30 – 11.45 am	Tea Break	
11:45 – 1:00 pm	<p><i>Effective Strategies to Track Detentions and Releases: Comments from Interlocutors and Open Discussion:</i></p> <p><i>Interlocutors: Gautam Thaker, PUCL Gujarat; Adv. Kiran Singh, MARG, New Delhi; Dr. Vijay Raghavan, TISS, Mumbai; Mr. Chaman Lal, Former Rapporteur, NHRC; Adv. Nupur Sinha, Centre for Social Justice, Gujarat; Mr. R.K. Saxena, Retd., I.G. Prisons, Rajasthan; Asim Sarode, Sahyog Trust, Maharashtra; Bhaskar Prabhu, Convenor, Mahiti Adhikar Manch, Maharashtra</i></p>	
1:00 - 2:00 pm	Lunch	
2:00 – 3.30 pm	Opening Up Prisons and Civil Society Access to Jails <i>Moderator: Dr. Vijay Raghavan, TISS, Mumbai & Sana Das, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, New Delhi</i>	
2:00 – 2:30 pm	<p><i>The Big Picture on the Status of Prison Visiting System in India: An Enquiry through the RTI Tool</i></p> <p><i>Mrinal Sharma, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative</i></p>	
2:30 – 3.30 pm	<p><i>Effective Strategies to Enhance Access and Accountability: Comments from Interlocutors and Open Discussion</i></p> <p><i>Interlocutors: Adv. Kiran Singh, MARG, New Delhi; Dr. Rani D. Shankardass, PRAJA, Delhi; Rev. Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan, Prison Ministry; P.L. Mimroth, Centre for Dalit Rights, Rajasthan; Mahesh Pandya, Gujarat Social Watch; VARHAD, Ravindra Vaidya, Maharashtra; Mr. Chaman Lal, Former Rapporteur, NHRC</i></p>	

3.30 – 3.45 pm	Tea Break
3.45 – 5:00 pm	Concluding Strategy Session The Way Forward: Collective Civil Society Initiatives for Transparency and Good Governance of Prisons <i>Moderator: Maja Daruwala, Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, New Delhi</i>

About CHRI and its Prison Reform Programme: The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent, non-partisan, international non-governmental organisation, mandated to ensure the practical realisation of human rights across the Commonwealth. CHRI was founded in 1987 by Commonwealth professional associations; it is headquartered in New Delhi, India since 1993, and has offices in Accra, Ghana and London, UK.

The Prison Reforms Programme of CHRI is more than 15 years old. The programme focuses on improving prison monitoring through the strengthening of undertrial review mechanisms and prison visiting system nationally, and ensuring early safeguards against unnecessary pre-trial detentions, specifically in Rajasthan and West Bengal. The programme also advocates for timely repatriation of foreign national prisoners and immediate release of asylum seekers. Evidence-based research, advocacy, capacity-building of actors of the criminal justice system including prison officials, welfare and probation officers, criminal defense lawyers, magistrates, legal aid functionaries and civil society actors are the regular activities of the programme.

Visit www.humanrightsinitiative.org for more information