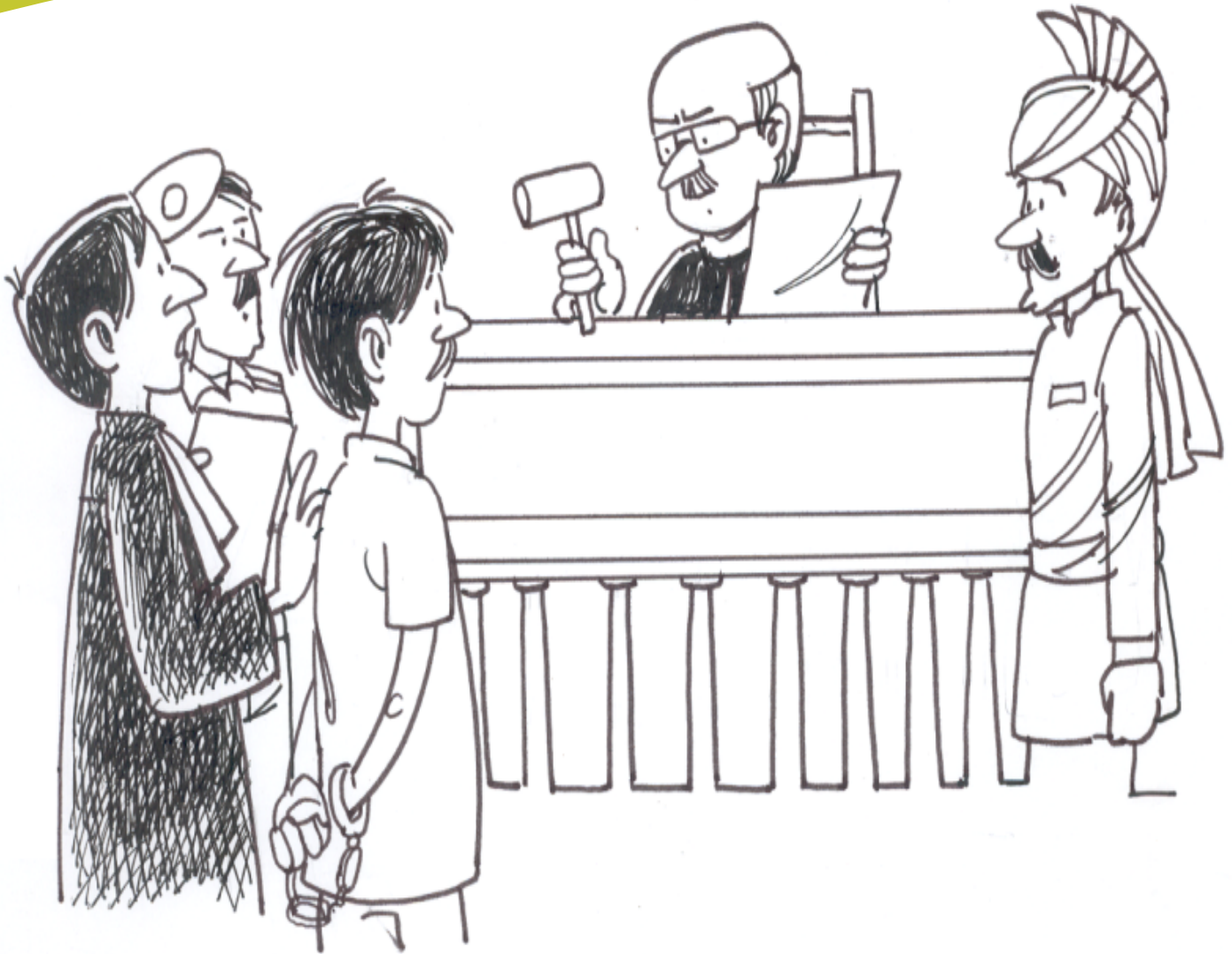


LEGAL AID SERVICES

IN CORRECTIONAL HOMES OF WEST BENGAL



"The State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities."

- Article 39A of the Constitution of India

A Joint study by:



The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)

&

The Directorate of Correctional Services, West Bengal



LEGAL AID SERVICES
IN
CORRECTIONAL HOMES
OF WEST BENGAL

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Acknowledgement

We extend our gratitude to the Inspector General of Correctional Services, West Bengal for granting us permission to conduct this study and to enable us to obtain relevant information from all correctional homes in the state for this study.

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Last but not the least, CHRI is grateful to Open Society Initiative for their generous grant to help us conduct this study

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I. INTRODUCTION

The right to free legal assistance for criminal defendants who are unable to afford a lawyer is a widely accepted principle of law and an essential component of the right to a fair trial. It provides a foundation for a fair and effective criminal justice system. Early access to legal services, especially in the case of detained persons, ensures that their rights are protected and provides a safeguard from abuse. It is one of the pillars that ensures the fairness of the criminal justice system and upholds Article 14 of the Constitution, which states: *"The State shall not deny any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India."* Under Article 39A of the Constitution of India, the State is mandated to provide free legal aid to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.

