

The rehabilitation and social reintegration of women prisoners

Implementation of the Bangkok Rules



Guide to the rehabilitation and social reintegration of women prisoners: Implementation of the Bangkok Rules

This guide was prepared by Penal Reform International (PRI) and the Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ) under the authorship of consultant Sharon Critoph.

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We promote alternatives to prison that support the rehabilitation of offenders, and promote the right of detainees to fair and humane treatment. We campaign for the prevention of torture and the abolition of the death penalty, and we work to ensure just and appropriate responses to children and women who come into contact with the law.

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The Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ) is a public organisation established by the Government of Thailand in 2011 and officially recognised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as the latest member of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme Network Institutes in 2016.

One of the primary objectives of the TIJ is to promote and support the implementation of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules).

In addition, the TIJ strives to serve as a bridge that transports global ideas to local practices with an emphasis on fundamental issues including interconnections between the rule of law and sustainable development, human rights, peace and security.

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Introduction



The primary purposes of imprisonment are to protect society against crime and to reduce recidivism. International standards make it clear that these can only be achieved if the time in prison is used to ensure the reintegration of prisoners into society upon release, so that they can lead law-abiding and self-supporting lives.¹

It is in all our interests that prisoners return to the community with the skills and attitudes that will enable them to stay out of prison in the future. Prisoners are part of society – the vast majority will eventually be released from prison and it is therefore of benefit to the broader community, and in the interest of public safety, that they are able to play a positive role in society. If they leave prison with greater problems, and without the knowledge and skills to cope, there will inevitably be ongoing consequences for them, their families and their communities and further costs for the state.

As the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has noted, investments in rehabilitation programmes for prisoners ‘are one of the best and most cost-effective ways of preventing their re-offending, with significant benefits not only for the individuals concerned, but also for public safety more broadly’.² There are, however, many prisoners who do not take part in or who cannot access rehabilitation programmes and many who do not benefit sufficiently from existing projects.

There are multiple reasons why prisons are unable to provide satisfactory rehabilitation programmes to all prisoners. Some prisons do not have the resources to implement appropriate activities. In others, existing schemes are not well tailored to individual needs, or are only available to a few prisoners. Even where good programmes exist, prisoners still face significant barriers during their imprisonment or following their release, which can impact their successful rehabilitation.

Female prisoners represent a small but increasing proportion of prisoners worldwide.³ They face specific barriers in accessing programmes and services in prisons and there are often limited rehabilitation opportunities available to them. Programmes that do exist are often heavily gendered and do not cater for their particular backgrounds and rehabilitation needs. Female prisoners also face gender-specific challenges after their release from prison.

As the commentary to Rules 57–58 of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) notes, ‘A considerable proportion of women offenders do not necessarily pose a risk to society and their imprisonment may not help, but hinder their social reintegration.’ Whilst this guide does not examine alternatives to imprisonment in detail, it should be noted that for the vast majority of female prisoners, community-based alternatives that provide assistance, support and treatment are the most effective way of helping them build positive lives away from crime in the future.

This guide covers the different aspects of rehabilitation and identifies the key elements for successful rehabilitation of female offenders. The primary focus is on specific programmes as well as good practices for addressing the root causes of offending. As the success of rehabilitation programmes can also depend on the provision and quality of pre- and post-release support, attention is also given to these programmes and services.

Purpose of this guide



This guide is designed for use by prison management, staff, policymakers and others involved in the criminal justice process, including legislators, judges and law enforcement officials. It aims to provide practical guidance on improving existing rehabilitation programmes and services and designing new ones, looking at different country contexts and taking into account location-specific challenges and opportunities.

Whilst existing documents look at the development of rehabilitation programmes in detail,⁴ there is little guidance available specifically on the rehabilitation of female prisoners. This guide aims to bridge that gap and provide practical solutions as to how criminal justice systems can improve their efforts in this area. This is done by highlighting some of the many innovative examples of promising practice in the rehabilitation of female prisoners around the world, which can engage and inspire others.⁵ The guidance can also be used by international organisations, NGOs and monitoring bodies in their advocacy efforts, and to provoke discussions amongst the broader community about improved rehabilitation for female prisoners.

This guide summarises the importance of good prisoner rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes and identifies the main barriers to successful rehabilitation, including the particular barriers faced by female prisoners and by specific groups of female prisoners such as girls, foreign nationals and women from ethnic minority groups. Identifying these barriers provides an insight into why additional efforts are needed to assist the rehabilitation of women offenders.

It is crucial that those involved in prisoner rehabilitation understand that what works in one country, or even in one prison, will not necessarily work in another location, and a programme that is successful for one prisoner might not have the same outcome for another. For this reason, the examples in this guide are illustrative and are intended to provide ideas for the development of new programmes. In practice, and in all locations, rehabilitation programmes should be designed according to the local context, taking into account the prisoner population profile, available resources and employment market needs.

The guide concludes with a set of 10 fundamental principles for the successful design and implementation of rehabilitation programmes for female prisoners.





Relevant international standards

International standards are clear that prison systems should be rehabilitative and should take into account the gender-specific social reintegration requirements of female prisoners. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is legally binding on all States Parties, stipulates that penitentiary systems ‘shall comprise treatment of prisoners the essential aim of which shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation’.⁶

The Nelson Mandela Rules

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (SMR) were first approved in 1957 and revised in 2015. The revised rules are known as the ‘Nelson Mandela Rules’.⁷ The Rules reiterate that the purpose of imprisonment is to protect society against crime and to reduce recidivism, and that prison administrations ‘should offer education, vocational training and work, as well as other forms of assistance that are appropriate and available, including those of a remedial, moral, spiritual, social and health- and sports-based nature’. The Rules also stipulate that all rehabilitation programmes, activities and services ‘should be delivered in line with the individual treatment needs of prisoners’.⁸

Rule 92 of the Nelson Mandela Rules makes it clear that the rehabilitation of prisoners should include ‘all appropriate means, including religious care in the countries where this is possible, education, vocational guidance and training, social casework, employment counselling, physical development and strengthening of moral character, in accordance with the individual needs of each prisoner, taking account of his or her social and criminal history, physical and mental capacities and aptitudes, personal temperament, the length of his or her sentence and prospects after release’.

The Bangkok Rules

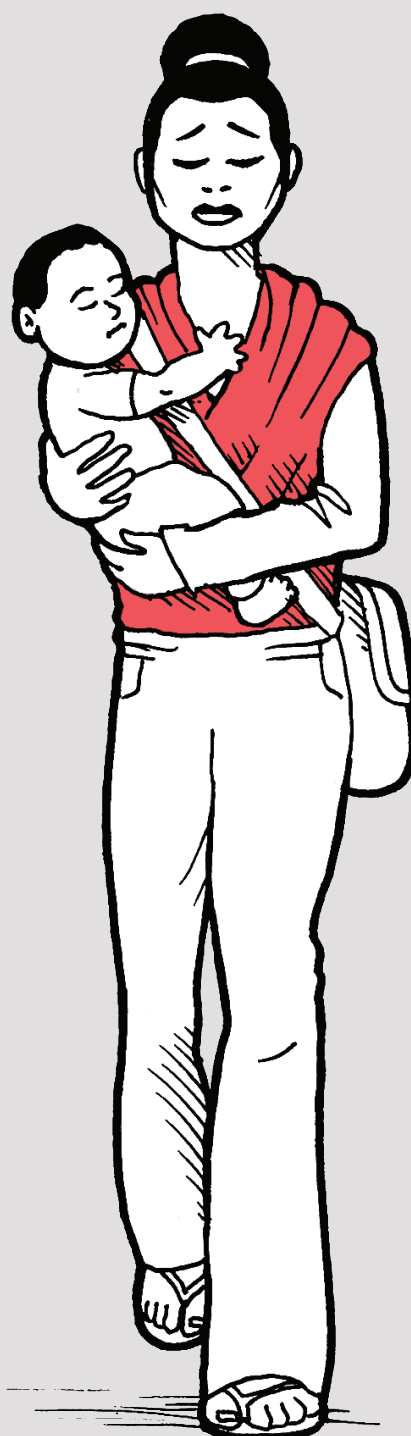
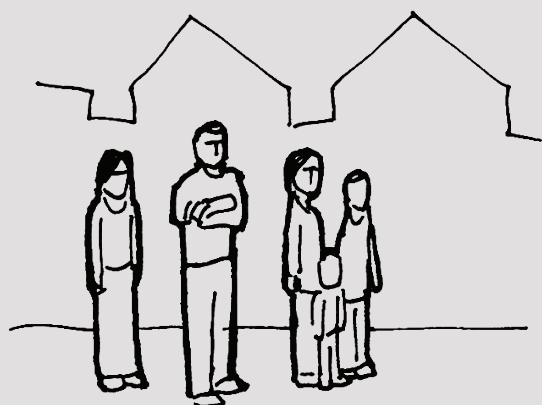
The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) were adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on 21 December 2010. The Rules give guidance to policymakers, legislators, sentencing authorities and prison staff on how to reduce the unnecessary imprisonment of women and meet the specific needs of women who are imprisoned, including in relation to their successful rehabilitation.

Before the adoption of the Bangkok Rules, international standards had not adequately addressed the specific characteristics and needs of women and girls in criminal justice systems. The Rules were also the first international instrument to address the needs of children in prison with their parent. The Bangkok Rules supplement both the Nelson Mandela Rules and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules), which were adopted in 1990.

Rule 29 of the Bangkok Rules specifies that staff should be trained to enable them ‘to address the special social reintegration requirements of women prisoners and manage safe and rehabilitative facilities’. Rule 40 of the Bangkok Rules requires classification methods to be gender specific ‘to ensure appropriate and individualised planning and implementation towards those prisoners’ early rehabilitation, treatment and reintegration into society’.⁹

PART 1

Background and context



The importance of rehabilitation and social reintegration



Globally, there is growing recognition of the importance of rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes in prisons. The Doha Declaration, adopted in 2015 at the 13th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, highlights the crucial importance of the rehabilitation of prisoners for achieving sustainable development (see The Doha Declaration on page 7).¹⁰

As the main purpose of imprisonment, rehabilitation should include a broad range of programmes, including physical and mental healthcare, substance abuse programmes, physical activities, counselling, psychosocial support, education and vocational training courses, creative and cultural activities, work opportunities, and regular access to well-stocked library facilities.

Education is a fundamental human right that should be enjoyed by all. Vocational training and work programmes allow prisoners to engage in constructive activities whilst gaining new skills for potential future work. This improves the ability of prisoners to successfully reintegrate into society and lead crime-free lives. Providing them with education, work and training opportunities can also ‘normalise’ their time in prison, making it closer to life in the community and helping prisoners lead independent lives after release.

In addition, good rehabilitation programmes can enhance safety and control measures in the prison environment. Prisoners engaged in constructive activities are generally easier to manage and less likely to be disruptive. Providing prisoners with constructive activities has also been found to reduce levels of depression and other mental health conditions, with one study describing prisoners’ motivation to change – through participation in vocational training programmes – as instrumental in improving mental health ‘as they are more focused on goals and resilient to negative external and social impacts on their lives’.¹¹

If operated transparently and fairly, prison rehabilitation programmes – and work programmes in particular – can benefit prisoners by providing incentives that could help them to financially support their families whilst also producing resources for prison systems themselves. This could be in the form of food production for the prison, facility cleaning and maintenance, or the sale of products made by prisoners. Many rehabilitation projects can be set up without significant resources and any profits made can be invested in enhancing rehabilitation programmes or developing new ones.



The Doha Declaration

The Doha Declaration, adopted in 2015 at the 13th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, called for the integration of crime prevention and criminal justice into the wider agenda of the UN – acknowledging that sustainable development and the rule of law are closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

The Declaration reaffirms the commitment of UN member states to implement and enhance policies for prisoners that focus on education, work, medical care, rehabilitation, social reintegration and the prevention of recidivism.

The UNODC is leading the Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration,¹² which is aimed at helping countries achieve a positive and sustainable impact on crime prevention, criminal justice, corruption prevention and the rule of law.

The four-year programme focuses on four interrelated components,¹³ with one aiming at 'fostering the rehabilitation and social integration of prisoners to provide a second chance in life' (the pillar on fair, humane and effective criminal justice systems).

In order to better support the rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners, the UNODC has developed several tools, including a *Roadmap for the Development of Prison-based Rehabilitation Programmes* and an updated *Introductory Handbook on the Prevention of Recidivism and the Social Reintegration of Offenders*.¹⁴ A technical guide for the development of national brands of prison products is also being produced.

The UNODC is directly supporting 11 countries in establishing a more rehabilitative approach to prison management, through technical assistance and practical support for prison-based rehabilitation programmes focusing on education, vocational training and work.



Barriers to successful rehabilitation



Both male and female prisoners face barriers to successful rehabilitation and social reintegration. Some of these barriers are institutional; others relate to individual circumstances.

There is often a lack of political will and budget allocation for rehabilitation programmes, and prisons are sometimes poorly equipped and lack the human and financial resources to deliver sustainable projects. In many institutions, opportunities for education and training are limited.

Teaching in prisons is often reported to be inconsistent and of poor quality.¹⁵ In some countries the only programmes available are those offered by NGOs, which are often short-lived due to funding limitations. In some prisons, security reasons are used to restrict access to education and training opportunities, including limiting access to libraries, training rooms and computers.

The prison environment itself – often violent and isolating – can run counter to rehabilitative principles. For all prisoners, the experience inside prison is an important determinant of potential rehabilitation. This includes conditions of detention as well as treatment by guards and other prisoners. Separation of prisoners from families and communities and the potential loss of family, employment and homes are experienced by most prisoners, and these factors are also likely to negatively impact their future rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation programmes are unlikely to succeed if authorities are unable to guarantee the fundamental rights of prisoners, such as providing a safe and secure environment, decent living conditions, nutritious food, safe water, good healthcare and regular contact with family and friends. Successful rehabilitation is also difficult to achieve in the absence of effective systems for proper allocation, classification and categorisation of prisoners.

