

**PRISONERS IN CAMEROON  
A PASTORAL CARE PERSPECTIVE**

**By**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS**

ACHPR: African Commission for Human and Peoples Rights

AIR: Amnesty International Report

ARV: Anti-Retro-Virals

BMM: Brigade Mixte Mobile

CCA: Corrections Corporation of America

COPE: Coalition of Prison Evangelists

CRTV: Cameroon Radio Television

CSDT: Constructivist Self Development Theory

DRDC: Dutch Research and Documentation Centre

HIV/AIDS: Human Immuno Virus / Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome

HRC: Human Rights Council

ICCPPC: International Commission for Catholic Prison Pastoral Care

IPCA: International Prison Chaplains Association

ISP: Intensive Supervision Programmes

NCHRF: National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

RNR: Risk Need Responsivity

SDF: Social Democratic Front

SCNC: Southern Cameroons National Conference

TB: Tuberculosis

UNSR: United Nations Special Rapporteur

UPC: Union Populations Camerounaise

## SUMMARY

Prisons in Cameroon are in crisis as far as inmates' wellbeing, the staffing situation, the justice and penitentiary systems as well as the administration of prisons are concerned. Prisons are obscure places, hidden from public view and society. Prisoners suffer many hardships while in prison. Prisons in Cameroon are not productive in terms of education and life skills.

There is a need for better living standards for inmates and prison officials. Prisons in Cameroon to a large extent are for punishment and not rehabilitation. The aim of this study is to investigate what the churches can contribute to improving the situation. Prison pastoral care could make a difference to the lives of prisoners.

Pastoral care models are perused in order to find a model that would be effective in the specific situation of Cameroon. Such a model could enable churches to contribute to the work of rehabilitation of prisoners and the reform of the prison institution. Pastoral care would challenge the human rights abuses, psychological, sociological, theological and ecclesial problems that face the prison institution in Cameroon.

**Chapter one** provides background information on pastoral care provided to prisoners in Cameroon. There is scarcity of pastoral presence in most Cameroon prisons. Privatization and effective pastoral care are possible ways of reforming the prison system. The chosen method for gathering data is that of qualitative interviews with inmates, prison officials, clergy, non-governmental organizations and civil society members in Cameroon.

**Chapter two** investigates the state of prisons, the conditions of prisoners, the prison system and administration. The 2002 Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on prisons and detention conditions in Africa constitute a resource for information on Cameroon prisons. The 2007-2008 Report of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms provides further information on Cameroon prisons. The Amnesty International Report of 2011 is another valuable resource for looking at prisons in Cameroon.

**Chapter three** explores possible alternative sanctions to a prison sentence. These alternatives have the goal of rehabilitating offenders with few inmates be housed in prisons while others are sent to halfway houses. Prison conditions could be improved with the successful implementation of these alternatives.

**Chapter four** investigates pastoral care with prisoners with a view to gain insights that can be applied to the situation in Cameroon prisons. Campbell's (1986) pastoral care model, the church as a prison community (Griffith 1993), the Nova Scotia Chaplaincy project (1993), Capps' (1995) theory of the pastor as agent of hope, Gerkin's (1997) shepherding model of pastoral care, the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy model of Hall (2003) and the Cotton End Baptist Church pastoral care model (2010) are surveyed.

**Chapter five** investigates three prison situations in Cameroon: Bamenda, Mbengwi and Ndop. Reasons for imprisonment of inmates, the prison environment and facilities, prisoners' situation and conditions, the prison system and administration as well as the role the churches play in prison are examined.

**Chapter six** concludes the study with findings, recommendations and points to prison pastoral care aspects that can be further investigated in future research work.

**Key words:** Alternative sanctions, churches, counseling, pastoral care, penitentiary system, prisoners, reformation, rehabilitation, therapy and trauma.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

As member and evangelism secretary of the Christian Youth Fellowship group of the Presbyterian church Naikom-Wum in the Menchum-Boyo Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon I was exposed to the inside of prison while in secondary school. I was a member of a Christian group that did evangelism in the local prison. We visited and prayed with the inmates of Wum Production prison on a quarterly basis. My duty as evangelism secretary was to draw up the outreach program. At the time the congregation, parish and presbytery did not have any program for prison pastoral work though some members were concerned with the lack of interest in this kind of work. Prison visitation was left to the goodwill of Christian groups in the various congregations and parishes. Often the groups consisted of a handful of members who volunteered their time, energy and scarce resources for these visits.

While serving as youth pastor for the North West region of Cameroon and parish pastor of Musang Parish, I was confronted one morning in the office by a prisoner from the Bamenda Central prison who asked me to baptize and confirm some 40 inmates who had been prepared for these rites but could not complete the process for lack of a pastor or chaplain.

I had to make arrangements with the session and congregation of Musang for outreach to the Bamenda Central Prison on Easter Monday. On that day when the rites were carried out and Holy Communion was served to baptized and confirmed inmates, there was great joy among the inmates. They interacted with members of the session and congregation in worship and songs of praise to God. They were overwhelmed with joy to see a pastor, a team of elders and members of the congregation who had come to visit and share the Easter message with them.

They had been deprived of this experience for a very long time. In a subsequent session meeting we took a decision to draw up a program where groups would go to the prisons with the pastor every month to serve the inmates.

I experienced a similar situation in Buea where only one parish, the Great Soppo parish, visited the local prison. They wanted to see other parishes in the presbytery join them in this exercise. The greatest problem, however, was that the church had no pastoral care program for prison work.

In May 2008, I was appointed Military and Prisons Chaplain and posted to Bamenda Station in the Mezam Presbytery of the North West region of Cameroon. This new assignment was a great challenge. There was no job description for the prison chaplain and no pastoral care model for prison chaplaincy work.

I had the opportunity to attend three conferences on prison pastoral care: the Coalition of Prison Evangelists (COPE) conference that took place in Kampala Uganda from 3-5 December 2008, the International Catholic Commission for Prison Pastoral Care (I.C.C.P.P.C.) conference that held in Cape Town South Africa from 11-15 October 2009 and the International Prison Chaplains Association (IPCA) conference that took place in Stockholm, Sweden from 20-25 August 2010. At these conferences I came under the impression of the challenges for prison pastoral care and how this mission field had been neglected by the churches in Cameroon.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

In Cameroon the basic human rights of prisoners and the way in which they are treated are cause for concern. Another concern is the question whether prison improves or ruins the lives of prisoners. The human rights of prisoners and the way in which they are treated, is a state, penitentiary system and humanitarian matter. Gross human rights violations abound in most prisons in Cameroon. Cameroon submitted three reports to the Human Rights Commission (HRC) concerning the situation of detainees.

In 1994, after having examined the second state report, the HRC deplored “the multiple cases of torture, ill treatment, extrajudicial execution and illegal detention, suffered in particular by journalists and political opponents”. The HRC pointed out that “such brutality is practiced in prisons disrespecting the provisions of Article 10 of the Covenant on detention centers” (Viljoen 2005:154).

Prisoners are mostly left to themselves and otherwise treated harshly in most of the prisons. No therapeutic work is done with them. Much hardship is suffered in the prisons of Cameroon. During visits to prisons I have seen the harsh, cruel and traumatic situations prisoners experience: some go on a hunger strike and die, others are shot and killed for trying to escape the poor living conditions in prison. Others just become withdrawn and are not able to express themselves for fear of beatings from prison officials. I have also seen the effects of chains on prisoners’ hands and legs as well as torture marks. Some come out of prison as hardened criminals. Juveniles are locked up with hardened criminals who ruin them. Problems of hygiene, proper health care and nutrition are daily experiences of prisoners in Cameroon.

From a psychological and sociological perspective, imprisonment traumatizes not only the inmates but also family members and close friends. Support systems, networks and positive visions to educate, transform and orientate inmates towards a better life and future, are scarce and hard to come by.

In Cameroon, society’s view on the reformation of prisoners is mostly negative as there is a general feeling that prisons do not succeed in transforming criminals. Communities sometimes take the punishment of perpetrators into their own hands. Thieves are burnt on the streets and alleged witches and wizards are sentenced and executed without a proper trial. A recent development in Nigeria is the introduction of a system where criminals are flogged at the market place and later allowed to go without serving a prison sentence. Of course the problem with these systems is the relative importance of the testimonies of men and women. This amounts to “jungle justice”. People use these community avenues and the failure of the justice system to settle scores with their opponents.

From a theological perspective, the image of God in people is violated when they are treated in a dehumanizing way as though they were worthless and stripped of their human dignity. The question is how this human dignity can be reclaimed and restored. From an ecclesial perspective, the question is whether the church in Cameroon should not play a more constructive role? The objective of this study is to explore whether pastoral care could make a positive contribution to the situation of people in the prisons of Cameroon. The humanitarian, psychological, sociological, theological and ecclesial problems will be investigated to gain new insights concerning the issues.

### **1.3 Literature Overview**

There are different views on the role prisons play in the modern world. According to Ward & Maruna (2008:175), various cross-currents are at play in the field of the rehabilitation of prisoners. The hard attitude that dominates most prisons is that individuals should pay severely for their transgressions against the state and the community. Griffith (1993:39) points out that “people want to see suffering meted out in the form of hard work, scanty food rations and other harsh conditions. As they see it, genuine punishment begins only when additional hardships are added to the incarceration”. Rejected by society, prisoners are no longer civil beings but unwanted individuals. The uncertain length of incarceration further complicates the effect of stress and nervousness on prisoners. Time spent in prison can be torture to the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of inmates (Oppler 1998:36).

Selke (1993:xii) sees prison as valuable and necessary because by locking away criminals they are prevented from causing further harm to people and society. President Nelson Mandela commented during his time of incarceration: “Prison not only robs you of your freedom, it attempts to take away your identity” (Stern 1998:107 cf Oppler 1998:2). Prison is often seen as a place for the rejects of society, a place of torment, torture and punishment (see Atabong 2007:173). According to Stern (1998:337), “prisons can be an expensive way of making bad people worse”.

Others, however, see prison as an opportunity for rehabilitation. They believe that those with deviant behavior can be transformed to become better citizens (see Murphy & Dison 1990:171; Rothman 1980:29-31). According to Alexander Paterson (in Matthews & Francis 1996:17) prisons are “as punishment not for punishment”. This means that people go to prison because of a crime they committed to pay or compensate for this misbehavior. While in prison they should be made to see their fault and helped not to go back to crime.

According to Matthews & Francis (1996:18), the loss of liberty is punishment enough and prisoners should not be subjected to inhumane treatment. They should be restored in a humane manner and not tortured or dehumanized while in prison. Sentences have to consider the need for punishment, public protection, deterrence and compensation. The prison service on the other hand has the job of providing security, humanity and help. Punishment for prisoners is not the business of the prisons but the courts. That is why courts commit offenders to custody for crimes deemed serious enough to warrant the loss of liberty.

In the United States of America, harsh conditions in prison have the function to deter. According to Selke (1993: xii), the prison system should not be used to deal with non-violent criminal offenders. They can be sent to halfway houses or correctional centers and can be attended to in a more humane manner. Prison is an effective means of segregating violent murderers, rapists or child molesters from society. The “lock them up and throw away the key” approach to dealing with crime has run its course. It is counter-productive to imprison those who do not pose a direct threat to society.

According to Selke (1993:xiii-xiv), “the addiction to use prison as a panacea for all social problems” is beginning to outstrip the ability of the United States government to pay for it. He advocates halfway houses or correctional centers for non-violent offenders as a solution to the “nagging social problem” of overcrowding in the prisons (cf Atabong 2007:150). An effective management of prisons can only take place when imprisonment is utilized in a more circumspect and systematic manner. It is rather unfortunate that treatment models have been abandoned in correctional facilities.

He sees the Scandinavian prison system of progressive principles of penology as a good model because there is moderation of punishment, respect for human dignity and opportunities and support for all citizens. This is indicative of a kinder and gentler society. Prisons in the United States of America have never before been so overcrowded, understaffed and under fire. It is therefore necessary to look critically at the prison as institution.

Selke (1993:xv) uses an interdisciplinary approach that includes sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, history and social work along with criminology and criminal justice to address prison issues. He points out the various reasons why people go to prison and is of the opinion that the justice and penitentiary systems ought to take a critical look at these reasons and prescribe treatment that would bring the individuals in prison to wholeness.

Offenders enter prison with a variety of deficits. Some are socially or morally inept, others are intellectually or vocationally handicapped, some have emotional hang-ups that stem from internal psychological problems and externally generated deficiencies as a consequence of environmental or family circumstances and still others have a mixture composed of varying proportions of some or all of the above (cf Levinson 1982:246; Atabong 2007:73-78). These factors should be taken into consideration when dealing with inmates so as to better understand their background and see how they can be helped.

Prisons can cultivate an atmosphere of collaborative training where the function of the staff is to provide assistance in helping inmates identify areas of deficit and encourage participation in programs designed to address these deficits. On a critical note, Johnson (1987:162) points to the fact that prisons too often have served as “warehouses” that cannot reform offenders. Treatment programs cannot thrive in warehouses. According to Irwin (1980:240), prisons are a microcosm of the larger society. Privacy, some educational and vocational training resources and voluntary systems of change (for example, individual therapy, group therapy, yoga or whatever prisoners believe to be effective) should be available.

The benefits are reduced or disappear if convicts are constantly confronted with murderous violence and whimsical, arbitrary and malicious control practices.

Rothman (1980:29-31) sees the role of the penitentiary as having to make up for a bad environment by providing offenders with a properly structured environment that would enable them to repent and become useful citizens on their return to the community. Physical conditions inside the prison are important. However, most of the literature on prisons (see Selke 1993:131; Hatry et al 1993:199; Roberts & Powers 1985:100; James et al 1997:122) suggests that the more important matter is the way in which prisoners are dealt with on a one-to-one personal level but due to lack of interest and inadequate funding, prison officials have rarely had the "luxury" of hiring counselors, vocational instructors, teachers and others who could provide opportunities for inmates who seek self-improvement. The security needs of a prison are always the top priority, and they receive even more attention (and funding) as prisons become more troubled. However, if prisons are ever to evolve into more constructive social institutions, it will be necessary to put the more affirming principles of corrections at the forefront.

When social conditions are neglected and deteriorate to the point where many are living on the fringes of society, the justice system cannot and should not be expected to deal with the intractable problems of social injustice. Some scholars (see Selke 1993:138-140; Murphy & Dison 1990:171; Matthews & Francis 1996:12; Ward & Maruna 2008:177) predict that, as the prisons are filled with more and more individuals who have little hope for the future, the justice system will become even less "successful" with more recidivism, and the cycle will continue. If members of society are not shown respect, prisons will never become what people expect them to be. It is futile to discuss prison reform without plans for social reform. Social justice is more important than criminal justice. Society will continue to live with the disgrace of today's prisons until a new reality is in place. The primary aim of prison should be to change patterns of criminal behavior in those imprisoned.

Most of the literature from the fields of criminology (see Selke 1993; Matheisen 1990; Andrews & Bonta 2003), human rights (see Mbembe 2001; Viljoen 2005; Wakai 2000) and social sciences (see Murphy & Dison 1990; Ryan & Ward 1989; McDonald 1994) concludes that imprisonment is a failure, illegitimate, and that whatever ideological forces support it, it does not achieve its goals. If the prison does not transform and rehabilitate the inmates and if inmates return from prison worse than they went in, then the very essence of the prison institution is called to question. Similarly if material and personnel resources are put into the prisons and nothing good is achieved, this constitutes wastage of resources.

In a critical review of imprisonment, Thomas Matheisen (1990:19) concludes that “the prison is a fiasco and does not find a defense in the celebrated purposes espoused in penal theory”. Matheisen (1990:19) would like to see the fall of the prison because the reasons for which prisons were created have not been fulfilled. Prison models have not achieved much in the prisons and there are problems in prison that need real solutions.

As to the question of prison reform Murphy & Dison (1990: 43-44) point out that one should differentiate between two distinct concepts: humanitarian reform and the rehabilitative ideal. Humanitarian reform calls for minimum civilized living conditions along with ensuring the physical safety of inmates and staff within the prison. The rehabilitative ideal refers to the kind of treatment and programs that will facilitate the successful reintegration of prisoners into society. For them, it is easier to change behavior in an individual than to redesign society. Focusing on the inmate is likely to be more effective than emphasizing static, structural predictors. Individual and institutional reforms go together. Murphy & Dison (1990:141) advocate supportive therapy in a rational and reality-oriented manner through learning appropriate behaviors in the handling of day to day problems in prisons.

One way of reforming prisons is through privatization. This issue is fiercely debated in the area of penal policy in the United States of America and in the United Kingdom. Those in favor of privatization (see Brakel (1988:240); Hutto (1990:11); Logan (1990:167); Harding (1992:7); Hatry et al (1993:199); James et al (1997:1) argue that it

will improve conditions for prisoners, reduce costs for the state and facilitate innovation. Privatization will introduce competition and new management techniques with the possibility of better quality for less money and more efficiency because of less bureaucratic “red tape” and a higher motivation to control costs. Logan (1987:1, 151-152) puts it as follows:

The state does not own the right to punish. It merely administers it in trust for the people and under the rule of law. There is no reason why subsidiary trustees cannot be designated as long as they are ultimately accountable to the people and subject to the same provisions of the law that directs the state. The power to punish must be transferred and delegated further... If comprehensive contracts could easily be written, performance perfectly monitored and promises enforced with less costs, then private prisons would provide exactly the conditions of incarceration the community desires.

Proponents of privatization are optimistic privatization will bring visible change in the challenges that worry the prison industry. Those against privatization of prisons (see Ryan & Ward (1989:17-20, 32-33); Chan (1994:44); MacDonald (1994:31); Schichor (1995:11-43) believe that accountability for the treatment of prisoners cannot be ensured and that it is the state’s absolute and legitimate responsibility to punish those who break the law. Low staffing levels, poor service conditions and poor quality recruits are bound to result from the search for profit and prison improvement. The state should live up to its responsibilities in reforming the prisons.

