



SOUTHERN SUDAN PRISONS SERVICE BULLETIN

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Alternatives to Imprisonment Workshop Juba, 6-10 April 2009



Last year, in June, a National Workshop on Alternatives to Imprisonment allowed representatives from various components of the criminal justice system to consider different options for addressing the problem of prison overcrowding. A consensus emerged around ten core strategies to promote alternatives to imprisonment in Southern Sudan. In

April of this year, a second national workshop was held in Juba to begin to operationalize these strategies and implement them.

The workshop brought together participants from the judiciary, the police, legislators, the prosecution service, the prison service, other government

ministries including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development, the Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare, the Human Rights Commission, civil society as well as from UN agencies.

Strategies to Promote Alternatives to Imprisonment in Southern Sudan

1. Decriminalization
2. Reducing the number of prisoners on remand
3. Reducing the number of offenders in prison for failing to pay a fine
4. Reducing the number of people in prison for failing to pay compensation to victims
5. Reducing the number of people in prison for failure to pay a debt (civil)
6. Removing all mentally ill individuals from prisons and placing them in a mental health institution
7. Encouraging diversion from the formal criminal justice system
8. Encouraging the implementation of non-custodial sentences
9. Encouraging the use of temporary releases from prisons
10. Encouraging the early release of offenders, when appropriate, with proper supervision

The workshop was used to:

1. Develop action plans for strategies reached during the first workshop on alternatives in June 2008.
2. Strengthen working relationships and collaboration among actors in criminal justice system of Southern Sudan in addressing overcrowding in prisons.
3. Review international experiences and best practices on various options

available as alternatives to imprisonment.

Participants were able to brainstorm about practical solutions and identify the activities required to implement each strategy.

Lt. General Agasio Akol Tong - Director General - Southern Sudan Prisons Service noted that “all sectors of the justice system are charged with promoting the safety of the community, it is a shared responsibility”.



The workshop identified a number of priorities for action, including the creation of a criminal justice linkage committee to facilitate system-wide coordination. It was also agreed that reviving the probation supervision function within the Prisons Service ought to begin as soon as possible.

The situation of mentally ill individuals found in prisons is particularly difficult and will require concerted action on the part of both the justice and the health sectors.

The situation of juveniles in prisons also required urgent attention. The recently adopted *Child Bill* will accelerate the

implementation of new responses to juveniles in conflict with the law. The situation of children and adolescents currently in prison, however, urgently requires attention.

It was also agreed that some action could be taken soon to review the practice of imprisoning people for default to pay a

fine or compensation to a victim. Imprisonment to enforce civil debts is also an issue requiring attention as this practice is contrary to the provisions of Article 11 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

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High Level Meeting on Alternatives to Imprisonment

Juba – June 25, 2009

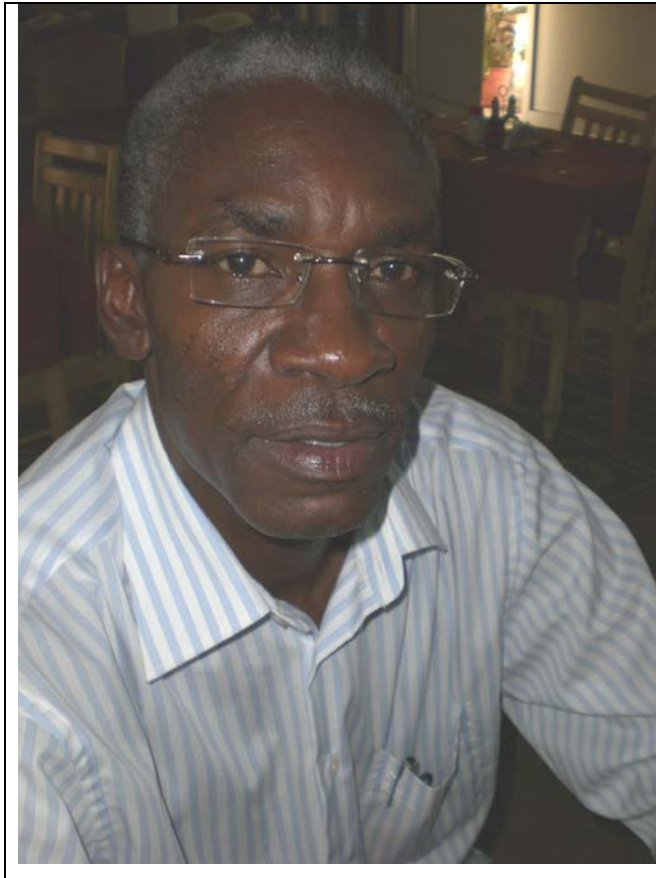
Immediate action must be taken to implement the strategies that we have identified together. Losing no time since the April 2009 national workshop on alternatives to imprisonment, a high level meeting was held in Juba on June 25 to review the recommendations that came out of the workshop and to plan their implementation.

The meeting, chaired by Mr. Justice Ruben Madol Arol of the Supreme Court, brought together senior officials from the Southern Sudan Prisons Service, the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development, the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs, and the Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission, including the Director General of the Prisons Service, the Prosecutor General, the Undersecretary, Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs, and representatives of the UNMIS, UNODC and ICCLR partners and advisers.

Lt. General Agasio Akol Tong, Director General of Southern Sudan Prisons Service explained: “We had the two workshops already and we agreed on a strategy. The problems we are all facing are not new. They exist in all criminal justice systems. We are trying to promote community safety through a good criminal justice system. We must work closely together”.

The meeting highlighted the importance of setting a place a strong coordination mechanism to build on the good will and commitment and the various agencies involved. A proposal was made to develop a Criminal Justice Linkage Committee to support this collective effort. A proposal will be prepared for consideration by the Minister.





Congratulations Aggrey!

UNODC is happy to announce that Aggrey Nyapola has joined the UNODC Project Team in Southern Sudan. As overall Project Coordinator, Aggrey will now lead the UNODC team in Juba which includes Cheikh Toure, Project Manager, and Miranda Akale, Associate Project Coordinator.

As a former UNMIS corrections adviser, Aggrey has been working closely with the Southern Sudan Prisons Service for the last three years. He is well acquainted with the challenges facing the prisons system and has developed some excellent working relationships with members of the UNMIS Rule of Law Section, the Southern Sudan Prisons Service, and the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform.

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