

THE SITUATION OF THE PRISON PASTORAL CARE IN AFRICA
PRESENTATION
TO
THE DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
&
CATHOLIC PRISON PASTORAL CARE

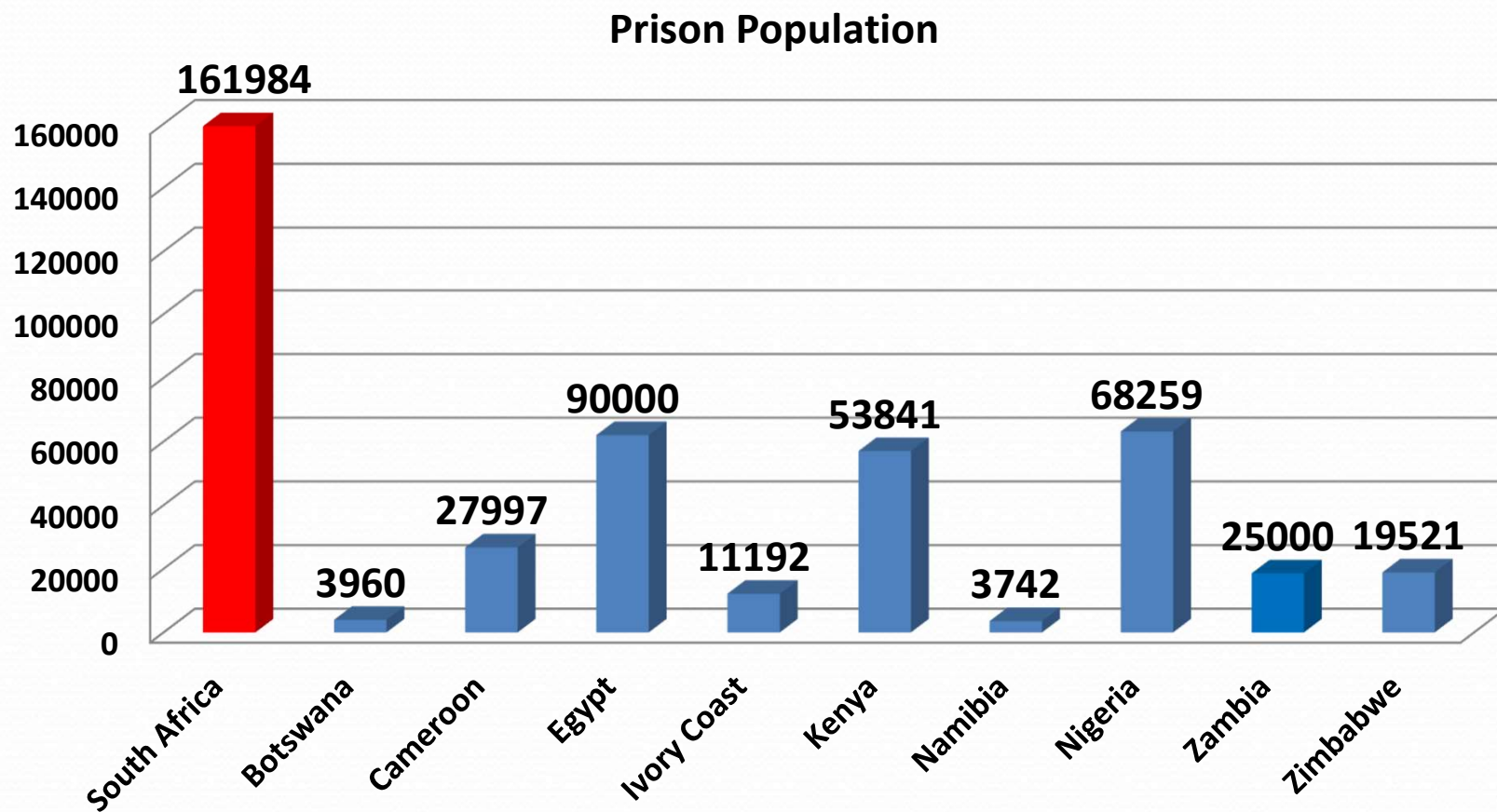
Presentation by Fr Peter Kimani Ndung'u
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HISTORY OF PRISONS IN AFRICA

- Incarceration as punishment was unknown to Africa until the colonial period.
- Local Justice system was victim oriented and based on restitution
- Colonisers used incarceration to control and exploit the local rebellious population
- The legacy of the past continues that there is little or no focus on rehabilitation

AFRICAN PRISON POPULATION



Conditions of prisons in Africa

Most prisons in Africa are dungeons. Many of them are old colonial buildings with sub-human conditions, like poor lighting, poor ventilation and poor hygienic condition. With gross overcrowding many do not even have beds or mats to sleep on

AFRICAN PRISON CONDITIONS: CHALLENGES

- Over Crowding and under resourced
- Dirty accommodations – unhygienic environment
- Insufficient food
- Lack of basic amenities
- Gang Control and Corrupt Wardens
- Mixing of children and adults leading to Sexual abuse

Overcrowded prison cells





PRISON CONDITIONS: CHALLENGES

- Lack of good governance
- Weak Civil Society that can advocate for good conditions- Lack of Public Interest
- Media restrictions – lack of accountability
- No Rehabilitation programs available
- Last on the national development agenda hence low in budget allocations.



CONSEQUENCES OF POOR PRISON CONDITIONS

- Inmates sleeping in Shifts
- Mixing of Adults and Children
- Wardens sell juvenile for sex
- Increase of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases
- Poor sanitation and lack of adequate medical care

Impact of imprisonment

- Trauma to the inmates , their families and close relations.
- Lack of support system,
- Rejection by society, prisoners become unwanted individuals who are suspects of crime even after release
- Social and psychological well-being is destroyed by imprisonment.
- Stigma follows them upon release hence social reentry becomes a challenge to them.