However, privatization of the prison industry is ongoing in the United States of America, Australia, United Kingdom and South Africa by agencies of companies like the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and Wackenhut that were pioneers in this venture. The CCA runs several prisons in the United States of America, United Kingdom and Australia (see Matthews & Francis 1996:260; James et al (1997:6); Oppler (1998:58-61); Ungar (2003:919).

A future dream for the prison system is described by Sessar (1994:114) as follows:

After the replacement of capital punishment by life imprisonment, after the introduction of probation and suspended sentences, after the victory of non-custodial sanctions over prison sanctions, the next step will be the prohibition of life imprisonment which has already been achieved in Brazil, Portugal, Spain and in Norway, and the reduction or abolition of imprisonment for juveniles.

This indeed is a great dream for every nation. This could also be a dream for Cameroon amidst the challenges that face the penitentiary and justice systems of the nation.

Another way of bringing change to the prison environment is through spiritual intervention, pastoral care services and chaplaincy activities by churches, religious groups and organizations. The church is not just an institution that satisfies people's religious beliefs and needs but can be seen as a school that continues to impact generation after generation (Mathiesen 1990:61). According to O'Neill (2009:74-75) the purpose of prison ministry is to give inmates a plan for salvation, a way to move on with their lives, to form inside of them a kind of self-discipline, to pray, read scripture and relate to people properly. Prisons have always had a certain religious quality attached to them. The very language of prison reform has religious images like the cell, penitentiary and reformatory (see Skotnicki 2000:2).

Duncombe (1992:194-209) points out that prison chaplaincy should address the problems of shaky religious foundations, lack of vision and realistic life plans, shame and self deception amongst inmates. Effective pastoral care could solve the problem of the scarcity of pastoral presence, the lack of a prophetic voice and opportunities for meaningful human service in prisons. Nurturing a vision for people at the margins of society is a task of the Christian church that can be executed to a great extent by means of pastoral care.

Allard & Allard (2010:332) suggest that prison chaplaincy should focus on pastoral counseling, pastoral care, a ministry of preaching, listening and accompanying prisoners on their journey of transformation and healing. Correctional services of Canada, United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, Denmark, Norway, South Africa, Sweden and Uganda have made great strides in this direction with pastoral care networks for inmates' rehabilitation (see Gendreau & Andrews 1990:173-184; Duncombe 1992:194-209; Skotnicki 2000:2; Hall 2003:108-137; O'Neill 2009:74-75; Allard & Allard 2010:330-332). This study aims to contribute to realizing this dream also for churches, religious groups and organizations in Cameroon.

There is a lack of literature on the Cameroonian prison system. Research on the social, political and economic situation of Cameroon and state institutions is hampered by strict censorship laws. It was not easy to procure the existing works of, for example, Mukong (1990), Boh & Ntemfac (1991), Wakai (2000), Mbembe (2001), Atabong (2007) and the report of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF 2007-2008). The virtual community is still emerging in Cameroon as internet facilities that could enhance research are lacking in many areas. Studies on issues relating to the economy, good governance, corruption and the plight of the suffering masses in Cameroon are risky to undertake for fear of arrest and imprisonment. The website on the Ministry of Justice and penitentiary administration in Cameroon lacks vital information. When I pointed this out to one of the authorities I was told that some information is left out for security reasons and the image of the country abroad.

Mbembe (2001:160, 186) a senior researcher describes the leadership in Cameroon as "autocrats and traditional warriors who, armed with a machete, spear and shield are ready to cut off the heads not only of their enemies but their most recalcitrant subjects". Impunity reigns supreme as subjects become victims of social injustice and violence is widespread.

Mukong (1990:119) a political prisoner points to the havoc caused by the Ahidjo regime to individuals, families and intellectuals who could have contributed much to the nation's development. He describes his own suffering in prison. For six years he was constantly moved from one prison to another and lost all contact with family and friends.

Boh & Ntemfac (1991:66-91), journalists of the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) describe the experience ten of them and three university professors went through at Brigade Mixte Mobile (BMM) Kondengui Yaounde after producing a radio program on multiparty politics.

Wakai (2000:49-60) a retired justice of the supreme court in Cameroon speaks of an "inferno" he and 172 others experienced at Brigade Mixte Mobile Bamenda and Kondengui prisons for no reason. Their detention subjected them to much pain. They were stigmatized and penalized as a result of their incarceration.

Njawe (2006:1-3) publisher of "Le Messenger" newspaper points to the fact that for over 34 years in the journalism profession, he has been arrested 126 times while carrying out his duty as a journalist. Physical and mental torture, death threats, ransacking of his newsroom were regular occurrences in a situation where repression and corruption even within press circles have become the norm.

According to Atabong (2007:102, 173), a Roman Catholic cleric and chaplain to New Bell Prison, Douala, prisons in Cameroon are treated as the dumping ground, waste basket, garbage dump of those society does not want to see. The prison environment is both a dumping ground for the destitute and a crash course in crime for delinquents. Prisons are tombs for the rejects and outcasts of society.

## 1.4 Research Gap

The literature on prisons and the penitentiary system is mainly to be found in the fields of criminology, human rights and social concerns (see Selke 1993:138-140; Murphy and Dison 1990:171; Matthews and Francis 1996:12; Matheisen 1990:18; Mukong 1990:119; Mbembe 2001:196; Viljoen 2005:153; Andrews & Bonta 2003:15). Pastoral care programs have been tried in prisons in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, Denmark, Norway, South Africa, Sweden and Uganda with some impact on the inmates. For instance, Matthews & Francis (1996:187) commend the Coverdale Community Chaplaincy Project of Nova Scotia that offers counseling and therapy based on pastoral counseling and spiritual and feminist principles to women in prison and to those who have returned to the community.

Cameroon literature on prison pastoral care is scarce. There is also a scarcity of pastoral presence in most Cameroonian prisons. Churches and clergy are still to venture into the area of prison pastoral care.

According to Duncombe (1992:209):

The prison is much a spiritual problem as it is a social or legal problem. It is within the power of the prison system to change its current spiritual ethos to one that provides a reasonable opportunity for inmates to choose a life based on a pattern other than the familiar cycle of crime and detention.

Atabong (2007:25) describes prison pastoral care in most dioceses and countries as “voluntary work by good hearted Christians”. Sometimes prison chaplains and coordinators are appointed without any support from either the church or government. Those who carry out pastoral care do so from the need they see in prison. Their zeal to offer help to the less privileged in prison drives them to visit the prison without any official appointment by their churches. The government is still to see the value of pastoral care to the prisons. Government sponsored chaplains are scarce in Cameroon prisons.

This study will explore the possibilities of the contribution of pastoral care by churches to the situation of people who are incarcerated for any length of time in prisons in Cameroon. Much of the literature on the penitentiary system focuses mainly on prisons in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, Denmark, Norway, South Africa, Sweden and Uganda (see Selke 1993; Murphy & Dison 1990; Matthews & Francis 1996; Matheisen 1990; Andrews & Bonta 2003; Oppler 1998; Roy & Mike 1994; Dodge 1975; Ward & Maruna 2008; Sakellariou and Pollard 2006; James et al., 1997; McDonald 1994; Ryan & Ward 1989; Garland 2001). The struggles to reform the prison institution is ongoing in these countries. The Cameroonian context is very different to the situation in these countries. Literature on Cameroon prisons has provided only fragmentary information.

From the International Catholic Commission for Prison Pastoral Care Conference Report 2009 (see [www.icc PPC.org](http://www.icc PPC.org)) and discussions on papers presented by chaplains serving in these regions, one can conclude that not much has been done in the areas of research, prison reform and pastoral care with regard to prisons in Central, East, North and West Africa. The aim of this study is to investigate in what way pastoral care by the churches in Cameroon could contribute to improving the situation of prisoners in Cameroon.

## **1.5 Objectives and relevance of study**

Pastoral care with prisoners in Cameroon has generally been haphazard and has mostly been done round about Easter and Christmas by a few concerned Christian groups and people of goodwill. Congregations have programs for caring for the needs of parishioners. The objective of this study is to investigate whether similar programs could be developed for inmates in Cameroon prisons. The research objectives for the study are as follows:

- The study will evaluate existing pastoral care models in order to gain insights for developing an effective pastoral care practice that is currently lacking in the

prisons of Cameroon. The study will focus on emotional and psychological issues concerning inmates and prison staff.

- The study also aims to gain insight with regard to prisoners and the prison system. Many churches see prison from a distance and have a nonchalant attitude towards the prison institution. The workings of the prison institution are often obscure to the clergy and laity in Cameroon. Information on the day to day happenings in prison is lacking. This study aims to provide insight into the prison environment, system and administration as well as insights as to what role the churches could play in this institution in the context of Cameroon.

The findings of the study could also be pertinent to the work of the justice system, penitentiary staff, human rights groups, civil societies and non-governmental organizations who work towards ameliorating prison conditions in Cameroon.

## **1.6 Methodology**

The approach of this study is qualitative. Qualitative analysis has to do with exploring issues, seeking an in-depth understanding of phenomena and answering questions. According to Mason (2007:3-8), qualitative analysis can produce well-founded cross-contextual generalities. It has to do with how the social world is interpreted, understood, produced or constituted. It is based on methods of data generation which are flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data is produced. It is also based on methods of analysis, explanation and argument building which involve understandings of complexity, detail and context.

Silverman, (2000:1-7) points to the fact that qualitative analysis is soft, flexible, subjective, political, speculative and grounded while quantitative analysis is hard, fixed, objective, value free, survey oriented, hypothesis testing and abstract. Quantitative analysis can amount to a “quick fix” involving little or no contact with people or the field of study. The process of measurement is central.

Qualitative analysis will be central in this study that will involve and engage with prisoners, prison staff and administration in Cameroon. The prisoners' situation, interaction with prison staff and administration will be looked into as well as social, economic and political issues surrounding the prison environment. In this study documented facts and figures about prisons in Cameroon also will be used to show a broader picture of the issues at stake. The main focus of the study will however be on qualitative analysis with the aim to provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data.

According to Hammersley (1992:160-172) qualitative analysis deals with the analysis of words and images rather than numbers, observation rather than experiment, unstructured rather than structured interviews, attempts to document the world from the point of view of the people studied. Participants will be allowed to talk freely about their prison experience after which these conversations will be analyzed and the data interpreted in order to gain knowledge and insights into the Cameroon prison situation and system.

From a constructivist perspective individuals are seen to construct their personal realities as they interact with their environment. Traumatic experiences shape or disrupt created models in dysfunctional ways. The Constructivist Self-Development Theory (CSDT) developed by McCann & Pearlmann (1990), is used to provide a framework for understanding and treating adult trauma survivors. Human beings create their own personal realities and their understanding of reality becomes a framework from which they assign meaning to new experiences. The theory will be utilized to gain a better understanding of the traumatic experiences of people in prisons. The human self in a prison context can experience, observe, organize and initiate activity that may further destroy the self. As a person interacts with the environment, the sense of self and style of life in relation to others continually changes. According to Laufer (1988:38) exposure of the self-system to a hostile environment fundamentally undermines the ability of the organism to unfold its potential, which in turn shatters the self-system. Development takes place in a social and cultural context as people absorb information from their environment.

They develop certain expectations and beliefs about themselves, others and the world which form a framework for the interpretation of experiences and attributing meaning. The theory will be utilized to reach a better understanding of the prisoners' worldview – their view of themselves, others and the world around them. Insights from the theory can also help in developing ways of enhancing the self capacities of inmates that would enable them to maintain a consistent sense of identity and positive self-esteem.

Pastoral care models that will be investigated for their suitability for implementation in prisons are those of Campbell (1986:37) and Gerkin (1997:16). These models focus on the caring leader as shepherd in a crises situation of hunger, thirst and want for love, care and leadership. According to Campbell (1986:18), pastoral care is about human interrelationships and as such touches on individual experiences and personal values. Pastoral care as shepherding mediates a sense of integrity, wholeness and steadfastness to those in need. The imagery of a “shepherd” encompasses all that is involved in providing pastoral care. Pastoral care is a relationship founded upon the integrity of the individual.

Gerkin's (1997:17-18) approach is “a narrative, hermeneutical methodology for doing practical theology in pastoral care and counseling with individuals and in pastoral leadership of a community of Christian people”. The care of the people of God will always involve the pastor in the care of individuals with as much psychological insight as he or she can muster. Prisoners suffer while in prison as most of them are lost, abandoned and left to fend for themselves in the midst of harsh realities. They need attention, care and understanding from loved ones, the church and the community. Like lost sheep they need to be brought home to the shepherd's loving embrace. Knowledge from the models could be further developed to attend to the emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of the lost in prison.

According to Gerkin (1997: 21, 27-28), the history of pastoral care is in process, continually emerging into an open-ended future. The prophetic, priestly and wisdom models of caring ministry inherited from the Israelite community are not the only biblical images with which pastors have to identify. Another model that will be investigated for its applicability is that of the caring leader as shepherd.

Yu, (1991:62-68) points out that the prison as a setting of pastoral care and counseling is radically different from other pastoral settings like parish, hospital and the military. The pastor as shepherd would play a great role as an agent of pastoral care for those who are in need of giving meaning to their lives and the challenges that face them. As shepherds pastors are mediators of the covenant faith: reawakening, renewing and maintaining a spirit of covenant relationship in a crushing and life threatening situation like the prisons. The shepherd's role like that of Jesus Christ is to seek and save the lost (John 10:10).

Many in the prison environment are in darkness and searching for a ray of hope. The future is bleak and uncertain as they spend their time in deep thought not knowing what the next day has in stock. A theory that addresses hope is that of Capps' (1995:1-3) that sees pastors as agents and providers of hope. What pastors have to give people in difficult circumstances is hope that is central to their calling in life. However, it is difficult to be an agent of hope if one has lost hope. Knowledge from Capps' (1995) theory can be used to provide a pastoral ministry that is based on hope in the prison environment. Pastors need to see their primary task as nurturing and fostering hope. The images of hope that is present in their work can help them to negotiate transitions in the lives of inmates (Capps 1995:25, 51). The prisoner who anticipates freedom wants to be able to walk the streets and sleep on the bed he left before entering prison. Through the ministry of hope the future is not certain but is viewed as being "open, unfrozen and full of opportunities" (Capps 1995:62-63).

The capacity to hope was important to prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps during the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war. Physically the prisoners were captives of the Nazi regime but inwardly they achieved a margin of freedom to the extent that they were able to hope. To project hope is to achieve some degree of autonomy in the present that can make a difference between life and death. By projecting a future hope alters the present (Capps 1995:70). Pastors as agents of hope would want to do everything they can to affirm persons in their hopes.

As moralists they can introduce moral feelings and judgments into pastoral counseling that would help prisoners to redirect their inner sufferings towards the cultivation of inner strength. The pastor as an agent of hope would help inmates reframe the problems and difficulties in their lives (Capps 1995:89, 117, 164).

The concept of hope ties with that of shepherd in that the desire is to rescue inmates from hopeless and helpless circumstances and bring safety and security to their situation as they sit in the darkness of the prison cell. The clergy or pastoral care workers would discover useful insights from the two concepts for effective prison pastoral care practice. In this study the focus will be on prison inmates.

The pastoral model that is to be developed will focus on the self and its development even while in prison. The goal is that the self should be able to tolerate strong affect, be alone without being lonely, calm itself and regulate self loathing (McCann & Pearlmann 1990:16-17). In line with the Constructivist Self Development Theory (CSDT) significant life experiences of traumatized individuals including personal history, characteristics of traumatic life events and the social and cultural context will be probed. The assessment will be used to understand the development of the individual's self capacities, ego resources, needs and schemas as well as provide the context for the meanings of trauma (McCann & Pearlmann 1990:101).

A case study research method using three prisons in the North West region of Cameroon as "cases" will be used with a qualitative data collection approach to investigate the situation of prisons in Cameroon. According to Broomley (1990:302), case study research is a "systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest". Yin (1984:23) defines case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Qualitative designs are characterized by observations, interviews, document analysis, field notes and the maintaining of a research diary.

This would be done through interviews with prisoners, prison officials, civil society members and clergy serving in prison areas. There will also be a review of documented facts on prisons in Cameroon. These would be done to get into the reality of prisoners in Cameroon. Cohen et al (2001:5) points out that “social reality can be understood from an external point of view. Reality is of an objective nature, out there” (Cohen et al 2001:5).

From an interpretivist perspective, a typical characteristic of case studies is that they strive towards a comprehensive (holistic) understanding of how participants relate and interact with one another in a specific situation and how they allocate meaning to a phenomenon being studied (Yin 1994). The study considers not just the voice and perspective of one or two participants in a situation but the views of other relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them. Case study research opens the possibility of giving voice to the powerless and voiceless like prisoners or marginalized groups. Multiple sources and techniques are used in gathering data. Data collection is largely qualitative but may also include quantitative data. Tools to collect data include surveys, interviews, documents review and observation (Yin, 1994). Case study research is aimed at gaining greater insight and understanding of the dynamics of a specific situation (Maree 2010:32). Only a few prisons would be selected and only they would have to be visited. Selection would be based on the significance of the case in relation to the objectives of the study. Accessibility and geographical location would be taken into consideration in the selection process.

Semi- structured interviews will be conducted with prisoners and prison officials of the Bamenda Central, Mbengwi Principal and Ndop Reference prisons in the North West region of Cameroon. Interview questions are framed with the intention to collect data that relate to learning more about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviors of participants. Participants would constitute a valuable source of information. Another aim of the interview questions is to obtain rich descriptive data that will enhance the understanding of the participants’ construction of knowledge and social reality. Multiple sources and techniques will be used to gather data (Maree 2010:76).

