

Protection and Fulfillment of Women Prisoners' Rights under Indonesia's Law No. 1 of 2023: A Case Study at Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Palembang

Nashriana¹✉, Syaiful Asmi Hasibuan², Nadillah Maudi Cahyani³, Rida Kherin Oktavianty⁴

¹ Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, 30662, Indonesia

² Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, 30662, Indonesia

³ Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, 30662, Indonesia

⁴ Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, 30662, Indonesia

correspond: nadillahmaudi@gmail.com

Abstract

This community engagement project aimed to enhance legal awareness and strengthen the protection of prisoners' rights at Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Palembang through the socialization of Indonesia's new Criminal Code (Law No. 1 of 2023). The initiative adopted a participatory and empirical approach consisting of five stages: preliminary assessment, legal socialization, educational implementation, evaluation, and sustainability planning. Fifty inmates participated in the program out of a total of 547 inmates at the facility. Data were collected through pre-tests, post-tests, interviews, and observations. Results showed a significant increase in inmates' legal understanding, from 32% in the pre-test to 86% in the post-test, indicating a 54% improvement. Qualitative findings revealed improved confidence, communication, and awareness of rights among participants. The program also contributed to fostering human rights-based correctional practices aligned with the Nelson Mandela Rules and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 16). In conclusion, the legal socialization of Law No. 1 of 2023 proved effective in empowering inmates through education and promoting the institutional shift toward a rehabilitative correctional model.

Keywords: Prisoners' Rights, Criminal Code (Law No. 1 of 2023), Legal Literacy, Restorative Justice, Correctional Institution, Human Rights Empowerment

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1. Introduction

The protection of prisoners' rights is central to achieving justice and human dignity within Indonesia's correctional system. Law No. 1 of 2023 marks a major reform of the Criminal Code, replacing the colonial Dutch legacy and introducing a humanistic, restorative approach that prioritizes proportional punishment, rehabilitation, and reintegration, including the explicit recognition and protection of prisoners' fundamental rights [1]. The law mandates that punishment must not degrade dignity (Article 52) and must consider individual circumstances (Article 54), aligning with modern correctional philosophy that views prisons as rehabilitative and educational environments rather than sites of retribution [2], [3].

Despite this advancement, the fulfillment of prisoners' rights remains constrained by limited legal literacy, inadequate educational support, and institutional challenges. Many inmates especially in Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Palembang Institution come from disadvantaged backgrounds and lack access to legal information, leaving them unaware of rights such as fair procedures, protection from abuse, health services, remission, communication, and rehabilitation opportunities [4], [5]. Low legal literacy deepens vulnerability to procedural injustice, as many inmates have never received structured legal education, reinforcing disempowerment [6]. Prior studies highlight that legal awareness supports rehabilitation and reduces recidivism, consistent with SDG 4 and SDG 16 on education, justice, and inclusive institutions [7], [8].

Data from Ditjenpas and field observations show that the Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Palembang prison is near full capacity, with overcrowding and limited access to legal counseling. Only 15% of inmates have participated in legal counseling in the past two years, and fewer than 10% understand key rights related to remission, rehabilitation, and legal aid, demonstrating the urgency of rights-based educational interventions [9]. A legal literacy program implemented by Universitas Sriwijaya in response to these issues demonstrated a 68% improvement in inmates' comprehension, affirming the effectiveness of participatory legal education [10].

These developments reflect Indonesia's broader shift toward a rehabilitative, rights-based correctional model. The new Criminal Code serves as a "moral compass" that humanizes offenders and redefines punishment as social restoration, a transformation that requires consistent implementation and continuous legal education [11]. This article analyzes the legal, institutional, and social dimensions of rights fulfillment in Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Palembang facility, offering recommendations to strengthen justice and human dignity within correctional practices [12]. Thus, this initiative not only fulfills the mandate of Law No. 1 of 2023 but also embodies Indonesia's broader constitutional commitment to justice and human dignity.

2. Methods

The methodological framework of this community engagement program employed an empirical and participatory approach to enhance inmates' legal literacy regarding Law Number 1 of 2023 on the Indonesian Criminal Code. Conducted at Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Palembang which in 2025 housed approximately 547 female inmates the program involved 50 participants.

The core activity was delivered through a structured 90-minute session consisting of a 15-minute pre-test, a 45-minute interactive presentation by the facilitator, a 15-minute discussion, and a 15-minute post-test. This sequence ensured systematic measurement of learning outcomes and effective engagement with the participants. Each stage was executed to produce reliable data and demonstrate the program's impact on inmates' legal awareness.

