

GROUP 2

EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO IMPROVE OFFENDER TREATMENT PROGRAMMES AND INTERVENTIONS THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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I. INTRODUCTION

On 27 January 2011, Group 2 commenced its workshop. The group appointed by consensus Mr. Shemfe as its Chairperson, Ms. Furuhashi as its Co-chairperson, Mr. Higami as its Rapporteur, and Ms. Letsatle and Mr. Endo as its Co-rapporteurs. The group was assigned to discuss “Effective measures to improve treatment programmes and interventions through community involvement” and agreed to conduct its discussion in accordance with the following agenda: 1) Effective measures to rehabilitate offenders; 2) Institutional treatment of offenders; 3) Community-based treatment of offenders; 4) Measures to enhance community involvement.

II. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

A. Effective Measures to Rehabilitate Offenders

At the beginning, the Group made a request for each member to explain the actual situations in their countries in regard to the most serious crimes offenders commit and the treatment of such offenders. (It was confirmed by all members that the word “treatment” includes rehabilitation, supervision of offenders, approaches to shorten the duration of detention for unconvicted persons, and bail.)

Regarding the most serious crimes, each participant referred to their own country’s serious crimes, such as, robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, street crimes, women trafficking, poaching, rape, incest, armed hold-ups, corruption, fraud, recidivated theft, drug offences, crimes committed by women or elderly persons, etc. (Note: Not listed in order of gravity.) About this subtopic, the Group shared some valuable information.

Regarding the rehabilitation of offenders, many participants stated that they are facing many difficult problems because of their different social conditions, legal matters and governmental funding, etc. Each member shared his or her valuable experiences about rehabilitation programmes (e.g. cognitive behavioural treatment or other treatments for classified offenders, religious services, child care, vocational training, etc.). Many countries wish to implement these programmes but they are expensive and priority has to be given to other demands. Some countries are concentrating on matters such as pardon, amnesty and gun control to both prevent crime and to hasten the return of offenders to their communities. However, it is still important to ensure that some rehabilitation should take place before offenders are released to their communities.

B. Institutional Treatment of Offenders

The Group discussed possible solutions to the problems in the institutional treatment of offenders.

All participants noted that the hesitance of institutional agencies to adopt open-door policies is borne of

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fear and negative public perception.

Participants therefore felt that private companies, non-governmental and faith-based organizations and individuals can play a good role in offender treatment and called for an open-door policy to incorporate them.

Another participant stated that the private sector can contribute in key areas that require high skills (programme planning, legal consultation), or do not require expertise (maintenance, patrolling), and the government can encourage the private sector by giving it professional, financial or other (such as self-realization) merits, sharing information and cooperating in a sound relationship with them.

More private finance and public funds can be sourced to build rehabilitation centres, designed for institutional treatment, like Mine Rehabilitation Programme Centre in Japan.

Another participant stated that charitable associations such as the Lions Club or the Rotary Club should be invited to offer assistance in both in-care and out-care programmes for offender treatment. It was also noted that multinational corporations can be encouraged to build facilities as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes to enhance offender treatment.

The group also noted that the family has a great role to play in facilitating offender treatment, resettling offenders and curbing recidivism.

One participant pointed out that the paralegal system in Uganda (mentioned in the paper of Visiting Expert, Ms. Chemonges) is a good example of how foreign aid can be harnessed to support treatment of offenders, by offering free legal advice.

Some members were also of the view that volunteers play useful supportive roles in offender treatment and that a wide range of retired professionals, like doctors, nurses, social workers, teachers etc. can provide services, at little or no cost. To encourage private organizations and individuals to assist, a strong partnership will have to be developed with the community. The SCORES (Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises) project in Singapore (mentioned in the paper of Visiting Expert, Mr. Chin) is a clear example.

Another participant also suggested the importance of proper criminogenic assessment of offenders' needs, to stimulate participation of private companies, organizations and individuals. The Strategic Action Plan to deliver these special intervention programmes (e.g. sex offenders' programmes) should be drawn, updated, reviewed and evaluated, with input from both the government and active organizations, to build trust and cooperation.

C. Community-Based Treatment of Offenders

The first question addressed by participants is: "Why the need for community involvement in offender treatment?".

The consensus reached is that even the best in-care, without community support, will only continue to increase recidivism.

This point is well illustrated by the two halfway houses we visited during our Study Tour: it is clear that care-providers still face frustration from some sections of the community.

The starting point, we all agree, has to be an open-door policy that will educate and attract the community to give more support. The criminal justice agencies should train their officers to engage with the community, and also develop guidelines and policies so that all stakeholders know what is expected of them. (This viewpoint was referred to by Visiting Expert, Dr. Kittipong.) There is the need to establish a correctional advisory council to coordinate activities of stakeholders within and outside the criminal justice system to improve offenders' rehabilitation.

Participants feel that it is necessary to engage the participation of organizations, clubs and societies with

interest in offenders to use their expertise and resources to complement institutional treatment of offenders. Halfway houses and community skill acquisition centres can be built and managed by these bodies. The Nigerian participant stated that after-care support services where tools are provided to support discharged offenders can also be provided by other community associations. Job placement and accommodation are critical for efficient treatment and this can be provided by cooperative employers and halfway houses. Mentoring, counselling and role-modeling from notable members of the community and celebrities can do a lot at lower or no cost. The participants feel that the government can experiment with out-sourcing rehabilitative work previously exercised by state agencies, especially in the areas of job placement, accommodations and other interventions.

