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More than 50,000 Children in Conflict with Law still await Justice 362 Juvenile Justice Boards suffering 55% case pendency, as of October 31, 2023

- *1 in 4 Juvenile Justice Boards operate without a full bench*
- *14 states lack Places of Safety*
- *Child Care Institutions (CCIs) grossly under-inspected*
- *Only 40 CCI homes for girls in the 292 districts that shared data*
- *Lack of a national data system for juvenile justice; all information sourced via RTIs*

November 20, 2025, New Delhi: A **first-of-its-kind study**, *Juvenile Justice and Children in Conflict with the Law: A Study of Capacity at the Frontlines*, by the **India Justice Report (IJR)** released today shows that **more than half (55%)** the cases before **362 Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs)** remained pending as of 31st October 2023. While **92%** of **765** districts in India have constituted JJBs, the authority dealing with Children in Conflict with Law, the pendency rate varies widely, from **83%** in Odisha to **35%** in Karnataka, signaling deep inequities that undermine juvenile justice delivery.

According to 2023 Crime in India data, **40,036** juveniles were apprehended in **31,365** cases under the Indian Penal Code and Special and Local Laws in India. **More than three in four** of the children involved were between 16 and 18 years of age. In a decade since the passing of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015, the IJR study finds that the decentralised architecture meant to deliver child-centric services suffers from systemic gaps, including a lack of inter-agency coordination and data-sharing. Additionally, unlike the National Judicial Data Grid, there is no central and public repository of information on JJBs. This led the IJR to file more than 250 RTI requests. Responses from 21 states¹ revealed that as of October 31, 2023, JJBs had only disposed of **less than half the 100,904** cases.

Vacancies in the juvenile justice system (24% of the JJBs were not fully constituted), and inadequate legal aid (30% JJBs do not have an attached legal services clinic) have led to high workload in crucial functions. On average, **154 cases** remained pending with each JJB annually. Additionally, inadequate data monitoring and funds have created severe constraints in the implementation of juvenile justice. Across the 166 CCIs or Homes, 14 states² and Jammu & Kashmir only 810 visits were made out of 1,992 that were mandated.

¹ Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

² Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

The IJR study framed 16 questions on the capacity of the juvenile justice system to four nodal agencies i.e., state police headquarters, the Department of Women and Child Development, State Child Protection Society (SCPS) and the State Legal Services Authority (SLSA). More than 500 responses* were received from 28 states and two UTs, covering 530 districts. Of these 500 responses, 11% were rejected outright, 24% received no reply at all, 29% were transferred to districts, and 36% were provided by state nodal authorities, indicating a weak culture of public data transfer and transparency.

*[*The 500 responses received include replies from state nodal authorities, districts, individual child care institutions, and police stations. This includes transfers to different authorities.]*

Maja Daruwala, Chief Editor, India Justice Report, said, “The specially designed juvenile justice system is pyramidal in structure. Its optimal functioning relies on information flowing regularly from first responders at individual institutions like police stations and care institutions upwards into overseeing authorities at the district, state, and national level. Yet, the IJR’s efforts at accessing reliable data from across the board evidence that authorised oversight bodies neither receive it routinely nor insist on it. Scattered and irregular data makes supervision episodic and accountability hollow.”

Justice Madan B. Lokur, former Judge, Supreme Court of India, commented, “IJR’s study exposes the gaps in our Juvenile Justice system. Despite the passage of 10 years since the implementation of the JJ Act, 2015, it is worrying to find that a quarter of JJBs did not have a full bench and evidence of a substantial number of staff vacancies in child care institutions. This has a detrimental effect on children who fall under its purview. During my tenure in the Supreme Court and even thereafter, my endeavor was to encourage discourse on the rights of children and justice for children, whether they were in conflict with the law or in need of care and protection; to improve their living conditions and make justice delivery humane and compassionate with reintegration and rehabilitation as the ultimate goal. There should be a concerted effort to routinely collate and disseminate data specifically on Juvenile Justice. Inadequate and patchy data from RTIs is concerning. It is essential that a child-centric National Data Grid integrates information on the functioning of the juvenile justice system and that all authorities involved regularly publish standardised data about their functioning in relation to children. Until the information spine is built and used, the system cannot truly serve the best interests of the child.”

Mandate and RTI response:

Function	Mandate	Actual	RTI responses from states/UTs	Source
Juvenile Justice Board (JJB)	1 per district	92%	All states (28 states + Delhi and J&K)	RTI
Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU)	1 per district	78% (642/ 821 police districts)	23 states + Delhi and J&K	RTI
Share of Social Workers in SJPU	2 per SJPU	70% (306/436 SJPUs)	11 states + Delhi	RTI
Legal Cum Probation Officers (LCPO)	1 per district	197 LPCOs in 236 districts	13 states + Delhi	RTI
Legal Services Clinic	1 per JJB	305 of 437 JJBs	18 states + Delhi and J&K	RTI
Medical Officer	At least 1 medical officer on call in each facility	28 in 128 facilities	14 states+Delhi	RTI
Observation Homes	1 in district or group of districts	319 of 765	28 + Delhi and J&K	Lok Sabha, March 2024
Places of Safety	At least 1 per state	40 in 765	28 + Delhi and J&K	Lok Sabha, March 2024

National findings

Infrastructure

- 18 states³ as well as Jammu & Kashmir had one JJB in every district, as required by the JJ Act.
- Delhi, with the highest number of children alleged to have committed crimes (42%), had only seven JJBs in 11 districts – lower than the mandate of one per district
- Odisha (34 JJBs in 30 districts) and Karnataka (34 JJBs in 31 districts) reported more boards than districts.
- 1 in 4 JJBs (111 of the 470 JJBs that responded) did not have a full bench of three members (principal magistrate and two social workers). Only three states/UTs –Odisha, Sikkim, and Jammu & Kashmir–had fully constituted benches.
- 14 states⁴ did not have Places of Safety to hold children between the ages of 16 to 18 years who were accused of or had committed a heinous offence.

³ Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

⁴ Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Punjab, Sikkim, Telangana, Tripura and West Bengal.

- Goa was the only state that reported an Observation Home (where a child is sent during the pendency of an inquiry as a temporary measure) in both its districts. Rajasthan reported 40 in 42 districts, and Mizoram and Maharashtra reported more Observation Homes than districts.

Staffing

- 30% of the 436 sanctioned posts for social workers across 218 Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPUs) had not been filled.
- 30% of 437 JJBs that responded to RTIs did not have a Legal Services Clinic attached to them. Five states—Mizoram, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Telangana, Tripura—and Delhi reported a clinic attached to every JJB.
- 15 states⁵ reported only 28 medical officers working across 128 institutions. Nearly 80% reported having none/ no medical staff/doctors.
- In 15 states⁶, only 82 persons-in-charge (full-time superintendent in charge of the institution) were reported across 128 institutions.

Special analysis: Data from 292 districts that provided sufficient data

To evaluate the compliance of JJ Act provisions for children in conflict with law, the IJR drew on data of 292 districts that provided relatively fuller information as of 31st October 2023. This analysis covers: the presence of a Child Care Institution (CCI); presence of JJB and their constitution [a Principal Magistrate and two social workers (one of whom must be female)]; an SJPU comprising at least one CWPO from every police station and two social workers (one of whom must be female); a legal services clinic attached to the JJB; the presence of a Legal-cum-Probation Officer (LCPO); staff in institutions; case pendency.

Findings of the analysis from 292 districts:

- 258 of 292 districts responded to the question on composition of the JJB. 220 had the mandated full bench of one Principal Magistrate and two social workers.
- Only Odisha, Sikkim, and Jammu & Kashmir did not have vacancies at the Principal Magistrate or social-worker level.
- Across the 292 districts that provided data, there were only 40 CCIs for girls. Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim reported mixed facilities for boys and girls.
- While there were 171 Child Care Institutions (CCIs), only 19 had doctors. Assam, Haryana, Meghalaya and Sikkim had one for each home. Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura reported no doctors.
- Of 171 total CCIs or homes, only 70 had counselors.

⁵ Assam, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Sikkim, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

⁶ *Ibid*

- Out of the total 110 Observation Homes, only Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura reported a counsellor for each Observation Home.
- Only 142 LCPOs were reported across 292 districts. Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Odisha had one for every district.

Budgets: Highest allocation for Mission Vatsalya; constitutes 0.03% of 2025 Union budget

Mission Vatsalya, under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, lays emphasis on strengthening the juvenile justice care and protection system with the motto to 'leave no child behind.' The Union government contributes 60% of the funds and the remaining is contributed by states. In the North-eastern states, 90% is contributed by the Centre. Further, states may establish a Juvenile Justice Fund (JJ Fund).

The IJR's analysis shows that there is a lack of disaggregation in the state budgets funds for Children in Conflict with Law (CCL) and Children in Need For Care and Protection (CNCP). In 2025-26, Child Protection under Mission Vatsalya received a mere 0.03% (Rs. 1500 crore) of the Union budget. Compared to the previous year, the allocation increased by 8% and was the highest budgetary allocation for the scheme since 2020-21.

Recommendations to improve Juvenile Justice Delivery

Governments in the centre and states are investing in the juvenile justice system, but it is important to ensure that limited resources, that are available presently, are prioritised and managed efficiently. Based on IJR's report, we recommend:

- *Plug critical gaps by ensuring sanctioned posts are filled and trained personnel are appointed to monitor and supervise the JJ system*
- *Maintain a robust centralised public database that tracks cases and links actions by police, JJBs, and care institutions in charge of children to ensure accountability.*
- *Training must ensure competency-based training programmes and integrated workshops for JJBs, police officers, social workers and probation officers etc.*
- *Operationalise periodic, independent evaluations envisaged under Section 55 of the JJ Act and Rule 42, JJ Model Rules, 2016.*
- *Fill on an urgent basis positions of Legal cum Probation Officers as per Mission Vatsalya guidelines*

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About the Juvenile Justice Study:

*The **Juvenile Justice Study** assesses how well states have equipped themselves to fulfill their statutory obligations under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 specifically in relation to Children in Conflict with Law (CCL). Drawing primarily on parliamentary responses, and a year-long RTI-based inquiry across states, the study analyses the capacity of key institutions—Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Care Institutions, Special Juvenile Police Units, and Legal Services—across four vital parameters: infrastructure, human resources, budgets, and diversity.*

By bringing siloed data to one place, this IJR study provides policy makers, active citizens and stakeholders with a valuable resource with which to address serious challenges and improve the overall functioning of the system.

About the India Justice Report:

The India Justice Report (IJR) is a quantitative index that uses the government's own statistics to rank the capacity of the formal justice system operating in various states. The IJR is a collaborative effort undertaken by DAKSH, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Common Cause, Centre for Social Justice, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and TISS-Prayas.

First published in 2019, each biennial report tracks improvements and persisting deficits in each state's structural and financial capacity to deliver justice based on quantitative measurements of budgets, human resources, infrastructure, workload, and diversity across police, judiciary, prisons, legal aid and Human Rights Commissions for all 36 states and UTs.