

## GUYANA

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### **I. Purpose**

Prisons/Correctional Services were established to safely secure persons who have violated the laws of the land and were convicted by a recognized Court of Law committed to serve a term of imprisonment. During the period of imprisonment, it is intended that prisoners should be involved in retraining activities that can target their deviant behaviors so that on release they can live meaningful lives. In instances where persons are sentenced to death, the prison system is expected to enforce that directive by authorized means.

### **II. Relevance of Prisons**

- Prisons form part of the criminal justice system (judiciary, police, probations);
- Protect society by keeping in custody criminals who violated the laws of the land;
- Retrain criminals to live useful lives on their return to society;
- Provide labor and other services provided by their captive labor force; and
- Creates employment and numerous economic opportunities.

### **III. Questions of the Relevance of Prisons**

- They are failing institutions;
- Breeding ground for criminal behaviors;
- Breeding ground for sexual deviance;
- Breeding ground for the spread of diseases (STD, TB, Pox, HIV/AIDS);
- Use of excessive force and authority; and
- Inequality of judicial sentencing leading to over crowding and a high minority population.

### **IV. The challenges for the Guyana prison service**

#### **1. External Impact**

- The culture of organized crime has transcended into the prisoners way of life (Mafia & Cartel);
- Use of phones as effective threats to the security of locations and officers. Institution close nature is eroded;

- Illegal arms smuggling has led to the proliferation of small arms in the prisons;
- The new international fight against crime and terrorism will result in the incarceration of prisoners of a high profile/special nature who require specialized security treatment regime; and
- Issues of organized criminal activities within prisons (riot, drug use, and trafficking) give prisoners a new awareness to defy authority and compromise security.

## **2. Internal Impact**

- Lack of resources (human, financial, and material);
- Poor infrastructure to secure and segregate various types of offenders;
- Inadequate technological infrastructure (security, surveillance systems);
- Poor judicial practices that contribute to overcrowding and perception of injustice;
- Increasing levels of organization among prisoners developing a strong criminal subculture;
- Lack of legislation to support the treatment of prisoners and provide required resources;
- Lack of information sharing in a structured/strategic method;
- Poor public image as a result of a perception of failure and oppression;
- The spread of contagious diseases in the prison and the lack of resources needed to combat same;
- Lack of community support to assist discharged prisoners;
- Inadequate resources to facilitate the provision of retraining programme to target skills/attitudes inadequacies so that prison can function in the open society;
- Lack of corporate involvement in retraining prisoners;
- Buildings weak in structure and inadequate in design;
- High percentage of prisoners on remand for long periods;
- Inexperienced staff members at the subordinate, supervisory and administrative levels;
- The high percentage of female staff members;
- Inadequate medical care for inmates consequent to the lack of sustained visits to the Prisons by Government Medical Officers;
- Inadequate information and technological systems to enhance security; and
- An unstable Judicial System.

### **3. Countermeasures**

- Prisons must be seen as an integral member of the Criminal Justice System notwithstanding its negative images;
- Management must be able to present the challenges of the prison environment in a professional and academic manner to stakeholders in order to position the department more advantageously in order to acquire scarce resources;
- Develop strategic linkages with the security in terms of developing coordinated crime fighting strategies/and information sharing forums;
- Development of the appropriate infrastructure (technological and structural) to minimize the challenges of overcrowding, organized criminal subculture, and separating of special watch prisoners;
- Amending and drafting of new legislations to support strategies to combat crime;
- Developing strategic linkages with key Ministries in order to provide necessary and effective services to the inmate population (human services, health, legal, and education);
- Developing core competences of prison officers to meet their multi-dimensional tasks in the prison environment;
- Control and relocation of prisoners in mass fire scenarios; and
- Measures for the control of prisoners, destruction of buildings and possible relocation of inmates during riots;
- Hostage taking; and
- The spread of contagious diseases, for example Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

The development of the Guyana Prison Service to meet these challenges will necessitate that the Prison Administration collaborate in a sustained and integral manner with Government, other partners of the Criminal Justice Administration and all relevant stakeholders. Collectively, we can provide the necessary structures, resources, facilities, and legislation to ensure the Guyana Prison Service execute its mandate in the most effective and efficient manner.

### **4. Best Practice**

- Allow free access to calls to admission inmates;
- Inmate continued contact with relatives thru visits and telephone calls;
- Access to worship with their religious denomination;
- Access to Medical services;
- Segregation of narcotic offenders;
- Counseling of substances abuse thru specialized programmes;

- Program for violent offender which is compulsory for parole application;
- Access of inmates to retraining and skill programmes;
- Inmate ability to be released on parole after completion of 12 months or 1/3 of sentence, whichever ever is greater;
- Remanded inmates' access to Magistrates every seven days;
- Committed prisoner access to High Court Judge on presentation of Jail delivery done at conclusion of April session;
- Inmates ready access to members of Visiting Committee on request;
- Convicted inmates' ability to earn finance to assist their family;
- Provision of special meals and counseling of HIV inmates;
- Establishment of a Sentence Management Board to effectively manage the sentences of convicted prisoners;
- Establishment of a Training Board to plan and manage training of both Officers and Inmates;
- Establishment of a Recruitment Board to ensure qualified staff are recruited; and
- Establishment of Visiting Committees to perform oversight role in ensuring that prisons are managed effectively.