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Treatment of Female Offenders in Prison: The Case of Cameroon

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Abstract:

The increasing absence of the concerns and challenges of female offenders in African prisons is gradually becoming an accentuated phenomenon. Even though this is partly due to their relatively small number, the special problems and needs of female offenders are absolutely necessary for a conducive prison life. Female inmates are plagued with problems related feeding, sleeping arrangements, health care, recreational facilities, freedom of movement and pregnancy and childcare in or out of prison. The deplorable prison conditions adapted to accommodate the special needs of women coupled with the differential attitude of prison staff towards female offenders have an adverse effect on women's physical and mental health and development. This study aims to promote the human rights and dignity of female offenders in Cameroon. It focuses on the challenges women experience in prison and considered possible policy reform to address these challenges. The research involved 10 female inmates and employed a purposive sampling It adopted a descriptive design with interview guides and focus group discussions as main tools. Data was analyzed using thematic content analysis to highlights the challenges and marginalized voices of women offenders in Cameroon.

Keywords: Treatment, female offenders, challenges and policy

1. Introduction

According to the international center for criminal law reform (I.C.C.L.R) a prison is defined as a place where people are physically confined and deprived from a range of personal freedom as a result of breaking the law. There are two types of prisoners namely: convicts and those awaiting trials. The former are those who have being trailed by the courts and found guilty while the latter are those who are yet to be tried. The prison also does serve as a reformatory correctional, rehabilitation, and penitentiary facility but its major function is to prepare prisoners for social reinsertion.

Studies carried out by the international center for prison studies (I.C.P.S) estimate prison population around the world to be about 10.1million while Friends World Committee for Consultation(F.W.C.C.) in collaboration with the QUAKER united nations office asset that women constituted just a small fraction of the total world population 2 to 4% with the highest being in Thailand 19% (Taylor (2010).

Literature on gender and the criminal justice system in Africa shows a discernable inequality in the way male and female offenders are treated. Unlike their male counterparts, women are generally ignored and their experiences and rights are marginalized in the manner in which the criminal justice system manages and operates correctional programmes for inmates. This comes as no surprise given that studies based on male perspectives form the core of 'general' theories of crime, without taking female experiences as crime participants or victims into account. Even where research has included female offenders and victims of crime, the studies often fall prey to sexism and in its extreme form, judicial or cultural misogyny (Ballinger, 2000:3; Moyer, 2001:242).

The statistics on arrests of men and women in the United States, Britain, Botswana, Cameroon, Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa, as in most criminal jurisdictions the world over, suggests that males have a monopoly on crime. Women continue to remain a minority within the prison community. In the United States of America, women make up 8.7% of the prison population. In Wales women make up 5.9%, in Canada 5%, in Botswana 5%, in Zimbabwe 3.5%, in India 3.2%, and in South Africa 2% (Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons 2006: 16). Women make up 1% and 6 % of the prison population in Africa (Sarkin, 2008). While there are women's prisons in some countries, in others, men and women are held in the same prison and not always separately (Samakaya-Makarati, 2003). This idea of housing male and female offenders in the same prison seems to be a global African crisis considering that the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture (Winslow, 2008) who also advocated that in Cameroon women are held in prison complexes with men, occasionally in the same cells. It is further exacerbated by the United Nations Committee Against Torture (CAT/C/SR.585588 and 590:2003) 4 (b) stating that the separation of men and

women in Cameroon is not always ensured in practice. According to Riley (1999) the consequences of not ensuring separation in accordance to the Body of Principles for the protection of all persons under any form of Detention or Imprisonment and in respect of the Cameroonian correctional policy are to expose female offenders to sexual harassment and exploitation by male offenders or prison guards.

Eventually, a common characteristic of women offenders in Africa is that the majority are very poor and uneducated. Usually, they are convicted for crimes such as murder and attempted murder as a result of self-defense, theft, abortion, poisoning, prostitution and infanticide (Godfrey & Lawrence, 2005:131; Sarkin, 2008: 25). It is imperative to note that in some well-established prisons these women are given the opportunity to get involved in some income generating activities such as handicraft while in others extracurricular activities are organized for them (Taylor, 2010).

