
REPORT OF THE SEMINAR

The 177th International Senior Seminar (Online) “Preventing Reoffending through a Multi-stakeholder Approach”

1. Duration and Participants

- From 12 January to 3 February 2022
- 19 overseas participants from 12 jurisdictions

2. Programme Overview

As stipulated in the Kyoto Declaration, preventing reoffending through a multi-stakeholder approach is an important theme in the criminal justice field internationally. This seminar aims to promote these efforts in participating countries, by sharing experiences and discussing (i) case disposition and penalties with due regard to rehabilitative perspectives and (ii) tailoring intervention, treatment and support to individual needs by effectively incorporating inter-agency cooperation and public-private partnerships. This programme was exclusively conducted online due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. The Content of the Programme

(1) Lectures and other presentations

The participants were from a wide range of time zones, including Asia, Africa and Latin America, and they needed to continue their professional and family duties during the seminar. Therefore, all lectures were recorded in advance and broadcast on-demand in order to allow participants to view lectures at their convenience. After watching the on-demand lectures, participants were required to submit questions or comments via an online learning management system, and their questions were answered in Q&A live sessions with the respective lecturers. This way, we tried to ensure both convenience and interactivity in lectures.

The lectures were firstly delivered by UNAFEI professors on the criminal justice system in Japan, as well as on specific topics relating to this seminar such as promoting measures for reducing reoffending, non-custodial sentences, assessment and re-entry support. After that, the specialist lectures and ad hoc lecturers were delivered, followed by Q&A sessions. Furthermore, as a special session, eight Japanese volunteer probation officers were invited to share their experience as community volunteers.

- Specialist Lecturer
 - Dr. Will Hughes
Senior Lecturer in Criminology
London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
“Community sentences for rehabilitation of offenders and preventing reoffending”
“Multi-stakeholder approaches for effective supervision and support of offenders”
- Ad Hoc Lecturers
 - Mr. HONDA Yuichiro
Public Prosecutor
Chief, Social Reintegration Support Office
General Affairs Department, Tokyo District Public Prosecutors’ Office
“Efforts of the Social Reintegration Support Office”
 - Mr. SUZUKI Takayuki
Specialist
Correction Bureau, Ministry of Justice
 - and
 - Mr. TOMIZAWA Satoshi

Official
Correction Bureau, Ministry of Justice

“Public-Private Partnership in Employment Support”

(2) Group Workshops

Participants were divided into four groups considering their time zones, Individual Presentations topics and professional backgrounds.

➤ Individual Presentations

Participants shared the practices and the challenges in their respective countries regarding the theme of the seminar through their individual presentations. All the presentations were recorded and uploaded online so that participants in other groups could watch them afterwards.

➤ Discussions

Built on the knowledge gained through lectures and individual presentations, the participants engaged in live discussions to explore more about the theme of the seminar. The subtopics discussed were: (i) Imposition of penalties and case dispositions with due regard to rehabilitative perspectives and (ii) Interventions, treatment and support tailored to offenders' individual needs, with sufficient consideration of a multi-stakeholder approach. Participants shared challenges and good practices in their respective countries with group members, and discussed the root causes and necessary actions for common challenges.

Below is an overview of the discussions:

- Imposition of penalties and case dispositions with due regard to rehabilitative perspectives
Although it is necessary to ensure due process and proportionality in imposing penalties and case dispositions, the participants reaffirmed the importance of effective use of non-custodial measures as far as possible since they can avoid the negative impact of imprisonment on rehabilitation of offenders and facilitate their social reintegration. They shared the legal basis for non-custodial measures, including the applicable options, criteria, discretionary power given to judges, prosecutors etc. It was reported that the existence of laws that provide non-custodial options does not necessarily mean they are fully used in practice. Many factors that would affect the active use of non-custodial measures were discussed, such as the necessity of sentencing guidelines, appropriate assessment required for appropriate use of non-custodial measures, the authority to implement non-custodial sentences in the community and collaboration with community partners who can support offenders. It was also noted that efforts should be made for providing adequate capacity-building and promoting understanding for rehabilitation of offenders among judiciary and law enforcement officers.
- Interventions, treatment and support tailored to offenders' individual needs
To make interventions, treatment and support for offenders most effective, participants recognized the importance of assessment throughout the criminal justice process to identify the individual needs of offenders. Various socio-economic factors relating to crime, such as poverty, isolation, association with gangs and other forms of organized crime, etc. were considered. Participants stressed the importance of support for employment, education and various support in collaboration with stakeholders to reintegrate offenders into the community, but various challenges which hamper rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders were also discussed. In prisons, for example, overcrowding was indicated as a significant factor that impedes rehabilitative environments that would facilitate offender treatment, while in the community, lack of monitoring or supporting systems for released offenders, as well as resources to fulfil them, were discussed. Furthermore, many participants regarded the issue of general perceptions of offenders as critically important, since prevailing punitive attitudes would make it difficult to engage various stakeholders in supporting offender rehabilitation. Therefore, government initiatives not only for promoting inter-agency coordination and community engagement in supporting offender rehabilitation but also for raising awareness for importance of offender rehabilitation were emphasized.

4. Feedback from the Participants

At the end of the seminar, we invited feedback from all participants. They said that, even though conducted online, they learned a lot from lectures and group discussions, and many of them indicated that the seminar served as an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of incorporating rehabilitative perspectives and multi-stakeholder approaches in their respective professional areas. They also indicated that, if it were conducted in person, they would learn more about the Japanese system and practice by visiting relevant institutions in Japan.

5. Comments from the Programming Officer

This seminar discussed the theme of preventing reoffending. In order to reduce reoffending, a wide range of individual and social factors which would induce or deter crime should be addressed. It cannot be achieved only by efforts of penal institutions. It requires active involvement of relevant agencies with various expertise, as well as various community resources.

In order to ensure that the “multi-stakeholder approach” is not just empty words, key persons are required to make a difference in their systems and practices. The participants in this seminar fully understood the concept of the theme and were highly motivated to learn from the experiences of other countries and lectures. They showed great discernment in analysing their current systems and practices, and they recognized the need to review their systems and practices from the viewpoint of offender rehabilitation, with due attention to society and human rights. I believe such sincere attitudes towards learning stimulated their discussions, and I learned a lot from the participants.

The International Senior Seminar invites high-ranked policymakers and practitioners, and it provides them with a great opportunity to learn deeply about important themes in criminal justice. I hope that the knowledge, thoughts and new perspectives on reducing reoffending gained in this 177th seminar will be gradually disseminated to various stakeholders in their respective countries, leading toward a global society in which “no one will be left behind” as envisaged in the SDGs.