I will make use of semi structured interviews to explore and probe the participants experience of prisons, prisoners and the prison system in Cameroon. Those who have been chosen for participation are credible, reliable and qualified persons who can provide relevant information to the research question. The aim of the interview will be discussed with participants in order to get their consent. I will get their feedback on my understanding of the data in order to check whether I have understood their intentions correctly. My aim in doing so is to collect rich and descriptive data on the phenomenon being studied.

The process of data collection, analysis and verification will continue for two months. “Yes” or “No” questions will be avoided. Questions will be clear and neutral. Questions will be kept to a minimum but probing and clarification questions will be used to gain a clear understanding of participant’s perceptions and the meanings they give to experiences. Questions will range from questions on experience and behaviour to questions on opinions and values. There will also be feeling questions, knowledge questions and sensory or value based questions.

According to Maree (2010:81-89) good interviewers are good listeners who do not dominate the interview but understand that they are there to listen. I will do well to listen more and talk very little in order to get what I want. I will also observe the respondent’s non-verbal communication and check my own non-verbal cues such as maintaining eye contact and keeping an upright posture. I will seek the participant’s permission to use a tape recorder to record the interview and also jot down important points as the interview unfolds. This will enable me to ask questions and review answers at the end of the interview. When interview is done, I will listen to the tape, review my notes and reflect on the interview to identify gaps that have to be explored in a follow-up interview. A written transcript will be used for data analysis. I will use qualitative analysis to interpret the data collected.

According to Maree (2010:99-103) the crux of qualitative analysis is to bring meaning to the words and data collected by identifying themes or patterns, ideas, concepts, behaviours, interactions, incidents, terminology or phrase that will facilitate understanding and organizing them into coherent categories that summarize and bring meaning to the text. The approach must be credible and trustworthy. This is best achieved through a process of inductive analyses of qualitative data where the main purpose is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes found in the raw data without restraints imposed by a more structured theoretical orientation.

Qualitative data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined and not merely a number of successive steps. I will constantly review original field notes and verify conclusions, get back to participants to collect additional data, verify such and solicit from participants consulted in the research. Seidel's (1998) approach consists of three essential elements: noticing, collecting and reflecting (think about), these elements are interlinear and cyclical.

My goal in analyzing qualitative data is to summarize what I have seen or heard in terms of common words, phrases, themes or patterns that would aid my understanding and interpretation of what is emerging. This requires creativity, descriptive and a systematic approach. Neuendorf (2002) defines content analysis as a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarizes message content. It is a process of looking at data from different angles with a view to identifying keys in the text that will help to understand and interpret raw data.

Discourse analysis aims to show how dominant forces in society construct versions of reality that favour their interests and uncovers ideological assumptions that are hidden in the words of written texts or oral speech that are used in everyday texts for building power and knowledge, regulation, normalization and development of new knowledge and power relations (Maree 2010:112).

The goal of qualitative research is not to generalize findings across a population. Findings from selected prisons will not necessarily apply to other regions of the country or to other contexts. Findings would constitute a window or mirror to see the reality of the situation in the field and constitute a framework through which new knowledge, analysis and symbolic interactions can result. A qualitative approach seeks to provide understanding from the participants' perspective, experiences, attitudes and behaviors. It provides answers to questions on the uniqueness of the individuals, groups, situation or issue. The goal of this study is to seek new knowledge about and insights into prison issues, prisoners themselves and the contribution of pastoral care in the Cameroonian context.

This chapter provided the background for this study on prisoners in Cameroon with respect to pastoral care. The lack of effective pastoral care in most Cameroonian prisons has been pointed out. The relevance of the study becomes clear when the paucity of research on prison pastoral care in the regions of Central, East, North and West Africa is taken into account. Issues in prisons include human rights abuses, psychological, sociological, theological and ecclesial problems. This study aims to investigate these issues with a view to fill a gap in the knowledge base.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRISONS IN CAMEROON

#### 2.1 Introduction

Cameroon celebrated 50 years of independence from colonial rule on 20 May 2010. The major problems facing the nation are economic, social, political crises and the situation with its prisons. Corruption in the administration remains a concern at all levels of the Cameroonian society. This chapter explores the conditions of prisons in Cameroon, its prison system and administration. Stories of some ex-inmates who have documented their experiences and a summary of the 2007-2008 report of prisons in Cameroon by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF) will also be presented. The NCHRF was created by the President of the Republic of Cameroon through Law No 2004 / 016 of 22 July 2004 to promote and protect the rights and freedoms of the people (see Atabong 2007:64)

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) was established under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. It is the first African human rights body with the responsibility for monitoring and promoting compliance with the African Charter. The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights was established in 2006 to supplement the work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The United Nations' Special Rapporteur (UNSR) is an independent expert who presents an overall picture of the practice of torture to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The Rapporteur's mandate covers all countries irrespective of whether a state has ratified the convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The mandate of the UNSR comprises three main activities (Nowak 2010:16-18):

- transmitting urgent appeals to states with regard to individuals reported to be at risk of torture;
- investigating past alleged cases of torture;
- undertaking fact-finding missions and submitting annual reports on prisons and detention conditions; information is received from individuals, NGOs and governments.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur was in Cameroon 2-15 September 2002 and gave a report to the Cameroon government which is credible, honest and constitutes a reliable source of information on prisons and detention conditions in Cameroon. This report will be referred to extensively in this chapter.

## **2.2 The Prison System**

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for administering prisons in Cameroon. The Presidency, Ministry of Defence and the Delegation for National Security are also closely involved in the administration of prisons. Legislation 92/052 of 27 January 1992 governs the penitentiary in the country. Under the authority of a principal administrator, there is a Prison Service Directorate with sub-departments for prison studies, administration, organisation and production, staff and health. There are three main categories of prisons (ACHPR 2002:10 cf Atabong 2007:49-53):

- central prisons located in the capital city of the regions;
- principal prisons that are linked to magistrate courts accommodating all categories including pre-trial prisoners;
- secondary prisons that accommodate sentenced prisoners are spread across the country.

The prison administration oversees about 72 prisons in total, excluding detention centres run by the Ministry of Defence and the Delegation for National Security. Two types of penal regimes are being applied in Cameroon: the Common Law based Penal Code is applied in Anglophone areas and the Criminal Prosecution Code is applied in Francophone regions. Not many lawyers are willing to provide legal assistance because of the poor remuneration. Under the Cameroonian law, certain authorities can deprive citizens of their liberty without much legal control or any time limitation. Cameroonian law permits release on bail only in the Anglophone regions where the legal system includes features of British Common law. However, bail is not frequently granted in these regions (see ACHPR 2002:10).

Cameroon criminal codes have been in existence since 1967 and are based on French colonial model. They have failed to find a compromise with indigenous customs and appear on the contrary to be repressing traditional behaviours in a misguided effort to enforce social and economic development. According to Gracia (2010:1-3) these policies instead of fighting crime raise crime levels, encourage disrespect of the law and fail to satisfy the people's sense of justice.

Prisons and judicial authorities in Cameroon, as in many countries worldwide, face adverse public opinion. Cameroon faces the problem of mob justice. Capital punishment is not yet abolished and there are many capital cases. The judiciary is corrupt, inefficient and subject to political influence. The Cameroon Constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, the judiciary in Cameroon has remained subject to political influence and corruption. The court system is part of the executive branch subordinate to the Ministry of Justice. Hence, justice is frequently delayed or denied many prisoners before the trial stage is reached. Political bias often brings trials to a halt and results in an extremely long process punctuated by extended court recesses (see ACHPR 2002:11).

## **2.3 Prison situation and conditions**

Prisons in Cameroon are severely dilapidated. They lack maintenance and repair. Prison maintenance is not an economic priority for the country. Ventilation and lighting are common problems in the Cameroon prisons. Prisoners often complain of a lack of air as detention centres fall short of the minimum standards of sanitary requirements and exhibit neglect of the highest order. There is no regular maintenance and disinfecting of the premises that often smell unpleasant (see ACHPR 2002:12). Most of the prison structures were built during the colonial period and have outlived their usefulness.

According to the ACHPR (2002:13-14) in April 2000, the Minister of Territorial Administration and the Secretary of State for Territorial Administration in charge of Penitentiary Administration visited Douala and Yaounde prisons. The Yaounde prison was found to be so dirty that the minister ordered the immediate release of funds for repainting of the prison. In Douala, the Minister said that the prison would be improved with funding from a foreign government. Prisoners often appear in tattered and visibly filthy apparel. There is a shortage of water and bathing facilities. Most prisoners sleep on mattresses laid out on the floor at night and folded up during day time. Pillows are a luxury in some sections of the prisons. However, prison authorities allow inmates to bring in their own mattresses, bed sheets and pillows. Prisoners, who are not provided for, complain and suffer from cold as they are forced to sleep on the floor. Sometimes inmates lobby with prison authorities to be allocated good places to sleep.

Feeding is a problem as inmates are only entitled to one meal a day, at lunch time, prepared by inmates assigned to work in the kitchen. The menu is poor and the quantity insufficient. The food is not well cooked and falls short of meeting minimum hygienic requirements. The United Nations Special Rapporteur tasted the food prepared by the prisoners and noted that in addition to it being badly cooked, and lacking taste, it failed to meet the daily standard nutritional requirement for an adult human being. Many prisoners in Cameroon are therefore malnourished (see ACHPR 2002:15).

Prisoners families are expected to provide food for their relatives in prison. This sometimes is not possible because of the distance between the prison and where the relatives are. Prisoners are often hungry and sometimes drink water to fill their stomachs. Living standards and conditions have remained harsh and life threatening in almost all the prisons. Visits by loved ones and relations are a problem because of great distances between inmates and their families. Sometimes letters to friends and relations are blocked by the prison warders. Persons taken into detention are denied access both to legal counsel and family members. Leisure, exercise, work, access to education and related activities are not widely available to inmates due to a lack of resources, the strict regime of prisoner control and a lack of qualified, specialised prison staff (see ACHPR 2002:16-17). Hence, appropriate training, skills development and specific professional training with a view to prepare inmates towards reintegration into society are lacking in most Cameroon prisons.

Medical facilities are lacking in most of the prisons. There is an acute shortage of qualified medical personnel and drugs for the health needs of prisoners. Inmates are sometimes forced to pay for medical services to which they are supposed to have access. Sometimes drugs and other medical implements are embezzled by corrupt prison officials and medical personnel at the expense of sick and suffering inmates. The United Nations Special Rapporteur noted that there is a serious problem of tuberculosis (TB) spreading across the prisons and detention centres of Cameroon and claiming the lives of inmates. There is a high demand for medical services. Severely ill inmates often have to wait several days before they can be taken to hospital. This delay is often a result of the administration not being able to foot the medical bills or lack of transportation to hospital (see ACHPR 2002:19). In such situations, some inmates are just left to die without any medical attention. Reports of inmates' death are frequent in almost all Cameroon prisons.

Torture and human rights abuses abound in the prisons of Cameroon. Prison officials and security forces subject women, children and elderly persons in prison to abuse. Most cases are not reported to the relevant authorities because of ignorance, lack of confidence or fear of reprisals on the part of the victims and their families.

In the New Bell prison in Douala and other non-maximum security penal detention centres, beatings are common. Prisoners are chained or flogged at times in their cells. Two forms of physical abuse commonly reported to be inflicted on the detainees include the *bastinade* in which the victim is beaten on the soles of the feet and the *balancoire* in which the victim with hands tied behind the back is hung from a rod and beaten, often on the genitals (see ACHPR 2002:20; Mukong 1990:15-21). An average person in good health cannot stand up to 30 minutes on the *balancoire* without being maimed for life.

Non-violent political activists are often subjected to physical abuse during their brief detention following roundups of participants in anti-government demonstrations or opposition party political rallies. Security forces constantly subject prisoners and detainees to degrading treatment that includes being stripped naked, confinement in severely overcrowded cells and denial of access to toilets or other sanitation facilities. Detainees are often beaten to extract confessions and detainees who are awaiting trial are sometimes required under the threat of abuse to pay the so called “cell fees” essentially a bribe to the prison guards to prevent further abuse (see ACHPR 2002:20).

Solitary confinement and chaining are two ways of sanctioning prisoners in Cameroon. With respect to chaining, inmates complain that the chain is thick, harmful to the hands and legs and is often applied randomly as there is no distinction between those awaiting trial and those convicted. They all suffer from constant beatings, torture, intimidation, verbal abuse, denial of services, tribalism or favouritism and extortion (see Mukong 1990:27; Njawa 2006:1-3; Wakai 2000:20).

According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur (ACHPR 2002:18-19) in the Northern region, the government permits traditional *lamibe* (chiefs) to detain persons outside the government penitentiary system in what can be termed “private prisons”. The places of detention in the palaces of the traditional chiefs of Rey Bouba, Gashiga, Bibemi and Tcheboa have a reputation for seriously mistreating their inmates. There are reports of disappearances of persons in the custody of security forces. Some disappearances may be attributed to summary executions by security forces in Bafoussam, Douala, Yaounde or the Northern regions. In these instances, the dead bodies of those concerned are rarely found, although the subjects are presumed dead.

Their families and relations are traumatised because of no knowledge of what has happened to them in prison. The Cameroon Constitution prohibits such brutal actions. The Cameroon law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and requires that an arrest warrant be served the individual concerned except when the criminal is caught in the act. This is not usually the case as security forces continue to arrest and detain citizens arbitrarily. The UNSR specifies cases of machete beatings, toe nails being ripped out and police shooting frail and sick inmates.

In the course of 2008, the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms NCHRF (2007-2008:6) was contacted for the case of acts of torture at the Bafia Central prison perpetrated by a prison warder, Olanuena Gallus, who had caused second degree burns on a detainee named Sibe Barthelemy by placing a hot electric iron on his body. The NCHRF reported the matter to the Vice Prime Minister in charge of Justice and Keeper of the Seals. No action was taken. Reports of inmates' death are frequent in the New Bell and Maroua prisons. There are no proper corpse removal procedures and inmates are forced to remove corpses without appropriate protection.

Overcrowding is a major problem in all Cameroon prisons. Prisoners are kept in dilapidated colonial-era prisons where the number of detainees exceeds the original capacity four to five times. According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur, Douala New Bell prison originally built for 600 inmates held more than 3500. Maroua prison with a capacity of 300 had more than 900. Bertoua prison created for 50 inmates, housed more than 700 persons. The Kondengui Central prison in Yaounde constructed in 1967 to hold 1500 inmates had approximately 3600 inmates. In 1999 the government official in charge of prisons complained that the Bafoussam Central prison built for 320 inmates held 3140 persons. Bamenda Central prison built for 300 inmates held 900 (NCHRF 2007-2008:6).

These figures are a result of the slow pace of justice especially for those awaiting trial. In most of the prisons a large number of the inmates are those awaiting trial. The pre-trial wait can be seven years or more. Pre-trial detention is used not to attain its primary goal of upholding order and security so as to facilitate investigation but rather as a sanction.

Persons taken into detention are sometimes denied access to legal counsel, close relations and family members. According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur, 80% of the prison population consists of untried prisoners: Douala 2000, Maroua 700, Bamenda 750, Yaounde 3000 (ACHPR 2002:20; cf Atabong 2007:70-71).

According to the ACHPR (2002:12-13), the prisoners of Yaounde Kondengui prison addressed a letter to the Minister of Justice and various newspapers in which they complained that of the 3600 persons held in the prison 3000 were awaiting trial. They threatened to go on hunger strikes or riots if nothing was done about the situation. Overcrowding leads to poor hygiene, illness and even deaths. The problem of overcrowding has worsened because of increase in prison population. The report further states that in 2000 the population was around 20000 with a prison capacity of 1700. In 2002 the prisons were holding 8117 prisoners indicating a staggering overcrowding rate of approximately 450%. The rate becomes even worse with particular prisons like Bamenda, Bafoussam, Buea, Douala, Maroua and Yaounde. Prisoners complain of lack of ventilation, lighting and air when locked in their cells. The number of prison staff compared to the overall prison population is low. Serious financial and personnel shortages face the penitentiary sector. The United Nations Special Rapporteur was informed that there has been no significant increase made to the budget for prisons since the colonial era. Inmates find it difficult to raise money for their bail and as a result they remain in prison for a long time. According to prison officials, the increase in the prison population cannot be attributed to the increase in criminality but rather factors such as: lack of access to justice, a very slow judiciary, too many persons awaiting trial due to unchecked application of remand, lack of an effective parole system and inefficiency in the investigation of cases. To help reduce overcrowding, the United Nations Special Rapporteur suggested measures such as mediation, suspended sentences, probation, short sentences, partial release, community service and amnesty. He described prison conditions throughout the country as “universally appalling” (ACHPR 2002:12-13; cf Atabong 2007:14-15).

The NGOs working in Cameroon prisons also pointed out the bad conditions of living and detention in penitentiary centers. Prisons are overcrowded, the prisoners' diet is inadequate and of poor quality, hygienic conditions are bad and medical care insufficient. They also raised their concern at the slow pace of the administration of justice as many suspects remain in detention for many years waiting judgment. The state authorities sometimes deny some NGOs and members of civil society access to prisons (see ACHPR 2002:8).

According to NCHRF (2007-2008:16-17) checks on prisoners' conditions were done in the central prisons of Douala, Yaounde, Ngaoundere, Garoua and Maroua. The visits revealed overcrowded prisons with tight and dilapidated buildings, poor feeding, absence of hygiene and care, insufficient toilets and shower rooms, torture, high mortality rate, mix up of minor and adult prisoners. Most of the prisons were constructed before independence in 1960 (Ngaoundere, Maroua and Douala prisons). The accommodation capacity has not improved with the exponential growth of prison population. The report points out that Ngaoundere was designed for 85 inmates held 766 prisoners, Garoua had 1458 and Yaounde 4500 inmates. Cell C of the penitentiary of Garoua had 171 inmates in a habitable area of 60metres square. As a result all inmates could not go to bed at the same time for lack of space to sleep. Some are compelled to keep awake standing or sitting while waiting for their turn to lie on a bed. Every prisoner was entitled to a surface area of 0.35 centimetres square.

