

Accessing, Opening and Using Government Data in Five Indian Cities: Policy Approaches and Non-Government Initiatives

In early 2012, Government of India approved the first policy in the country governing **proactive disclosure** of government data, and especially of **born-digital** and **digitised** data. This National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (**NDSAP**) extends the mandate of the Right to Information (**RTI**) Act to establish policy and administrative support to enable informed citizenship, better decision-making and heightened transparency and accountability. The project plans to locate these policy documents, especially NDSAP, in the context of their actual implications for non-government data practitioners.

We will focus on **research** and **advocacy organisations** working in the area of **urban development** across five cities in India – **Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Delhi, Mumbai** and **Pune** – to map their practices of collecting, accessing, sharing and using government and self-generated urban data, such as those related to property records, geospatial data, public health, elected representatives etc.

The study will allow us to reflect on two key questions: (1) how RTI and NDSAP are **transforming** approaches and processes of data practices, and (2) can the **grounded experience** of advocacy and research organisations inform shaping of a more **effective** and **open** data policy for India?

This project employs **grounded research approach** for analysing NDSAP, RTI and the Government of India's policies and approaches to Public Sector Information access and sharing. By grounded approach, we mean **building narratives** and **accounts** from the **field** to understand how policies **align / deviate** from the practical, everyday realities of data gathering, sharing, advocacy, and use of government information, and associated legal and technology challenges.

The grounded approach also helps us to understand how these organisations **interact** with the state, the **responses** they receive from government officials, the approaches they employ in obtaining government information, and how these approaches inform their **understanding** of the **state** and government. We plan to take these findings back to a **critical discussion** of the **challenges** and **opportunities** of **open government data** in India, with a specific focus on making NDSAP more **sensitive** about requirements of **actually existing data practices** among civil society researchers and advocates.

As part of the study, we will generate information about the nature of data that different research and advocacy organisations are collecting in the five Indian cities concerned, and share the tabulated findings as an **open archive** of **data practices**.

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