

Strengthening the Capacity of
the Nigerian Correctional Service
to Effectively Rehabilitate and
Reintegrate Prisoners Held for
an (alleged) Association with
Boko Haram (Phase I-III)

Achievements Report 2021-2023



UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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“
This initiative constitutes a major step forward in our collective goal to support the Nigerian Correctional Service in its efforts to comply with the core provisions of the Nelson Mandela Rules by improving prison security, safety and the humane treatment of prisoners.
”

Ms. Leticia Ayoola-Daniels
Director of the Administration of Criminal Justice and Reforms Department under the Federal Ministry of Justice of Nigeria

MAKING THE
WORLD SAFER
FROM DRUGS,
CRIME AND
TERRORISM



A prison officer following UNODC training
Cover: Training on the Nelson Mandela Rules e-learning course

Introduction

Over the past decade, Nigeria has been grappling with the threat of terrorism and violent extremism from groups such as Boko Haram – an Islamic extremist group officially known as Jama at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da’ wal, most active in north-eastern Nigeria. Due to the increasing threat, many people have been arrested and prosecuted for terrorism and violent extremism-related crimes.

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After taking on my assignment as UNODC’s representative in Nigeria, my very first travel took me to Maiduguri where I was struck by the fate of alleged members of Boko Haram who had been lingering in detention already for several years with no trial in sight. While several UNODC projects were already supporting investigators and prosecutors to work through their case files, there was no intervention to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of these young men. Thanks to the support of Germany, we were able to help Nigeria to close this gap.
”

Dr. Oliver Stolpe
Representative, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Country Office for Nigeria

The Nigerian Correctional Service is mandated to take custody of all legally interned persons; provide safe, secure and humane custody of offenders; and implement rehabilitation programmes to facilitate the reintegration of offenders back into society. The Correctional Service now faces the complex challenge of managing detained individuals associated with violent extremism within the general prison population, where they could potentially recruit new members and turn prisons into incubators for radicalization to violence. This is in addition to the existing challenges such as overcrowding, poor prison conditions, limited rehabilitation facilities, and insufficient prison management capacity.

Despite these challenges, in recent years the Correctional Service has identified a need to provide prison-based intervention programming to facilitate effective rehabilitation and social reintegration support for persons who have been either suspected or convicted of Boko Haram association. Their proposed approach sought to transform prisons into an opportunity for disengagement and rehabilitation.

Since 2021, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been working closely with the Nigerian Correctional Service on this new approach, focusing on three key impact areas: enhancing prison security and safety by introducing effective management policies and procedures upon admission and in the course of imprisonment; supporting the rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners, in particular (alleged) Boko Haram

associates ; and improving the capacity of the Nigerian Correctional Service to continuously monitor compliance with core provisions of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules).This technical assistance was made possible by the generous support of the Government of Germany.

The impact has been profound. Focusing on one pilot prison, Maiduguri Maximum Custodial Centre, the programme has achieved impressive outcomes, including improved infrastructure, enhanced knowledge and capacity of prison staff, and successful collaborations with community leaders and civil society organizations towards the successful reintegration of violent extremist offenders into society. As a result, people are safer both inside and outside prison. This report explores these achievements, and areas for future work.

Impact areas



Safety and security

Safe and secure prisons reduce tensions, prevent escapes and safeguard the well-being of prisoners and staff.



Rehabilitation and social reintegration

Imprisonment often strains the relationships between offenders, their families and society as a whole. The impact is even more severe for violent extremist offenders.



Application of the Nelson Mandela Rules

The Nelson Mandela Rules provide clear standards to ensure the safe, secure and humane custody of all prisoners, including those detained for violent extremism-related offences.

Programme background

In 2021, UNODC and the Nigerian Correctional Service carried out a joint assessment of the Maiduguri Maximum Security Custodial Centre in Borno State. The aim was to identify strategic interventions that would enhance the safe, secure, and humane custody of violent extremist prisoners and prevent the spread of radicalisation to violence within the prison, and the broader prison population. At the time, the prison held 1,275 individuals who were suspected of being associated with Boko Haram. The assessment highlighted various areas that required attention, including safety and security, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and compliance with the Nelson Mandela Rules. As a result, UNODC directed its technical support towards these critical areas, aiming to address the identified gaps and enhance the overall conditions and outcomes at the Nigerian Correctional Service.