In addition to the constitutional mandate, the Legal Services Authority Act (LSAA) was passed in India in 1987, but was enforced only from 1996. It was enacted to constitute legal services authorities to provide free legal services to the disadvantaged sections of society. Legal services authorities at national, state, district and taluk levels are constituted under the Act. The Supreme Court and High Courts have their own legal aid committees. While the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) can formulate legal aid schemes for the entire country, the State Legal Services Authorities (SLSA) also frame model schemes for their respective states. The SLSA and the District Legal Services Authorities (DLSA) also conduct legal aid clinics in prisons.

The Act prescribes income criteria as well as a list of persons entitled to legal aid and a hierarchical structure for the delivery of legal services. According to Section 12 of the Act all persons in custody, including custody in a protective home, a juvenile home, a psychiatric hospital or a psychiatric nursing home are entitled to legal aid irrespective of their incomes.

However, in practice access to legal aid is observed more as a privilege than a right. Effective state-funded legal aid is important in this direction to assist indigent accused persons to realise their rights and provide a better chance to seek justice. State machinery and civil society have an important role to play in providing effective legal services to those detained in correctional homes. Without access to effective legal representation, millions of poor and marginalised persons face arbitrary and extended pre-trial detention, torture, coerced confessions, wrongful convictions, stigma, health and livelihood impacts and other abuses.

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) has worked in West Bengal since 2009 to strengthen the existing system of access to legal aid for prisoners. The practical experiences gained under CHRI's project highlight certain problems imbibed in the existing system, such as:

1. Delay in appointment of legal aid lawyers;
2. Lack of accountability and supervision of their work;
3. Lack of communication between lawyer and client;
4. Non-appearance of the lawyer on dates of court productions and hearings;
5. Lawyers demanding money for free legal services.

Further, data compiled by NALSA for 2010 reveals that of the 18,000 prisoner population in the State of West Bengal, legal aid was rendered to only 1,475 inmates. In a bid to fill this gap, CHRI advocated with the State Legal Services Authority to set up legal aid clinics in correctional homes. Pursuant to CHRI's efforts, in 2012/2013 several directives were issued by the State Legal Services Authority to improve access to legal aid for inmates. One important directive was to set up Permanent Legal Aid Clinics in all correctional homes of West Bengal (Image 1.1).

In May-June 2013, CHRI undertook a study in collaboration with the Department of Correctional Services, West Bengal to document the current functioning of state-funded legal aid services in various correctional homes across West Bengal. The study aims to showcase the working of the legal aid clinics, identify gaps and provide suggestions to strengthen legal aid clinics in their functioning. The outcome of the study is collated in this report to provide a fish-eye view on the status of legal services today in correctional homes (CH) in West Bengal.

Mir Dara Sheko, WBHJS
Member Secretary
STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY
WEST BENGAL



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No. 122(19)/SLSA-26/10, Dt.:- 21.01.2013

To
The Chairman,
District Legal Services Authority
&

The Chief Judge/The District & Sessions Judge
Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly, Burdwan, Purba Medinipur, Paschim Medinipur, Birbhum,
Bankura, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas, Purulia, Nadia, Murshidabad,
Malda, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar and Darjeeling.

**Sub : Setting up Permanent Legal Aid Clinic compulsorily
to the Correctional Home within the district .**

Sir,

I am directed to request you to take **immediate step** to set up **Permanent Legal Aid Clinic** in the **District Correctional Home** as well as **Sub-Divisional Correctional Homes** of the District, so that, through the trained Para Legal Volunteers, such Permanent Legal Aid Clinics can function to deal with the problems of the inmates **either legal or otherwise** in the Correctional Homes of the District.

I am further directed to **obtain compliance report** from you as regards setting up such Permanent Legal Aid Clinics in the district and sub-division Correctional Homes of your district positively within 15th March, 2013, and to submit thereafter performance report bearing statements **month by month** with reference to number and category (viz. Male, Female, Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe, etc.) of the beneficiaries.

Yours faithfully,

(**Mir Dara Sheko**)
Member Secretary
State Legal Services Authority, W.B.

Figure 1.1

II. METHODOLOGY

There are 58 correctional homes in West Bengal including central correctional homes (6), sub-correctional homes (33), district correctional homes (12), special correctional homes (3), women's correctional homes (2), open-air correctional homes (2).

A questionnaire was distributed to all correctional homes in West Bengal in May 2013. The questionnaire contained 10 questions pertaining to the working of District Legal Services Authorities and paralegals, and inviting suggestions to improve the legal aid services in various correctional homes.

Out of 58 correctional homes where the questionnaire was circulated, 42 sent a duly completed questionnaire. The responses were filled by the superintendents of central & district correctional homes and the controllers of sub-correctional homes. The study is based on the responses of these 42 correctional homes. As this is a good sample, it is indicative of the current state of legal aid services in West Bengal correctional homes.

