Americas

Canada
The Restorative Justice movement has grown in Canada over the last thirty years. The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (crcvc.ca) lists many ways in which restorative justice is used (not all involve victims but they all have a restorative element): Victim Offender Mediation; Circles of Support and Accountability; Peacemaking Circles (rooted in Aboriginal tradition); Healing Circles; Sentencing Circles; Community Assisted Hearings; Community Conferencing; Community Justice forums; Healing Lodges (for the Aboriginal community within institutions). The Department of Justice, Canada, has a directory listing all available programmes (394): (justice.gc.ca).

US
From the 1990s Restorative Justice programmes have existed in the US, initially as a diversionary practice for juveniles and first time offenders and later, in some areas, as a part of the formal court process, in the community and in prisons. Additionally, RJ principles have been adopted as a strategy by some police departments. There is legislation to support RJ in the majority of states, however, it varies how much implementation there is in practice. Victim Offender Dialogue is available in several States for serious and violent crimes: (navac.website). The National Center on Restorative Justice (ncorj.org), which receives congressional funding, promotes wider use of RJ through support, education and research. The National Association for Community and Restorative Justice (nacrj.org) is a focal point for RJ practitioners throughout the US and there is a list of active organisations on their website. RJ principles are also used in school settings.

Latin America
It is difficult to ascertain the current situation in Latin America. But several countries have developed different versions of Restorative Justice. Some of the services are or were linked to Truth and Reconciliation processes after political oppression and focus on human rights issues, e.g. Argentina, Peru. A recent initiative in Colombia focuses on human rights violations, and meetings involving victims of violence seeking healing.

There is also a strong tradition of involvement by civil society and community groups bringing people together.

In the criminal justice system Costa Rica and Bolivia have active restorative justice programmes for low-level offenders, and Brazil has several restorative justice services in different cities.

There are also several services concentrating on restorative practices in schools, using circles for community conferences, especially in Brazil and Costa Rica.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice gives victims of crime the chance to meet or communicate with their offenders to explain the real impact of the crime. It gives victims a voice and holds offenders to account for what they have done and helps them to take responsibility and make amends.

It can involve a face-to-face meeting, or indirect processes such as letters, recordings or videos.

UN Resolution 2002

April 2002 ECOSOC Resolution 2002/12: Basic principles on the use of restorative justice programmes in criminal matters.

Handbook

Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes 1st edition 2006, 2nd edition 2020.

Available from UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Restorative Justice Around the World
A brief guide

2024

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Africa

Restorative justice has been practised in Africa since before the colonisation of African territories by Western European powers.

Rwanda adopted the traditional Gacaca process after the 1994 genocide, helping to heal the wounds of genocide and resolve conflicts.

Uganda introduced reforms in the criminal justice system after the enactment of the Children's Statute in 1996, focusing on restoration, reconciliation, and compensation for minor offences committed by children.

Ghana established the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) which investigated human rights violations and granted amnesty to offenders who confessed to their crimes. (nyulawglobal.org).

South Africa
In pre-colonial South Africa, restorative justice was influenced by the Ubuntu philosophy, which emphasised the importance of community and rehabilitating the wrongdoer. There are four RJ projects in South Africa offering training, guidance and resources.
Phoenix Zululand works with inmates in 10 KwaZulu-Natal correctional centres to prepare them for reintegration (phoenix-zululand.org.za).
Restore is a charity that offers RJ courses for young offenders in Cape Town's Pollsmoor Prison (restore.org.za).
Hope Prison Ministry provides RJ and victim-offender dialogue in several prisons.(facebook/hopeprisonministry)
The Restorative Justice Centre in Pretoria, established in 2001, has trained over 2000 people in restorative justice concepts and mediation. They are helping to establish the **SA Restorative Justice Accreditation Body (SARJAB),** setting criteria for training and recognising practitioners. They have adapted the UK's Restorative Justice Council's framework.(rjc.co.za).

Restorative Justice Kenya
The Constitution encourages alternative dispute resolution for resolving conflicts, and the Sentencing Policy Guidelines promote inclusiveness of victims and offenders. Restorative justice practices include the Lang'ata Women's Prison, Forgiveness and Reconciliation Program launched in 2016 to promote forgiveness and reconciliation with inmates' families and victims. (kenyalaw.org).

Nairobi Youth Restorative Justice Programme
This initiative focuses on diverting young offenders away from incarceration. Participants engage in restorative processes, involving victims, families, and communities, emphasizing healing, reconciliation, and personal accountability. (restorativejustice101.com).

UK & Europe

UK

Young offenders 10-17
Restorative Justice services are mandatory in Youth Justice Teams and Services. Victims are contacted to see if they want to take part, and young people are helped to become involved.
Adults
Adult offenders and victims can be referred to local services, which are available in many parts of the country. Cases are undertaken by trained facilitators, either paid staff or volunteers.

Victims Code
Includes the right for victims of crime to information about Restorative Justice.
Restorative Justice Council (RJC) (restorativejustice.org.uk)
Provides standards of practice for restorative practitioners, trainers and services. These groups can apply to the RJC for accreditation, which is awarded if the standards are met and membership fees are paid.
All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) (rjappg.co.uk) Set up in 2021 to raise the profile of restorative justice in Parliament, and make it more available nationally. It has six work streams developing policy in criminal and non-criminal settings.
Non-criminal applications
There is increasing interest in the UK in using restorative approaches in education, health, social care and communities.

Europe

Most European countries now have programmes of Restorative Justice, mostly for young offenders and also many for adult offenders, including serious crimes.
European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) (euforumrj.org) Founded in 2000 in Leuven, Belgium, where its main office is located. Its membership includes individuals and organisations all over Europe. It promotes restorative justice to the public, provides training, and organises conferences and workshops. It has working groups on hate crime, restorative cities, environment, schools, gender-based violence and institutional violence.

EU Victims Directive 2001
The first binding EU legislation on restorative justice
Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)8 calls for all victims and offenders to have access to a restorative justice process and argues for cultural change towards a more restorative approach to crime and criminal justice at all levels of policy and practice.
Venice Declaration 2021
Adopted by 40 European countries, emphasised importance and benefits of restorative justice.

Australia, New Zealand & Asia

Australia and New Zealand
Restorative Justice (RJ) is well embedded in Australia and New Zealand, initially in Youth Justice and then in Adult Offending Services throughout different stages of the justice process. It is enshrined in state law in some areas. Some schemes are focussed on first nation perspectives. Restorative practices are also used outside of criminal justice settings and these help to build, deepen and repair relations in communities, including schools, workplaces and extended families.**(aarj.org.au).**
In New Zealand, Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 led to the introduction of Family Group Conferencing, a model that has since travelled the world in various forms.

Taiwan
The transition of criminal policy in Taiwan in 1997, to a more merciful focus, enabled the emergence of RJ in the justice system. Since 2008 RJ practices have expanded to include both adult and juvenile cases. RJ has been formally included into relevant criminal law and was identified as one of the 12 major future directions within Judicial Reform. RJ practices are also applied in school settings and medical disputes. Taiwanese schemes have taken into consideration cultural characteristics, highlighting the need to address shame carefully.

Japan
RJ remains at a nascent stage in Japan. There are no official schemes in the criminal justice system and RJ meetings only occur sporadically outside official structures. There had been growing interest in the 1990s and early 2000s. In 2005 an official pilot program was launched for offenders who were under 14, but this had low referrals and ceased in 2007.

Thailand
Ideas about RJ gained support in Thailand from around 2000. As in many Asian countries, practices draw on the previous traditions and culture of managing justice communally in rural areas. RJ has been well received by the public and in justice institutions. From 2003 family group conferencing has been used with juvenile offenders and from 2004 victim offender mediation in adult cases.

Indonesia
Again RJ practice that exists draws on customary traditions in rural areas. The National Prosecutor Office and National Police of Indonesia have set up RJ projects in some parts of Aceh Province and North Sumatra Province. These involve customary and community leaders and heads of village. The National Law Development Agency (BPHN) has provided training in dispute resolution using RJ approaches to heads of villages and lawyers.