According to the NCHRF (2007-2008:18-19) there were no beds or beddings in most of the prisons. Inmates lie on makeshift mattresses of barely 40cm wide while the poorer ones use mats or cardboards to lie on. Lack of ventilation makes the time spent in the cells unbearable especially in regions characterised by heat. All five prisons had not been repainted for more than ten years. Walls were discoloured by smoke and weathering. In the Central Prisons of Ngaoundere, Garoua and Maroua, detainees are given only one meal a day. Meals basically comprise corn fufu and vegetables seasoned sometimes with tiny dried fish. About 40 HIV/AIDS patients were in these prisons and were not yet following the ARV treatment. Only wealthy inmates can afford treatment in case of outbreak of diseases.

This explains the significant number of deaths (five deaths on average in the Ngaoundere Central Prison) due to lack of medication or appropriate medical care. There were 23800 detainees in prison amongst which 14864 were in custody which is about 62.24% of the total number of detained persons. The accommodation capacity of prisons in Cameroon is 16000 places for 23800 detainees making a deficit of 7800 places (as of 31 December 2008).

According to Viljoen (2005:153-157), United Nations Special Rapporteur, a chronological analysis of the views and concluding observations adopted with respect to Cameroon reveals a varied though consistent pattern of violation of detainees rights. The Human Rights Commission (HRC) further deplored the fact that “prison conditions in Cameroon are characterized by severe overcrowding, inadequate food and medical care” and urged the government “to address the issue of prison overcrowding as a matter of priority and ensure that prisoners are treated with humanity in keeping with Article 10 of the Covenant” (Viljoen 2005:155). In his report of 2002, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture noted with concern that no response has been provided to cases brought to the attention of the government since 1998.

Mbembe (2001:186) points out that in postcolonial times, corruption and mortality are peaking. Prisoners are battered, butchered and tortured to the extent that they lose their lives. Mbembe is on self-imposed exile in South Africa and has no hope of returning to Cameroon because of his critical writings and scholarly contributions against the leadership in Cameroon. He is currently a senior researcher at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Dr Chemuta Divine Banda, Chairman of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF 2007-2008:49) points out that in the preamble to the country’s constitution Cameroon affirms its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This commitment is enshrined in the establishment of a large arsenal of national legislation and ratification of international instruments to ensure the exercise and observance of rights and freedoms. The violations are often perpetrated by those who are supposed to be protecting these rights and freedoms.

In the course of its inquiries and investigations into the complaints relating to the violation of human rights, the NCHRF often questions the government and its agents. While some cooperate, others, however, maintain total silence. This includes heads of departments of the police, gendarmes, courts and tribunals. The situation presents a real obstacle to the work of the NCHRF and is a serious blow to the image of Cameroon with regard to human rights. Cameroon's condemnation by the United Nations Committee for gross human rights violations should provoke the government and her agents to resolve to work towards ensuring the respect, protection and promotion of citizens' rights and freedoms.

According to the Amnesty International Report (AIR 2011:95-96) prisons and detention centres in Cameroon are overcrowded and conditions of prisoners are life threatening. Medical care and feeding of inmates are inadequate. Prison disturbances and escape attempts by inmates are frequent. Several prisoners are shot and killed during escape attempts. Prison guards are poorly trained, ill-equipped for their tasks and their numbers are inadequate for the large prison population in Cameroon. Some prisoners are reported to have died in Maroua because of scorching heat and in Ngaoundere due to cholera outbreak. Prisoners on death row were not informed why their sentences were not made known to them.

## **2.4 Stories from Prison**

Some well-known persons of the nation, who experienced prison, took a bold step of making known what they had suffered while in prison. They had difficulty publishing due to strict censorship.

Mukong (1990:1-2) an ex-political prisoner laments that the Cameroonian nation consists of highly talented scholars who are oppressed by censorship. Intellectual achievement is hampered by the fear of arbitrary arrests and detention. The journey to independence was not easy and many people lost their lives in the process. Mukong and others who fought for the independence and unification of Cameroon constantly suffered harassment, arrest, detention and torture.

Mukong (1990:3) points out that “torture has reduced Cameroon to a nation of experimental guinea pigs, sycophants, imbeciles, hand-clappers and alleluia singers”. At Yaounde BMM prison, prisoners had to lie on their sides in order not to take up much space. Ernest Ouandie leader of the UPC Party was given a vono bed and mattress while the rest of the inmates had to lie on the floor with only their clothing between their skin and the cement floor (see Mukong 1990:3). The overcrowding in the cell made it unbearably hot during the day. The “truth” in BMM was not what really happened but what the commissioner or the person investigating the case wanted the inmate to declare (Mukong 1990:15-21). The purpose of torture is manifold: to undermine the ego and pride, cause helplessness and absolute dependence on the prison officials, to provide some fun for prison officials at the pain, to bring inmates to their knees.

Mukong (1990:24-31) was constantly being moved between the BMM, Mantoum and Tchollire concentration camps. At Tchollire he was twice subjected to real beatings that kept him in bed for three days. He and a host of others were cut off from family, friends and the outside world. There were no communal prayers in the cells but once every evening all the cells listened to prayers conducted from cell 4 by one of the prisoners. The director instilled terror in the camp. When he made his appearance at the entry gate every prisoner crouched to the ground. Mukong was often thrown into the solitary cell for being outspoken and critical of the regime. Many times he went on a hunger strike to let the government officials know that he was unjustly imprisoned and should be set free.

Once he was critically sick and in hospital. He was sure the end was near and wanted very much to see the wife and children whom he had lost touch with for a long time. He was told the wife could not make it to see him because she was heavily pregnant by another man. He wept bitterly and was upset for more than a week as lost love tormented him (Mukong 1990:92).

The concentration camps in the sixties were personal prisons of the Head of State and it did not matter how one got there. Once there one was considered a prisoner of the Head of State and could only be released after his consent had been obtained. Prisoners were often taken into the bush and shot from behind.

A report would then be fabricated on how this was an error which occurred in pursuit of a fleeing prisoner. If a person was not well known in society, he was shot and left to rot in the bush without a proper burial (see Mukong 1990:47, 69, 86, 91, 92, &109).

In the sixties the family bond was often destroyed as the regime left many children fatherless and thousands of women widows through imprisonment and death of their loved ones. The few letters that came in were censored and could contain only news about the family. If the letter dared to speculate that the President would make a favourable gesture on a coming feast day, such a letter was not delivered. It was considered political (see Mukong 1990:120).

Mukong (1990: 113) also criticizes the religious bodies in Cameroon:

Again I ask which religious group has ever considered it an order from above to attend to the prisoners in the BMM and those in the detention centers? Yet we all know that these are the ones who suffer most and furthermore we also know that they have never been condemned by any court of law. And our Lord Jesus Christ shall welcome us to his Father's kingdom for having visited him in prison.

Mukong (1990:113) and his friends did not see the churches play a role in Cameroon to help the many who were in prison for no reason. A prelate, Bishop Dogmo, was in prison on account of a prayer group he had organised to pray for the nation's wellbeing and his church did nothing about his situation. The voice of the church was not heard addressing issues of injustice and corruption but they were silent as many people were dying in prison for no reason. Mukong prayed that God would open the eyes of the church leaders to the realities of those in prison.

According to Mukong (1990:119), from 1958-1982 Ahidjo's regime caused the deaths of 50000 people through torture in the detention centres. At least 285000 Cameroonians were adversely affected by this war of attrition. In the great release of 1975, the Mantoum detention centre was closed down. It ceased to be a place for detaining political prisoners and was later converted to a common law prison. Tchollire still serves as a detention centre for political prisoners (Mukong 1990:129).

Mukong (1990:133-138) was finally released on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 following a decision of the President signed 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept 1976. His mother had died in May 1976 and it pained him that he was not able to give her a fitting burial. He went to her grave and wept bitterly. Mukong spent most of the six years in prison reading the Bible, praying and writing. He was almost ostracised from the Cameroonian society not because people hated him but because it was dangerous to be too close to him. Reintegration into society was almost impossible. If it were not for his early formation and spiritual development this would have hastened his exit from this world. His book '*Prisoner without a crime*' (1990) was banned several times. '*Prison graduate*' (1991) by Boh Herbert & Ntemfac Ofege suffered a similar fate.

Boh & Ntemfac (1991:6-13) started the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) program "Cameroon calling". Following the May 6, 1990 edition of the programme, they, with eight journalists and three lecturers from the University of Yaounde were arrested and sent to BMM Kondengui. According to Gideon Tanni, "Cameroon calling" sneaked into the broadcast schedule of CRTV through the back door, that is, clandestinely and surprised Cameroonians with its power.

According to Boh & Ntemfac (1991:13-15, 41) veteran journalists Sam Nuvalla Fonkem, Johnnie MacViban and Ebbsiy Ngum were arrested and detained for four months at BMM Kondengui prisons on account of their radio program "Cameroon Report". They were tried on charges of contempt and subversion. Johnnie MacViban and Ebbsiy Ngum were set free while Sam Nuvalla Fonkem got a six months suspended sentence. The concern of the journalists was that there was no interaction between the governed and the governing authorities in Cameroon.

Boh & Ntemfac (1991:67-71) describe BMM Kondengui as the "home of horror and terror" when they saw the torments and torture prisoners go through while in detention. The detainees were given food and water only in their cells and went out to relax in the sun only once in a while. Some inmates had been out only a few times in the course of three years of detention. More than half the population of BMM Kondengui are prisoners who have committed no crimes and were arrested for no apparent reason.

Most were arrested in the night by policemen who smashed their doors and pulled them out of bed at gun point away from their screaming wives and children. The journalists and university dons were arrested because of a radio talk on democracy and multiparty politics in Cameroon. Instructions to produce the program came from the Head of State himself ( Boh & Ntemfac 1991:81-87).

The journalists said they were shocked that such institutions could still be part of 1990 Cameroon (see Boh & Ntemfac 1991:88-90). They were finally released after pressure from the international community, diplomatic missions in Yaounde and university students who threatened to burn down the university structures if their lectures were not released.

According to Fai Henry Fonye (in Boh & Ntemfac 1991:97) “journalism is a science and it has no use if it cannot analyse and forecast”. Boh & Ntemfac tabled their resignations as Assistant Chief of Politics at CRTV radio and Assistant Chief of Politics at CRTV television respectively on 10 May 1990. According to Boh & Ntemfac (1991:97-120) CRTV was “too much a house of lies, corruption, nepotism, abuse of power and gross incompetence”.

Wakai ( 2000: 11-19) a retired justice of the supreme court of Cameroon and 172 others were arrested for being the brain behind the formation of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) party. The SDF was created to challenge the ruling government to open up to the plight of the suffering masses, rehabilitate parliament and the judiciary and further a sense of national belonging in all Cameroonians.

Wakai (2000:20) asserts that democracy was killed in Cameroon on October 23 1992 when the Supreme Court Justice Dipanda Mouelle failed to give the true verdict of the Presidential elections with the excuse that his hands were tied. Wakai was arrested in his bedroom at 6.50 a.m on October 28 1992. The telephone line to his house was cut to block communication with the outside world. The wife was kicked in the shin and fell. The soldiers who came to arrest him rained blows on him as he tried to dress up while others ransacked the residence. They were treated like criminals.

According to Wakai (2000:22-29) passing through the balançoire and being beaten on the soles of the feet, are common practices in the prison. When the soles were peeling off they were ordered to walk, run or dance on the gravel around the building. They were allowed to relax in the sun for two hours a day and did so for the first time after three weeks of sleeping on the floor. They read the Bible and sang choruses to soothe their pain and suffering. Their arrest was politically motivated. Detainees persuaded prison officials to allow clergy to conduct religious services in the prison. Wakai (2000:34-36) commends the dedication and devotion of Rev. Sister Headwig from the Archbishop's house Bamend who brought bread and sardines to the inmates almost on a daily basis.

Wakai (2000:55) points out that in Cameroon it is the decisions of the all powerful executive branch that rules the nation. The executive reviews judicial decisions and not the judiciary as is the case in the more refined legal systems of other nations.

The strong arm of the executive rules supreme in Cameroon with the judiciary finding itself in an uncomfortable situation when it comes to enforcing the law. Wakai (2000) with others on the legislative bench say they are worried and disturbed with the broken state of the law in Cameroon. According to Griffith (1993:124) "whenever the state is regarded as the final arbiter of right and truth people are delivered up to be crucified".

Wakai (2000:55) on the night of December 27<sup>th</sup> 1992 and the other 172 inmates were transferred to BMM Yaounde where they were confined to walls in the prison as opposed to cells at BMM Bamenda. Some diplomatic missions opted to visit them but the regime refused them access: Frank Michels Belgian ambassador and Frances Cook United States of America ambassador to Cameroon at the time. They were finally released on December 31 1992 thanks to the solidarity of the Cameroonian masses and the international community who spontaneously denounced the repressive action as illegitimate.

Njawe (2006:1), publisher of *Le Messenger* newspaper, faced relentless harassment by the Cameroonian state authorities throughout his journalistic career. His longest detention lasted ten months when he was arrested on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1997 for daring to wonder about the President's health. On 13<sup>th</sup> January 1998 he was sentenced to 24 months in prison. Four months later the sentence was reduced to 12 months because of pressure exerted by national and international public opinion. He was, however, granted presidential pardon after having served ten months in prison.

According to Njawe (2006:2) his spirit was not broken in prison. He was deprived of his family, colleagues and relations. Often he was in tears on the arms of his late wife Jane and children when he saw the suffering they had to endure to come and see him in prison. He cried when Jane gave birth to a still born child on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1998 four days before his trial following beatings she received the previous day from prison guards who did not pity her pregnancy situation when she brought food to him in prison. His long stay in prison stimulated his sense of solidarity with the poor and the outcast. It strengthened his determination to use journalism as a weapon to fight against all kinds of abuse. He was warned not to write while in prison as this would lead to solitary confinement. He had to bribe some inmates and prison officials to get his material to the newspaper. Journalism to him was like his own religion. The trials, imprisonment and many death threats could not make him change his calling. Njawe died in a motor accident in the United States of America. Boh Herbert, in a tribute to Njawe during a funeral service in Washington DC in August 2010, said: "Njawe endured and survived a lot more: numerous arrests, solitary confinement, jails, the savage beating of his pregnant wife and the loss of their unborn baby (Boh 2010:1).

This chapter took an in depth look at prisons in Cameroon. The penitentiary system and prison conditions were described by means of reports of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF), Amnesty International (AIR 2011) and documented stories from ex-inmates. The reports and stories indicate that prisons in Cameroon are in a bad state and the prison system is faced with several challenges.

Mathiesen (1990:135) points to the fact that “the prison does not have a defence, the prison is a fiasco in terms of its own purposes”. Arguments for the existence of prisons are not convincing to Mathiesen.

The following chapter will assess alternative sanctions to prison with a view to understanding intermediary measures or sanctions that can be taken to rehabilitate inmates and reform the prison institution. Griffith (1993:31-32) argues that:

If one of the goals of a justice system is to provide comfort and assistance for the victims of crime, prisons contribute nothing towards attaining that goal. There are occasional calls for prison reform but rarely any fundamental questioning of the system itself or of the very practice of caging people.

Prisons have failed to live up to their goals and expectations. Hence, they should be abolished or done away with. According to Griffith (1993:35):

From the perspective of technique, if prisons do not appear to have contributed to rehabilitating offenders or lowering crime rates, the problem does not lie with the neutral means (caging people) but rather with the need for additional precision and expertise in the application of the technique. The question rarely arises about whether in fact the prison itself is morally and socially tolerable. Few people pause to wonder whether the dehumanizing impact of prisons contributes to more criminality, violence and misery than it prevents.

Prisons should go through some critical evaluation in relation to rehabilitation of prisoners and reformation of the institution. Griffith (1993:203) argues further that prisons are not resisting violence and stealing but propagate it as they steal people away and rob them of their dignity as human beings. Hence alternative sanctions to prison could offer better solutions to challenges that face the prison industry and many nations. Chapter three will focus on alternative sanctions to incarceration.

## CHAPTER 3

### ALTERNATIVE SANCTIONS TO PRISON

#### 3.1 Introduction

Alternative sanctions to prison have to do with subsidiary or intermediary measures that are taken to offer solutions to criminal behaviour and penitentiary matters. Knowledge from alternative sanctions has provided insights to some correctional officials in their task of managing prisons and collaborating with the justice system.

This chapter will focus on alternatives to incarceration with a view to understand what correctional officials have developed as solutions to the challenges facing the prison institution. Some alternative sanctions are available in some parts of the world while other parts are still to study and reflect on them in relation to their prison situation. Alternatives to prison can also be seen as alternative sanctions that inmates can be involved in without necessarily going to prison.

Oppler (1998:52) points out that, alternative sanctions to prisons include initiatives such as victim-offender reconciliation programmes, restitution and compensation, day fines, community service, electronic monitoring, intensive supervision programmes and boot camps. I will now investigate alternatives to prison sentences.

#### 3.2 Victim-Offender Reconciliation programmes

Victim offender reconciliation programmes involve the organisation of a meeting between the offender and the victim. The meeting may result in payment of compensation, return of stolen property or reparation for damage and work to redress the situation. Oppler (1998:52) points to the fact that the meeting recognises the interests of the victim through the reparation of damage caused by the offender.

Mediation facilitates and promotes the reconciliation process between offender and victim. Zehr (1990:19-29) explains that in the mediation process the needs of the victim are central. Many victims of crime speak of the need to talk about what has happened to them and to give voice to their pain, fear and anger. True forgiveness requires remembrance. Victims should be able to bear witness to the injustices they have suffered and the ways in which they have been violated. Family, friends and other supportive people should listen and share in the grief. Some victims are also helped by being able to come to the point of expressing their pain and anger to people who have wronged them.

