



Department of Prisons



Contingency Plan for Covid 19 in Sri Lanka Prisons



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Message of the Commissioner General of Prisons

It is obvious that the Covid pandemic has been the biggest challenge on each and every aspect of the day today functionalities of human being at present throughout the world.

Similarly, the impact of covid pandemic towards the prisons cannot be ignored as there is such a significant impact on the activities carried out within prisons. Moreover, prevention and managing covid pandemic in prisons have been much difficult than outside society as the majority of the prisons are overcrowded where the mostly recommended social distancing is difficult to be maintained. In addition to that, as the health education and practices among majority of the inmates are poor, additional efforts have to be made to manage and prevent spreading covid within prisons. However, it is understood that there should have a proper guideline for prison institutes on how to prevent and manage covid pandemic within prisons while carrying out day today functions.

Accordingly, the Department of Prisons and the Department of Health Services together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) engaged in an activity to develop this covid contingency plan which consists of guidelines for prison institutes on how to prevent and manage prisons within covid pandemic while implementing daily functions. I believe that this contingency plan will guide and assist the prison institutions to manage this pandemic with minimized harms and further I would like to acknowledge the Director General of Health Services and the UNODC for the assistance given to develop this contingency plan.

H.M.T.N.Upuldeniya

Commissioner General of Prisons

Message of the Director General of Health Services

COVID-19 pandemic has been severely affecting the lives of people worldwide, including Sri Lanka. The spread of the disease and the impact of this pandemic vary in various sectors of the population in the island. The Ministry of Health with the help of other sectors took many initiatives for preventing, controlling, and managing the COVID -19 situation in the country to ensure the safety of the lives of the people, their economic and social activities.

Among many public and private establishments "Prisons" have also been identified as an important sector which should not be overlooked in controlling the spread of COVID - 19 in the country. Due to overcrowding and poor hygienic practices, have shown COVID - 19 clusters within the prisons in the recent past. Hence, ensuring the health safety of the individuals in prisons is mandatory during this period to minimize the spread of COVID -19 and the safety of prison officers and the visitors against COVID - 19 is equally important. Therefore, conducting regular awareness programmes, improving basic facilities for proper hygienic practices, diagnosing and monitoring the suspected patients among prison inmates, staff and visitors are of utmost importance. Accordingly professional guidelines in terms of COVID 19 management within prisons were identified as important for prison institutions to ensure the safety of the inmates, officers, and visitors.

After many deliberations, finally this document is in hand to guide the officials to minimize the serious impact due to COVID - 19. I strongly affirm that this contingency plan on COVID - 19, which includes the guidelines for prison administration on steps to be followed during the day-to-day functions within a prison, will immensely contribute in mitigating the risk of the Covid 19. Further, I would like to appreciate dedication made by Commissioner-General of Prisons, Mr. H. M. T. N. Upuldeniya, and the assistance provided by the staff of the Department of Prisons to finalize this initiative in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. I wish to thank Dr. Hemantha Ranasinghe, Director – Prison Healthcare Services for taking this initiative forward with all the stakeholders and for successfully finalizing the contingency plan. We as the Ministry of Health would like to extend the fullest support for its successful implementation.

Dr. Asela Gunawardena
Director General of Health Services

Foreword

This document is produced by obtaining information from open sources. Its aim is to provide Prison Officers with advice and guidance to follow in the event of an outbreak of COVID 19.

Effective pre-planning and robust collaborative arrangements between partner organisations with responsibility for the health and wellbeing of detainees/officers are essential to effectively manage an outbreak of COVID 19 or other communicable disease outbreak in prisons that pose a risk to health staff, prisoners, officers and others entering the prison premises.

