

Webinar on How Prison Libraries Support Rehabilitation Efforts: Sri Lankan Context

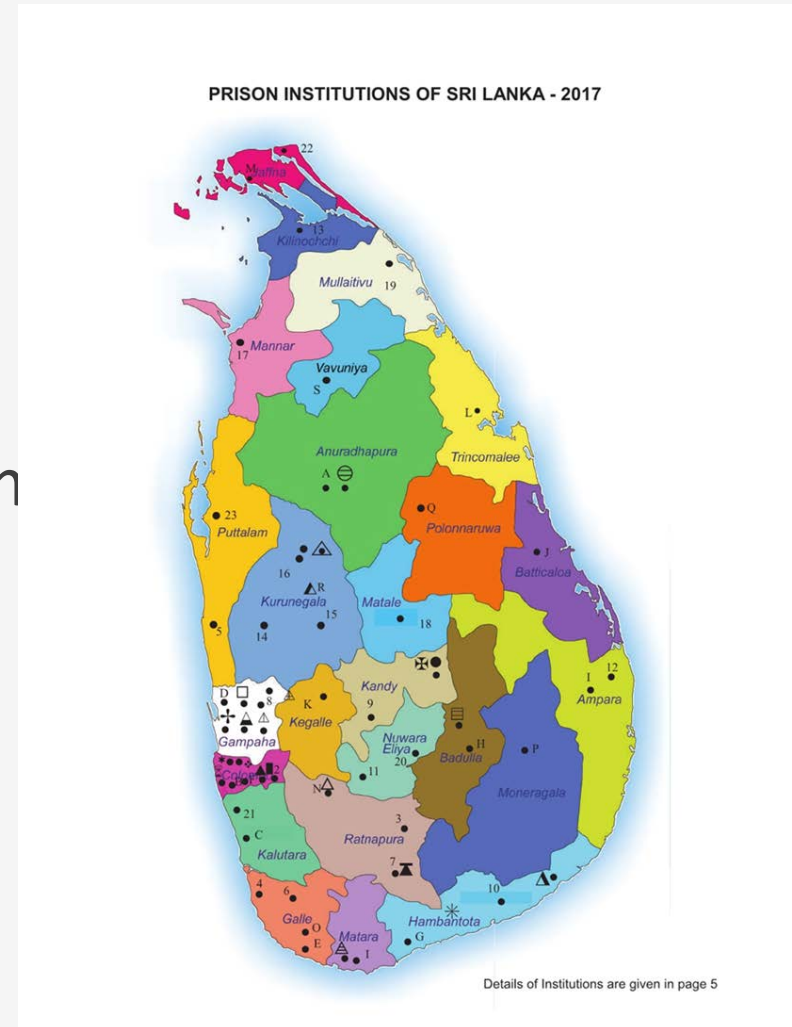
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Background

- 35 institutions in the Sri Lankan Prison System
- Marginalized and disadvantaged community
- Most are illiterate and are deprived of freedom due to their imprisonment.
- Recidivism rate in Sri Lanka - > 50%



Background (Contd...)

Prison authorities play a vital role with the work they do to rehabilitate convicted criminals through education and vocational training.

Custody, Care and Correction are 3 pillars of the Prison Department

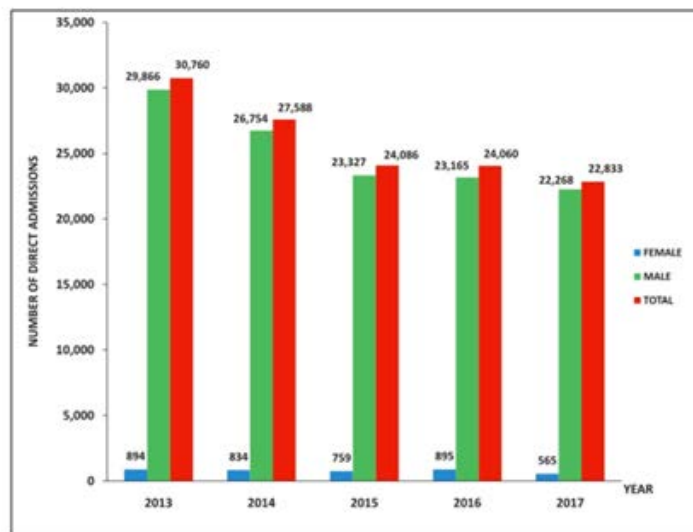
Vision: “Social reintegration of inmates as good citizens through rehabilitation”

Mission: “Rehabilitation of Prisoners ensuring their custody and care by building a proper relationship between the prisoners and the officials so that the officials gain the job satisfaction while the labour productivity of the prisoners to enable the department be self-dependent and utilizing it to augment the development drive of the country and ultimately socializing the prisoners as creative and virtuous skillful citizens.”

