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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

**Human rights and the social reintegration of persons released
from detention and persons subjected to non-custodial
measures****Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for
Human Rights****Summary*

The present report contains a comprehensive study in which an overview of the international legal framework relevant to the social reintegration of persons released from detention or subjected to non-custodial measures is provided, with a particular focus on applicable human rights norms and standards. It presents a range of initiatives adopted by States and identifies barriers that hinder effective reintegration.

The study highlights various efforts aimed at addressing these barriers, including the development of comprehensive and sustainable reintegration programmes, initiatives to shift public perceptions and combat stigmatization and discrimination, the participation of individuals with lived experience in the development of programmes, support for family and community connections, and the adoption of gender-responsive and inclusive approaches.

The study emphasizes the importance of a human rights-based approach to social reintegration that complements broader crime prevention and criminal justice strategies. It concludes with recommendations to promote more inclusive and effective reintegration practices, including developing operational guidance on implementing a human rights-based approach.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/9. The Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to prepare a comprehensive study, with practical recommendations, on human rights and the social reintegration of persons released from detention and persons subjected to non-custodial measures, with a view to assessing the benefits of further developing guiding principles, based on consultations with key stakeholders, and to present the study to the Council at its sixtieth session.¹

2. In preparing the report, OHCHR organized two virtual expert consultations (on 19 and 25 March 2025), gathering 28 participants, including 20 women, from over 18 countries around the world, including persons released from detention with lived experience and their families, representatives of criminal justice organizations, and civil society organizations engaged in social reintegration. In addition, OHCHR issued a call for input and consulted with organizations of survivors of crime. The report is based on the analysis of 87 submissions,² and a review of publicly available material.

3. This study focuses on the human rights and social reintegration of persons who have been subjected to a criminal sanction of deprivation of liberty or to non-custodial measures, such as judicial supervision, probation, conditional or suspended sentences, community service orders, commitment to treatment programmes and fines. This study does not cover pretrial detention, although individuals released from detention, especially prolonged pretrial detention, often face similar barriers and human rights challenges.³

II. International legal framework

4. In resolution 57/9, the Human Rights Council refers to social reintegration as the successful re-entry into society of a person who was subjected to a sanction involving deprivation of liberty or to non-custodial measures, so that the person can lead a law-abiding and self-supporting life with dignity, access to opportunities and enjoyment of human rights, without discrimination of any kind.⁴ It emphasizes that the primary goal of the administration of justice with respect to incarceration and non-custodial measures should be the eventual social reintegration of persons subjected to these measures, and recognizes the relevance of social reintegration for the full realization of human rights and public security, among others.⁵

5. In international human rights law, the term “social reintegration” is often used alongside or interchangeably with “(social) rehabilitation”. In general, “social reintegration” refers to one of the aims of the penitentiary system, while “(social) rehabilitation” is commonly used with regard to the procedures and means, including activities, interventions, services and programmes, to attain the aim of social reintegration.

6. United Nations human rights mechanisms have addressed the issue of social reintegration to a limited extent. When addressed, it is often within the context of prison conditions and management and thus with a primary focus on the period of incarceration. They have not elaborated on the core components of social reintegration or on the practical measures required to implement it effectively. Mentions of social reintegration at the point

¹ Human Rights Council resolution 57/9, para. 8.

² The submissions received in response to the call for input are available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-input-ohchr-comprehensive-study-human-rights-and-social-reintegration>.

³ While individuals in pretrial detention are entitled to the same protections afforded to convicted prisoners, such measures must respect the presumption of innocence and should not entail the same implications or treatments as post-conviction imprisonment (in keeping with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 9 and 10 (3); Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 35 (2014), para. 21; *Isherwood v. New Zealand* (CCPR/C/132/D/2976/2017), para. 8.4; and United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), rule 122).

⁴ Human Rights Council resolution 57/9, preamble.

⁵ Ibid.

of release or post release are even less frequent, and references to non-custodial measures are particularly rare and underdeveloped. This section contains an overview of the international framework of norms and standards relevant to social reintegration.

7. Article 10 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights requires that the essential aim of a penitentiary system's treatment of prisoners be the reformation and social rehabilitation of prisoners. The lack of a realistic prospect for convicted offenders to be eligible for parole or other probation measures is contrary to the Covenant.⁶ Furthermore, the imposition of life sentences can only be compatible with the Covenant if there is a possibility of review and a prospect of release, notwithstanding the gravity of the crime and the circumstances around it.⁷ Regarding children in conflict with the law, the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that judicial procedures take into account age and the desirability of promoting the rehabilitation and social reintegration of children.⁸

8. The international standards and norms related to prison management and the treatment of offenders developed under the auspices of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice – in particular, the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules),⁹ the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty – reaffirm a rehabilitative and social reintegration approach to the treatment of offenders, emphasizing individualized rehabilitation programmes and stressing the need to maintain family and community ties as key aspects of social reintegration. The Nelson Mandela Rules stress that the primary purposes of a sentence of imprisonment, namely to protect society from crime and to reduce recidivism, can only be achieved if the period of imprisonment is used to ensure the reintegration of prisoners into society upon release so that they can lead a law-abiding and self-supporting life.¹⁰ The Bangkok Rules promote gender-responsive reintegration programmes that match women's specific needs and the adoption of gender-responsive non-custodial measures, especially for women with caregiving roles and girls deprived of their liberty.¹¹ The United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty recommend that authorities provide juveniles with post-release support to facilitate successful social reintegration.¹² States should also consider the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules) and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) to increase the use of non-custodial measures, which should be the least restrictive necessary, proportionate and aimed at rehabilitation.¹³

9. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has stressed that all persons, including prisoners and detainees, are entitled to the rights to health, work, education, adequate housing and social protection.¹⁴ In addition, the Committee has established that States should ensure that prisoners and detainees have equal access to preventive, curative and palliative health services and to sexual and reproductive health services, should prohibit forced or compulsory labour and refrain from denying or limiting equal access to decent work, and should guarantee a fair wage for prisoners who agree to work and the right to social security.¹⁵ Other human rights treaty bodies have also addressed the social reintegration of prisoners and detainees, issuing recommendations to move from a punitive model to one of

⁶ *Albanese et al. v. Italy* (CCPR/C/142/D/3328/2019-3579/2019), para. 9.8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 9.4; and *Blessington and Elliot v. Australia* (CCPR/C/112/D/1968/2010), para. 7.7.