Apparently the bulk of literature focuses on North America and Europe, with little information on the other continents. This notwithstanding reports concerning prisons from Non-Governmental Organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, fill this lacuna especially for Africa but still with limited information and only for South Africa and Nigeria. (Sarkin, 2008). Even where statistics on the female population are available provided for some countries, it is a completely lame case for Cameroon. The statistics for 1998 only gives the total number of persons in penal institutions in Cameroon at 15,903 (Winslow, 2008) and for 2002, the prison population was around 20,000 but these statistics fail to give the specific percentages for male and female offenders respectively (ACHPR: 2002). However, the Douala central prison contains 3600 prisoners of whom a hundred are female (but this number has dropped to 70 according to prison records 2015). and the Kondengui central prison has 3600 inmates with 700 women inclusive (Totoum, 2008:1) while the Buea central prison has 600 inmates with only 7 females. Under this circumstance there remains a need for a comprehensive study of prisons in Cameroon and female offenders and their specific needs and concerns and related policies in particular.

2. Statement of Problem

The increasing absence of the concerns and challenges of female offenders in African prisons is gradually becoming a phenomenon. Even though this is partly due to their relatively small number, the special problems and needs of female offenders are absolutely necessary for a conducive prison life. The gap in criminological research on the experiences of female inmates only compound issues (Henning et al. 2005; Simon, 1975; Haffejee et al., 2005). Consequently, correctional providers lack adequate knowledge about many facets of female offending. Despite the many differences that exist between male and female offenders, programmes and services designed for males are usually extended to female offenders with little alteration (Suter et al. 2002). As a result, in most instances women are assessed with the same (or slightly modified) criteria as men. Therefore there is a need to determine the degree of similarities and differences between women and men in prison in order to identify and design gender sensitive and protective policy with regard to their sexuality.

According to the Special Rapporteur delegated to Cameroon by the African Commission for Human and People's Rights (ACHPR: 2002) men, women and minors are to be kept separately in prisons, but due to overcrowding this is hard to implement. Thus mothers often are incarcerated with their children and or babies who eat the same food and this also applies for pregnant women and nursing mothers. Moreover, women offenders are most often not provided with sanitary towels in prison and during their menstruation they are forced to improvise. Besides they are plagued with problems related to pregnancy and care giving for children in or out of prison. This poor prison conditions adapted to accommodate the special needs of women coupled with the differential attitude of prison staff towards female offenders (Linonge, 2001) have an adverse effect on women's physical and mental health. Thus documenting and examining the treatment of deplorable prison conditions from female prisoners' perspectives would rightly highlight their challenges and marginalized voices. It is against this background that this study aims to promote the human rights and dignity of female offenders in Cameroon. It focuses on the treatment women experience in prison and would consider possible policy reform to address these challenges.

3. Differential Treatment of Female Offenders by the Criminal Justice System

The law sets a double standard in criminal adultery in Cameroon and is substantiated by section 361 of the Penal Code which allows that a husband be either a habitual offender or a notorious one who commits adultery in the matrimonial home before he can be charged to court whereas for a married woman, one isolated incident suffices. However in 2016 this section was revised to in favour of both parties. However, this seems to be characteristics of the nineteenth-century woman who was worshipped almost as a goddess while she conformed to the confines of home, but was subject to a vicious double standard if she strayed. During that period even one episode of extramarital tution, murder, attempted murder and theft (Godfrey & Lawrence, 2005:131; Sarkin, 2008: 25). These crimes may seem offensive to the society but the law is lenient in its punishment against the female offender in most jurisdictions of the world. A good example in Cameroon is presented by section 340 of the Penal Code on infanticide where a woman who kills her baby within one month of its birth is deemed to have committed infanticide and not murder because the law takes into cognizance her physiological and psychological peculiarity during the period after birth. Any co-offenders who assist her would not benefit from her special mitigation but will be punished with either imprisonment for life or sentenced to death. The lenient treatment of infanticide is closely followed by the English Infanticide Act 1938, which gives a woman up to 12 months. However, Sarkin (2008: 25), reports that crimes such as abortion or procuring an abortion that can be committed only by women, represent disparate treatment that can carry a life sentence in many countries. On the contrary, this offence is also treated leniently by section 337(1) of the

Cameroonian Penal Code, which only punishes a woman with imprisonment from 15 days to one year or with a fine of five thousands to two hundred thousand francs or both.

