

Forum: Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1)

Issue: Addressing the effectiveness of rehabilitation systems in prisons

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Introduction:

It is imperative that, when discussing the topic of disarmament and security, we go beyond conventional military and security measures and take the urgent subject of prison rehabilitation into account. Building resilient societies and reducing potential threats to global peace both depend on the successful reintegration of those who have completed their sentences. It is essential to investigate the various strategies used by member states and evaluate how well they work to stop people from returning to a life of crime once they are released.

Identifying the fundamental components that lead to successful rehabilitation attempts will be at the heart of our discussions. Utilising evidence-based methods while considering how an individual's road to reintegration is affected by their education, vocational training, mental health care, and involvement in the community.

We can develop comprehensive solutions that enable those who are incarcerated to lead fulfilling lives after release by acknowledging the importance of social, economic, and psychological components in the rehabilitation process.

Effective rehabilitation also needs to address the crucial post-release phase. It must go beyond the prison walls to guarantee that those released have access to the resources they need, such as housing, job opportunities, and community reintegration programmes. The danger of recidivism can be decreased and public safety can be improved domestically and abroad by increasing the support systems.

Definition of Key Terms:

1. **Vocational Training:** vocational training refers to instructional programs or courses that focus on the skills required for a particular job function or trade.
2. **Rehabilitation:** the action of restoring someone to health or normal life through training and therapy after imprisonment, addiction, or illness.
3. **Incarceration:** the state of being confined in prison; imprisonment.
4. **Post-release phase:** the period after people have served their prison terms and have returned to society is referred to as the post-release phase. They receive assistance and resources during this time to help them locate housing, employment, deal with mental health or substance misuse concerns, and effectively reintegrate back into society.

Background Information

The issue of the effectiveness of rehabilitation systems in prisons has arisen over time due to various shifts in criminal justice philosophies. In the past many countries have taken a punitive approach to criminal punishment, with a larger emphasis on retribution rather than rehabilitation measures. This lone belief has persisted throughout history, that punishment alone could hinder crime and reform prisoners. The availability and calibre of rehabilitation programmes have been impacted by budget restrictions and scarce resources in many prison systems. The effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes is impeded by insufficient funds for education, vocational training, mental health services, and counselling. Not only that, but the success of an inmate's return to society after serving time in jail depends heavily on post-release care. When inmates are released from prison, they encounter many difficulties that could raise their risk of recidivism. Some factors being, lack of housing stability, reconnecting with family, and, limited employment opportunities. These are not all of the reasons why rehabilitation is at such a large focus currently, but only some.

The Birth of the Rehabilitative Ideal

The emergence of the rehabilitative ideal signalled a substantial change in the criminal justice system's perspective on rehabilitation. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, there was a shift from the use of predominantly punitive tactics to the conviction that inmates might be changed via education, employment, and individualised care. Modern correctional systems' efforts at rehabilitation were established as a result of this change.

Medical Model of Rehabilitation

In the 1950s, it was thought that once someone had a particular level of disability, they would always be regarded as disabled. On the other hand, they wouldn't be qualified for disability benefits if they didn't have that degree of impairment. According to the American Medical Association's Committee on Medical Rating of Physical Impairments, a proper assessment of a permanent impairment necessitates a thorough medical examination, and an accurate measurement of function, and should not be influenced by arbitrary factors like the person's age, gender, or line of work. The American Medical Association Committee regarded pathology to be the same as a disability in the 1950s, but experts now understand that a person's physical state and environment interact to cause disability. This change has a number of effects on policy, professional development, and research. The medical model has since gained prominence and views criminal behaviour as a psychological illness to be treated, like medical conditions

Focus on Reentry Programs

In the mid-1900s was when the beginnings of reentry programs were uncovered. The emphasis on reentry programmes within the context of rehabilitation marked a move towards addressing the difficulties that people face after being released from prison. Reentry programmes support inmates reintegrating into society by offering necessary tools, services, and assistance to lower recidivism and foster effective reintegration. According to a RAND Corporation research, offenders who took part in correctional education programmes had a 43% lower chance of going back to jail within three years than those who did not.

Current Situation

The rehabilitation theory of punishment, which was most recently developed, holds that the goal of punishment is to provide the offender with rehabilitation and education so that he can return to society and operate as a law-abiding member of the community. Even while it did not always result in an offender obtaining a more lenient penalty than he would have under a retributive or preventive philosophy, rehabilitation was seen as an empathetic alternative to retribution and was established in legal practice in the 19th century. Rehabilitation frequently entailed the release of an individual on probation with limitations; in other instances, it required that he spend a substantially longer time in custody so that he may receive treatment.

Restorative Justice Movement

The phrase "restorative justice" had gained popularity by the second phase of the 1990s and was widely used by 2006. It is an approach to restitution known as restorative justice that seeks to make criminals comprehend the harm they have caused, acknowledge the responsibility for their actions, have a chance at redemption, and refrain from harming others in the future. Its objective for victims is to empower them by participation in the process and to lessen their sense of helplessness.