Prison overcrowding is one of the main impediments to developing prison-based rehabilitation programmes. Overcrowded facilities struggle to provide for the basic needs of prisoners. Many are chronically under-resourced and staff work in harsh conditions with little or no training. Under these circumstances, prison administrations prioritise basic prison management and the prevention of violence, often at the expense of rehabilitation.

Overly punitive approaches to imprisonment hinder rehabilitation efforts. The frequent use of harsh disciplinary measures, such as solitary confinement, frequent lockdowns and transfers, can severely disrupt progress towards rehabilitation, as can the withdrawal of educational privileges as a punitive measure. Prisoners classified as high security are often excluded from rehabilitation opportunities.

Life in prison is often not conducive to training and learning, with prisoners reporting difficulties concentrating¹⁶ and a lack of support and encouragement from prison staff. The presence of alcohol, drugs and gang violence inside prisons can also severely disrupt prisoner rehabilitation.

Whilst prisons in lower-income countries face significant additional challenges in implementing rehabilitation programmes, there are successful programmes in even the most difficult situations. In addition, facilities that prioritise rehabilitation are easier to manage and cheaper to run in the long term.

In addition to physical conditions of detention, prisoners face a range of barriers to successful rehabilitation that relate to their individual circumstances and personal histories. This might include health issues, drug and alcohol dependency and histories of abuse. Successful rehabilitation is therefore contingent on the delivery of programmes and services that tackle these underlying issues.

Additionally, the majority of prisoners come from disadvantaged backgrounds and many have some form of learning difficulty. Previous experiences of formal education are likely to have been negative, and many offenders may not have obtained qualifications or may have dropped out of school early. Many prisoners have low self-esteem and negative attitudes towards formal education.

Steady employment following release has been found to be one of the most important factors in reducing reoffending.¹⁷ However, employers can be reluctant to hire former prisoners, and prisoners can also face restrictions on employment and education as a result of their criminal records. Due to the problems they face in finding work, former prisoners are often forced to take the lowest paid and least secure jobs in the economy and can easily fall into debt. Additionally, many are not able to find suitable housing – a particular problem if their imprisonment has led to family breakdown. These factors combine with a lack of adequate post-release support to make successful rehabilitation extremely difficult for many.

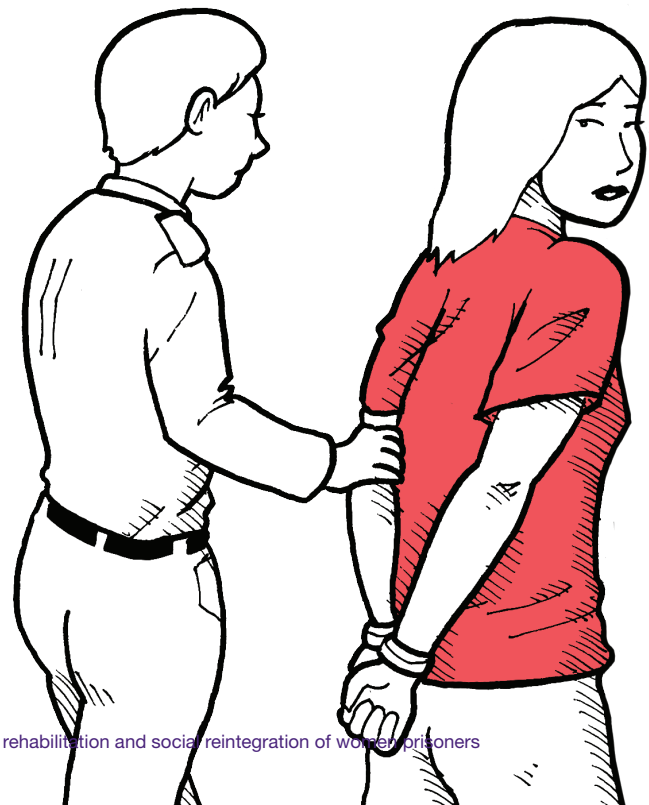


CONTEXT: Barriers to participation in prison programmes

A 2012 survey of prison education and training in **Europe**¹⁸ found that in the majority of European Union (EU) member states, participation in prison education and training was lower than 25 per cent. In developing countries, prisoners' participation in such activities tends to be much lower and there are often fewer activities available.

The findings of the 2012 survey showed that the most common barriers to participation in these programmes were lack of motivation and previous negative experiences of education. Other barriers included the fact that there were greater incentives to take part in prison work than in education and training programmes, the limited number of spaces available, and learning opportunities that were not compatible with sentence duration (for example, for prisoners serving short sentences).

A 2009 study of access to education in **Slovenia** found that education levels attained before prison were relatively low, with the reasons given for dropping out being lack of motivation, problems with drug addiction and learning difficulties.¹⁹ In **Bulgaria**, the 'value system' of female prisoners was identified as one of the reasons they had previously dropped out of education. For many, education had not been 'part of their life priorities'.²⁰



Pre-trial detention



Globally, there are estimated to be at least 3.3 million people in pre-trial detention on any given day and approximately 15 million people are admitted into pre-trial detention over the course of a year. In some countries pre-trial detainees outnumber convicted prisoners.²¹ Women, ethnic and religious minorities and foreign nationals are often overrepresented in pre-trial detention.

Pre-trial detainees often spend months or years imprisoned before trial, sometimes spending longer in detention than those who have been convicted and often in worse conditions. Pre-trial detainees may have limited contact with other prisoners, additional restrictions on family contact, and fewer opportunities for healthcare and vocational or job programmes.

The impact of detention before trial is often underestimated. As with convicted prisoners, pre-trial detainees can lose their family, their jobs and their homes during the course of their detention.²² They face the same harmful social, economic, physical and psychological consequences, and are just as likely to be stigmatised or criminalised as a result of their imprisonment.

Crucially however, pre-trial detainees are often not afforded the same services and opportunities as those who have been convicted. They are usually excluded from rehabilitation programmes and it can be difficult for prison administrations to assess and plan for their needs. Prison authorities may not feel that it is their responsibility to provide training and education to pre-trial detainees, instead prioritising the custody and rehabilitation of convicted prisoners.

The UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment has found that 'discriminatory treatment suffered by pre-trial detainees, who may be held longer than some convicts, has been justified by the heads of some facilities on the grounds that their guilt being not yet proven, there is less responsibility and obligation, and consequently less resources, allocated to care for them'.²³

Pre-trial detention should always be used as a last resort and for the shortest possible time. Alternative, non-custodial measures should always be considered, particularly for those suspected of minor offences. However, when pre-trial detainees are held and particularly when their detention is prolonged, prison authorities must offer them opportunities for purposeful activity, including services and activities that are available to convicted prisoners. There are many ways to achieve this, including through short or modular courses and informal learning opportunities. The Nelson Mandela Rules also state that untried prisoners should always be offered the opportunity to work and that if they choose to work, they should be paid for it.²⁴



Characteristics of women prisoners



Female prisoners face additional barriers to rehabilitation that are often not recognised or effectively tackled within criminal justice systems.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education has pointed to the lack of research on the particular educational needs of women prisoners, noting that there is, in particular, little attention paid to the number of women with learning difficulties in detention, with the majority of research focused on male prisoners.²⁵

The lack of knowledge about women prisoners' educational and other rehabilitation needs is particularly problematic given that they are usually very different from the needs of men. As a result, the opportunities offered to women are often poorly thought through and ineffective.

This section of the guide summarises four key challenges faced by female prisoners, including challenges related to their personal situations and challenges that stem from criminal justice responses to their imprisonment.

Pathways to prison

Men and women have many parallel and often overlapping pathways to prison. These include substance abuse, social marginalisation, poverty and mental health conditions. There are also specific gendered pathways to imprisonment that need to be understood and tackled.

To successfully rehabilitate prisoners, authorities need a good understanding of their personal backgrounds, the circumstances that led them to prison, and an awareness of the obstacles they may face on release. Any rehabilitation programmes that do not take these factors into account and which do not provide the necessary care, assistance and treatment are likely to fail.

Many prisoners, and in particular female prisoners, have been convicted of non-violent offences. These offences are often related to substance dependence or due to economic pressure and the need to provide for children and other family members.²⁶

As the commentary to Rules 57–58 of the Bangkok Rules notes, many women are in prison 'as a direct or indirect result of the multiple layers of discrimination and deprivation, often experienced at the hands of their husbands or partners, their family and the community'. Widespread domestic violence against women and sexual abuse prior to imprisonment have been documented in many countries worldwide.



CONTEXT: Reasons for imprisonment

Whilst the crimes committed by both men and women are often closely interrelated to their personal histories and economic situations, it should be recognised that there are many women and girls who are imprisoned after being pressured or duped into participating in criminal activities, or who have been imprisoned due to their association with others engaged in illegal behaviour. In some cases, women are imprisoned for crimes committed in response to coercion by abusive partners.

A 2007 study demonstrated that the situation of women prisoners in **Afghanistan** posed a particular dilemma in relation to rehabilitation efforts.²⁷ The report found that many of the women imprisoned were innocent but had been convicted because they had no legal assistance or because they had been forced to confess. Others had been used or framed by male relatives or were arrested because they were with their husbands or partners when the crime was committed. As a result, offending behaviour programmes – aimed at addressing the underlying causes leading to crime – were not relevant because the women were victims themselves and therefore had entirely different needs.

A 2019 study of 10 women from **Thailand** imprisoned in Cambodia for cross-border drug trafficking revealed life histories marred by a range of vulnerabilities, including individual (for example, mental ill health), relational (such as parental abuse and domestic violence), and social (for example, low levels of education and limited employment opportunities). All of the women had carried drugs across international borders for somebody else. None were career criminals nor had knowledge of the international drug trade. Their offending was characterised by a lack of control and involved varying degrees of exploitation.²⁸

In a 2012 study of female offenders in **South Africa**, 55 per cent of the women interviewed said they had become involved in criminal activity because they needed to provide for their families. Others reported that they turned to crime in an effort to emancipate themselves from abusive partners, spouses or parents.²⁹

In **Kyrgyzstan**, one report noted that 70 per cent of women convicted of killing their husband or other family member had experienced a 'longstanding pattern of physical abuse or forced economic dependence'.³⁰ Another study in Kyrgyzstan found that of 27 women convicted of murder or manslaughter of a male family member, three said they had acted to protect children, 10 had experienced sexual abuse, 14 had experienced frequent domestic abuse, and 15 said that it was an act of self-defence.³¹

One study illustrated how black women in the **US** had been forced to commit offences due to physical attacks or even death threats, or following more subtle pressure or provocation. This included being manipulated or 'talked into' committing the offence, confessing to an abuser's crime, or committing physical assaults in response to psychological victimisation.³² In **Mexico**, it has been estimated that at least 40 per cent of women convicted of drug-related crimes, such as transporting drugs between cities or smuggling drugs into prisons, were coerced into doing so by their boyfriends or husbands.³³

Research on 13 women prisoners at Idrizovo prison in the **Republic of Macedonia** found that virtually all of the women had experienced serious violence at the hands of their husbands or partners, with most of the women reporting that they felt safer inside prison than outside. The research also found that most of the crimes the women committed were related to their previous abuse.³⁴



Women in prison often come from disadvantaged backgrounds typically marked by economic deprivation, substance abuse, violence and household disruption. Prisoners also tend to have higher rates of illiteracy and lower levels of education than the general population.³⁵

As the World Health Organization (WHO) has noted, alarmingly high rates of mental health problems are reported amongst female prisoners, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and a tendency to self-harm and commit suicide.³⁶

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT PRISONERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES³⁷

	Women in prison	Men in prison	General population
Taken into care as a child	31%	24%	2%
Experienced abuse as a child	53%	27%	20%
Observed violence in the home as a child	50%	40%	14%
Experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse	53%	27%	–
Reported mental health issues	65%	42%	–
Unemployed in the four weeks before custody	81%	67%	–
Identified as suffering from both anxiety and depression	49%	23%	15%
Have attempted suicide at some point	46%	21%	6%

Most women who are admitted to prison are mothers and many have primary care responsibilities for other family members. These responsibilities and relationships can play a role in women’s pathways to prison and are also fundamental to their rehabilitation prospects. For mothers, separation from their children can severely impact their mental wellbeing. Prison systems must take these factors into account when designing rehabilitation programmes for women.





PROMISING PRACTICE: Holistic support and advocacy in Sierra Leone

The organisation AdvocAid is the only human rights organisation in **Sierra Leone** providing holistic legal aid and rehabilitation support to women and girls in conflict with the law.³⁸

AdvocAid was founded in 2006 and has a team of paralegals, lawyers and social workers who work with women and girls through the justice system, at police stations, courts and prisons. Their services include formal and legal education, welfare, and post-detention support for prisoners and former prisoners. AdvocAid also works on national advocacy and law reform campaigns that focus on broader issues impacting women and girls in the justice system, including conditions of detention.

AdvocAid's rehabilitation strategy is grounded in a thorough knowledge of Sierra Leone's justice system and society, as well as needs assessments of women and girls in conflict with the law. The organisation believes that rehabilitation must be approached in a broad sense, recognising that all stages of imprisonment have an impact on the chances of post-prison reintegration.

AdvocAid works with women and girls in prison through six different pillars, which aim to break the cycle of reoffending and offer better rehabilitation. The different levels of support provided are access to justice, education, vocational training and business skills training, raising awareness, and research and advocacy. In the future, they will provide psychosocial and financial support for women and girls who have been released.

The research and advocacy pillar of AdvocAid's work aims to involve and amplify the voices of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and relay their views to policymakers and the public through photo exhibitions, documentaries and research pieces. The project offers a sense of empowerment to the participants whilst also challenging negative stereotypes and public perceptions of prisoners.