However, there is a landmark difference between what the law says and its implementation. In spite of the fact that the law stipulates lenient treatment for female offenders in the cases of infanticide, abortion and death sentence does not necessarily mean it is given. These offences scarcely appear in court and even when it does appear it is if the female offender is caught or dies in the course of an abortion (Ngassa, 1998). Apparently, the discussion of these lenient laws is not to say that there are no offences in which the female offender is treated harshly by the criminal justice system.

Nevertheless, the attitude of court judges also constitutes a major cause for concern. This is in relation to article 37(2) of the Cameroon constitution, which provides that "the judicial power shall be independent of the executive and legislative powers". Consequently, judges are to act according to their own discretion. If this was practical in Cameroon one would have been tempted to conclude that the rule of law would have forced judges to exercise some amount of social justice, but this is however not the case as many judges are unable to dispense their power without fear or favour which therefore impacts on the offenders. This is evident from the fact that many judges' court decisions are influenced by the executive powers. This is supported by the fact that enormous power has been given to the president of the Republic under the constitution to appoint, dismiss, promote, transfer and discipline judicial officers, especially judges and prosecutors. This limits not only the independence of the judiciary but also the effectiveness of the separation of powers (Fombad, 2007).

The effect of the discretionary nature of the sentencing system has given rise to unwanted disparities in the sentencing of offenders convicted of similar offenses and possessing similar criminal histories. This disparity arose largely because of differences in judicial values, attitudes and sentencing philosophy (Nagel & Johnson 1994).

4. Methodology

This study was carried out in two prisons in Cameroon: the Buea and Douala Central Prisons. 10 female offenders, 5 from each prison were purposefully selected for the study which also adopted a descriptive research design. The research combined a number of methods. Primarily, the major tools were interview guides and focus group discussions through which data on the experiences and challenges of women offenders was elicited from two categories of persons: the female inmates and prison staff. Secondary data was extracted from books, journals and official records. Data generated, was analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics and thematic content analysis for trends and patterns.

This study falls in line with the objectives of the Rights theory which forms the framework for this research. This theory is critical to the context of imprisonment and is reinforced by the Standard Minimum Rules for the treatment of prisoners, which stipulates that no discrimination shall be shown in the treatment of prisoners. Emphasis is laid on specific international standards for women which usually relate to separation in places of detention, special facilities for the care of pregnant women, those recovering from childbirth and convalescing (Tougouri, 1996:55). Nevertheless, a global perspective of the theory of rights seeks what is basic to humanity, to propagate gender equality as a means to ensure quality life for all. Proponents of human rights argue that the modern consideration of the theory of human rights should not start with the natural right tradition, but with the theory of social justice (Vincent, 1986).

5. Results and Discussion

A total of ten female inmates participated in the study. The majority were in their reproductive ages with up to half of the sample population falling in the age group 20-29. Thus indicating a low crime wave among older than younger women as confirmed by Lenhard (2005). More than one-third of female inmates were either secondary school drop outs or ordinary level holders. Implying that, these women were not mere illiterates though ignorant of the law. This tallies with the profile of women prisoners internationally according to (Linonge 2001; Covington & Bloom 2003; Modie-Moroka, 2003) who noted that female offenders are typically of low socioeconomic status, uneducated and poor. Further, close to three-quarter of the sample were married against one tenth who were single and the rest were in free union.

Moreso findings reveal that the greater number of female offenders were mothers with at least a child who were taken care of by family members (mothers, younger/elder sisters, brothers, grandparents and aunts) as similarly purported by Vetten in Sarkin (2008). Hence their present situation virtually affects the relationship with their children. Moreover, the most frequent reason for conviction was abuse of trust. Others included; theft, fraud, perjury, murder and attempted murder which aligns with history of crimes committed by women in the Africa continent worldwide (Kaggwa, 2012; Godfrey & Lawrence, 2005:131; Sarkin, 2008: 25). Interestingly only two inmates were recidivists. The majority were in prison for the very first time where they had spent at most three and half years and prison term varied between 5 and 25 years. This rather contradicts (SUR, 2010) who articulated that most prisoners are recidivists. About half the sample suffered from health problems such as body pains, gastric, typhoid and tooth ache while the other half, who were relatively younger did not. This is similar to the report by International center for prison studies (2010) which noted that the younger female inmates probably because of their age seemed more resistant to health crisis.