The Questionnaire had the following questions based on which the analysis is documented in this report:

- 1. Does any member of the District Legal Services Authorities (DLSA) visit the correctional home?*
- 2. If yes, how often?*
- 3. Has a permanent legal aid clinic been established by DLSA?*
- 4. If yes, name of the paralegal volunteer assigned to the clinic*
- 5. How many times does the paralegal volunteer visit the correctional home?*
- 6. Are you satisfied with the work of the paralegal volunteer?*
- 7. Are the prisoners satisfied with the work of the legal aid lawyers?*
- 8. Has DLSA organised any legal awareness camps inside the correctional home during the past year?*
- 9. If yes, how often?*
- 10. Suggestions, if any*

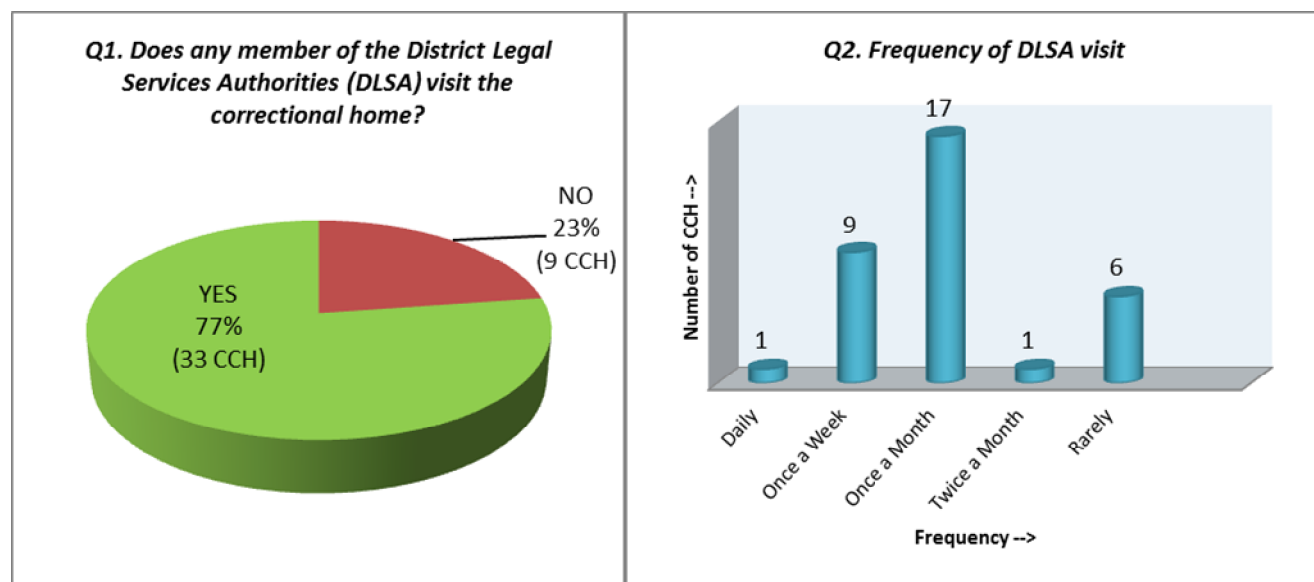
III. ANALYSIS

A. DISTRICT LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITIES

i. Visits by District Legal Services Authorities

The extent of access to legal aid varies across the country and across prisons. The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has issued directions to all State Legal Services Authorities (SLSA) to set up teams of legal aid lawyers to visit jails and ascertain those persons who require legal services.¹ A District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) is constituted in every District to implement Legal Aid Programmes and Schemes in the District including custody.

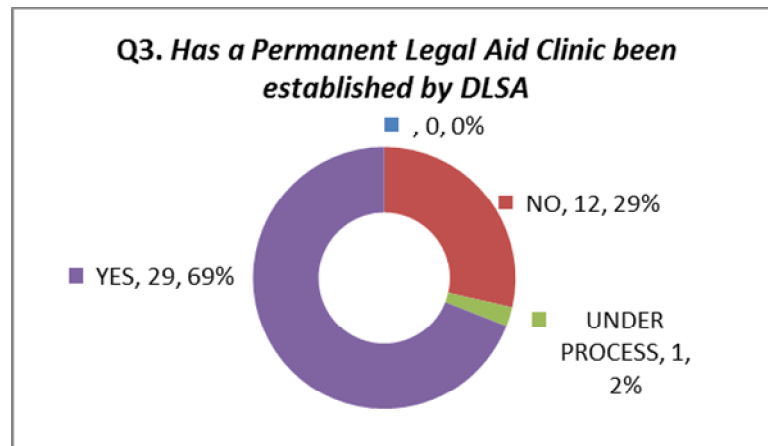
It is encouraging to see that in 77 per cent of the correctional homes (CH) in West Bengal, District Legal Services Authorities have their presence. However, there still exist 10 such correctional homes where DLSA needs to extend its services (listed in the Appendix).