2.1. Preliminary Assessment

This initial phase aimed to identify inmates' baseline legal understanding. The research team from the Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, together with the institution's education division, distributed structured questionnaires and conducted guided interviews with selected inmates and officers. The pre-test consisted of 15 questions on key provisions of Law No. 1 of 2023, covering rights to fair process, health services, rehabilitation, remission, and family contact. A total of 50 inmates participated voluntarily. Conducted in a single day, the assessment allowed time for orientation, testing, and debriefing. The results indicated that only 32% of participants had an adequate understanding of their rights. This phase also included mapping available resources and institutional readiness, which informed the development of training materials tailored to inmates' literacy levels and learning needs [1].

2.2. Legal Socialization (Educational Intervention)

Figure 1. Legal Socialization



Source: Field Data, 2025

Figure 4. Participants of the Legal Socialization



Source: Field Data, 2025

The second phase involved a structured legal education workshop on key provisions of the new Criminal Code related to prisoners' rights, delivered through interactive lectures, visual media, case discussions, and role-playing. Materials were simplified

into practical explanations using relatable examples from daily prison life. Sessions were facilitated by law lecturers, correctional practitioners, and law students, covering five themes: humane treatment, proportional sentencing and restorative justice, rights to remission and rehabilitation, access to services, and legal assistance mechanisms. Conducted in a single three-hour session at the institution’s multipurpose hall, the workshop used a participatory approach that encouraged inmates to share personal experiences, fostering a reflective and empowering learning environment [6], [5].

2.3. Educational Implementation and Interactive Learning

Figure 3. Interactive Learning



Source: Field Data, 2025

Figure 3. Interactive Learning



Source: Field Data, 2025

During implementation, the facilitators applied contextual pedagogy, using multimedia presentations, visual diagrams, and real-case examples to bridge the gap between abstract legal principles and practical understanding. An educational pamphlet summarizing Law No. 1 of 2023 (focusing on prisoners’ rights) was distributed to each participant.

Additionally, a diagrammatic comprehension model (Table 1) was introduced to illustrate the difference in inmates’ understanding levels before and after the intervention.

Figure 1. Comparison of Inmates’ Legal Understanding Before and After Socialization

Evaluation Phase	Mean Understanding Score (%)	Interpretation
Pre-Test	32%	Limited understanding
Post-Test	86%	Significant comprehension

Source: Field Data, 2025

As shown in Table 1, the evaluation indicates a 54% improvement in legal understanding after the educational program. The increase demonstrates the effectiveness of participatory and contextual teaching methods in improving inmates’ knowledge of their legal rights, consistent with previous empirical findings that participatory legal education enhances retention and awareness among marginalized groups [1].

2.4. Evaluation and Monitoring

Figure 5. Sharing Session



Source: Field Data, 2025

Figure 6. Sharing Session



Source: Field Data, 2025

Evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Pre-test and post-test comparisons measured

gains in legal comprehension, while interviews and FGDs with inmates and officers assessed behavioral changes and program relevance. Data triangulation, combining observations, feedback forms, and staff performance records strengthened the validity of findings. Post-test results showed that over 70% of participants could identify at least four legal rights under Law No. 1 of 2023, up from 18% before the intervention. Correctional staff also noted greater inmate confidence in discussing their treatment and rights, reflecting the cognitive and psychological empowerment targeted by restorative correctional education [7].

2.5. Program Sustainability and Institutional Integration

The final stage focused on developing a sustainability plan to institutionalize legal education within the correctional facility. The team produced a modular handbook, “Understanding Your Rights under KUHP 2023,” for integration into future rehabilitation activities. A proposed MoU between Universitas Sriwijaya and Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Palembang aims to support annual follow-up programs and continued collaboration. The sustainability plan consists of three key components: (1) Training of Trainers (ToT) for officers as legal literacy facilitators, (2) integration of legal modules into the rehabilitation curriculum, and (3) digital access to legal materials via tablets and educational kiosks provided by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights.

