JAIL MAIL: MAPPING DATA ON INDIAN PRISONS

Dear friends,

Greetings from CHRI!

Taking forward CHRI's mandate and objective to make prisons more transparent, open them up to accountability, and encourage the sharing of prison data in the public domain, CHRI is pleased to share with you the 'Indian Prison Data Map'. This map graphically displays basic information on prisons – such as key criminal justice institutions, Board of Visitors, Under Trial Review Committees (UTRC), Legal Aid Services for Persons in Custody and foreign national prisoners (FNPs) – for each Indian state.

CHRI has, over the years, conducted several data-driven research studies to advocate for prison reforms in India. Last year, we also published a guidebook, *Key to Transparency: Your Guide to Using the Right to Information Act 2005 to collect information on Prisons,* to aid individuals and organisations looking to use the Right to Information (RTI) Act to seek information on prisons. The Indian Prison Data Map is an extension of this CHRI's work on bringing transparency and accountability to the country's criminal justice institutions by making the information on pertinent aspects of prison reforms accessible to the public in a simplified form.

You can visit the 'Indian Prison Data Map' by clicking here; the guides at the end offer further information on using the data sheets linked to the map.

Even with the enactment of the RTI Act 2005, prisons remain closed institutions with limited access for the public on their data. The *Prison Statistics India* report, collated and published by the Government of India's National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB), is the only official source of information for data on prisons. The last report, however, only offers data till 2015. The *National Prison Information Portal* (www.eprisons.nic.in) too publishes very rudimentary information, such as the total number of prisoners, number of admissions, number of visits, etc. Even though a few states share some information on prisons on their websites, most rarely update this information or proactively disclose detailed data on prisons.

The data provided in the 'Indian Prison Data Map' is sourced from responses to RTI applications filed by researchers as part of CHRI's national reports. Additionally, secondary data on prisons, the police, courts, and legal aid that we include in the Overview of Criminal Justice Institutions has also been used. These secondary sources include Prison Statistics India 2015, Crime in India 2016, Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India 2015, Data on Police Organisation 2017, the Bureau of Police Research and Development, National Legal Services Authority, and the Supreme Court of India Newsletter - Court News April-June 2017. This information will be updated with the release of our subsequent reports on these issues.

An analysis of the data has led to some interesting observations. The study on prison monitoring reveals, for instance, that till November 2014, over 50% states did not have either the Board of Visitors or Non-Official Visitors in their jails. Another study -- the first of its kind on the functioning of UTRCs – with data from May 2015 to October 2015 showed that 60% of these committees (where they were present) failed to comply with the quarterly meeting mandates. Further, the study on 'Legal Aid for Persons in Custody' found that the time taken to appoint a legal aid lawyer for inmates ranges from one day to 48 days across different states. Yet another study on foreign national prisoners (FNPs) in India showed that there are currently 3,908 FNPs, out of which 871 have completed their sentence but are still awaiting repatriation, 522 are 'persons whose nationality has not been verified' while only 222 FNPs have ever received consular access.

What you can do to help our efforts

1. Use the Indian Prison Data Map to access state-wise information on prisons.
2. Share the information sheets, reports and Indian Prison Data Map widely with individuals or organisations in your network who can benefit from it.
3. Volunteer to file RTI applications on issues concerning prisons and prisoner's rights which can be shared with us to update the map or to expand the scope of the map.
4. Provide your feedback to the map to make it more comprehensive and useful.

You can write to us at chriprisonsprog@gmail.com with comments and suggestions. Please email us if you do not wish to receive these updates.

With best regards,

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