In those CHs visited by DLSA, the frequency of visits varies considerably. In most CHs (17), DLSA visits once a month, while in nine, the visits are weekly. It is commendable to note that DLSA visits the Alipore Central CH daily to provide legal aid services to the prisoners.

¹ National Legal Services Authority Newsletter, April-November, 2010.

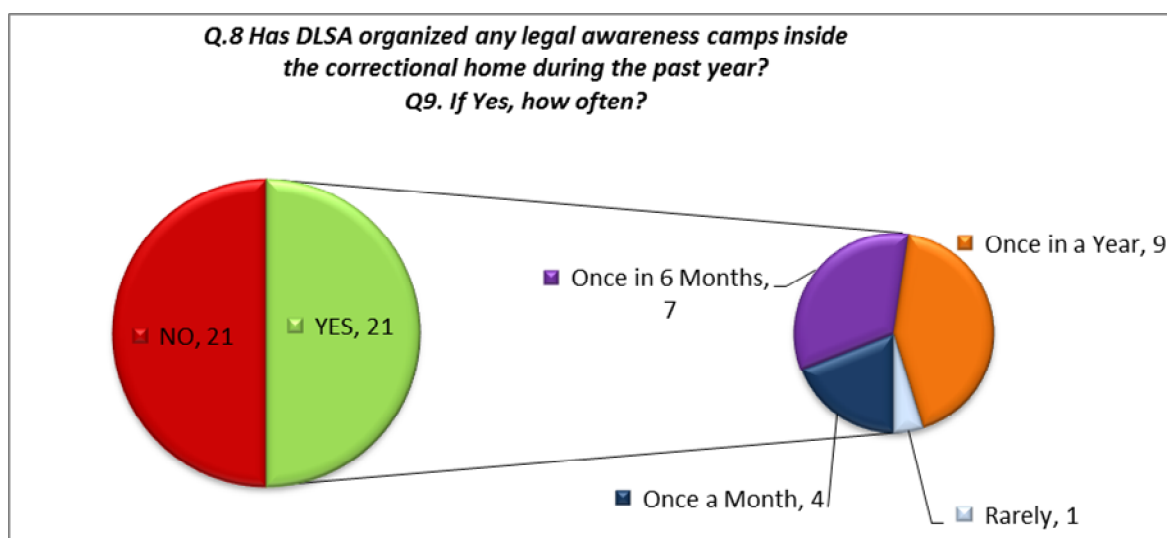
ii. Permanent Legal Aid Clinics



Permanent Legal Aid Clinics were established in 29 CHs across West Bengal which indicates a positive trend towards greater state intervention in providing legal aid services. Jangipur Subsidiary CH which started with a monthly visit from a DLSA representative is working towards establishing a permanent process. The 12 CHs which do not have a permanent clinic are mostly subsidiary correctional homes along with one central, two district and two special correctional homes.

iii. Legal Awareness Camps inside Correctional Homes

The Legal Services Authorities Act enlists creating legal awareness as one of the main functions of the State Legal Services Authority. NALSA too has directed the State Legal Services Authorities to organise legal awareness camps in prisons to make the prisoners aware of their rights. When it was validated against West Bengal correctional homes, it was found that legal awareness camps were held only in 50 per cent of the correctional homes.