⁸ Convention on the Rights of the Child, arts. 14 (4) and 40 (1); and Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 32 (2007) on the right to equality before courts and tribunals and to a fair trial, paras. 42 and 44.

⁹ General Assembly resolution 70/175, annex.

¹⁰ Nelson Mandela Rules, rule 4 (1).

¹¹ Bangkok Rules, rules 16, 41, 46, 63 and 64.

¹² United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty, rule 80.

¹³ Tokyo Rules, rules 1, 8–10 and 16; and Beijing Rules, rule 29.

¹⁴ General comment No. 22 (2016), para. 31.

¹⁵ General comments No. 14 (2000), para. 34; No. 22 (2016), para. 31; No. 18 (2005), para. 23; No. 23 (2016), para. 10; and No. 19 (2007), para. 31.

rehabilitation and reintegration;¹⁶ to ensure that persons deprived of their liberty participate in designing their individual sentence plan for full rehabilitation;¹⁷ to develop policies for the effective rehabilitation and social reintegration of persons deprived of liberty, particularly those belonging to minorities and Indigenous Peoples;¹⁸ to apply adequate gender-sensitive social reintegration measures;¹⁹ and to adopt robust accountability mechanisms.²⁰

10. The special procedures of the Human Rights Council have also addressed the social reintegration of prisoners and detainees. Mandate holders have stressed that a prison regime that provides for opportunities to engage in meaningful work and educational and vocational training is essential for subsequent successful reintegration.²¹ Mandate holders have recommended that States ensure access for all women to marketable skills for reintegration,²² enhanced and culturally appropriate services for Indigenous Peoples following prison release,²³ specialized disengagement and reintegration programmes for persons convicted of terrorism-related offences,²⁴ and the reinstatement of the civil, political, economic and social rights of prisoners of conscience as part of their social reintegration.²⁵ In addition, during the universal periodic review, States have made recommendations concerning the social reintegration of released prisoners.²⁶

11. Regional human rights systems have also addressed social reintegration of released prisoners. The European Prison Rules require that all prisoners be assisted with preparation for release and aftercare support to aid reintegration,²⁷ and the Council of Europe recommendations concerning children with imprisoned parents provide for a child rights approach to social reintegration.²⁸ The European Court of Human Rights has interpreted the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as requiring States to facilitate reintegration.²⁹ The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has emphasized that the aim of the treatment of prisoners must be their social readaptation, and that imposing life sentences on juveniles without considering prospects for reintegration violates human dignity.³⁰ It has also stated that reintegration programmes for older persons should be adapted to their needs and capacities and include a gender perspective.³¹ The Guidelines and Measures for the Prohibition and Prevention of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Africa emphasize the importance of rehabilitation in criminal policy.³²

12. In short, existing international and regional norms and standards on human rights, prison management and the treatment of offenders establish social reintegration as a fundamental objective of criminal justice systems. Sentencing must therefore allow for the possibility of review and offer a genuine prospect of release and reintegration. Rehabilitation

¹⁶ CAT/C/MNG/CO/3, para. 22 (f).

¹⁷ CAT/C/ISL/CO/4, para. 16 (b).

¹⁸ CERD/C/URY/CO/24-26, para. 34 (d); and CERD/C/CAN/CO/18, para. 19.

¹⁹ CEDAW/C/DEU/CO/6, para. 58; and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general comment No. 39 (2022), para. 42 (g).

²⁰ CAT/OP/BRA/3, para. 37.

²¹ See A/HRC/58/55/Add.1; A/HRC/57/46; and A/HRC/55/52.

²² See A/HRC/17/26/Add.5.

²³ See A/HRC/36/46/Add.2.

²⁴ See A/HRC/55/48/Add.2; and A/HRC/40/52/Add.5.

²⁵ See A/HRC/37/49/Add.2; A/HRC/56/52; and A/HRC/56/61/Add.3.

²⁶ See A/HRC/57/8; A/HRC/55/6; A/HRC/52/5; A/HRC/47/12; and A/HRC/41/7.

²⁷ European Prison Rules, rules 6 and 107. See also <https://edoc.coe.int/en/european-prison-reform/11595-guidance-document-on-the-european-prison-rules.html>.

²⁸ Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning children with imprisoned parents, paras. 1, 32 and 41–44.

²⁹ See European Court of Human Rights, *Khoroshenko v. Russia*, Application No. 41418/04, Judgment, 30 June 2015, and *Vinter and Others v. United Kingdom*, Applications No. 66069/09, No. 130/10 and No. 3896/10, Judgment, 9 July 2013.

³⁰ See Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Castillo Petruzzi et al. v. Peru*, Judgment, 30 May 1999, and *Mendoza et al. v. Argentina*, Judgment, 14 May 2013. See also American Convention on Human Rights, art. 5 (6).

³¹ Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-39/22, 30 May 2022, paras. 386–396.

³² African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, art. 5.

should be individualized, with incarcerated persons actively involved in designing their sentence plans. Maintaining family and community ties is essential, as is adopting a child rights-based approach. Reintegration programmes must be gender-responsive and culturally appropriate, particularly for Indigenous Peoples and minority groups. Prisoners should be prepared for release and receive post-release support, including access to healthcare, housing, meaningful work, education and vocational training, without discrimination. Where appropriate, States should promote the use of the least restrictive non-custodial measures that are proportionate, necessary and focused on rehabilitation.

III. Social reintegration initiatives

13. States are undertaking efforts to promote the social reintegration of persons released from detention or subjected to non-custodial measures. In their submissions, States have outlined a broad range of social reintegration interventions. Most involve prison-based rehabilitation programmes, including education and literacy training,³³ vocational training and employment preparation,³⁴ cultural, religious and sports activities,³⁵ specialized interventions,³⁶ and drug dependence treatment.³⁷ In addition, several States have established partnerships with the private sector to provide training for prisoners and employment opportunities post release.³⁸ Some States also mentioned the implementation of open-prison programmes,³⁹ which enable incarcerated individuals to spend time in the community as part of a gradual transition process. In addition, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) provides countries with technical assistance to support the advancement of rehabilitative prison environments, including in the areas of education, vocational training and employment preparation, cultural, religious and sports activities, and drug dependence treatment.⁴⁰

14. With regard to reintegration programmes provided upon release, States reported offering a range of services, including legal aid; employment referrals, job placement, business start-up support, financial assistance and employer subsidies;⁴¹ psychological support;⁴² and temporary housing and other transitional services.⁴³ Several States also highlighted programmes aimed at strengthening family ties,⁴⁴ and at providing targeted support for women upon release.⁴⁵ Assistance is often delivered in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations or community networks,⁴⁶ including through community volunteers; in some cases, services are supported through State funding.⁴⁷

15. States have also mentioned national laws and regulations governing non-custodial measures, such as probation, community service, conditional and suspended sentences,

³³ See submissions from Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Costa Rica, Italy, Morocco, Russian Federation and Saudi Arabia.

³⁴ See submissions from Azerbaijan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Italy, Mauritius, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

³⁵ See submissions from Burkina Faso, Italy, Morocco and Poland.

³⁶ See submissions from Poland and Switzerland.

³⁷ See submissions from Bahrain, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Saudi Arabia.

³⁸ See submissions from Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Guatemala, Italy, Mexico, Qatar and Uzbekistan.

³⁹ See submissions from Bahrain and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

⁴⁰ See submission from UNODC.

⁴¹ See submissions from Azerbaijan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Poland, Russian Federation, Singapore, Uzbekistan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

⁴² See submissions from Azerbaijan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

⁴³ See submissions from Azerbaijan, Costa Rica, Singapore, South Africa and Uzbekistan.

⁴⁴ See submissions from Guatemala, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

⁴⁵ See submissions from Costa Rica, Mexico, Romania and the Human Rights Commission of Zambia.

⁴⁶ See submissions from Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burkina Faso, South Africa and Togo.

⁴⁷ See submission from Poland.

electronic monitoring, parole and conditional release.⁴⁸ Efforts have been made to expand alternative penalties, including partial house arrest and intensive supervised release,⁴⁹ and to introduce legal reforms that abolish restrictive eligibility requirements and broaden the range of offences to which such measures are applicable.⁵⁰ In addition, several States have adopted special legislation for children that prioritizes diversion and other non-custodial responses.⁵¹ Some States have also implemented measures to expunge or limit the disclosure of criminal records to improve access to employment and education opportunities.⁵²

16. Among non-custodial, community-based programmes, which serve as alternatives to imprisonment and support offenders within the community, States have reported implementing community engagement and aftercare initiatives,⁵³ programmes specifically targeting youth and women,⁵⁴ addiction recovery and mental health services,⁵⁵ and partnerships with NGOs and private companies on training and employment.⁵⁶ UNODC has supported States in developing non-custodial measures, such as parole, conditional release, sentence reduction and restorative justice approaches.⁵⁷

17. Some States have also reported efforts to promote restorative justice as a means of fostering offender accountability, supporting victim healing and encouraging community involvement.⁵⁸ These efforts include the development of restorative justice networks and outreach programmes,⁵⁹ community participation initiatives,⁶⁰ and reintegration programmes aimed at addressing underlying inequalities.⁶¹

18. In addition, States have described a variety of initiatives aimed at combating discrimination and stigmatization to support the reintegration of persons released from detention or subjected to non-custodial measures. These efforts target the general public, communities, families, youth, employers and the private sector. Awareness-raising and education campaigns include seminars and workshops,⁶² school-based programmes,⁶³ and traditional and social media campaigns.⁶⁴ States have highlighted community engagement activities, such as sports events,⁶⁵ concerts, exhibitions,⁶⁶ and family education programmes.⁶⁷ Furthermore, targeted awareness-raising initiatives for employers and the private sector have been developed, including meetings with employers to promote inclusive hiring practices,⁶⁸ awareness-raising sessions for businesses,⁶⁹ and strategic partnerships with NGOs and the private sector.⁷⁰

⁴⁸ See submissions from Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Uzbekistan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

⁴⁹ See submission from Chile.

⁵⁰ See submission from Bahrain.

⁵¹ See submissions from Burkina Faso and Poland.

⁵² See submissions from Chile and Costa Rica.

⁵³ See submissions from Romania, Singapore and South Africa.

⁵⁴ See submissions from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Italy, Mexico and the Human Rights Commission of Zambia.

⁵⁵ See submissions from Bahrain, Costa Rica and Mexico.

⁵⁶ See submissions from Guatemala, Togo and Uzbekistan.

⁵⁷ See submission from UNODC (for instance, its activities in Cambodia, Colombia, Kenya, Malaysia and the Philippines).

⁵⁸ See submissions from Costa Rica, Mexico, South Africa and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

⁵⁹ See submission from Costa Rica.

⁶⁰ See submission from Uzbekistan.

⁶¹ See submission from Switzerland.

⁶² See submissions from Bahrain, Italy and Switzerland.

⁶³ See submission from Qatar.

⁶⁴ See submissions from Guatemala, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

⁶⁵ See submissions from Bahrain and Singapore.

⁶⁶ See submission from Singapore.

⁶⁷ See submission from Guatemala.

⁶⁸ See submissions from Costa Rica, Russian Federation and Uzbekistan.

⁶⁹ See submission from Costa Rica.

⁷⁰ See submission from Bolivia (Plurinational State of).

IV. Barriers to social reintegration

19. Despite these initiatives, persons released from detention or subjected to non-custodial measures continue to encounter substantial obstacles to successful social reintegration.⁷¹ These obstacles not only hinder their reintegration, but also impair the enjoyment of their human rights. Key obstacles include stigmatization and discrimination, insufficient, fragmented, underresourced and underfunded support services, especially post release, insufficient support for establishing or maintaining family ties and accessing community networks and assistance, overly restrictive non-custodial measures, unrestricted use of criminal records and excessive fines.

20. Stigmatization and discrimination remain among the most pervasive barriers to social reintegration and have major adverse effects on access to employment, housing, healthcare and social protection, among others.⁷² Negative public perceptions and bias – for example, persons released from detention are often viewed as dangerous and untrustworthy – lead to social exclusion and discrimination.⁷³ Employers are often reluctant to hire individuals with criminal records.⁷⁴ Discrimination increases the risk of homelessness and exposure to violence and drug use.⁷⁵ Limited access to treatment for mental health conditions or substance use disorders and to general healthcare services has a negative impact on the right to health.⁷⁶

21. Insufficient, fragmented and underresourced or underfunded support services, especially post release, pose a major challenge. Although there are legislative provisions creating support services, implementation is often hindered by the absence of national policies, strategies and structured reintegration pathways and by limited budget and staffing.⁷⁷ Available support is overly reliant on civil society.⁷⁸ Many released persons lack access to support services, such as housing assistance, job placement programmes, counselling and healthcare, including addiction treatment programmes.⁷⁹ Paucity of information and services further impedes reintegration.⁸⁰ Limited support to adapt to new technologies further complicates reintegration, particularly as employment, social services and banking increasingly shift online.⁸¹

22. Insufficient support for establishing or maintaining family ties and for accessing community networks and assistance represents a further challenge. Detained parents and their children face numerous challenges to maintaining child-parent bonds, which are essential to

⁷¹ See submissions from 101 civil society organizations, Penal Reform International and Edmaj Aftercare Centre. See also <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FNni1LRe88cE4RxUp7biQqSxNKIeCc94/view> and https://www.acjrd.ie/images/PDFs/reintegration/Its_like_stepping_on_a_landmine_Reintegration_of_Prisoners_in_Ireland.pdf.