Pertaining to how female offenders came to the attention of the police, bosses, reported the criminal act to police for inmates guilty of abuse of trust and fraud while neighbours, family members and the bank reported the cases of theft, murder and perjury. More than three-quarter of the offenders were not represented by a lawyer because they could not afford one.

This strongly reveals the poor socio economic status of the inmates which contributed to their present status. Also about two-third of the female prisoners did not understand anything during their first court appearance as a result of their ignorance in legal matters while a minority asserted that the court claimed they were guilty, even though they know they are not. However, the court session gave the convicted women an opportunity to learn about the law of their country. But these women offenders think the law is not only complicated but harsh and more of theory than practice. Besides, all inmates were never sexually abused during their childhood but had been harassed by staff of prison. Whereas a host of them had witnessed advances from both prison staff and male inmates. This affirms Truss, Geoffrey, and Wanda (2004) who stated that these women are prone to abuse ranging from sexual violence, verbal and at times exclusion which involves social programs and benefits.

5.1. Treatment of Female Offenders in Cameroon

Women in Cameroonian prisons, experience a difficult lifestyle. In terms of feeding these women offenders are to eat once a day. In Douala central prison they are entitled to ten cups of rice for ten days while in Buea they receive a cup of raw rice or flour or 8 fingers of unripe banana on a daily basis. Without other ingredients or accessories like firewood or stoves, they are expected to cook their meals. Consequently they are forced to depend on family members and friends who provide these missing items or money for them. This is completely different from the situation of male inmates who are entitled to cooked plate of rice per day and three of four times per week in Douala and Buea respectively. The prison staff affirmed that it is as a result of the small budget allocated to the prisons but this discrimination is outrightly contrarily to the rights theory which promotes equal rights for all.

As the level of sleeping arrangements, it ranges from sharing beds sometimes to sharing beds always due to limited beds and space especially at the Douala central prison and the inmates are expected to provide their sheets and take turns in dressing and washing as well as cleaning of the immediate environments. In Buea, the women offenders sleep on mats or mattresses on the floor provided by their families. Some have light blankets to protect themselves from the cold while other simply have sheets. As for the males the tendency of sharing beds is not very high and when they earn cell positions (Head of cell) as a results of good conduct, they use their powers within the cell to own beds which they do not share.

Pertaining to dressing, literature holds that female offenders in South Africa suffered from irregular supply of uniforms. In this study the female inmates in Buea reported that they used to have uniforms before but because of the stigma attached to the uniforms by the society, Human Rights activists advocated for casual dressing which is provided by inmate's families, missionaries, individuals or Non-Governmental Organization. The story is similar in Douala but for the fact that inmates in Buea receive clothes more often than those in Douala. But it was possible for male offenders to frequently receive old clothes from male warders who outnumbered female warders in both Douala and Buea central prisons.

Moreso, toilet facilities for women offenders were horrible. These toilets were either bad and unfit for use or very unclean which caused inmates to use buckets all the time. During the focus group discussions, inmates revealed that, there is no supply of water which exacerbate the situation. Besides, the prison cells in Douala central prison is overcrowded due to limited space and ventilation is obstructed. As for toiletries like rolls, sanitary towels and pads, there has never been the provision of any just as indicated by Winslow (2008). During menstruation inmates are expected to handle the situation independently by improvising. Consequently they use toilet rolls which they buy with money from relatives. In Zimbabwe, women used alternatives such as newspapers, tissues and pieces of blanket or prison uniform. This is rather gender insensitive on the part of the prison system which is reductive of the specific gender needs of the women offenders. This actually does not conform to the provisions of U.N. standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners and it is also contrary to the rights of these women prisoners according to the rights theory.

Furthermore, female offenders also experienced the nonchalant attitude of prison staff and their greedy and aggressive natures. This is usually in relation to their gifts or possessions (such as food stuff, jewelry) which they seize using force. This is similar to the situation in Uganda where the moods of female prison staff changed when female offenders received expensive or quality items from relatives and friends, which the female warders could not afford (Neudek, 2003). As for the male inmates, such cases were rare because they successfully fought back and when they let go, it was in exchange for some favour. A 38 year old female inmate in Douala central prison said:

They took my gizzard from the pack brought to me by my sister in front of me. They said they ate it in my presence so that I should think that she (my sister) forgot to include the gizzard.

