
Foreword

by Brigitte Strobél-Shaw

Integrity within prison systems is fundamental to the rule of law and the credibility of justice institutions. As closed environments, characterized by significant power imbalances and limited transparency, prisons remain particularly vulnerable to corruption. When corruption occurs, it undermines security, facilitates criminal activity, weakens rehabilitation efforts and erodes public trust. Most importantly, it threatens the dignity and rights of those deprived of liberty and the professionalism of prison personnel.

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) calls upon States parties to promote transparency, accountability and integrity across all public institutions, including prison systems. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) provide universally agreed standards for humane and effective prison management. *Integrity Behind Bars: Guide on Corruption Risk Management in Prison Systems* supports Member States in translating both of these commitments into practice by offering practical, preventive and risk-based approaches to strengthening integrity in prisons.

This Guide provides concrete tools and good practices that prison administrations can directly apply. These include conducting corruption risk assessments to identify vulnerabilities in core functions; developing mitigation strategies to address those vulnerabilities, such as merit-based recruitment, vetting and staff rotation; establishing safe and confidential reporting mechanisms; and reinforcing oversight and accountability systems. It also highlights the value of leveraging technology and strengthening leadership to foster a culture of integrity. Together, these measures demonstrate that corruption risks can be systematically mitigated through structured and sustained action.

This publication also reflects the strength of cooperation and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) expresses its sincere gratitude to the co-producer, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) of Hong Kong, China, and to the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA) for its continued partnership and commitment to advancing integrity worldwide.

Corruption in prison systems is a global challenge, but it is one that can be addressed. It is my sincere hope that this Guide will serve as a valuable resource for Member States in strengthening prison integrity, protecting human rights and reinforcing public trust in justice institutions.

Brigitte Strobél-Shaw
Acting Director, Division for Treaty Affairs
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Foreword

by Woo Ying-ming

Integrity behind bars is essential to justice, human dignity and public trust. Correctional systems, by their very nature, operate as closed environments with concentrated authority and limited external scrutiny. Without active safeguards, such settings become inherently vulnerable to corruption. Left unchecked, these risks erode institutional credibility, undermine fairness and cripple the very prospects of rehabilitation.

To confront this pressing challenge, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) of Hong Kong, China and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with the support of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities, jointly developed *Integrity Behind Bars: Guide on Corruption Risk Management in Prison Systems*. This Guide offers a practical, field-tested toolkit designed to help prison and correctional authorities, anti-corruption agencies and other interested institutions identify corruption vulnerabilities, strengthen integrity frameworks and embed accountability into daily operations.

Building on previous UNODC publications, enriched by international experience, and informed by the frontline expertise of practitioners, this Guide presents a comprehensive range of measures that are adopted across jurisdictions to reduce vulnerabilities in custodial settings. These include corruption risk assessments, prevention reviews, professional training, procedural clarity and strengthened complaints channels. Equally important, the Guide recognizes that sustainable integrity requires attention to staff welfare, as underpaid or overburdened personnel are more vulnerable to corrupt inducements.

The Guide also shares the good practices of Hong Kong, China, among others, where the close partnership between the ICAC and the Correctional Services Department in preventing corruption and upholding integrity in the prison system has proven highly effective. There, clean prison management rests on the foundation of an independent anti-corruption agency, close institutional collaboration, proactive corruption prevention reviews, robust staff training and transparent public reporting mechanisms, which provide options for consideration of prison authorities in other jurisdictions.

We are honoured to present this Guide as a contribution to strengthening integrity across global justice systems. Developed in close collaboration with correctional experts, anti-corruption practitioners, academics and international partners, it reflects diverse legal and cultural realities while staying faithful to shared principles of justice, transparency and human rights.

It is our sincere hope that this Guide serves not only as a practical resource but as a catalyst for reform, and as an inspiration for all those committed to enhancing integrity behind bars.