⁷² See submissions from Romania, the Greek National Commission for Human Rights and the Igarapé Institute.

⁷³ See submissions from the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria and the University of Victoria.

⁷⁴ See submissions from the Greek National Commission for Human Rights, the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria, the Igarapé Institute, Défi-Job and Belady US: An Island for Humanity. See also A/HRC/57/46 and https://www.iprt.ie/site/assets/files/7337/the_secondary_punishment_a_scoping_study_on_employer_attitudes_to_hiring_people_with_criminal_convictions_report_web.pdf.

⁷⁵ See submissions from the Igarapé Institute.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ See submissions from the Ombudsman's Office of Colombia, the Ombudsman's Office of Ecuador and the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria.

⁷⁸ See submissions from Antigone, Behatokia, Belady US: An Island for Humanity, the Human Development Organization, Women Beyond Walls, the National Network of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls (Australia), the Democracy and Human Rights Development Centre, Equis: Justicia para las Mujeres, the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association and Metzineres.

⁷⁹ See submissions from the Human Rights Commission of Zambia and the Irish Penal Reform Trust.

⁸⁰ See submissions from Equis: Justicia para las Mujeres and the Irish Penal Reform Trust. See also https://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/downloads/social_policy/SLCIS_report_2022.pdf.

⁸¹ See submissions from the Ombudsman's Office of Poland and Penal Reform International.

social reintegration. Moreover, imprisonment imposes financial burdens on families, hindering relationships. There are also structural barriers, such as lack of child-friendly visits, unavailability of mother-baby units and geographical distance between prisons and families. Violent prison settings and disproportionate security-related practices, such as strip-searching children before visits, also create psychological barriers to maintaining relationships. Furthermore, costly and restricted calls, lack of privacy and time limits on communication hinder contact between detained parents and their children.⁸² While community networks are crucial for reintegration, there are barriers to accessing this support, such as invasive community assessment processes, that can alienate not only the individual, but also their informal support networks of family and friends.⁸³

23. Overly restrictive non-custodial measures also constitute barriers to social reintegration. Conditions of parole, such as forced relocation away from home communities, and arduous parole supervision requirements can negatively affect social reintegration.⁸⁴ Long-term supervision can have a profound psychological impact on parolees, who may live in a constant state of fear that minor missteps could lead to reincarceration.⁸⁵ Technical violations of probation and parole can lead to reimprisonment for minor infractions or non-criminal acts.⁸⁶ Furthermore, parole conditions are often applied uniformly, without considering individual circumstances.⁸⁷ Although intended as a non-custodial alternative, electronic monitoring, if improperly used, can replicate the harms of detention. It also raises serious human rights concerns, for instance undue surveillance and restrictions on certain rights amounting to violations, with a disproportionate impact on marginalized groups, which hinder access to education, work and caregiving and undermine rehabilitation and reintegration.⁸⁸ In addition, the expansion of offences and infractions subjected to such non-custodial measures as electronic monitoring, when not aligned with rehabilitative goals, can lead to concerns of “net-widening”.⁸⁹

24. Insufficiently regulated use of criminal records and excessive fines also constitute a major barrier to social reintegration. Overreliance on criminal records in areas beyond the criminal justice system can have a negative impact on access to employment, housing, healthcare and social services.⁹⁰ Disproportionately high criminal fines, often imposed alongside custodial sentences, can create lasting obstacles to reintegration. Non-payment can lead to denial of access to basic rights, such as voting, renewing identification documents, opening bank accounts, securing loans, accessing social benefits, formalizing employment and pursuing higher education.⁹¹

25. Moreover, barriers and challenges to reintegration often have a disproportionate impact on specific groups, including women, LGBTIQ+ persons, Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, minorities, persons with disabilities and drug users.⁹² For example,

⁸² See submissions from Children of Prisoners Europe and the International Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents.

⁸³ Community assessment processes consist of interviews between parole officers and community members to assess the community member’s suitability for being an approved support provider. See submissions from the University of Victoria and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

⁸⁴ See submissions from the University of Victoria, the Vietnamese Advocates for Change and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

⁸⁵ See submission from the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

⁸⁶ See submission from REFORM Alliance and Perseus Strategies.

⁸⁷ See submission from the University of Victoria.

⁸⁸ See submission from Lorna McGregor. See also [A/79/296](#), paras. 29–32.

⁸⁹ “Net-widening” refers to the potential unintended consequences of expanding the reach of the criminal justice system, particularly when implementing alternatives to detention or imprisonment. See submissions from Penal Reform International and the National Human Rights Commission of Greece.

⁹⁰ See submissions from the Human Rights Commission of Zambia and Mujeres Libres.

⁹¹ See submission from the Instituto de Defesa do Direito de Defesa (Institute for the Defence of the Right of Defence).

⁹² See submissions from the Federal Public Defenders’ Office of Brazil and the Canadian Human Rights Commission, REFORM Alliance and Perseus Strategies, the International Network of Formerly Incarcerated Women, Metzineres, Validity Foundation – Mental Disability Advocacy Centre,

women face compounded challenges due to gender bias and discrimination as they struggle to regain or locate their children,⁹³ are pushed into precarious and low-paid work, lack access to the social security system, and are often compelled to return to unsafe environments.⁹⁴ LGBTIQ+ persons encounter additional obstacles stemming from a lack of awareness and training of officials, which leads to misgendering and the imposition of gendered practices and expectations.⁹⁵ People of African descent are disproportionately disenfranchised on the basis of criminal convictions,⁹⁶ and Indigenous Peoples, Roma and other minorities often lack access to culturally adapted reintegration plans.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, drug users face limited access to harm reduction services and drug-dependence treatment, especially post release, thus increasing their vulnerability to health risks and criminalization.⁹⁸

V. Responses to the barriers to social reintegration

26. In the submissions and expert consultations, a range of promising practices have been highlighted that address the key barriers to social reintegration identified in the previous section. These examples demonstrate how targeted interventions can contribute to more successful reintegration outcomes. In particular, they respond to challenges such as insufficient and fragmented post-release support, stigmatization and discrimination, lack of support to rebuild family and community connections and the lack of tailored responses for specific groups, especially women, LGBTIQ+ persons and Indigenous Peoples.