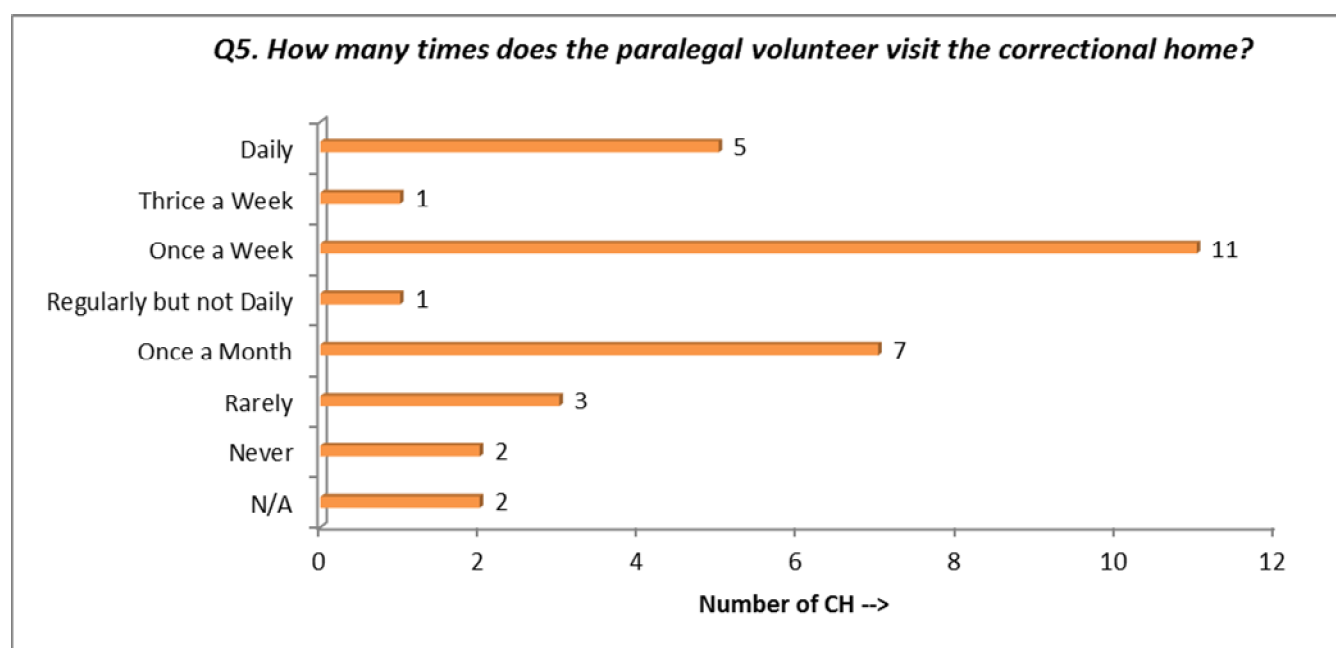


Of the 50 per cent (21) correctional homes, where legal awareness camps were held, the frequency of the camps varies. Monthly camps are held in four CHs, namely Berhampore Central Correctional Home, Dinhata Subsidiary Correctional Home, Raiganj District Correctional Home and Suri District Correctional Home which ensures that prisoners receive more legal awareness to realise their rights. However, in most CHs, awareness camps are held either annually or biannually.

B. PARALEGALS

i. Profile and frequency of visits

There are a total of 56 paralegals who work across the 42 CHs in West Bengal. Of these, 54 paralegals are assigned through the Permanent Legal Aid Clinics established in 23 CHs. Tamluk Subsidiary CH and Mekhliganj Subsidiary CH have one paralegal each who visit once a week and once a month respectively but have no Permanent Legal Aid Clinic. Though most of the paralegals are advocates by profession, there are also social workers, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) workers and legal counsellors who provide legal aid to prisoners. Taking a step further, Berhampore Central CH, Malda District CH and Raiganj CH have recruited and trained convicts as paralegals to assist prisoners on a daily basis. While the largest number of convict paralegals are in Berhampore Central CH (15), Malda Central CH has established a good balance of access to legal aid to prisoners with a DLSA representative visiting once a week and convict paralegals available on a daily basis. This ensures that cases are processed rapidly and follow ups can be done immediately. The graph below shows the varied frequency of visits by paralegal volunteers across different CHs.



While most paralegals visit correctional homes weekly, in five correctional homes paralegals are available on a daily basis. Monthly visits rank second in the frequency chart. However, this creates an imbalance in access to justice since the judicial remand period is 15 days. For example, if a paralegal visits the prison on the first day of every month, then prisoners who are admitted between the second and fifteenth of every month will have a higher chance of going unrepresented in court for the next production (since they were not represented during the first production).

ii. Feedback on Paralegal services

Evaluating the performance of the work done by paralegal volunteers, prison authorities were satisfied with the work of 95 per cent of the paralegals. However, they noted that there was room for improvement in 5 per cent of paralegals (3 out of 56).

From the prisoners' point of view, the numbers varied slightly. Prisoners were satisfied with the work of 47 paralegals out of 56. It is unclear on what basis their performances were evaluated –frequency of visits or quality of services. This could be a further area of research and a call for a regular feedback mechanism of quality of legal aid services to improve their functioning.



C. SUGGESTIONS

Several CHs gave suggestions to strengthen the reach of legal access to prisoners who require legal assistance. CHs are the silent observers of the legal aid mechanism and through these suggestions, have shown their interest to actively engage in contributing towards proper functioning of the state mechanism. These suggestions were made by the superintendents, controllers and welfare officers of the correctional homes.

1. Monthly/ Quarterly Legal Awareness Camps to be Held in Correctional Homes.

Balurghat District CH: "Legal awareness camp once in 3 months instead of 6 months."

Contai Subsidiary CH: "Legal awareness camp should be organised frequently."

Ranaghat Subsidiary CH: "Camp should be organised regularly inside the CH to address the problems of inmates."

2. Supply of Awareness Leaflets/Booklets by DLSA

Midnapore Central CH: "We require: 1-regular legal awareness camps. 2- Regular visits by paralegal volunteers. 3- Supply of awareness leaflets/booklets from DLSA on awareness on legal aid. 4 - weekly/regular visit by DLSA."

3. Weekly/ Regular Visits by DLSA Lawyers

Jhargram Subsidiary Correctional Home: "Weekly visits by DLSA-appointed lawyer and quarterly legal aid camps are very useful for the inmates."

Berhampore Central CH: "Weekly visits by legal aid lawyer from DLSA will improve legal aid in this CH."