Table 2. Summary of Methodological Framework

Phase	Description	Key Activities	Output
Preliminary Assessment	Identification of legal literacy levels among 50 participants (out of 547 inmates)	Pre-test, interviews, mapping resources	Baseline data on inmates’ understanding
Legal Socialization	Rights-based education	Workshops, simulations, group	Increased awareness of legal rights

Phase	Description	Key Activities	Output
	under Law No. 1/2023	discussions	
Implementation	Application of interactive learning	Contextual teaching, media distribution	54% improvement in comprehension
Evaluation	Impact measurement and feedback	Post-test, FGDs, observations	Quantitative & qualitative evidence
Sustainability	Institutional integration	ToT for officers, legal handbook	Long-term program continuity

Source: Field Data, 2025

Ethical Considerations

The program adhered to ethical standards set by Universitas Sriwijaya’s Institutional Review Board and the Indonesian Correctional Authority. All participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was maintained throughout data collection and publication.

3. Results and Discussions

The implementation of the community service program, “Protection and Fulfillment of Prisoners’ Rights at Palembang Class IIA Correctional Institution (Socialization of Law No. 1 of 2023 concerning Prisoners’ Rights)”, produced both quantitative and qualitative outcomes demonstrating significant improvement in inmates’ understanding of their legal rights and institutional awareness. The following discussion presents empirical findings, interpreted within the theoretical and normative framework of human rights and restorative justice as embedded in Indonesia’s new Criminal Code.

3.1. Quantitative Results: Legal Understanding Before and After Intervention

The evaluation of the program was based on a comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test results involving 50 female inmates who participated in the legal literacy sessions. The test instrument, consisting of 20 structured questions, measured comprehension in five key domains: (1) understanding of prisoners’ rights, (2) awareness of fair trial principles, (3) access to rehabilitation and remission, (4) legal aid and complaint mechanisms, and (5) understanding of restorative justice principles. The results showed a substantial improvement in overall comprehension, increasing from an average score of 32% before the program to 86% after. Table 1 presents the detailed comparison across the assessed domains.

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Legal Comprehension Levels

Domain of Knowledge	Pre-Test Mean (%)	Post-Test Mean (%)	Improvement (%)
Understanding of prisoners’ rights	35	89	+54
Awareness of fair trial principles	28	82	+54
Rehabilitation and remission rights	30	85	+55
Legal aid and complaint mechanisms	31	90	+59
Restorative justice awareness	35	84	+49
Average Score	32	86	+54

Source: Field Data, 2025

As shown in Table 3, the most significant improvement occurred in the domain of *legal aid and complaint mechanisms* (+59%), suggesting that many inmates had previously been unaware of the availability

of legal representation or channels for filing grievances. The results also indicate a strong cognitive transformation toward recognizing their basic human and legal rights under Law No. 1 of 2023. This outcome confirms the effectiveness of contextual, participatory, and interactive legal education methods in increasing awareness among marginalized groups [4], [6].

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Participant’s Level of Understanding

Phase	Understanding Level (%)	Category
Pre-Test	32	Low
Post-Test	86	High

Source: Field Data, 2025

The improvement of over 50% demonstrates that structured legal education can significantly enhance inmates’ comprehension, bridging the gap between normative legal frameworks and their lived experiences within correctional institutions.

3.2. Qualitative Findings: Behavioral and Attitudinal Shifts

Beyond numerical data, qualitative evaluations revealed notable shifts in attitudes and self-perception among inmates. The majority of participants expressed newfound confidence in articulating their legal entitlements and reported greater comfort in engaging with correctional officers regarding procedural or disciplinary matters. Several participants indicated that they previously viewed imprisonment as synonymous with the total loss of rights; however, after the sessions, they recognized that incarceration does not negate fundamental human dignity, as explicitly stated in Article 52 of Law No. 1 of 2023 [2].

During post-program focus group discussions, three behavioral indicators emerged as signs of improved legal literacy:

1. Assertive Communication: Inmates began using legal terminology appropriately when discussing issues of treatment, rehabilitation, and family visitation.
2. Cooperative Engagement: There was a marked increase in cooperation between inmates and officers

during routine counseling, attributed to enhanced mutual understanding.

3. Peer Education: Some inmates initiated informal sharing sessions to explain key concepts of the new Criminal Code to fellow prisoners, creating an organic learning network within the prison community.

During post-program focus group discussions, three behavioral indicators emerged as signs of improved legal literacy: assertive communication, cooperative engagement, and peer education. These findings support Wahyuni's (2024) argument that legal literacy functions not only as a cognitive asset but also as an empowerment mechanism that improves inmates' psychological resilience and reintegration prospects [7].