Introduction

People deprived of their liberty, such as people in prisons and other places of detention, are more likely to be exposed to corona virus (COVID-19) than the general public due to the often-limited conditions in which they live together for long periods of time. In addition, experience shows that prisons and similar environments where people gather in larger groups can act as a source of infection, aggravation and spread of infectious diseases inside and outside prisons. Prison health is therefore generally regarded as public health. The response to COVID-19 in prisons and other detention centres is particularly challenging, requiring a full government and community strategy for the following reasons:

1. A widespread transmission of a contagious pathogen affecting society at large also poses a threat to the introduction of the contagious disease in prisons and other places of detention. The risk of rapidly increasing transmission of the disease in prisons is likely to have a reinforcing effect on the epidemic and rapidly multiply the number of people affected.
2. Efforts to control COVID-19 in prisons are likely to fail unless strong infection prevention and control (IPC) measures, adequate testing, treatment and care are implemented.
3. In many countries, the responsibility for health care in prisons lies with the Ministry of Justice / Home Affairs. Whereas, the responsibility for health care in prisons and other places of detention in Sri Lanka lies with the Ministry of Health. Although, the cooperation between the health and justice sectors is crucial for protecting people in prisons and other places of detention and society at large.
4. People in prisons and other detention centres are already being deprived of their liberty and may react differently and unexpectedly to further restrictive measures imposed on them.

What is COVID 19

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the coronavirus. COVID-19 has the potential to cause outbreaks in prisons and other closed settings, because of the confined condition where people live in close proximity for a prolonged period of time.

The risk of spreading the virus into the prison may be associated with newly admitted individuals, prison staff, service providers and visitors, who might be infected in the community.

Transmission

Infections can be transmitted between prisoners, staff and visitors, between prisons through transfers and transports of inmates and cross-distribution of staff to and from society. As such, prisons and other custodians are, of course, an integral part of all public health responses to corona virus disease (COVID-19).

In addition, generally insufficient investment in prison health, significant overpopulation in some prisons and rigid security processes have the potential to delay diagnosis and treatment.

As such, COVID-19 outbreaks in custodial settings are of importance for public health, for at least two reasons: first, that explosive outbreaks in these settings have the potential to overwhelm prison health-care services and place additional demands on overburdened specialist facilities in the community; and second, that, with an estimated 30 million people released from custody each year globally, prisons are a route for community transmission that will disproportionately impact marginalised communities.

Main routes of transmission

Infection can be spread to people by droplets coughed out or exhaled by a person with the COVID-19 virus, or people may become infected by touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

Symptoms of COVID-19

The main symptoms are:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath/ and or difficulty breathing

Some people may begin with other symptoms, such as aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, inability to smell or taste, or diarrhoea. Some people become infected and are contagious without yet having developed symptoms and feeling unwell. For many people, COVID-19 infection can be mild, and they make a full recovery with minimal intervention. However, it can be much more serious for people with underlying health conditions, and people with weakened immune systems.

Management of a COVID 19 outbreak

Any outbreak, *and in the case of COVID 19 it means one confirmed case*, must do isolation first and inform the health authorities. Then, Senior Prison Staff at Prison Headquarters should be informed to take necessary action.

Communication

Once a single case has been reported within a prison institution, it is important:

1. To communicate according to the agreed plan, the outbreak to all staff and persons in custody at prison institution,
2. To prepare staff, visitors and prisoners / detainees for the necessary restrictions required to limit any outbreaks.
3. Publish all changes to the regime and update staff and prisoners / detainees daily
4. To implement your decided contingency plan.

For prisons and places of detention, keeping families as well as prisoners informed by the authorities of the measures taken is very important. This is very important, especially when it comes to providing information on how relatives of those in custody can obtain information about or maintain contact with prisoners during crises where there is an increased risk for high-risk groups / individuals who have underlying health conditions. Examples of how this can be done or found are in the list below:

- Senior Prison Staff must make website updates on the situation and contact details for the various prisons must be posted.
- Specific phone hotline in times of crisis
- Video conferencing
- Individual contacts with welfare departments within prisons etc.
- Encouraging letter writing

Within a contingency/management plan for COVID 19 or any other pandemic it is essential to employ strategies based around three straightforward principles:

- ☒ Prevent it!
- ☒ Contain it!
- ☒ Beat it!

Prevent it!

Prevent it! Preventative measures

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Covid-19 PPE should be made available to all staff, both to protect themselves and to protect the prisoners whom they meet. PPE equipment used in prisons should be to the same specification as that used in hospitals.

Prevent it! Protect yourself and others by following the important steps outlined below:

- Train all station staff in the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and provide washing or sanitizing facilities before entry and before exit of the prison and maintain the practice throughout the outbreak.

