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## Protecting and promoting human rights of prisoners in India through new developments in prison management and the administration of justice

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### Project Factsheet



**Main donor:** Foreign and Commonwealth Office

**Key partners:**  
Penal Reform and Justice Association (PRAJA)  
Academy of Prison and Correctional Administration, Vellore (APCA)

**Duration:** 15 months

#### Project contact details

The Project will be managed by Penal Reform International's London office.

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## Background

India has a prison population of 372,296, of which 65 percent are awaiting trial.<sup>1</sup> The Universal Periodic Review for India, reporting in 2009 indicated some of the overarching problems in the country's penal system: overcrowding, torture, disease, poor treatment of prisoners, conditions of detention below those required by international standards, and nearly a majority of prisoners under pre-trial detention. In particular, it recommended training on human rights issues for law enforcement officials.

PRI's engagement in India dates back to the mid-1990s. An early project in 1999 initiated the relationship between PRI and Regional Institutions of Correctional Administration (RICA) in some states. Further projects included engagement on issues relating to women, mental health and new initiatives in penal reform. This project builds on these past relationships and aims to expand them to other regions, tackling problems that have not been addressed and exploring solutions to new challenges.

India's penal system is still largely based on legislation from colonial times (Penal Code, 1860; Police Act, 1861; Prisoners Act, 1900; Prisons Act, 1894) and where new legislation has been put into place, there is a lack of adequate training relating to the new regulations creating an implementation gap. The Report of the recent Working Group of the UPR (2012) showed the Government's acceptance of recommendations to ratify OPCAT, improve training on human rights and promote women's rights and eliminate discrimination against women. Therefore, this is an opportune moment for improved penal policy to be discussed and developed at the regional and national levels.

## Project Details

### Overall Objective

To strengthen the Indian Corrections Service and policymakers' understanding and commitment to good practice and new developments in prison management.

### Specific Objectives

- 1) To increase knowledge of prison officials of their rights and duties in the prison environment (including the prevention of torture and the needs of women prisoners). The project aims to improve attitudes of criminal justice professionals towards prisoners, focusing on how human rights can and should be introduced in different components of the prison environment, leading to increased respect for prisoners' human rights (including vulnerable prisoners) and their better treatment, including prevention of torture.
- 2) To expose prison personnel to best practice in prison management from around the world.
- 3) To encourage high-level regional and national policy makers and criminal justice stakeholders to look at the good practices in prison management and criminal justice reform being used elsewhere, including the use of alternatives to imprisonment.

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<sup>1</sup> International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS), *World Prison Brief*, 2011

## Activities

- Three Training of Trainer (ToT) workshops (each of four days duration) to be undertaken in collaboration with each RICA in Chandigarh, Pune and Kolkata for a selection of maximum 25 participants. These workshops will be based on a pilot workshop developed and delivered in Vellore in January 2013 and will cover international human rights standards in prison, principles of good prison management, security, pre-trial detention, health care, vulnerable groups and reintegration and how these issues can be properly addressed within Indian prisons.
- Following each training workshop, a regional seminar will take place to draw attention to prison reform issues. The seminars will be aimed at high-level State government representatives and judiciary and will include panel discussions with a range of national, international and state-level resource persons.
- Preparation and publication of a policy paper outlining the key trends, challenges and recommendations for penal reform in the country to be distributed at advocacy and training events.
- Advocating in all the regions through discussions with high-level stakeholders.
- A two-week exposure visit to the UK will be organised as part of the project with 2 participants selected from each ToT from Chandigarh, Pune and Kolkata and 4 participants from the pilot ToT in Vellore. The visit will give the 10 participants a chance to learn from the UK system and take back elements of good practice to their regions.

## Expected Results

- An on-going resource of competent trainers is established within the Indian Prison and Corrections Service through the delivery of training of trainer programmes.
- Improved knowledge and capacity of local partners and stakeholders to support the development of a professional prison service.
- Exposure of professionals to international good practice for prison management and administration.