

REPORT ON A TWO DAY INTERACTIVE FORUM

“MAKING THE PRISONS A BETTER AND  
A SAFE PLACE”.

## INTRODUCTION.

With support from the British High Commission in Sierra Leone, Prison Watch Sierra Leone (PW-SL) received project grant to organize an interactive forum on making the prisons a better and safe place.

This project targeted Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Prison Officers and Staff of Prison Watch Sierra Leone.

Previous and current detention monitoring observations and reports have indicated that the prisons and other detention centers are unsafe and not conducive for human living and the penitentiary regime remain to be saddled with serious human rights challenges.

One of the most troubling aspects we have observed is that people who go to prison usually walkout more dangerous than they entered.

Making the Prisons a Better and Safe place is a 3 weeks project which was successfully implemented by Prison Watch Sierra Leone (PW-SL). The project was able to meet its objectives and stimulated far reaching discussions that was originally thought.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The following were the project objectives:

- a. To collect views and perceptions of Civil Society Organizations on the role of the prisons and Prison Officers.
- b. To raise awareness on the role of detention managers in detention management.
- c. To organize a two day interactive forum on the role of Civil Society Organizations in **Making the Prisons a Better and Safe Place**.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES**

### ***Pre-Consultation Meetings***

A one day pre-consultation meeting with National Prison Authorities was held. The essence was to have an insight of prisons authorities' views of how to make the prisons a better and a safe place.

### ***Consultative Tours***

A week long consultative tour was organized to all provincial and district administrative regions. The essence was two fold;

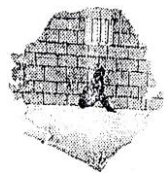
1. To have consultations with detention managers in charge of district prisons on the significance of the project and have their input.
2. Conduct a post training survey through administration of questionnaires and interviews on the views of the job and life of the prison officers.

### ***Interactive Forum***

A two day interactive forum on the theme making the prisons a better and safe place was organized.

## **PROJECT RESULT**

- a) Pre-consultative meetings with National Prison administration held.
- b) Consultative tour to prisons to functional prison institutions organized.
- c) Data on population of prison officers at each prison collected.
- d) A two day interactive forum on in making the prisons a better and safe place held.
- e) Press conference held.

**FINDINGS*****Pre Training Survey.***

The following constitute findings of pre training survey on the perception of Civil Society Organizations/public on the job and life of the Prison Officer. Analysis of survey results reveals the following:

- i. All persons interviewed choose prison job as their option last in preference to military and police job.
- ii. Public hold negative perception about the job of the Prison Officer.
- iii. Even though there was a general and agreed consensus on the need for prison establishment, yet graduates and other well meaning people expresses negative predilection for prison job.
- iv. All persons interviewed agreed on the need to have penal establishment as a deterrent measures to crime.
- v. There was a general consensus on the need to professionalize the prison services.

***Consultations with Prison Authorities***

- i. Improved and better conditions of service for prison officers.
- ii. There is the need for in-service and on the job training for prison officers in Human Rights and Detention management.
- iii. There is a need for professional short courses for graduate Prison Officers.

**TWO DAY INTERACTIVE FORUM**

A two day interactive forum with CSOs, Prison Officers and Staff of Prison Watch Sierra Leone was organized. The following were cardinal issues were generated by participants in **MAKING THE PRISONS A BETTER AND SAFE PLACE**. The following **THEMATIC ISSUES** formed the major discussion points in making the prisons a better and safe place.

**A. Role of Prison Officers.**

**B. Role of The Judiciary.**

***With support from British High Commission in Sierra Leone.***

**C. Role of Civil Society Organizations.****D. Role of Government.****PRESENTATION OF THEMATIC ISSUES**

Plenary presentations on the following thematic issues were made.

**The Role of Prison Officers in Making the Prison a Safe and Better Place.**

- i. Prison Officers have a crucial role in the Rehabilitation and reformation of prisoners.
- ii. Educated elites should be encouraged to join the Prison Services and must be drawn from diverse professional background.
- iii. Regular and effective monitoring of penal regimes will serve as restraint and reminder to Prison Officers about their role and responsibilities.
- iv. Prison Officers should serve as guidance councilors to prisoners.
- v. Officers should set up early warning mechanisms, i.e. notification of government at an early stage of any security breach.
- vi. Institute proper classification of prisoners other than their uniforms.
- vii. Use of Resources Judiciously.
- viii. Protecting the rights of prisoners, i.e. knowing the rules and ordinance should be a must for all Prison Officers.

**The Role of the Judiciary in Making the Prison a Safe and Better Place.**

- i. Judiciary to fast track prosecution of cases as delay in trials causes high congestion in prisons.
- ii. Assign magistrates to the fourteen (14) Administrative Districts.
- iii. Prepare computerized data on court attendance of all prisoners which can be easily assessed.
- iv. Should be devoid of political control and interference in justice dispensation.
- v. Encourage court sittings in Pademba Road and other district prisons.
- vi. Judiciary to put mechanisms in place that will enhance the monitoring of the courts and case load of all magistrates.
- vii. Judiciary to critically examine evidence upon which matters can be sent to court for trials.
- viii. Sentences to be commensurate with crimes committed.
- ix. There is need for periodic dialogue forum involving Prison Officers, Magistrates and Judges.