- Screen the health of all people entering the prison including by taking their temperature, collecting information on history of covid 19 symptoms, information on vaccination, non-communicable diseases etc. via a short questionnaire.
- Follow preventive hygiene measures by keeping all areas of the prison clean and ventilated, using the overall guidance of recognised health experts e.g. World Health Organisation.
- Pay particular attention to regular daily disinfection of communal areas and specifically door handles, gates, locks, keys, communal security aids before issue and upon their return e.g., UHF radios, handheld metal detectors, handcuffs and weapons/magazines.
- Communicate COVID-19 prevention and control measures to all prisoners, ensuring they understand and addressing any fears and concerns they may have.
- Regularly wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or an alcohol-based rub, if available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Prevent transmission by catching coughs and sneezes in your elbow or in a tissue if available; then throw the tissue in a bin with a lid.
- Be alert to prisoners with a new, continuous cough, high temperature or other symptoms of concern.
- Minimize non-essential contact with suspected COVID-19 cases.
- If officers feel unwell with covid 19 symptoms, inform the prison health authorities and prison administration.

Prevent it! Preventing spread

Separate accommodation block should be allocated to isolate if diagnosed cases identified among inmates. Assign a specific group of officers to the allocated block and make sure to provide personal protective equipment for daily regime activities.

Prevent it! Isolation

OICs (Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent) should pay particular attention in considering the isolating of the following three groups of prisoners in each prison in order to minimise the risk of Covid-19 infection:

1. New arrivals must be quarantined
2. Prisoners who have symptoms of Covid-19 must be isolated
3. Elderly prisoners or those in poor health should be isolated

Ensure humane treatment whilst applying COVID 19 restrictions.

1. Improve prison sanitation wherever possible by establishing effective cleaning schedules and practice.
2. Maintain prisoners' access to open air as much as possible and for a minimum of one hour per day, using a rotating system to limit numbers.
3. Continued interaction with the outside world is necessary for the mental health and well-being of people in prison. If visits are stopped, provide alternatives to visits.
4. Introduce alternatives like virtual contacting for continued access to legal advisors of people in prison.
5. Ensure continuity of services and supplies for people with special needs, e.g. women, the elderly, children, non-nationals, the illiterate, and people with physical and mental disabilities.
6. Do not stigmatize or discriminate against suspected cases or people who have had contact with suspected/confirmed cases.
7. Decongest prisons through relevant authorities.

Further organisational considerations that will assist in preventing the spread of COVID 19.

- *Public health engagement* – A good working relationship with Public Health officials is essential and prisons should wherever possible follow their instructions on how best to manage Covid-19 outbreaks.
- *Criminal Justice engagement* – Good communication with Criminal Justice colleagues is also essential to have a co-ordinated approach across the system.
- *Movement of prisoners* to and from court need to be kept to with procedures agreed about how best to achieve this. Video link or Skype systems should be used wherever possible to enable courts to operate in the physical absence of the prisoners.
- *Prisoner escort arrangements* – the escorting staff wear PPE.
- *Prisoner communications* – Good communications with prisoners about Covid-19 and the steps being taken in prisons to contain it are essential. Ideally access to television and radio coverage to keep prisoners up to date with community developments as well as internal communications (this has helped achieve prisoner acceptance of the lock down steps that are being taken in prisons all over the world).
- *Funerals* – No attendance at funerals is being allowed except in very exceptional circumstances. Encourage virtual methods for funerals.
- *Prisoner release procedures* –
 - Inmates who are going to be discharged on bail or expiration of sentence should be separated and appropriate tests to be done to identify covid 19 patients as recommended by the health authorities. If the tests are negative, inform the relevant regional health authorities and the police stations in written regarding inmates' discharges to their areas. If the tests are positive, such inmates shall be managed in accordance with the applicable regulations issued by the Director General of Health Services.

Prevent it! Movement of prisoners

- Once accommodation units identified and established -Limit movement between accommodation blocks unless operationally critical.
- Allocate general duty staff for specific accommodation blocks to work in and avoid rotation of them as much as possible to prevent opportunity for cross contamination of COVID 19 between accommodation blocks.
- Limit movement of prisoners/detainees to and from court
- Reduce escort/transfer of prisoners/detainees to operationally critical moves only sanctioned at HQ level and on judicial requirements.