In parallel, the raising awareness pillar of AdvocAid's work focuses on educating people about the law, through nationwide public campaigns – including songs and TV shows – with the aim of building more tolerant and understanding communities for released women prisoners to return to.

Limited opportunities

Due to the larger numbers of male prisoners – especially in prisons that are overcrowded or lacking resources – authorities often focus on the situation and needs of men. As a result, fewer rehabilitation opportunities are available to women and girls and those that do exist tend to be less varied and of poorer quality than those offered to men and boys.

Many female prisoners lack rehabilitation opportunities due to the type and location of the facilities in which they are held. Female prisoners are also regularly imprisoned far from their families and communities, which is in itself a barrier to successful rehabilitation. Female prisoners have also noted that when training opportunities were available to them, they were not aware of them or were not given information on how to participate. In many facilities there are long waiting lists to join courses – a particular problem for prisoners with short sentences, many of whom are female.

As women represent a small proportion of the prison population, there are fewer women's prisons – and those that exist often lack good education and training opportunities. As women's prisons are typically smaller, there may also be less financial resources and physical space available for libraries, classrooms and training workshops. In some countries, small numbers of women are housed in separate parts of male prisons, and the number of women is often considered insufficient for investment in suitable rehabilitation programmes.

Prison officers have also noted that women held in male facilities cannot participate in training and education programmes for security reasons, because the libraries, classrooms and workshops are located in the male part of the prison. In such a situation, prison authorities can consider a simple rotation system to allow female prisoners to use the facilities at specific times or on particular days. This type of system would need to ensure the sufficient separation of prisoners and provide effective supervision to guarantee the safety of female prisoners.

Pregnant women and women with children living with them in prison are often excluded from prison programmes or do not have the time to participate, due to a lack of alternative childcare arrangements. Prison authorities should put special arrangements in place to allow for their participation.



CONTEXT: Lack of suitable opportunities

A 2011 study based on interviews with women in nine prisons in **Pakistan**³⁹ found that there were no recreational opportunities in the prisons visited, except for television which was available in two prisons. The study found that no efforts were undertaken by the prison authorities to provide prisoners with basic education or vocational training opportunities.

A 2012 study of women prisoners in **South Africa**⁴⁰ found that they suffered from a lack of education and work opportunities because investment in education and training was concentrated in the larger male prison population.

The study also found that most prison work in Pollsmoor and Worcester Female Correctional Centres consisted of women sewing denim and noted that, whilst this was 'a practical and efficient way to manufacture prison uniforms, occupy women in productive labour and for them to earn a small income... given the continued decline of the South African textile industry, this is unlikely to be a fruitful avenue for post-release employment'. Whilst some female prisoners said that they enjoyed participating in such activities, others emphasised the need to develop skills in less gendered areas, such as financial and business management.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Equal opportunities for prisoners in South Sudan

The National Prison Service of **South Sudan** has established a vocational training centre in Juba Central Prison aimed at rehabilitation and the prevention of recidivism. The project aims to empower prisoners by providing them with self-supporting skills. Eight different trainings are equally available to

both men and women in the prison. These are carpentry and joinery, building and construction, electrical installation, metal fabrication and welding, auto mechanics, agriculture, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and tailoring and fashion design. The classes have both male and female instructors.

Despite the emergence of many new and innovative rehabilitation programmes for female prisoners, the opportunities available to them in many prisons are still heavily gendered. Programmes for women often reflect their traditional role in society or cover domestic tasks for which they are already skilled.

The opportunities typically provided to women in prison often serve only to equip them for the most low-paid jobs in the economy, reinforcing notions that they cannot compete with men in the workplace. This further entrenches their reliance on men, potentially compounding existing histories of dependency and abuse.

Whilst skills taught to men in prison are often designed to prepare them for employment on release, programmes available to women are less focused on providing new vocational skills. Additionally, opportunities for work outside the prison premises tend to only be available to male prisoners.



It's all about giving people a second chance... It's all about giving them a chance to tap into the economy they were not a part of before. ”

Aggrey Mokaya, founder of Change Hub, a technology-focused rehabilitation programme in Kenya (see Promising Practice on page 16)



My website, I can say, it is my superpower in my business...
It helps me meet new clients online everywhere in Kenya. I learnt so many things through Change Hub. I was introduced to HTML, CSS and Javascript. For my website I coded everything myself. ”

Participant in the Change Hub programme (see Promising Practice below)



PROMISING PRACTICE: Access to technology for women prisoners in Kenya

The Change Hub Innovation Centre is a technology-focused rehabilitation programme for women prisoners at Langata women's prison in Nairobi, **Kenya**, which teaches women coding, web design, computer hardware maintenance and 3D printing. The programme is designed to help women access the increasingly technology-based economy on their release.

The programme was designed to counter gender stereotyping in training and education opportunities for women in prison, and to give women the opportunity to work in the field of technology.

Before the introduction of the Change Hub programme, most courses available to women in Langata prison were limited to those traditionally seen as appropriate, such as sewing and tailoring.

The classes were set up in 2016 and are taught by university graduates. Participants in the programme attend classes three times a week and have the opportunity to be paid teaching assistants for the next group of students. The participants are also building a website for Change Hub.

Sentence length

Because of the nature of their offences, women often serve very short or very long sentences,⁴¹ both of which pose particular challenges when it comes to rehabilitation.⁴²

Rehabilitation programmes and work opportunities for prisoners with short sentences are usually limited or non-existent, often being considered a waste of valuable resources and a practical and administrative burden. Prison staff have also noted that it can be difficult to understand and address the needs of those serving short sentences. Prisoners serving short sentences may themselves lack motivation and feel that it is not worth their time to embark on a training or education course in prison.

Many female prisoners serving short sentences are not given adequate opportunities to participate in education and training programmes. However, there are many ways to design rehabilitation programmes for prisoners serving short sentences, so that they are better prepared for employment after their release.



CONTEXT: Rehabilitation for prisoners serving short sentences

In order to make rehabilitation programmes available to prisoners serving short sentences, prison administrations can:

- Ensure that educational options are flexible and varied for prisoners serving both long- and short-term sentences.
- Assess prisoners serving short sentences for their formal and non-formal education experience and attainment.
- Introduce short-term educational activities that can pave the way for continued education after release, including modular or unit-based courses that help prisoners gain credits for continuing education.
- Shorten or adapt existing courses to tailor them for the needs of prisoners serving short sentences.
- Make use of new technologies or e-learning to overcome the lack of continuity for prisoners serving short sentences.
- Make use of short-term motivational activities such as music, drama and art courses.

Prisoners serving long-term or life sentences are often neglected when it comes to rehabilitation programmes. However, all prisoners must be given the opportunity to be rehabilitated, regardless of the length and nature of the sentence⁴³ – including those sentenced to death. It is important to note that any sentence may be commuted or reviewed, and all prisoners may be considered for pardons or amnesties.

International standards state that every prisoner should have the opportunity to be rehabilitated back into society. Rehabilitation is particularly important for long-term and life-sentenced prisoners who may find it especially hard to adjust to life outside the prison system. In cases where release or the possibility of obtaining work following release is unrealistic, prisons should consider and prioritise non-formal learning opportunities designed to promote personal development and increase self-confidence. All prisoners should be given the opportunity to work in prison.

Post-release barriers

In addition to the challenges women face in prison, many also encounter gender-specific barriers to their rehabilitation after release. These often reflect the situation of women in society more broadly, such as expectations of their role in society, low social and economic status, and the general lack of education and employment opportunities available to women in many countries.

Most women will have already faced gendered barriers to education, training and employment before coming to prison, and these barriers can persist after their release. Women prisoners often have poor self-esteem and low expectations, with many believing that it is not worth participating in rehabilitation programmes because they will never have the opportunity to use the skills or knowledge gained.

The role and status of women and girls in the family can also be a barrier to rehabilitation. Many women are the main caregivers for children and other family members, and their lack of financial independence means that they are often dependent on male relatives, including those who have abused them.

The ability to find permanent employment after release and escape from poverty is critical in preventing recidivism. However, women prisoners can encounter particular obstacles in finding secure employment after their release, due to the stigma of imprisonment.

Successful rehabilitation is also contingent on the presence of a safe, stable family and community environment and good post-release support. However, these are often not available to women when they leave prison. Imprisonment often leads to irreparable family breakdown, including separation/divorce,⁴⁴ and the loss of jobs and homes.⁴⁵ When women are imprisoned, even for short periods, their children often have to live with other relatives or go into alternative care. In these situations, it can sometimes be difficult to reunite families after release.

As they are often financially dependent on men, women are at a particularly high risk of leaving prison with no home to go to and no means of financial support. In such circumstances, it is easy for female offenders to fall back into crime. Many continue to suffer high levels of mental health problems and there is a high rate of self-harm and suicide amongst former female prisoners.⁴⁶

In many countries the crimes for which women are convicted are highly stigmatised, such as sex work.⁴⁷ This impacts on women, and on their future rehabilitation, both during imprisonment and after release. In most countries former female prisoners face greater stigmatisation than men regardless of the nature of their offence, and are more likely to be ostracised by their families and communities.

Women are sometimes imprisoned for having an abortion, for running away from home,⁴⁸ or for so-called 'moral crimes' such as adultery. In some countries, women who have been raped are convicted and imprisoned for having extramarital sex and are later ostracised by their families and communities.



A few weeks in prison are enough to lose your home, children and job and cause harm to mental health. Because women are often primary carers, when a mother is sent to prison, in nine out of 10 cases her children will have to leave their home to go into the care system or to live with relatives. ”

Chief Executive of UK charity Women in Prison



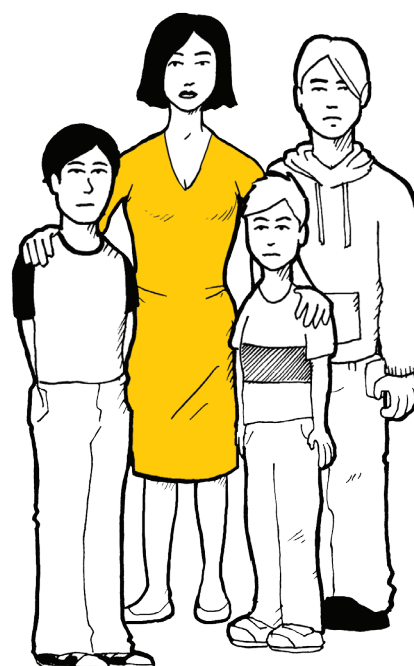
CONTEXT: Unemployment rate of former prisoners

Studies in the **US** demonstrate that former prisoners have significantly higher rates of unemployment compared to the general population. A recent analysis showed that in 2018, former prisoners were unemployed at a rate of over 27 per cent – which is higher than the total US unemployment rate during any historical period and nearly five times higher than the current unemployment rate for the general population.⁴⁹

The study established that former prisoners want to work, but face barriers to securing employment – particularly within the period immediately following release – including employers’ unwillingness to hire former prisoners. Significantly, the unemployment rate of former women prisoners was higher than for men, with the unemployment rate of black or Hispanic populations higher still.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE OF FORMER PRISONERS

	Women in prison	Men in prison
Hispanic	39%	26%
Black	40%	35%
White	23%	18%



PART 2

Guidance



Baseline for successful rehabilitation



Engagement and support

All prison rehabilitation programmes require the engagement and institutional support of relevant authorities to ensure short-term success and long-term sustainability. It is very important for NGOs and other community groups to be involved in rehabilitation projects, due to their expertise and because prisoners feel they can trust them. However, projects also need the support and financial backing of authorities and close coordination of all relevant actors in order to thrive.

Before developing new projects, prison authorities should have a good understanding of the profile of the prison population, the quality and impact of existing programmes (as well as any gaps), available resources, and actual market needs. This analysis will allow authorities to devise appropriate national strategies for rehabilitation and reintegration. They should also establish structures to oversee the implementation of such strategies.⁵⁰

Another important consideration is the effective monitoring and evaluation of prison rehabilitation programmes to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. Such efforts should be centrally organised and managed, and should, where possible, consider the impact of specific programmes on recidivism levels, the employment rates of former prisoners, and other indicators.⁵¹ Monitoring and evaluation of rehabilitation programmes need to be carried out in a gender-sensitive and gender-responsive way. Equally importantly, independent monitors should have access to information about rehabilitation programmes in order to check that they are being applied fairly and consistently and in accordance with international human rights standards.

Police officials and members of the judiciary also have a key role to play in rehabilitation. Experiences of police custody can impact the rehabilitation chances of offenders, whilst members of the judiciary can exercise a wide range of powers designed to reduce reoffending, including through their sentencing and parole eligibility decisions. All officials working in the criminal justice system should receive training on the importance of appropriate rehabilitation and non-custodial measures, and to address gender-specific needs.





PROMISING PRACTICE: Human rights auditing and action planning

The Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI) has – together with its correctional service partners internationally – developed a unique set of methodologies for increasing compliance with the Bangkok Rules and other relevant international standards, through internal human rights auditing and action planning.

A typical audit of a female prison will see a team of trained officers, with support from RWI advisors, visit the institution for a week to observe all aspects of prison conditions and routines, interview officers and other stakeholders, and conduct extensive reviews of available documentation. A comprehensive report is produced on compliance with the Nelson Mandela and Bangkok Rules, and the team will then remain for a second week to facilitate the development of detailed action plans, as well as sharing audit data with the prison administration to enable the development of national-level plans and policy directives.

These approaches were first applied by RWI in **Indonesia** and have since been adapted and intensified for use in **Kenya** and **Sierra Leone**. The approaches recognise that even small increases in compliance can have a major impact on the lives of prisoners and that meeting many standards requires little or no resources, as they are primarily related to policy, procedure, training, documentation and accountability. Repeat audits at pilot institutions have found

significant improvements in compliance with the Bangkok Rules, and methodologies are also now being further developed for use with offenders serving sentences in the community, where evidence suggests that rehabilitation programmes are most effective.

