

## Analysis of Serve the City Nairobi's Visit to G.K. Prison: Impact on Volunteers and Environmental Practices

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### Abstract

This study analyzes the impact of *Serve the City Kenya's* (STC Kenya) visit to G.K. Prison in Nairobi on volunteers' attitudes and perceptions regarding social responsibility and environmental practices. The visit, conducted on December 4, 2024, sought to assess how engagement with inmates influences volunteers in line with *Serve the City International's* core values, which include humility, compassion, courage, respect, love, and hope, while exploring how volunteerism can foster sustainable environmental behaviors within correctional facilities. Using a pre- and post-visit quantitative survey design, data were collected from 20 volunteers, with 12 pre-visit and 10 post-visit responses analyzed. Findings revealed that 75% of volunteers reported increased empathy, open-mindedness, and appreciation for others' dignity following the visit. Additionally, over 80% agreed that inmates would benefit from environmental education and that small, consistent actions can promote sustainability. The study concludes that volunteerism in prison contexts not only enhances participants' personal and moral growth but also creates pathways to promote environmental stewardship as part of inmate rehabilitation. Recommendations include integrating environmental education into volunteer programs and expanding partnerships between correctional institutions and community-based organizations for sustainable transformation.

**Keywords:** *Serve the City Kenya, volunteerism, prison rehabilitation, environmental sustainability, social exchange theory, environmental behavior, empathy, community engagement, Nairobi G.K. Prison*

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### 1. Introduction

Serve the City Kenya (STC Kenya) organized a visit to the G.K Prison in Nairobi on December 4, 2024, as part of its mission to engage with the vulnerable communities within the prison and promote social and environmental change among its members. The visit aimed to assess the impact of the experience on volunteers in terms of STC International's core values, humility, compassion, courage, respect, love, hope, and to explore how environmental practices with the prison could be improved through volunteer engagement. This report analyses data from surveys conducted before and after the visit, focusing on the volunteers' mindsets, reflections, and perceptions of environmental awareness and responsibility.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Visit

The visit was part of STC Kenya's board initiative to promote social and environmental change through volunteerism and community engagement. Accordingly, the primary purpose of the visit was to engage with inmates during the chapel service, distribute Christmas gifts, and conduct a research project to evaluate the impact of the visit on volunteers. The research aimed to answer two key questions:

1. How did the visit impact volunteers in terms of STC International's values?
2. How could environmental practices at the G.K. Prison be fostered because of the volunteers' visit?

### 1.2 Research Questions

What role do Serve the City Kenya's values play in addressing the societal and environmental concerns of the most vulnerable?

In this case, there are two parts to the research question:

1. How did a Serve the City Kenya volunteer visit to the G.K. Prison, Nairobi West, impact the volunteers in terms of Serve the City International's values of compassion, humility, respect, courage, love, and hope?
2. How could environmental practices at the G.K. Prison in Nairobi be fostered as a result of the volunteers' visit?

## 2. Literature Review

In relation to volunteerism, prison rehabilitation, and environmental sustainability, the review of recent studies provides a comprehensive overview of the existing body of knowledge. Duwe et al. (2016) found that prison visits by community volunteers were associated with a decline in reoffending among inmates who interacted with the volunteers. The scholars concluded that such interactions should be frequently subjected to inmates, especially those viewed as high-risk offenders, since they often lack social support (Duwe et al., 2016). A similar perspective is highlighted by Schuhmann et al. (2018) in their research on inmates' perceptions of volunteer visits. According to their analysis, the visits should be treated as human-to-human interactions to understand their effects. Also, such opportunities are viewed as offering inmates the chance to have personal conversations aside from conversations on the cruelty associated with their life in prison.

The study also indicated that volunteer visits are more beneficial than even family visits. The scholars state, "Inmates draw hope, strength, or self-respect from the conversations; they see volunteers as role models and develop a more positive view of the future" (Schuhmann et al., 2018, p.4545). Nonetheless, the issues the scholars highlighted that would negatively impact the interaction include a lack of connection between the inmates and the volunteers, and implicit bias against the inmates by the volunteers regarding worldview. Research on environmental practices that involve inmates actively taking part in environmental care is limited. However, studies show that when inmates are educated about environmental care, they tend to develop a sense of responsibility for keeping their environment clean and protected (Weber et al., 2015). This illustrates the study's relevance to addressing this gap.