### The Role of Civil Society in Making the Prison a Safe and Better Place.

- i. To monitor the Prisons, Police and the Courts.
- ii. To monitor prisoner's legal status, and the provision of service delivery e.g. health, food, water, etc.
- iii. To advocate on behalf of prison and improvement of prison services.
- iv. Civil society should create a platform where violation issues of inmate will be discuss and address.
- v. Partnership building with media houses, human rights commission, and other Human Rights Bodies.
- vi. Constructive engagement with Government and Prison Administration on prisons and detention issues.
- vii. Organize capacity building training for Prison Officers and help popularize the prison rules and ordinance.
- viii. Undertake Human Rights Education in Prisons on the rights and Responsibility of Prisoners and Prison Officers.

## The Role of Government in Making the Prison Better and a Safe Place.

### *Inmates*

- i. Provide adequate medical facilities and services.
- ii. Provide educational facility with modern equipments for training.
- iii. Relocation and placement of prisoners taken into consideration their ethnic affinity and the choice of geographical location.
- iv. Separation/Transfer of hardcore prisoners to separate detention facilities with maximum security.
- v. Timely supply of sufficient and adequate food.
- vi. Improve on basic infrastructural and social facilities for prison inmates.
- vii. Introduction of non custodial detention measures in the case minor criminal matters and civil matter.

### *Prison Officers*

- i. Increase in budget allocation for Prison Management and Administration.
- ii. Improved conditions of services and adequate wage scale for Prison Officers.
- iii. Build specially Hospital detention facility for prisoners as in the case of 34 military hospital for Military and police hospital at Kingtom for Police.
- iv. Professionalize the Prison Services.



- v. Integrate Human Rights Training for all new recruit Prison Officers.
- vi. Support refresher in-service on the Job training for long serving prison Officers and professional short courses for Graduate Prison Officers.
- vii. Sponsor overseas exchange visits for Prison Officers.
- viii. Allocate delivery vehicles to each district prison.
- ix. Build more quarters for Prison Officers.
- x. Train Prison Officers in Security trainings.

### **SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY**

One important outcome of the project is the need to follow up on presentation on thematic issues. In view of this, the following sustainable measure was agreed:

- a. Prison Watch – SL continue to perform oversight responsibilities in monitoring and raise awareness on detention conditions in the country.
- b. British High Commission continues to support credible civil society organizations like Prison Watch - SL to continue in their oversight responsibilities.
- c. There is a need for continued dialogue with prison administration and detention managers on the outcome of the thematic issues raised by participants.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the level of appreciation show by the prison authorities and prison officers, and the level of success gained by this project, we hereby recommend the following:

- a. Organize on the job service training for Prison Officers in Human Rights and Detention Management and the handling and processing of detainees.

- b. Support professional short courses for graduate Prison Officers.
- c. Promote exchange visit for prison officers so as to strengthen their capacity and make them professional in the execution of their duty.
- d. There is the need for constant assessment of the rule of law, justice system and detention conditions through constant monitoring by credible organizations like Prison Watch –SL.

## APPENDIX

INSTITUTION	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	CC	PATV	DOV
Prison Head Quarters	79	19	98	N/A	N/A	N/A
Freetown Central Displ	223	-	223	N/A	N/A	N/A
Freetown Central Pademba Rd	-	81	81	324	1,074	25/03/09
Prison Officers Training School	80	27	107	N/A	N/A	N/A
Waterloo Oil Palm Plantation.	14	-	14	N/A	N/A	N/A
New England Prison Camp.	14	3	17	N/A	N/A	N/A
Masanki Prisons	5	-	5	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bo Prisons	32	4	36	80	146	30/03/09
Moyamba Prisons	25	5	30	90	56	28/03/09
Bonthe Prisons	21	1	22	70	23	25/03/09
Pujehun Prisons	18	2	20	76	26	31/03/09
Makeni Prisons	31	5	36	75	142	31/03/09
Port Loko Prisons	18	9	27	105	100	31/03/09
Mafanta Prisons	21	3	24	N/A	N/A	N/A
Magburaka Prisons	15	-	15	100	35	31/03/09
Kambia Prisons	19	5	24	60	23	31/03/09
Kabala Prison	16	4	20	75	38	31/03/09
Kenema Male Prison	00	18	18	150	166	31/03/09
Kenema Female	32	-	32	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sefadu Prisons – Kono	18	3	21	210	144	31/03/09
Kailahun Prisons	16	4	20	80	64	31/03/09
Mattru Jong Prisons	9	4	13	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>783</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>989</b>	<b>1495</b>	<b>2037</b>	

NOTE:

1. CC – Construction Capacity
2. PATV: - Population at the time of visit.
3. DOV: - Date of visit.

Total Number of people that are supposed to be in prison taken into account construction capacity excluding Mattru Jong Prisons which was newly constructed =1494

Total Population in prisons at time of visit, excluding Mattru Jong = 2037

Differential Total =542