Dum Dum Central CH: "Periodic visit required, at least once a week."

Purulia District CH: "Continuation of the engagement of DLSA lawyers can improve the legal aid at the CH."

Raiganj District CH: "Legal aid lawyer should visit the CH at least twice a week,"

Siliguri Special CH: "One legal aid lawyer should visit at least once a week for counselling."

4. Permanent Legal Aid Clinic to be Set Up in CHs

Haldia Subsidiary CH: "I believe that the legal aid clinic is the most important part of our correctional home for counselling undertrial prisoners and it would also help to appoint advocate."

Cooch Behar District CH: "Permanent legal aid clinic may be set up in the CH to provide legal services to inmates."

Islampur Subsidiary CH: "Firstly, a legal aid programme should be started in this home. Many of the inmates are languishing here for long, as they are unable to appoint a lawyer privately. These inmates may be assisted by appointing lawyer through legal aid."

5. *Involve Correctional Home Officials and Staff for Prompt Action*

Basirhat Subsidiary CH: "If volunteers came once a week regularly on Saturdays to the permanent legal aid clinic inside the CH, advise inmates on their cases and advise the officers/staff of the CH on how to help the inmates, the officers/staff may take prompt action on their suggestions on Sundays."

6. *Regular Visits by Paralegals*

Purulia Women's CH: "1. The immediate engagement of a paralegal volunteer is of utmost necessity to make the legal aid machinery more effective. 2. The legal aid volunteer may visit more frequently, at least thrice a week."

Uluberia Subsidiary CH: "Paralegal volunteers should visit the correctional home in a regular manner."

7. *Feedback Mechanism & Supervision*

Serampore Subsidiary CH: "The inmates constantly complain that legal aid lawyers do not attend their proceedings regularly. Regularity should be maintained"

Presidency CH: "More legal awareness camps are required. Supervision of paralegal volunteers by DLSA is needed."

Diamond Harbour Subsidiary CH: "Feedback should be taken from the paralegal lawyers as to why the general prisoners are not interested to interact with them."

8. *Provisions/Fund for Poor Inmates Unable to Furnish Surety*

Alipore Central CH: "Poor underprivileged prisoners' bail applications are granted with DLSA's help, but it would be very supportive for such prisoners if necessary steps are taken to furnish their bail amount/surety etc. or to release them on personal bond."

Bankura District CH: "A fund is required to provide security money for poor inmates who are unable to provide security money of their own."

Jalpaiguri Central CH: "Inmates often face the problem of submission of local sureties to avail bail."

9. *List of Legal Aid Panel lawyers to be Supplied*

10. *Increase in the Number of Legal Aid Lawyers*

11. *Apprise the Status to the Prisoners*

Howrah District CH: "1.- On an average, 22 prisoners per week pray for a legal aid lawyer in the CJM court. One lawyer is inadequate to dispose all these cases. The number of legal aid lawyers may kindly be enhanced for CJM Court. 2 – An increase in the number of visits by lawyers in the CH. 3 - No intimation received from DLSA regarding the engagement of legal aid lawyers on the basis of prisoners' prayers. Intimation is required to apprise the prisoners regarding engagement of lawyer. 4 –A list of legal aid panel lawyers for the respected court may kindly be supplied each year."

IV. APPENDIX

Q1. Does any member of the District Legal Services Authorities (DLSA) visit the correctional home?					
YES - List of CHs where DLSA visits					
S No.	Name of CH	S No.	Name of CH	S No.	Name of CH
1	Alipore Central CH	12	Diamond Harbour Subsidiary CH	23	Mekhliganj Subsidiary CH
2	Alipurduar Special CH	13	Dinhata Subsidiary CH	24	Midnapore Central CH
3	Arambag Subsidiary CH	14	Dum Dum Central CH	25	Purulia District CH
4	Asansol Special CH	15	Ghatal Subsidiary CH	26	Purulia Women CH
5	Balurghat District CH	16	Hooghly District CH	27	Raiganj District CH
6	Bankura District CH	17	Howrah District CH	28	Ranaghat Subsidiary CH
7	Basirhat Subsidiary CH	18	Jalpaiguri Central CH	29	Serampore Subsidiary CH
8	Berhampore Central CH	19	Jangipur Subsidiary CH	30	Siliguri Special CH
9	Bishnupur Subsidiary CH	20	Kalyani Subsidiary CH	31	Suri District CH
10	Bongaon Subsidiary CH	21	Malda District CH	32	Tamluk Subsidiary CH
11	Darjeeling District CH	22	Mathabhanga Subsidiary CH	33	Uluberia Subsidiary CH
NO - List of CHs where DLSA does not visit					
S No.	Name of CH				
1	Burdwan District CH				
2	Contai Subsidiary CH				
3	Cooch Behar District CH				
4	Haldia Subsidiary CH				
5	Islampur Subsidiary CH				
6	Jhargram Subsidiary CH				
7	Presidency CH				
8	Raghunathpur Subsidiary CH				
9	Tufanganj Subsidiary CH				