Zehr (1990:186) argues that the aim of victim offender reconciliation is not to ask questions like “What should be done to the offender?” but rather “What can be done to make things right?” Mediation projects exist in Canada, United States of America, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, France, Norway and several other countries. Research in the United States of America has shown that mediation projects result in a greater satisfaction for victims and offenders who feel that justice is being done through the compulsory payments of compensation (see Oppler 1998:52).

### **3.3 Restitution and Compensation**

In most countries of the world, restitution and compensation constitute part of the sentence of a prisoner. In Canada, about three quarters of the conditional sentences include compensation or unpaid work as special conditions. In the United States of America, restitution centres exist that are like open prisons where inmates must work to pay for any damage caused their victims. Most countries see restitution as a supplement to the sentence of an offender (see Oppler 1998:53).

### **3.4 Fines**

A fine is an amount of money paid to compensate for the damage brought about by crime. The offender pays a fine to avoid imprisonment. Fines have been used more extensively in Europe than in the United States of America. In some countries the fines have become the most important alternative for short prison sentences of up to six months. Three factors are associated with the successful collection of fines (DRDC 1994:21-23):

- the fine must not exceed the paying capacity of the offender to any great extent;
- payments in instalments must be limited as much as possible;
- the payment period should not be too long.

In Sweden unpaid fines can be converted to a prison sentence. Griffith (1993:196) points out that the imposition of fines is the most widely used intermediate sanction in the world. However, fines have a greater punitive impact on the poor than on the wealthy. For the poor a small fine can have a devastating impact on family finances. By definition intermediate sanctions are still punitive.

### **3.5 Zimbabwe Community Service**

Community service as a penalty began in the United Kingdom in 1972 and has spread to the United States of America, Canada, Finland and Zimbabwe. According to Viljoen (1997:34-51) studies have shown that prisons have a minimum rehabilitative effect on inmates. Hence, another approach is needed to help improve on the prison problems in the world. Community based alternatives (community service) with focus on remand prisoners (pre-trial detainees) is recommended. Remand prisoners experience intense emotional stress because of their difficult legal status. They are suspected but have not been proven guilty. They suffer long detentions during which time they are separated from their families. They are uncertain about the length of their imprisonment. Future trial dates are often not known. They have a variety of economic, social and political problems while waiting to be tried.

Remand prisoners often suffer from depression and some attempt to commit suicide if these problems are prolonged. Zimbabwe, for instance, has resorted to community service (diversion), which have been largely successful in bringing inmates to reason, reconciliation and compensation for the wrongs committed by them to their victims. Fourteen salaried employees coordinate the program countrywide while the rest of the work is done by volunteers. The community service alternative is judicially driven by magistrates who chair the district committees. They visit the placement institutions (halfway houses) where offenders are kept and ensure that the program operates smoothly. They are assisted by other members of the district committee. The involvement of affected members of the community and the heads of institutions has helped to educate the local committee on the advantages of the scheme. The scheme relies on the public for implementation. The district committees are composed of government officials and members of the public who provide voluntary services. To ensure uniformity in their approach to community service orders, guidelines were prepared by the National Committee and distributed to magistrates. These guidelines indicate the approach to be adopted by magistrates when enforcing community service orders (see Viljoen 1997:52-71; Oppler 1998:54).

One of the advantages of this non-custodial sentence is that it is served in the community and offenders have contact with their families and the community. The harmful effects of imprisonment and overcrowded prison conditions are avoided. Instead of losing their jobs because of imprisonment and becoming dependent on the state, offenders continue to work to support themselves and their families. Living conditions are one of the major factors which determine prisoners' state of mind and being, self-esteem and dignity. According to Oppler (1998:54) the success of the Zimbabwean model lies in the fact that it did not attempt to emulate the structures of some developed countries where alternatives to prison are supervised and administered by a separate public funded service. The model is judicially driven and operates through the courts. This system also goes back to traditional modes of African justice that were based on the principle of reparation rather than retribution (see Viljoen 1997:72-73; Atabong 2007:14-15).

### 3.6 Electronic Monitoring

Electronic monitoring was introduced in 1971 as a way of reducing psychological destruction of detention and improving social integration. With the passage of time the sanction has changed to providing a solution to prison overcrowding. Two types of electronic monitoring systems of offenders exist (Schwitzgebel 1969:597-600):

- an “active” system whereby a transmitter in the form of an ankle or wrist-band is worn on the offender and a receiver transmits signals to a central computer;
- a “passive” system that controls the whereabouts of the offender by use of irregular telephone calls.

Electronic monitoring programmes were established in the United States of America in 1990. It has three components (Schwitzgebel 1969:601-605):

- electronic control;
- frequent contacts between staff and offenders;
- urine tests to check on the use of drugs.

The target group includes offenders of violent and property crimes, drug and traffic offences. The implementation is not without problems such as (Schwitzgebel 1969:606-611):

- technical failures;
- transmitter breakdown;
- overloading of the telephone system;
- incorrect reporting of the offender violating rules.

Also the use of electronic monitoring necessitates an increase in supervisory staff which makes it fairly costly to run the programme.

### **3.7 Intensive Supervision Programmes (ISPs)**

Intensive supervision programmes consist of a number of punishments and treatment elements that are carried out under the strict control and supervision of the probation service. It is an alternative to prison geared towards hardened criminals who have committed serious crimes (offenders for whom a fine or community service could not be imposed). The court can sentence an offender to ISP as an alternative to custody. The probation service can place an offender in an intensive supervision project only if the court has imposed a conditional sentence with probation supervision. ISP can be seen as a condition for early parole. It is a demanding intervention. A standard ISP involves at least two contacts per week, house visits at night, community service and restitution. This is usually combined with house arrest, urine checks and electronic supervision. According to Clear & Hardyman (1990) cf Oppler (1998:56) Intensive Supervision Programmes are described in the United States of America as “tough, strict and harsh” and many people want it to be so. However, Erwin & Bennett (1987) cf Oppler (1998:58) point out that Intensive Supervision Programmes have kept a great number of offenders out of prison.

### **3.8 Boot Camps**

Boot camps are sentences imposed in the United States of America and United Kingdom on young adult offenders. It is a relatively short sentence followed by a period of intensive supervision. Boot camps are directed towards young non-violent first time offenders between the ages of 17 and 25 years. They are sent to a boot camp for a maximum of six months. Boot camps are characterised by a military regime involving a great deal of marching, physical training and military discipline with severe punishment for misconduct. The above aspects are combined with hard physical labour, education, gaining of vocational skills and sometimes counselling. The expectation is that the combination of a strict military regime with rehabilitative activities will lead to less repeat of offences.

Boot camps are popular in the United States of America as it is believed that there is great educational benefit to be gained by the young adults from military training. However, Morash & Rucker (1990:2), Osler (1991:1) and the National Institute of Justice (1994) have reservations concerning the effectiveness of boot camps leading young inmates to good behaviour.

### **3.9 Re-integrative Shaming**

Re-integrative shaming is a prelude to reintegration. The concept was developed by an Australian criminologist, John Braithwaite who sees “shaming” as “conscience-building” (Braithwaite 1989:55). Re-integrative shaming functions on the premise that sanctions imposed by persons who are close to the offender have more effect than those imposed by a “remote legal authority” (Braithwaite 1989:56). Shaming as a response to crime will work because it affects the way people see the world and their place in it. Offenders would want to behave differently after having been “shamed” (Braithwaite 1989:57-58). The rule of law will become meaningless unless there is community involvement in moralising about and helping with crime problems.

In New Zealand, “Family Group Conferencing” has been used for young offenders between 14-17 years (Oppler 1998:58). Several role players gather to make the decision on what sentence should be given to offenders. The conference draws up a plan of action involving an apology and restitution to the victims that may include money to be paid, work to be done for and within the wider community. The court adjourns the case while the plan of action is being implemented. If the plan is successful, the court proceedings are terminated.

According to Burnside & Baker (1994:94-97) evidence indicates that such a process is beneficial to the victims and offenders. Similar programmes are being executed in Canada and the United States of America (Braithwaite 1989:54-97; cf Burnside & Baker 1994:94-97; Oppler 1998:58).

### **3.10 Restorative Justice**

Europe, the United States of America, Australia and other countries are increasingly adopting the principle of restorative justice. According to Viljoen (1997:74-75) cf Atabong (2007:102-122); Allard & Allard (2010:330-337) restorative justice is based on presuppositions such as:

- crime results in harm to victims, offenders and communities;
- not only the state, but victims, offenders and communities should be actively involved in the criminal justice process that should focus on redressing the wrong that has been done.

Offenders should be held responsible for their actions. Non-custodial sanction is a channel through which the restorative justice approach can be introduced into the various prison systems. Atabong (2007:103-105,119) asserts that restorative justice is a way of making punishment more humane. It is an alternative model: the “third way” between retributive and rehabilitative models that have dominated penal philosophy. It is a process in which all those affected by an incident of wrong-doing gather to share their feelings and resolve together how to deal with its aftermath. Priority is given to values of healing, respect, participation, dialogue, truth, mutual care and peacemaking. Also, opportunities for remorse, forgiveness and reconciliation are provided. Allard & Allard (2010:337) affirm that the restorative justice vision turns out to be nurturing, enlightening and truly restoring to offenders and their victims.

### **3.11 Risk Need Responsivity (RNR) model**

The risk need responsivity model has to do with risk factors that may hinder response to correctional programs by inmates. The model deals with the relationship between the risk factors, personality of inmates and community factors that reinforce or hinder the development of those in prison.

Andrews & Bonta (2003:15) argue that in order to fully predict the likelihood that a person will commit a crime, the wider political, economic and cultural contexts within which the person lives should be considered. However, these conditions alone are not enough to lead to crime. Though political, economic and cultural conditions may set the stage for criminal actions, individual and personal attitudes and behaviours are also important.

According to Ward & Maruna (2008:56-66) the environment exerts a powerful influence on behaviour. The RNR model is a rehabilitation and framework model meant to guide therapists and correctional workers in the rehabilitation process. It is often translated in practice into a “one size fits all” policy that fails to take critical individual needs and values into account. Its implementation in correctional settings typically involves a mechanistic, workbook based approach to group work with prisoners or probationers. Offenders are screened for risk level and needs and then assigned to varying dosages of vocational skills. Workshops are done according to their assessment results (Ward & Maruna 2008:72-73). The focus of this model is on “programs” not “people” as it fails to address the preferences and circumstances of the individuals. Treatment plans focus on the skills and resources required to function in the particular context into which inmates are likely to be released. However, the application of this model by correctional services throughout the world has resulted in reduced recidivism rates and safer communities (Ward & Maruna 2008:90-96 cf Deci & Ryan 2000:227-268).

### **3.12 Good Lives model**

The Good Lives Model is a positive model based on the assumption that people are likely to embrace positive change and personal development. As a result the kind of language associated with the model is future oriented, optimistic and goal focused. It provides a framework for intervening therapeutically with individuals of all types (see Ward & Maruna 2008:111).

Ward & Maruna (2008:128-129) suggest that a “holistic” treatment perspective is based on the idea that the best way to reduce the risk to commit crime is by helping individuals live more personally fulfilling, successful and productive lives. Therapy is tailored to suit each client’s plan for a future life and is administered in a systematic and structured way. The Good Lives Model functions as a regulatory ideal and is practical. It provides an incentive to change by focusing on the individual’s own life goals as motivating factors for treatment. In essence, goals are desired states or situations that individuals strive to achieve and constitute important components of personality. The Good Lives Model assumes that individuals are active, goal seeking persons with the capacity to detect and pursue goals (see Ward & Maruna 2008:141; Austin & Vancouver 1996:338-375).

Ward & Maruna (2008:163-164) point out an example of a client who was a long time gang member with a history of violence and had attended several criminology programs without success. During his goals assessment the client told his counsellor that a long standing ambition was to attend university but he did not feel this would ever be possible. An intervention program was formulated with this long term goal in mind. In order to be able to enrol for pre-university course he needed to work on his social skills and anger management, change his attitude towards others and improve his time management. Gradually the internal and external conditions required to reach the goal of university attendance successfully were put in place and the individual’s sense of being began to change. Finally he left the gang and started to view himself as a knowledge seeker, someone who was capable of learning and could apply his knowledge in constructive ways (Whitehead, Ward & Collie 2007:578).

The Good Lives Model assessments are made by means of clinical interviews. This requires a degree of clinical sophistication. The Good Lives Model is also able to incorporate the principles of the RNR model without any difficulty. The two models are therefore largely compatible despite different starting assumptions and emphases (see Ward & Maruna 2008:171). The Good Lives Model is very useful in creating a more constructive atmosphere in offender treatment and therefore helps to reduce levels of denial and offense supportive attitudes.

The model can speak directly to clients on matters that concern them such as their lives and relationships without ignoring the legitimate safety concerns of the community. It can contribute to primary, secondary and tertiary correctional crime reduction strategies and through the promise of better lives for offenders can lead to less harmful outcomes for members of society. The rehabilitation of offenders is both an “evaluative” and “capacity building” process (see Ward & Maruna 2008:171-173).

It is believed by many in the correctional setting that the implementation of these models on a global perspective will definitely make a difference in the prisons and impact on the lives of inmates. Looking at the Cameroonian situation one can only talk with certainty of fines that have been used to replace or reduce prison sentences for some category of offences. The other models are still to be studied or made available to the prison officials for trial. Oppler (1998:66) asserts that there is no single solution to the crisis in the prisons. Only a mixed and flexible package of providing humane penal institutions and alternatives to imprisonment will contribute to the reducing of offending in the long-term.

Alternative sanctions to prisons are seen as ways of attending to prisoners in a humane manner. However, such programs have not produced the desired results in some prisons because of their poor implementation or lack of skilled personnel to carry them out. The prison is a secular institution that punishes those within its walls. Moral values that could make a difference to the lives of inmates are scarce. Prisons most often are seen from the perspective of crime and punishment. Criminal and retributive justice systems are prevalent in most Cameroonian prisons as prisoners must pay severely for crimes committed against the state and their communities.

On the whole, Griffith (1993:46, 218) argues that “prisons can hardly make the claim that they prepare offenders for a return to society when imprisonment itself stigmatizes them so that they are sure to be rejected by society on return”. There are no alternatives to prisons. There are only alternatives to the ways in which people are victimized and imprisoned.

According to Griffith (1993:203) the only alternative sanction that works is Jesus' proclamation of liberty to captives. The churches discipleship role in the prisons could make a difference in the lives of inmates. The following chapter would investigate the role pastoral care can play in the prisons or correctional centres. Pastoral care could lead the way in reconstructing and giving meaning to traumatized lives behind prison bars leading to a situation where forgotten souls could begin dreaming of a better life even within the darkness of the prison cell. Prisoners need a sign of hope that will save them from the loneliness and despair of prison.

## CHAPTER 4

### PASTORAL CARE WITH PRISONERS

#### 4.1 Introduction

My personal experience with prisons in secondary school and in the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon provoked an interest in prison studies. My participation in international conferences made me realize that prison situations vary throughout the world. However, prisons in Cameroon are in a bad state when it concerns human rights abuses, feeding of inmates, accommodation, educational, medical and recreational facilities.

As I see it there is little hope that prisons in Cameroon will become reformatory grounds without the help of those outside the prison environment and institution. Chaplaincy to the prisons made me realize the wilderness and traumatic experience of inmates whom I see as sheep without a shepherd: lonely, sad, hungry and sick of love, care and attention. The prison staff and administration with limited means at their disposal cannot do much in this wilderness. Hence, prisons have become places for the survival of the fittest. Chaplaincy also led me to ponder what role pastoral care can play in Cameroon prisons that are faced with many challenges.

The prison institution should be understood, nurtured and cared for if it has to promote the wellbeing of those within its walls. The practical wellbeing of inmates should come to centre stage and pastoral care should attempt to think what it would take to offer spiritual care to a corporate whole like prisons.

According to Ruggiro (1991) "Prisons, even the most reformed ones produce damage and disease, in varied forms and intensity, they produce damaged and ill people". Pastoral care should be able to take care of these damaged and sick individuals in prison.

Atabong (2007:1) argues that prison is part of a large psychosocial, economic and spiritual problem that faces the Cameroon nation. At risk are traumatised inmates from dysfunctional families. The prison institution should be understood and made effective if it is to promote the wellbeing of those within its walls. The physical and emotional wellbeing of inmates, facilities that would keep them busy and religious interventions are issues that warrant attention.

The focus of pastoral care is especially on the spiritual aspect of being human. In a holistic approach to the problems of the prison institution and the problems of individual inmates, the spiritual aspect cannot be neglected. This could make a huge difference in Cameroon prisons. “The church should do good to people, learn from them and build them up, not make people who are already having a bad time, feel worse” (Pattison 2007:117, 145).

However, the churches in Cameroon have little knowledge on pastoral care models in prison. I will explore several pastoral care models beginning with Griffith (1993:190-193) who sees the church as a prison community. Pastoral care with prisoners could bring about attention, spiritual care and understanding from loved ones, civil society members and people of good will.

The Nova Scotia Coverdale chaplaincy project that provides insights on meeting the psychological needs of inmates through pastoral counselling would also be looked at. Most traumatised persons want to experience a relationship with a warm, concerned individual who is actively involved with them in an empathetic and responsive manner (McCann & Pearlmann 1990:93). The Nova Scotia Coverdale chaplaincy project could provide insights to prison chaplains to probe into significant life experiences of traumatised individuals including personal history, characteristics of traumatic life events, social and cultural contexts. This assessment could enable pastoral care givers to understand the development of inmates’ individual self capacities, ego resources, needs and schemas (McCann & Pearlmann 1990:101).

