

An Integrative Approach to Strengthening Justice

IBJ Implements its Vision for Criminal Justice Reform in India

Along with roundtable discussions organized in Delhi, IBJ India also conducted a full day roundtable workshop for the prison administration of the State of West Bengal



IBJ India Country Manager Mr. Ajay Verma conducting capacity building workshop at Central Jail Ajmer, Rajasthan

In the last two years, IBJ's efforts in India have been expanded to reach 26 of the 29 states. In 2013 and 2014, IBJ placed a special emphasis on the vulnerable urban poor, who are typically unaware of their legal rights. Significant headway was made in strengthening the criminal justice system. The New Delhi Defender Resource Center, IBJ India's headquarters, regularly mentored volunteer lawyers and successfully trained almost 50 defense lawyers in pre-trial and trial strategies.

Through the Duty Lawyer Project, IBJ India provides early access to competent counsel for pre-trial detainees in Tihar Prisons in New Delhi, the largest prison in Asia. As of 2014, IBJ India

has provided free legal aid representation to 750 inmates through the Duty Lawyer Project. Three-quarters of bail applications made by IBJ lawyers were successful. IBJ India lawyers regularly visit prisons to take on cases. Early access to counsel has helped release many pre-trial detainees.

In the long term, IBJ India's efforts to provide legal representation has the potential to create a model for early access to counsel that can be replicated and rolled out in other parts of India. IBJ India has conducted numerous workshops and trainings aimed at building capacity in all levels of the prison administration, including prison welfare officers, guards and custodial staff, lawyers, judi-

cial and corrections officers. With the addition of Legal Fellow, Gulika Reddy to the IBJ team in Chennai, IBJ India is continuing to expand its services across the country. Gulika, who is part of the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Community, is leading the six-person pro-bono task force in Chennai.

Creation of rights awareness is a key part of the IBJ India portfolio, along with handling pro-bono cases and educating law practitioners. These campaigns have had positive impact on more than 4,000 pre-trial detainees and convicted prisoners. In 2013, IBJ India conducted two prominent legal awareness events in Tihar Jail, reaching more than 700 inmates during these sessions alone.

JUSTICE FACTS:

India

Rule of Law (Percentile Rank)

2013: 53

2013 Prison Population:

411,992

33 per 100,000

Led by Mr Ajay Verma, IBJ Fellow and Country Manager, these provided crucial information to inmates about legal representation, the importance of effective communication with lawyers and judges, plea-bargaining, and bail procedures. These legal awareness events provide direct opportunities to address the most pressing questions and concerns facing detainees. In 2014, IBJ India conducted rights awareness events benefiting more than 1,000 inmates, including 862 adolescent inmates in Tihar Prisons.

In collaboration with the State and District Legal Services Authority of Rajasthan (RSLSA) and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), IBJ India conducted a series of trainings and workshops providing paralegal training in four prisons across the country. Organized by IBJ Fellow Ajay Verma, these sessions taught long-term prisoners how they can provide basic legal information to pre-trial detainees in their jail. Approximately 110 paralegals were trained in this initiative.

In an additional effort to increase legal protection, IBJ India with the support of prison administration officials created the Handbook on Prisoners' Rights and Duties.



Paralegal volunteers at IBJ Workshop in Central Jail Ajmer, Rajasthan



Mr. Adhir Sharma, IPS -Additional Director General of Prisons and Inspector General of West Bengal Correctional Services, interacting with the participants

It was distributed among inmates at Tihar Prisons and was followed by a rights awareness discussion, covering prisoners' right to appeal, parole, furlough, and sentences.

To help implement our vision for criminal justice reform, IBJ has reached out to numerous local organizations that share our goals. In 2013, IBJ Country Fellow Ajay Verma and other staff members participated in the Criminology Conference at the National Law University, Delhi. The event served as a platform for various local actors to discuss criminal justice policies in India and is one of many examples of our efforts made to expand IBJ's local network.

IBJ's roundtable discussions have been crucial in increasing dialogue between key actors in the justice system. In December 2013 and September 2014, IBJ India and Delhi Prisons organized two capacity-building workshops for prison welfare officers in Delhi Prisons. In December, under the guidance of Mr. Sunil Gupta, the Principal Law Officer of Delhi Prisons, and Mr. Ajay Verma from IBJ India, the participants examined the role of welfare officers in legal matters. They discussed the principal challenges they are facing in their daily work,

and the perception that jail in India carries a reformative purpose. The two-day workshop in September was aimed at capacity building for warders, head wardens, and the assistant superintendents of all ten Delhi Prisons.

Along with roundtables in Delhi, IBJ India also conducted a full-day workshop for the prison administration of the State of West Bengal. The theme was "Custodial Violence: its Prevention and Remedies." The training promoted awareness for 35 lawyers and other key actors in the West Bengal criminal justice system.

We are deeply grateful to all the partners, organizations and individuals we have worked with to continue to expand access to justice. The constructive partnerships we have forged with the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, the Prison Ministry, NGO (Ajmer Unit), the National Law University in Delhi, the State and District Legal Services Authority of Rajasthan, Delhi Prisons, and many others are the cornerstones of IBJ's work to build a sustainable legal system.