

CASE CODING MANUAL

A guide for coding and classifying judgments from Indian courts

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Last updated: March 2021

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Introduction

At the [DE JURE program](#), we aim to harness the potential of recent changes in data availability to expand the evidence base on the economics of justice reform through rigorous analysis and experimentation.

A large amount of judicial data has become available in India since the launch of the e-courts national portal in 2013. Our team of researchers has been using this data to conduct in-depth research on various aspects of the judiciary and its impact on economic outcomes.

As part of this endeavor, we are also studying the impact of environmental litigation in India on actual environmental outcomes such as air pollution levels, water quality, etc. In this regard, we require you to read and extract relevant information from a dataset of environmental judgments passed by Indian courts. Your input will enable us to categorize cases and record the characteristics of these judgments that are relevant to the studies we conduct.

This document provides useful instructions and guidance on how to navigate the case coding portal and review judgments to extract relevant information.

We thank you for your valuable assistance with our research endeavors!

Accessing the Form

- Step 1: Visit <https://airpollutioncases.herokuapp.com/room/airpollution/>.
- Step 2: Enter the participant label assigned to you.
- Your participant label will be sent to you separately by email.
- Step 3: You will be directed to a page with the case to be coded and the relevant fields to be filled out by you.

*In case of any questions or technical difficulties, please reach out on the Slack channel or write to **Ritesh Das** at rdas4@worldbank.org.*

Reading the Judgments

The key to this exercise is to read the judgments carefully, with the aim to extract relevant information. Some information like case title and judge names are easy to identify. However, some fields are more complicated and completing them accurately will require you to have a deeper understanding of the facts of the case, arguments made in court, and the final verdict.

While there is no uniform format for judgments passed by the courts, all judgments are likely to have the following components:

Cause Title:

The cause title contains the name of the court, case number, and party names. Located at the very top of the judgment it usually follows the following format:

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KARNATAKA
Civil Writ Petition No. 1 of 2021

John Doe (Petitioner)

Verus

State (Respondent)

At times, the names of the judge(s) will be included in the cause title as “*Before: Hon’ble Mr./Ms. Justice X*”. Other times this may be mentioned after the cause title.

You may also come across judgments where two or more cases have been heard together as tagged matters. This usually happens if two or more cases deal with the same cause of action or have similar prayers for relief.

Facts:

The main text of the judgment usually begins with a summary of the facts of the case. This section is very useful to understand case context and extract information regarding parties, advocates, districts, etc.

Arguments:

The facts will generally be followed by a brief record of the arguments made before the court by the respective advocates.

Legal Discussion:

A section of the judgment is often dedicated to summarizing the relevant legal provisions and precedents relevant to the facts of the case. In this section, the judges may also discuss the history or evolution of the law, their opinion of the legal position on the subject, etc.

Final Orders:

The final orders are the actionable part of the judgment and set out the final decision (dismissed, appeal allowed, relief granted, etc.). This is usually set out at the very end of the judgment.

It is important to note that this is only a general guide on the conventional format of a judgment. However, each of these components will not always be distinctly identifiable in all the judgments you encounter.

Filling Out the Form

Case ID

- The case ID refers to the case number which appears at the beginning of the judgment - either before or as part of the cause title. The case ID will generally be in an abbreviated format. For example, WP No. 1 of 2021, CA No. 2 of 2021 etc.

Judge Names

- Judge names are often written under the “*Coram*” section of the judgment, which usually appears right after the cause title.
- The judge names may also be included in the cause title as “*Before: Hon’ble Mr./Ms. Justice X*”
- Check to see if it is a single bench or division bench (two judges). In some cases, there may also be 3 or more judges adjudicating on the case.
- Start typing the name of the judge. This should prompt a drop-down menu with judge names to appear on your screen. You can then select the name of the judge relevant to the judgment you are coding.
- In case the judge’s name does not appear in the drop-down menu, you can also fill it manually by typing in the name. However, while typing in the name, please remember to only include their first name, last name, and middle name (if any). Do not include prefixes such as “*Hon’ble Mr. Justice*”.

Petitioner and Respondent Names

- Check to see the number of petitioners and respondents in every judgment.
 - The suffix “& Anr.” after a petitioner/respondent name in the cause title implies there are two petitioners/respondents.
 - The suffix “& Ors.” after a petitioner/respondent name in the cause title implies there are more than two petitioners/respondents.
- In some cases, the names of all petitioners and respondents will be included in the cause title. However, if all party names are not mentioned in the cause title, check the judgment text. Party names are often included in the judgment text as part of the facts and arguments.
- **Please include only one petitioner or respondent name in a single field.** If there is more than one petitioner or respondent, you can add fields by clicking on the “+” button.

