

ICT POLICY GUIDELINE – GHANA PRISONS SERVICE

PREAMBLE

The mandate and the scope of operation of the Ghana Prisons Service require constant interaction and information exchange between headquarters and remote prisons as well as other governmental institutions such as the Judicial Service, Police Service and other security agencies.

In addition to that, present inter-office communication between the headquarters, regional and district prisons is difficult and time consuming. A network solution which will provide customized network of communication and information through which specified and authorized people can freely interact, is also envisaged.

Through the network system, a vital state institution as the Ghana Prisons Service will be interconnected to facilitate an electronic administrative network of all local and regional operations to the Prisons Headquarters.

AIM

The aim of this paper is to highlight the need for computerizing information in the Prisons Service to provide a reliable means by which information/data is managed to achieve the best possible results in the shortest possible time with the aim of enhancing the efficiency of the Prisons Administration.

GENERAL

STRUCTURE OF GHANA PRISONS SERVICE

1. The Ghana Prisons Service is an integral part of the Ghanaian penal system. As spelt out in the Prison Service Degree 1972 NRCD 46 the service is charged with the responsibility of ensuring safe custody, welfare, reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners.

2. To ensure efficiency, effectiveness and strict responsibility, the Ghana Prisons Service is decentralized into four/4 main divisions as follows:-

- {a} General Administration
- {b} Prison Establishments
- {c} Prison Officers Training School
- {d} Ghana Borstal Institution

A] **GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

3. The Prisons Service is centrally administered from the Prisons Headquarters where policy guidelines and programmes are formulated and drawn for the entire Service. The Prisons Headquarters therefore handles a large volume of data relating to both officers and prisoners.

As a catalyst for effective and easily accessible departmental transactions and information, ICT Policies should be formulated in such a way that access to ICT is effectively distributed within the organizational structure.

In order to make it functional and strategic, an ICT Programme should be developed to capture the following areas: Finance, Agriculture, Industries, Logistic, Human Resource, Welfare, Operations etc.

[B] **PRISON ESTABLISHMENTS**

4. The Service has a total of 42 prisons establishments sited at various places throughout Ghana. The main functions of these establishments are to ensure the safe custody and welfare of prisoners as well as their reformation and rehabilitation. With a staff strength of about 3800, the prisons population on currently stands at 11500.

[C] **PRISON OFFICERS TRAINING SCHOOL**

5. This is the basic and only training institution in Ghana for the training of various category of prison officers. Courses run at the school include Recruit, Cadet, Career, Refresher and other related courses.

An estimated number of 300 officers and other identifiable groups such as Prison Officers Wives' Association (PROWA), Retired Prison Officers Association (REPOA), Prison Officers Welfare Association (POWA) and Prison HIV/AIDS Project Team are trained each year.

[D] **GHANA BORSTAL INSTITUTION**

6. This institution admits Juveniles and young offenders (14-18yrs) who have passed through the Juvenile courts and sentenced for detention normally not less than 3yrs. Its main objective is to morally transform young and Juvenile offenders by educating and equipping them with vocational skills.

7. It can be seen from the above that the Service handles a large volume of data in its daily operations. Handling this manually is not only time consuming and difficult but also fraught with many human errors.

It is envisaged that an Information Technology Plan will ensure benefits in the following areas:

[a] **Criminal Records**

All the data on inmates shall be kept in a well organized manner to facilitate easy and instant retrieval of the desired information.

It should be possible to verify within a minimum amount of time whether new inmates had ever been to prison and therefore had files already created. In this regard, duplication of records are avoided.

The records management system will include a sub-system for matching newly taken thumb prints and pictures against existing ones on the database. The system should be capable of advising us timely, as and when inmates complete their prison terms.

[b] **Logistics**

This area will embrace the organization of supplies and services. Procurement and Stores policies will be redefined to enable the service programme and plan its logistics requirements and purchases, so as to ensure effective and efficient inventory management system.

All items kept in the stores including food items, detergents, farm equipment, stationery, uniform and accoutrement etc should be computerized in order to establish efficient monitoring of goods in stock and issues.

[c] **Accounting and Financial Management**

The system should be capable of keeping records of all Receipts and Payments, process them and produce financial statements including

- {i} Expense Analysis Report.
- {ii} Income and Expenditure.
- {iii} Cash flow statement.
- {iv} Budget and Budgetary control

{d} **Technical and Industries**

This unit apart from supervising the various trades in the Prison Establishments also undertakes various kinds of projects such as sewerage, plumbing, electricals as well as general construction and maintenance.

The management of ICT programme in this department will enhance the promotion of functional and qualitative efficiency in order to attain required goals in a cost effective and efficient manner.

The programme will also strengthen Estate Management to ensure estate planning and maintenance. Building plans and land documents will also be secured as a security organization.

[e] **Human Resource**

Human resource management and staff development are essential to realizing corporate goals.

