

## **GENDER-SPECIFIC NEEDS: HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH**

### **WHAT WE FOUND**

Women in prison have high rates of pre-existing and prison-induced mental health conditions, worsened by poor conditions, lack of support, separation from family and an overreliance on security-driven and medicalised responses. They face shortages of medical staff, limited access to gender-specific medical services and insufficient hygiene products. Poor conditions and lack of resources exacerbate their health issues, particularly reproductive and mental health needs.

### **WHAT WE ADVOCATE**

Ensure equivalent healthcare to that available in the community, with gender-sensitive screening, adequate resources, and free hygiene products. Integrate prison health services with public health systems under national health authorities. Prioritise alternatives to detention for women with mental health conditions. Provide comprehensive, trauma-informed care in prisons, with regular assessments, supported by specialised medical staff and mental health training for prison staff.

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## **WOMEN AT HEIGHTENED RISK**

### **WHAT WE FOUND**

Certain women are in special situations of vulnerability and may face heightened risks. They include pregnant women and women living with their young children in prison, foreign women, LGBTIQ+ women, indigenous women, women from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds and older women. Prisons often lack disaggregated data, adequate risks and needs assessment, sufficient resources, adequate training, and programmes and services that address the specific needs of those women. As a result, those women may experience stigma and discrimination, poor healthcare, and restricted access to services and activities.

### **WHAT WE ADVOCATE**

Prioritise alternatives to imprisonment for women at heightened risk and implement gender-responsive prison policies with an intersectional approach, identifying the specific needs and risks faced by women and taking special measures to address them. Collect and make available reliable data on the realities of women in prison, disaggregated by other intersecting factors to better inform policies and measures to meet their specific needs.