In addition, the program generated wider social impact within the correctional community. Correctional officers reported a noticeable reduction in disciplinary incidents and increased collaboration between inmates and staff during counseling sessions. The improved communication climate fostered mutual respect and strengthened social cohesion inside the facility, demonstrating that legal literacy interventions can contribute to a more humane and rights-based correctional culture.

3.3. Institutional Performance: Factual Data from Palembang Class IIA Correctional Institution

To contextualize these results, factual data from the *Regional Office of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, South Sumatra (2024)* indicate that Palembang Class IIA Correctional Institution has a total capacity of 560 inmates, currently housing 547 inmates, or approximately 98% occupancy. The institution has introduced several programs aimed at rights fulfillment, including:

- Health Services: Regular medical check-ups and partnerships with Palembang General Hospital.
- Education and Training: Literacy classes and vocational skills programs in sewing, bakery, and crafts.
- Religious and Psychological Counseling: Weekly sessions provided by certified counselors and clerics.
- Communication Rights: Designated visiting hours and virtual visitation facilities through "Lapas Smart Service."
- Remission and Rehabilitation: Systematic remission assessments conducted every national holiday in

accordance with Ministerial Decree No. M.HH-17.PK.05.06/2022 [13].

However, the report also identifies gaps in program delivery: only 15% of inmates had previously received structured legal counseling, and most educational activities focused on vocational rather than legal knowledge. The community engagement initiative therefore addressed this institutional gap by integrating legal literacy into the broader rehabilitation framework.

However, the report also identifies gaps in program delivery: only 15% of inmates had previously received structured legal counseling, and most educational activities focused on vocational rather than legal knowledge. The community engagement initiative therefore addressed this institutional gap by integrating legal literacy into the broader rehabilitation framework. The collaboration between Universitas Sriwijaya and the correctional institution has since been extended through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to ensure annual legal education programs. This follow-up initiative marks the first institutionalized step toward sustainable rights-based education within the Palembang Class IIA facility, ensuring long-term continuity beyond the initial intervention period. This aligns with Astuti's (2022) observation that effective prison reform requires synchronization between regulatory change and institutional practice, ensuring that progressive laws such as the 2023 KUHP are internalized within everyday correctional governance [14].

3.4. Discussion: Interpreting the Impact and Policy Implications

The results affirm that participatory legal education can effectively enhance awareness and empowerment within prison environments. This outcome supports the restorative justice philosophy embedded in the new Criminal Code, which emphasizes rehabilitation and social reintegration rather than punitive isolation. The observed behavioral changes particularly in communication, cooperation, and self-advocacy reflect a transition from passive compliance to active participation, a hallmark of human-centered correctional reform. This shift resonates with the conceptual framework advanced in recent scholarship highlighting that the restorative model of justice must include educational interventions that restore autonomy and human agency among offenders [15]. Furthermore,

the integration of this program into institutional routines contributes directly to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (*Quality Education*) and Goal 16 (*Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions*). By promoting accessible legal education, the program strengthens inmates' civic understanding and supports national commitments to human rights-based governance.

The findings also reveal critical insights for correctional policymakers:

1. Legal education must be institutionalized as a core rehabilitative function, not an auxiliary activity.
2. Correctional officers require specialized training in rights-based facilitation to sustain literacy outcomes.
3. Periodic evaluations and follow-up modules should be introduced to measure long-term impact on reintegration and recidivism rates.

These recommendations align with international best practices articulated by the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), which underscore that every inmate retains the right to education and access to legal information as part of their rehabilitation process [16]. Furthermore, the integration of this program into institutional routines contributes directly to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). By promoting accessible legal education, the program strengthens inmates' civic understanding and supports national commitments to human rights-based governance. In the long term, this initiative serves as a sustainable empowerment model that can be replicated in other correctional facilities across Indonesia, fostering systemic transformation toward education-centered rehabilitation.

3.5. Correlation Between Education and Rights Fulfillment

A key analytical finding is the direct correlation between legal literacy and the realization of prisoners' rights. As inmates gain a better understanding of their rights under Law No. 1 of 2023, their ability to advocate for fair treatment, request legal aid, and participate in rehabilitative programs increases substantially.

This finding is consistent with Hakim, Johari, and Saputra (2024), who emphasize that ensuring access to legal information is an integral part of fulfilling female inmates' rights within Indonesian correctional institutions [5]. The Palembang program thus serves as a replicable model for other correctional institutions across the country, demonstrating how academic-institutional collaboration can bridge normative law and practical human rights implementation.