In order to manage and develop prison staff to become more efficient and effective, there is the need for the formulation of new and relevant training programmes to enable them discharge their duties more professionally.

Placement of staff in terms of postings, appointments, promotions and career planning programmes will also be given due consideration.

An ICT programme for the personnel of the Ghana Prisons Service in this regard will ensure the accomplishment of internal and external coordination and cooperation as well as personal expertise.

i. **Officers**

The Prison Officers Training School is the sole training institution used for training both superior and subordinate officers and therefore need the setting up of a modern computer laboratory at the training school to offer ICT related courses to train all personnel of the Service with sufficient training and supporting reference materials to properly protect and manage information assets.

ii. **Inmates**

As a way of equipping inmates with employable skills and keeping them abreast with modern technological trends which may require computer literacy, there is the need to establish computer laboratories in some of our prisons like the Borstal

Institution and Nsawam Medium Security Prison.

This will facilitate the process of reformation and help to transform them into useful citizens upon their integration into society.

[f] **Agriculture**

The Agric Unit of the service was established as a means to decongest the walled prisons, train inmates in modern agricultural practices and to produce food to supplement government funding of feeding in the Prisons.

In view of the huge expenditure made by central government in respect of prisoners ration annually, the service has recognized the need to expand its agricultural activities.

As a propelling force to drive the agric unit forward to reach its full potential, there is the need for the integration of an ICT programme geared towards streamlining the agricultural activities of the service with respect to sales, purchases, yields, acreages, personnel and other agric related records.

[g] **Security and Communication Network**

The fundamental aim regarding the utilization of ICT is to promote efficiency.

Security must be maintained and this mandates that practices and laid down rules are adhered to accurately on a consistent basis. This will require the creation of security intelligence systems procedures.

The Ghana Prisons Service envisages the provision of a Virtual Private Network, which can support data, video, voice, Internet access and should be capable of integrating into a single national network infrastructure of Public Safety and security.

A complete solution when deployed would enable the following benefits:

- I. Secured access to required information to and from the connected points
- II. Top-level security over the network
- III. Increased efficiency in inter units communication and easier inter outstation administration.
- IV. Real time on-line access to data on the network

- V. Video connectivity between all the connecting points on the network
- VI. Corporate e-mail services.

[h] **Archives (Information Management)**

9. Records of closed files dumped at the archives need to be automated. These files that contain records of ex-prison officers and ex-convicts could serve as reliable database for reference.

Creation of Website

10. The Ghana Prisons Service Website will enhance a good public image of the Service in that, all the relevant information about the Service will be on the website. Contacts within or without could easily be made.

APPLICATION SOFTWARES COVERING THE ENTIRE REQUIREMENT OF THE SERVICE

Though the other components of these ICT program are important, the most mission critical component is the Application Software Component. This area addresses the day to day Management issues involved within the Organization. The following areas have been identified as most critical for attention.

- {a} Criminal Records Management
- {b} Personnel Management System
- {c} Director/Deputy Director Information Management
- {d} Stores Management System
- {e} General Accounting System
- {f} Transport Management System
- {g} Forecasting, Budgeting and Financial
- {h} Procurement Management System
- {i} Farm Management (Trends of Inputs/Expenditure)
- {j} Tender Documents Management
- {k} Security Gate Management (e.g. for Nsawam & Headquarters)
- {l} Archives Administration

MASTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS PLAN (MISP).

11. Approach to management autonomy

11.1. It should be the policy of the Ghana Prison Services that directorates enjoy the greatest measure of management autonomy. Included herein is the use and deployment of ICT, consistent with the efficient administration of the department as a whole. This policy should be applied consistently in the provision and utilization of ICT. The Ghana Prison Service will create the necessary transversal discipline within which directorates can manage and implement ICT functionally in their own right. To this end, it will be expected of the **ICT Directorate** to provide guidance and policy framework and processes to:

- a. Promote mutual and external order.
- b. Add value to the utilization of ICT.
- c. Promote shared utilization of technology to obtain cost-effectiveness and functional advantages and avoid duplication.
- d. Determine standards for the procurement and utilization of ICT products and services, which, at the same time, can be used as parameters for the evaluation of performance.
- e. Promote the utilization of industry proven ICT.
- f. Reduce risks in the utilization of ICT.