Contain it!

Contain it! Joint planning

Include prison health and penitentiary authorities in the public health condition rather than letting them plan and work in isolation. Prison health is public health. Despite this and the very loose boundaries between prisons and communities, prisons are often excluded or treated as separate from public health initiatives. The rapid spread of COVID-19 will, like most epidemics, disproportionately affect the most disadvantaged people. To mitigate the effects of outbreaks in prisons on places of detention, it is therefore crucial that prisons, juvenile prisons, and detention centres are embedded in the broader public health response.

Contain it! Risk management

Design and implement adequate systems for limiting importation and exportation of cases from or to the community, and transmission and spread within prisons.

- Consider limiting the regime within the station/detention facility. Reduce prisoner/detainee work to *essential tasks only* e.g., catering assistants and cleaning operatives. (consider accommodating essential workers together to avoid cross contamination from other areas of the prison)
- Stop all visits to prisoners/detainees but seek alternative options for virtual visits to maintain family contact. (discuss the rationale with prisoners before stopping visits to reduce risks to disorder)
- Deliver meals to each accommodation unit rather than collecting meals from one central point to reduce exposure to the virus.
- Restrict or severely reduce movements around the prison wherever possible by considering:

- any options for support staff to work remotely either at home, or in another identified place within the prison/place of detention.
- allocating the same staff group to each accommodation unit daily across all shifts.

Contain it! Prevention and control. Develop protocols for entry screening, personal protection measures, environmental cleaning and disinfection, and restriction of movement, including limitation of transfers and access for non-essential staff and visitors.

Contain it! Healthcare

Task health care professionals to engage regularly with staff and prisoners to explain the symptoms of any outbreak, dispel myths and to provide reassurance.

Explicitly and transparently align the prison/place of detention health systems with the wider community health and emergency planning systems, including any transfer protocols for patients requiring specialised care.

Consideration must be given to isolate identified cases and contacts if required to control the spread of infection in prisons. Special consideration of the potentially serious mental health effects of isolation in these settings is essential.

Contain it! Order and Control

Order and control during all virus outbreak situations will always give cause for concern among the staff regarding the management's handling of orders and control. Senior executives must therefore provide calm and consistent leadership and consider having a certain amount of patience towards unpleasant staff and prisoners / detainees in a potentially very unstable situation that a viral outbreak in closed institutions inevitably causes. Potentially, staff and prisoners/detainees may be at heightened risk of reacting irrationally to any given situation that under normal circumstances would not give any cause for concern due to their heightened sensitivity to change of routines or in some cases fear of catching the virus.

Normal daily practices need to be reviewed, for example Search – OICs (Superintendents/Assistant Superintendents) should consider the frequency and need for searches which are usually related to the need to apply strict movement restrictions and regime restrictions during each outbreak of COVID 19 at their station / detention centre.

Contain it! Protection of staff conducting searching.

OIC's must ensure that appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is provided to staff required to conduct searching to protect them and those they are searching from the potential to contract COVID 19.

Beat it!

Measures which will stop the spread of a virus inside the prison, will include:

1. Social distancing and changing of traditional greetings.
2. Decide now where you will house individuals or groups of individuals in custody if found to be infected.
3. Restricted movement inside places of detention, stopping of all transfers between places of detention, and consider the use of alternatives to facilitate access to legal assistance, such as the use of mobile telephone or video conferencing for court hearings. Restriction of movement inside the Prison. Limit transport and movements inside the Prison; Consider limiting activities where larger groups have the opportunity to meet; Consider limiting mobility by isolating individual wings or units

Restrict larger gatherings inside the prison without compromising the safe and secure environment for staff and prisoners.

4. Early isolation of symptomatic prisoners either individually or collectively in dedicated house blocks where many are infected.
5. Inform the prisoners/detainees by using signs, noticeboards, TV, or radio. To avoid the potential for disturbances, it is very important that prisoners are regularly informed about the ongoing situation. Transparent communication with prisoners/detainees will have a significant impact in reducing health concerns and the risk of potential disorder.
6. Educate staff, prisoners/detainees and official visitors about the signs and symptoms of COVID 19 and how to combat the virus by following W.H.O. guidance around hygiene, self-containment if infected.

