

ANTIGUA Y BARBUDA

CHALLENGES, MEASURES AND BEST PRACTICES

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I. Prevention of Prison Violence

It is of great importance that prevention of violence is diligently adhered to. Straying away from such, means it will adversely affect the proper functioning of the security aspect of the prison. However, in the past due the lack of sufficient staff, it was almost impossible to prevent violent events of inmates towards other inmates, and inmates attacking prison officers.

We are all very aware of rivals gangs in civil society, whose members have from time to time are committed to prison on various charges, some of which are quite serious charges. It was always an uphill task for officers, who were un-aware of some of these gang members. But due to our wits, tact and constant communication with our local police force, and assistance from the Office of the Money Laundering and Drug Control Policy (ONDPCP), we were able to gather information on such members, and take corrective measures to counter their activities.

Although we are woefully short of cells to properly house the inmates due to overcrowding, we have been quite effective in separating rival gang members, whilst still curtailing the numbers of members of any particular gang in a particular cell. Those measures have contributed to the lowering of prison violence.

II. Disciplinary Regulations

Both inmates and officers are subject to the rules and regulations under cap 341 of the Prison Act of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda. The inmates are liable under the rule 159 and 197, and officers are liable under rule 114, If any of the rules or regulations are breached. Further, the visiting committee plays an integral part in the disciplinary matters of officers and inmates, under rule 198 and 199 respectively.

III. Reform and Social Rehabilitation of Prisoners

It has been the goal of the prison authority for many years in promoting the Social Rehabilitation of inmates of HMP. As a consequence, we have been fortunate to have the services of two (2) counselors who have been able to address the inmates' needs, and have been quite effective in the commencement of the reform process. However, all inmates did not readily accept such counseling. This was mainly due to the varied environments that a number of them originated from.

I am sure that you would agree with me that social rehabilitation can be a long process. Looking at the environment that some inmates are raised, lack of confidence in the system by some, and a lack of understanding by some, it has been a serious challenge for these groups to adapt to the Social Rehabilitation within the prison. However, with patience and the determination to make the programme work, we have been able to convince them through one on one counseling. As a consequence, these inmates were able to open up and have moved to group counseling, and have gained confidence to the extent that their strengths and weaknesses have been exposed.

Having established their strengths and weaknesses, we have been able to place them in different rehabilitation programmes such as:

the Craft Shop;
the Tailor Shop;
Carpentry;
Electronic repair;
the Prison Farm;
Remedial Classes;
Auto Mechanic and Auto Body Repairs; and
the Life Skills Programme,
For the Female Inmates, their programmes consist of:
Cooking;
Baking;
Needle Craft; and
Remedial Classes.

Quite recently we have been able to re-open our Prison Library through the assistance of the Optimist Club. They have also introduced English Language, Mathematics and Spanish, and they have insisted that at the end of the inmates training, they will be able to take the CXC exams.

IV. Penitentiary Legislation and Public Policies

Our Penitentiary Legislations and Public Policies can be found under Cap 341 of the Prison Act of Antigua and Barbuda, and the Prison Rules that govern both Prison Officers and Inmates of HMP.

V. Conditions of Detention

Conditions of Detention depend on the Courts. When someone offends society, the court will order remanded detention or convicted detention. However, the magistrate or judge according to the level of the offence committed can provide varied means of sentencing, such as:

- a. Short or long sentence;
- b. Incapacitation;
- c. Suspended sentence; and
- d. proposed alternative sentence, rather than custodial sentence.

VI. Selection and Training of Penitentiary Staff

Many of the experienced officers have been in the prison service for a number of years, without any follow-up training after their initial training to become officers. However within recent times we have been fortunate to be able to access short courses through assistance of the ONDCP.

In addition, we have been fortunate to have been able to recruit and train an additional 18 officer who were added to our complement of 55 other officer. These new officer became permanent members of staff effective 31 October 2011, and have been a great source of relief to the previously woefully inadequate numbers that we were experiencing for quite a number of years. We are not yet up to our full complement, and we have already budgeted for a further increase in our number for the upcoming Financial Year.