4. Conclusions

The community service project titled "Protection and Fulfillment of Women Prisoners' Rights under Indonesia's Law No. 1 of 2023: A Case Study at Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Palembang" demonstrates the transformative potential of legal literacy as an empowerment instrument within the correctional system. Empirical findings from this study indicate that participatory and contextually adapted legal education can substantially enhance inmates' understanding of their rights, improve institutional relations, and reinforce the rehabilitative mission of incarceration in Indonesia.

The results revealed a significant improvement in prisoners' comprehension, with post-intervention test scores rising from 32% to 86%, equivalent to a 54% overall increase. This outcome confirms the effectiveness of interactive learning methods that bridge the gap between normative law and lived experiences in correctional settings. Moreover, enhanced legal literacy has fostered behavioral changes, such as assertive communication and cooperative engagement, contributing to a more inclusive and rights-based institutional culture.

The continuity of cooperation between the Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, and Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Palembang is maintained through scheduled annual legal education sessions and capacity-building programs for correctional officers. In conclusion, the socialization of Law No. 1 of 2023 not only strengthens legal awareness among prisoners but also promotes a systemic shift from punitive correction to rehabilitative justice, aligning Indonesia's correctional practices with global human rights and sustainable development standards.

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Biographies of Authors

Dr. Nashriana, S.H., M.Hum.

Nashriana is a Lecturer in Criminal Law at the Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, Indonesia. Her research focuses on criminal law related to women and children, emphasizing restorative justice within the Indonesian criminal justice system.

Dr. Syaiful Asmi Hasibuan, S.H., M.H.

Syaiful Asmi Hasibuan is a Lecturer in Criminal Law at the Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, Indonesia. His research focuses on juvenile criminal law, with particular attention to justice principles and child protection within Indonesia's criminal justice system.

Nadillah Maudi Cahyani, S.H., M.H.

Nadillah Maudi Cahyani is a Lecturer in Criminal Law at the Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, Indonesia. Her research focuses on criminal law and legal protection, with a particular interest in strengthening justice within the criminal justice system and safeguarding individual rights in legal processes.

Rida Kherin Oktavianty, S.H., M.H.

Rida Kherin Oktavianty is a Lecturer in Criminal Law at the Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, Indonesia. Her research focuses on administrative criminal law, emphasizing the

principles of justice and the effectiveness of law enforcement within public administration.

	<p>Nashriana  0009-0008-6015-0533 is an Associate Professor of Child Criminal Law and Penology on Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang. She completed his doctoral studie at Faculty of Law of Sriwijaya University, with a research focused on criminal law related to women and children, emphasizing restorative justice within the Indonesian criminal justice system, attained her LLB (S.H.) at Faculty of Law of Universitas Sriwijaya, and obtained her Magister Humaniora from Faculty of Law of Universitas Diponegoro. She can be contacted via email at nashriana@fh.unsri.ac.id</p>		<p>at nadillahmaudicahyani@fh.unsri.ac.id</p>
			<p>Rida Kherin Oktavianty  0009-0008-3376-5284 is a dedicated lecturer in the Criminal Law Department at the Faculty of Law, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, Indonesia. She earned both her Bachelor of Law (S.H.) and Master of Law (M.H.) degrees from Universitas Sriwijaya, specializing in criminal law. Her research interests focus on administrative criminal law and criminal acts in the field of administration. She welcomes academic communication and collaboration and can be reached via email at ridakherinoktavianty@fh.unsri.ac.id</p>
	<p>Syaiful Asmi Hasibuan is a lecturer in the Department of Criminal Law with a focus on the field of Juvenile Criminal Law. He became part of the Faculty of Law at Universitas Sriwijaya in the year 2024. Obtained his Bachelor of Law (SH) degree from the Faculty of Law at UMSU, followed by his Master of Law (MH) degree from USU. Subsequently, he pursued his Doctoral studies at USU and successfully completed his degree in 2021. He welcomes academic communication and collaboration and can be reached via email at syaifulasmihisibuan@fh.unsri.ac.id</p>		
	<p>Nadillah Maudi Cahyani  0009-0006-7625-6864 works at Universitas Sriwijaya Palembang as a lecturer and researcher in the Criminal Law Department. She was born on August 9, 1995, in Banda Aceh. She obtained her Bachelor of Law (S.H.) and Master of Law (M.H.) degrees from Universitas Sriwijaya. Her primary areas of expertise and research include criminal law and legal protection, with a particular focus on issues related to justice and the rights of vulnerable groups. She can be contacted via email</p>		