Q2. If yes, how often?			
DAILY		TWICE A MONTH	
1	Alipore Central CH	1	Suri District CH
ONCE A WEEK		RARELY	
1	Alipurduar Special CH	1	Bishnupur Subsidiary CH
2	Bankura District CH	2	Diamond Harbour Subsidiary CH
4	Midnapore Central CH	4	Ghatal Subsidiary CH
5	Purulia District CH	5	Presidency CH
6	Ranaghat Subsidiary CH	6	Siliguri Special CH
7	Tamluk Subsidiary CH		
8	Basirhat Subsidiary CH		
9	Bongaon Subsidiary CH		
ONCE A MONTH			
1	Arambag Subsidiary CH	9	Jalpaiguri Central CH
2	Asansol Special CH	10	Jangipur Subsidiary CH
3	Balurghat District CH	11	Kalyani Subsidiary CH
4	Berhampore Central CH	12	Mathabhanga Subsidiary CH
5	Darjeeling District CH	13	Mekhliganj Subsidiary CH
6	Dinhata Subsidiary CH	14	Purulia Women CH
7	Hooghly District CH	15	Raiganj District CH
8	Howrah District CH	16	Serampore Subsidiary CH
		17	Uluberia Subsidiary CH

Q3. Has a permanent Legal Aid Clinic been established by DLSA?						
NO			YES			
1	Alipurduar Special CH	1	Alipore Central CH	16	Malda District CH	
2	Asansol Special CH	2	Arambag Subsidiary CH	17	Mathabhanga Subsidiary CH	
3	Bishnupur Subsidiary CH	3	Balurghat District CH	18	Midnapore Central CH	
4	Burdwan District CH	4	Bankura District CH	19	Presidency CH	
5	Cooch Behar District CH	5	Basirhat Subsidiary CH	20	Purulia District CH	
6	Ghatal Subsidiary CH	6	Berhampore Central CH	21	Purulia Women CH	
7	Haldia Subsidiary CH	7	Bongaon Subsidiary CH	22	Raghunathpur Subsidiary CH	
8	Islampur Subsidiary CH	8	Contai Subsidiary CH	23	Raiganj District CH	
9	Jhargram Subsidiary CH	9	Darjeeling District CH	24	Ranaghat Subsidiary CH	
10	Mekhliganj Subsidiary CH	10	Diamond Harbour Subsidiary CH	25	Serampore Subsidiary CH	
11	Tamluk Subsidiary CH	11	Dinhata Subsidiary CH	26	Siliguri Special CH	
12	Dum Dum Central CH	12	Hooghly District CH	27	Suri District CH	
		13	Howrah District CH	28	Tufanganj Subsidiary CH	
UNDER PROCESS			14	Jalpaiguri Central CH	29	Uluberia Subsidiary CH
1	Jangipur Subsidiary CH	15	Kalyani Subsidiary CH			

Q.4. If yes, name of the paralegal volunteer assigned to the clinic			
Name of CH	Name of Paralegal	Name of CH	Name of Paralegal
Alipore Central CH	Mr. Sanjit Das, DLSA	Purulia District CH	Shankar Bhusan Lye
Diamond Harbour Subsidiary CH	Sri Sauvick Halder,	Contai Subsidiary CH	Sk Bahrul Alam
	Sri Dipak Purkait,		16 convicts including 5 female convicts are trained as paralegal volunteers. No outside paralegal volunteer visits this CH
	Sri Bishnupada Mondal,		
Presidency CH	Miss Anita Das	Berhampore Central CH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male - Subir Datta, Rezaul Karim, Nurul Islam, Ashish Dutta, Rezaul Hoque, Dibakar Roy, Nirmal Ch Pramanik, Puspun Biswas, Krishna Mal, Md Nurul Islam Shadab, Indranil Das. Female - Anita Bannerjee, Nipa Das, Chandana Roy, Helema Bibi, Pramila Das
Hooghly District CH	Nabin Chandra Das		
Raghunathpur Subsidiary CH	Smt Soma Ghosh	Malda District CH	Swapan Ghosh (convict)
	Gurupada Roy		Marful Haque (convict)
Arambag Subsidiary CH	Alok Kr Kundu (advocate).	Suri District CH	Md Rafique Hossain
Serampore Subsidiary CH	Smt Sima Roy (social worker)	Jalpaiguri Central CH	Manabendra Ghosh, Advocate
Basirhat Subsidiary CH	Tarun Mukherjee	Darjeeling District CH	Haider Ali, Advocate
	Supriyo Mondal		Smt Jayanti Dawan
Bongaon Subsidiary CH	Pradip Biswas	Raiganj District CH	Sanjoy Saha (Convict)
	Rathindra Nath Sen,	Dinhata Subsidiary CH	Biplab Mandal (Convict)
	Nirmal Samadar,		Harihar Roy Singha, Advocate
	Biswanath Samadar,	Mathabhanga Subsidiary CH	Robindranath Roy Basunia
Ranaghat Subsidiary CH	Abu Tahar Mondal	Balurghat District CH	Suraj Das Minajpur Rahaman
	Tamal Sarkar		Santanu Sarkar - Legal Counsellor
Midnapore Central CH	Gopal Roy	Mekhliganj Subsidiary CH	Pradeep Kr Biswas
Bankura District CH	Pradip Kr Roy	Tamluk Subsidiary CH	Prasanta Kumar Dey
	Debabrata Chatterjee, Advocate,		
	Sumanta Mishra, Advocate,		
	Rinku Ray Chand, ICDS Worker,		
	Kanaklata Mondal (Atta) ICDS Worker		