Present Scenario in Prisons

CONVICTED PRISONERS

CONVICTED PRISONERS, 2013 - 2017



DIRECT ADMISSIONS OF CONVICTED PRISONERS BY INSTITUTIONS, 2013 - 2017

Institution	2013			2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Wellikada Prison	11,369	428	11,797	8,712	416	9,128	9,959	432	10,391	9,260	531	9,791	8,570	298	8,868
Mahara Prison	3,178	-	3,178	3,234	-	3,234	1,860	-	1,860	1,650	-	1,650	1,651	-	1,651
Bogambara Prison	1,700	-	1,700	1,412	26	1,438	1,056	36	1,092	996	27	1,023	979	20	999
Kandy Remand Prison	-	50	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jaffna Remand Prison	236	17	253	195	15	210	253	10	263	396	10	406	467	10	477
Anuradhapura Remand Prison	1,390	36	1,426	999	35	1,034	815	15	830	699	20	719	787	19	806
Badulla Remand Prison	569	2	571	430	6	436	342	9	351	373	1	374	350	5	355
Batticaloa Remand Prison	759	46	805	905	51	956	693	29	722	801	13	814	556	14	570
Galle Remand Prison	1,402	68	1,470	1,444	64	1,508	850	23	873	870	13	883	1,005	16	1,021
Matara Remand Prison	371	6	377	345	7	352	262	5	267	285	3	288	243	5	248
Tangalle Remand Prison	455	4	459	433	6	439	374	4	378	304	3	307	342	7	349
Angunakolapelessa Prison	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	56	3	59
Negombo Remand Prison	2,022	70	2,092	1,879	57	1,936	1,644	53	1,697	2,137	114	2,251	1,767	36	1,803
Ambepussa T.S.Y.O	29	-	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Watareka T.S.Y.O.	-	-	-	16	-	16	21	-	21	14	-	14	22	-	22
Trincomalee Remand Prison	347	10	357	255	8	263	325	13	338	201	5	206	173	5	178
Kegalle Remand Prison	991	-	991	748	-	748	647	-	647	588	-	588	975	-	975
Kalutara Remand Prison	1,692	43	1,735	2,597	60	2,657	1,396	26	1,422	1,626	31	1,657	1,527	46	1,573
Kuruwita Remand Prison	1,120	26	1,146	972	27	999	725	19	744	923	21	944	1,044	29	1,073
Polonnaruwa Remand Prison	397	16	413	322	7	329	201	6	207	242	2	244	169	5	174
Monaragala Remand Prison	440	9	449	267	2	269	179	9	188	161	1	162	236	8	244
Wariyapola Remand Prison	768	45	813	713	19	732	685	40	725	742	57	799	645	28	673
Vavuniya Remand Prison	631	18	649	876	28	904	1,040	30	1,070	897	43	940	704	11	715
Total	29,866	894	30,760	26,754	834	27,588	23,327	759	24,086	23,165	895	24,060	22,268	565	22,833

Note 1 : The Kandy Remand prison and the Bogambara prison were named as Bogambara prison on 5th June 2014 as one establishment at Palkelele Dumbura.

Note 2 : Training School for Youthful offenders which was established at Ambepussa was taken to Watareka camp on 23rd March 2014.

Note 3 : The Tangalle Remand prison has been Established as Angunakolapelessa Remand Prison on 03rd November 2017 .

Source: Department of Prisons

Source: Prison Statistics, 2018

Research Methodology

Qualitative Research

One of the Objectives is to find how prison libraries support rehabilitation and as a whole educational programmes in prisons

Semi structured interviews with prisoners (mostly with recidivists) –both male and female, ex-prisoners and prison officials including rehabilitation officers in 4 closed prisons in Sri Lanka (Welikada, Mahara, Bogambara and Angunakolapelessa)

