

Education of minors in prison



Description

Detained minors are particularly vulnerable and often prevented from receiving a proper education. In Africa, considerable uncertainty persists about the dimension of the issue. Little data exist about the origin of the imprisonment of these minors and the way they are treated. These youngsters, of which about 65% should not be behind bars, are often considered as deserving no political consideration and are victims of the lack of interest from both the public authorities and the population and at times even their own parents.

According to their respective objectives, IDAY-International and the NGO Defense of Children International (DCI) – Belgium have decided to work together to resolve this issue. The partnership started in May 2010 and as from the General Assembly of Kampala in November 2011, both organizations consulted each other regularly to examine how IDAY-Members could best respond to the needs. They both aimed mainly at the improvement of the legal policies and norms, the adoption of concrete measures to have the basic rights of the minors deprived of liberty respected in particular in terms of education.

In the light of international and regional standards, putting youngsters behind bars must remain a last option. If such a punishment is pronounced, it must be as short as possible. It is up to each State to verify that minors are treated with dignity and prevent them being subjected to degrading and inhuman treatments. Also, the way the minors are detained must be adapted to their situation. The norms expect them never to be detained preventively for more than 48 hours, a rule rarely respected.

IDAY's program aims at improving the situation of minors in prison, regarding their overall situation, their conditions of detention and their access to education.



The program is articulated around 3 themes:

Mapping of minors in African prisons

Data collected will give an overall profile of the minors both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, indicate the inadequacies of the legislation and policies and give an overall picture of the minors' detention conditions — too many minors are still being detained together with adults instead of having their own prison or yard to avoid abuses of all sort. It will also provide relevant data on the situation regarding education and, in particular the norms these minors should reach to be able to integrate into the national education system when leaving prison. The data will also serve as reference mark to evaluate progress being achieved.

The mapping will be implemented by the organizations or persons who already work with minors in prison because they master the problems involved in this specialized area. It will be coordinated at regional level, in order to compare data and information collected. The survey questionnaires were developed together with several members of the IDAY and DCI-Belgium networks.

Guide on education of minors in prison

The results of the mapping exercise will be used to update and adapt the “existing guides on education of minors in prison” aimed at the various authorities concerned: government, donors, international institutions. It will be a tool to advocate and influence improvements for these minors. In addition, the guide will reiterate the fundamental rights and obligations as described in the international conventions (restricting liberty as a measure of last resort, duration as short as possible, respect of the minors deprived of liberty, the need to provide education to facilitate reinsertion when released).

The guide will also list the good practices found in some countries as well as concrete proposals to facilitate a legal framework adapted to the situation prevailing in each country. To do so, meetings of the participating organizations will be organized each year.

Advocacy and sensitization campaigns

The third component consists of conducting advocacy campaigns with government authorities and raise awareness of the population about the situation and rights of the minors in prison at both national and international levels. The goal is to remind States of their responsibility regarding the conditions minors in prison are facing, to inform leaders of the deficiencies of their legislation and also to facilitate the coordination of local and foreign civil society organizations active in the sector.