A. Comprehensive and sustainable initiatives for social reintegration

27. As emphasized in the submissions and expert consultations, successful reintegration requires a holistic approach and framework that addresses key aspects such as employment, housing, healthcare and support networks, along with sustained support and continuity of care from before until after release, when necessary.⁹⁹ The NGO REFORM Alliance identifies four key components for effective reintegration: (a) pre-release planning and technical support, connecting individuals with support networks; (b) fulfilment of immediate basic post-release needs, such as food, housing and healthcare; (c) skill-building and employment opportunities, including through programmes that incentivize second-chance hiring; and (d) community restoration and rehabilitation practices that address systemic discrimination and marginalization.¹⁰⁰

28. The Australian NGO Vacro has developed a reintegration practice framework that shows that well-designed, evidence-based services can support individuals in creating new beginnings. The reintegration framework incorporates desistance theory, the capability approach and throughcare service design. According to this framework, effective reintegration programmes are composed of key elements of throughcare services, specialist

Behatokia and Ambika Satkunanathan. See also <https://centerforjusticeresearch.org/rethinking-prisoner-reentry-one-pager/#:~:text=Prisoner%20reentry%20is%20a%20critical%20racial%20justice%20issue%2C,times%20higher%20for%20Black%20Americans%20than%20other%20groups>.

⁹³ See submissions from the International Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents, and Children of Incarcerated Caregivers and the Global Prison Nursery Network.

⁹⁴ See submissions from the International Network of Formerly Incarcerated Women and Mujeres Libres. See also <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35475665/>.

⁹⁵ See submission from the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

⁹⁶ A/HRC/54/66, para. 11.

⁹⁷ A/70/212, para. 62. See also submission from the University of Victoria.

⁹⁸ See submissions from UnMode and the Human Development Organization.

⁹⁹ See submissions from UNODC, the India Vision Foundation and the Mental Health Society of Ghana. See also https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/crimeprevention/Introductory_Handbook_on_the_Prevention_of_Recidivism_and_the_Social_Reintegration_of_Offenders.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ See submission from REFORM Alliance and Perseus Strategies. See also https://perseus-strategies.com/wp-content/uploads/Upholding-Rights-and-Unlocking-Potential-A-Global-Approach-to-Social-Reintegration_Digital-v2_.pdf.

community services and whole-of-family services.¹⁰¹ Indeed, UNODC has stressed that comprehensive and sustainable social reintegration initiatives should also consider rehabilitation interventions that address criminogenic thinking, attitudes and behaviour, which are crucial for fostering social reintegration prospects. Cognitive behavioural therapy and related interventions aim at fostering behavioural change and, in many cases, address the root causes of criminal behaviour. Evidence-based risk and needs assessment tools should therefore be applied to identify and address criminogenic risk and needs that also constitute barriers to successful social reintegration.¹⁰²

29. The Igarapé Institute in Brazil has concluded that multidimensional support programmes integrating healthcare, employment, housing and social services, together with initiatives that support personal development and community reintegration, tend to yield the most positive reintegration outcomes.¹⁰³ Transition service models that consolidate various forms of support into a single location minimize bureaucratic hurdles and improve access to essential services, thereby enhancing reintegration outcomes.

30. The National Human Rights Commission of Mexico presented a comprehensive, human rights-based framework for the social reintegration of incarcerated individuals that positions reintegration as both a legal obligation and a strategy to prevent recidivism. Grounded in the principle of dignity, the framework emphasizes education, health, work, sports and culture as key pillars. It promotes a shift from punitive systems to inclusive, rehabilitative and community-centred alternatives, and stresses the importance of inter-institutional coordination and civil society participation.¹⁰⁴

31. In Costa Rica, the Ministry of Justice and Peace launched a pilot project through the creation of the Social Reintegration Unit in 2018.¹⁰⁵ The Unit focused on both the pre-release and post-release phases, offering interdisciplinary professional support during the first year after release to strengthen psychosocial, family and employment skills, and involved collaboration among public institutions, NGOs, communities, families and the criminal justice system. Despite its promising design, the programme ended in 2019 due to lack of funding and personnel. The Unit currently focuses on developing plans and projects for the reintegration of the most vulnerable populations.¹⁰⁶

32. Furthermore, programmes with strong evaluation frameworks show significantly lower recidivism rates. Initiatives with targeted approaches to housing, health and employment that have demonstrated effective reintegration strategies include One Vision Housing in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which offers housing and support through a network of landlords; in the United States of America, the Re-entry Housing Pilot Programme, under which housing assistance was conditional on the continuation of any necessary treatment and job search efforts, and the Transitions Clinic Network for individuals with chronic health conditions; and the Skill Mill in Estonia and the United Kingdom, which employs youth in productive activities.¹⁰⁷

33. In Austria, the NEUSTART association provides a wide range of services aimed at supporting former prisoners. These include organizing social network conferences, conducting violence prevention programmes, offering aftercare services and assisting with employment and housing, for example, by renting social housing and sub-letting it to former detainees with the ultimate goal of transferring the lease to the individual.¹⁰⁸ Also in Austria, a platform for e-learning in the penal system, available in detention facilities, enhances

¹⁰¹ See submission from Vacro.

¹⁰² See E/CN.15/2025/14.

¹⁰³ See https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/SP_EN_Impact-of-the-Initiatives-for-the-Social-Reintegration-of-Formerly-Incarcerated-Individuals.pdf and https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/SP_EN_Guide-for-the-social-inclusion-of-formerly-incarcerated-individuals.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ See <https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/default/files/documentos/2019-07/modelo-reinsercion-social.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ See <https://www.mjp.go.cr/Comunicacion/Nota?nom=Unidad-de-Inserci%C3%B3n-Social-brindara-preparacion-y-seguimiento-pospenitenciario>.

¹⁰⁶ See submission from Costa Rica.

¹⁰⁷ See submissions from the Igarapé Institute.

