

Prison Directorate: Strategic Planning Process Data Collection and Analysis

1.0 Introduction

The following report provides a summary of the main issues raised in the first round of data collection for the Bangladesh Prison Directorate strategic planning process.

Priorities were identified during the initial meeting of the working group for the strategic planning process. A questionnaire was designed based upon these priorities and was circulated to seven prisons for completion. Interviews were held with all seven prisons, which allowed for a clarification of issues and further data collection. The prisons included in this process were **Dhaka, Sylhet, Bogra, Rangpur, Kashimpur, Madaripur and Sirajganj.**

The aims of this first round of data collection were therefore:

- To test the data collection tool
- To assess whether data from prisons supported the priorities identified by the working group
- To test where data may have been missing
- To test issues highlighted as potential priorities by the working group

1.1 Analysis of the data

A basic theming of potential priorities was carried out in order to analyse the data. Coding of these priorities drove the analysis. Priorities were identified and data was used to substantiate these priorities if available.

The data was analysed under the four key pillars used by the strategic planning process; Prisoners, Staff, Buildings and Infrastructure and Systems and Procedures.

2.0 Prisoner Issues

Key priorities emerged from the data regarding prisoner issues.

2.1 Overcrowding

Overcrowding underpinned many of the problems faced by the prison service. All prisons were substantially overcrowded. For example, overcrowding ranged from 240 more prisoners than the official capacity of one prison to 3000 more prisoners than the official capacity for another prison. Dhaka prison had the highest number of prisoners at 9108, but their official capacity was not discussed.

2.2. Education

All prisons felt that the education for prisoners could be vastly improved and should be a priority for the Prison Directorate to address. Whilst most prisons had some sort of education programme in place, the extent of these programmes were limited. They usually consisted only of a literacy programme, where prisoners were taught to sign their names. The classes were delivered by literate prisoners.

Religious education was also available in three prisons. Sometimes these classes were taught by other prisoners but in one prison an NGO facilitated this type of education.

2.3 Vocational work and training

All prisons felt that the opportunity for prisoners to partake in work or vocational training should be prioritised by the prison service. They explained that this would provide prisoners with skills, which they could use on their release from prison, but that work or training also provided something for prisoners to do and gave some income for the prison itself.

There was work available in some prisons. For example, in some sites prisoners were involved in making cane goods, handicraft or tailoring. In two prisons, prisoners were also involved in TV, radio, refrigerator or fan repairs. In one prison, computer training was also available; however, the extent of this training was not discussed.

The availability of work or vocational training was not consistent across the prison service, with Dhaka prison for example having no such options. This is presumably due to the severe overcrowding that this prison is experiencing.

2.4 Security

This first round of data collection provided some fascinating information regarding the issue of security in Bangladesh prisons.

As discussed previously, an objective of this data collection was to test issues discussed as priorities by the strategic planning group. A major issue raised in these initial discussions was the idea that prisons needed to be modernised in relation to security, that the height of perimeter walls should be increased, that watchtowers should be built etc.

While these issues were also discussed by the seven prisons, the data did not substantiate this need. For example, across all seven sites there were **NO** escapes of prisoners in the last 12 months. Only one prison could remember an escape and this was from Dhaka medical college.

Violence between prisoners was very rare in the sites included in this project. For **five** of the prisons there were **no recorded instances of violent altercations** between prisoners or between prisoners or prison staff in the last 12 months.

One prison explained that there was **one violent altercation** between prisoners in the last 12 months but **none** between prisoners and staff.

However, another prison was unable to provide numbers of altercations but explained that fights did 'often' occur between prisoners. This was thought to usually arise with adolescent prisoners and overcrowding was seen to be the cause.

A key theme emerged which may explain why the level of violence between prisoners was so low. It was true across all prisons, that prisoners support each other; this was particularly true in relation to older prisoners supporting younger prisoners. Prisoners were generally thought to be well behaved and prisons

explained how prisoners also support prison staff. The role of the 'convict officer' was thought to maintain this process.

There was on average [less than one riot per year](#) in the whole prison service ranging from 1971 to 2002.

While there was not the opportunity to explore these issues further, the data does suggest that if there are limited resources available to the Prison Directorate then diverting them to areas other than security may be beneficial.

2.5 Bar Fetters

Bar fetters were used as per the Jail Code in at least three of the prisons involved in this project.