In 2017, the Sierra Leone Correctional Service – with technical support from RWI and the United Nations Development Programme – introduced pilot human rights audits and human rights action planning for the country's 19 correctional facilities (male and female). This included in-depth training on and familiarisation with the Nelson Mandela and Bangkok Rules, and with the audit tools developed by RWI. In the past two years, facility and deputy managers and officers made strides to implement the human rights action plans. This has resulted in improvements in file management, record keeping, separation of categories where possible, access to clean water and sanitation, improvement in diet, and improved contact with the outside world (access to newspapers, radio and television, phone calls, and visitation rights for children). Before the interventions, female prisoners had little to do, with no activities or vocational training available. However, following the audits and action planning, women have been able to participate in bakery production in male institutions (with full precautions taken for the separation of men and women), and the production of traditional cloth.

Management style and staffing

Rehabilitative principles should form the basis of the whole prison approach,⁵² and the best results are achieved when everyone is committed to these principles as an essential part of their duties, creating a prison-wide culture of rehabilitation. Such approaches also create more positive, safe and rewarding professional experiences for staff.

Rehabilitation is more likely to be successful if implemented from the first day of a prisoner's detention. With this in mind, rehabilitative principles should be at the forefront of all aspects of prison management and, for female prisoners, must be part of a broader gender-sensitive prison management approach. Whilst different approaches are suited to different local contexts and the needs of the prisoner population, there are some aspects of prison management that need to be in place before rehabilitation programmes can thrive.

Good relationships between prisoners and staff are critical to the success of rehabilitation programmes. Such relationships are best achieved through dynamic security approaches, through which staff and prisoners have proactive and frequent interactions, allowing staff to understand the rehabilitation needs of individual prisoners and any problems they may face.

Prison officers can be key players in prisoners' rehabilitation, encouraging them to participate in education and training activities and supporting them throughout. This can be especially important for female prisoners, who may suffer from low self-esteem and a lack of confidence in their own educational and vocational potential.

To play a positive role in this process, staff must be able to work in safe conditions, be well supported by their managers and have the opportunity and time to think creatively and engage with prisoners. They should be carefully selected and provided with appropriate and ongoing training, including in human rights and the concept of dynamic security.⁵³ Where possible, prison staff should also include a sufficient number of specialists such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, teachers and trade instructors.⁵⁴

The Bangkok Rules specify that capacity building for staff employed in women’s prisons should enable them to address the specific social reintegration needs of women prisoners, and that all staff assigned to working with women prisoners should receive training relating to the gender-specific needs and human rights of women prisoners.⁵⁵ Prison authorities should also ensure that there is an adequate staff-prisoner ratio and make particular efforts to hire a diverse range of employees, including sufficient female staff. Women prisoners should be supervised only by women staff members.⁵⁶



CONTEXT: Gender-sensitive management style

For the rehabilitation of female prisoners to be successful, there needs to be a recognition amongst prison management that women prisoners have different requirements to men and that these different needs must be reflected in the management ethos, with changes being made to management style, assessment and classification, programmes offered, healthcare, and the treatment of women with children. The following have been identified as some of the requisite ingredients for a gender-sensitive management style in women’s prisons:⁵⁷

- The recognition of the different needs of women.
- A capacity and willingness by prison staff to communicate openly with prisoners and use a non-authoritarian manner.
- Skills such as active listening and patience in explaining rules and expectations.
- Awareness of emotional dynamics, and the capacity to respond firmly and fairly.





PROMISING PRACTICE: Personal officers in Sweden

In **Sweden**, every prisoner has a personal officer assigned to them. This officer is a designated member of staff who the prisoner should turn to with any requests and problems about their prison sentence. The personal officer is aware of the prisoner’s history and their current situation, and is

responsible for supporting the prisoner in positive social endeavours. The professional relationship between personal officer and prisoner helps the efficient handling of prisoner requests and is central to enhancing and supporting positive social behaviours.



CONTEXT: Dynamic security approaches

A positive climate that encourages cooperation among prisoners and between prisoners and staff can help to improve safety and security in prisons and contributes to effective rehabilitation and preparation for release. Dynamic security approaches involve proactive and frequent interaction between prison staff and prisoners.

‘Dynamic security means that basic grade prison staff are trained and encouraged to develop good personal relationships with prisoners, to know and understand them

as individuals, to provide sympathetic help with personal problems and to engage in meaningful dialogues with them. Prisoners have their most frequent and continuing contacts with the basic grade staff. The nature of their daily interactions with this grade of staff greatly influences their behaviour and attitudes. Positive interactions tend to reduce destructive behaviour and attitudes and facilitate constructive work with prisoners.’⁵⁸



PROMISING PRACTICE: Model prison project in Thailand

In 2015, the Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ), in cooperation with the country’s Department of Corrections, established a country-wide initiative in **Thailand** called the Model Prison Project. This initiative aims to enhance prison staff’s understanding of international human rights standards and encourages prison management to carry out their policies and practices in line with the Bangkok Rules.

Prisons around the country are invited to join the project. They are provided with technical assistance and then assessed against specific criteria developed by the TIJ and the Department of Corrections and based on Penal Reform International’s (PRI) Index of Implementation on the Bangkok Rules.⁵⁹ The status of Model Prison is awarded to prisons that have demonstrated that they have successfully adopted a gender perspective.

There are nine sets of criteria that the prisons are assessed against for Model Prison status. These include standards of hygiene and

healthcare, safety and security measures, contact with the outside world and pre-release measures. The prisons are also assessed on the way they manage foreign national prisoners, those from minority and Indigenous groups, pre-trial detainees, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and mothers with children living with them in prison.⁶⁰

The TIJ provides direct support to prisons participating in the programme. This includes training on the management of women prisoners, advisory input and support from subject specialists, specific skills building for correctional staff, and opportunities to network with others working in the field of corrections.

There are currently 12 prisons in Thailand with the status of Model Prison – demonstrating that implementation of provisions of the Bangkok Rules is possible, despite common constraints such as overcrowding and limited financial resources.

Therapeutic and holistic approaches

The majority of prisoners – and women prisoners in particular – have multiple, overlapping needs and their successful rehabilitation is dependent on all of these needs being met. Rehabilitation programmes should address the root causes of criminal behaviour, including those that are specific to female prisoners. To achieve this, programmes must be integrated and holistic, taking into account economic, social, physical and psychological factors. Programmes that equip prisoners with practical skills whilst at the same time providing therapeutic support can be particularly beneficial.

Due to their backgrounds and the specific challenges they face in prison, women are particularly likely to benefit from counselling and psychosocial, cognitive and motivational programmes. Psychosocial approaches look at the combined influence that psychological factors and the surrounding social environment have on a person’s physical and mental wellness and their ability to function.

There are many different types of programmes that focus on changing the attitudes and behaviours of prisoners, which have been shown to have positive effects on recidivism. These include cognitive behavioural therapy – a talking therapy aimed at helping prisoners manage problems by changing the way they think and behave and by breaking problems down into smaller parts.

A high percentage of female prisoners are incarcerated for drug-related offences and many are dependent on substances. In addition, many women who enter prison have underlying mental health problems, often stemming from physical or sexual abuse. Many prisons do not have substance dependency or mental healthcare programmes in place and those that do exist are often inadequate.

If well managed, prisons can provide a safe and secure environment for women to reduce substance dependency, recover from abusive backgrounds, and receive any treatment, counselling and mental healthcare they need, which may not otherwise be available to them. Authorities should strive to expand the trauma-informed care available to female prisoners, taking into account their past experiences and their resulting coping mechanisms. Trauma-informed approaches can also be considered during the design of prison facilities. Holistic approaches can tackle other factors that lead to offending behaviour, including poverty and social status.

The Bangkok Rules are clear that prison health authorities should provide or facilitate specialised treatment programmes designed for women substance abusers, taking into account prior victimisation and the special needs of pregnant women and women with children, as well as their diverse cultural backgrounds.⁶¹ Where relevant programmes do not exist in prison, there is an increased duty on authorities to facilitate prisoners’ access to relevant programmes in the community.⁶² Studies have shown that women prisoners who participate in such programmes are more likely to be successfully rehabilitated.⁶³



PROMISING PRACTICE: Working in partnership in Georgia

In **Georgia**, PRI works with four local partner organisations to deliver rehabilitation and support services to women prisoners (and their children) who have experienced violence and discrimination. The project was established to empower and improve the situation of women offenders through better access to psychosocial, legal and medical support services and to rehabilitation and protection.

The range of interventions is designed to break the chain of violence and inequality experienced by women prisoners, which can begin prior to their offending and continue post-release. The project seeks to address the trauma and consequences of violence and provide holistic support so that the women are resilient and empowered to lead self-sufficient, law-abiding lives after their release.

This programme also aims to improve the situation of children of imprisoned mothers, including efforts to rebuild children's contact with their mothers and to help them access psychosocial, education, healthcare and other support services in the community. PRI has opened a day nursery at the women's prison in Tbilisi, where young children up to the age of three live with their mothers.

Additionally, the project seeks to improve the technical and management capacity of government institutions, employment agencies, the private sector and other agencies working with vulnerable women and children, and to build partnerships and coordination in the design, delivery and management of support schemes. This includes regular working group meetings to identify needs and foster cooperation between state and non-state actors working in the provision of rehabilitation services to women prisoners and former prisoners.

To date, the project has provided support services to over 600 beneficiaries, including 40 children of prisoners.

One of the partner organisations – the Women in Business Association (GAWB) – organises vocational training courses and business education for women prisoners and former prisoners, and, after the women have completed business education courses and prepared their own business plans, provides them with small grants for their own start-up businesses.

GAWB has also established a shelter to accommodate homeless former women prisoners, including women with young children, in order to provide them with a safe place to live until they can support themselves. The project also pays for medicine and medical services for project beneficiaries if state medical programmes do not cover the costs.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Therapeutic communities in Australia

Wandoo is a dedicated alcohol and drug rehabilitation prison for women in Perth and the first female prison in Western **Australia** to run an intense rehabilitation programme, known as a 'therapeutic community'. The facility can treat up to 77 selected minimum- and medium-security prisoners, who must demonstrate a desire to treat their addiction.

The focus of Wandoo is to offer a supportive environment where women can break the cycle of addiction and drug-related offending.

It aims to provide 'a safe, healthy, supportive and respectful space to recover and make positive, lasting changes'. Wandoo offers dedicated and intensive trauma-informed treatment within a therapeutic community. Women are supported via multi-disciplinary case management to reduce addiction, improve mental and physical health and reduce the chances of reoffending. Women at Wandoo are also offered transitional and post-release support for their ongoing rehabilitation.

Individual assessments, classification and allocation

Individual risk and needs assessments are a key component of prisoner rehabilitation and are essential for ensuring that prisoners are housed in facilities that are equipped to meet their education and training needs, taking into account multiple social, legal, healthcare and other rehabilitation considerations. They are also crucial in establishing the level of security required and to reduce the risks of bullying, violence, exploitation, suicide or self-harm. However, many assessment tools have been designed with male prisoners in mind and the needs of female prisoners have often been overlooked.

As the Nelson Mandela Rules make clear, successful rehabilitation requires individualisation of treatment and a flexible system of classifying prisoners in groups.⁶⁴ Rule 11 deals with the separate allocation of prisoners based on their sex, age, criminal record and the legal reason for their detention. Other principles outlined in the Rules also rely on good classification and assessment procedures, including those related to prisoner searches, allocation, the application of disciplinary measures and supervision requirements during family visits. The allocation of women prisoners in particular should take into account their caretaking responsibilities, their individual preferences and the availability of appropriate programmes and services.⁶⁵

Prisoner assessments should be comprised of three different considerations: the risk a prisoner poses, their individual needs, and sentence planning. The latter includes the activities (such as rehabilitation activities) that a prisoner should undertake during their sentence. To be effective, all assessments must be regularly reviewed and updated and the prisoner should be involved in the process.

The shortage of information on female-specific rehabilitation needs is closely linked to the availability and quality of individualised assessments. In many prison systems, assessments focus too heavily on the risk a prisoner poses, at the expense of factors such as mental health, previous abuse, family circumstances and educational ability. Female prisoners in particular are often assigned an unnecessarily high security level, which can severely compromise their rehabilitation prospects.

Sentence plans are the foundation of rehabilitation programmes and are designed to address the root causes of criminal activity. They can include training programmes as well as access to drug or alcohol dependency programmes, and can focus on issues such as personal relationships, family reconciliation and anger management. Rule 94 of the Nelson Mandela Rules calls for sentence plans to be compiled as soon as possible following a prisoner's admission. Validation of prior learning is also key to good assessments and sentence planning, as all too often prisoners are given tasks that do not provide them with new skills.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Gender-informed assessment and classification tools

Women's Risk Needs Assessment in the US

Recognising that women have very different pathways to prison than men and that traditional assessment tools are male-orientated, the Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA)⁶⁶ was developed in the US by the National Institute of Corrections in cooperation with the University of Cincinnati.

The WRNA comprises gender-responsive risk and needs assessment tools designed to respond to the specific needs of female offenders in criminal justice systems, taking into account their distinct biological, social and psychological attributes. They include a case file review, a semi-structured interview, a written survey and a case management treatment plan tailored to women.

The WRNA was developed following extensive literature searches and focus groups with correctional staff, treatment practitioners and female prisoners. It takes account of gendered pathways to crime and, in particular, any history of physical and sexual abuse, trauma, mental illness, self-medication and low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. The WRNA is now used in at least 24 states in the US, and is also being implemented in the Czech Republic, Namibia and Singapore.

Contact with the outside world

Contact with family, friends and community can be crucial for the rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners and can reduce the risk of recidivism.⁶⁷ As the main caregivers in most families, such contact can be particularly important for the rehabilitation of women prisoners.