However unlike middle and upper class women who are reserved chivalrous treatment by law enforcement officials, it is clear that, Cameroonian inmates like other racially minority women are treated more harshly by the criminal justice system (Nagel & Johnson, 1994: 188) which may exacerbate racial and socioeconomic sentencing disparities.

The situation for pregnant inmates is not very different but however chaotic especially in Douala central prison. They are subjected to all the odds, other female offenders undergo, but for the fact they are visited occasionally by health staff for prenatal care. But usually this is ineffective as reported by a 31 year old inmate in Douala Central Prison who had a miscarriage at five and half months due to stress caused by the uncomfortable conditions in prison.

I suffered immensely in this pig sty so much that when I lost my baby. I was rather relieved because I could not have imagined my baby growing in such an inhuman environment.

Generally pregnant inmates share beds, eat same food, and are equally scolded, insulted, intimidated and sexually harassed by male inmates and staff. This is quite far from the expectations of the rights theory which rather covers pregnant inmates from child birth to convalescence (Tougouri, 1996: 55).

In Buea Central Prison pregnant offenders are rather assigned less or minor work during labour periods which require less energy like cleaning. But there is no steady staff in charge of the health of pregnant inmates despite the presence of a health unit which is functional only during the day. Nevertheless, humanitarian associations in the Roman Catholic Church in Buea enormously assist pregnant women financially in Mount Mary hospital during pre and post natal care. A 28 year old inmate who just gave birth in Buea central prison reported thus;

The health services we receive from the Catholic church are very impressive. They followed up my pregnancy from inception till delivery at Mount Mary hospital. In fact, I did not expect all these, it still seem to me like a dream.

As for women offenders with babies in prison, it is their responsibility to take care of their babies. Thus, unlike the case of Ethiopia where female offenders frequently complained about the clothing for infants, which were often coarse, unhygienic and unsuitable for modern requirements (Forsythe (1993), no special facilities exist to support these babies in Cameroon. These babies sleep on same beds or mats and eat same food like their mothers like the case in Nigeria (Agozino, 2005:191). The pregnant state of women offenders does not really seem to be a worry to the prison authorities in Cameroon as evident in the complete absence of related provisions in this light.

Fortunately, despite all these limitations and hardship, no female offender has ever attempted to escape or commit suicide as is the case in Jefferson Correctional Institution in North Florida (DeBell, 2001). These inmates have rather internalized the problems and adapt to the present conditions. Others in Douala central prison have strategized temporal coping strategies like adopting a good attitude which permit them gain periodic favours from the staff like running errands which also give them opportunity to visit their love ones from whom they get food stuff and other personal needs.

Furthermore, while in prison, the major issues that run through the minds of these women are worries about the wellbeing of their families and especially that of their children. This is because such women were the primary caretakers of children prior to incarceration. However, their families are aware of their situation and are very supportive for the majority of inmates. This impressive support put them in a delightful state which raises hope especially after their release. But according to prison authorities the principal challenge experienced by inmates is sexual restriction. This shows the disconnection in communication between the women offenders and the prison staff. It also discredits the fact that these women have a say in the running of the prisons as the staff claimed. This just goes to confirm the stands of Think Africa press (2010) that, this minority problem has made it difficult for female inmates to be fully incorporated in to existing prison programs.

Meanwhile, inmates equally engage in some activities in prison like hairdressing, tailoring, basket weaving, bag and jewelry making and audio visual activities. Inmates in Douala central prison claimed strongly that the training were quite insufficient to guarantee a job upon release by virtue of its limited facilities and disorganized nature. Whereas those in Buea, affirmed that they were rather restricted from major activities from which they could easily earn money like tailoring and poultry. Only male inmates were involved and they used money generated to better life in prison.

In addition, women prisoners are entitled to visits from their family members, friends, and well-wishers. Despite, this possibility to entertain visits from outside, female inmates still missed their loved ones dearly, especially husbands and children. This is because visits are not properly organized. Most often women offenders like their visitors are expected to bribe the prison staff to entertain visits. Sometimes visiting hours are reduced without reasons, visitors are disrespected, insulted and attacked and women offenders closely watched which influence interaction with visitors. Consequently female inmates rarely enjoy visits with their contacts from outside. In addition, these inmates are forbidden to step out of the prison premises for fear that they may get impregnated. Thus while male inmates are allowed to involve in activities out of the prison environment after serving one-third of their prison term according to Section 52 of Penal code, women are rather restricted because of their gender. Besides, Non-Governmental Organizations also visit prison inmates including women offenders and offer gifts in kind such as food stuff, clothes, blankets, health sensitization and moral education and trucks for transportation of prisoners and goods.