Advocates

- Advocate names will typically appear after the cause title along with phrases like “Present” or “On behalf of”.
- When filling in advocate names, only include their first name, last name, and middle name (if any). Do not include prefixes such as “Adv”, “Sr. Adv”, “Mr.”, “Ms.”, etc.
- **Please include only one advocate name in a single field.** If there is more than one advocate for the petitioner(s) or respondent(s), you can add fields by clicking on the “+” button.

Company Involved

- For this field, you need to identify if any company is a party to the litigation, either as a petitioner or respondent. If you find that a company is a party, please enter the name of the company in this field.
- Please keep the following in mind while filling out this field:
 - Party names suffixed with “& Co.”, “Ltd.”, “Pvt. Ltd.” etc. are companies.
 - “M/s.” is often used as a prefix while recording company names in judgments. Although technically the prefix “M/s.” should only be used for firm names, it is a practice followed by Indian courts to use it as a prefix for company names as well.

District

- This field refers to the district in which the cause of action arises. For example, in cases of water pollution, you will fill in the name of the district where the water body in question is located.
- To fill out this field, start typing the name of the district. This should prompt a drop-down menu with district names to appear on your screen. You can then select the name of the relevant district.
- In case the district name does not appear in the drop-down menu, check to see if there is a similar district name spelled slightly differently. Sometimes the name of the district may have been misspelled. If you still cannot find the district in the drop-down list, you can simply type in the name of the district.
- The name of the district is not always evident from the judgment and there may be judgments where the district is not mentioned at all. In such a situation, you can leave this field blank. However, be sure to examine the judgment text (especially the facts component) carefully for this information.

- The district can sometimes be determined through other details within the judgment text. For example, details about the District Magistrate or Police Station. However, be sure to read the facts carefully before concluding the district

State

- This field refers to the state in which the cause of action arises.
- To fill out this field, start typing the name of the state. This should prompt a drop-down menu with state names to appear on your screen. You can then select the name of the relevant state from this list.
- It is safe to assume that if a particular state high court is hearing the case, the issue being contested has arisen within that state. This is what gives the court the jurisdiction to hear the matter in the first place. If this is not the case, and the issue being contested relates to a different state, an explanation will usually be provided in the judgment text. However, this is rare and will happen only in exceptional circumstances.
- In the case of National Green Tribunal or Supreme Court judgments, the state should be easily identifiable from the facts.

Appeal Case

- In this field, we want to determine whether the case was brought before the court as an appeal or not.
- You can determine this by:
 - *The case number* - Each court has slightly varying nomenclatures for different kinds of appeals. Appeals will usually be categorized as civil appeal, criminal appeal, etc. They may also be abbreviated as C.A. or CrI.A.
 - *Facts* - The facts stated in the text of the judgment will typically mention that a case has been filed as an appeal.
- If you determine that the case is an appeal, select “Yes” from the drop-down menu. Else, select “No”.

Constitutional Case

- Constitutional cases are those where a **substantial question regarding the interpretation of a Constitutional provision** is involved.
- **A simple mention of the Constitution in the judgment text is not enough.** For example, many of the cases you come across will be writ petitions and may mention that they have been filed under Article 226/227 of the Constitution. This, by itself, is

insufficient to categorize the case as one that is Constitutional. However, if for example, a case is discussing whether the right to clean air/water is a fundamental right under the Constitution, it should be categorized as “Constitutional” because it involves interpretation of a Constitutional provision.

- If you determine that the case is a Constitutional case, select “Yes” from the drop-down menu. Else, select “No”.

Government’s Role

- In this field, we want to determine if the Government is a party to the litigation.
- Here, “Government” includes:
 - The Central Government (Union of India) or any of its Ministries and/or Departments;
 - The State Government (State of Punjab, State of Karnataka, etc.) or any of its Ministries and/or Departments;
 - Local authorities (Municipalities, etc.); and
 - Statutory bodies.
- Select whether the Government is a petitioner or respondent from the drop-down menu. In case the Government is involved both as a petitioner and respondent (as in the case of inter-state or inter-departmental disputes) select “Both”. Select “None” if the Government is not involved in the litigation.

Environmental Impact

- In this field, we want to determine whether the judgment is likely to have a positive impact on the environment or not.
- If you think that the judgment is likely to have a positive impact, select “Yes” from the drop-down menu. For example, if the court orders that a polluting factory be shut down or imposes fines on the polluter, such a judgment is likely to have a positive impact on the environment.
- If, on the other hand, you believe that the judgment will have no impact or a negative impact on the environment, select “No” from the drop-down menu. This may include judgments where the petition is dismissed without passing any further orders. Judgments, where the case is sent back to a lower court for being heard afresh without passing any orders on the merits of the case, will also fall in this category.