Nigeria

Number of prisoners:
80,883
Convicted prisoners: **25,626**
Awaiting trial: **55,257**

Number of female prisoners:
1,887

Number of prisons:
245

Relevant documents

Sustainable Development Goals

This programme provided meaningful support in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the application of a result-based approach and contributed to SDG 1 – No poverty, and SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions.

The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules)

A strong focus of the programme has been on the promotion of the Nelson Mandela Rules which offer powerful barriers against violent extremism taking root in prisons.

The United Nations System Common Position Paper on Incarceration

The programme was aligned with the UN Systems Common Position on Incarceration with the objectives of reducing the prison population, strengthening prison management and advancing the rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders. This was particularly important in Nigeria due to its large population of detainees awaiting trial.

UNODC Strategy 2021-2025

The technical assistance provided in Nigeria was in line with the UNODC Strategy, which aims to promote global peace, security, human rights, and development by creating a safer world that is free from drugs, crime, corruption, and terrorism.

UNODC Strategic Vision for Nigeria 2030

UNODC’s technical assistance to the Nigerian Correctional Service was implemented within the framework of its Strategic Vision for Nigeria 2030, which *inter alia* focuses on enhancing the welfare, rehabilitation, and successful reintegration of prisoners.

Initial challenges

- Persistent prison overcrowding and a limited use of non-custodial measures.
- Security and political sensitivities around the topic of violent extremism and terrorism within prisons.
- Inadequate prison conditions, infrastructure and staff capacity to implement advanced interventions for violent extremist prisoners.
- The impact of climate change and related disruptions on prison management.
- Limited access to justice and legal aid for individuals associated with violent extremist offences.
- Societal lack of tolerance and acceptance towards individuals with a previous association with Boko Haram, posing challenges for successful reintegration.



Staff living quarters in Derad before and after renovation

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The intervention by UNODC in the Maiduguri Maximum Custodial Centre has been nothing short of transformative. Before their involvement, the deradicalization programme was severely underfunded, which resulted in uncertainty about its future. As the programme manager, I faced the daunting task of meeting the needs of both the inmates and dedicated staff. I am grateful for UNODC and the German Government support and their genuine concern for improving the conditions for the inmates and staff. Their interventions have made a significant impact, providing hope and tangible progress for the future.

”
Dr Ibrahim Ade-yusuf
Program Manager/Deputy Controller of
Nigerian Correctional Services,
Deradicalization Program Management Unit



Safety and security

Effective prison management is a complex responsibility and a multifaceted task aiming at promoting a society's safety. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to establish and maintain measures that protect both staff and prisoners, prevent escapes, and facilitate successful rehabilitation. This becomes even more critical when dealing with violent extremist offenders, as prisons lacking adequate safety and security measures can become a breeding ground for radicalization and the incitement of violence. Implementing robust safety and security measures played a pivotal role in enhancing the capacity of the prison service to manage violent extremist prisoners and deter the spread of radicalization to violence within prison settings.

“

The UNODC interventions will go a long way in enhancing staff performance in line with international prison management guidelines. Correctional officers from the Nigerian Correctional Service are now eager to practice the best custodial management, which will be emulated around the continent and the globe.

”

Mr. Leon Magem
Assistant Controller of Corrections,
Team Leader, Deradicalization
Programme, Maiduguri Maximum
Security Custodial Centre

Activity summary

- Enhanced the prison security audit checklist and provided training to prison staff on conducting effective security audits.
- Trained 49 prison officers on dynamic security techniques, equipping them with the necessary skills to maintain a secure prison environment.
- Implemented improvements to the lighting infrastructure including perimeter fencing within the prison system to enhance security and deter potential security breaches.
- Developed an engaging and interactive online training course on the UNODC Handbook on Classification of Prisoners, incorporating presentations with animations and real-life scenarios.
- Enhanced the capacity of 15 prison officers to effectively utilize the Corrections Information Management System (CIMS), improving data management and information flow within the prison system.
- Fostered stronger collaboration between the Nigerian Correctional Service and various law enforcement agencies, particularly in the domains of prison intelligence and prison incident management.
- Established effective mechanisms for information sharing between the Deradicalization Programme in Maiduguri Maximum Security Custodial Centre and the Headquarters in Abuja to enhance coordination and ensure a comprehensive approach to addressing radicalization to violence within prisons.