In many cases, regular contact with family allows women to repair broken ties, reduces the risk of family breakdown resulting from detention, and allows women to participate in family decisions and discussions, including in relation to childcare. Separation from family, and particularly from children, can be particularly detrimental to the psychological wellbeing of women prisoners and impacts their future rehabilitation prospects.

Meaningful interactions with family, friends and the community also help prepare prisoners for life after prison, reduce the stigma of imprisonment, and motivate them to participate in rehabilitation programmes. Family visits close to the time of release are particularly important in helping prisoners and their families make post-release plans. However, many women in prison have little meaningful contact with their families. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that women prisoners are often ostracised by their families.



Where possible resettlement work should include helping the offender and his or her family maintain or rebuild relationships, an assessment of the support a family is able and willing to provide and, where appropriate, involvement of the family in plans for release. It is important that work on family relationships provided by the prison is integrated with work done by resettlement service providers.⁷⁰ ”

Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales (see Context below)

Where possible, prisoners should be held in prisons near their families and communities, as this aids their rehabilitation and allows for longer family visits, including the possibility of home visits. Allocation close to home also makes it easier for prison administrations to prepare prisoners for release. Rule 4 of the Bangkok Rules states that women prisoners should, where possible, be allocated to prisons close to their home or place of social rehabilitation.

However, due to the small numbers of female facilities in many countries, women are more likely to be located far from their families and the logistical difficulties and financial costs of prison visits can be prohibitive. As many children have to leave home when their mothers are imprisoned, it can also be very difficult for them to visit the prison and their caregivers may be reluctant to take them.

Contact with the outside world is particularly important for the rehabilitation of pregnant women and those living in prison with their children. Such contact can provide them with practical and emotional support and reduce their feelings of isolation.

Whilst families are key to the resettlement of many prisoners, it should also be noted that, in some cases, family members are part of the problem and may have directly contributed to criminalisation. As the Bangkok Rules make clear, ‘In view of women prisoners’ disproportionate experience of domestic violence, they shall be properly consulted as to who, including which family members, is allowed to visit them.’⁶⁸



CONTEXT: The role of family and friends in rehabilitation

A 2014 report by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons on resettlement provision for adult offenders in **England and Wales** confirmed the central importance of family and friends in the successful rehabilitation of prisoners. Research carried out in eight prisons, including two women’s prisons, found that

more than half of the research participants had returned home or moved in with family and friends on release. Those who had a job on release had mainly arranged this with the help of previous employers, family or friends.⁶⁹



Healthcare

The timely identification and appropriate treatment of health issues, including drug and alcohol dependency, mental health conditions and any history of previous abuse, can play a significant role in the successful rehabilitation of prisoners, particularly if complemented by post-release care and support.

When physical and mental healthcare needs are identified at an early stage of incarceration, prisoners can be allocated to facilities that can provide for their needs, including in relation to available healthcare services and medication, appropriate rehabilitation services, and work and training opportunities. Even where specialised support is not available, the identification of specific needs can help prison administrations tailor individualised treatment programmes.

If health issues are undiagnosed or untreated, or if there is no post-release care and support, former prisoners may find rehabilitation difficult and may struggle to successfully interact with others. They may also find it difficult to secure appropriate employment and housing after their release.

The amount of time prisoners can spend outside their cells is a crucial factor in health and rehabilitation. Participation in education and training should never be used by prison staff to justify restrictions on time spent outside the cell for other activities, including opportunities to exercise and participate in sports.

Women and girls in prison have particular healthcare and sanitary needs. Rules 6–18 of the Bangkok Rules provide detailed guidance on healthcare provision for these needs. Rule 48 also provides more detailed guidance on the medical and nutritional needs of pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and mothers with children in prison. In order to respond to the healthcare needs of female prisoners – a crucial factor in their rehabilitation – prison authorities must provide female-specific services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, and appropriate programmes and services should be available to those who have experienced violence, including domestic violence and sexual abuse.



Education, vocational training and work



Studies have confirmed that prisoners who receive education and vocational training during their imprisonment are less likely to reoffend and are more likely to find work than those who do not receive such opportunities.⁷¹

All programmes will work best if they are developed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including prisoners, former prisoners and communities. This includes consultations on existing programmes, and identifying problems and deficiencies as well as opportunities for future projects.

There is often a significant overlap between education, vocational training and work programmes in prisons. However, there are also distinct considerations for each type of programme. The following section summarises these considerations, with specific reference to female prisoners.

Education

For those who have previously missed out on educational opportunities, life in prison can provide them with the opportunity to learn basic literacy or numeracy or expand on their existing knowledge. Others can revisit subjects learned at school, gain new qualifications or learn life skills to help them after release.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education has reported that learning in prison is generally considered to have a positive impact on recidivism, reintegration and employment outcomes. However, the Special Rapporteur has also pointed out that prisoners face significant and complex educational challenges owing to a range of environmental, social, organisational and individual factors.⁷³

Specific barriers to education in prison include a lack of suitably qualified teachers who are willing to work in a prison environment, inflexible learning opportunities, negative attitudes towards mainstream education and a lack of interest and participation, including among female prisoners. As women generally have less economic independence, they also face more economic barriers to fee-paying higher education opportunities in prison. As women in prison are often the main caregivers for their children and other family members, they are likely, where possible, to choose paid prison work over education so that they can send money home.⁷⁴

Some prisoners find that their learning is interrupted when they are moved to another institution or as a result of security measures such as frequent lockdowns. Others have reported that lessons and exams are regularly cancelled due to a lack of teachers or exam invigilators.



Learning in prison through educational programmes is generally considered a tool of change, its value judged by its impact on recidivism, reintegration and, more specifically, employment outcomes upon release. Education is, however, much more than a tool for change. It is an imperative in its own right.⁷² ”

UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education

However, as has been demonstrated in many prison settings, these factors and the challenges they present are not insurmountable. For example, the introduction of modular courses that enable credits to be acquired can work well for prisoners serving short sentences, and can also protect prisoners from losing their educational attainment if their learning is disrupted. In some countries, the lack of teaching facilities and staff can also be overcome through the use of distance learning courses.⁷⁵

Other ways to increase interest in prison education programmes and address low levels of motivation among female prisoners is improved information and awareness raising about the opportunities available and the benefits of participation. For this to be successful, it is important that prison staff themselves have positive attitudes towards prison education and that they actively encourage prisoners to participate in the programmes.

It can also be helpful to use alternative teaching methods to those used in mainstream education and to consider non-formal and self-directed learning as a route into formal education or as a rehabilitation tool in itself. This might include teaching by prison guards, volunteers and prisoners themselves and through peer support groups. Studies have shown that whilst formal education programmes in prisons have had success in reducing recidivism, the introduction of informal learning can have additional benefits and longer-lasting effects, including improved self-confidence and motivation.⁷⁶

Education in prison can take many forms and, where possible, prisoners should be allowed to participate in education outside prison. Where education does take place in prison, it is beneficial to involve the outside community as much as possible.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Peer education programmes

A 2007 review of the effectiveness of interventions to address HIV in prisons⁷⁷ found that, based on the data and literature available, HIV education programmes in prisons were more likely to be effective if developed and delivered by peers.

Researchers have pointed out that peer education may be an effective intervention approach because '[i]nmate peer educators are more likely to have specific knowledge about risk behaviour occurring both inside and outside the prison. Peer education has the additional advantage of being cost-effective and, consequently, sustainable.

Inmate peer educators are always available to provide services as they live alongside the other inmates who are their educational target.⁷⁸

Peer educators can play a key role in educating other prisoners because they can tackle illegal or forbidden activities without fear of retribution and can speak openly to others. Their input is less likely to be viewed with suspicion by other prisoners and they are better placed to decide which educational strategies will work best in their prison. Peer-led education can also be of benefit to the educators themselves by improving their self-confidence and self-esteem.





PROMISING PRACTICE: Prison-university partnerships

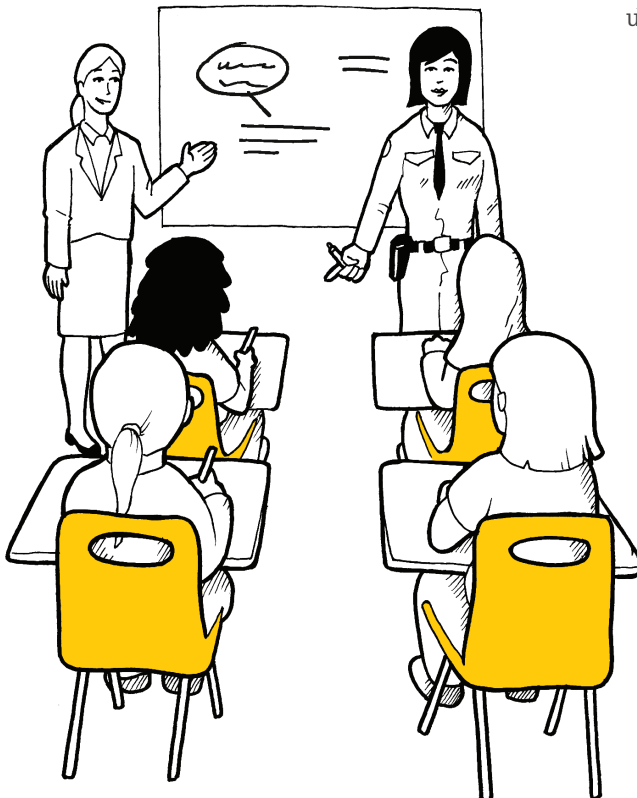
The increase in prison-university partnerships around the world has been hailed as an exciting developing trend in prisoner rehabilitation.⁷⁹ Such partnerships can be particularly useful in breaking down barriers to higher education for women in prison.

There are many types of potential partnership approaches between prisons and universities and these can be adapted to meet different needs and suit local contexts. They include, but are not limited to, student placements to mentor prisoners, academic reading groups in prisons, learning partnerships between prisoners and students, e-learning courses that allow prisoners to gain university credits, and programmes that allow prisoners to attend university on day release.

The African Prisons Project offers a formalised sponsorship programme enabling prisoners and prison staff to study law with the University of London's international programme. At the end of 2018 there were at least 50 people in prison in **Uganda** and **Kenya** studying for law degrees by correspondence and over 150 more had been trained as auxiliary paralegals. The programme is also supported by local university lecturers and law students in order to help students contextualise their knowledge.

The UNODC, in partnership with the University of **Panama**, has supported the establishment of the first university programme at the Women's Rehabilitation Centre (CEFERE), offering training in three different career paths.⁸⁰ The project enables women prisoners to obtain degrees for the first time. According to a news article published online by the government of Panama in February 2018, there were 43 regular students and 45 first-time students participating in the programme at CEFERE in 2018, and 14 women graduated in December 2016.⁸¹

Walls to Bridges (W2B)⁸² is an innovative educational programme that brings together imprisoned and non-imprisoned male and female students to study university-level courses in jails and prisons across **Canada**. By providing access to education for prisoners and through collaborative scholarly inquiry with university-based students, W2B classes offer opportunities to understand the complexities of criminalisation and punishment through lived experiences and intersectional analyses. An important principle of all W2B courses is that students from outside the correctional system are not 'mentoring', 'helping' or 'working with' imprisoned students. All participants in the class are peers, learning the content together through innovative, experiential and dialogical processes. Self-reflexivity is a key component of W2B classes. All students who successfully complete the course receive university or college credit.



Vocational training

Vocational training programmes in prisons should focus on the wider development of the individual. In addition to providing practical skills, good prison training and work programmes should also aim to give prisoners the information and skills they need to find a job after release. This includes general employment skills, enterprise and self-employment training, career guidance, job hunting skills and how to apply or interview for jobs. Women in prison are likely to benefit particularly from this type of programme as well as from programmes designed to build their self-confidence as potential employees.

Importantly, vocational training priorities must be in line with the reality of the labour market. For female prisoners, vocational skills training programmes should be chosen and designed with consideration for the types of jobs women are likely to be offered, but also with a view to breaking gender stereotypes and economic disparities in the job market.

The commentary to the Bangkok Rules contains a list of potential vocational training activities that may assist women in leading independent lives upon release, including administrative and computer skills, painting and decoration, managing income-generating community projects, and the use of microcredit facilities. While the list also includes childcare, cooking, hairdressing, dressmaking and embroidery, programmes should not be limited to activities traditionally considered as appropriate for women.⁸³

Importantly, prisoners should also have a choice as to the type of training programme they would like to join. They should be trained according to recognised national standards and receive accredited qualifications for their learning. Even if female prisoners are employed to do basic prison tasks within a prison, such as catering, cleaning or gardening, these could be part of accredited training programmes. The fact that qualifications were gained inside prison should not be mentioned on any certificate of learning.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Helping women build their economic freedom in Bolivia

As part of its Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration, the UNODC is working with the **Bolivian** prison administration and a local NGO, CECOPI, on an initiative to train female prisoners in the field of construction and related technical skills. The programme is designed to help the women acquire technical skills and strengthen their rights, self-esteem, entrepreneurial skills and decision-making capacities.

The project counters the gender stereotyping that leads to male prisoners receiving skills in more profitable areas, such as accounting and mechanics, and female prisoners in less lucrative industries, such as the production of handicrafts. The project is based on research into the demands of the job market in Bolivia and equips women prisoners with skills for jobs that are predicted to be among

the highest in demand in the coming years, and which will help women build their economic freedom.

The initiative is currently being rolled out with an initial group of 50 female prisoners, who are receiving training in a range of construction-related specialities, including building, metalwork, plumbing, pipefitting, carpentry and training to be electricians. In addition, 10 of the women will subsequently become trainers to teach the skills they have learned to other prisoners.

