

Social Reintegration of Women Prisoners in South East Asia

Findings of a UNODC
2019 Scoping Study



Methodology

Part of UK solution to COVID-19: New Single Rooms for Women Prisoners at Askham Grange



Women in Prison in South East Asia



High use of imprisonment for women compared to other parts of Asia and internationally, with women making up more than 10% of prisoners in Laos, Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand.



Drug related offences account for more than four out of five women prisoners in Indonesia and Thailand and more than half in Cambodia and Singapore.



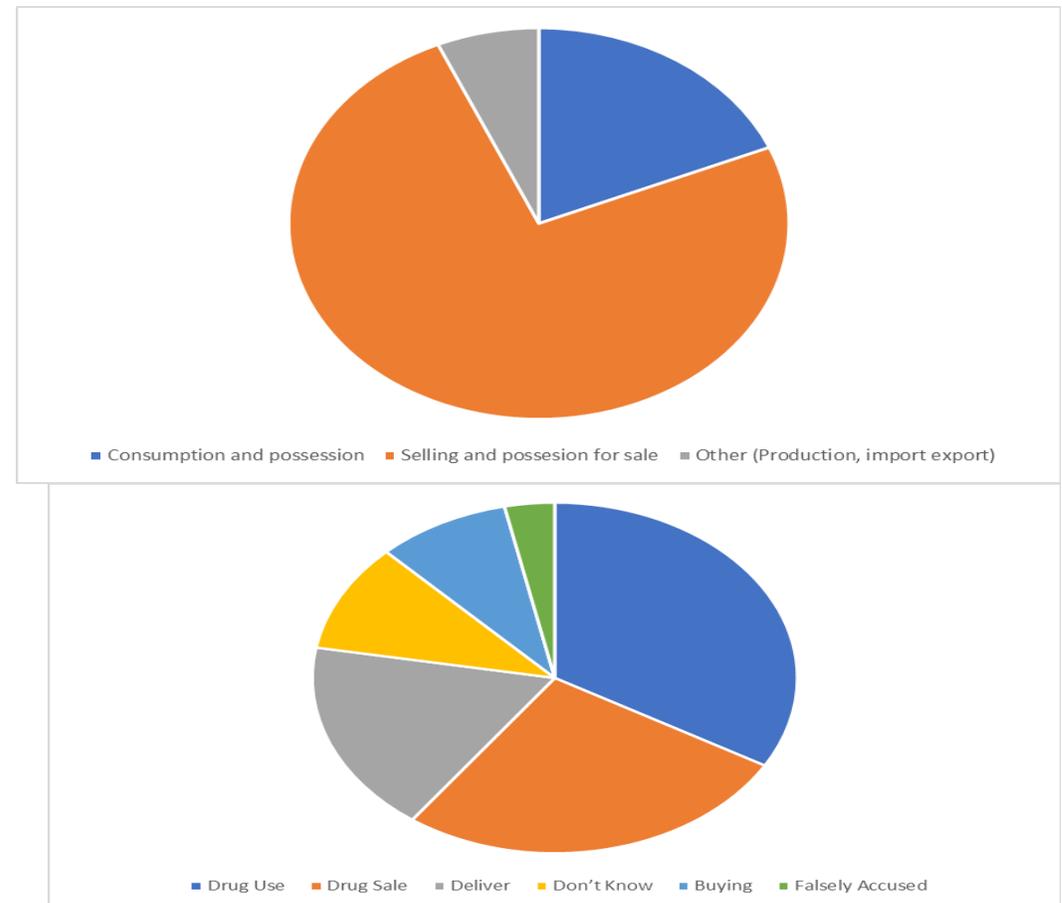
Foreign nationals make up a significant proportion of prisoners in Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore in particular

Implications for Post Release Services

- Many women prisoners suffer substance misuse problems for which treatment is needed during and after release. Some women use drugs as a coping mechanism to deal with an abusive relationship
- Women involved in sale of drugs often have a low level of education and become involved in drug offences for financial reasons or to support their family. They may have been paid or tricked into selling drugs and/or subject to exploitation, coercion or abuse as part of their everyday experience.
- Risk of re-offending on release may be very high.
- Even when enabling legal provisions are in place, the transfer of foreign national prisoners takes place relatively infrequently.
- The age of the women, the length of their sentence, health status and whether they belong to a minority ethnic group influence the kind of post release support that needs to be offered .

- Thailand and Indonesia

Data from IDPC



Maintaining Family Ties

- In Cambodia , NGO This Life provides financial support and transport for monthly visits from family members.
- In Singapore, the strengths of family support are an important feature in the risk needs/ assessment tools used prior to release from prison in order to inform a reintegration plan.
- In Malaysia Parole officers visit an offender's family prior to release as part of the assessment and after release visit the parolees at home and work and are available 24 hours a day should the parolee need assistance.
- In Indonesia, the law requires the families of adults who use drugs (and the people who use drugs themselves) to report their drug use to the authorities and this can act as a disincentive to families to accept a released prisoner back.



Preparation for Release

- Prisons in South East Asia arrange a variety of medical and psychological treatment, counselling, vocational training, legal assistance and family reconciliation services.
- In Thailand, prisoners whose remaining prison sentences are less than 6 months – 1 year attend pre- release programs which last between 30 – 100 hours.
- At Ayutthaya, within the women’s prison, a barista training programme enables serving prisoners to work in a prison run café in the town.
- Prison director wants to know every prisoners plan

Help On Release

- Many women prisoners will have needs for help on release – somewhere to live, an income and continuing healthcare treatment or social support.
- The Malaysia Prisons Department offers temporary placements to house ex-prisoners in Half Way Houses.
- “Some women do not want to go there as they have had enough of following rules while in prison. The shelters have curfews and expect residents to do cleaning and other chores. They therefore choose to stay with friends.”
- House of Blessings looks after children of mothers in prison who rejoin them on release.
- Thailand offers grants and other help with self employment



Recommendations

- **Comprehensive post release support is needed to address the range of issues which have led women into drug related offending and offer viable alternative ways of making a living.**
- **Careful assessment is needed to ensure that a woman's return to their family is the best option for them after release.**
- **There is a need to ensure that the wide range of initiatives available to help women on release are of the scale and nature required and offered in a way most likely to attract and sustain commitment from the women.**
- **Both government and civil society organisations could do more both to help women after release and promote more positive attitudes to them. They would benefit from better funding and coordination mechanisms at national and local level.**