This concludes the main content of the COVID 19 Prison outbreak contingency management plan.

Checklist:

PPE

What: Prison officials and inmates should be trained in the correct use of a surgical mask, to protect them against other people's potentially infectious respiratory droplets and the mask use and supply of masks should be ensured as much as possible.

1. Perform hand hygiene before putting on a mask and after discarding a used mask.
2. Masks should not be left dangling around a person's neck.
3. Avoid touching the front of the mask while wearing it.

When: The minimum PPE to be worn for cleaning an area where a person with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) is disposable gloves and an apron. Hands should be washed with soap and water for a recommended period of time after all PPE has been removed.

If a risk assessment of the setting indicates that a higher level of virus may be present (for example, where unwell individuals have slept such as a multiple occupancy cell block), it is essential to take required precautions when cleaning such places.

How: Every officer and inmate should wear masks and officers and health staff, depending on the risk of exposing to the corona virus should wear PPEs.

Who: Every officer, inmates and health staff should follow the guidelines with regard to PPEs given by the Director General of Health Services (DGHS)

Provide daily access to healthcare staff who can assess prisoners and then make clinical recommendations.

Initial and ongoing assessments of the prisoners are very important to limit the spread of the virus, but also to prevent unnecessary restrictions being put in place which may limit the movement of individuals within the custodial environment and its regime.

Reporting process for staff to be able to report suspected infected prisoners.

Detect person early! Contact prison health officers.

Most suitable would be a daily handover to their closest supervisor who will pass the information up the chain of command. Prisons may additionally develop paper systems for this task depending on location and or resourcing implications.

Cleaning Management

What: Cleaning an area with normal household disinfectant after someone with suspected corona virus (COVID-19) has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. Daily disinfection of commonly used places within prisons with a recommended disinfectant is essential to prevent possible infections.

When: Public areas such as corridors, canteens, rest rooms, office complexes, quarantine centres, treatment centres and commonly used vehicles, equipment, taps, telephone receivers should be cleaned thoroughly as normal but as a minimum every day.

How:

- Wear PPEs properly and dispose the used the PPEs in proper manner.
- Disinfect the surfaces with the cleaning products you normally use. Pay particular attention to frequently touched areas and surfaces, such as bathrooms, grab-rails in corridors and stairwells and door handles, commonly use places.
- Wash hands regularly with soap and water for recommended period.
- Use disposable cloths or paper roll and disposable mop heads, to clean all hard surfaces, floors, chairs, door handles and sanitary fittings.
- Use a recommended disinfectant solution for cleaning.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants. This is essential not only for its effective use, but also to ensure prolonged availability and reduce the costs of supply.

Who: Equipment Store Keeper (ESK) branch with a person who has received training in proper handling and regulations and has been equipped with relevant protective equipment. Guidance of prison health staff should be taken.

Waste Management

What : Waste from covid treatment centres, quarantine centres, isolation places or any other infections possible places should be properly managed to avoid any possible infections through the wastages.

When: Every time that wastage is removed

How :

1. Wastage should be put in a rubbish bag and tied when full.
2. The rubbish bag should then be placed in a secure place.
3. Waste should be stored safely and kept away. You should not put your waste in communal areas and dispose after recommended period of time.

Who :Equipment Store Keeper (ESK) branch with a person who has received training in proper handling of wastage and has been equipped with relevant protective equipment. Guidance of prison health staff should be taken.

Ventilation in Units – Blocks

What: Good ventilation counteracts the spread of viruses and other diseases. Ventilation inside the wings of a prison is very much important.

When: Immediately and always

How: Ensure that ventilation is as good as possible in the cells / blocks. The windows should be cleared of clothing, fabric coverings and other personal belongings which may reduce airflow.

Who: The officers assigned in cell blocks and wards.

Communication with the partners and other authorities

What: Close collaboration among local health authorities, divisional and district secretariats, police stations and agencies are very much important and required in a pandemic or any other circumstances in a prison. As well as, close coordination with Prison Headquarters is essential in managing a pandemic in prisons. Ensuring the continuity of information, which is a crucial component of an effective management of a pandemic is similarly important. Further, establishment of an information centre from which the families of inmates are possible to get information regarding their relatives in prisons is a significant aspect during a pandemic.

