

RESPONDING TO THE COMMUNITY-BASED CORRECTION SYSTEM FOR TREATMENT OF CRIMINAL OFFENDERS THROUGH MULTI-AGENCY COOPERATION

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I. LEGAL BASES AND OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY-BASED TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS AND PREVENTION OF RECIDIVISM

The Philippines engages in crime prevention and promotes the treatment and rehabilitation of criminal offenders. It has laws that support saving and redeeming valuable human resources and programmes and services that enhance and develop their capacities to become responsible, productive and law-abiding members of society.

The Probation Administration was created by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 968, "The Probation Law of 1976", to administer the probation system. Under Executive Order No. 292, "The Administrative Code of 1987", which was promulgated on November 23, 1989, the Probation Administration was renamed as the "Parole and Probation Administration" and given the added function of supervising prisoners who, after serving part of their sentence in jails, are released on conditions of parole.

Effective August 17, 2005, by virtue of a Memorandum of Agreement with the Dangerous Drugs Board, the Administration also performs the function of investigating and supervising first-time minor drug offenders pursuant to Republic Act No. 9165.

The PPA in its vision statement declares that it is a model component of the Philippine Correctional System that shall enhance the quality of life of its clients through multi-disciplinary programmes and resources, an efficient organization, and a highly professional and committed workforce in order to promote social justice and development. Its mission is to rehabilitate probationers, parolees and pardonees and promote their development as persons by utilizing innovative interventions and techniques which respect the dignity of man and recognize his divine destiny.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that "the State promotes a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free from poverty through policies that provide adequate services, promote employment, rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all."

It is evident that the Philippines is a people-centered country, whose ultimate goal is the welfare of its citizenry. It is a member country of the United Nations and signatory to many international treaties and covenants that respect human rights and promote total human development.

In its continuing endeavours, it seeks to address poverty, crime, corruption, violence and terrorism and many societal issues that obstruct development of human beings. It has introduced numerous development programmes and basic services to address basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education and even vocational skills that would generate employment to improve income of individuals and families and, contribute to the country's gross national product (GDP), as well.

In the 1970s, President Ferdinand E. Marcos introduced the concept of "Bagong Lipunan" or the "New Society" where socio-economic development programmes were extended to the people to eradicate poverty and diminish unemployment and social unrest in the country.

During the time of President Fidel V. Ramos from 1992-1998, the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) was im-

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plemented through the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) Project, for the purpose of addressing the minimum basic needs that consist of survival, security and enabling needs. Its ultimate goal was to reduce poverty incidence and attain an improved quality of life (IQL) among the project beneficiaries. It prioritized poor provinces and municipalities and targeted the poorest of the poor families to address their survival, security, health and enabling needs. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) was the lead agency, and other departments of the government served as line agencies supporting the implementation of the whole project. It was finally institutionalized through Republic Act No. 8425, dated June 3, 1998.

The Parole and Probation Administration (PPA), since the inception of its community-based correction system in 1976, has developed multiple approaches to crime prevention and treatment of criminal offenders. Various community-based development interventions were made with involvement of community resources.

II. THE PAROLE AND PROBATION ADMINISTRATION (PPA)'S MULTI-AGENCY COOPERATION EXPERIENCE

Over the years, the PPA has sought to give meaning to its mission statement by designing and executing viable and effective rehabilitation programmes responsive to the needs of its clients. It believes that individuals, particularly criminal offenders, will fail to achieve a great amount of personal change if the economic and social structures of the family and community are weak or unavailable. If they are unemployed and have nowhere to stay, the tendency of falling back into old habits and criminality is possible. A supporting social and economic environment that fully embraces them is needed so that they can live normal lives. Thus, the PPA aims at providing its clients access to employment by giving them skills and livelihood training programmes.

Probation and parole officers and support staff are provided with training courses to develop their professional skills and inculcate positive attitudes towards probation and parole work so that they have the ability to be directly involved in the treatment and rehabilitation of clients. The PPA fosters institutional partnership with international agencies like Daytop International in the United States, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the United Nations Asia and the Far East Institute (UNAFEI) to provide training courses for its probation and parole officers on Therapeutic Community (TC) Modality and approaches and strategies to crime prevention and treatment of criminal offenders, respectively, with the maximum involvement and participation of communities.

The PPA forges and maintains networking and convergence with local community resources involved in the delivery of social services. To mention a few: Local Government Units (LGUs), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Education (DepEd), the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and some educational institutions. The PPA involves local people as volunteer probation aides (VPAs), to serve as community partners of probation and parole officers in the supervision and rehabilitation of its clients, and develops job referral systems among public and private employment agencies and individuals to address joblessness among clients and prevent recidivism.

III. METHODS OF MULTI-AGENCY COOPERATION

The PPA adheres to the principle of interdependence through institutional convergence to expedite delivery of services needed by its clients. It believes that for the basic human organization to survive it has to connect with other social systems in the community and work with them collectively and mutually help each other. For several years, the world has gone into globalization and undertaken measures to promote unity and cooperation among nations to respond to global issues and concerns such as poverty, terrorism, crimes, gender inequality, and climate change, among others. The PPA works in the local and national community by involving agencies and community resources to treat offenders by improving their lives.

Below is a profile of multi-agency cooperation as an approach to community-based treatment of offenders used by the PPA:

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AGENCIES/INSTITUTIONS	PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES
Department of Social Welfare and Development	Foodstuff, skills training, livelihood and cash assistance, family planning, population control methods,
Department of Education	Alternative learning system, scholarship grants
Department of Health	Medical, dental and clinical services, training on aftercare services
Department of Environment and Natural Resources	Seedlings, trainings and seminars on conservation of natural resources
Department of Trade and Industry	Skills training, entrepreneurial seminars
Department of Labor and Employment	Training kits, job placement
Department of Agriculture	Trainings and seminars on farming & construction of training facilities, planting materials
Department of Interior and Local Government	Seminars and trainings on fire prevention, and other crime, man-made disaster initiatives
Local Government Units (barangay, municipal, city and provincial levels)	Lot for the convergence/skills training center, funding assistance, foodstuff, support/office personnel, seedlings, fuel, honoraria for probation officers, office supplies, office equipment, seminars on Gender and Development (GAD) matters,
Technical Education and Skills Development Authority	Skills and livelihood trainings & scholarship grants
Dangerous Drugs Board	Drug-test kits, seminars on aftercare services, etc.
Religious Groups	Spiritual formation, training venue and seminars, counselling services and faith-based sessions.

IV. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND MEASURES ADOPTED IN MULTI-AGENCY COOPERATION

The PPA's experience in multi-agency cooperation provides learning opportunities for probation workers and other community resources. It strengthens the concept of interdependence among community resources/agency for collective efforts in addressing the needs of offenders. In the multi-agency cooperation approach, each community resource or agency is part of the whole system and has a great and significant role to make or unmake the development goals and processes.

A piecemeal approach by service agencies blocks holistic and integrated development. Some service agencies or community resources have limited knowledge of cooperative development approaches in treating criminal offenders. Thus, what happened was that they worked based on their available resources and focused on their assigned clients. They failed to consider other development systems in the community where they could access and share resources for maximum development of clients. Lack of initiative of some community resources to promote crime prevention and treatment of offenders is another one. As a consequence, building initiatives for collective action towards reforming criminal offenders are underestimated and, at the very least, the resources are underused for the purposes they were allocated.

Through its probation workers the PPA established an effective collaboration with government service agencies/community resources through a development interface or convergence of various services. It ensures that clients are able to get the services and programmes they need from other agencies. Probation officers participate in the budget planning session to receive funding from their respective local government units and involve themselves in most important and major initiated activities of the government service agencies/community resources to maintain effective networking and alliances.

V. CHALLENGES FACING MULTI-AGENCY COOPERATION

There is a need to shift from an individualistic approach to multi-agency cooperation through institutional convergence among community resources and service agencies. The principle of interdependence through collective action should be upheld and given paramount consideration. Correction or probation workers who belong to the profession of transforming and developing the capacities of offenders should be reoriented on development concepts and approaches, e.g., multi-agency cooperation, to enable them to become more effective implementers of the community-based corrections system.

The PPA, as a lead agency in the prevention of crime and treatment of offenders, should strongly develop and exercise teamwork not only among its workers in the probation system but, with and among community resources. The multi-agency approach is viable only if all agencies act as team players and believe that community resources are potent agents to reform and develop human beings, particularly criminal offenders.

The initiative of building and maintaining a consistent and well-organized institutional partnership among agencies and entities in the government and individuals in the community requires great determination and serious commitment. A probation officer or any correction worker should have enough knowledge about the mandate of each agency to unite people and agencies, and should know how to use its resources for the benefit of offenders. Social interactions through planning, focus-group discussions, and proper implementation of the project should be effectively carried out. Periodic monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects should be conducted, to ensure that what has been planned out is well executed.

Initially, more capacity-building activities should be conducted to strengthen the capacities of correction/probation workers and service agencies or community resources and promote a well-organized partnership and alliances among those directly involved in the delivery of basic services to achieve an effective community-based corrections system.

VI. REFERENCES

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6. The 1987 Philippine Constitution
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