Prison Libraries – present scenario



Photos: Courtesy of
Prison Authority

Rehabilitation Efforts

Vocational Training – carpentry, masonry, tailoring, etc

Literacy Classes

Religious Education

Religious activities – meditation etc , community activities

Opportunities for higher education and continue education

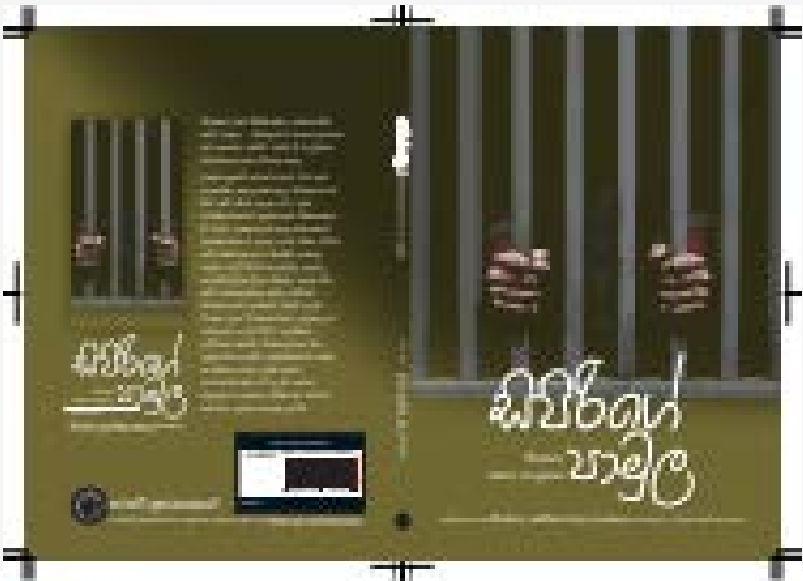
Sports activities

Creativity programmes : Author visits, publishing poetry books, authoring books

Enhance creativity among prisoners



Art Competition – From All island prisons



Poetry Book published by inmates



Prisoners though confined to closed doors most of the time, have got a chance to display their talents to the public through the art exhibition currently held at the J.D.A.Perera Gallery in Colombo. Two jailors having a close look at one of the paintings. *Picture by Saman Sri Wedage*

Showcasing talents

Allow inmates to showcase their musical/dancing talents at programmes and workshops

[Lilitha Sira Sara](#)



Receiving supports from voluntary organizations/Prison Welfare Society

- [Opening of an education centre](#)
- Publicity for prisoner activities – Radio/TV programmes
- Book donations
- Author visits and Reading camps
- New year/Vesak/Christmas Celebrations
- Open Day for Prisoners



Perception of Prisoners/Ex-prisoners on Prison Libraries

Prisoners see Prison Library

- As important in meeting their diverse information needs
- Helps to improve reading skills and gain knowledge
- Assists them to spend their time effectively during incarceration
- Helps to overcome stress while enhancing their well-being by reading. (As Visits are restricted due to COVID-19 pandemic situation)

“However, we hardly have access to prison library and we have nothing new to read” (an inmate)

Perceptions of prison officials

Positive, Energetic Leadership and motivation

Lack of resources/facilities to rehabilitate, run libraries etc.

No policies or standards

Language barriers

Lack of expertise/training/exposure

In general, some of prison officials do not see the importance of a prison library in the rehabilitative process.

Drawbacks Associated with Rehabilitation Efforts

- No adequate library facilities in prison establishments
- No funding for prison libraries
- No proper reading facilities, resources and library services
- No law or a policy available that highlights the need for a prison library or reading
- Lack of prison staff
- No qualified librarians in the Prison Department
- No formal selection procedure for rehabilitation programmes
- Perception of Prison Officers on prison education
- No formal planning in rehabilitative efforts, no proper plans
- Over crowding and high recidivism
- Ostracism, socio economic issues
- Prevailing health situation –COVID-19 pandemic

What we did as library professionals

- Initiated 'Prison Library Development Project' with Friends of Sri Lanka National Library
- Appointed a 'Special Committee on Prison Library Services' – under the Strategic Plan of Sri Lanka Library Association (2016-2022)
- Collected books and other resources for prisons
- Assisted Prison Officials to conduct programmes and workshops to improve literacy and artistic and literary skills
- Formulation of guidelines for prison libraries in vernacular languages (Sinhala and Tamil)
- Translation of relevant literature such as IFLA Prison Library Guidelines , ALA Library Standards for Correctional Institutes etc

Initiatives taken to improve the Prison Library Sector

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PRISON LIBRARY GUIDELINES FOR SRI LANKA PRISONS



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Committee on Prison Library Services
Sri Lanka Library Association

இலங்கை சிறைச்சாலைகள் நூலகங்களுக்கான வழிகாட்டுதல்கள்
PRISON LIBRARY GUIDELINES FOR SRI LANKA PRISONS



சிறைச்சாலைகள் நூலக சேவைகள் தொடர்பான குழு
இலங்கை நூலக சங்கம்

BOOKS
BEYOND BARS

A BOOK DRIVE TO BUILD LIBRARIES FOR PRISONERS IN SRI LANKA

DONATE YOUR NEW
OR BOOKS IN GOOD
CONDITION

- ANY BOOK [FICTION, NON-FICTION, POETRY]
- ENCOURAGE TO DONATE TO INSPIRING
WORKS THAT CAN HELP UPLIFT PRISONERS' SPIRIT
- SINHALA, TAMIL OR ENGLISH BOOKS

DROP OFF
LOCATIONS

- SRI LANKA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
- NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF LIBRARY AND
INFORMATION SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF
COLOMBO
- LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA

JAN 25 - FEB 25

'Let us join together to celebrate books as the embodiment of creativity, the desire to share ideas and knowledge, to inspire understanding, creation of dialogue, tolerance and inclusive societies'-
UNESCO's message on World Book and Copyright Day, 2017

FOR MORE INFO:
CONVENOR, SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON PRISON LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT,
SRI LANKA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
PHONE: 011 2589103

Future Actions to be done by Library Professionals

- Set up a model prison library at the main prison
- Fund Raising for Collection and other resources development
- Conduct programmes and workshops to improve literacy and artistic skills
- Provide a network of volunteer librarians to serve in Prison libraries
- Formulation of Standards for prison Libraries
- Help prison authorities to revive prison library sector in the country

Thank You

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