After release, the women will receive support in joining the National Association of Women Constructors, which helps its members promote their services, find work opportunities and develop their own business.⁸⁴



Training women prisoners is part of an integral process; not only are they receiving technical training, but they are also going to be empowered in exercising their rights, and upon release they can do better work and have a higher income, which will give them a higher quality of life. ”

Director of the Bolivian NGO CECOPI, which works with the UNODC on training female prisoners in construction (see Promising Practice on page 32)

Work

Prison work programmes can provide prisoners with valuable skills, confidence and improved self-esteem, and have been shown to reduce levels of reoffending.⁸⁵ There are many different models of prison work, including those run by prisons and state enterprises as well as individual or private-sector initiatives. All prison work programmes need to be carefully regulated and monitored to avoid corruption and exploitation of the workers. They should be based on research into actual market needs so that there are clear pathways to sustainable employment after release.

The Nelson Mandela Rules state that prison labour must not be afflictive in nature, that prisoners should not be held in slavery or servitude, and that no prisoner should be required to work for the personal or private benefit of any prison staff. The work provided should allow a prisoner to maintain or increase their ability to earn an honest living after release and, within limits, prisoners should also be able to choose the type of work they wish to perform.⁸⁶

Prison work⁸⁷ should be a way for prisoners to gain new skills and feel confident in the job market. Work opportunities should be determined on an individualised basis, taking into account the specific or additional obstacles that women in prison might face and the physical and mental fitness of a prisoner.⁸⁸ There should be ‘a system of equitable remuneration of the work of prisoners’ (Rule 103 (1) of the Nelson Mandela Rules), good occupational health and safety provision for working prisoners, and the organisation and methods of work should resemble as closely as possible those of free workers.⁸⁹ When private companies are involved in prison work, safeguards must be in place to ensure a free labour relationship.⁹⁰

As recommended by the International Labour Organization, the conditions of work offered to prisoners should be similar to work outside the prison, with comparable wages to those of free workers in the relevant industry. There should also be the possibility of prisoners continuing the same type of work upon release.⁹¹ In practice, prison work programmes are often designed to benefit the prison authorities or to keep prisoners occupied. Women in prison are often employed to carry out tasks that support the running of the prison, such as cooking, cleaning and repairing prison uniforms. Such tasks are not usually part of an organised rehabilitation programme and are often unwaged.

Employers can be reluctant to give jobs to former prisoners due to fear and stigma, or the assumption that they do not have the necessary skills. There are, however, many promising examples of programmes that connect prisoners and employers and provide prisoners with skills for specific jobs, as well as enterprises that are set up with the specific aim of employing former female prisoners. Some employers have started actively recruiting in prisons, with job fairs in prisons becoming increasingly common. There are also a growing number of innovative projects designed and led by prisoners, community organisations and local businesses, which support the training of prisoners and the employment of prisoners after release.

Prison work programmes that create links with potential employers and community organisations can also be particularly valuable for female prisoners and can provide a route to potential employment after release. There are many good examples of rehabilitation programmes that benefit the broader community as well as the prisoners themselves, helping to break down the stigma of imprisonment and improve community awareness of life in prison.



It's a double restoration — not just of the house but of the person. What does Indianapolis need? A solution to this housing crisis. What do women in prison need, more than anything? Ownership. Of our minds, of our bodies, and of our physical homes.⁹² ”

Vanessa Thompson, *Constructing Our Future*, Indiana Women's Prison (see Promising Practice below)



PROMISING PRACTICE: Investing in prisoners' futures

US: Constructing our Future programme

Constructing our Future is a community revitalisation programme dedicated to providing education, housing and employment to formerly incarcerated women in Indianapolis, **US**, whilst also mitigating the problem of abandoned homes in Indianapolis — thereby restoring communities and at the same time promoting successful integration of women.

The programme combines extensive training in life skills with education and practice in building trades and residential maintenance. Participating women learn multiple trades, and can obtain certified construction skills and carry out work to restore formerly abandoned homes. The aim is for women released from prison to be independent, law-abiding citizens who give back to the community and in the process reduce recidivism, rebuild communities and provide affordable housing.

The programme was conceived by a group of incarcerated women who had participated in a public policy class in prison, where they discussed life after prison and what they would need to be successful. In 2017 their programme was endorsed by the Indiana General Assembly as a re-entry programme for women leaving prison.

Criteria for participating include a willingness to complete training programmes, the ability to be a productive member of a team, and a commitment to the mission to rehabilitate abandoned houses.

UK: Bike repair training

In 2017, Halfords — a **UK** retailer of car parts, bicycles and other equipment — launched a cycle mechanic training facility at Drake Hall prison for women prisoners who want to train as bike mechanics. The project aims to increase the number of female bike mechanics in a profession that is traditionally male-dominated.

The women are supported by Halfords workers and, during their training, they work on reconditioned bikes that are then donated to primary schools in disadvantaged areas of the country. The company has since hired former female prisoners who signed up to the training scheme while serving their sentences.

Algeria: Microcredit schemes

Since a prison reform strategy was adopted in **Algeria** in 2006 for the reintegration of prisoners and the prevention of recidivism, over 7,850 former prisoners have benefitted from employment assistance schemes.⁹³ Algerian prison authorities have agreements with several microcredit agencies to help former prisoners set up their own businesses after release.





We believe that projects like Drake Hall are a real win-win for businesses and local communities alike – the more productive people are whilst in prison, the more they can learn and the better their chances of succeeding once they leave. We're not just talking about prisoners, we're talking about people who have a huge amount of potential and skills, and above all, it's about changing people's lives and giving them a second chance. ”

Halfords spokesperson (see Promising Practice on page 34)



PROMISING PRACTICE: Therapeutic and community-oriented programmes

There are an increasing number of innovative prison programmes in which prisoners participate in work schemes designed to benefit their local community or which are driven by environmental and sustainability principles. There has also been a recent growth in projects that combine work and vocational training with therapeutic approaches that are of direct benefit to prisoners.

In Auckland Regional Women's Corrections facility, **New Zealand**, prisoners learn practical beekeeping (apiculture) whilst also studying for a certificate in the subject. The course provides participants with highly sought-after skills for employment in a commercial beekeeping enterprise or for starting their own business – or simply for pursuing beekeeping as a hobby after release. The honey produced is either used in the prison, gifted to prison visitors or donated to local charities.

Since the programme was established in 2016, a total of 17 women have completed the one-year programme, with some graduating with a certificate in apiculture. Some of the women who graduate from the programme go on to mentor others.

In Adelaide Women's Prison in **Australia**, the Greyhound Adoption Programme (GAP) allows prisoners to train retired greyhounds to be pets and make the transition from racing careers to domesticated life. The programme gives women in custody an opportunity to learn new skills and turn their lives around, so that they can contribute to society in a meaningful way upon their release.

Prison staff work in partnership with the South Australia Greyhound Association to coordinate and deliver the programme. Trainers attend the prison four days a week and teach the women skills in areas of dog care such as first aid, grooming, diet, interacting with people, walking on a lead and daily exercise. One hundred and thirty former racing greyhounds have been retrained since the programme was established in 2015.

The greyhounds are a valuable addition to the prison environment and have proved to be a positive point of connection between prisoners and staff. Prisoners who have fostered a dog have noted how the animals have improved their mental health and taught them about responsibility. The programme has been such a success that it was expanded to Mobilong men's prison in 2018.



It's a positive interaction, and the pride and dignity that comes with it is worth its weight in gold. ”

Australian Correctional Services Minister speaking about the Greyhound Adoption Programme (see Promising Practice above)

Preparation for release and post-release support



Re-entry into society can be distressing for prisoners and many suffer from depression or anxiety after their release. For rehabilitation and social reintegration to be successful, prison systems should focus from an early stage on preparing prisoners for release, by building confidence, self-esteem and independence.

The Nelson Mandela Rules stipulate that before the completion of a sentence, necessary steps should be taken to ensure a gradual return to life in society for the prisoner. The Rules also point out that the duty of society does not end with a prisoner's release, noting that there should be governmental or private agencies 'capable of lending the released prisoner efficient aftercare directed towards the lessening of prejudice against him or her and towards his or her social rehabilitation'.⁹⁴

The Bangkok Rules state that '[a]dditional support following release shall be provided to released women prisoners who need psychological, medical, legal and practical help to ensure their successful social reintegration, in cooperation with services in the community'.⁹⁵

The problems women face after release from prison tend to be very different from those that men face, particularly in relation to their health, employment opportunities, housing and primary care responsibilities. Many women return to the same abusive situations that led them to prison.

Good rehabilitation and pre-release schemes take these factors into account, providing prisoners with the practical skills and tools they need to adapt to life after prison. There are many examples of such programmes, with the most successful incorporating both emotional and practical support and advice.

In-prison programmes should help female prisoners prepare to adapt to life in the community by teaching them life and relationship skills and how to deal with situations that may arise. This could include problem solving, communication, self-assertiveness, anger management and conflict resolution. Programmes that educate women on their rights are also particularly important. Programmes that are linked to community initiatives can be particularly beneficial as they can provide continuity of support post-release.



As women prisoners are less likely to have been in mainstream employment and more likely to have been financially dependent on male relatives, they are also likely to benefit particularly from jobs skills training, financial management and support with securing housing.

Whilst rehabilitation programmes should be integrated throughout the term of imprisonment, the weeks immediately before and after release from prison can be particularly important in determining whether rehabilitation will be successful. Prisoners should be provided with practical information to help them prepare for release, including information about local public transportation and support services available in the community. Women prisoners should have the opportunity to discuss life after prison, including their fears, expectations and any specific support services they may need.

As they are usually the main caregivers in families, women will benefit from extra contact with their family as their release date approaches, including pre-release home leave schemes. Such schemes help boost self-confidence and allow women to reconnect with their families, including their children. Temporary release schemes also allow prisoners to put some practical measures in place in preparation for leaving prison, including the possibility of contacting prospective employers, getting on-the-job training and finding accommodation.

If temporary home release is not possible, authorities can also increase a prisoner's contact with family by allowing them extra visits and phone and/or Skype calls. Some prisons offer family visiting spaces where a prisoner's family members can stay with them overnight.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Video calls in Thailand

In October 2018, the Department of Corrections of **Thailand** initiated an alternative means of communication with family via mobile phone video calls. This was initially piloted in five pilot prisons and is now in place in most institutions in the country.

Family members are allowed one call a month to pre-release prisoners with less than one year to serve. It greatly benefits female prisoners, especially those who are imprisoned far away from home and who have young children. The project also reduces the burden on families who do not have the time and money to visit in person.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Community engagement in Singapore

The Yellow Ribbon Project in **Singapore**⁹⁶ is based on the premise that prisoner rehabilitation requires broader community engagement. The project seeks to engage the community to help former prisoners find employment and housing, learn new skills and feel welcomed. The project aims to generate greater awareness of the need for second chances and inspire more people to accept former prisoners into their lives.

The project is spearheaded by the Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-Offenders (CARE) Network, which involves public, private and

non-governmental bodies working together to ensure seamless care between prisons and communities and to develop innovative rehabilitative initiatives.

The project features regular job fairs, during which prisoners can meet with potential employers and undertake job interviews. Ahead of the fair, prisoners are provided with training on basic interview techniques and resume writing skills and are given an update on the availability of career opportunities. Prisoners who secure employment during the job fair are also provided with post-release support, including financial assistance, accommodation and counselling.

For rehabilitation to be successful, it is equally important that families and communities are well prepared for the release of prisoners. This applies to all prisoners but can be particularly helpful for women due to the stigma they face, the additional barriers they encounter upon release, and their roles as mothers.

Local NGOs, community leaders, local authorities and former prisoners are well placed to work with families and communities to prepare them, both practically and emotionally, for a prisoner's return. Public perceptions and media representations of prisoners and prison life can also influence how communities react to released prisoners. Prison authorities themselves can play a key role in improving the way prisoners are represented to society.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Working with communities in Malawi

The Centre for Human Rights Education, Advice and Assistance (CHREAA)⁹⁷ in **Malawi** is an NGO that was set up in 2002 to promote and protect human rights by assisting vulnerable and marginalised people in Malawi to access justice through advocacy, legal advice and assistance.

The Centre has several ongoing projects, including the decriminalisation of vagrancy laws, the promotion and protection of the rights of sex workers, a bail project that aims to equip people to apply for bail even if they don't have a lawyer, and paralegal services for victims of sexual abuse. CHREAA also provides psychosocial counselling and

support services for prisoners, including assessments to ensure that prisoners with mental health problems are moved to appropriate institutions for care and treatment, and psychosocial services to help prepare prisoners for release.

In parallel to this, CHREAA works with families and community leaders in the months before the release of the prisoner to help prepare them for the prisoner's return. CHREAA representatives then carry out follow-up visits to check how the former prisoners, families and communities are coping.

Post-release support is one of the most crucial aspects of successful reintegration, linking former prisoners with potential work opportunities and providing them with appropriate services in the community, such as mental healthcare, counselling and substance abuse programmes. Any gaps or deficiencies in the care and support available to prisoners after release can contribute to reoffending.

There are many models of post-release support. These include 'halfway houses', which are places of residence aimed at providing prisoners with the necessary skills to reintegrate into society and to support and care for themselves. Parole is a form of conditional, supervised and supported release from prison which allows prisoners to return to the community before their sentence has expired. Such schemes act as an intermediate stage between prison and independent living in the community.

There are also a number of schemes, often run by NGOs, that provide practical support and small loans to released prisoners and their families. This may include help with reuniting families, housing, or employment opportunities.

Peer mentoring programmes can provide support so that former prisoners can continue education, training and employment on release. This can also be provided by former prisoners who have successfully reintegrated after leaving prison.



When a parent is imprisoned, the dynamics of families change. The remaining parent faces additional pressure to both earn an income and care for their children emotionally. Children with a care-giver in prison are likely to drop out of school. The effect of this increased family stress ranges from emotional distance between children and their parents to actual family separation in more serious cases. ”

Billy Gorter, Director of This Life Cambodia (see Promising Practice on page 39)



PROMISING PRACTICE: Peer health mentoring in Canada

The Unlocking the Gates Peer Health Mentoring Programme⁹⁸ in British Columbia, **Canada**, helps female prisoners in the first few days after their release, with peer mentors helping the women navigate life after prison – such as meeting them at the prison gate and helping them to get to appointments, find housing or enter treatment programmes. The programme works with community agencies inside the prison in order to connect with women

during pre-release planning, and offers systematic peer support and engagement during the immediate days following release.