Woo Ying-ming
Commissioner, Independent Commission
Against Corruption of Hong Kong, China
President, International Association of
Anti-Corruption Authorities

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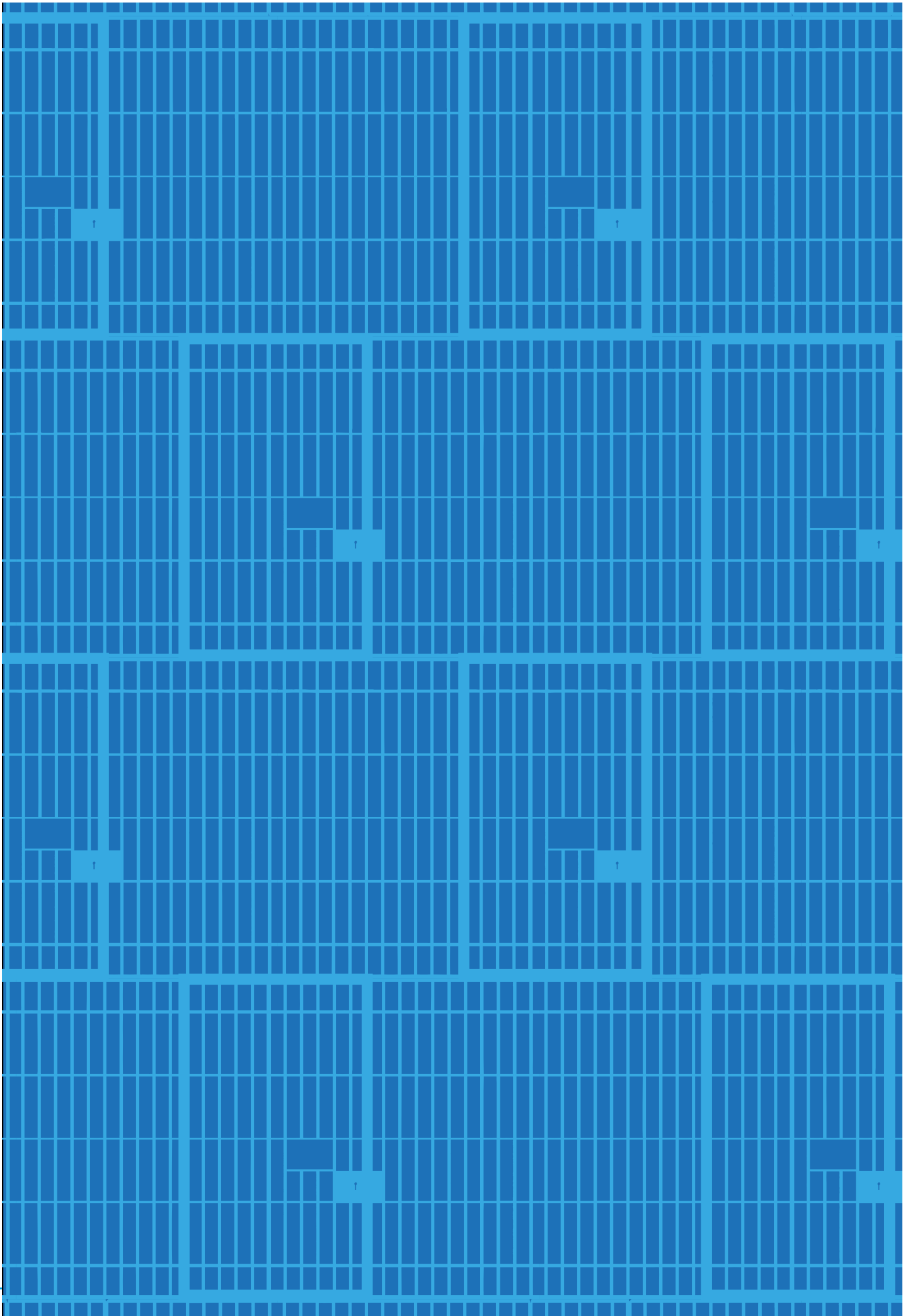
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International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities



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