Heads of divisions/directorates are responsible and accountable for the effective management and administration of their areas of specialty. This includes, except where prescribed in any other prescripts or elsewhere by a recognized authority or recommended by the management of the department, that divisions/directorates can decide autonomously about computerization as well as the procurement and utilization of ICT. This also establishes ownership of ICT and data/information in each directorate/division, regardless of where ICT is located. **This should be done in consultation with the ICT directorate who should provide guidance and advice in terms of** international trends. This enhances and ensures that technology is driven by business requirements and not otherwise, **ITC should be user driven.**

11.2 Functional points of departure for the procurement and utilization of ICT.

11.2.1 On a functional strategic level, ICT should be developed in such a manner that:

- a. An open architecture and backbone infrastructure is eventually established.
- b. Access to ICT is effectively distributed within the organization.
- c. Internal and external integration and adaptability are possible.
- d. The procurement and application of ICT is directed mainly by the following functional points of departure:
 - I. All solutions/systems must be needs driven.
 - II. All solutions/systems must be proved to be realistic by means of the methodology for conducting feasibility studies adopted by the department.
 - III. Solutions/systems must be approached holistically.
 - IV. All systems must be solution/business-oriented.
 - V. The functionality and output of solutions/systems must be user-friendly.
 - VI. Timeliness, applicability and the ability to cater for future needs must be ensured.
 - VII. Functionality and costs-effectiveness must be ensured.

VIII. Solutions/systems must be properly supported and the continuation of services should be ensured.

11.3 Main objective regarding the utilization of ICT

11.4 The fundamental aim regarding the utilization of ICT is to promote efficiency. As part of the process of determining strategy, requirements, provision, utilization and evaluation of ICT, it must be clearly demonstrated that the solutions/systems promote functional and qualitative efficiency in order to attain the required goals in a cost effective and economical manner and that computerization results in added value.

MAIN ROLE PLAYERS

12.1 A complete explanation of the allocation of functions to each of the main role players and the manner in which each must contribute in their specific critical focus areas for the provision and utilization of ICT, is covered later in this document.

AUTHORITY TO EXECUTE

13.1 Except as prescribed to the contrary in this document or as embodied in a similar statutory authority elsewhere, the Director-General is qualified to make decisions regarding computerization, procurement and utilization of ICT in the department in terms of this document and any other directive issued from time to time. The Director-General should give attention to, or have attention given to, the following management and functional ICT focus points:

- I. Internal strategy as well as operational and technical policy.
- II. Planning for:
- III. Integration of ICT as a strategic resource in order to support the functional goals (in the MISP).
- IV. Internal and external system integration and creation of management information systems (MIS).
- V. Systems development and implementation.
- VI. Emergency support, business continuity and/or disaster recovery plans

regarding ICT systems and facilities.

VII. Organizational rules designed to:

- Accomplish internal and external co-ordination and co-operation.
- Acquire personnel expertise.
- Establish and ensure ownership of all ICT systems developed using State funds.

This must be done by the establishment of an Information and Communication Technology Committee (ICTC) for the consideration of and rendering of advice on the referred matters under chairmanship of the Head (ICT), supported by selected personnel from Corporate Planning office, (ICT) office, Finance office, office responsible for Logistics and other functionaries needed from time to time where necessary.

13.2 Synchronization of the budget with the MISP and the application of ICT funds in a manner, which is not only cost-effective but also ensures an improved and efficient service.

13.3 The provision, training and utilization of the required ICT personnel on a continuous basis.

13.4 Internal procurement systems and structures.

a. Control measures specifically directed to:

- I. Ensure conclusive pre-acquisition control through the establishment of quantifiable delegations.
 - II. Ensure that output conforms to specification.
 - III. Exercise strict control over consultant services.
 - IV. Ensure that deliverables/output/costs are quantified in order to enable the evaluation of the attainment of goals, value-for-money decisions and functionality in an objective manner.
- b. In the case where a specific office is the principal for a specific application system, that office Head should take note of the requirements of other

relevant role players within the organisation.

- c. The Director-General can delegate the authority given to him in this document to an official in the department under conditions, which he may determine, and he can also, at his discretion, withdraw this authority.

13.5 Reporting Structure

It is important that the ICT office should report directly to the office of the Director-General. This will ensure that all strategic decisions are executed appropriately.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCUREMENT PROCESS

1. The provision of ICT takes place just as any other purchase or acquisition of services in accordance with the processes prescribed by the relevant authority, (Treasury, Finance Department) and the tender regulations.
2. A department should first consider the matter internally through the ICTC or other control structure.
3. If the matter falls outside the direct departmental authority, in terms of delegated authorities, it should first be referred to the relevant authority for finalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ghana Prisons Service has to establish an ICT programme as a matter of urgency to automate its operations to meet global standards.
2. Owing to the global nature of increasing crime rate and terrorism, there is the need for an ICT policy in the Ghana Prisons Service to enable us maintain accurate statistical data on convicts.
3. The Ghana Prisons Service therefore needs a databank on criminals for easy retrieval of relevant information for use by other security agencies and the judiciary.
4. To keep abreast with technology, Computer laboratories must be established in our training school and selected prisons to offer ICT related courses for both staff and inmates.

Conclusion

The idea of developing an ICT policy framework for the Ghana Prisons Service will enhance efficiency in the administration of the organization and therefore it would be appreciated if the government would seek funding for this project as a matter of urgency either by direct government funding or assistance from donor agencies.