

# **Rehabilitating Kenyan Inmates through Mindfulness PLUS Training**

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## **Background**

Mindfulness PLUS was first implemented in the largest maximum security prison in Kenya (Naivasha). In 2015, a group of 25 inmates were trained over two days in a mindfulness programme applied to the prison context, which included proactive techniques such as ‘Mindfulness Techniques on the Go’ and embodiment techniques such as mindful release of emotions. To make this programme self-sustaining, those men then became “mindfulness champions and leaders” who to date have trained around 200 inmates with great results.

## **Objectives**

This paper describes some of the key components of the Mindfulness PLUS programme and assesses its impact in Naivasha prison.

## **Methods**

Randomised control trials and longitudinal studies could not be conducted due to the prison environment. Open ended surveys and an evaluation made by an independent assessor (interviews and focus groups) revealed a great impact of the programme at the individual, group and institutional level. Key outcomes from these qualitative studies were used to construct a questionnaire to assess the generalisability of the impact in 140 inmates.

## **Results**

Individual level: indicators show that more than 80% feel more in control of their emotions, their thoughts, they are more reflective, they are consuming less drugs and alcohol and even they have regained control over their lives despite being incarcerated. Group level: among other improvements, more than 80% see themselves as part of a group of mindful leaders, they engage in less conflict, more cooperation and they are mentoring each other.

Institutional level: more than 75% respect rules and regulations, they engage in other rehabilitation programmes and have better relationship with prison authorities. All the above changes are highly correlated with being more mindful and with identification with the mindfulness training group.

## **Conclusion**

Results show that Mindfulness PLUS had a multilevel impact in Naivasha and the positive results were related to both being more mindful and identifying with a mindful group.

## **Discussion**

Certain mindfulness trainings are appropriate to be shared by trained inmates. The power of being trained by a fellow inmate highlights the potential of utilising and creating social identities that revolve around mindfulness.