This will be followed by Capps (1995) model of the clergy as agents and providers of hope in a difficult milieu like that of prisons. Many in prison are in darkness and searching for a ray of hope. The future is bleak and uncertain. Prisoners need a sign of hope that will save them from the loneliness and despair of prison. The clergy as agents and providers of hope could free prisoners from the daily worries of prison life (cf Griffith 1993:86).

Gerkin's model of pastoral care focuses on community pastoral care by congregations. The model however lacks a psychological framework with regards to prisoners. The Cognitive Behavioural Therapy model focuses on therapy in the prison environment with a biblical background. The model focuses on the thinking patterns of inmates and develops strategies for treating criminal behaviour.

The work in prison is enormous and can lead to frustration and burnout for those offering pastoral care. Hence team work is necessary in facing the challenges within the prison institution. Another model that would inspire pastoral care workers towards team work is that of the Cotton End Baptist Church.

I am going to explore these pastoral care models in order to ascertain what is relevant and applicable to the Cameroon prisons' situation. These models have been put into practice in other parts of the world and could contribute to the Cameroonian situation. Knowledge from these models could be further developed to attend to the emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of prisoners who are abandoned and left to fend for themselves in the midst of harsh realities. According to Osmer (2008:152), models of good practice offer practitioners help in imagining how they might do things better or differently. Sometimes models of good practice are retrieved from the past to address current and urgent situations.

## 4.2 The Church as a Prison Community

Griffith (1993:190-193) sees the church as a prison community. He argues that those in prison are part of the church community. The relationship between the church and the prison should be that of visiting, feeding and ransoming those within the prison institution as could be seen from the early church example. The church is called to be of service to those who have been victimized, violated by crime and the machinations of the juridical process. The church should value the lives of those in prison. Griffith (1993:191) points out that:

The church is not called out of the world for the sake of remaining separate from the world in some social or spiritual utopia. Rather the church is called out of the world only for the sake of being sent back into the world (Matthew 28:19) as a community that no longer follows the lords of the world or standards of the world or the bad news that the world seeks to pawn off as good. The church is sent back into the world with a new Lord, a new calling, a new service. If such is not the case, then the church has no service whatsoever to offer the world.

How can the church be of service to those who are in prison? Griffith (1993:203) argues that:

Jesus' proclamation of liberty for the captives marks the fall of the prison. To proclaim that the prison has fallen is not to pretend that God's will is fully incarnate in the world; rather it is to witness to the presence of God's kingdom and to allow that presence to demythologize the prison institution.

The church is called to bring a new reality within the shells of the old reality. They are called to follow the examples of communities and individuals who offer persistent love and nurture that have contributed to healing victims of assault and rape in a situation where the courts in pursuit of justice only compounded the trauma. The question that faces the prison industry is not what is effective but what is faithful. This calls for increased personal and communal involvement in fighting crime. If the church has to minister to victims of crime it must be with loving service and not with doctrinal demands or what they consider to be quick solutions to emotional crises.

Churches can serve as places of refuge for prisoners. Geographical location or separation should not constitute a barrier to prevent the churches from establishing a volunteer presence in areas of need. Church communities could also sponsor mediation programs fashioned after the original victim offender reconciliation program started by concerned Mennonites in Canada. By bringing victims and offenders together in the presence of third party mediators would help resolve the issues at stake and bring about reconciliation. Mediation programs are accessible, free of charge and can help keep cases out of the judicial system. The church could also mobilise the community to be involved in movements for justice, peace and service (see Griffith 1993:204-225).

Similarly, during the 2009 Africa Regional conference for prison chaplains organised by the International Commission for Catholic Prison Pastoral Care at Cape Town South Africa, Ms Hlengiwe Mkhize saw the church as the moral authority of the most vulnerable. “We expect the church and other faith based organisations to take a strong stand when deaths in correctional centres are reported and when offenders are deprived of other rights and privileges such as parole” (see Mkhize 2009:1). Pastoral care should go beyond rehabilitation and reintegration. Pastoral care should sit at the very heart of correcting offending behaviour.

Campbell & Halloway (1970:147-148) point out that “visit the prisoners” has never been taken seriously by the churches. There are people who have been in prison for decades without a single visit. The biblical call to visit the prisoners is a call to faithfulness to the gospel message of salvation for all in Christ Jesus. “In Mathew 25 we read that Jesus preached to individuals and to nations: care for prisoners, visit them, set them free” (Griffith 1993:118).

### **4.3 Coverdale Community Chaplaincy Model**

The Coverdale Court Work Services (1993) was a pioneer chaplaincy project in Nova Scotia that offered counselling and therapy based on pastoral counselling, spiritual and feminist principles to women in prison and those in halfway houses in the community.

Emotions like pain, hurt, fear, horror, sadness and isolation usually turn into aggressive actions and can lead to tragic incidents. These emotions affect the psychology of individuals and if relations with family members, friends and the community are not cordial, such emotions can lead to disorientation of individuals resulting in crime (see Atabong 2007:76). This model focuses on the psychology of women in prison.

According to Matthews & Francis (1996:186-187) women were referred from the courts, emergency shelters and other community sources by probation or parole officers to Nova Scotia pastoral counselling program. The chaplaincy project used a framework of feminist principles with the focus on showing women what choices there are and enabled them to take decisions and regain control over their lives. The chaplaincy project and services resulted in growth in self worth and esteem amongst the women. This was as a result of the working relationship between them and the chaplains. This relationship was enhanced by:

- reducing the power of differences between the therapist and the client;
- sharing of experience, allowing women to identify their own agenda;
- working at their pace with a commitment to confidentiality and social change.

The project offered individual sessions on a weekly basis to women with histories of abuse. Chaplaincy services combined counselling support with intensive therapy. Ex-prisoners could continue to attend counselling sessions even after their release into the community.

According to Matthews & Francis (1996:187-188) many of the community chaplaincy programs are of recent origin. Their long-term effects have not been assessed. However, the evaluation of the programs at correctional centres like P4W, Manitoba and Nova Scotia all indicate that the women who have completed the programmes exhibited greater self confidence and a better understanding of their own situation and had more control over their lives (see Kendall 1993; Pollack 1994; Mooney 1993; Shaw 1994). Those who had received individual counselling and therapy expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the approach. They appreciated the fact that they could make their own decisions after the counselling and chaplaincy sessions.

Matthews & Francis (1996:233) point out that current policies relating to women offenders in Canada follow a “special needs” model which focuses on an increasing specialization of programmes and policies for women which are distinct from those available to men. This rests on the assumption that women become involved in offending for reasons which are somewhat different from those of men. They also respond emotionally and physically to sentencing and incarceration differently from men. It is believed that the challenges women experience in prison differ from those of men. Women inmates face greater mental health problems, tougher times and issues than men. These assumptions to some extent reflect the traditional view of women prisoners as primary care-givers. It is also seen as an attempt to move away from a liberal feminist position which argued for equality of provision for women offenders.

The Coverdale pastoral counselling and chaplaincy programs could benefit prisoners in Cameroon who face emotional, mental and psychological problems while serving their prison term. Prison chaplains in Cameroon could have a critical look at the Nova Scotia Coverdale chaplaincy project and develop useful insights from it for their work with prisoners. The chaplaincy project could benefit inmates who face emotional, mental and psychological problems and would be glad to have someone listen to them and work with them in a loving and understanding manner. Chaplaincy sessions following aspects of the chaplaincy project could work therapeutically in the lives of traumatized inmates and enable them to make meaningful and life changing decisions.

In the Russian prisons, there are special rooms where ministers of religion can meet with prisoners and hold services including baptisms and marriage ceremonies and hear confessions. Churches have been built in certain prison colonies. There is a flood of evangelical literature which pervades even remote prison colonies (see Maden, Swinton & Gunn 1994; Matthews & Francis 1996:233).

#### **4.4 Capps Model of the Clergy as Agents of Hope**

Many in the prison environment are in darkness and searching for a ray of hope. The future is bleak and uncertain as they spend their time in deep thought not knowing what the next day holds for them. According to Capps (1995:1-3) pastors are agents and providers of hope. What pastors have to give people in difficult circumstances is hope that is central to their calling in life. However, it is difficult to be an agent of hope if one has lost hope. Knowledge from Capps' theory can be used to provide a pastoral care ministry that is based on providing hope in the prison environment. Pastors need to see their primary task as nurturing and fostering hope. The images of hope that is present in their work can help them to negotiate transitions in the lives of inmates (Capps 1995:25, 51).

The prisoner who anticipates freedom wants to be able to walk the streets and sleep on the bed he left before entering prison. Through the ministry of hope the future is not certain but is viewed as being "open, unfrozen and full of opportunities" (Capps 1995:62-63). The capacity to hope was important to prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Physically the prisoners were captives of the Nazi regime but inwardly they achieved a margin of freedom to the extent that they were able to hope. To project hope is to achieve some degree of autonomy in the present that can make a difference between life and death. By projecting a future hope alters the present (Capps 1995:70).

Pastors as agents of hope affirm persons in their hopes. As moralists they introduce moral feelings and judgments into pastoral counseling that help prisoners to redirect their inner sufferings towards the cultivation of inner strength. The pastor as an agent of hope helps inmates reframe the problems and difficulties in their lives (Capps 1995:89, 117, 164). The concept of hope ties with that of shepherd in that the desire is to rescue inmates from hopeless and helpless circumstances and bring safety and security to their situation as they sit in the darkness of the prison cell. The clergy or pastoral care workers would discover useful insights from the two concepts for effective prison pastoral care practice.

## 4.5 Gerkin's Shepherding Model

According to Gerkin (1997: 27) the shepherding motif is mostly captured in the imagery of Psalm 23 where the Lord God is depicted as a good shepherd who leads the people in paths of righteousness, restores the souls of the people and walks with people amongst their enemies and even into the valleys of the shadow of death. From the early Christian times to the present, the image of pastoral leaders as shepherds of the flock has persisted as a prototypical image applied to both pastors and ecclesiastical leaders of the institutional church. In more recent times the shepherding metaphor has been widely appropriated as a grounding metaphor for the care-giving pastor.

Gerkin (1997:18-81) argues that the pastor stands in the gap between an individual parishioner and a community of faith seeking to reconcile the one to the other. He sees the pastor as mediator and reconciler and addresses pertinent issues such as single parenthood, marriage concerns, adolescence, old age and HIV/AIDS which are concerns every society faces. Gerkin's approach can be applied to prisons that face a variety of problems that detract from the quality of human lives. Such problems are for instance, that of hygiene, proper health care and nutrition, tuberculosis, hepatitis, HIV/AIDS as well as psychological problems. Those who suffer from the above mentioned diseases are stigmatized and are often segregated from other prisoners. They feel lonely, sad and left to themselves. A low self esteem develops amongst such inmates (see Matthews & Francis 1996:70). The shepherding model sees the church as a community that offers help, counsel and nurtures its members to wholeness of life. Gerkin's model has a community approach to pastoral care to those who are vulnerable and marginalised in society.

Gerkin (1997:66) points out that in prisons and criminal justice centres pastoral care-givers should be able to establish ministry programs that would help inmates see prison from the perspective of reformation of life. Pastoral care should respond to the needs and concerns of those in prison and criminal justice centres.

## 4.6 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Model

In cognitive behavioural therapy the client and the counsellor collaborate to understand the client's dysfunctional thinking patterns and develop treatment strategies. Inmates do what they do because of the way they think. Hall (2003:108-109) points out that the cognitive behavioural therapy approach is compatible with pastoral counselling and education aimed at treating criminal thinking patterns. It is compatible with religious training because the same principles can be supported from a biblical perspective: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). The same concept is expressed in Romans 12:2 which says: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, pleasant and perfect". Cognitive therapy techniques and Christian ideas can be blended to provide an effective healing environment. The approach helps in healing partnership by giving the client a reason for the treatment procedure, encourages self-awareness and teaches new ways of thinking more flexibly and productively.

The cognitive behavioural therapy approach assumes a relationship between events, thoughts, feelings and behaviours. It uncovers dysfunctional thinking patterns that lead to bad feelings and antisocial behaviours. Grendreau & Andrews (1990:173-184) argue that cognitive behavioural approaches are effective because they address the connection between criminal thinking and criminal behaviour. Faith-based cognitive behavioural programs show good impact as additional treatment model for correcting criminal thinking, reducing facility infractions and recidivism after incarceration (see Hall 2003:110-137).

## 4.7 Cotton End Baptist Church Pastoral Care Model

Pastoral care for many in Cameroon is a big challenge. Often clergy cannot find the time, energy and resources for full time prison pastoral care work. The Cotton End Baptists Church pastoral care model concentrates on team work with the clergy playing supervisory roles. There is concern for all in the community and pastoral care teams under the supervision of the clergy do a lot to reach out to the needs of the community. The pastoral care network supplements the work of the clergy. Pastoral care is the responsibility of the whole church and concerns those in need of help. As far as the Cameroonian situation is concerned volunteer teams could be set up under the leadership of an appointed clergy to visit and offer pastoral care to the prisons. The churches through their clergy could define the work to be done and give guidelines to those to execute the programs in the various prisons.

According to [www.cottonendbaptistchurch.co.uk](http://www.cottonendbaptistchurch.co.uk) (2010:1) Cotton End Baptist Church recognizes pastoral care as the hallmark of a great church. Their aim is to develop the highest quality pastoral care that would give meaning to the church's life, witness and mission. They define pastoral care as "the provision of spiritual, emotional, physical and practical support irrespective of decisions taken by those for whom we are caring". Pastoral care does not involve judgment but its primary role is one of support. If an individual takes a decision they do not agree with, they do not stop caring for the one. The pastoral care network of the church extends to the church, the community and the workplace.

Initially they sought to work out how to make pastoral care within the family work best. The goal of pastoral care within the Cotton End Baptist Church is that no one is missed and that everyone receives an appropriate level of care. No one should be left without a person to turn to in times of pastoral need. The pastoral care network is coordinated by the pastoral care ministry leader and includes a team of people who share in pastoral care. The idea is that everyone who is part of the church and wider church family is connected to the pastoral care network or a pastoral carer. The overall team is under the care of the minister who meets regularly with the pastoral care coordinators (see [www.cottonendbaptist.co.uk](http://www.cottonendbaptist.co.uk) 2010:1).

Where a person is a member of a house group the pastoral care will operate through the house group either by the leader(s) or by others who take on pastoral care duties within the group. Where a person is not a member of a house group, they will informally be linked to a house group as a first point of contact. This typically takes the form of recognising when a person is absent from church and taking responsibility for following up absence and informing the pastoral care coordinators of any needs or concerns. The pastoral care network is only part of the coping that goes on within the church family. Much informal care and help is given outside the network. All caring relationships simply serve to enrich relationships and to show Christ's love in different ways (see [www.cottonendbaptistchurch.co.uk](http://www.cottonendbaptistchurch.co.uk) 2010: 2).

The network serves to supplement the work of the minister or core leadership team and does what they are not able to do. The minister and leadership team receive information about people who are sick, in hospital or prison or otherwise in need of help, encouragement or a visit. They then set out to visit and offer pastoral care to those concerned. The pastoral care network is not a counselling service. Those who offer their services as pastoral care-givers are not typically trained as counsellors. Where life circumstances arise that require more professional or trained help, appropriate arrangements are made to address them. Pastoral care is the responsibility of the whole church. It is about the person in need and not about the person helping. Those who exercise pastoral care are called to minister the love of Jesus through their words and actions and to treat everyone who asks for help as a unique individual, equal with them in the sight of God (see [www.cottonendbaptistchurch.co.uk](http://www.cottonendbaptistchurch.co.uk) 2010:2).

This chapter identified pastoral care models that could improve the lives of inmates and the prison environment. The relationship between the church and the prison should be that of visiting, feeding and setting free those within the prison environment. Churches can serve as places of refuge for prisoners. The Nova Scotia Coverdale chaplaincy project focuses on pastoral counselling and psychological needs of prisoners. The chaplaincy project could benefit Cameroon prisoners who suffer from emotional, mental and psychological problems while serving their prison term.

Knowledge from Capps' (1995) theory on the clergy as agents and providers of hope can be used to put in place a pastoral care ministry that is based on providing hope in the prison environment. Pastors and clergy in general should see their primary task as that of nurturing and fostering hope. The concept of hope ties with that of shepherd in that the desire is to rescue inmates from hopeless and helpless circumstances that worry the very core of their existence.

Gerkin (1997:18-81) argues that the pastor stands in the gap between an individual and a community of faith seeking to reconcile the one to the other. Gerkin's (1997) shepherding model has a community approach to pastoral care to those who are vulnerable and marginalised in society. Pastoral care should respond to the needs and concerns of those in prison. The cognitive behavioural therapy techniques and Christian ideas can be blended to provide an effective healing environment.

The Cotton End Baptist church pastoral care model could provide insights to pastoral care workers in a situation where clergy are in short supply to offer full time ministry to the prisons. Volunteer ministry teams could be developed and commissioned to reach out to the prisons under the supervision of an appointed clergy. The Cotton End Baptist church pastoral care network could provide knowledge beneficial to the work of the clergy in the prison environment.

Chapter five will look at field work in three prisons (Bamenda Central, Mbengwi Principal and Ndop Reference Prisons) in the North West region of Cameroon. The focus would be on the prison environment, penitentiary system, living conditions of prisoners and staff and the role the churches play in prison.

## CHAPTER 5

### FIELD WORK

#### 5.1 Introduction

Empirical data from prisons in Cameroon was needed for this study. I obtained permission from the Delegate of Penitentiary Administration in the North West Region of Cameroon to gain access to prisons in that region. The intention was to collect data on the prison system and administration, situation of prisoners and the role the churches play in the prison environment.

In order to obtain data on prison officials, non-governmental organizations and church officials working in prison areas, I distributed semi-structured questionnaires and the letter of informed consent to a random sample of people. They were selected on the basis that they could provide accurate and current information in the area of prisons. Their level of education was also taken into consideration.