Results

- Significantly enhanced the structural security of the prison by addressing the lack of a reliable electricity source due to insurgency-related disruptions in the state. As a safe and sustainable alternative, the programme installed a solar system and strategically placed lights around the perimeter fencing, effectively mitigating the serious security risk previously faced.
- Strengthened public security by improving communication channels between the Deradicalization Unit's field offices and headquarters. Through the provision of advanced technology, the programme facilitated better coordination and regular updating of case review reports on each Designated Interest Client, contributing to more effective management of potential risks and the implementation of appropriate interventions.
- Achieved an overall improvement in prison security by enhancing staff confidence in managing violent extremist prisoners in a safe, secure, and humane manner. This was accomplished through comprehensive training to more than 100 prison officers, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure the proper and secure storage of prisoner information, identify potential vulnerabilities and implement necessary measures to enhance safety and security within prisons, and effectively handle various conflict situations that may arise in prisons. The effectiveness of the training was evaluated through pre- and post-evaluation surveys and garnered positive testimonials from participating prison officers.



Solar system donated to Maiduguri Maximum Security Custodial Centre



Training on the Corrections Information Management System

Positive change, one block at a time: Inspector Zarami's story

Inspector Babagana Zarami, an officer of the Nigerian Correctional Service, found his career and outlook change following a three-week training of trainers delivered by UNODC.

"I used to be caught in the routine of simply caring for inmates' welfare within the prison walls. Little did I know that a remarkable journey awaited me when I was selected for a life-changing opportunity – a three-week UNODC training of trainers on vocational programmes.

"These three weeks opened a world of possibilities. I ventured into the realms of carpentry, masonry, and drywall installation. Beyond the technical skills, I acquired valuable knowledge on the proper use of equipment and the essential part of keeping oneself safe in both training and workplace environments.

"Our instructor was a true master of his craft. He didn't just impart knowledge; he instilled confidence. Each of us had the chance to demonstrate our newfound skills, crafting practical items that showcased our progress.

"The most rewarding part of this journey is what came next. Armed with these newfound skills, I returned to the Maiduguri Maximum Custodial Centre with a purpose – to teach inmates the art of block molding. To date, the inmates under my guidance have produced more than 1,000 blocks, tangible evidence of the impact of this vocational training.

"Our plan is to showcase these accomplishments to the world, a testament to the transformative power of education and skill development.

"I am deeply grateful to Germany for providing the funding and support to UNODC for bringing this invaluable programme to life. It has not only equipped me with lifelong skills but has also brought us closer to the goal of effective rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates in our care.

"I have discovered the potential for positive change, one block at a time."

“

I am deeply grateful to Germany for providing the funding and support to UNODC for bringing this invaluable programme to life. It has not only equipped me with lifelong skills but has also brought us closer to the goal of effective rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates in our care.

”

Babagana Zarami

Training of trainers for prison officers in charge of vocational training



Rehabilitation and social reintegration

Imprisonment often comes with significant challenges and far-reaching consequences that can strain the relationships between offenders, their families and society as a whole. The impact is even more severe for violent extremist offenders as they are likely to be stigmatized twice, both as criminals and terrorists, and society may not support a second chance.

Prison-based rehabilitation plays a crucial role in the management of violent extremist offenders. It serves the dual purpose of mitigating safety and security risks within prison environments while also improving the prospects of social reintegration for these individuals upon their release.

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Through this training, I have come to recognize the significance and necessity of implementing a well-defined vocational training programme for the inmates. It is crucial that the managers of the Centre strictly adhere to this training programme to ensure its effectiveness.

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Prison officer in charge of vocational training at Maiduguri Maximum Security Custodial Centre

Activities

- Enhanced vocational training opportunities by constructing a multi-purpose skills acquisition hall, renovating existing vocational centres and procuring relevant equipment, tools, and materials such as sewing machines, carpentry tools, drywalling materials, educational books and stationery.
- Improved educational facilities by renovating classrooms and providing ample books and stationery resources for effective learning.
- Enhanced the skills of prison officers responsible for vocational training programmes through tailored training sessions to enhance their capacity in delivering quality instruction.
- Empowered prison officers and civil society organisations to use sports as a means of preventing violent extremism within prison settings. This included procuring sports equipment and attire to support the implementation of sports-based rehabilitation efforts.
- Facilitated constructive dialogue between the correctional service and community leaders, promoting public understanding of the positive impact of disengagement interventions on public safety. This collaborative approach aimed to foster community support and integration for the successful reintegration of offenders into society.

