



TOPIC A

# Reducing reoffending through rehabilitation and reintegration

The United Nations emblem, featuring a world map surrounded by olive branches, is centered in the background.

**CCPCJ**

**Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice**



**Head Chair: Celeste Aracena**  
**Deputy Chair: Sebastián Lob**

# **Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice**

## **Topic A: Reducing reoffending through rehabilitation and reintegration**

### **Introduction**

Crime and recidivism remain persistent challenges for justice systems across the globe. The reintegration of former offenders into society is a complex process, often hindered by stigma, lack of employment, and inadequate support systems. Traditional punitive approaches to criminal justice have proven insufficient in preventing reoffending, prompting a shift toward strategies that emphasize rehabilitation and reintegration. These strategies aim not only to reduce the likelihood of reoffending but also to promote social harmony, economic stability, and the protection of human rights. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), as the primary policy making body of the United Nations in crime prevention and criminal justice, plays a critical role in promoting rehabilitative frameworks that support sustainable reintegration.



## Definition of Key Terms

- **Recidivism**

Recidivism refers to the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend, typically measured by subsequent arrests, convictions, or returns to incarceration. It is a key indicator of the effectiveness of criminal justice systems and rehabilitation programs.

- **Rehabilitation**

Rehabilitation encompasses the range of psychological, educational, and vocational programs designed to help offenders address the root causes of their behavior and reintegrate as productive members of society. These programs may include drug and alcohol treatment, mental health counseling, educational courses, and skills training.

- **Reintegration**

Reintegration is the process through which former offenders re-enter society and resume lawful, self-sustaining lives. Successful reintegration depends on factors such as access to employment, housing, community support, and social acceptance.

- **Restorative Justice**

A form of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior through reconciliation between victims, offenders, and the community. Restorative justice often includes mediated dialogue and restitution and can be a component of rehabilitation.

- **Alternatives to Incarceration**

These include non-custodial measures such as probation, community service, electronic monitoring, and restorative justice practices. These alternatives are used to reduce prison overcrowding and encourage rehabilitation in a less punitive environment.

## Background information

The global prison population continues to rise, with an estimated 11 million people incarcerated worldwide as of 2023. Many of these individuals return to prison within years of release **due to a cycle of poverty, trauma, and systemic neglect**. In some countries, recidivism rates exceed 50%. The societal and economic costs of this cycle are immense, prompting international efforts to implement rehabilitative justice reforms.

Rehabilitation was formally endorsed in international law through the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), which highlight the **need for prisoners' social reintegration**. Similarly, the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners (the Bangkok Rules) emphasize gender-specific rehabilitation. The CCPCJ has continually advocated for **evidence-based practices** to reduce reoffending and enhance rehabilitation outcomes.

Recent years have seen a shift towards **trauma-informed care, education-based rehabilitation**, and partnerships with NGOs and the private sector to provide employment training. Despite progress, challenges such as **insufficient funding, political resistance, and lack of community support** continue to impede global reintegration efforts.

## Major Parties Involved

- **United States of America**



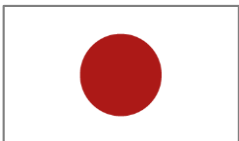
The U.S. has one of the highest incarceration and recidivism rates, with nearly 70% of released prisoners rearrested within three years. However, various states have begun adopting rehabilitative measures, such as California's restorative justice programs and Second Chance Act initiatives that support reintegration services.

- **South Africa**



Post-apartheid South Africa has prioritized rehabilitation in its correctional philosophy. Programs like the Offender Rehabilitation Path aim to reduce reoffending by addressing offenders' social and psychological needs. However, limited resources and overcrowding remain major challenges.

- **Japan**



Japan emphasizes discipline and vocational training in its correctional approach. The country implements structured daily routines in prisons and offers vocational programs that train inmates for re-entry into the workforce. While Japan's recidivism rate is moderately high (around 45%), the government has initiated support centers known as Hogo-shisetsu to assist released individuals with housing and job placement. However, aging prison populations and social stigma continue to challenge reintegration efforts.

- **Brazil**



Brazil faces one of the highest incarceration rates in South America, with severe prison overcrowding and poor conditions. Despite this, innovative community-based reintegration initiatives like the APAC model (Association for the Protection and Assistance of the Convicted) have gained international recognition. APAC prisons operate without armed guards and focus on trust, responsibility, and human dignity. These facilities report recidivism rates as low as 15%, compared to over 70% in regular Brazilian prisons.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The CCPCJ has long emphasized rehabilitation and reintegration as essential components of effective criminal justice systems. A key milestone was the Kyoto Declaration (2021), which urged Member States to promote rehabilitation and expand alternatives to incarceration. This built on the groundwork laid by earlier frameworks like the Nelson Mandela Rules, which stress humane treatment and the need for education and vocational training in prisons.

The Doha Declaration Global Programme, supported by CCPCJ and UNODC, funded prisoner education and reintegration programs worldwide. Additionally, CCPCJ has facilitated international cooperation through workshops and technical assistance aimed at building national capacities.

Despite progress, implementation remains uneven due to funding gaps and weak coordination between prison systems and post-release services.

The CCPCJ is one of the few UN bodies that bridges both **crime prevention** and **criminal justice**, allowing it to influence law enforcement, judicial reform, and corrections policy simultaneously. This makes it uniquely positioned to tackle systemic issues like reoffending from multiple angles.

## Possible Solutions

To effectively reduce reoffending, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. First, member states should **invest in evidence-based rehabilitation programs within prisons that focus on education, trauma treatment, and job skills**. Second, reintegration must be **supported through transitional housing, employment assistance, and social reintegration networks**.

The CCPCJ can **advocate for the expansion of non-custodial alternatives for non-violent offenders and the standardization of reintegration practices across member states**. Establishing a **global reintegration support fund** could assist low-income countries in developing community-based rehabilitation centers.

International cooperation is crucial, particularly in sharing practices, training professionals, and monitoring outcomes. Emphasis should also be placed on **destigmatization** campaigns to encourage communities to **accept** former offenders and **support** their reentry.



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