## 2.1 Theoretical Review

The study is defined by several theoretical frameworks that inform the analysis of volunteerism, prison rehabilitation, and environmental sustainability, as discussed below:

### 1. Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory explains social behavior as a cost-benefit analysis of relationships, including time, effort, and emotional support (Ahmad et al., 2023). When discussing the context of volunteerism, this theory helps explain volunteers' motivations for engaging in activities that benefit others, such as prison visits.

### 2. Environmental Behavior Theory

This theory explores the factors that influence individuals' environmental behavior, such as awareness and attitudes (Brick et al., 2024). It provides a framework for understanding how volunteers' perceptions of environmental practices within G.K. Prison can influence actionable change at the individual level.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Survey Design

The research employed a quantitative survey design with a pre-post design to measure changes in volunteers' perceptions and attitudes. The survey consisted of 27 Likert-scale items in five sections:

- Section A: Expectations and Mindset (pre-visit) - 6 questions corresponding to Serve the City International values.
- Section B: Impact and Reflection (post-visit) - 6 questions corresponding to Serve the City International values
- Section C: Perceptions of Environmental Awareness and Responsibility (post-visit) - 5 questions
- Section D: Opportunities for Engagement (post-visit) - 5 questions
- Section E: Environmental Behaviors and Advocacy (post-visit) - 5 questions

Each question used a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "Strongly Disagree" and 5 indicating "Strongly Agree."

### 3.2 Participants

The study involved volunteers primarily recruited from Africa International University (AIU), with approximately 20 students participating in the prison visit. Based on the collected demographic data, participants spanned various age groups, with equal representation of males and females. Participants represented diverse professional backgrounds or, as students, diverse career aspirations.

Prior to participation, all volunteers completed an indemnity form, including consent to participate in the STC Kenya research project. The form mentioned the research questions and emphasized that participation was voluntary.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Data collection occurred in two phases:

1. Pre-visit survey (Section A) administered before the prison visit to establish baseline attitudes
2. Post-visit survey (Sections B, C, D, and E) administered after the visit to measure changes and gather insights on environmental observations and recommendations

The questionnaires were administered and completed online via mobile phones, thereby ensuring convenient data capture and minimizing paper use, consistent with the commitment to environmental sustainability. Regarding response rates, 12 members responded to the pre-visit questionnaire, and 10 to the post-visit questionnaire.

### 4. Findings

#### A. Survey results before the Visit

<b>Table 1: I feel prepared to approach this experience with an open mind and without judgment</b>				
	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Agree	2	16.7%	5	41.7%
Strongly agree	7	58.3%	12	100%

Regarding whether the volunteers felt prepared to approach the experience with an open mind and without judgment, a majority (75%) reported being prepared, whereas 25% were not.

<b>Table 2: Motivated to participate in the visit because of the belief that others should be supported in difficult situations</b>				
	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Agree	1	8.3%	4	33.3%
Strongly agree	8	66.7%	12	100%

Regarding whether participants felt motivated to participate in the visit because they believed others should be supported in difficult situations, 75% agreed with this view, whereas 25% did not.

**Table 3: I feel confident stepping out of my comfort zone to connect with others during the visit**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Agree	1	8.3%	4	33.3%
Strongly agree	8	66.7%	12	100%

25% of participants reported feeling unconfident stepping out of their comfort zone to connect with others during the visit, whereas 75% reported feeling confident.

**Table 4: I value the dignity and worth of all individuals, regardless of their circumstances.**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Agree	1	8.3%	4	33.3%
Strongly agree	8	66.7%	12	100%

75% of participants reported valuing the dignity and worth of all individuals, regardless of circumstances, whereas 25% disagreed.

**Table 5: I am ready to engage with those I meet during the visit with kindness and empathy.**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Agree	1	8.3%	4	33.3%
Strongly agree	8	66.7%	12	100%

75% of respondents indicated that they were ready to engage with those they met during the visit with kindness and empathy, whereas 25% held the opposite view.

