

ST. LUCIA

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Summary:

1. The challenges faced at the Bordelais Correctional Facility and the Prison Service in Saint Lucia includes outdated prison legislation, overcrowding, high proportion of pre-trial prisoners, punitive criminal justice policies that penalize minor offences and criminalize large numbers of young people and a punitive social environment that supports the death penalty and harsh criminal justice policies. Many progressive efforts have been accomplished at implementing rehabilitative reforms, with the full support of the Ministry of Home Affairs and National Security but there is much needed training for Correctional staff that continues to resist the rehabilitative philosophy. Due to overcrowding some young prisoners are housed with older prisoners while violating the classification policy. Segregation is used frequently as the main disciplinary measure. Prisoners with mental illness are a significant problem at the Bordelais Correctional Facility, due to the inadequate mental health treatment available. Significant efforts are currently being implemented at developing individualized sentence management system and to increase provisions for prisoner education and rehabilitation programmes.
2. A few alternative sentences are provided in the current Criminal Code of Saint Lucia, but they are rarely applied and short prison sentences are used excessively, often because offenders are unable to pay the high fines imposed. For example, in Saint Lucia 42.3% of prisoners are serving sentences of 2 years or below and around 24% are serving sentences of one year or below. Imprisonment is over-used in Saint Lucia and contributes to the current 46% rate of recidivism.
3. Probation and Parole services in Saint Lucia are significantly under-resourced thereby undermines the courts' ability to use non-custodial sanctions and measures that require supervision. Progress is being made slowly on building capacity of the probation services, but much more remains to be done to ensure that a larger number and variety of alternative sentences are applied in practice.
4. Drug related imprisonment: The current provisions of Drugs Acts in Saint Lucia are not covered entirely in line with the spirit of the United Nations Convention against illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. While Saint Lucia's national laws have been very efficient in integrating the punitive elements of the Convention, they have not taken into account the other components which include provision for the treatment and rehabilitation of offenders. The management of the Bordelais Correctional Facility has adapted a recent discussion paper published by UNODC, Principles of Drug Dependent Treatment which emphasizes in general, drug use should be seen as a health care condition and drug users should be treated in the health care system rather than in the criminal justice system where possible. Prisoners convicted of drug related offences make up 4.6% of the prison population and those convicted or charged with drugs offences make up 6% of the prison population.
5. Limited drug treatment is available and provided in Saint Lucia. Some drug counseling is provided at the Bordelais Correctional Facility, but these services are very inadequate in number and quality. 89% of the repeat offences are drug related, as prisoners return to their communities without having their health problems addressed while imprisoned. This

means that many citizens get a criminal record which prevents them from getting employment, which in turn criminalizes the youth who are most involved in using drugs.

6. Imprisonment of Juveniles and Young people: In Saint Lucia juveniles are referred to as individuals below the age of sixteen (16), contrary to international law which determines the age limit as eighteen (18). In general, younger prisoners up to the age of 25 make up a significant proportion of the prison population, for example; currently there are 162 prisoners (Detainees and Sentenced) which are between the ages of 16 and 25, which make up 31% of the total prison population. When assessing the lifetime impact of a criminal record and imprisonment on these young people, it is important to take account of the stigmatization encountered by ex-prisoners and offenders in Saint Lucia, and how this reduces significantly prospects of employment and destroys positive family relationships.
7. Staffing, recruitment and training: The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (SMR) places great importance on the quality and status of staff assigned to supervise prisoners. Currently Correctional Officer in Saint Lucia are trained at the Royal Saint Lucia Police Academy for six (6) months. Efforts are currently being undertaken to develop a new Initial Training Course (ITC) that is Corrections specific and does not include police training. The new ITC is expected to be implemented in April 2012. The new ITC will emphasize the need to recruit and select staff with integrity, professional capacity and personal suitability to work within the prison environment. It will also highlight the need for continued capacity building of staff with regular in-service training courses. Currently there are inadequate numbers of specialist staff, such as Social Workers, Remedial Teachers, Trade Instructors and Mental Health professionals assigned to the Bordelais Correctional Facility. These provisions are based on the premise that a key requirement for good prison management and proper treatment and rehabilitation of prisoners, is the existence of a well trained cadre of professional staff, who can balance the responsibilities of maintaining order and security with those of contributing to the rehabilitation of prisoners in a positive and constructive manner.
8. The quality of prison healthcare provision in Saint Lucia is inadequate. There are two (2) nurses and three health care assistants employed at the Bordelais Correctional Facility. However, the scheduled weekly visits by Medical Doctors and Psychiatrist from the Ministry of Health are insufficient to cover the health care needs of the prisoners if the Doctors show up as scheduled. A similar situation exist with dental care treatment, the impact of the poor medical services on prisoners' health is exacerbated by overcrowding. There are currently sixty-four (64) prisoners with mental illness who are not receiving any or adequate treatment. Visits from psychiatrists are insufficient and the treatment provided, if any is symptomatic.