

Enhance the Access to Information for Prisoners through 'Mini libraries' at Prison Wards

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ABSTRACT

Prison libraries are expected to cater to the information needs of prisoners as well as to educate those with difficulties in reading and writing. In Sri Lanka, the library system in prisons is not well-established and operates with limited resources and facilities for the prisoners to access information resources. This study is intended to formulate an operational mechanism for prison libraries to cater to the information needs of the prisoners. The project was carried out by the Main Library of the University of Jaffna at the *Jaffna Remand Prison*, which comprises nearly 3,690 prisoners. The assessment of this prison library revealed that areas such as the organization of information resources, infrastructure facilities, and the operational mechanism need careful attention. The existing collection of information resources (n= 2,500) was added to the accession register, technical and physical processing completed, and placed at the *Main Library* premises located at the Administrative wing of the Jaffna Remand Prison. A small portion of this collection, comprising 75-80 information resources, is proposed to be transferred periodically to the *Mini libraries* situated in 13 prison wards for the use of prisoners. Further, the infrastructure facilities of the *Main Library* and *Mini libraries* were developed with the support of donations received. This Prison library commenced its operation with the ceremonial opening on April 8, 2023. In terms of sustainability, the Main Library of the University of Jaffna extends its assistance in maintaining the library system. Future plans for this prison library include promoting collaboration with adjacent surrounding libraries for resource sharing and building a children's collection to promote reading among children accompanied by the prisoners.

Keywords: Prison libraries, Prisoners, Information rights, Sri Lanka

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