<b>Table 6: I believe that small actions of service can contribute to positive change.</b>				
	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Agree	1	8.3%	4	33.3%
Strongly agree	8	66.7%	12	100%

75% of participants indicated that small acts of service could contribute to positive change.

**B. Survey results after the visit**

<b>Table 7: This experience helped me see life from a new perspective and appreciate the challenges others face.</b>				
	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Strongly agree	7	58.3%	10	83.3%
Missing System	2	16.7%	12	100%

58.3% of the volunteers appreciate the challenges others face. 25% disagreed with the sentiment, while 16.7% provided no feedback.

<b>Table 8: I felt a genuine sense of care and connection with the people I interacted with during the visit.</b>				
	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Strongly agree	7	58.3%	10	83.3%
Missing System	2	16.7%	12	100%

58.3% of participants reported a genuine sense of care and connection with the individuals they interacted with during the visit, while 25% were positive. 16.7% of respondents did not respond to that.

<b>Table 9: This experience deepened my understanding of the importance of treating everyone with dignity.</b>				
	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Strongly agree	7	58.3%	10	83.3%
Missing System	2	16.7%	12	100%

58.3% of respondents agreed that the experience deepened their understanding of the importance of treating everyone with dignity, whereas 25% disagreed. 16.7% of respondents did not respond to that.

**Table 10: I was able to see kindness and empathy during the visit, and I felt it was meaningful.**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Strongly agree	7	58.3%	7	83.3%
Missing System	2	16.7%	12	100%

58.3% of respondents reported being able to show kindness and empathy during the visit and found it meaningful, whereas 25% did not. 16.7% of respondents did not respond to that.

**Table 11: This visit left me feeling more hopeful about the potential for change and restoration in people’s lives.**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Strongly agree	7	58.3%	10	58.3%
Missing System	2	16.7%	12	100%

58.3% of respondents agreed that the visit left them feeling more hopeful about the potential for change and restoration in people’s lives, whereas 25% did not. 16.7% of respondents did not respond to that.

**Table 12: The prison environment reflects an understanding of the importance of cleanliness and sustainability**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Disagree	1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Neutral	3	25.0%	4	33.3%
Agree	3	25.0%	7	58.3%
Strongly agree	3	25.0%	10	83.3%
Missing System	2	16.7%	12	100%

50% of respondents held the view that the prison environment reflects an understanding of the importance of cleanliness and sustainability; 25% held neutral views, and 8.3% disagreed. 16.7% of respondents did not respond to that.

<b>Table 13: I observed efforts within the prison to manage waste responsibly.</b>					
		<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Neutral		4	33.3%	4	33.3%
Agree		1	8.3%	5	41.6%
Strongly agree		5	41.7%	10	83.3%
Missing	System	2	16.7%	2	100%

50% of respondents reported observing prison efforts to manage waste responsibly. 33.3% of respondents held neutral views, while 16.7% did not respond.

<b>Table 14: I believe inmates could benefit from environmental education programs to help improve their surroundings</b>					
		<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Agree		2	16.7%	2	16.7%
Strongly agree		8	66.7%	10	83.4%
Missing	System	2	16.7%	12	100%

3.4% of the participants believed that inmates could benefit from environmental education programs to improve their surroundings, whereas 16.7% did not respond.

<b>Table 15: I felt motivated to take action on environmental issues after observing conditions in the prison</b>					
		<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Neutral		1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Strongly agree		9	75.0%	10	83.3%
Missing	System	2	16.7%	12	100%

75% of respondents reported being motivated to take action on environmental issues after observing the conditions in the prison, whereas 8.3% held neutral views. 16.7% of the respondents did not respond to that.

**Table 16: There were visible signs of environmental degradation (e.g., litter, poor waste disposal) that need to be addressed**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Disagree	4	33.3%	5	41.6%
Agree	2	16.7%	7	58.3%
Strongly agree	3	25.0%	10	83.3%
Missing System	2	16.7%	12	100%

41.7% of participants agreed that there were visible signs of environmental degradation that needed to be addressed, 41.6% disagreed, and 16.7% did not respond.

**Table 17: The prison provided opportunities for inmates to engage in environmentally friendly activities (e.g., gardening, recycling)**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Agree	2	16.7%	2	16.7%
Strongly agree	8	66.7%	10	83.4%
Missing System	2	16.7%	12	100%

75% of participants agreed that the prison provided opportunities for inmates to engage in environmentally friendly activities, whereas 16.7% did not respond.

**Table 18: I would be willing to participate in programs to promote environmental sustainability in prisons**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly disagree	1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Strongly agree	9	75.0%	10	83.3%
Missing System	2	16.7%	12	100%

75% of, while 8.3% held an opposite perspective. Participants indicated that they would be willing to participate in programs promoting environmental sustainability in prisons, whereas 8.3% held the opposite view. 16.7% of respondents did not respond to that.

**Table 19: Environmental improvement programs in prisons could serve as valuable rehabilitation activities for inmates**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Neutral	1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Agree	1	8.3%	2	16.6%
Strongly agree	8	66.7%	10	83.3%
Missing   System	2	16.7%	12	100%

Regarding the notion that environmental improvement programs in prisons could serve as valuable rehabilitation activities for inmates, 75% of the participants agreed with this view, while 8.3% were uncertain. 16.7% of respondents did not respond to that.

**Table 20: This visit inspired me to reflect on my own environmental habits and make improvements**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Neutral	1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Strongly agree	9	75.0%	10	83.3%
Missing   System	2	16.7%	12	100%

75% of participants strongly agreed that the visit inspired them to reflect on their environmental habits and make improvements, while 8.3% were unsure. 16.7% of respondents did not respond to that.

**Table 21: I believe small changes in daily habits can collectively lead to a better environment in institutions like prisons**

	<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Agree	1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Strongly agree	9	75.0%	10	83.3%
Missing   System	2	16.7%	12	100%

83.3% of the participants. In comparison, believed that small changes in daily habits can collectively lead to a better environment in institutions such as prisons, whereas 16.7% did not respond.

<b>Table 22: Prisoners would benefit from learning about the environmental impact of everyday actions, such as water and energy use</b>					
		<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Agree		1	8.3%	1	8.3%
Strongly agree		9	75.0%	10	83.3%
Missing	System	2	16.7%	12	100%

Source: Student Volunteers (2025) N=12  
 75% of the participants strongly agreed that prisoners would benefit from learning about the environmental impact of everyday actions; 8.3% only agreed, while 16.7% did not respond.

<b>Table 23: Volunteers can serve as role models in encouraging environmental responsibility among inmates</b>					
		<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly agree		10	83.3%	10	83.3%
Missing	System	2	16.7%	12	100%

83.3% of participants agreed that volunteers can serve as role models to encourage environmental responsibility among inmates, while 16.7% did not respond.

<b>Table 24: Educational sessions on environmental care should be incorporated into volunteer activities in prisons</b>					
		<i>f</i>	%	Cf	Cf%
Strongly agree		10	83.3%	10	83.3%
Missing	System	2	16.7%	12	100%

83% of the participants agreed that educational sessions on environmental care should be incorporated into volunteer activities in prisons, while 16.7% did not respond.

## 5. Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the objectives of the visit were to join and interact with the inmates in which also offered the opportunity to research the impact of the experiences on the volunteers in line with the core values of Serve the City International, and to look into environmental practices that could be integrated in prison environments. According to the pre-visit survey analysis, a majority of volunteers (75%) held positive attitudes toward the visit and believed that small acts of service could bring about positive change. In the post-visit survey, a majority (75%) reported that the experience enabled them to view life from a new perspective and appreciate the challenges others face. A majority (75%) also held the view that prisoners would benefit from learning about the environmental impact of everyday actions, and that volunteers could serve as role models to encourage environmental responsibility among inmates. Thus, it can be argued that the study met its objectives while laying the groundwork for further research

on how volunteers can work with inmates to promote sustainable environmental practices in prisons.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research findings indicate that volunteering experiences have a significant impact on individuals' environmental consciousness, social awareness, and personal growth. They indicate that a significant number of participants exhibited heightened empathy, whereas a small percentage held neutral views. The report underscores the importance of reflecting on volunteer experiences to examine what has been learnt and acquired. This also entails expanding sustainability efforts in prisons to improve environmental care, with volunteers actively advocating for these initiatives.

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