¹⁰⁸ See submission from the Austrian Ombudsman Board.

educational opportunities for prisoners and supports their social reintegration. The platform offers resources on education, digital and financial literacy, job readiness and life skills, along with guidance on job applications, housing and public services. A moderated email system enables prisoners to contact authorities and arrange housing or social benefits before release.¹⁰⁹

34. The Prayas project of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in India shows the constructive impact of community-based reintegration practices that incorporate stable housing, lawful income, positive relationships and freedom from substance abuse. Through its NGO placement programme, it has secured employment for released prisoners within the NGO sector, enhanced their awareness of welfare services and improved their relationship networks.¹¹⁰

B. Changing perceptions and tackling stigmatization and discrimination

35. Innovative initiatives are demonstrating how public awareness, inclusive practices and the active involvement of people with lived experience can shift societal attitudes and create more supportive environments for reintegration. In Singapore, the Yellow Ribbon Project plays a central role in the country's reintegration strategy by mobilizing public support, reducing stigma and creating opportunities for released prisoners. In 2024, the Project held, among other initiatives, an exhibition displaying artworks by former and serving prisoners. Proceeds from this and other awareness-raising events were channelled into a national charity that supports prisoners, persons released from detention and their families by providing financial assistance and residential, educational and training programmes. Similar events have been replicated in various countries.¹¹¹

36. In Czechia, Rubikon Centrum helps people overcome the stigma of a criminal past and reintegrate into society, by providing direct support services, collaborating with national and international partners to test and implement innovative solutions,¹¹² and working to shift public attitudes towards greater openness and respect for persons with criminal records. Rubikon Centrum's employment agency partners with over 100 employers, and 30 per cent of its staff have lived experience. It engages with employers to overcome concerns about hiring individuals with criminal records and has successfully advocated changes to laws to reduce employment restrictions.

37. In Colombia, the NGO Mujeres Libres is dedicated to addressing the systemic challenges faced by women after prison. Its work focuses on raising awareness about post-incarceration stigma, defending the human rights of incarcerated and released women and advocating structural changes in criminal justice policies. It provides direct support through psychosocial and legal assistance, helping women navigate reintegration despite barriers such as criminal records, unemployment and social rejection. Through its advocacy, it has brought visibility to the post-prison reality and has pushed for inclusive public policies that promote dignity, autonomy and real opportunities for women re-entering society.¹¹³

38. UNODC has led several initiatives to combat stigmatization and discrimination. In Nigeria, it has fostered dialogue between correctional services and community leaders in the north-east of the country, leading to regular engagement by the Borno State Command to support reintegration efforts.¹¹⁴ In Thailand, annual public awareness campaigns, conducted in collaboration with the Department of Corrections and civil society, encourage community

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ See submission from Vijay Raghavan.

¹¹¹ See submission from Singapore.

¹¹² Rubikon Centrum is part of the European Movement for Detention Houses, known as RESCALED, which advocates small-scale, community-integrated detention houses as an alternative to large-scale prisons. See submissions from RESCALED and Fair Trials.

¹¹³ See submission from Mujeres Libres.

¹¹⁴ See https://www.unodc.org/conig/en/stories/the-role-of-community-leaders-in-the-reintegration-of-ex-prisoners_-unodc-promotes-dialogue-in-north-east-nigeria.html and https://www.unodc.org/conig/en/stories/from-inmate-to-artisan_-community-involvement-in-inmate-reintegration-in-nigeria.html.

engagement and enable public interaction with prisoners in neutral settings.¹¹⁵ In addition, the global “Prisoners matter” campaign (#prisonersmatter), launched annually around Nelson Mandela International Day, advocates humane treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners by promoting the Nelson Mandela Rules through social media, public events and international partnerships.¹¹⁶

C. Participation of formerly incarcerated persons

39. Providers of support to persons released from detention or subjected to non-custodial measures report that efforts involving the active and meaningful participation of persons with lived experience yield the most sustainable and effective reintegration results, including through tailored responses to the real needs of formerly incarcerated persons.¹¹⁷ In Buenos Aires, the Office of the Provincial Undersecretary for Employment and Community Inclusion of Persons in Conflict with the Law, led by a formerly incarcerated woman, implements programmes in and outside prisons, including productive hubs, mental health support and pre-release planning, with the aim of reducing recidivism through inclusion, work and dignity. The Office’s work is built on the principle of co-management between Government and civil society and focuses on holistic reintegration.

40. In Mexico, Mujeres Unidas por la Libertad, an NGO founded by a formerly incarcerated woman, provides critical support to women after their release from prison, especially those without housing, family support or access to mental healthcare. The organization offers shelter, helps women obtain identification documents and supports them in reintegrating into society. It also assists women required to wear electronic monitoring devices, who face heightened discrimination and restrictions.¹¹⁸

41. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Incarceration Nations Network, which is led by persons with lived experience, equips formerly incarcerated persons with skills in conflict communication and entrepreneurship. It has created job opportunities through partnerships with local employment agencies and has enabled formerly incarcerated persons to showcase their talents and mentor others, including through music.¹¹⁹ In Colombia, the organization Fundación Tiempo de Juego educates incarcerated youth about their rights and supports them in requesting alternative sentencing. Upon release, it provides psychosocial, educational and employment support; some former detainees become mentors.

42. In Czechia, in 2022, Rubikon Centrum launched the “Our Voice Matters” initiative, designed to empower individuals with lived experience of the criminal justice system to participate actively in shaping policies that affect them. The initiative promotes inclusive decision-making and challenges policies that exclude these individuals. It uses structured frameworks to ensure that participation is both safe and meaningful, and it includes a range of activities, from public education campaigns and peer mentoring to high-level policy lobbying and strategic consultations.¹²⁰

43. In Chile, over 2,600 incarcerated individuals – in other words, 10 per cent of the prison population – participated in 263 prison forums across the country, where they described their experiences and proposed solutions as input for the constitutional drafting process in 2022. While the constitutional text was not approved by popular referendum, key issues raised in this participatory process included access to education, healthcare and employment and the elimination of barriers resulting from having a criminal record.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ See <https://www.unodc.org/roseap/en/2024/08/concert-prisoners-thailand/story.html>.

¹¹⁶ See submission from UNODC.

¹¹⁷ See submission from Mutual de Liberados Mario Cafiero.

¹¹⁸ See submission from Equis: Justicia para las Mujeres.

¹¹⁹ See <https://incarcerationnationsnetwork.org/caribbean-justice-work/>.

¹²⁰ See submission from Fair Trials.

¹²¹ See <https://cabildospentenciaros.cl/download/informe-final-cabildos-penitenciarios-junio-2022/>.

