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
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 wal 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.

The Nelson Mandela Rules provide clear minimum standards of prison treatment and aim to strengthen 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.

Strengthening the Capacity of the Nigerian Correctional Service | Achievements Report 2021-2023

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
Improves positive relationships between offenders, their families and society as a whole. The impact is even more intense for violent extremist offenders.

Application of the Nelson Mandela Rules
The Nelson Mandela Rules provide clear standards to ensure the safe, secure and human treatment of all prisoners, including those detained for violent extremism-related offenses.
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.

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.

Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of prisoners:</th>
<th>80,883</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convicted prisoners:</td>
<td>25,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awaiting trial:</td>
<td>55,257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Number of female prisoners: | 1,887 |
| Number of prisons:          | 245   |

The intervention by UNODC in the Maiduguri Maximum Custodial Centre has been nothing short of transformational. Before their involvement, the deradicalization programme was severely understaffed, 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
Effective prison management is a complex and multifaceted task aiming at maintaining 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 play a pivotal role in enhancing the capacity of the prison service to manage violent extremist prisoners and deter the spread of extremist ideologies in the prison system to enhance safety and security within prisons.

**Activity summary**

- Enhanced the prison security audit, lockdown, 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’s Handbook on Classification of Prisoners, incorporating presentations with animations and real-life scenarios.
- Established effective information sharing between the Headquarters in Abuja to enhance security and deter potential security threats.
- Improved data management and information flow within the prison system.
- Focused 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 capacity of the Nigerian Correctional Services, focusing on correcting 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 premises to enhance the serious security risk previously faced.
- Strengthened the prison security audit by improving communication channels between the Deradicalization Unit’s field offices and headquarters.
- Implemented an advanced technology programme that facilitated better tracking of case review reports on each prisoner, particularly in the domains of prison security and deter potential security threats.
- Established an effective information sharing system between the Nigerian Correctional Service and various law enforcement agencies to enhance security and deter potential security threats.
- Improved data management and information flow within the prison system.
- Enhanced staff on conducting effective security audits.

**Positive change, one block at a time:**

**Inspector Babagana Zarami:**

“The most rewarding part of this journey is the opportunity it gave our custodial staff to be a part of a landmark initiative. The training of trainers delivered by UNODC.

“I used to be caught in the routine of simply teaching basic safety to the prison officers. After this three-week training journey around the world, I was selected to attend the UNODC training of trainers on vocational rehabilitation. These three weeks opened a world of possibilities. I ventured into the realms of equipment and the essential part of keeping prisoners busy. Beyond the technical skills, I acquired relevant knowledge on the equipment and the essential part of keeping prisoners busy and preventing escape attempts.

“Effective prison management is a complex and multifaceted task aiming at maintaining 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 play a pivotal role in enhancing the capacity of the prison service to manage violent extremist prisoners and deter the spread of extremist ideologies in the prison system to enhance safety and security within prisons.”

**Assistant Controller of Corrections, Team Leader, Deradicalization Programme, Maiduguri Maximum Security Custodial Centre**

**Babagana Zarami**

“I am deeply grateful to Germany for providing the funding and support to help bring this invaluable programme to life. It has not only enhanced the standards of our prison service, but it has also brought us closer to the world, a testament to the potential of peace in our hearts.”

“Positive change, one block at a time: Inspector Zarami’s story”

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Rehabilitation and social reintegration

Improvement often comes with significant challenges and forrever necessity to remain in the relationship 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.

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 for effective learning.
- Enhanced the skills of prison officers and staff through training programmes to ensure their capacity in delivering quality instruction.

Results

- The expansion of tools and equipment resources enabled more prisoners to access vocational and educational programmes, enhancing their prospects for successful reintegration into society.
- The vocational training skills of prison officers were improved in key areas such as drywalling, carpentry, and masonry, resulting in prisoners producing better quality outputs. Additionally, in order to ensure the sustainability, the capacity of various non-governmental organizations and academic facilities within prisons was increased significantly on the use of tools to prevent violent extremism.
- Reintegration prospects improved as a result of the development of effective programmes, enhancing their prospects for successful reintegration into society.
- Prisoners were able to enroll in various vocational skills, only 291 inmates were registered due to limited resources. However, minorities of 713 prisoners expressing interest in learning various vocational skills, only 291 inmates were able to enroll in these programmes, enhancing their prospects for successful reintegration into society.

Reintegration and social reintegration

The role of community: Adamu’s story

The role of community: Adamu’s story

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.

Prison officer engaged in vocational training at Malam Kura Maximum Security Custodial Centre

Adamu’s story serves as an excellent example of the transformative power of the Nigerian Correctional Service. The two UNODC projects complement each other, increasing the impact of the programme at the Centre. The first project was implemented by UNODC and funded by the United States Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. The second UNODC project was implemented on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The Centre is located within the traditional Kura community. The special link between the prison and the community is a powerful example of the transformative role that community involvement plays in the rehabilitation and reintegration process.

After being caught stealing by his police, 22-year-old Adamu, residing in the city of Yola, Adamawa State, was arrested by a police officer from the Nigerian Correctional Service and community leaders. He was found guilty of robbery and the court sentenced him to 2 years in prison. Due to his young age and lack of experience, Adamu was sentenced to life imprisonment. After his release, Adamu worked as a construction labour and makes nothing less than N20,000 per month. He is a former prisoner. He is now an employer of labour and makes more than N200,000 per month. He fiercely supports the role that community involvement plays in the transformative power of the Nigerian Correctional Service.

However, his perspective has always been that when he was released from prison, his life was not over. He sought forgiveness and reconciliation. The community is a powerful example of the transformative role that community involvement plays in the reintegration process. Adamu’s story serves as an example of the transformative power of the Nigerian Correctional Service.
The Nelson Mandela Rules provide clear standards for prison officials to ensure the safety, security, and humane treatment of prisoners, including those charged with violent extremism-related offenses. The practical application of these rules has led to the following achievements:

**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 staff officers and instructors within the Correctional Service, equipping them with the necessary skills to effectively deliver in-service training.
- Provided the Nigerian Correctional Service with over 200 copies of the Nelson Mandela Rules e-book, 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 Magaliru 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 organizations, 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, sanitation, and food 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, worsening the pressures of the growing prison population.
- Improved the staff's ability to stay informed about the implementation of the Rules through providing comprehensive training to officers, increasing their knowledge and ability to apply the Rules in their daily duties. The training has been positively received from the senior leadership of the Nigerian Correctional Service but has also prompted plans to cascade similar training in all prison establishments, further reinforcing the importance of upholding these standards.
- Improved the living conditions of prison staff by renovating the staff quarters designed for officers attached to the Deradicalization Programme, facilitating better coordination and strengthening the institutional capacity of the Deradicalization Programme; fostering improved interactions 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.

**What next?**

The programme implemented at the Maiduguri Maximum Custodial Centre has achieved many positive outcomes, ranging from improved access to justice and am sure Germany continues to support the project.

**Sustainability and partnerships**

During the implementation of the programme, the Nigerian Correctional Service were effective in mechanising the long-term sustainability of the interventions. This encompassed collaborating closely with the Nigerian Correctional Service, ensuring ongoing operational and educational collaborations, including sustaining ownership among those responsible for allocating resources to these programmes. By involving the affected community in the process, the programme also provided crucial infrastructural support and training, contributing to the lasting impact of the interventions.

The Maiduguri Maximum Security Custodial Centre service as a pilot prison under another funded project implemented by UNODC, which is funded by the United States Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (NLLE), the UNODC-funded project offers an opportunity for UNODC to expand upon the initiatives funded project offers an opportunity for UNODC to expand upon the initiatives.

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