

# **TREATMENT OF FEMALE INMATES AT CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR WOMEN**

*Celso S. Bravo\**

## **I. HISTORY OF BUCOR**

The Bureau of Corrections, formerly known as the Bureau of Prisons, was created under the Reorganization Act. No 1407 dated 1 November 1905. The Prison Law which is its underlying formal and legal support is found in sections 1705 to 1751 of the Revised Administrative Code of the Philippines.

The Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) is an agency under the Department of Justice tasked to effectively safe-keep and rehabilitate national prisoners — those sentenced to three (3) years and one (1) day and above. It is composed of seven (7) operating institutions strategically located all over the country to accept national prisoners from the nearest region.

The country's penal institutions started during the Spanish regime when Spanish penal laws, contained in royal decrees, ordinances, rules and regulations, were extended to the country. The main insular penitentiary was the Old Bilibid Prison in Manila constructed in 1874 and formally opened by a Royal Decree in 1865. The San Ramon Prison in Zamboanga City was next established in 1869, originally to confine Muslim rebels, but was closed during the Spanish-American War, and reopened in 1898. Under the American Regime, the Iwahig Penal Colony (formerly called Iuhit Penal Colony) in Puerto Princesa, Palawan was established in 1904.

Eventually, the Bureau of Prisons was created under the Reorganization Act of 1905, effective 1 November 1905, under the Department of Commerce & Police, and was then transferred to the Department of Public Instruction. The prison law, which was enacted pursuant to the provisions of Sec. 1705-1751 of the Administrative Code of 1917, finally placed the Bureau of Prisons under the Department of Justice.

Due to the increasing inmate population, more prisons and penal colonies were created and placed under the supervision of the Bureau of Prisons, namely: the Correctional Institute for Women (CIW) in Mandaluyong, Rizal, established in 1931 by authority of Act No. 3579 purposely to confine female national offenders; the Davao Penal Colony on 21 January 1932 in accordance with Act No. 3732 and Proclamation 414 series of 1931. The Old Bilibid Prison was transferred to Muntinlupa in 1935 and was renamed the New Bilibid Prison in 1940. The Sablayan Penal Colony in Mindoro Occidental was established on 27 September 1954 under Proclamation 72, and the Leyte Regional Prison was established on 16 January 1973 under Proclamation 1101. With the approval of PD 28 on 25 October 1972, which established the regional prisons, all existing national penal institutions were converted into regular prisons and penal farms.

On record, the first head of the prison was Lt. George Wolf, an American, from 1909-1910; while the first Filipino Director was Ramon Victorio, 1923-1930. Our present Officer-In-Charge is the Deputy Director of the National Bureau of Investigation, Rafael Marcos Z. Ragos.

To emphasize the new trend in modern penology, the Bureau of Prisons was renamed the Bureau of Corrections pursuant to Executive Order No. 292 dated 22 November 1989.

The Correctional System in the Philippines is composed of six (6) agencies under three (3) distinct

---

\*Officer-In-Charge, Medium Security Compound, Bureau of Corrections, Department of Justice, the Philippines.

and separate executive departments of the National government, namely:

- The Department of Justice — under this are the Bureau of Corrections, the Parole and Probation Administration, and the Board of Pardons and Parole
- The Department of Interior and Local Government — under this are the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, which runs the city, municipal and district jails; and the provincial jails through their respective provincial governments
- The Department of Social Welfare and Development — under this is the Child's Program Bureau which oversees youth rehabilitation centers

It is envisioned that in the years to come, BuCor will be a modern, secured and professional correction institution which is characterized by a more responsive prison system geared towards the humane and spiritually guided rehabilitation of inmates, for their reintegration into the mainstream of society.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS

The main responsibility of the Bureau is to carry out its twin objective — custody (safekeeping) and rehabilitation of national offenders. It has an authorized *plantilla* positions of 2,362 personnel — 1,441 custodial personnel, 776 administrative personnel and 142 members of the medical staff. It is headed by a Director and assisted by 2 Assistant Directors. With a population of 37,168 inmates as of November 2012, statistics show that literally, the ratio of inmates to custodial personnel is 72:1.

## III. THE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN

On 14 February 1931, the Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) was born. It is administered and managed by a Penal Superintendent. It was the sole institution dedicated to women offenders serving more than three (3) years' imprisonment. The CIW housed 270 inmates who originally came from the Old Bilibid Compound. It was in 1982 when a fire blazed through CIW due to faulty wiring, which practically destroyed the main facility. More than a year later, reconstruction was completed and on 26 September 1983 a new building was erected.