Results

- The expansion of tools and equipment resources enabled more prisoners, to access vocational and educational programmes. Initially, out of over 700 prisoners expressing interest in learning various vocational skills, only 291 inmates were registered due to limited resources. However, with additional support, more prisoners were able to enroll in these programmes, enhancing their prospects for successful reintegration into society.
- The vocational training skills of prison officers were improved in key areas such as masonry, drywalling and carpentry, resulting in prisoners producing better quality outputs. Additionally, in order to ensure the sustainability, the capacity of various non-governmental organizations and academics from Borno state was increased, specifically on the use of sports to prevent violent extremism within prison walls.
- Reintegration prospects improved as a result of the development of effective strategies to address barriers and create a supportive environment for prisoners transitioning back into society, including through fostering dialogue between the Correctional Service and community leaders.



Practical session during the training of trainers on masonry

“Acknowledging that prisons can serve as potential incubators for radicalization to terrorism and terrorist recruitment, and that proper assessment and monitoring of imprisoned foreign terrorist fighters is critical to mitigate opportunities for terrorists to attract new recruits, recognizing that prisons can also serve to rehabilitate and reintegrate prisoners, where appropriate, and also recognizing that Member States may need to continue to engage with offenders after release from prison to avoid recidivism, in accordance with relevant international law and taking into consideration, where appropriate, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, or ‘Nelson Mandela Rules’.”

UN Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017)

The role of community: Adamu’s story

After being caught stealing by his community and handed over to the police, 22-year-old Adamu, residing in north-east Nigeria, faced a trial that resulted in a prison sentence of 24 months. Overwhelmed by shame and uncertainty about his future inside and outside prison, Adamu wept uncontrollably, feeling the weight of not just the court’s judgment, but also the harrowing stories he had heard from former prisoners and their families.

The fear of being treated like an animal and enduring further hardships after release haunted Adamu. On entering prison Adamu isolated himself, resenting the world and blaming dysfunctional systems for his misfortune.

However, his perspective began to shift when a correctional officer from the Nigerian Correctional Service introduced him to vocational training programmes available to prisoners. Within a short time, Adamu mastered the art of crafting traditional caps, a skill that would prove valuable in shaping his future. Upon his release, he showcased his craftsmanship to the traditional ruler, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation. The community, witnessing his newfound talent and ability to earn a decent living, began to trust him once again.

“Adamu is from my community and is a former prisoner. He is now an employer of

labour and makes nothing less than N20,000 on a traditional cap. In fact, he made the cap I’m wearing today.”

This recollection was shared by a traditional ruler during the second dialogue between community leaders and the Nigerian Correctional Service, organized by UNODC in Yola, Adamawa State in May 2023 under another project implemented by UNODC and funded by the United States Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. The two UNODC projects complement each other, increasing the impact of the programme at the Maiduguri Maximum Custodial Centre.

Adamu’s story serves as an excellent example of the transformative power of rehabilitation programmes and the critical role that community involvement plays in the successful reintegration of individuals like him.

Dialogue with community leaders



Application of the Nelson Mandela Rules

The Nelson Mandela Rules provide clear standards for prison officials to ensure the safety, security, and humane treatment of prisoners, including those detained on violent extremism-related offences.

The practical application of these rules in managing violent extremist prisoners within the overall prison population results in a safer environment for prison staff and other inmates. Moreover, the rules recognize the difficulties faced by staff working with certain categories of prisoners and require that the conditions of their service reflect the importance and difficulty of their role. This consideration was crucial in the programme's design.

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As an instructor and course coordinator responsible for preparing course content for new recruits, I have been highly impacted by this training. The course content and the modules of the e-learning course underpin that humane treatment of those in our custody should be at the centre of how we carry out our duties.

