

The Initiatives that the Church in Bangladesh has
Developed and put into practice in the face of the Social
and the Ecclesial Challenge faced by the Prison Ministry

Fr. Liton Hubert Gomes. CSC

Convener

Prison Ministry Desk

&

Executive Secretary

Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Prison Brief Data

(Ref. WPB & National Prison Administration Bangladesh, 13 May, 2019)

- ❖ Country: [Bangladesh \(South Asia\)](#)
- ❖ Ministry Responsible : [Ministry of Home Affairs](#)
- ❖ Prison Administration : [Department of Prisons](#)

Bangladesh Prison Brief Data

(Ref. WPB & National Prison Administration Bangladesh, 13.05.2019)

- ❖ Prison population total (including pre-trial detainees / remand prisoners): **88, 211**
- ❖ Official capacity of prison system: **40, 664**
- ❖ About 43% of all prisoners in Bangladesh, or 37,000 people, are behind bars for drug-related cases. (20 July, 2018, Dhaka Tribune)

Bangladesh Prison Brief Data

(Ref. WPB & National Prison Administration Bangladesh, 13.05.2019)

- ❖ Female prisoners : 4.1%
- ❖ Juveniles / minors / young prisoners : 0.7%
(May 2012 - under 18)
- ❖ Number of establishments / institutions: 68
 - ❖ 55 district prisons,
 - ❖ 13 central prisons

❖ The 68 prisons in Bangladesh can be divided into two major types:-

- ❑ **Central Jails (13)**- central jails are for the confinement of prisoners under trial, administrative detainees and convicted prisoners sentenced to a term of imprisonment, including imprisonment for life, and the death sentence.
- ❑ **District Jails (55)**- district jails are located at the headquarters of the district, are used for the confinement of all categories of prisoners, except those convicted prisoners whose sentence exceeds 5 years.

❖ Two types of accommodation: cell accommodation and accommodation in association wards.

Bangladesh Prison Population Trend

(Ref. WPB & National Prison Administration Bangladesh, 13.05.2019)

Year	Prison population total
2000	62,669
2002	68,178
2004	73,154
2006	71,114
2008	86,838
2010	69,650
2012	68,700
2014	65,662
2016	73,177
2018	83,350
2019	88,211

❑ The problems and Challenges face as Chaplain at Prison Ministry in Bangladesh

- ❖ Using prisons to confine and punish prisoners, but should be a place of refinement and transformation.
- ❖ Two-thirds of prisoners are awaiting trial and many will stay in prison for far longer than the sentence they would have served if they had been convicted of their crime.
- ❖ Most are poor and have no money for a lawyer; often the families do not even know where they are.
- ❖ Chaplains found that they had much more interaction with officers
- ❖ it is important for chaplains to develop good working relationships with prison staff, because, these staff members are often responsible for the decisions that determine the chaplain's ability to do his job

❑ The problems and Challenges face as Chaplain in Bangladesh

- ❖ Prison chaplains face challenge in their interactions with inmates. Chaplains are initially surprised by the manipulation they face from inmates.
- ❖ Jails and prisons administrators think they are saving money by allowing nonprofit groups or volunteer chaplains.
- ❖ Prison chaplains may wrestle with the injustices in the criminal justice system. Chaplains must decide how prophetic they can be in their advocacy for change and transformation—which may depend on many factors, including their supervisors and setting.

❑ The problems and Challenges face as Chaplain in Bangladesh

- ❖ Psychological disorders and severe frustration are common among prisoners after suffering from a prolonged period of incarceration. Many of them become addicted.
- ❖ There is no counseling facility in the prison. Medical facility is also very inadequate.
- ❖ There are thousands of prisoners who have committed very minor crimes or even no crimes at all. But after experiencing the terrible environment and getting in touch with the imprisoned criminals, many of them get involved with the underground world.

❑ The problems and Challenges face as Chaplain in Bangladesh

- ❖ The visiting room is so crowded that nobody can see or hear anything. But if visitors pay to these guards, they can arrange the meeting in a calmer and quieter environment.
- ❖ Money is exchanged illegally in the jail premises. After extorting money from the relatives, the jail guards take bribes from the inmates.