When: Fast and accurate information sharing and close coordination should be ensured from the beginning to end of a pandemic among above stake holders for an efficient and effective management of a prison during a pandemic.

How: An responsible officer or a committee of officers should be appointed to coordinate with above authorities and required physical resources should be given to assigned officials.

Who: Assigned responsible officer (may be a jailer) or committee members.

Communication with inmates

What: Continuous and proper communication between prison administration and inmates are vital in any circumstances. Particularly, it is essential to communicate and update the inmates regarding the prevailing situation of covid 19 and precautions that should be taken by inmates to prevent or mitigate the risk of spreading the virus among inmates and to prevent incidents that may occur.

When: To avoid disturbances, suspicions, misunderstanding and spreading covid19 , it is very important to make aware the inmates about the situation and the reason for changes in the prison's everyday life.

How: Communication through notices, posters, displays and rehabilitation officers and selected inmates.

Who: The rehabilitation officers, officers directly involve in inmates' matters.

Relocations of inmates

What? Good practice would be to stop all inter-prison transfers/escorts, restrict/postpone possible productions to courts. consider the use of alternatives like video proceedings instead of physical production to courts.

- If transport or movement outside is necessary, instruct the inmates and officers to wear masks and other PPEs as required.

When: From the beginning of such a pandemic in the Country

How: If transport or movement outside is necessary, instruct the both inmates and officers to wear masks and other PPEs as required.

Disinfection of vehicles after escorting or transferring of inmates is essential.

Who: Drivers and officers who are responsible for transporting inmates.

Management of new admissions

What: Prisoners who have recently arrived at prisons can transmit the virus to the prison. Therefore, a specific plan has to be introduced and implemented to manage new arrivals.

When: Every day new arrivals.

How: Inmates should be separated at the court based on the risk assessment and should be examined by a medical officer at the entrance of the prison. All the new admissions should be quarantined within a separated section in the prison or outside quarantine center as determined by the Superintendent of Prisons (SP) subjected to recommendations of health staff. Duration of quarantine is determined by circulars issued by the Director General of Health Services (DGHS). PCRs should be done at the end of quarantine period. Following actions or facts should be taken or considered at the risk assessment

- Measurement of temperature, Disinfection, Rapid antigen tests, Health history, Age, Living area and job status, Vaccination history, other risks

Awareness programs on covid 19 should be arranged within the quarantine centers (Videos, audios, displays can be used). Separation and other precautionary methods should be implemented based on risk levels in these centers as determined by the SPs based on recommendations of health staff and selected officers should be assigned to work with these inmates for a specific period as determined by the SP or Chief Jailer (CJ). Further, maintenance a proper data base for admissions is required and information of positive inmates should be reported to the HQ covid center daily.

Who: Officers who are going to courts, assigned medical staff for this task, officers in main gate and the staff assigned to quarantine centres.

Management of legal representation

What :Legal representation is a right of inmates. Therefore, it is required to facilitate for lawyer visits or legal representation through a proper mechanism. Respect due process of the law and inform lawyers and other official visitors about the restrictions and consider alternative options to facilitate access to legal assistance e.g. use of mobile telephone/video conferencing to obtain legal advice etc.

When: When legal representation is required for inmates

How: If it is risky to allow face to face lawyer visits, alternatives should be introduced like video calls, telephone calls. If face to face lawyer visits are essentials, it should be arranged with required precautionary measures.

Prison Staff

What: Protection of prison staff from a pandemic through every possible precautions and measures is essentials for a smooth running of a prison. If the prison staff gets positive with covid, daily routines and other functions are interrupted creating number of other issues. Therefore, special measures should be established to safeguard and treat if officers get positive.

When : Throughout the prevalence of pandemic in the country

How : If any officer is identified with covid 19 symptoms, they should inform the relevant authorities and act according to the recommendations given by the authorities. Every officer should follow necessary covid health precautions according to their job description. Further, the Superintendent of Prisons should take necessary arrangements to supply and store adequate quantities of relevant health protective equipment and other logistics for the use of officers and inmates.