44. The International Network of Formerly Incarcerated Women is a global network of women in 25 countries, founded and led by formerly incarcerated women to promote the active involvement of formerly incarcerated women in shaping reintegration policies.¹²²

45. In December 2023, UNODC hosted the National Decongestion Summit in the Philippines, with participation by 344 legal and correctional professionals, top government officials and international partners, with the aim of addressing overcrowding in prisons. Formerly incarcerated individuals played a key role by sharing personal stories and leading workshops. Their input influenced major policy reforms, including the expansion of sentence reduction schemes and the introduction of custodial hearings.¹²³

D. Supporting family ties

46. Interventions that support constructive family involvement contribute to effective reintegration.¹²⁴ A good practice to protect the rights of children affected by parental incarceration is maintaining and strengthening the parent-child bond, from arrest to reintegration, when in the child's best interests.¹²⁵ Initiatives like child-friendly prison visits and activities that mirror everyday family life, such as shared meals or school involvement, build parental confidence.¹²⁶

47. Various programmes have been developed to support relationships between children and their imprisoned parents. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the Feltham Family Support Group provides support for maintaining family ties during imprisonment, and the National Policy Committee on Resettlement encourages constructive family involvement to support rehabilitative work in prisons.¹²⁷ Another effective reintegration strategy is the Community Mediation Maryland re-entry mediation programme in the United States, which strengthens family bonds through pre-release mediation, thus reducing recidivism.¹²⁸ Several promising practices support mother-child reintegration post-incarceration. In Canada, the Elizabeth Fry Society offers parenting programmes, supervised visits and post-release support. In the United States, the organization Mothers on the Rise provides coordinated care and assistance in navigating community life.¹²⁹

E. Gender-responsive and inclusive social reintegration efforts

48. Many submissions presented initiatives and programmes that take into account the specific needs of women, LGBTIQ+ persons and Indigenous People, who face greater barriers to reintegration. However, information on initiatives targeting people of African descent, other minority groups and persons with disabilities remains very limited and warrants greater attention.

49. Grass-roots NGOs founded and led by women with lived experience are offering gender-sensitive solutions tailored to the specific needs of women. In Zambia, a group of formerly incarcerated women founded the Tithandizane Comfort Home to support reintegration. The organization empowers women by providing annual cohorts with training

¹²² See submission from the International Network of Formerly Incarcerated Women.

¹²³ See submission from UNODC.

¹²⁴ See CAT/OP/PRY/1. See also

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a81d6b2e5274a2e87dbfc00/farmer-review-report.pdf>, <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=700ad891b6621ff42aa6cd5da216153f1d47a67b>, <https://www.familiesoutside.org.uk/content/uploads/2011/02/TaysideFamilyProject.pdf> and <https://www.cdi.ie/app/uploads/2024/04/CDI-Prisoners-Returning-Home-min.pdf>.

¹²⁵ See <https://www.gov.wales/improving-wellbeing-and-educational-outcomes-children-wales-affected-parental-imprisonment-summary-html>.

¹²⁶ See submissions from Children of Prisoners Europe, and Children of Incarcerated Caregivers and the Global Prison Nursery Network.

¹²⁷ See submission from the International Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents.

¹²⁸ See submissions from the Igarapé Institute. See also <https://www.cdi.ie/app/uploads/2024/04/CDI-Prisoners-Returning-Home-min.pdf>.

¹²⁹ See submission from Children of Incarcerated Caregivers and the Global Prison Nursery Network.

in computer literacy, entrepreneurship and poultry farming and, later, with seed money. Other gender-responsive initiatives that have demonstrated effective reintegration strategies for women include the Journeys to Freedom women's resettlement programme in the United Kingdom, which provides personalized support to women leaving the prison system, thus achieving notable outcomes in stable housing and employment.¹³⁰

50. Red Corpora en Libertad is an international network that works with LGBTIQ+ individuals in prison, focusing especially on transgender and lesbian women. The network brings attention to the fact that these populations face systemic exclusion even before incarceration and that traditional reintegration models fail to address their realities. In response, the network promotes a whole new reintegration approach grounded in respect for diversity. The network's impact includes conducting regional research, advocating inclusive policies and partnering with civil society to provide housing, employment and support services tailored to LGBTIQ+ needs. In Mexico, Casa de las Muñecas Tiresias, which was founded by a formerly incarcerated transgender woman, offers a comprehensive reintegration programme focused on the professional development, economic autonomy and emotional well-being of formerly incarcerated transgender women. Its services include legal assistance, assistance with obtaining official recognition of gender identity, mental healthcare and support for individuals living with HIV.

51. Effective social reintegration initiatives for Indigenous Peoples involve culturally relevant, community-based reintegration strategies that empower Indigenous communities and respect their legal traditions and governance.¹³¹ In Canada, the law allows for the establishment of Indigenous-run healing lodges to provide culturally grounded, community-based alternatives to incarceration. The law also enables Indigenous communities to supervise individuals upon release, facilitating reintegration through traditional practices and community support. Several Indigenous-led and community-based initiatives complement these legislative measures: the Seven Sparks Justice Programme of the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre connects Indigenous individuals with services post release; Indigenous Justice Centres provide culturally appropriate legal support and advocate reducing overly restrictive release conditions; and the Indigenous Community Corrections Initiative funds Indigenous-led projects that offer alternatives to incarceration and support reintegration.¹³²

52. In Australia, there are several promising aspects of current reintegration programmes for Aboriginal peoples that improve social reintegration and lower recidivism. Programmes that are designed and led by Aboriginal people tend to improve participant engagement and retention, as they align with the Aboriginal conceptualization of cultural safety. Initiatives combine practical support with cultural connection and identity development. The Darwin Programme of the Young Women's Christian Association supports women with housing and parenting, while the Breaking the Cycle programme uses art-based training to foster cultural safety. For men, the Fairbridge Bindjareb Programme combines employment training with elder mentorship, and the Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation offers work-release opportunities with holistic support.¹³³ In Chile, the Red de Apoyo del Machi Celestino Córdova has developed a proposal for social reintegration focused on spiritual healing, cultural identity and community-based support for Mapuche prisoners. Proposals include reforming prison regulations, creating culturally relevant prison modules and offering a spiritual and educational reorientation programme rooted in the Mapuche world view.

¹³⁰ See submissions from the Igarapé Institute. See also <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35475665/>.

¹³¹ See https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/bec-oci/PS104-6-2013-eng.pdf and <https://prisonjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Decarceration-through-Self-determination-w.pdf>.

¹³² See submission from the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

¹³³ See submissions from Jocelyn Jones, and the National Network of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls (Australia), on Sisters Inside, an Aboriginal-led organization that provides holistic, community-led support to released women.