❑ The problems and Challenges face as Chaplain in Bangladesh

- ❖ Long process to get the permission for prison ministers. There is no permanent permission system
- ❖ Lack of welfare measures and reform programmed.
- ❖ Inadequate attention to women and child prisoners.
- ❖ Inadequate vocational training facilities.

❑ The problems that Bangladesh prison administration system has:

- ❖ Food supply is generally insufficient and poor quality. The water supply is inadequate and has to be secured from a container located in the bathing area of prisoners outside their cells.
- ❖ The living conditions of prisoners in jails are unhygienic. This is due to overcrowding of the prisons with the large numbers of under trials.
- ❖ Poor prison conditions that make the maintenance of proper health and hygienic practices nearly impossible for prisoners, hospital facilities and services inside prisons are also inadequate, poor.

❑ The Initiatives that the Church in Bangladesh has Developed and put into practice in the face of the Social and the Ecclesial Challenge faced by the Prison Ministry

- ❖ Establishes a desk under **Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace at CBCB** level and Diocese level
 1. Prison Ministry Desk
 2. Climate change Desk
 3. Migration Desk
 4. Child Protection Desk
- ❖ Give appointment of the Desk heads both levels
- ❖ Make the team and give formation/Training, It is service, ministry for all.

The Initiatives

- ❖ **Religious and Lay Volunteers together**
- ❖ **Near by Parish is take vital initiatives**
- ❖ **Visiting Prisons** the Scripture gives us insight: "I was in prison and you came to visit me ... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me"(Matthew 25:36, 40).
- ❖ If Jesus is in the world today we would find Him "to seek and to save the lost!"
- ❖ **Bring Hope to Prisoners:** we are a part of this unique ministry. Volunteers with Prison Fellowship and bring the hope of the Gospel behind prison walls.

The Initiatives

- ❖ **Avoid the Culture of Throwaway:** When Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners, he answered that "it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). They were considered corrupt ... criminal, He offered them the healing of His forgiveness, His salvation, and even His friendship.

The Initiatives

- ❖ **Sacraments and Counseling for Spiritual and Mental Healing:** God seeks to set prisoners free—from imprisonment by sin, ignorance, rebellion, and foolish choices. Jesus identified Himself as the source of this freedom. As this is an important part of God's work, it is an important part of the Church's work as well (*Luke 4:17-19*), (*Isaiah 61:1-3*), (*John 8:34-36*). Provide pastoral care and seek to ensure spiritual welfare of prisoners
- ❖ **Prophetic voice Refinement and Transformation:** Society may intend prison to be a place of punishment, but God can use it as a place of refinement and transformation. He does not give up on those in prison, but pursues them in love (*Psalms 66:10-12, Psalm 68:5-7, Psalm 69:33*).

The Initiatives

- ❖ **Inter-faith Dialogue:** Welcome Brothers and sisters in Christ leading and managing the multi-faith chaplaincy. arranging and leading worship for prisoners, observing religious holy days and festivals, distributing religious literature, supplies and materials.
- ❖ Ensuring and supporting prisoners in dealing with families/relatives, prisoners family visitation. Legal aid support etc.

The Initiatives

- ❖ Leading on developing relationships with various support and volunteer groups
- ❖ Arranging appropriate training for chaplaincy volunteers; nurture volunteers in their contribution
- ❖ Arranging effective administration of chaplaincy, including prisoner lists for events, records updated etc
- ❖ Providing mentoring and personal support for other chaplains and volunteers

The Initiatives

- ❖ Taking care of own spiritual health and development, allowing time for private prayer, study and retreat
- ❖ Charity and love offering to prisoners
- ❖ Dialogue with officers
- ❖ Training for Police Officers
- ❖ Rehabilitation center for Drug addicted
- ❖ Rehabilitation center for girls/women/street children
- ❖ Street Children school and moral awareness programs

