Over the decades, the number of inmates ballooned exponentially but the facilities remained the same. The CIW inmates grew to more than 2,000 from 270 inmates in 1931. Dormitories with single beds had to be replaced with two bunk beds that could accommodate four people at a time. Common areas were converted into dormitories to give room to the growing population. Inmates said goodbye to some of their hallways and their mess hall to relieve the congestion problem. It was on 16 June 2003 and 18 September 2007, when the CIW welcomed a new extension building at Mandaluyong City and CIW-Mindanao, respectively, that helped the issue of congestion, but it did not solve it. Today CIW-Mandaluyong has 2,008 inmates with an inmate-to-guard ratio of 69:1, and CIW-Mindanao has a total of 286 inmates and has an inmate-to-guard ratio of 21:1.

### A. The Reception and Diagnostic Center

The Reception and Diagnostic Center, which is the receiving arm of the Bureau, admits and classifies national prisoners for a period of 60 days (including a 5-day quarantine period). Inmates undergo psychiatric, psychological, medical, and other examinations. They are classified as: Maximum, Medium or Minimum based on their security status.

Upon arrival at the CIW, the prisoners are immediately brought to the Receiving Office where they are turned over officially to the Receiving Officer by their escorts, either from the guards of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) or from the Provincial Guards. In the Receiving Office, they go through routine inspection of articles in their possessions. Those which they are not allowed to keep, like money, drugs and medicines, shall be taken and entered in their prison record. Receipts will be issued by the Receiving Officer. Drugs and medicines are given to the medical officer for his proper dispensation. The rest of the articles shall be returned to the prisoners upon their release unless they

153RD INTERNATIONAL SENIOR SEMINAR  
PARTICIPANTS' PAPERS

request their disposal before such time.

They are next photographed for identification purposes, given a haircut and are issued available prison uniforms and equipment. They are then taken into quarantine for five (5) days. While under quarantine, they go through identification procedures, undergo thorough medical and physical examinations to determine their physical capacity to work, and get necessary medications if found suffering from any ailment, segregated from the rest and hospitalized if necessary.

**B. Inmates' Welfare**

A special accommodation for pregnant CIW inmates is afforded. Whenever practicable, however, arrangements shall be made for children to be born in a hospital outside the prison. An infant born while the mother is serving a sentence in the CIW may be allowed to stay with the mother for a period of time not exceeding one (1) year. After the lapse of said period, if the mother of the infant fails to place the child in a home of her own, the superintendent shall make arrangements with the Department of Social Welfare and Development or any other social welfare agency for the infant's care. As far as practicable, the CIW shall have a nursery staffed by qualified personnel, and no female prisoner shall be subject to any disciplinary measure which might affect her unborn or nursing child.

As to its male counterparts, female inmates are introduced into institutional life by means of a well-planned orientation programme. The Reception and Diagnostic Center (admission center) using all appropriate means shall make available to them, educational, recreation, and religious facilities, as well as group lectures on prison rules, citizenship training and personal care. This is designed to help them adjust themselves to prison life. At the same time that they go through the orientation process, they shall be interviewed and examined by members of the classification staff to determine their weaknesses, capabilities, interests and are eventually assigned work assignments.

**C. Good Conduct Time Allowance**

As a reward for good conduct, diligence and loyalty, male and female inmates may have their sentences diminished or reduced in the manner provided under the following schedule:

For good conduct, a prisoner will be entitled to five (5) days for each month of good conduct during the first two (2) years of imprisonment; eight (8) days for each month from the third to the fifth year of imprisonment; ten (10) days for each month from the sixth to the tenth year of imprisonment; and fifteen (15) days from the eleventh and successive years of imprisonment;

A prisoner, who has attained the classification of colonist or trustee, shall be entitled to an additional five days' good conduct time allowance for each calendar month, while the prisoner retains his or her classification, in addition to the credit allowance authorized in the preceding paragraph. A prisoner serving a life sentence classified and retaining the classification of a colonist or trustee, shall have his or her sentence automatically modified to thirty (30) years. However, for misconduct, a colonist or trustee may forfeit all special credits and the modification of his or her sentence.

A special time allowance for loyalty, consisting of a deduction of one fifth of the period of the sentence, shall be granted to any prisoner who — having evaded the service of the sentence on the occasion of disorder resulting from conflagration, earthquake, explosion, or other similar catastrophe or during a mutiny, in which the prisoner has not participated — shall have voluntarily surrendered to the authorities within forty-eight (48) hours, following the issuance of a proclamation announcing the end of such calamity.

As a general rule, the twin mandate of the Bureau of Corrections as earlier stated, is to keep and rehabilitate the inmates until they are released by due process of law; to care for them while they are incarcerated; to reclaim them by environment and association, by intellectual and moral instructions, by industrial and practical teaching; and to train them to earn honest livelihoods in the future, thus preparing them for re-entry into society as cured women mentally, physically and morally. They are trained so that they will in the ordinary course of events be law-abiding and self-supporting members of society.

True to its main goal, to rehabilitate and not punish its inmates, “The Open House” was created. It was a rare privilege extended to the female offenders doing time in prison. This policy enabled female relatives and minor children to stay overnight at the Institution on special occasions. Soon after, the inmate’s perception gradually changed. They embraced the programme and discipline followed. It is because of that discipline and love for others that in spite of the dense population, the dormitories have remained organized and clean without a whiff of unpleasantness.

#### **D. Rehabilitation Programmes**

The first step in our rehabilitation effort is to provide the basic needs of inmates as human beings. The other steps in the rehabilitation process are the provision of work programmes, health care, education and skills training, recreation, sports, and religious guidance.

The chaplain service caters to the religious needs of inmates and personnel. Each of the prisons and sub-colonies has one organic chaplain and a church to undertake various religious worships and formations.

Health care for the inmates is provided through the NBP hospital and six other prisons’ mini-hospitals/clinics. Serious cases that cannot be handled are referred to any government hospital in Metro Manila.

The inmate work programme keeps the inmates busy, provides them money for their personal expenses and family, and helps them acquire livelihood skills.

CIW’s holistic approach to rehabilitation involves religion, education, livelihood and social skills — all of which are needed for the inmates’ preparation for their release.

The inmates began getting involved with improving themselves and their home — the CIW. Because of a lack of funds, the CIW administration has resorted to creative means to improve its facilities. The CIW has seen facilities being fixed or constructed with the help of the employees and inmates — hand in hand.

The men and women of the CIW have created something that not a lot of prisons have — a family. There is a genuine love present between the inmates and employees of the CIW. The success and staying power of the CIW boils down to one universal concept — love.

The Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) believes that the transformation of the inmates begin with proper rehabilitation. The first step of which is when the prisoner admits wrongdoings and accepts the situation. It is only through acceptance that the process can start.

The CIW has Reformation Programs, Performing Arts Groups and inmates’ organizations that equip inmates with the necessary tools to ensure the institution’s goal — the re-entry of inmates to their respective communities as spiritual, obedient and productive citizens.

Inmates have the opportunity to join counselling sessions, prayer meetings and recollections, hear Holy Mass, and participate in Bible groups and other religious activities. Non-Catholics are welcome at the Institution. Inmates are encouraged to practice their own religion as long as they are within the bounds of the freedom of religion.

Inmates are motivated to pursue their education at the CIW. The institution’s education programme consists of a Computer Literacy Program, Vocational Courses from the Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA) and the Alternative Learning System of the Department of Education: Basic Literacy, Lower Elementary Education (Grades 1-3), Advanced Elementary Education (Grades 4-6) and Secondary Education (High School).

The Education Program covers 25%-30% of inmates. The CIW also has year-long events that the inmates enjoy like the *Linggo ng Wika*, Sportsfest, Teacher’s Day and festivals, to name a few. The CIW makes certain that the inmates experience the same activities that students outside the institution

153RD INTERNATIONAL SENIOR SEMINAR  
PARTICIPANTS' PAPERS

experience as well.

Inmates who have gone through the programme have been promoted to being instructors themselves after being evaluated.

Those programmes open doors for inmates to generate income while inside the institution. The various agro-industrial projects allow the inmates to discover skills they may not have known prior to being incarcerated. The women are exposed to poultry and livestock farming, bead making, sewing, candle making and much more.

Projects like bead making highlight the imaginativeness of the women. Intricate bag designs and adorable key chains are just some of the women's creations that have proved to be popular. The Philippine flag design continues to be a crowd pleaser and has been used in different ways, like cell phone charms, coin purses and ballpoint-pen holders. The beaded products are so popular that they have even reached the shores of Dubai, the United Kingdom and Kuwait.

Besides daily morning workouts, the CIW promotes sports and exercise through its readily available activities, like volleyball, badminton and table tennis. The institution also holds annual sporting events to compliment the programme. There are also indoor games that less active inmates can enjoy as well.

The CIW houses several performing-arts groups that the inmates can join. Music is an integral part of the rehabilitation process. There are six performing groups at the institution: the Ati-atihan and Drums & Lyre, the Crossband Band, the CIW Dance Troupe, Tunog Kawayan, the CIW Music Ministry, and the CIW Chorale. These groups perform during special events at the institution or when there are visitors.

The CIW Dance Troupe gives homage to our roots with their repertoire of modern and Filipino dances. The Troupe practices every day and updates their choreography on a monthly basis. The mix Filipino dances like singkil with contemporary music like Madonna showcasing an unforgettable performance.

Medical and dental checkups are available to the inmates through the infirmary. There are also medical missions throughout the year that the inmates engage in, thanks to the CIW's partner groups and organizations.

With the success of these programmes in play, the inmates have better chances of adjusting and being assimilated into their communities after their release.