



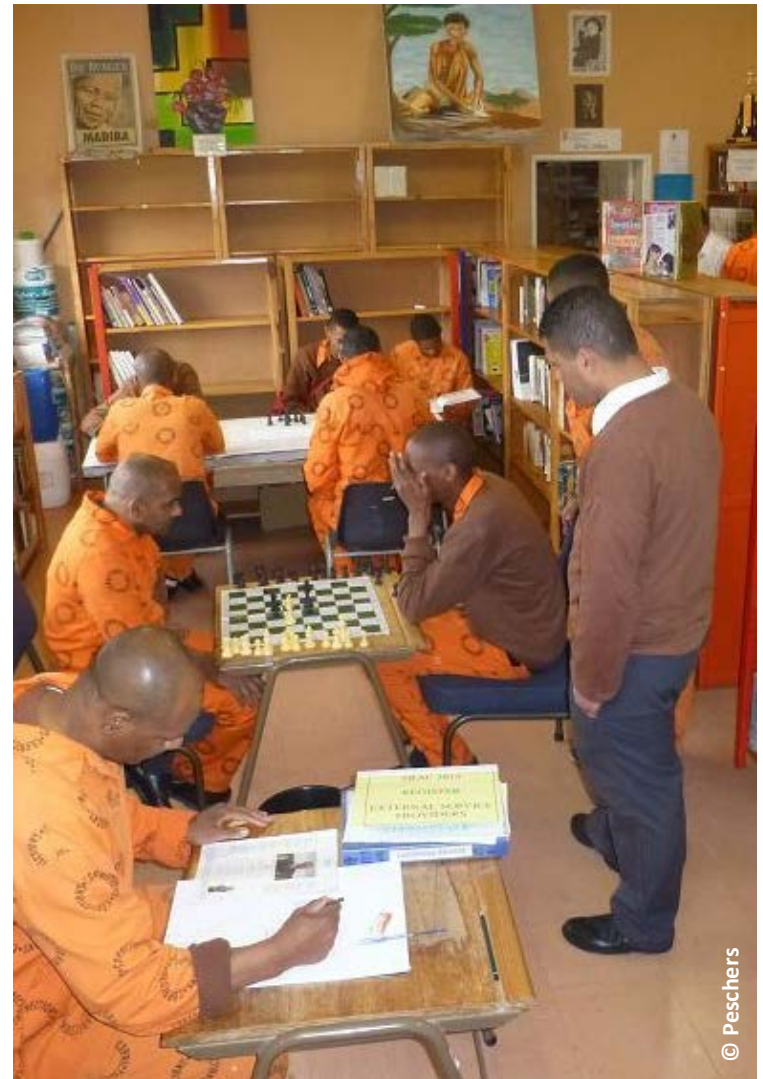
Role of libraries in prison

Lisa Krolak, Chief Librarian



Prison libraries are safe and friendly social meeting and learning spaces supporting:

- Education and lifelong learning
- Access to information
- Borrowing materials
- Recreation
- Cultural activities
- Spiritual development
- Distraction



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Role of libraries in prison during COVID-19



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- **Services are paused**
- **Limited or alternative services**
- **Innovative and creative solutions**
- **Technological developments**



Books beyond bars

The transformative potential of prison libraries



Lisa Krolak



UIL Policy Brief 11:

How prison libraries support rehabilitation efforts



Prison libraries open up a world beyond prison bars by allowing inmates to select books and other materials, carry out research, take part in organized activities, enjoy the company of other people or simply relax in a safe and welcoming environment. This can help prisoners to forget for a time the harsh reality of prison life in an otherwise extremely restrictive and regulated environment. Prison libraries have an important role as educational, informational, cultural and recreational meeting and learning spaces for the entire prison community. Providing free access to relevant resources is crucial for prisoners' personal development, well-being and, ultimately, rehabilitation. Taking security issues into account, inmates should be able to enjoy the same-quality library services and materials available to citizens living in freedom.

The right to prison education and prison library services

Education is a human right to which all people are entitled, regardless of their age, gender or socio-cultural background. Recognition of this fundamental right is at the heart of UNESCO's mission and is reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals, and other key international instruments.

However, the right of prisoners to access education, including the use of prison library services, is frequently overlooked or disregarded. Prisoners are rarely part of the educational discourse as they are locked away, often at a distance from the public. Prisoners are subject to discrimination generally and to discrimination in the provision of education specifically. Underlying this reality, often, is a belief that the purpose of imprisonment is merely to punish or deter. Such an approach not only runs counter to the commitments countries have

The Nelson Mandela Rules

The right for prisoners to have access to a prison library is reflected in the authoritative frameworks of the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, also called the Nelson Mandela Rules. It contains 122 rules, one of which specifically calls for the establishment of prison libraries.

Rule 64

Every prison shall have a library for the use of all categories of prisoners, adequately stocked with both recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to make full use of it.

Source: UNODC, 2015

made to protect the basic rights of prisoners, it also negates the potential social benefits and cost savings associated with the rehabilitation of ex-offenders.

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