The Papua New Guinean participant suggested that victim-and-offender reconciliation is necessary to reduce social exclusion and encourage resettlement of ex-offenders back to their homeland.

D. Measures to Enhance Community Involvement

All participants agreed that in some developing countries that have no alternatives to imprisonment, existing legislation should be reviewed and new legislation enacted.

One participant from Japan suggested that in order to enhance the involvement of the private sector, various methods of cooperation should be used, such as “the trial employment and guarantee system” (subsidies for three month payment and cover for accident by insurance).

Participants shared the view that intensive media and public enlightenment campaigns should be implemented, like Singapore’s Yellow Ribbon Project and the Japanese Movement for a Brighter Society, Thailand’s media and diplomats’ open day visit to prisons, and the U.K.’s National Offenders Management Programmes. These programmes have been proved to be effective in garnering community support in their respective countries. In relation to this, one participant from Japan stated that the media need to be well informed about the processes involved in offender treatment to avoid undue sensationalism in reporting events that relate to penal institutions.

All participants agreed that Community Volunteers Associations should be formed for effective coordination and public participation. Community engagement activities should be developed to stimulate public interest, while respected community leaders and volunteers should be identified to support treatment programmes as practiced in Japan (VPOs, Women’s Association for Rehabilitation Aid, BBS). Ex-offenders who have changed and are contributing positively to society could be involved as role-models.

It was the view of participants that trust funds should be established to mobilize public and private funds to support offender treatment, like the U.K. credit union established to give start up loans to ex-offenders.

All participants agreed that continuous community outreach should be reviewed to raise social awareness and acceptance of offenders in society. In doing so, stated some participants from Japan, the government should educate young people, such as high school students, about treatment of offenders, as well as introduce some kind of collaborative court which involves people in the sentencing procedure with judges, so that the public will gradually become aware of the treatment of offenders. One participant from Japan stated that collaboration on human resources should be achieved between the courts and the community and therefore finding cooperative enterprises needs to be focused on people who have experienced the court’s sentencing procedure. Additionally, some participants stated that HIV infection raises serious problems in offender treatment and that the government and NGOs can support HIV infected inmates and help to reduce the stigma attached to their diagnosis.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

After the discussions ended, the following conclusions were agreed among all participants:

1. From the lectures given by Visiting Experts, international evidence has clearly established that offender treatment programmes are improved and more effective when appropriate cultural input is allowed. Therefore all programmes adopted must be adapted to the cultural and socio-economic situations of each country.

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2. Categories of serious crimes vary in each country. This depends on each country's social conditions, legal matters and other realities. The levels of treatment of offenders are also varied from one place to the other. Most developing countries are still faced with challenges that limit standards and rehabilitative assistance to offenders.
3. The importance of offender rehabilitation needs to be emphasized throughout criminal justice procedure.
4. The role of an offender's family is important and needs to be included as early as possible in the criminal justice process.
5. Private organizations and individuals can play more important roles in institutional and community-based offender treatment. Private enterprises can provide many services effectively or at low cost. The huge resources derived from charitable organizations, voluntary associations, NGOs, community-based organizations, including multi-national corporations, e.g. the Toyota Programme in the U.K., should be harnessed to assist in offender treatment and management.
6. Thorough needs assessment is important to guide community participation in offender treatment.
7. Public relations campaigns, incentives and awards are veritable motivational tools that can encourage community participation in offender treatment.
8. Victim-and-offender reconciliation is necessity to enhance integration of offender into society.
9. Ex-offenders face difficulties in finding jobs and resettling after their prison terms due to stigmatization, social exclusion, and rejection. Aftercare services for ex-prisoners are therefore critical to help with reintegration.
10. Other obstacles that impede community involvement are: fear, stigmatization, lack of understanding, indifference to offenders, sensational reporting by the media, lack of regulations or legislation, poor funding and inadequate resources.

B. Recommendations

At the end of the discussions the Group reached a consensus on the following recommendations:

1. Institutional Treatment Stage

- To re-orientate the mindsets of the prison staff and offenders to allow the community to partner with them, especially in the developing countries;
- To ensure thorough assessment of the needs of offenders to guide the involvement of the community;
- To promote vocational training for prisoners to increase their employability, including self-employment;
- To recommend an open-door policy for correctional institutions to enhance community involvement.

2. Community-Based Treatment Stage

- To promote victim and offender reconciliation;
- To promote government and community partnership in offender aftercare services;
- To recommend the government to support the community at local level by providing funding to NGOs or CBOs, especially on the treatment of juvenile offenders;
- To recommend organizations such as the U.N. to promote voluntary associations targeted at offender treatment;
- To recommend communities to harness resources to establish and manage community-based rehabilitation centres such as halfway houses and skill acquisition centres.

3. All Stages of Criminal Justice Procedure

- To promote public relations activities to raise public awareness;
- To garner media support in public relations activities;
- To seek support for offenders' families and offenders from relevant organizations;
- To revise legislation and regulations to allow for community involvement;
- To encourage charitable associations, NGOs and multi-national corporations to be involved in offender treatment;

- To give incentives to organizations that employ ex-prisoners;
- To educate young people about the harmful effects of crime and offer them a second chance;
- To introduce collaborative court proceedings which involve lay people in sentencing;
- To involve the community in the planning and delivery of offender treatment to encourage ownership of the programmes;
- To promote collaboration on human resources between the courts and the community;
- To recommend the government and NGOs to support HIV infected inmates in an effort to reduce stigmatization.