Superintendent should personally visit and observe the commonly used facilities like bachelor quarters, canteens etc to check possible spreading of virus. Further, Superintendent of Prisons should follow the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Public Administration and Commissioner General of Prisons with regard to officers (Call officers for duties as teams, Provision of accommodation and transportation). Moreover, the risk levels of officers in assigning duties to them (Age, NCDs) should be considered by the Superintendent and Chief Jailers. If any positive cases found among officers, isolate them immediately and inform to prison health authority and HQ covid center and make arrangements to transfer them to treatment centers or home quarantine

Who : Superintendent, Chief Jailers and other staff members who are responsible for each and every circumstances highlighted above.

Management of discharges of inmates

What : Discharge of inmates is another very important aspect of importance in managing covid 19 pandemic in prisons. The risk of moving the virus from prisons to society should be prevented through a proper scanning process. Discharges of inmates may be a major source of transmitting the virus to the society, if it is not carefully managed. Therefore, proper plan of discharge has to be implemented in each and every prison throughout the country.

When: For every discharge of inmates on bail or at the completion of sentence.

How: Inmates who are going to be discharged on bail or expiration of sentence should be separated and appropriate tests recommended by the health authorities should be done to identify covid 19 patients. If the tests are negative, inform the relevant regional health authorities and the police stations in written regarding inmates' discharges to their areas. If any positive cases found, such inmates shall be managed in accordance with the applicable regulations issued by the DGHS. Inmates who were vaccinated within prisons should be issued vaccination certificates at the discharge and an updated data base for discharges should be maintained by the Superintendents of Prisons.

Who : Prison health staff and responsible officers for discharges

Management of vocational training

What: Vocational training in a prison is one of the rehabilitation aspects of importance which should be carefully run during a pandemic situation as the work stations are mostly probable places of spreading virus. Therefore, the prison administration has to strictly follow the guidelines of DGHS (Director General Health Services) in functioning vocational training.

When: At any occasion that industries are in function

How: Superintendent of Prisons based on health recommendations should decide whether he functions all the industries or essential industries. If any external officials participate in rehabilitation or vocational training programs as resource persons, it is required to have vaccination certificates. Further, it is encouraged to conduct such lecturing programs using virtual platforms. Food production processes and products handling in industries have to be arranged taking necessary covid precautions. Required facilities for washing, sanitizing should be established in industrial sections and a proper mechanism has to be implemented to disinfect commonly used equipment and places in industries.

Who : Assistant Superintendent of Prisons or Jailer who is the in charge of industries, vocational instructors in respective workshops and officers assigned duties in industrial activities.

Management of rehabilitation programs

What: Rehabilitation Activities are very important requirement in prisons since it closely associates with the prison inmates and their well being. Though it is more important, implementation of such programs during a pandemic situation have to be well organized and properly planned to prevent any possibility of spreading the pandemic through rehabilitation programs. Further, it is needed to follow the health recommendations in taking the involvement of external parties for rehabilitation programs.

When: It is required to follow each and every recommendation at every rehabilitation program organized.

How: Superintendents of Prisons and rehabilitation officials should be careful to implement the most required and effective rehabilitation programs and while following covid precautionary requirement. Encourage social distance as much as possible during the programs and disinfection of place of programs in advance, availability of washing facilities should be ensured. Further, consider whether external parties joining for the programs have been vaccinated and are essential for such programs.

Who : Rehabilitation officers and other assigned officers for such rehabilitation related activities

Meals Management

What: Preparation and distribution of meals are other important areas where the covid pandemic could be spread throughout the prison if the kitchen doesn't act in order and securely. Food preparation has to be well hygienic, clean and secured to avoid any possible transmission of virus. As well as, another vital aspect is food distribution within the cells and wards where there is possibility of spreading the virus among inmates. Therefore, it is essential to strictly follow the covid regulations and precautions within the kitchen and during the food distribution.

When: In each and every meal time and distribution

How: Separate group of inmates should be utilized for kitchen work and accommodated closed by the kitchen and a separate group of inmates should be used for food serving with PPE kits and other required precautions. As well as, a proper mechanism should be established to prevent contacting inmates with ration contractors and both raw and dry rations should be properly cleaned. More over, the equipment used in kitchen and during the distribution should be cleaned before and after using.