2.6 Infectious diseases

There were [no outbreaks](#) of infectious disease in the prisons but small numbers of individual cases of disease, such as chickenpox.

2.7 Juveniles

There was a difference in the provisions given to juvenile prisoners in the seven sites involved in this project. Some prisons explained that young prisoners were treated in the same way as older prisoners but two prisons explained that juveniles have 'different cells and different education facilities and better sports facilities like football' which was due to the support of an NGO working within this prison. Another prison said that more education is provided for juveniles however, no further detail was given.

These illustrations of 'good practice' should be shared amongst the Prison Directorate in order to illustrate, that with help of outside agencies, juveniles can be provided with additional support whilst in prison.

2.8 Skin disease

Skin disease was not thought to be a major problem for prisons.

3.0 Staff Issues

There were also key priorities, which arose from discussions relating to staff in the prison service.

3.1 Shortage of staff

Shortage of staff was a concern for all seven prisons. Different prisons needed different numbers of staff, this ranged from 21, 700 and 1300 more staff required.

Prisons explained that this issue was a major priority for them and that there was a 'staff crisis' in the prison service. One prison explained that in some cases there was **one guard for 800-1000 prisoners**.

Some prisons needed more male staff than female staff, which is not surprising based on the differences in numbers of men and women in prison.

3.2 Shortage of specialised staff

There was also a shortage of specialised staff, which was of particular concern in relation to the role of the doctor.

Most prisons had one doctor, although some had only a part time doctor.

The interviews highlighted the important role of the doctor in supporting 'vulnerable prisoners'. Prisons explained that doctors have a multitude of roles to fulfil, apart from medical responsibilities. These included identifying drug addicted prisoners and those suffering from mental health issues, identifying the age of juveniles etc.

There was also a shortage of staff such as sociologists or psychologists etc. No prison had a psychologist, and several prisons explained how important these roles were. The wider context of the prison service should be remembered here however; as one prison explained, there are very few psychologists in the whole of Bangladesh. Perhaps, having these positions filled within prisons may be unrealistic.

3.3 Training

100% of prisons explained that the only real training their staff had received was induction training. There had not been any follow up training, although equipment training had been held in one prison. One prison explained that 'practice has trained the staff'.

The prisons felt that providing training for their staff was a priority which must be addressed by the prison directorate. They explained that the training centre allocated to the prison service is of a very poor standard. They also explained that it was very difficult to release staff for training as they are so busy with their 'day to day' jobs.

3.4. Pay and Benefits

The pay and benefits for staff working for the prison service were thought to be very meagre. Prisons explained that the salaries are poor and are not in comparison to other government workers. They described the prison staff as 'deprived staff' with their current wages making it difficult to provide for their families.

The prisons explained that there was no 'risk payment' in place for prison staff which is available for police officers, and that they are only allocated 8-10 days of annual leave. However, it is unlikely that prison staff will be able to take this leave, as it is difficult to release staff from their jobs. They also explained that accommodation is only provided for some staff and that promotion prospects are limited.

One prison explained that a Deputy Jailer's salary is BDT 4,600 and a Superintendent's salary is BDT 11,000.

3.5 Staff attitudes toward their jobs and prisoners

Staff had a relatively positive attitude towards their jobs and prisoners, but prisons did clarify that this does depend on the person. 60-70% of staff in one prison, realise that prisoners are not only criminals according to the Jail Superintendent. The answers to these questions were very subjective as those in charge of prisons gave them, perhaps a more effective way to explore this issue would be to engage on a greater level with more junior staff.

3.6 Job descriptions

Job descriptions are taken from the Jail Code and were thought to be unrealistic and 'out of date' by several prisons.

4.0 Buildings and Infrastructure Issues

4.1 Lack of Space

A lack of space was a consistent issue in all seven prisons.

6 out of 7 prisons felt that the space in prisoner quarters was overcrowded, that prisoners did not have room to move and that the buildings are old and needed to be modernised.

Space also influenced the separation of prisoners. Some prisons were able to separate all prisoners however, others could not always separate drug addicted prisoners, high-risk prisoners, or mothers with their children. It was usually possible to separate under trial prisoners from convicted prisoners. When prisons did have the facilities to separate prisoners, the cells in which they did so were often overcrowded with up to five prisoners in each cell.

There was also no opportunity for exercise for prisoners due to the limited space available (except in one prison where partial outside space was available). However, all prisons had the opportunity for prisoners to partake in indoor games such as board games and in some prisons TVs were available in prisoner wards.