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- Lack of categorisation of offenders also allows contamination of petty offenders to become hardcore criminals such that they come out worse than they came in.
- While there are prisons in Africa where prisoners are provided with two or three meals a day others may have just one small meal a day just enough to keep them alive. Some depend on their relatives to bring them food from home.



Cameroon

The prevalent attitude with regard to the Cameroon prison system, just like many other African prisons, is that prisoners should pay severely for crimes committed against society and the state. Prisons are for punishment not rehabilitation and therefore the focus is not on education and imparting life skills. Prisons in Cameroon are in a bad state of repair. Overcrowding, poor living conditions, inadequate medical care, slow access to justice and an arbitrary system of prison discipline are some of the problems. Prison conditions are deliberately unpleasant because that should act as a deterrent to future offending behavior and crime. Manipulation, distrust, despair, bitterness and hostility are rife in most Cameroon prisons. The prison experience is often traumatic and threatens the psychological core or emotional balance of inmates




There are no formation programmes to help them reflect on and ameliorate their lives.

Over 40% of those in prison had no jobs before going into prison.
90% of those who had jobs will lose their jobs because of their imprisonment.

90% of those who have a prison record will not find employment because of their prison record and stigma.

Thus rehabilitation and formation programmes for the provision of skills for self reliance should be mandatory if we intend to curb recidivism.



In most of our prisons in Africa, over 75% of the prisoners are awaiting trial. The judicial systems are completely overburdened. The investigative arms of governments are slow and prosecution flawed. This is due to a lack of finance, outdated and disorganised filing systems. Corruption in the judiciary, absenteeism of different stake holders in the court, non availability of certain documents in case files, and lack of supervision which breeds a 'laissez faire' attitude at work. Disgruntled, poorly trained and poorly paid prison personnel, who are also understaffed. All these contribute to the clumsy execution of their jobs; that is the judiciary and prison personnel. Thus cases are forever being adjourned, and the overcrowding remains unbearable



continuation

Torture is still used in many of our prisons as a way to control prisoners. There is ill-treatment and torture of some prisoners by prison staff, but also some prisoners torture other prisoners.

Prisoners are cruel to each other partly because the prison staff sometimes surrender and let prisoners exercise control over the prison.



Governance

- In some countries prisoners continue to stay on in prison long after their sentence is over due to lack of information, corruption, poor management, disorganisation and bad will of prison and judiciary staff. In short there are many human rights violations in many of our African prisons and the standard minimum rules for the treatment of offenders are not respected.

Infrastructure

- Lack of office or counseling rooms
- No provision for decent places of prayer or worship
- Lack of remuneration from government or church
- Most of the spiritual care is done by volunteers at their free time.



Lack of Information and self formation

- Lack of networking in order to learn from each other.
- The field of prison chaplaincy in Africa is still undergoing professional development. There's need for tailor made training for prison chaplaincy workers
- There is a need for chaplains in Africa to develop a theology of spiritual and prison pastoral care

g) Rehabilitation programs

- Lack of rehabilitation programs organised by the government
- Chaplains step in to offer the courses voluntarily i.e. vocational training, formal education ICT, Bible programs
- Idleness and boredom is prevalent in most prisons.
- Most governments do not have budget heads for rehabilitation programs

h) Stigmatisation of ex-prisoners

- Lack of awareness in churches, among families and communities of the need for prison visits.
- Ex prisoners lack social support and social reintegration for released persons back to our communities without fear or prejudice and this has led to recidivism.

Current interventions by the church in Africa

- After the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation in 2011: *Africae Munus* No.83 .The Catholic Church's option for the poor is seen in its service to those in the forgotten and the least, specifically the prisoners.
- Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI exhorted that the prison ministry be organised, advocate for prison reforms, abolition of the death Penalty, and train prison pastoral workers on the holistic approach, use of restorative justice and other means for the rehabilitation and re insertion of ex- offenders and victims (.)
- He recommended that “Pastoral workers have the task of studying and recommending *restorative justice* as a means and a process for promoting reconciliation, justice and peace, and the return of victims and offenders to the community” (*Africae Munus* No. 83).



THE SITUATION OF THE PRISON PASTORAL CARE IN AFRICA

- Chaplains provide religious and spiritual care in various ways, such as, providing access to volunteer workers of faiths other than those represented by the permanent personnel. They also lead services, officiate in ceremonies and facilitate rituals
- Chaplains also consider pastoral counseling to be their primary task in the prison system



ROLE OF CHAPLAINS - CONT.

- EXAMPLE OF ZAMBIA- Chaplaincy runs Carpentry workshop, strengthening the Tailoring Group, increasing the number of education classes, including illiteracy program, supporting Computer skills Training Program
- Management of sports facility for the inmates and other cultural activities(Drama and Musical Group
- Coordination of spiritual and Bible programs

SCRIPTURE CLASS GRADUATION IN KENYA PRISONS





OTHER CHURCH INITIATIVES

- Victim-offender- Prison Care Support Network –in Cameroon provides medical consultancy, counseling support children in conflict with the law, legal assistance, facilitate reinsertion back to society



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- Prison Care and Support Network in South Africa- responds to the spiritual and emotional needs of prisoners and their families
- Provides care and support after release including restorative justice to reduce stigma and reoffending
- Facilitates Alpha programs for prisoners.

conclusion

- Majority of these programs are found only in a few countries while majority are without any form of organized support from the church and thus there is need to have a policy to streamline the prison pastoral care with the mainstream Continental evangelization plan under SECAM-Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar