CASE STUDY OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION PROGRAMME IN THE NATIONAL PRISON SYSTEM OF SENEGAL

JEAN-MICHEL BOUDIGUES
Maharishi European Research University, Seelisberg, Switzerland


This case study reports benefits for inmates, for correctional staff, and for the country from nationwide implementation of the Transcendental Meditation Programme in the prisons of Senegal. Benefits for inmates included sharp reduction in negativity, irritability and aggressiveness; improved relations between inmates; improvement in health; marked decrease in drug consumption; improvement in sleep; and greater confidence and joyfulness. Benefits for staff were greater self-confidence, greater concern for inmates, greater self-control, greater conscientiousness, improved health, and decreased absenteeism and lateness. Benefits for prisons were almost complete cessation of fights between inmates, sharp decrease in the number of medical consultations, marked decrease in rule violations by inmates and staff, and fewer escapes; and benefits for the nation were reduced national recidivism, as well as increased and more balanced rainfall and increased harvests.—EDITOR

In early 1987, the Transcendental Meditation Programme, the fundamental component of Maharishi’s Unified Field Based Integrated System of Rehabilitation, was introduced into the prison system in Senegal, beginning with two prisons in the capital city, Dakar and a third prison in the nearby city of Thiès. This first stage of implementation was evaluated using reports of inmates and personnel, reports of prison directors, and evaluation of the Director of the Penitentiary Administration.

PROFOUND AND COMPREHENSIVE IMMEDIATE BENEFITS

The results of this program were immediate, profound, and comprehensive. Colonel Mamadou Diop, the Director of the Penitentiary Administration of the Republic of Senegal, described the outcomes as follows:

The first results of this program in Senegalese prisons were really dramatic, as much for their speed to manifest as for their intensity. The reports that one prison director after another sent to me after only a few days or weeks of the application of this program share in common the same amazement and deep satisfaction. These results can be summarized as follows:

a) Inmates:
- Immediate improvement in sleep—disappearance of insomnia, which was widespread;
- Very sharp reduction in irritability and aggressiveness;
- Very sharp reduction in negativity; more confidence in oneself and in the future, more joyfulness;
- Improvement in relationships between inmates—more openness, better communication, reduction in the number of thefts and diverse types of aggressive behavior;
- Improvement in health; marked decrease in drug consumption.

b) Staff:
- More self-confidence and more concern for the inmates;
- More self-control;
- Greater conscientiousness;
- Better health;
- Less absenteeism and lateness.
This was done in a systematic way from August 1987 to February 1989. During this time, over eleven thousand inmates and nine hundred correctional officers were instructed in the Transcendental Meditation Programme. Thirty-one prisons participated, including maximum security prisons, prison farms, prisons housing both adults and juvenile offenders, and one women’s prison. In each prison, as in the initial three institutions, both inmates and staff participated.

The holistic benefits for individual inmates, staff, and the institution as a whole were appreciated by the director of each prison in Senegal, as reflected by their unanimous support for a resolution endorsing Maharishi’s Unified Field Based Integrated System of Rehabilitation at the 1988 annual meeting of the penitentiary administration of Senegal.

BROADER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of the Transcendental Meditation Programme, points out that stress, negativity, and violation of Natural Law by the members of society give rise not only to imbalance and disorder in society but imbalance in nature as well. As collections of the most incoherent and turbulent members of society, prisons generate an influence of incoherence and stress in the collective consciousness. Thus, the alleviation of stress in the prisons and prisoners, on a large enough scale, could relieve imbalance in society and promote balance in nature.

Accordingly, greater balance in nature, reflected in more ideal rainfall, was predicted in advance by the team implementing the project in Senegal. An analysis of 13 years of meteorological data from ASECNA (the agency for the security and control of air traffic) and the Ministry of Civil Engineering, Urbanism, and Transport in Dakar revealed that in 1987 Senegal had the highest rainfall in 9 years, and the best distribution of rains over time in 9 years (without excessive flooding leading to crop damage). In contrast to Senegal, neighbouring countries did not have improved rainfall. In addition, Senegal in 1987 had the most optimal spatial distribution of rains over the whole country compared with the previous 12 years, with more rain in northern semi-arid areas and less in wetter areas for which large amounts of rain were not needed for crop production. Record harvests in Senegal were the result.

CONCLUSION

The results of this project serve as an example of the enormous benefits that can be gained by the criminal justice system of any country by the wide-scale implementation of the Transcendental Meditation Programme. These benefits include improved mental and physical health among both inmates and staff, more peaceful prison atmosphere, and substantially reduced recidivism. Greater balance in nature was also seen in the national rainfall and harvest. The results of this case study thus support the proven effects of many controlled studies with individual inmates, and indicate that the highest goals of any nation’s criminal justice systems can be practically realized though the development of consciousness achieved by the Transcendental Meditation Programme.