There was inadequate space for education or training of prisoners in all prisons.

4.2 Sanitation, water, toilet, and bathing facilities are inadequate

The sanitation, toilet and bathing facilities were problematic for all prisons. The prisons explained that there was a real lack of toilets for prisoners, for example, in one prison there were no toilets available during the day for prisoners to use. For other prisons, there were only 2 or 3-4 toilets per 100 prisoners.

Prisons discussed the consequences of this and explained that the situation lead to poor sanitation and uncomfortable living conditions for prisoners.

4.3 Poor Ventilation

6 out of the 7 prisons felt that ventilation in their prisons was poor and needed to be improved.

4.4 Security

As discussed, all prisons felt that issues relating to buildings and security were key priorities for the Prison Directorate to address. However, the data relating to this issue did not substantiate these claims.

Nonetheless, from the seven sites:

100% of prisons feel that the height of the perimeter wall should be raised.

Prisons also felt that they needed modern alarm systems, flood lights, CCTV and walky-talkies.

6 out of the 7 prisons felt that they needed new watch towers.

4.5 Under Trial Prisoners (UTPs)

Prisons felt that they supported UTPs. They explained that they facilitated access to legal aid, they were usually separated from convicted prisoners and were allowed interviews everyday if they so wished. They were generally allowed more interviews than convicted prisoners, however, they were not permitted to work.

One prison followed the Jail Code exclusively and gave UTPs less food than their convicted counterparts, the rationale for this was that they 'do not work so they therefore get less food'.

5.0 Prison Systems and Procedure Issues

5.1 The Jail Code

Prisons felt that the Jail Code (JC) should be revised and modernised. They explained that it was 'no longer realistic'.

This data collection allowed GTZ staff to observe the influential nature of the JC on the working practice of Bangladesh prisons. Despite being considerably out of date, the JC is followed exclusively and provides a level of accountability for prison staff. A clear illustration of this is the use of bar fetters. Bar fetters were still used in the prisons included in this data collection, and their use correlates to directions given in the JC, despite their illegality across the world.

5.2 IT Systems

All prisons felt that providing IT systems for recording and managing information would be very beneficial to their work. They explained that they felt computers would assist in data recording but would also be more efficient, allowing them time to carry out other tasks.

5.3 Categorise prisoners

There is currently no way to assess the risk of an offender when they enter prison. There is therefore no way for the prison service to categorise and manage the risk that a prisoner may pose. Prisons believed that to have a risk assessment in place would be very beneficial as currently any information relating to an offender comes only from their court record.

5.4 'Good' and 'bad' behaviour

Remission is used within prisons when a prisoner illustrates 'good behaviour'. If a prisoner is granted remission, then this is recorded via his/her history ticket. If a prisoner commits an offence then this will also be recorded on their history ticket and they will be punished in accordance with the Jail Code. The prisons explained that while this system is in place they feel that it could be improved significantly.

5.5 Tracking a prisoner's case status

There is a record system in place to track a prisoner's case status. The prison receives custody warrants from the court where the prisoner's next court date is recorded. If a prisoner has committed other crimes previously there is not the possibility to obtain this information from their files.

6.0 Additional Questions

Initial discussions with the working group highlighted potential priorities. This data collection allowed for 'testing' of these issues, which are discussed below.

6.1 Drugs

Drugs were not thought to be a problem in one prison, however, in 4 prisons prisoners 'sometimes smuggle drugs into prison following court visits'.

Two prisons disagreed that the problem was small in scale, one explained that smuggling of drugs is a common occurrence and another explained the following;

'Many cases, happens very often. They hide drugs in shoes, belts, pants, on the way to and from court. We catch people nearly every day. Drugs are thrown over the wall'

Prisons explained that unless they actually catch the prisoner with drugs there are no systems in place in which to identify drugs. The data suggests that drugs in prisons are a problem and is an issue that requires further exploration.

6.2 Prisoners contacting criminals from outside of prison

This was thought to be a small, but insignificant issue, with several prisons saying that it is not a problem at all.

6.3 Prisoners using different names when they return to prison

There was some disagreement regarding this issue. Some prisons felt that this did not occur while others thought that it did. However, there is currently no system in place in which to record whether the same person returns to prison using a different name.

There is also no way for a prison officer to record information relating to a prisoner if he/she recognizes the same repeat offender. This is an issue which requires further exploration.