This chapter focuses on the field work done in the Bamenda Central, Mbengwi Principal and Ndop Reference prisons in the North West region of Cameroon. The intention was to understand the situation of the prison institution in Cameroon from the perspectives of prisoners, prison officials, non-governmental organizations and church officials.

The following is the result of interviews conducted with those concerned. Pseudo names have been given to the participants for security purposes and confidentiality. Most of the participants answered the questions on the semi-structured questionnaire while others gave oral answers to the questions. I took notes as we discussed the questions. I went back to some people for clarification of some answers to the questions. I listened to the participants as they told their story and probed them for details and deeper insights.

The questions that were asked the participants (inmates) are as follows:

- 1) What brought you to prison?
- 2) What was your experience with:
  - A) the prison environment and facilities in prison?
  - B) the prison officials ?
  - C) other prisoners?
  - D) what role does the church play in prison?

The questions that were asked the prison officials, NGOs and clergy serving in prison are as follows:

- 1) What has been your experience with the:
  - A) prison system and administration?
  - B) prison environment?
  - C) prisoners?
  - D) churches' role in prison?

The empirical data was collected from 29 July 2010 to 31 January 2011. The field work began on July 29<sup>th</sup> 2010 when I met with the Regional Delegate for Penitentiary Administration in the North West Region of Cameroon for permission to have access to the prisons and collect data on prisoners, prison system and prison pastoral care.

The letter opened the way for me to enter all the prisons in the regions assisted by the Superintendents who were to facilitate my access to gather information. I started at the Bamenda Central Prison where I had served as chaplain, moved to Mbengwi and then Ndop prisons. I also made a stop over at Fundong, a new prison that was opened to decongest Bamenda Central prison. However, I could not collect any information as state officials were visiting the prison.

I will present the data prison by prison expressing the views of inmates, prison officials, NGOs and church officials serving in the prison. I will then do an analysis of the three prisons under five headings: crimes that bring people to prison, the prison environment, prisoners situation and conditions, the Cameroon prison system and the churches role in prison.

## **5.2 Bamenda Central Prison**

The structures of the Bamenda Central Prisons are of colonial heritage from the 1960s. They are dirty, stinking and dilapidated. A solid fence was recently constructed with funds from the European Union to help solve the problems of insecurity and the many escapes from the prison. There is an infirmary with basic drugs and a reformatory school with a few textbooks donated by the Roman Catholic chaplaincy desk. There are no beds especially in the awaiting trial section. Inmates sleep on cardboard and other makeshift materials which are folded up in the morning.

“Lambert”, convicted for aggravated theft, saw prison as a place for everybody, complained about the lack of human feelings by some prison officials and also about the fact that some prisoners have no hope while in prison. Once inside the prison walls they feel all is lost. He appreciated the church’s role in visiting them from time to time with food, clothes, books, drugs and money for some urgent needs and spiritual nourishment.

“Joshua” saw prison as hell when he just got in. After being inside the prison walls for sometime he feels all is not bad. Like Lambert, he complains about some prison officials who do not have concern and feelings for prisoners as they maltreat inmates without mercy. Some inmates see no hope while in prison. The church’s role in prison is wonderful thanks to the Roman Catholics, Baptists and especially the Presbyterians who reach out to all inmates in the prison. They are doing a wonderful work for the Lord in prison and without their presence life in prison would be compared to hell.

Through their evangelistic services some inmates have surrendered and committed themselves to the Lord. Some have been given the opportunity to go to Bible schools and others get healing from the work the churches do in prison. In short, it is wonderful.

“Mr Asang” an ex-inmate, retired civil servant and senior journalist was remanded in prison as having been an accomplice in the murder of a “Fon”, promoting insurgency and secessionist tendencies and being an activist for the Southern Cameroon National Conference (SCNC). The Bamenda Central prison is a very old colonial structure and outmoded, lacks basic facilities like toilets, beds, food and sports for recreation. The Superintendent was good but other prison officials were crude and uncouth. Prisoners suffer many hardships and the cells are overcrowded. The church’s role is that of moralization through preaching repentance. They provide some basic necessities such as food, clothes, soap, in a sporadic manner without proper coordination and supervision. He calls on churches to train specialists’ pastors and priests who would know how to relate to prison officials and handle prisoners’ issues with a pastoral heart.

“Ma Forteh”, a prison warden, complained of a poor prison system in Cameroon because prisoners do not have enough land to cultivate their own food, do not feed well, their cells are small and congested and there is lack of education on productivity and handwork. The prison environment is not conducive because the water system and toilet facilities especially during the dry season are poor and breeds mosquitoes around the cells and yard. Prisoners are aggressive at times because of hunger and fight to own things that are not theirs. Some steal from their friends to cope with life in prison. Some are often sick as a result of poor living conditions. In two weeks there were three deaths. Every two or three months they experience the death of an inmate and there is no proper disposal of corpses of inmates who die in prison. “E Ward” is really overcrowded with more than a hundred inmates. Cooking inside the cell makes the cell very hot and inmates often remove their clothes in order to stay cool. There is a minimal ration of food for inmates. This study was done after the prisoners had just gone on the rampage (early July 2010). On finding out what the issue was, it was reported that the reason for the insurgence was that prisoners’ rights were grossly abused.

They sprayed faeces on prison officials and held two prison wardens hostage. The churches run services for the inmates, feed, clothe, counsel and care especially for the sick ones.

A non-governmental organisation “CATA” working in the prisons also gave input concerning their experience. According to the secretary general, prison system and administration are not “open spaces” accessible to the general public. They are working institutions in which the government’s routine day to day business is conducted. There is no recognized legal right for citizens to enter these institutions. Access to them can be limited except to those who have something to do there. Prisons may exclude all but prisoners, prison officials and lawyers. However, there is pressure from some concerned citizens, civil society and members of the media for access to observe and perhaps critique what happens in the Cameroon prisons. They would like to report on alleged human rights abuses, corruption, living conditions of inmates and perceived improprieties that take place in these institutions.

Since these institutions are financed with public money, the argument is that the public has a right to know what is going on inside them. Cameroon courts have not been willing to recognize any constitutional right of access that is generally applicable to such institutions. What some courts have been willing to acknowledge is a principle of non-discrimination. In Cameroon, the rights to access penal institutions have been extended to prison chaplains as well. There are powerful and persuasive reasons, well grounded in both history and function for granting prison chaplains the right of access to penal institutions. The infrastructure of the Bamenda Central prison is under-developed. The independence of Cameroon has not led to better living standards for the inmates and prison staff or prison authorities. The physical structure derived from the colonial period is still apparent even though the country recently celebrated fifty years of independence. Indeed, the living conditions in the Bamenda Central prison are unhealthy and proper facilities are lacking. Some of the outdated and overcrowded facilities are an affront to human dignity. Daily life in the prison is degrading as almost all the inmates are packed in overcrowded cells. Despite the provision of the prison penal code and the minimum rules for the treatment of inmates, there are virtually no facilities for inmates.

Out of a total of 600 inmates incarcerated in the Bamenda Central prison, 400 were on remand with more than half on remand for six months and others beyond six months. While some inmates on remand may stay for less than a year, others stay for 12 to 24 months. There is no screening by psychiatrists to determine the mental state of inmates into the prison. The slow judicial process accounts in part for the long remand, delays by the police and prosecutors are major contributory factors to overcrowded prisons.

The churches bring the peace and serenity of Christ to those who are deprived of freedom to help inmates live time in prison as God's time, help inmates to take part in charity and solidarity projects, offer those who commit crimes the possibility of rehabilitation and positive return to society, create new opportunities of recovery in every personal and social situation, facilitate regular contact between prisoners, their relatives and friends and works to prevent crime in the community.

### **5.3 Mbengwi Principal Prison**

At the Mbengwi principal prison, the Superintendent was very cooperative. I was given access to the inmates' cells to see the bedding and toilet situation. They were not in such a bad condition as those in Bamenda Central Prison. It is a small prison with a fence, farms, chapel and enough play ground for recreation. According to a senior prison official "Jovens", the Cameroon prison system judging from decree number 92 / 052 of 27<sup>th</sup> March 1992 offers a clear vision with a three fold mission:

- protection of society;
- punishment for wrongdoing and deterrence for others;
- rehabilitation of the wayward through work, training and counselling.

The prison administration is well structured as of the 1992 decree. The only problem is the lack of adequate material and financial means to bring to fruition the intended goals. The continuous downward trend of staffing further complicates issues but on the whole Cameroon prisons are better managed now than they were before 1992.

The prison environment is characterised by an ardent effort to improve living conditions. Water and electricity are provided with modern toilet facilities that have replaced the bucket system. Socio-cultural activities are now part and parcel of the prison curricula. There is a continuous fight to establish better hygiene which has reduced skin diseases. The food has not improved much in quantity, but the quality is better. This effort has drastically reduced and even eliminated unwarranted deaths in the prison. The prisoners have a more cordial relationship with the staff than before because now the rights of the inmates are well respected.

According to the senior prison official, prisoners hardly ever admit that they are guilty of the offence that brought them to prison. Though aware of the wrong committed, they spend time trying to evade the law, blame others and see their stay in prison as punishment for a crime they did not commit. They complain, accuse, denounce, resist and curse the prison system, but rarely take responsibility for their wrong behaviour. Those who do take responsibility are viewed as traitors but they do have fewer difficulties during their prison stay. The resistant ones suffer much more stress. Many do not make an effort to change or improve their situation but prefer charity and sympathy. They tend to beg and snatch things from visitors. Inmates spend quality time outside their cells which is very nourishing to their physical wellbeing. "When there is theft in Mbengwi, the prison is excluded". This means that the community would not suspect that prisoners are involved in the theft case. A cordial and harmonious relationship exists between the prison environment and the community at large.

The churches, NGOs, associations and friends visit, share and interact with inmates on a regular basis. When and where the churches gain access to the prisons much has been done in the following domains:

- counselling through the preaching ministry, church services, advice and connecting with families;
- improving detention conditions in the areas of health services (procurement of medicines, health care, hospitalisation, settling of bills for diminished inmates);

feeding (foodstuff, cooked or raw) and assistance to produce food from gardens, farms and breeding of animals or birds;

- training workshops for arts and crafts, clothing, shoe mending and making, seminars, courses and so forth. Prisoners have been trained to run worship services in the absence of the clergy officials.

“Elkanah” was convicted for trying to abort a pregnancy that led to the death of his fiancée. The matter was taken to court and he was imprisoned. The prison environment was very bad at the beginning but gradually things began to change. He was worried and concerned about the family back home. Stubborn and recalcitrant inmates meet with the wrath of the prison administration while obedient ones have no problems. Most of the inmates are in prison for crimes relating to juvenile delinquency. The churches play a vital role in prison. As a result of the churches work in prison he now tries to bring other inmates to the light of the gospel message. At the beginning there was no zeal for church activities or Christian principles amongst the inmates. The churches’ influence has caused inmates to think before resorting to violence or crime. The churches’ role in prison is to encourage inmates to change and become better citizens once out of prison. Collaboration exists between the churches and the prison administration to reform the prison institution. There is a good outreach program by the Presbyterian chaplaincy for congregations in Meta Presbytery to visit the prison every Sunday. There is a counselling session with the inmates every Tuesday by the chaplain.

“Indah” and four others from the same family were in prison because they were accused by family members of killing their father. They feel bad about being in prison and are worried about the length of their imprisonment. They miss their children and are often worried, downcast and depressed. The prison officials have been very cordial and loving towards them. There is a communal spirit among inmates. They do things together, such as watching television programs, playing games, spending their leisure time together, doing craft work and working on the farms.

Churches provide clothes, enough food both cooked and raw and also help them to buy what they need for their craft work. Evangelistic activities lead to conversions in prison. Christian education benefits the inmates on a spiritual and moral level.

“Maggie” was preparing to be confirmed and start partaking in the Lord’s Supper Fellowship. She hopes to join the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) group of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and participate in prison pastoral care when released from prison. She was worried about ex-convicts not finding work once out of prison and asked what could be done about the situation. After her release from prison she hopes to go back to Gabon where she was doing some business if she cannot find work in Cameroon.

According to one of the church officials working in the prison “Mitemba”, the prison system is poor as many prisoners spend a long time awaiting trial. Court sessions are often adjourned, bail procedures are costly and difficult because some judges and lawyers serve their own interests (mostly monetary) rather than those of the victims seeking justice. Court procedures take a long time. Inmates are put together in cells irrespective of their ages and crimes. Sometimes inmates are treated badly and with a lack of respect for their human rights. Sometimes inmates are exploited by the personnel and asked for bribes before being allowed certain privileges. The prison environment in Mbengwi is fair compared to other prisons such as the Bamenda Central prison. The drainage and yard are good and there is a playground and some patches of land for gardening. There is a chapel for worship services. However, the cells are overcrowded and ventilation is insufficient. There are television sets only in the male section. Stronger or richer prisoners exploit the weak and poor ones. Some inmates learn bad habits from hardened criminals which results in their regular return to prison soon after their release (recidivism). Prisoners often beg from visitors. When they stay long in prison, they lose track of their families and are forgotten by society. However, prisoners in Mbengwi are given permission to go and see their families once in a while. This helps to maintain contact between them and their families.

The churches send people who try to lead the prisoners to Christ by preaching and teaching the word of God. They support the prisoners with material things such as clothing, food and other basic necessities. They make contact with prisoners on arrival and follow them up with counselling for the duration of their incarceration. They facilitate contact between the prisoners and their families and communities. The churches' role and pastoral engagements are essential, have a positive effect and are life-giving. However, some churches neglect to play this role because it is expensive and not lucrative.

#### **5.4 Ndop Reference Prison**

At the Ndop reference prison, the Superintendent was also very open and welcoming and gave me access to the prison. According to a senior prison official "Ngoh", the prison system and administration have evolved quite substantially since 1980. The prison has procured facilities such as television sets and water system toilets but much still has to be done. Some churches have contributed tremendously to the support and moral quality of inmates.

Some inmates I had met while serving as chaplain to the Bamenda Central Prison were on transfer to this prison. One of them "Sambah" was comfortable, happy and very relaxed unlike in Bamenda. He told me the food was not only good but also of a sufficient quantity. The prison officials are very understanding. The females prepare their own food. They do not eat from the common pot as was the case in Bamenda Central Prison. There are frequent visits by their family members. He however regretted the fact that the churches were not actively present in prison as was the case in Bamenda. He would love to see and welcome regular visits by the churches in the community to the prison as these visits are nourishing to the moral and spiritual integrity of inmates. A Roman Catholic priest from Bafoussam prison comes to visit once in a while. Christian groups are not regular in visiting the inmates. There is no place of worship. Inmates worship in the open yard. He hoped the situation would improve in future.

“Mamun” a prison warden said the prison system and administration had improved since she entered the service in 2003. There has been some renovation work in Cameroon prisons. After the establishment of human and prisoners’ rights, the prisoners are being treated very kindly. Compared to her experience in Dschang prison, her current situation at the Ndop Reference Prison had a great improvement. At the Dschang prison, inmates slept in shifts since cells were too small and could not accommodate everyone. Prisoners only received one meal a day. The infrastructure was also not very good. The prison was built in 1929, the buildings were old and there were no beds for inmates to sleep on.

At Ndop Reference Prison, prisoners are provided with beds, blankets and bed sheets. They have breakfast every day and are served food from the prison farms. However, recreational facilities are lacking in the prison. Craft work is the personal initiative of some inmates. Government allocates quarterly credits for prisoners’ upkeep. She had never experienced an attempted escape by an inmate. She relates an incident where a prisoner attempted an escape and was fired at by the warden. The warden was taken to court and his salary was suspended. She is in charge of the files of the prisoners. She constantly gives advice as to the possibilities of inmates’ release from prison. According to her, the churches play a vital role in the life and lifestyles of prisoners because they visit them and preach words of encouragement to them.

## **5.5 Prison staff**

I also met with some prison staff who had put in at least ten years of service. Their impressions about the prison system, administration, environment, prisoners and the role of the church in prison are as follows: the prison system and administration has improved in some instances whereas in others it is not very encouraging. Improvement is slow because staffing is inadequate, there are no possibilities for career development for staff members, there are few possibilities for promotion and when staff members retire there are not many benefits. Prison officials should be motivated, protected and equipped because of the risk involved in the work they do.

The prison system should improve its infrastructure. Prisoners should be well taken care of and treated humanely. The churches assist the prisoners materially and spiritually but should play a greater role concerning the moral development of inmates in order to rehabilitate and reinstate them into society once they are released.

## **5.6 Analysis of Data**

### **5.6.1 Crimes that lead to imprisonment**

Reasons abound why people go to prison: theft (Lambert), impersonation and lies telling (Joshua, Samba), family problems, witch hunting and murder (Elkanah, Indah, Maggie). According to Elkanah most of the inmates are in prison for crimes relating to juvenile delinquency. Others find themselves in prison for political reasons and suspicion by state authorities of having and promoting insurgency and secessionists tendencies (Asang). The prison becomes a place where offenders against the community and state pay for crimes committed. Griffith (1993:80) points out that:

Crime rates are usually higher in communities that suffer the frustrations of high unemployment, low per capita income, limited health care facilities, high rates of infant and other mortality and scarce or poor quality community services.

This is the case with Cameroon where the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen almost on a daily basis with few employment opportunities and poor service delivery to communities and the nation as a whole.

### **5.6.2 Prison Environment**

The prison environment can be seen from different perspectives: it is a place for everybody and a place of no hope (Lambert). The environment can be compared to hell where one is lost once inside (Joshua). It is outmoded and lacks basic facilities like toilets, beds, good food and sports for recreation of life (Asang). The environment is not conducive for human habitation (Forteh).