The project was designed after women told researchers that the first few days of transition were particularly hard, because they have immediate unmet health and social needs that can be overwhelming. The mentors are themselves former prisoners, some of whom went through the mentoring programme after their release.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Providing pre- and post-release support in Cambodia

The organisation This Life Cambodia provides holistic case management to families in conflict with the law in **Cambodia**, with the goal of supporting vulnerable families at risk of separation. Women with children are a priority group.

Under the project named This Life in Family, the organisation provides income-generation support for families with a primary caregiver in conflict with the law. It also helps prisoners maintain regular contact with their families through family tracing services, prison visits, and supporting children to remain in appropriate family care. In addition, the organisation supports access to legal assistance and provides post-release planning and support.

This Life in Family aims to bolster the resilience and capacity of families, especially during the vital stages of reintegrating a primary caregiver back into their community upon release from prison, and to enable the family to become self-supporting through income-generating activities. The project is community driven and was identified as a priority by local communities.

Between 2016 and 2018 the project supported 86 families with children, and 28 primary caregivers were supported with income-generation activities in preparation for their rehabilitation and reintegration on release from prison.





PROMISING PRACTICE: Erasing criminal records in Costa Rica

Legislative reform in 2017 in **Costa Rica** permitted courts to erase criminal records. The law outlines criteria for the court to take into account, which include the length of the sentence, the offence committed and, when relevant, the ‘situation of vulnerability’ of the offender. The law is applicable for people imprisoned for minor offences (carrying a penalty of five years’ imprisonment or less) who have served their sentence. The offender must have been in a situation of vulnerability (such as poverty, social exclusion and discrimination) at the time that the offence was committed.

While the reform does not specifically target women, they are likely to benefit as the majority of non-violent female offenders are imprisoned for property crimes or small-scale drug-related offences, often committed in a context of vulnerability and poverty. In the past, these women struggled to gain employment because of their criminal record, despite having relevant work experience and skills; this in turn perpetuated cycles of poverty and recidivism.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Employment for released prisoners in Thailand

The Lila Thai Massage Ex-Inmate Employment and Skill Development Centre, set up in Chiang Mai, **Thailand**, in 2014, offers employment upon release for graduates from the Chiang Mai women prison’s massage training programme.

The women earn the equivalent of USD\$950 per month, which is more than twice the average monthly income in Thailand (about USD\$450). The Centre, in response to the increasing demand, has now expanded its service to cover six locations in the city of Chiang Mai.

Rehabilitation programmes for specific groups



Whilst women have different rehabilitation needs from men and face gender-specific challenges, they also have personal characteristics and situational circumstances that impact their rehabilitation requirements. These can often overlap, causing multiple needs and challenges.

It is also important for prisons to offer rehabilitation programmes that reflect the diversity of the prison population in a country, taking into account particular groups of prisoners. The availability of specific programmes should therefore be periodically reviewed to ensure it reflects any significant changes in the prison population profile, such as an increase in the numbers of foreign prisoners or older prisoners. The section below identifies some groups of female prisoners with specific needs and provides suggestions as to how authorities can provide them with appropriate support.

Girls

According to a report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, whilst most children return to their community after detention, over two-thirds do not return to school upon release.⁹⁹

There are many possible reasons for this. Firstly, many children who come into conflict with the law have already dropped out of formal education or have never attended school. The percentage of girl prisoners in this category is particularly high, given the barriers to girls' education and the reasons girls come into conflict with the law. Detained children also present a much higher rate of learning disabilities than other children.¹⁰⁰

In most countries, the number of girls in prison is very low and the opportunities available to them are extremely limited. All too often authorities have no time, resources or expertise to cater for this group. Because of their small numbers, girls are often held together with adult female prisoners with no access to age-appropriate programmes or activities.

Girls in prison often come from particularly difficult backgrounds, which may include family breakdown, violence and abuse, and many will have experienced significant barriers to education. Their successful rehabilitation will also depend on the situation they will be released into.



I studied up to grade six in primary school but I was often absent and I don't know how to read very well. I don't have any skills. I used to work as a maid to support my family. My salary was very low and the work was exhausting. I am happy to attend literacy class here, to be back to school, it reminds me of my childhood. It gives me courage to continue my studies once released. During two hours every day in the classroom, I forget that I am a prisoner. I feel like I am a normal girl.¹⁰¹ ”

A 15-year-old girl studying literacy in Kampot prison, Cambodia, with the support of SIPAR, a French NGO

Prisons can, however, provide imprisoned children with educational and training opportunities that they would not normally have access to, and a chance to turn their lives around. There are different models of education for children in prison. In some countries, children can attend mainstream schools during the day. In others, there are specific in-prison education courses. In all cases the curriculum and standard of education should mirror that in the community and should be freely available to all.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Supporting children in detention in Spain

The organisation Fundación Diagrama¹⁰² manages 22 detention centres in **Spain**, with a total capacity for 815 young people, supporting and helping them reintegrate into their families and communities. Young people under the care of the detention centres receive individual attention in accordance with their age, sex, maturity, needs and social capacities; their care takes into account the best interests of the child and is in line with children's rights, such as the right to education, training, health, religious assistance, family life, information and privacy. Young people also participate in specific programmes focusing on offending behaviour.

Each young person has an individualised plan drafted by a multidisciplinary team formed of various professionals (such as educators, psychologists, social workers and teachers). These professionals are trained to carry out appropriate interventions with young people, which also take into consideration the variables regarding gender identity. The young person also participates in the group meetings in which their plan is developed, ensuring that their opinions are taken into account. The plan is regularly monitored and evaluated in order to allow for adjustments in accordance with their development and needs. Young people are also given responsibility for their own progress and they can discuss their rehabilitation, problems or concerns with the team. This process involves the engagement of their families where appropriate.

Pregnancy and women with children in prison

Pregnant women and women with children living with them in prison can face particular challenges when it comes to rehabilitation. Pregnant women, mothers and their children have specific healthcare and dietary requirements that are often not adequately met in prisons, and mental wellbeing is of particular concern. Contact with friends, families and communities can be especially important for these women, not only to reduce their isolation but also to enable them to prepare for release, including in relation to practical childcare and support needs.



In prison, pregnant women and women with children living with them are often excluded from rehabilitation programmes. Sometimes authorities assume they would not want to participate in education and vocational training, and often there are no alternative childcare arrangements available that would allow them to do so.

Rule 42 (2) of the Bangkok Rules specifies that the regime of prisons should be ‘flexible enough to respond to the needs of pregnant women, nursing mothers and women with children. Childcare facilities or arrangements shall be provided in prisons in order to enable women prisoners to participate in prison activities.’ Rule 42 (3) further notes that ‘[p]articular efforts shall be made to provide appropriate programmes for pregnant women, nursing mothers and women with children in prison’.

Holistic rehabilitation programmes are particularly important for pregnant women and women with children in prison. Many will leave prison with little or no family support and their childcare responsibilities may make it difficult for them to undertake additional training or find employment and suitable housing. Women leaving prison with their children are also likely to need help dealing with the physical and psychological impact of prison on their children, and in supporting them in adapting to life in the community.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Prenatal yoga in prison in the US

The Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW), in collaboration with the organisations Yoga Behind Bars¹⁰³ and Birth Beyond Bars,¹⁰⁴ co-organised a three-day programme in the **US** on trauma-informed pre-natal yoga for pregnant and post-partum prisoners. This programme provided a safe space for them to share their feelings of isolation, distress and depression and to create a ‘community of caring’.¹⁰⁵

The trained facilitators used this platform to validate and honour people’s experiences.

Those involved in the programme shared information about pregnancy, birth and post-partum needs and learned from each other. It helped them realise that even though they were in prison, they still had choices.



I am not alone. What I am experiencing is a normal part of being a new parent. ”

Participant in the Yoga Behind Bars programme (see Promising Practice above)

Foreign national prisoners

The term foreign national prisoners refers to prisoners who do not carry the passport of the country in which they are imprisoned. They may have lived in the country for a long time or may have been arrested soon after arrival.¹⁰⁶

As a minority group, foreign national prisoners face particular challenges when it comes to rehabilitation. Language is one of the most obvious barriers, not only in terms of the provision of education and training but also because without a common language, staff will not be able to recognise individual needs and problems. It can also be very difficult for prison administrations to establish the personal and educational background of foreign prisoners and to understand their likely situation on release, with many facing deportation from the country of detention.

As a result, foreign national prisoners are often excluded from regular rehabilitation programmes and prisons are unable to provide for their needs, including practical assistance to prepare for release. Depending on their country of detention, some may receive support from their embassies or consular officials, but many will not have access to this type of support.

The rehabilitation needs of foreign female prisoners merit particular attention. Many are in prison for drug trafficking and are serving very long sentences. A large proportion of them are mothers and are particularly affected by the separation from, and lack of contact with, their children. Many come from socially and economically marginalised communities. Female migrant workers and trafficked women are particularly vulnerable in prison settings.

Any rehabilitation programmes for foreign national prisoners need to take into account their individual situations, including the reason they were in the country of detention. For example, those who were arrested for drug smuggling upon entry to the country will have very different needs from women who were long-term residents or women who were living in the country legally as migrant workers.

Other ways to support foreign national prisoners can include consultations with community representatives of foreign nationals, basic language courses and the availability of foreign-language books, and the use of e-learning courses for distance education. Authorities should also consider offering foreign national prisoners activities such as art, sport and music, which require less use of verbal communication.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Distance learning for foreign national prisoners

FORINER¹⁰⁷ was a two-year pilot project funded by the European Commission. It provided foreign national prisoners from EU countries with access to education offered by their home country, while they were imprisoned in a foreign European country. Research had found that there were only limited or no educational materials available for foreign EU national prisoners, and that the financial resources to offer foreign prisoners education were too limited.

During the project 36 students, including five women, enrolled on an educational course offered by their home country. An evaluation of the project found that the majority of students thought that participation in the courses would reduce the likelihood of recidivism and make it easier for them to find a job after prison. More than half the students indicated that they hoped participation in the course would improve their relationship with their family and friends.

Ethnic and racial minorities and Indigenous prisoners

The Bangkok Rules state that prison authorities must recognise that women prisoners from different religious and cultural backgrounds have distinctive needs and may face multiple forms of discrimination. Accordingly, prison authorities should provide comprehensive programmes and services that address these needs, in consultation with women prisoners themselves. Pre- and post-release services should also be appropriate and available to these groups of prisoners.¹⁰⁸

Ethnic, racial minority and Indigenous prisoners are often overrepresented in prison systems and are particularly likely to have multiple needs due to their social and economic marginalisation. Many are drug and alcohol dependent. Indigenous female prisoners are statistically more likely to have been victims of domestic violence and are at particular risk of stigma and ostracisation from their communities.

When they are released from prison, these groups may face particular barriers to rehabilitation and existing support services may not take into account their specific cultural needs. They are also likely to face discrimination when seeking housing, employment and social support.



I want to do something here. I don't want to waste my time. When I go back out, at least I have something that can help me in the future to start a new life. You have the chance to do something positive with your life. All people make mistakes, and from these mistakes you can learn. I now have the chance to start something that is positive. When I go out it can help me to get a job. ”

Student who participated in the FORINER project (see Promising Practice above)



CONTEXT: Minority groups

A 2017 report found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women comprise 34 per cent of women behind bars in **Australia** but only two per cent of the adult female Australian population.

The report also found that 'the overwhelming majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in prison are survivors of physical and sexual violence. Many also struggle with housing insecurity, poverty, mental illness, disability and the effects of trauma. These factors intersect with, and compound the impact of, oppressive and discriminatory laws, policies and practices, both past and present. Too often, the impact of the justice system is

to punish and entrench disadvantage, rather than promoting healing, support and rehabilitation.'¹⁰⁹

There are many steps that prison authorities can take to meet the particular rehabilitation needs of ethnic and racial minorities and Indigenous prisoners. These can include employing a representative number of staff from different backgrounds and training all staff in cultural sensitivity. Authorities can also consult with community representatives to understand how best to address the problems and barriers faced by their members within the criminal justice system and society as a whole.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Indigenous prisons for women in Canada

The Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge (OOHL) is a multi-level security facility for women in **Canada** located on Nekaneet First Nation land. It was opened in 1985 as Canada's first healing lodge for women offenders. It provides a unique environment where minimum- and medium-security offenders can work towards changing their lives through the educational, vocational, correctional and social programmes available to them in a culturally responsive setting. The practices, traditions, culture and values of the Nekaneet are taught to the residents. The OOHL represents a culturally and gender-informed option for federally incarcerated Indigenous women, or those who wish to follow a traditional healing path.

Buffalo Sage Wellness House (BSWH) is another Indigenous healing lodge for women in Canada. It is a minimum- to medium-security facility with 28 beds, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous

prisoners who present a low risk of flight or recidivism can apply to transfer to. Women living at the lodge can have supervised day trips, day parole and full parole. The centre is run by an Indigenous community that is responsible for implementing federal prison rules. The facility also provides programmes that focus on the root causes of offending and on managing past trauma. The effective operation of BSWH relies on the belief that Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders who follow the Aboriginal culture require specific programmes that address their social, educational, emotional, physical and spiritual needs in a culturally sensitive way. BSWH develops appropriate programmes to assist women offenders in recognising their full potential for reintegration back into the community, and provides high-quality support and supervision for offenders by ensuring the protection of society, offenders and their communities.

Prisoners with mental healthcare needs

A disproportionately large number of prisoners, and particularly female prisoners, have mental health conditions. They are a particularly vulnerable group and have complex rehabilitation needs, including in relation to the healthcare they receive. Prisoners with mental health conditions are vulnerable to abuse in prisons and the discrimination and stigmatisation they encounter in the community can be magnified in prison settings.