VI. Integrating crime prevention with human rights-based approaches to social reintegration

53. International standards and norms in the areas of crime prevention and criminal justice, especially those related to prison and offender management, have recently been complemented by a new instrument in the form of the United Nations Model Strategies on Reducing Reoffending (the Kyoto Model Strategies), which were developed under the auspices of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.¹³⁴ The Kyoto Model Strategies reflect the commitment of States to reduce reoffending by investing in the rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders. They provide guidance on implementing individualized approaches that address both the risks and the needs of offenders, promoting community-based rehabilitation and expanding the use of non-custodial measures, including by prioritizing community supervision. They also offer guidance for supporting rehabilitation and reintegration within correctional facilities. The Kyoto Model Strategies emphasize the importance of maintaining constructive family relationships, delivering programmes that address the root causes of offending and ensuring a smooth transition from custody to community life, which includes support in accessing housing, employment and health and social services. They also emphasize that rehabilitation programmes should be evidence-based, age-appropriate and culturally and gender-sensitive. In addition, the Kyoto Model Strategies promote the use of restorative justice programmes as a complementary approach to rehabilitation.

54. UNODC has developed various technical guidance materials on prison and criminal reform, with dedicated chapters on integrating the concept of rehabilitation and reintegration as one of the primary responsibilities of prison and probation authorities and criminal justice systems. Publications with a particular focus on the social reintegration of persons released from detention or subjected to non-custodial measures include the *Introductory Handbook on the Prevention of Recidivism and the Social Reintegration of Offenders*, the *Road Map for the Development of Prison-based Rehabilitation Programmes*, the *Handbook of Basic Principles and Promising Practices on Alternatives to Imprisonment*, the *Toolkit on Gender-responsive Non-Custodial Measures*, *A Practitioner's Toolkit for Women's Access to Justice Programming* and the *Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes*. These publications promote a rehabilitative approach to prison and offender management in support of the social reintegration prospects of offenders with a view, inter alia, to contributing to public safety and crime prevention.

55. Human rights norms and standards add to and strengthen aspects of social reintegration approaches, particularly by comprehensively addressing the principles of non-discrimination, participation and accountability and by treating access to social and other services as a right. A robust human rights-based approach affirms the inherent dignity and rights of persons released from detention or subjected to non-custodial measures. It emphasizes their right to be protected from all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, disability or other status, and requires that a gender-responsive and intersectional approach be taken that addresses the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women, LGBTIQ+ persons, Indigenous Peoples, minorities, including people of African descent, persons with disabilities and persons who use drugs.

56. A human rights-based approach emphasizes that active participation by persons released from detention or subjected to non-custodial measures is imperative so that they may be agents of their own reintegration. Active participation includes meaningful involvement of released persons, as well as families and grass-roots organizations, in the planning, implementation and evaluation of reintegration programmes. In addition, due consideration should be given to the rights and needs of victims and survivors of crime.

¹³⁴ See E/CN.15/2025/14 and General Assembly resolutions 77/232 and 78/224. See also <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/cpcj-model-strategies-on-reducing-reoffending.html>.

57. Human rights norms and standards encourage transparent monitoring and oversight of social integration efforts, in keeping with the principle of accountability. The fact that access to housing, employment and health and social services is a human right adds to the urgency of its effective fulfilment in social reintegration processes. Furthermore, the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights provide a framework for private sector engagement in social reintegration, including in relation to addressing structural barriers, stigma, discrimination and exclusion.

58. Consequently, the human rights framework adds to existing social reintegration frameworks, and it would be beneficial to complement the Kyoto Model Strategies and UNODC work and ongoing processes with guidance on the application of human rights principles, norms and standards to social reintegration and to supporting States in fulfilling their human rights commitments.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

59. A strong human rights-based approach is central to the effectiveness of social reintegration programmes. It complements crime prevention approaches by reinforcing the human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination, accountability and indivisibility. Such an approach ensures that reintegration efforts are comprehensive, sustained, inclusive, individualized and responsive to the needs of those most affected. Furthermore, it contributes to effectively addressing persistent barriers faced by persons released from detention or subjected to non-custodial measures, especially stigma, discrimination and exclusion.

60. Research and experience show that the most effective reintegration programmes adopt a multidimensional approach, addressing both immediate and long-term needs. This includes robust pre-release planning, fulfilment of basic needs such as food, housing and healthcare, and access to opportunities for employment. Effective programmes also promote community restoration, tackle systemic discrimination and involve individuals with lived experience in their design and delivery. Constructive family involvement, gender-responsive strategies for women and culturally grounded, community-based approaches for Indigenous Peoples further enhance outcomes. Critically, programmes with strong evaluation frameworks show significantly lower recidivism rates than others, underscoring the importance of evidence-based, rights-affirming reintegration strategies.

61. Despite the existing normative framework, there is a need for guidance on the implementation of social reintegration with a human rights-based approach. Clear practical guidance is required on how to operationalize existing human rights norms and standards, institutional capacity, political will and meaningful participation of affected individuals in policy design. Reintegration efforts are often fragmented, underfunded and overly reliant on civil society, with many formerly incarcerated individuals perceiving support as charity rather than as a right.

62. The following are key practical recommendations for States and relevant stakeholders to develop effective social reintegration policies grounded in human rights:

- (a) Adopt and institutionalize a human rights-based approach in all reintegration policies and programmes, ensuring that they are inclusive and participatory;
- (b) Adopt actionable guidance in the light of existing international human rights norms and standards, with clear implementation pathways and robust accountability mechanisms;
- (c) Reform punitive practices, including the use of criminal records and fines, and increase the use of non-custodial measures, ensuring that they are legal, necessary, proportionate, subject to regular review and modification, and supportive of reintegration;

(d) Invest in sustainable, State-led reintegration frameworks, while enabling partnerships with civil society, the private sector and persons with lived experience;

(e) Standardize definitions and methodologies in reintegration work, invest in rigorous evaluation frameworks and enhance impact assessments, including through improved collection of disaggregated data and monitoring.

63. International human rights mechanisms are encouraged to strengthen their focus on social reintegration, including by increasing their monitoring of social reintegration efforts and providing recommendations to assist States in meeting their human rights obligations and enhancing the effectiveness of their reintegration policies.

64. The Human Rights Council is invited to consider ways to clarify the application of human rights norms, standards and principles to the social reintegration of persons released from detention or subjected to non-custodial measures, to share good practices and to support States in fulfilling their human rights obligations, while ensuring coherence and complementarity across United Nations processes.