The infrastructure is less developed, the physical structures put in place during the colonial period is still apparent and constitute an affront to human dignity (CATA, Asang). However, according to Jovens efforts are being made by the state authorities to improve on the prison environment. For those who have put in many years in prison it was very bad at the beginning but gradually things are beginning to change a little (Elkanah). The prison environment has undergone some changes in terms of facilities like television sets and water system toilets but much still has to be done (Nghoh, Mamun). Most of the prison officials were of the opinion that the prison environment needs to undergo changes in infrastructure (Jovens, Nghoh, Mamun, Forteh).

### **5.6.3 Prisoners Situation and Conditions**

Some prison officials treat prisoners inhumanely; they maltreat inmates and show no concern for them as human beings (Lambert, Joshua, Asang). However, others are understanding and caring and follow up on their issues and concerns (Sambah, Mamun). Many prisoners are devoid of hope. Once inside the prison they feel all is lost (Lambert, Joshua). Prisoners suffer many hardships (Asang).

According to Ma Forteh, prisoners do not have enough land to cultivate their own food hence they are not sufficiently nourished. Their cells are small and congested. There is a lack of education on craftwork, life skills and productivity. Prisoners are aggressive at times because of hunger and fight for limited goods. Some steal from their friends in order to cope with life in prison. Others are often sick as a result of poor living conditions. Cooking inside the cell makes the cell hot and forces inmates to remain naked at times. There is a minimum ration of food for inmates (Sambah).

Also according to CATA the independence of the Cameroon nation has not led to better living standards for the inmates and prison officials. Daily life in prison is degrading as almost all the inmates are placed in overcrowded cells. However, Jovens points out that the feeding of inmates might not have improved much in quantity but the quality is better. Most of the prison officials pointed out that prisoners should be well taken care of and treated with human dignity (Mamun, Ma Forteh).

As far as prisoners' behaviour is concerned, Jovens points out that most prisoners hardly admit that they are guilty of the crime or offence that brought them to prison. Most of them spend their time trying to evade the law, blaming others for their situation and rebelling against their imprisonment. They complain about their imprisonment and resist the prison system. Those with a positive attitude make life much easier for themselves whereas the rebellious ones have constant difficulties coming to terms with life in prison. On a positive note, inmates spend some quality time outside their cells which is conducive to their wellbeing (Jovens). A communal spirit exists amongst inmates (Indah). However, Mitemba points out that some prisoners exploit others and some learn bad habits from others and this leads to recidivism. Inmates lose track of their families when they stay long in prison.

#### **5.6.4 Cameroon Prison System**

The prison system in Cameroon is mostly poor because of a lack of facilities (Ma Forteh, CATA). There is a slow judiciary process that accounts in part for long remand of prisoners and overcrowded prisons. According to CATA, the public does not have sufficient access to prisons though prison chaplains have the right of access to penal institutions. Jovens, a senior prison official, points out that Decree 92/052 of 27 March 1992 is clear about the three fold mission of the prison system:

- the protection of society;
- punishment for offenders in order to deter others from criminal activity;
- the rehabilitation of offenders through work, training and counselling.

However, there is a lack of adequate material and financial means to achieve the above goals in most prisons. The downward trend of prison staff further complicates matters though, on the whole, Cameroon prisons are better managed now than was the case before 1992 (Ngoh). Socio-cultural activities are now part of the prison curricula.

According to Mamun, some improvements are taking place in most Cameroon prisons. After the establishment of human and prisoners' rights, prisoners are being treated more kindly. Some prison officials also pointed out that the prison system and administration has improved in some locations but not in others. Not many new staff members are recruited in the different grades. Promotions, career development opportunities and retirement benefits are inadequate. Prison officials should be motivated and equipped to do their work well and encouraged to be happy in their working environment. According to Mitemba, the prison system is a failure because prisoners who await trial do so for long periods of time. Court sessions also take a long time, bail procedures are costly and some judges and lawyers are corrupt.

#### **5.6.5 Churches' role in Prison**

The churches play a positive role in prisons. They visit the prisons, preach the gospel message, contribute to the physical wellbeing of prisoners by bringing them food, medicine, clothing and sometimes they also provide financial assistance to the very poor prisoners. Through their evangelistic efforts some inmates have committed themselves to God and changed their lives. Church services constitute healing for many prisoners. Some inmates are allowed to attend Bible schools (Joshua) while in prison.

According to Asang, the role the churches play is to provide moral guidance and basic necessities. This does happen, but in a sporadic manner and without proper coordination and supervision. Churches should train specialist pastors and priests who can offer prison pastoral care and liaise with prison officials.

CATA pointed out that churches bring the peace of Christ to those who are deprived of their freedom so that their time in prison can be experienced as God's time. They assist prisoners with training that enables them to take part in charity and solidarity projects.

Churches contribute towards to the rehabilitation of prisoners and their positive re-entry into society. Churches also support those who have been released from prison and help them to readjust to their social situations and environments.

Churches facilitate regular contact between prisoners, their families and friends in order to help them maintain their support systems and relationships. The evangelistic mission and services of the church contribute to preventing crime (Mitemba, Jovens, Elkanah).

According to (Jovens, Indah, Mitemba), the churches do offer counselling through the preaching ministry, church services, training workshops for arts and craft. Collaboration exists between the churches and the prison administration to reform the prison institution. There are some outreach programs though all churches do not participate (Mitemba, Ngoh).

Some prison officials pointed out that, churches in Cameroon should play a greater role as far as the moral guidance of inmates is concerned. In doing so, they can contribute to the rehabilitation and successful integration of released prisoners into society.

This chapter presented the analysis of field work that was done in the prisons of Bamenda, Mbengwi and Ndop. It gave a detailed analysis of issues that led to imprisonment, the prison environment, the situation of prisoners, the prison system and the role of the churches in prison.

The following chapter presents the findings of the study. Current issues in the area of prison pastoral care, possible outcomes, recommendations and future research will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 6

### FINDINGS

#### 6.1 Summary

This study began with a background survey of pastoral care in the prisons of Cameroon. Conferences on prison pastoral care in Uganda, South Africa and Sweden highlighted the challenges of prison pastoral care and how this mission field had been neglected. This is also the case in Cameroon. Prisons in Cameroon were investigated in order to ascertain what the churches could do in the area of pastoral care to contribute to the wellbeing of prisoners in Cameroon.

Chapter one established that there was scarcity of pastoral presence in the prisons of Wum, Bamenda and Buea. Pastoral care is haphazardly done by a few concerned Christian groups and individuals. One of the objectives of this study was to investigate what impact congregational outreach programs would have on inmates.

Another objective was to investigate what impact an effective pastoral care practice would have on prisoners, staff and administration of prisons. Pastoral care programs that could provide effective pastoral care are presently lacking in Cameroon prisons. Pastoral care and privatization were seen as ways of reforming the prison institution.

The problems in Cameroon prisons can be viewed from human rights, psychological, social, theological and ecclesial perspectives. The harshness of the prison environment affects inmates physically and emotionally. The prevalent attitude is that individuals should pay severely for crimes against the state and community. Prisons are for punishment and not rehabilitation. However, new insights with regard to prisoners and the prison system were also presented.

The prison infrastructure is in need of change as prisoners suffer in the small and often overcrowded cells. Prisons in Cameroon are not productive in terms of education and life skills formation. The government document on the rehabilitation of offenders through work, training and counselling should be put into practice in Cameroon prisons. Better living conditions for inmates and prison officials are needed.

The literature survey contains various views on the role prisons play in the modern world, for example punishment, rehabilitation and deterrence. The literature review covered national and international perspectives on prisons and penitentiary systems in the world. Alternatives to imprisonment have been developed and adapted for use in some correctional services but have yielded little results.

Literature on prisons focused on crime, human rights and social concerns. The situation of prisons in Cameroon, the United States of America, Australia, Europe, Central, East, North, South and West Africa was described. There is paucity of literature and information on Cameroon prisons. Data on prisons in Cameroon was gained from literature, interviews, documented facts and reports.

The methodology used was the qualitative analysis of literature and interviews with prisoners, staff and administration of the Bamenda, Mbengwi and Ndop prisons in the North West region of Cameroon. The analysis provided a deeper understanding of prisoners in Cameroon.

McCann & Pearlmann's (1990:101) Constructivist Self Development Theory (CSDT) was used to better understand inmates' worldview and their view of themselves, the prison environment and others. In line with this theory significant life experiences of traumatized inmates including personal history, characteristics of traumatic events, the social and cultural context were probed in order to understand the development of the individual's self capacities, ego resources, needs and schemas.

Campbell (1986:18-37) and Gerkin (1997:16-27) pastoral care models of shepherding were explored in the context of prison pastoral care. Pastoral care is about human interrelationships and touches on individual experiences and personal values. The shepherd's role like that of Jesus Christ is to seek and save the lost (John 10:10).

Pastoral care could make a difference in the lives of traumatised, wayward, whimsical, stubborn and recalcitrant inmates.

Chapter two focused on prisons in Cameroon: their state, conditions of prisoners, the prison system and administration. The report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur for prisons and conditions of detention in Africa (ACHPR 2002:1-20) gave an account of Cameroon prisons that was closely followed by the reports of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF 2007-2008:1-18) and Amnesty International (AIR 2011:95-96). The reports saw prisons in Cameroon in a bad state needing attention and care. Mukong (1990); Boh & Ntemfac (1991); Wakai (2000) and Njawe (2006) voices from Cameroon painted a negative image of prisons, staff and administration.

Chapter three explored alternative sanctions to prison with a view to gain an understanding that could be further developed for the rehabilitation of inmates and reformation of the prison institution.

Chapter four was concerned with pastoral care models with the intention of gaining insights on prison pastoral care work. Campbell (1986) and Gerkin (1997) pastoral care models of shepherding, the Nova Scotia Coverdale Community Chaplaincy project, Capps' model of the clergy as agents of hope, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy model and the Cotton End Baptist church pastoral care model were closely looked at.

Chapter five was on field work done in three prisons: Bamenda, Mbengwi and Ndop. Reasons for imprisonment of inmates, the prison environment and facilities, prisoners' situation and conditions, the prison system and administration as well as the churches role in prison were examined.

Chapter six concludes the study with findings, recommendations and future research.

## 6.2 Findings

Complaints that abound in most Cameroon prisons have to do with overcrowding, poor living conditions, inadequate medical care, insufficient food, slow access to justice and an arbitrary system of prison discipline. In some prisons inmates go for months without detection of communicable diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis, HIV/AIDS etc. There is no privacy for inmates while in their cells. The notion of punishment reigns while the ideal of rehabilitation seems to be an unachievable goal. Harsh conditions of imprisonment are purposeful since it is believed that prison conditions should be made unpleasant in order to deter future offending behaviour and crime.

Some prisons use involuntary segregation for disciplinary reasons. Hence, there is trauma in most Cameroon prisons. Prisoners are degraded and stripped of their dignity when they live under inhumane conditions. Manipulation, distrust, despair, bitterness and hostility are features and sensations of most Cameroon prisons.

Overcrowded prisons destroy rather than build a positive self image. The prison experience is traumatic because it threatens the psychological core or balance of inmates. Krystal (1978:90) defines trauma as “a paralysed, overwhelmed state with immobilization, withdrawal, possible depersonalization and evidence of disorganisation.” Trauma is experienced differently by adults. Traumatic experiences may result in uncomfortable feelings of anxiety and helplessness. A traumatic experience affects one’s frame of reference, perspective, meaning and other constructs. Trauma can have profound effects on a person’s self esteem (McCann & Pearlmann 1990:74).

Quality life can be achieved in the prison institution through a faster, more effective judicial system that enforces justice for many of the pre-trial cases. Cordial staff-prisoner relationships, better staff and management relations will also improve matters. The conditions vary from prison to prison, though some similarities have been pointed out. There should be better living standards for prisoners and prison officials. The prison system should undergo changes in infrastructure since most of the structures are outdated and in a state of dilapidation.

The ultimate goal of the prison system should be to provide a safe environment to serve out the sentence. The attitudes and behaviours of ex-offenders have a connection with the way they were treated while in prison. On the whole, “physical and emotional survival in the prison environment requires each prisoner to create a niche, find a role or achieve a status that will offer some degree of protection from the dangers and uncertainties of prison life” (Selke 1993:73).

Community based alternatives with focus on the remand prisoners who undergo intense emotional stress because of their difficult legal status is necessary for the Cameroon prisons. The document on the rehabilitation of offenders should be applied effectively and for this to be accomplished, training is necessary.

Frye (1982) cf Griffith (1993:171) argues that given proper guidance and opportunities to develop themselves, prisoners are capable of being transformed to better individuals with a sense of purpose and direction in life. Educational and vocational programs geared towards life skills and keeping the prisoners busy and active would facilitate the reform process of inmates. If prisoners spend most of their time in overcrowded cells doing nothing, they are bored and this could lead to bad behaviour.

Prisons in Cameroon should become productive and rehabilitative. The objective should be to transform prisoners through work, educative and vocational programs into productive citizens. Selke (1993:133) points out that “correctional agencies have a responsibility to promote, sponsor and participate in research and programme evaluation efforts”.

However, in Cameroon there is little interest for prison reform since other national issues compete for the attention of citizens and politicians. Prison reform is not one of the issues that can be addressed with simple solutions. Citizens and the political elite have little knowledge of the prison institution. Prisons in Cameroon can be best described as “out of sight, out of mind”.

However, the church, through pastoral care, can help restore human dignity, bring life and love to the prison institution. Pastoral care could guide offenders to take responsibility for their wrong-doings, repent and become useful citizens upon their return to the community. Rehabilitation of inmates would include work, schooling, moral development and learning discipline (Mathiesen 1990:25). Through pastoral care the inmate can be treated, reconstructed and returned whole into the social environment (see Rothman 1980 cf Murphy & Dison 1990:13).

Some faith communities have programs for caring for the needs of parishioners. Such programs could make a difference in the lives of traumatized inmates in Cameroon prisons. The shepherding model of Campbell (1986:18-37) and Gerkin (1997:16-28) are pastoral care models that will focus on the prisoner and his or her therapeutic needs. The shepherd's role as a caring leader is to seek and save the lost (John 10:10). Insights from the Nova Scotia Coverdale community chaplaincy project, the Cognitive Behavioural therapy model, the Cotton End Baptist church pastoral care model and Capps (1995) theory of the clergy as "agents and providers of hope" could supplement Campbell's (1986) and Gerkin's (1997) pastoral care models.

Networking and team work with others are essential for prison pastoral care. Hope for the future can be nurtured through cordial relationships with the community, neighbourhood, family alongside formal and informal volunteer groups that enlist their services to fight criminal behaviour and crime. Flexibility to new ideas and knowledge are the key to addressing the problems of offenders and offending behaviour (Murphy & Dison 1990:159-160).

Prison pastoral care workers are among the few who can freely enter into closed institutions like prisons and bring positive changes. Pastoral care is a necessary and essential component for prison reformation and rehabilitation of those within its walls. "The biblical word on prisons and caring for both prisoners and victims of crime has radical implications for the discipleship of the church and the church's witness to the nations" (Griffith 1993:xiv).

The Cameroonian situation of prisons needs attention, further study and reflection by all the stakeholders concerned with prison reform. Churches, by means of pastoral care and advocacy, can play a decisive role in effecting change in the prison situation and penitentiary system in Cameroon.

### **6.3 Future Research**

At the 2010 International Prison Chaplains Association conference in Stockholm Sweden delegates could not come to an agreement as to what role chaplains can play in secular institutions like prisons. Church sponsored chaplains and state sponsored chaplains could not come to an agreement on the issue. What are chaplains called to do in prison? Further research could be done in this direction.

The lack of literature on prison pastoral care in South Africa also suggests that further work needs to be done in this regard. I visited the Pretoria Correctional Service in June 2011 to observe the environment and investigate what is happening with regard to pastoral care. I saw non-governmental organisations and churches involved with spiritual care work in the Pretoria Correctional Service but did not find literature on their role in the correctional services. This too warrants further exploration or investigation.

A theologically contextualised model for pastoral care in African prisons could be a contribution to this field of study. The prisons in Africa require an indigenous African based theology to effectively address the specific nature of “underfed, overcrowded and health neglected prison life” and not just the “under educated inmates” as is the case with most of the United States of America studies (Campbell 1986 cf Capps 1995, Gerkin 1997). Authentic and relevant models are needed for the African context.

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## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN RECOMMENDATION

I the undersigned, **MUSI Francis Mac-TATA**, Regional Delegate of Penitentiary Administration North West, recommend **Rev. Pastor ABRAHAM K. AKIH**, a student in the University of Pretoria, South Africa, Faculty of Theology, to carry on a research program in the prisons of the region with the aim of initiating a good pastoral care model that will guide all stake holders involved with the various aspects of the mission incumbent on the prison system in Cameroon.

I therefore request all Superintendents in charge of the different prisons to give him enough assistance and collaboration that he deserves.

29 JUL 2010

For the Delegate and by order  
The Chief of Service for General Affairs



**RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE - MA TRAUMA COUNSELING**

1. Name of Prison.....
2. Name of Inmate / Ex-Inmate.....
3. Gender (Male / Female).....
4. Age.....
5. Status (Married, Widow or Widower, Divorced , Single).....
6. Highest Academic Qualification (FSLC, O'Levels, A' Levels, Masters, Doctorate)
7. Position in society before imprisonment.....
8. What brought you to prison?  
.....  
.....  
.....
9. What was your experience with :
  - A) The Prison environment and facilities in prison?  
.....  
.....
  - B) The Prison Officials.....
  - C) Other Prisoners.....
10. What is or was the length of the sentence? .....
11. What role does the church play in prison? .....

## RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE - MA TRAUMA COUNSELING

### OFFICIALS / CLERGY WORKING IN PRISON

- 1.Name of Prison.....
- 2.Name of official / Clergy.....
- 3.Gender (Male / Female).....
- 4.Age.....
5. Position or Rank.....
- 6.Length of Service.....
7. What has been your experience with the:
  - A) Prison system and administration.....
  - B) Prison Environment.....
  - C) Prisoners.....
  - D) Churches role in prison.....

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