Q5. How many times does the paralegal volunteer visit the correctional home?

N/A	REGULARLY BUT NOT DAILY	THRICE A WEEK
Howrah District CH	Diamond Harbour Subsidiary CH	Bankura District CH
Purulia Women CH		
NEVER	ONCE IN A WEEK	DAILY
Dum Dum Central CH	Balurghat District CH	Alipore Central CH
Kalyani Subsidiary CH	Basirhat Subsidiary CH	Berhampore Central CH
RARELY	Bongaon Subsidiary CH	Malda District CH
Midnapore Central CH	Tufanganj Subsidiary CH	Presidency CH
Siliguri Special CH	Contai Subsidiary CH	Raiganj District CH
Uluberia Subsidiary CH	Hooghly District CH	
ONCE A MONTH	Purulia District CH	
Arambag Subsidiary CH	Raghunathpur Subsidiary CH	
Darjeeling District CH	Ranaghat Subsidiary CH	
Dinhata Subsidiary CH	Suri District CH	
Jalpaiguri Central CH	Tamluk Subsidiary CH	
Mathabhanga Subsidiary CH		
Serampore Subsidiary CH		
Mekhliganj Subsidiary CH		

Responses to Q6 and Q7 have not been listed here to maintain confidentiality

**Q8. Has DLSA organized any legal awareness camps inside the correctional home during the past year?
Q.9 If yes, how often?**

NO		YES	
N/A		ONCE A MONTH	
1	Alipurduar Special CH	1	Berhampore Central CH
2	Arambag Subsidiary CH	2	Dinhata Subsidiary CH
3	Asansol Special CH	3	Raiganj District CH
4	Bishnupur Subsidiary CH	4	Suri District CH
5	Bongaon Subsidiary CH	ONCE IN 6 MONTHS	
6	Burdwan District CH	5	Alipore Central CH
7	Contai Subsidiary CH	6	Balurghat District CH
8	Cooch Behar District CH	7	Basirhat Subsidiary CH
9	Dum Dum Central CH	8	Hooghly District CH
10	Ghatal Subsidiary CH	9	Howrah District CH
11	Haldia Subsidiary CH	10	Jangipur Subsidiary CH
12	Islampur Subsidiary CH	11	Malda District CH
13	Jhargram Subsidiary CH	ONCE IN A YEAR	
14	Midnapore Central CH	12	Darjeeling District CH
15	Purulia District CH	13	Diamond Harbour Subsidiary CH
16	Purulia Women CH	14	Jalpaiguri Central CH

About CHRI



" The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons"

Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1821-1881

The Prison Reform Programme of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is focused on increasing transparency of a traditionally closed system. The programme aims to improve prison conditions, reform prison management, enhance accountability and foster an attitude of cooperation between the various agencies of the criminal justice system. Over the years, we have worked in different parts of the country including Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, and West Bengal. A major area of our work is focused on highlighting failures of the legal system that result in terrible overcrowding and unconscionably long pre-trial detention and prison overstays, and engaging in interventions to ease this. Another area of concentration is aimed at reviving the prison oversight systems that have completely failed. We believe that attention to these areas will bring improvements to the administration of prisons as well as have a knock on effect on the administration of justice overall.

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent, non-partisan, international non-governmental organisation, mandated to ensure the practical realisation of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth. In 1987, several Commonwealth associations founded CHRI because they felt that while the member countries had both a common set of values and legal principles from which to work and a forum within which to promote human rights, there was relatively little focus on human rights issues.

CHRI's objectives are to promote awareness of and adherence to the Harare Commonwealth Declaration, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other internationally recognised human rights instruments, as well as domestic instruments supporting human rights in Commonwealth member states.

Through its reports and periodic investigations, CHRI continually draws attention to progress and setbacks to human rights in Commonwealth countries. In advocating for approaches and measures to prevent human rights abuses, CHRI addresses the Commonwealth Secretariat, member-state governments and civil society associations. Through its public education programmes, policy dialogues, comparative research, advocacy and networking, CHRI's approach throughout is to act as a catalyst around its priority issues.

CHRI is based in New Delhi, India and has offices in London, UK and Accra, Ghana.

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