5.2. Effects of Prison Life on Female Offenders

Findings portray that, the life style in prison take a heavy toll on the female offenders both positively and negatively. Inmates learn to be careful about their words, actions and activities in order not to avoid unnecessary problem. They also realize that the family remains the only reliable relation when one is in trouble. Basically, the life in prison renders these females inmates more courageous, smarter and vigilant. In Douala Central prison they develop a fighting spirit that enables them get what they want, when and where at the level of the prison premises. Most of all, they socialize, share and protect each other, even though not trusting each other. In Buea central prison they communicate, discuss family issues and pray together. But generally, female inmates assert that prison life is a bad experience by virtue of the fact they are poorly treated by the staff of prison. They are recognized as criminals who deserve no concern despite their human rights as prisoners.

On the other hand, the life in prison instills bad behaviour on female inmates which prompt them get involve in more criminal acts. They adopt other characters which contribute to facilitate life in prison such as: to fight, quarrel, cheat, blackmail, manipulate, double-cross, bribe and remain defensive. Twenty-nine year old female inmate in Douala central prison asserted thus:

I often start a quarrel or a fight with others so I can steal money on them, which I use to buy basic necessities. At times I steal valuables like jewelry which I sell to get money to take care of myself.

5.3. The Challenges of Female Offenders

The challenges of female inmates in Cameroon are many and varied. Socially they have limited basic necessities. The women offenders in Douala complained of poor and insufficient meals, lack of portable water, toilets, inadequate sanitation, healthcare facilities, overcrowding and limited sleeping space. In Buea, the major social worries were lack of recreational facilities and restrictions on outings. It is imperative to note that the U.N. standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners in article 21(1) and (2) that inmates have the right to recreational activities. Women in both prisons complained of limited healthcare and were equally stigmatized as recidivists. Economically, female offenders in Buea were sidelined from activities which could enable them earn money to improve livelihood in prison. Besides, the training those in Douala central prison received was limited, irregular, unorganized and lacked follow up.

Politically, these women suffer from the ills of favouritism and were evaluated using criteria originally created for men. They were intimidated, lack freedom of expression and are rather interrogated closely often. Psychologically they were traumatized and stigmatized as recidivists and bad women who do not deserve pity which affect their morale enormously. A few female inmates in Douala Central prison hold that some inmates are innocent and virtually righteous persons who just become victims of circumstance. Besides, with the morale education they receive, they are subjected to change in behavior in the nearest future.

4. Conclusion

The fact that female offenders continue to remain a minority is not enough excuse for these women to be treated indifferently by both the law and prison staff. Like all vulnerable categories of human beings they are entitled to certain rights which are recognized and should be respected by all. The women offenders in Cameroonian prisons eventually face a critical and chaotic situation which need urgent response. They experience permanent hardship in terms of feeding sleeping arrangements, sanitation and hygiene, healthcare and recreational facilities. Besides they are victims of sexual harassment and discrimination in the prison milieu. The coping strategies they adopt are temporal and ineffective. As a result these challenges do not only jeopardize real life in prison but also retards the so call reinsertion into the larger society.

Criminal law in Cameroon though described as lenient towards female offenders to certain extent still need to be broadly gender sensitive. This is because the prison authorities practically have no interest in any changes in the lives of these inmates in the present like in the future. This is evident in their complete ignorance of the principal concern of female offenders. They rather imagine it despite the fact everything is happening in their presence. This shows the height of inhuman treatment. This chauvinistic attitude must be checked but also must be accompanied with increased in budget for the prisons. Moreover, creating an enabling environment for conducive communication and sensitization, integrating services in relation to the needs of the female inmates, introducing programmes to rehabilitate and prepare inmates upon release as well reviewing policy, will not only shape the lives of these women but will also reduce their psychological trauma and contribute to the development of prisons in Cameroon.

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