Who: In charges and other officers in kitchen, ration jailers and officers, officers involve in food distribution.

Kitchen Management

What :Kitchen in a prison is a place where covid can be transmitted throughout the prison. Therefore, proper management of the kitchen in a prison is essential to prevent possible transmission of covid pandemic.

When :Every time that raw ration is taken, cooking and distribution

How :Separate group of inmates should be utilized for kitchen work and accommodated closed by the kitchen and a separate group of inmates should be used for food serving with PPE kits and other required precautions. Further, a proper mechanism should be established to prevent contacts of inmates with ration contractors. Vegetables and other raw materials should be properly cleaned.

Who :Officers attached to kitchen, taking raw rations and food distribution.

Search Management

What: Searches of personals, cells and wards in a prison are essential to maintain a secured prison environment and may also be a sensitive activity that can spread covid pandemic among inmates and officers. Therefore, a proper mechanism has to be implemented in searches to avoid transmission of virus through searches.

When: Throughout the period that the pandemic is existed.

How: Use of modern technologies for searches should be promoted and based mainly on intelligence. Only the essential searches could be executed depending on intelligence.

Who: Officers who involve in searches of persons, items, cells and wards.

Visits Management

What: Although the contacting outside world is a right of prison inmates, it will be a main source of spreading the virus from/to society. Therefore, visits should be managed properly to prevent the transmissions to both sides. Then, prison administration has to decide whether face to face visits are suspended and virtual visits are promoted.

When: Immediately when there is a suspicion of infection. The prison should consider the length of time that it can be closed to visitors but must also take its lead from WHO and HQ guidelines and instructions.

How: Video visitation and pre booked visits should be encouraged. Superintendents should follow the regulations with regard to visitation issued by the Director General of Health Services (DGHS). Inmates should not be allowed to take food or other items from external parties and follow the circulars issued by the Commissioner General of Prisons in terms of visitation (CGP). Superintendents based on the instructions issued by the CGP should introduce a mechanism to get essential items through prison canteens. All other visits (lawyer visits) should be arranged in accordance with regulations issued by the DGHS and the CGP. Further, steps should be taken to establish an information center to make aware the families of infected inmates and privileges like home leave and license board should be subjected to quarantine and PCRs.

Who: Officials attached to SM branch, daily visitations, canteens and information centre.

Prison Health Staff

Main Covid 19 management center headed by Director Health Services (Prisons) should be established at the PHQ. This center should maintain an updated and accurate data base with regard to covid in the DOP and take actions to send identified covid patients and officers within prison institutions to treatment centers or home quarantine coordinating with the health authorities.

Health Staff attached to Department of Prisons have to take all the necessary precautions to prevent spreading covid within prison premises. They should closely supervise, direct and observe the circumstances and make recommendations to CGP, SPs take required actions.

Health staff should issue the relevant guidelines/ recommendations regarding covid to prison authorities.

Health staff should closely coordinate with the regional health authorities and make necessary arrangements to run intermediate quarantine centers and treatment centers under DOP with their assistance

Guidelines for General Practices

Superintendent of Prisons should appoint a covid 19 management committee in the prison institution consisting relevant officials.

The committee should daily involve in awareness programs, observation, reporting to SP, coordination with HQ covid center and regional health staff, proposing SP the alternative activities prevent spreading.

Regular provision of protective items and other logistics to prevent spreading covid should be ensured in prisons.

Inmates of external work parties should be separated from other inmates. If it is possible, SPs may decide to detain such inmates in a secured outside place within the prison premises

Facilities for hand washing, bathing and sanitizing should be established

Preferences

This document draws on advice from several sources including:

- The World Health Organisation, <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/prisons-and-health/publications/2020/preparedness,-prevention-and-control-of-covid-19-in-prisons-and-other-places-of-detention-2020>
- The Lancet medical journal
- UNODC guidelines- Preparedness, prevention and control of COVID-19 in prisons and other places of detention Interim guidance 15 March 2020
- Public Health England UK Prisons Communicable Diseases contingency plans
- UNODC prisons mentors operational experience of incident management
- Guidelines of Director General Health Services Sri Lanka (DGHS)
- Prison health staff
- Prison Ordinance and Regulations