

# HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH EMPOWERMENT



- *Understand the Concepts:  
Empowerment, stigma and self-stigma*
- *Get inspired in your work*
- *Make a difference*



UBUMI PRISONS INITIATIVE



This pamphlet was prepared by Ubumi Prisons Initiative to inform and inspire partners on the concept of empowerment and how to implement the core value of empowerment in their work



*Working for Ubumi Prison Initiative has greatly renewed my strength and has brought healing both physically and mentally because I have found purpose for my life whilst in prison. It has even helped me to inculcate a sense of love to patients and make them know that somebody out there still loves them.*

*Indeed it has been of tremendous help to me to belong to this great Organisation which is helping the very vulnerable people and giving them a good health and hope for the future.'*

*Quote by an inmate coordinator*

# Human Rights

'Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.'

United Nations ([www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/](http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/))



# Empowerment

Working with empowerment is one way to work towards achieving basic human rights for all.

”The capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the proces by which, individually andcollectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives” (Adams, 2008)

Empowerment in practice: ”The continuous interaction between critical reflection and empowering practice, that is, the continuous in and out cycle of reflecting-acting-evaluating and the interplay between thinking and doing” (Adams, 2008)



# Stigma

The term stigma refers to problems of knowledge (ignorance), attitudes (prejudice) and behaviour (discrimination). Stigma is a perceived negative attribute that causes someone to devalue or think less of a whole person.

According to the World Health Organization "stigma is a major cause of discrimination and exclusion: it affects people's self-esteem, helps disrupt their family relationships and limits their ability to socialize and obtain housing and jobs. It also contributes to the abuse of human rights".

Stigma may affect the behavior of those who are stigmatized: they often start to act in ways that their stigmatizers expect of them. It also shapes their emotions and beliefs, causes depression, and exposes the person's social identity to low.



# Self-stigma

Self stigma - when the other's judging eye becomes your own

Human beings are not individual planets orbiting each other independently. We depend on each other. We are each other's mirrors. When we look at others with discrediting eyes, it has a negative impact.

When an inmate is placed in prison he or she becomes an outcast in society. Many will feel fundamentally rejected. Stigma produces and reproduces patterns of power and social control.

*Self stigma* is when the shame placed upon you by others, becomes the way you view yourself. The shame becomes internalised, and this is deeply harmful. When one believes the negative views placed upon them, they may start viewing themselves as unwanted, as bad or as criminals with no hope for a better tomorrow.

This negative process can become a vicious one, because if you view yourself as 'bad', it is very easy to start acting 'bad'. Self-stigma can also lead to difficulty in forming positive social relationships. Again, if one thinks of oneself as bad or useless, it becomes difficult to form meaningful relationships.

Stigma is harmful, and if we want to change lives for the better, self-stigma is important to address.

# Why empowerment?

*Empowerment has the potential to facilitate better coping with imprisonment and a positive reintegration process*

When individuals and/groups are empowered, they have the skills to

- Understand and appreciate own importance and ability to contribute positively to one's own life and the common good
- Identify own resources and make meaningful decisions
- Empowerment promotes resilience and coping
- Coping with imprisonment can become easier, when one focuses on self-development and/or is able to contribute positively to other people's lives using one's skills
- Empowerment can become a tool for reintegration, when one feels useful and important



# How to work with empowerment as CSO's

## At individual level

### Ideas to support and facilitate empowerment:

- Focus on what unites us rather than what separates us
- Be aware not to assume anything negative of a person just because they are or have been imprisoned.
- Do not 'preach' about how you think someone should act (rarely does anyone truly listen when they are 'told' what to do, rather than involved in a process): Listen and learn respectfully. Expect the positive, not the negative. Nudge gently when appropriate.
- Give individuals possibility for influence, when they show motivation and commitment
- Look at inmates and former inmates as vital partners. They know something you do not know. Facilitate their involvement.
- Encourage networking and mutual support, even in difficult environments
- Do not use words such as 'kaili' or other derogatory language
- Identify role models and use them to help others identify their own potential
- Be aware of how you communicate to and with external stakeholders



# How to work with empowerment as CSO's

## At **structural** level

### Identify useful elements in existing structures:

- Policies and strategy papers (for instance the reform and corrections paradigm)
- Identify change agents (in the ministries and the correctional service)
- Advocacy has many forms - be strategic with what you choose: It can be diplomatic engagements with leadership, events, media engagements, SoMe, music and art



# The Principles of the Ubumi Model

- Inmates are supported to take on responsibility in projects supported by corrections staff and management, partner NGOs and Ubumi
  - Volunteerism
- Education and skills building within relevant fields
  - Support corrections staff to improve health through partnership, collaboration and capacity building
- Help to self-help - food production, routines for health care and hygiene, support groups and much more to stimulate sustainable solutions



# How do we work with empowerment in the Ubumi Model

- We include inmates as volunteers on our Ubumi Model projects which gives them a sense of responsibility and a role to fulfil while imprisoned
- Inmates and ex-inmates are encouraged to take on new responsibilities and constructive roles
- We involve volunteer inmates in decision making in the projects
- We help inmates identify own strengths and abilities through participation in our projects
- We build existing resources, knowledge and skills of volunteer inmates within for instance leadership, health, nutrition and/or farming
- We implement life skills training and educational activities for inmates, including juveniles
- We facilitate support groups for inmates
- We establish reintegration projects for ex-inmates which promote empowerment through knowledge and skills building



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*I think to be a happy person is to  
understand what your life does to others  
- an inmate*





## Make a difference

We hope this pamphlet - even if short, has made you and our organisation motivated to work with empowerment to achieve basic human rights for all. You are always welcome to contact us to learn more and get support in your work.

# Ubumi Prisons Initiative

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- Danish CSOs for Development Cooperation



**100%**  
**FOR THE CHILDREN**

**Learn more:**  
**[www.ubumi.dk](http://www.ubumi.dk)**  
**[www.ubumi.org](http://www.ubumi.org)**

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