As with all prisoners, the rehabilitation of prisoners with mental healthcare needs depends on individualised assessments and adequate health screening and monitoring. However, there are many prisons around the world that are not equipped to carry out such assessments or provide appropriate mental healthcare. If prisons do not have qualified mental health professionals, then prison staff as well as other healthcare professionals should be trained to identify signs of emotional or psychological distress and know how to respond.¹¹⁰

Good social reintegration planning is crucial for prisoners with mental health conditions as they are likely to face particular difficulties finding employment and housing after their release, and their conditions are likely to deteriorate if they do not receive continuity of care. It is best if prison and community mental health services cooperate closely to ensure appropriate measures are in place post-release.

Prisoners with physical disabilities

The difficulties that people with physical disabilities face in their communities are magnified in a prison environment. They need to be allocated to suitable accommodation, including in relation to their physical environment and the availability of appropriate healthcare services. The Nelson Mandela Rules are clear that prison administrations must make all reasonable accommodation and adjustments to ensure that prisoners with physical disabilities have full and effective access to prison life on an equitable basis.¹¹¹

Prisoners with disabilities should be able to participate in rehabilitation activities and services. Where existing services are not accessible to them, authorities should ensure that there are alternative measures available. For example, information and materials should be available in alternative formats such as Braille or audio. Good reintegration planning is particularly important, and prison authorities should coordinate with community organisations to help prepare prisoners with disabilities for release and to ensure continuity of care.

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex prisoners

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex prisoners are vulnerable to discrimination and abuse in prisons, including violence and sexual abuse. Prisoners are often targeted for sexual abuse because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.¹¹² For example, one study in the US showed that, in three prisons, a quarter of female prisoners who were raped were bisexual or lesbian.¹¹³ Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex prisoners are also more likely to suffer from HIV/AIDS, problems associated with drug use, and other health conditions, including mental ill-health. Lesbian or bisexual female prisoners also risk being sanctioned for open displays of affection. Transgender women may have particular healthcare needs that are not catered for, including access to hormonal treatment. They are also at risk of being placed in solitary confinement as a 'protective measure'.

Many lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex prisoners have been ostracised from their families. Others find that their partners are not permitted to visit them. This lack of contact with families and partners, combined with the isolation they often encounter in prison, can have a negative impact on mental health and reintegration prospects.



The lack of family support available to many lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex prisoners and the paucity of community services available to these groups in many countries can also make their transition out of prison particularly difficult.

In addition, discrimination and stigma can make it hard for lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex former prisoners to find housing and employment. Prison authorities should consult with community organisations where possible, in order to gain a better understanding of the rehabilitation needs of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex prisoners.¹¹⁴



PROMISING PRACTICE: Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in Thai prisons

In **Thailand** the concept of gender and the terms that define sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) are very fluid. Prison authorities have acknowledged the high numbers of prisoners with diverse SOGIESC in Thai male prisons¹¹⁵ and have taken steps to provide appropriate care and facilities for them, including in relation to rehabilitation opportunities. Recognising the complexities of allocating and separating prisoners with diverse SOGIESC, authorities have also sought to understand their particular needs and respond appropriately.

One example of this is Chanthaburi Provincial Prison. With the aim of promoting the prisoners' talents to the community, the prison organised a talent show called 'the Chan Star', which invited prisoners to sing,

dance and act. Among the contestants were 'ladyboys', who put on drag-style performances to showcase their artistic talents. Clothing and makeup were provided to allow them to fully express themselves.

Because the contest was open to the public – with many business owners from the local entertainment industry attending – some of the contestants secured jobs as in-house performers after their release. The Chanthaburi Provincial Prison is also in the process of building a community recreational centre where different performances can be held daily. The aim is to create an outlet for prisoners with artistic talents to express themselves in a way that suits their preferred identity, as well as to increase public engagement and acceptance.

Older prisoners

In many countries around the world, the number of older people in prison is growing fast.¹¹⁶ Despite this, most prison systems are not set up to cater for their needs. Most prisoner programmes and services are designed with younger prisoners in mind and many lack the resources to care for the needs of older prisoners.

Elderly prisoners might have specific mental healthcare needs, including those related to dementia, and older women prisoners may suffer from low mood, anxiety and feelings of depression as a result of the menopause. Elderly women also have an increased risk of depression, which can be linked to bereavement or problems associated with growing old, including physical illnesses. Some research indicates that older female prisoners are more likely than older male prisoners to report serious health problems such as cardiac, degenerative and respiratory illnesses.¹¹⁷

Vocational training and work programmes in prison may not be relevant to most older prisoners, because many will not be looking for employment after release. Additionally, they may struggle to participate in recreational activities due to ill-health and mobility problems and they also have different needs in terms of therapy and counselling. Some prison staff view older prisoners as beyond rehabilitation and consider that it is not worth spending time helping them prepare for life after prison. Older prisoners also have specific needs in terms of preparation for release, particularly in countries where there is a lack of community support available to them. Prison programmes should be adapted to the individual needs and circumstances of older prisoners, including age- and health-related needs and length of sentence. Prison authorities can modify existing programmes to enable older prisoners to participate. Special programmes for older prisoners can also be arranged without significant additional resources.

10 key principles

for gender-sensitive rehabilitation programmes

The principles below provide a framework for the successful design and implementation of rehabilitation programmes for female prisoners.¹¹⁸ They address the points raised in this guide and reflect the foundations of the promising practice examples cited. These key principles can be used as a basis for developing new programmes and improving existing ones.

01 Part of a broader strategy

Rehabilitative principles are embedded in relevant laws, policies and procedures. Programmes are based on a national strategy for rehabilitation and are fully supported by politicians and policymakers.

Community-based alternatives to imprisonment are implemented wherever appropriate and possible, particularly for pregnant women and mothers.

Adequate resources, including financial resources, equipment and staff, are allocated for rehabilitation programmes to ensure long-term sustainability.

02 Community and prisoner driven

Programmes are based on consultations with prisoners, former prisoners and communities about rehabilitation needs, taking into account their ideas for improving existing programmes or developing new ones.

Training, work and education programmes delivered by the prison system are supplemented by peer education programmes where possible.

Education opportunities reflect the education provided in the community. Where possible, prisoners are able to participate in educational and training opportunities in the community or in collaboration with community agencies.

Where applicable and appropriate, programmes include family and peers, to ensure a smooth transition from prison to the community.

03 Supported by staff and managers

Prison staff are carefully selected and provided with appropriate and ongoing training, which enables them to address the special rehabilitation needs of women and girls.

Prison staff actively encourage and support women and girls to participate in prison programmes.

Staff are well supported by their managers and have the time to engage with prisoners. There are sufficient women staff to supervise female prisoners.

04 Gender responsive

Education, work and training opportunities are available to all without discrimination and reflect the needs of women and girls, including those with special needs.

Programmes are specifically designed for women and girls but are comparable to those offered to men and boys.

The range of opportunities available to female prisoners are as broad and flexible as possible and counter gender stereotyping.

05 Individualised

Rehabilitation programmes are based on individual needs assessments and tailored to the backgrounds and specific needs of female prisoners.

Programmes take into account previous learning and current skills levels and reflect prisoners' history, including their family situation, any physical or mental health problems, drug or alcohol dependencies, and previous instances of abuse.

06

Holistic

The design of individual sentence plans takes into account prisoners' likely situation on release, in terms of their family situation, housing, employment prospects, ongoing health needs and the availability of community-based support programmes. Prisoners are provided with appropriate pre-release and post-release support.

Rehabilitation programmes take a holistic approach aimed at tackling the root causes of offending and developing female prisoners' different sets of skills and knowledge.

Given the broad range of social and personal issues that female prisoners face, programmes also combine support in different areas such as mental health, housing, relationships and addiction.

Such integrated programmes provide prisoners with practical life skills in preparation for their release, aim to improve their confidence and self-esteem, and help them address other problems they may face such as poverty, homelessness or substance abuse.

07

Based on market needs

Work and training opportunities for women prisoners are based on research into the real needs of the community and of the market needs for employment.

There are clear pathways to potential employment for women in prison.

Prisons periodically assess the programmes offered to see if they fit the profile of the female prisoner population and are relevant to the job market.

08

Sustainable and consistent

Good linkages exist between prison-based programmes and community-based interventions to ensure relevance and continuity of support for female prisoners.

It is possible for prisoners to continue or complete programmes of learning after their release, to ensure that the time and efforts they put into learning in prison are not wasted and to ensure a smooth transition from prison to the community.

Unless absolutely necessary, education, training, work, health and wellbeing programmes are protected from frequent interruptions due to transfers and security measures.

09

Good quality

Prison educators are properly qualified and trained to the same standard as educators in the community.

Prison educators receive specialised training on working with women and girls in prison and understanding their backgrounds.

Prisoners participating in education and training programmes are safe and free from abuse. Health and safety standards are consistent with international standards and programmes are free from corruption and exploitation.

10

Evidence-based

Rehabilitation programmes are based on a detailed analysis of the profile of the prisoner population, gaps, resources and market needs.

Structures are in place to oversee implementation of rehabilitation strategies and programmes are regularly monitored and evaluated against gender-responsive indicators, with the direct involvement of prisoners.

Independent monitors have access to information about rehabilitation programmes in order to check they are being applied fairly, consistently, and in accordance with international human rights standards.

Endnotes

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- 89 United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 99.
- 90 See International Labour Organization, *Checkpoints: Eliminating and Preventing Forced Labour*, 2016.
- 91 For more information, see 'Q&As on Business and Forced Labour: When is it OK to use prison labour?', *International Labour Organization*, www.ilo.org/empent/areas/business-helpdesk/faqs/WCMS_DOC_ENT_HLP_FL_FAQ_EN/lang--en/index.htm#Q3.
- 92 'Female Inmates In Indiana Pitch Plan To Rehab Empty Houses — And Their Lives', *NPR*, 2 November 2017, www.npr.org/2017/11/01/559901323/female-inmates-in-indiana-pitch-plan-to-rehab-empty-houses-and-their-lives.
- 93 'Penitentiary reform: education and training to promote social reintegration and prevent recidivism', *Algeria Press Service*, 17 March 2019 (in French), www.aps.dz/algerie/63699-reforme-penitentiaire-l-enseignement-et-la-formation-pour-favoriser-la-reinsertion-sociale-et-prevenir-la-recidive.
- 94 United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), Rules 87 and 90.
- 95 United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), Rule 47.
- 96 For more information, see www.yellowribbon.org.sg.
- 97 CHREAA is a not-for-profit non-governmental organisation dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights by assisting vulnerable and marginalised people in Malawi. CHREAA works within the criminal justice system providing legal aid services to people in conflict with the law through its paralegals service.
- 98 For more information, see ccphe.ubc.ca/projects/unlocking-the-gates-utg-peer-health-mentoring-program.
- 99 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, *The right to education of persons in detention*, 2009, A/HRC/11/8, para. 41.
- 100 For example, a 2001 report by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice found that between 70 and 87 per cent of incarcerated juveniles in the US suffered from emotional disabilities that interfered with their education. Coalition for Juvenile Justice, *CJJ 2001 Annual Report: An Overview*, 2001.
- 101 SIPAR is a French organisation that has supported the building of libraries and the provision of books in all Cambodian prisons and is now working on developing prison libraries to become multi-functional education centres. SIPAR also provides formal qualifications for prison staff who train as librarians. SIPAR has a new prison project focused on prisoner literacy, vocational training and reintegration.
- 102 For more information, see www.fundaciondiagrama.es.
- 103 For more information, see yogabehindbars.org.
- 104 For more information, see birthbeyondbars.com/about-us.
- 105 For more information, see yogabehindbars.org/prenatal-yoga-prison.
- 106 This guide does not cover issues relating to the detention of asylum seekers or those detained in immigration detention facilities. This term would however include immigrants detained in countries where illegal immigration is a criminal offence and held with prisoners convicted of criminal offences.
- 107 For more information, see www.meganexus.com/foriner.
- 108 United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), Rules 54–55.
- 109 Human Rights Law Centre and the Change the Record Coalition, *Over-represented and overlooked: the crisis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's growing over-imprisonment*, 2017.
- 110 For more information on mental health in prisons, see World Health Organization, *Mental health in prisons*, 2014; Penal Reform International, *Mental health in prisons: A short guide for prison staff*, 2018.
- 111 United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 5.
- 112 Human Rights Watch, *Submission to the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in Law and Practice*, September 2018.
- 113 'At Risk: Sexual Abuse and Vulnerable Groups Behind Bars: Hearing Before the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission', testimony of Kendall Spruce, 19 August 2005.
- 114 For more information, see Association for the Prevention of Torture, *Towards the Effective Protection of LGBTI Persons Deprived of Liberty: A Monitoring Guide*, 2018.
- 115 One estimate states that the number of transgender prisoners in Thai prisons increased from 1,600 to 4,110 between 2006 to 2016. Chitsawang N, 'Transgender Prisoners in Thailand Keep Growing', *Thailand Criminology and Corrections*, 2016, thaicriminology.com/transgender-prisoners-in-thailand-keep-growing.html.
- 116 Sleep B, 'Old age behind bars: how can prisons adapt to the needs of increasingly elderly populations?', *PRI blog*, 25 September 2014, www.penalreform.org/blog/age-bars-prisons-adapt-increasingly-elderly-populations.
- 117 Kerbs J and Jolley J, 'A Commentary on Age Segregation for Older Prisoners: Philosophical and Pragmatic Considerations for Correctional Systems', *Criminal Justice Review*, Vol 34, No 1, 2009, pp119–139.
- 118 These recommendations can be read in conjunction with the master checklist for initiating/enhancing prison-based rehabilitation programmes, which can be found in United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Roadmap for the Development of Prison-based Rehabilitation Programmes*, 2017, pp61–66.

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