”

Course instructor from
Kaduna Staff Training College

Activities

- Facilitated the integration of the UNODC e-learning course on the Nelson Mandela Rules into the Nigerian Correctional Service training curricula. This involved providing 30 computers and related equipment to two training colleges in Kaduna and Lagos.
- Enhanced the proficiency of 113 senior officers and instructors within the Correctional Service, equipping them with the necessary skills to effectively deliver the e-learning course.
- Provided the Nigerian Correctional Service with over 2000 copies of the Nelson Mandela Rules, ensuring easy access to this essential document for both staff and prisoners.
- Improved the quality of life for officers working in the Deradicalization Programme at the Maiduguri Maximum Custodial Centre by renovating their living quarters and providing essential furniture.
- Fostered better coordination and information exchange between the Nigerian Correctional Service, criminal justice agencies, and civil society organisations, leading to improved access to justice and more efficient case management for individuals detained on charges related to violent extremism.
- Drilled a new solar powered borehole and renovated the health clinic, improving the living conditions and overall health of prisoners.

Results

- Improved access to health, water and sanitation for prisoners through the drilling of a new borehole and renovation of the health clinic; a vital element of the Nelson Mandela Rules. Climate change and related disruptions have led to water scarcity across many prisons in Nigeria as existing boreholes dry up. This adds to the pressures of the growing prison population.
- Improved the day-to-day implementation of the Rules through providing comprehensive training to officers increasing their knowledge and ability to apply the Rules in their daily duties. The trainings have not only generated interest from the senior leadership of the Nigerian Correctional Service but have also prompted plans to cascade similar trainings to all its training schools, further reinforcing the importance of upholding the rules.
- Improved the living conditions of prison staff by renovating the staff quarters designed for officers attached to the Deradicalization Programme. This holistic approach towards improving conditions for both prisoners and officers, has led to an increased appreciation and awareness among correctional officers regarding the significance of positive prisoner-staff relations, including adherence to the Nelson Mandela Rules.



An instructor from the Nigerian Correctional Service Staff Training College proudly displays his certificate of completion for the Nelson Mandela Rules e-learning course



Computers donated to Nigerian Correctional Service Kirikiri Staff Training College

What next?

The programme implemented at the Maiduguri Maximum Custodial Centre has achieved many positive outcomes, ranging from improved infrastructure to enhanced knowledge and capacity of prison staff. Additionally, constructive collaborations with community leaders and civil society organizations have paved the way to the successful reintegration of offenders into society.

However, it is crucial to replicate these interventions in the four other prisons in Nigeria that hold violent extremist prisoners, given the ongoing threat of terrorism, violent extremism, and radicalization to violence in prisons. Accomplishing this task will require several key actions, including strengthening the institutional capacity of the Deradicalization Programme; fostering improved collaborations between various criminal justice actors and civil society organizations, and developing an evidence base on the effectiveness of non-custodial measures in addressing the prolonged detention of violent extremism-related offenders.

Sustainability and partnerships

During the implementation of the programme, UNODC employed effective mechanisms to ensure the long-term sustainability of the interventions. This encompassed collaborating closely with the Nigerian Correctional Service, supporting existing vocational and educational initiatives, and fostering a sense of ownership among those responsible for allocating resources to these programmes. By extending support beyond trainings, the programme also provided crucial infrastructural support, greatly contributing to the lasting impact of the interventions.

The Maiduguri Maximum Security Custodial Centre serves as a pilot prison under another project implemented by UNODC, which is funded by the United States Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). This INL-funded project offers an opportunity for UNODC to expand upon the initiatives commenced in the aforementioned programme, thereby further enhancing the scope and reach of the programme interventions.

Lastly, the programme actively engaged community leaders and empowered civil society organizations operating in Borno State. This engagement ensured their continued ability to collobarate with the Nigerian Correctional Service even after the programme concludes, thus creating a sustainable network of support joint work for the successful reintegration of violent extremist offenders into society.



Improved access to water at Maiduguri Maximum Custodial Centre

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A fair trial in an appropriate time frame is an essential contribution to citizens' trust in their own government. It is, therefore, also a contribution to fighting violent extremism. I therefore congratulate UNODC for their work on access to justice and am sure Germany will continue its support of the project.

”

Mr. Johannes Lehne
Deputy Ambassador, Embassy of the
Federal Republic of Germany, Abuja



Meeting on access to justice for violent extremist prisoners



Training of trainers learning materials

Thank you

UNODC expresses sincere gratitude to the donor and partner country, without whom this initiative would not have been possible.

Donor



GERMANY

Partner country



NIGERIA

Implementing partner



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime