

THE PAROLE AND PROBATION SUPERVISION PROGRAMMES ON REHABILITATION AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF RELEASED INMATES/OFFENDERS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*Conrad Mate Patuve**

I. INTRODUCTION

In order to build a safe and inclusive society, it is vital to prevent reoffending and to effectively facilitate offenders' rehabilitation and reintegration as responsible citizens. To stay up to date with the best international practices and policies, PNG promotes gender equality in terms of providing rehabilitation and reintegration programmes to both male and female offenders. With the increase in crime rate and exploited correctional facilities, the alternative to imprisonment is to provide rehabilitation and positive reintegration of offenders in the community, and these are practical measures towards transforming offenders' attitudes and reducing recidivism.

This paper specifically focuses on the programmes that the Parole and Probation Officers implemented towards rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders in PNG. I will firstly give a brief background on the assessment and transition of inmates into the community. Secondly, I will highlight the community-based rehabilitation and reintegration programmes offered to the offenders. Also, I will highlight the issues and challenges encountered during the process of rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders and, finally, will note the possible solutions.

II. ASSESSMENT AND TRANSITION OF INMATES INTO THE COMMUNITY

The Correctional Institutions in PNG have rehabilitation programmes where they provide counselling, spiritual programmes, education and specialized training to assist inmates to positively reintegrate into the society as reformed citizens. These institutional programmes are effective and were designed to prepare offenders to successfully reintegrate into their own communities. The majority of these programmes are offered by churches and have produced positive outcomes for smooth transition of inmates from prison to the community. The inmates' rehabilitation and reintegration process starts from the prison when they are thoroughly assessed by the Prison Classification Committee. The Probation and Parole Officers then conduct prisoner/offender investigations and interviews by assessing the prisoner's possibility of successful reintegration into the community and further recommend through pre-parole reports and pre-sentence reports whether or not the prisoner or offender is a low-risk and is a suitable candidate to be further rehabilitated in the community. The victim's view also plays a major role in the process of offender rehabilitation. This process works effectively between the Correctional Institutions and the Justice Department including churches and community participation. Furthermore, with the good working relationship with churches, the Probation and Parole Officers design specific rehabilitation programmes, many of which are based on spiritual activities and general counselling, supervision, guidance and face-to-face interviews. Upon release into the community, 20 per cent of offenders find it difficult to reunite with their families, causing difficulty in the smooth transition from prison into the community. However, the Probation and Parole Officers with the support from the Volunteer Probation/Parole officers continue to provide community rehabilitation programmes throughout the offenders' lives.

* Parole Officer, Southern and Highlands Region, Department of Justice and Attorney General / Parole Services, National Government, Papua New Guinea.

III. COMMUNITY-BASED REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMES

In Papua New Guinea, we believe every offender has a potential to live a crime-free life and to be a contributing member of society through rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. Community Corrections creates a conducive environment for the reintegration of parolees and probationers through supervision, monitoring and rehabilitation and ensures the parolees and probationers comply with conditions of parole and probation orders. The Probation and Parole Officers conduct assessment on every offender placed on probation and on parole through the Risk Level Supervision Plan and Supervision Plan Summary Form. Based on the assessment outcome, the officers then initiate rehabilitation programmes including the Action Plan Goals for each parolee and probationer to ensure they have positively changed and have successfully reintegrated into their own communities. These Action Plan Goals are reviewed every three months. The Probation and Parole Officers also designed rehabilitation programmes based on the offenders' needs and level of specialization and on the skills that they attained. The offenders who have skills sewing clothes or baking bread have their rehabilitation programmes structured according to their level of skill, and they engage in this programme during their parole and probation period.

A. Volunteer Probation and Parole Officers' Tasks

In PNG there are few Volunteer Probation and Parole Officers (VPOs). Many people refuse to become volunteers due to higher expectations from them of being paid by the government. Despite this barrier, a few volunteers were appointed and were engaged mainly in providing released inmates and offenders with supervision and general counselling, community activities and providing spiritual programmes like Bible studies.

B. The Role of Churches and Other Stakeholders in Rehabilitation of Offenders

Churches in collaboration with the Justice Department play a commanding role in providing rehabilitation programmes to offenders. Some churches provide accommodation and counselling programmes to selected released inmates whom they had been in contact within the prison. Some churches also provide basic necessities like food and clothing to the released inmates on a short-term period. Churches are also involved with the offenders in conducting anti-crime campaigns, and sometimes they take up the leadership roles in the church. Moreover, the majority of the released inmates have secured employment with security companies and work as security guards. Few of the offenders who have qualifications in various fields have secured employment with companies; however, many of them do not get employed due to their criminal conviction records. Also, a few of them have engaged in Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) like marketing of goods and other similar ways. Additionally, a few of the released inmates, with the knowledge they possess, have started their own registered companies like security firms and cleaning garbage services and have employed other released inmates to earn money and live a prosperous life.

C. Accommodation and Health Services

Many of the released inmates are welcomed by their families and are provided with accommodation and other basic necessities upon their release; however, it does not last long as some of them are then removed from the house to find their own accommodation. With the mercy from churches, few were accommodated by the churches and by their distant relatives. Similarly, many of the released inmates do not have easy access to health services as they have no financial support to have access to the health facilities. On the contrary, PNG has no aftercare system established. Also, PNG has no specific treatment and rehabilitation institutions to care for the offenders. The Probation and Parole Officers only offer offenders with individual counselling approaches, face-to-face interviews and community service programmes like general cleaning at the public places.

D. A Case Study – Parolees Undergo Life Skills Training

Parole is a significant aspect of the criminal justice system, and the Department of Justice & Attorney General (DJAG) has been at the front line, making sure parole administration is carried out effectively, right from the prison and into the communities. The Parole Intervention Programme in 2019 saw 14 parolees from the National Capital District & Central province undergo a week-long Life Skills Training run by the Foundation of Women in Agriculture Development (FOWIAD). The training included making of coconut oil, coconut biscuits, stock feed and Sepik soap, which can be sold for income apart from family consumption and

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usage. The training and life skills have taught them to help improve their living and will help each of them to reintegrate back into their communities.



All participants (parolees & staff) who attended the week-long training posing with their certificates at the Community Based Corrections office at Boroko, Port Moresby, PNG.

IV. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The rehabilitation and reintegration programmes that are currently offered by the Probation and Parole Services in PNG are fragmented and unsustainable. The stakeholders are called in on an ad hoc basis and stakeholder support is not accessible in all provinces in the country and the officers only work on what they have to provide rehabilitation programmes to the offenders. The absence of resources and the lack of coordination between agencies in the criminal justice and social service systems results in the released inmates leaving the prison without any connection to support services and assistance from government agencies and community organizations. Offenders returned to their communities with many barriers hindering their reintegration process. They needed adequate housing, transportation, a reliable source of income, family support and a dependable communication source to converse with employers and other resourceful individuals. Similarly, more of the released inmates are unable to find stable employment after being released resulting in some of them being rearrested for breaching their probation and parole conditions. Some of the offenders experienced mental disabilities and health issues but were not supported due to no Rehabilitation Institutions and poor coordination between the Parole and Probation Services and other stakeholders. PNG has no proper referral pathways for the offenders to relevant organizations for treatment and other rehabilitation programmes.

V. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The remedy to the above-mentioned challenges, the Probation and Parole Services Management needs to provide and facilitate support systems for the reintegration of offenders into society and establish and strengthen partnership with all relevant stakeholders to provide rehabilitation and reintegration programmes

to the released inmates, and to fully involve the community in the reintegration of parolees and probationers. Additionally, new reforms are needed to help released inmates' access services related to housing, employment, health, mental health and addiction, and social reintegration. The Parole and Probation Officers should be fully trained in skills such as service coordination, motivational interviewing and counselling. In addition, the government through DJAG should form a robust partnership stakeholder to promote a multi-stakeholder approach in preventing reoffending and facilitating offender rehabilitation at the community level and to conduct awareness-raising activities. Furthermore, it is crucial to sensitize the general public and community members to understand that the rehabilitation of offenders and their social inclusion is good to prevent reoffending and to establish a safe and inclusive society. Furthermore, PNG needs to have an aftercare system established to fully achieve the goal of successful rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. Similarly, there is a need to create legislation or regulation to navigate the proper referral pathways for offenders to have easy access to services offered by the relevant stakeholders, including counselling, special treatment, health, education, housing and many others. The Parole and Probation Services should be also fully capacitated with enough resources and funding to fully implement the offender rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in the community. Lastly, there is need to establish the Rehabilitation Institutions in the country together with establishment of a National and Provincial Rehabilitation Working Committees.

VI. CONCLUSION

There have been a lot of efforts and initiatives made by the Probation and Parole Officers on implementing offender rehabilitation and reintegration programmes; however, they have not met the international standards. PNG still faces a lot of challenges in implementing and administering the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of released inmates due to lack of coordination with the relevant stakeholders, diverse cultural and traditional norms, and poor consultation with the whole community including the victims of crimes. The Parole and Probation Services has a legal framework that addresses offender rehabilitation and reintegration; however, more needs to be done. Conclusively, despite the limited resources and funding, the Parole and Probation Officers continue to deliver successful and effective rehabilitation and reintegration programmes to the released inmates in Papua New Guinea.