



UNODC HANDBOOK ON RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMMES (SECOND EDITION)

Since the publishing of the [First Edition](#) of the *Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes* in 2006, the field of restorative justice has developed significantly, both with the expansion of national initiatives and with the international recognition of restorative justice as means to enhance the rule of law and access of justice.

On May 22nd 2020, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) officially launched the Second Edition of the *Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes*. This brief aims at providing a clear overview of the novelties presented in the Second Edition of the UNODC Handbook and its potential value for governments, policy-makers and practitioners.

Context

The revised handbook is the newest edition to the UNODC Criminal Justice Handbook Series, a series of practical tools and guidance materials developed to support countries in enhancing the rule of law and their criminal justice reforms.

In November 2017, under the petition of the Economic and Social Council resolution 2016/17, UNODC convened an expert group meeting held in Ottawa, Canada to review the use and application of the [Basic Principles on the Use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters](#), as well as new developments and innovative approaches to the field. During the meeting, it was acknowledged that the *Basic Principles* was a useful framework but that the field had developed extensively since 2006 suggesting there was a need for “additional practical guidance” on various issues concerning restorative justice in criminal matters.

In 2018, at the 27th session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Member States requested UNODC to update the First Edition of the handbook.

With this mandate, UNODC produced a revised version of the handbook. The revised draft was reviewed at an expert group meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 17 to 19 June 2019.

What is restorative justice?

The Second Edition of the UNODC handbook emphasizes the flexible nature of restorative justice and the diversity of practices encompassed through the vast cultural contexts within





different countries. Despite the evolving nature of restorative justice approaches, the handbook notes that most definitions of restorative justice share common elements.

Restorative justice focuses more on the harm done to the victim than on the breaking of the law. Restorative processes usually take the form of a facilitated dialogue that can take place at various stages of the criminal justice process through the voluntary participation of those affected by harm, including the victim, the perpetrator and, in some programmes, members of the community. Outcomes may include victim empowerment, reaffirmation of community values, acknowledgement of the harm done by the perpetrator, and a forward-looking commitment to reparative action for the victim or the community.

What has changed in the Second Edition of the handbook?

The revised handbook brings an up-to-date view of its First Edition and incorporates new areas resulting from the observations and recommendations of experts. The main novelties are as follow:

- More in-depth explanation of key concepts. The updated handbook brings a more comprehensive explanation of restorative justice key concepts, restorative practices, and the *Basic Principles*, based on updated research, evidence-based findings and a more balanced approach regarding victims and offenders.
- Innovative chapter on restorative justice responses to serious crime. While at the time of the first edition restorative justice programmes have largely been reserved for first time offenders or relatively minor offences, we now know that its benefits may be even more powerful in situations involving serious offences. Chapter 6 advocates for the possibility of applying restorative justice to serious crime, while responding to common concerns that have been identified by experts in this area. The chapter provides valuable guidance on implementing fundamental procedural safeguards, while covering a range of different types of serious crime, such as: intimate relationship violence, sexual violence, violence against children and hate crimes.
- Requirements for successful operation of restorative justice programmes. Chapter 5 collects lessons learned about the main factors responsible for the successful operation of restorative justice programmes, including: Safe and meaningful engagement of victims and other participants, promotion of appropriate referrals, preparation of participants, competent facilitation of the process, and effective programme support and positive community engagement. Chapter 8 introduces updated research findings on program monitoring and evaluation of restorative justice processes to support organizations and policy-makers.





Why is the Handbook important?

The use and implementation of restorative justice processes and programmes, has substantially increased both geographically and in scope in the past 15 years. Still, many countries fall short of providing truly comprehensive restorative justice programmes on a national scale to both adult and juvenile justice systems, or for most types of offenses. The handbook can therefore be of great value as a reference document and as a source of inspiration for further improvement.

The revised handbook is the most up-to-date international guide developed by the expertise of practitioners, academics, and representatives of organizations that advocate for the implementation of restorative justice values and practices. The document covers a wide range of topics including good practices for program design and implementation; mobilization of community assets to support countries in advising restorative practices; improvement of victim's participation; or programme monitoring mechanisms to oversee the operation of restorative justice services and training providers.

The handbook may be used as a tool in a variety of contexts for all actors of the criminal justice system, including governments, policy-makers, criminal justice professionals, restorative justice practitioners, members of civil society and academia. Moreover, restorative justice is believed not only to be important in the framework of the criminal justice system but as a more broad justice paradigm.

Resource Kit

- UNODC. (2020). Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes Second Edition. Retrievable on https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/20-01146_Handbook_on_Restorative_Justice_Programmes.pdf
- TIJ-UNODC. (2020). Online launch webinar of the Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes – Second Edition. Retrievable on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74cIyd22PEI>
- EFRJ. (2020). Interview with Jee Aei (Jamie) Lee. Retrievable on <https://vimeo.com/420642694>

Author: Georgina Colomé Ginella, European Forum for Restorative Justice, Leuven - Belgium.

Reference: European Forum for Restorative Justice (2020). UNODC Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes (Second Edition): Thematic Brief. Leuven, Belgium.