Evidence-Based Practices

Evidence-based practices are defined as interventions and strategies that have undergone extensive research and have been successful through data analysis. By using evidence-based practices, rehabilitation programmes can increase the likelihood of successful outcomes for prisoners and lower recidivism rates by ensuring that interventions are founded on empirical research.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States of America (USA)

Between the 1950s and 1970's an ideal model was configured based on the belief that trained experts could oversee personalised assessment and medicaments to diagnose the root causes of criminal behaviour, akin to doctors curing other ailments. It was known as the "rehabilitative ideal," and it was firmly based on the premise that prisoners might be changed and reintegrated into society as law-abiding citizens.

Rehabilitation was a significant part of the U.S. prison policy in the mid-1970s. Prisoners who had psychological issues, like substance abuse or belligerence, were recommended to improve their occupational skills to resolve such problems. Since this time there has been a shift, there is less of an emphasis on rehabilitation and resolving such problems at the root, and rather, seeing punishment as a prison's primary function. Mass incarceration has been a complex in the USA since the 1970s, and both parties' politicians

used racial rhetoric to enforce penitentiary policies. In 2023 Almost 2 million people are in prison.

Policymakers, practitioners, and researchers continue to disagree on the efficacy of rehabilitation systems. While some contend that focusing on punishment and incapacitation is vital for public safety, others say that investing in rehabilitation can benefit both prisoners and society.

Norway

Norway's prison rehabilitation is entirely successful due to its humanistic and rehabilitative focus. The prison system heavily prioritises rehabilitation and the post-release reintegration phase into society, there is a focus here on identifying the root causes of criminal behaviour and providing optimum opportunities to individuals. Early in the 1990s, the Norwegian Correctional Service undertook a severe series of reforms to shift towards rehabilitation. Prisoners, who had previously spent the majority of their days behind bars, were given daily training and educational opportunities. The low rates of recidivism in Norway are one of the most important measures of the country's effective rehabilitation programme. Statistics show that Norway has a recidivism rate that is much lower than many other nations, at about 20%.

Asia

Following China in 1949 after the communists took power, reform became the main objective of criminal discipline. The historical proletariat's goal to transform society and humanity served as the foundation for this programme. The idea that an offender owes society a debt that may be satisfied by simply serving a prison sentence was foreign to Chinese jurisprudence. Because the state was so determined to alter the offender's mindset, the jail was typically combined with labour and political education.

Japan has continued to have one of the lowest incarceration rates in the world and a very low crime rate, but starting in the 1990s, some mild increases in the severity of sanctions, including incarceration, led to congestion in its prisons. Similarly, Singapore has maintained a very low crime rate despite having maintained a strict criminal code and a high imprisonment rate. Indonesia has inflicted harsh penalties for crimes, such as the death penalty for drug trafficking whilst being the most populated country in Southeast Asia. More

than 20% of the total jail population in Hong Kong was made up of women, a figure that was higher than the global average of roughly 5% at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

NGOs

There are a multitude of NGOs that are focusing on rehabilitation and criminal justice reform. Criminon is an international NGO primarily focused on criminal rehabilitation, through programs that improve various communication and relationship skills. The Penal Reform International (PRI) is an organisation working globally to uphold humanity in prison systems so that they uphold no harm and human rights for all. The mentioned NGOs focus globally, though, it is highly encouraged to research NGOs that pertain to a specific member nation(s).

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

The Doha Declaration, which was adopted after the 13th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, emphasised the significance of taking action to aid in the rehabilitation and social reintegration of convicts into society. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) assisted Member States in creating a more rehabilitative approach to jail administration as part of the Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration and its pillar on fair, humane, and effective criminal justice systems. In fact, funding comparable programming for inmates was suggested as one of the best and most economical strategies to stop their reoffending, with major advantages for the individuals concerned and public safety.

Possible Solutions

It is recommended that delegates should start the process of developing solutions by identifying the root causes relevant to their nation in relation to the topic of prison rehabilitation systems. An alternative strategy is to break down the overarching problem into several manageable sub-issues and address each one separately in individual clauses. This systematic approach aids in developing comprehensive and actionable resolutions that address all aspects of the problem.

A considerable solution to combating the lack of effective rehabilitation could be inviting the UNODC among other applicable organisations to carry out periodic evaluations and impact analyses of the supported rehabilitation initiatives in LEDCs to ensure accountability, transparency, and ongoing improvement.

Expanding on the lack of funding and economic means for LEDCs to improve the state of rehabilitation efforts, member nations may choose to urge the UNODC to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to provide training, technical assistance, and knowledge for LEDCs in the means of designing better-improved rehabilitation programs. Encouraging the formation of public-private partnerships can help LEDCs' rehabilitation programmes leverage more funding. Invite private sector organisations, NGOs, and charitable foundations to contribute to funding resources and experience.

Member states may choose to encourage community involvement in the rehabilitation process, including families, neighbourhood organisations, and civic leaders. Utilise restorative justice techniques to promote healing and accountability for both victims and offenders. By involving the community there is an attempt to reduce the stigmatisation and isolation individuals may experience once reintegrating into society. It may also be more cost-effective compared to more disciplinary practices. Lastly, it can help to create a safer environment that targets community orientation.

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Useful Links

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