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Children's future wastes away in custody as they await freedom

► Juvenile homes have no facilities for studies, yet some suspects are innocent.

► Judiciary to speed up minors' cases this and next month, preferably out of court.

DANIEL CHEGE, NAKURU

At only 15, his future appears gloom. For the past two years and eight months, the boy has been confined to the Nakuru Juvenile Remand Home.

He is facing a murder charge at the High Court in Kabarnet, Baringo, and only when he is not found culpable will he have the chance to see their home again.

But as is the norm, the case might not end soon. Meanwhile, the minor is wasting away as his agetates shape their future in school.

"In this institution, we have no facilities for his studies and the only thing we can offer is training on life skills," says Lorna Sang, the manager.

According to Ms Sang, there are 54 boys and three girls aged between 13 and 17 at the institution waiting for their court cases to be concluded.

The are from Nakuru, Baringo, Nyandarua, Narok and Kericho counties.

Ms Sang says the remand home, which is the main one in the South Rift region, cannot accommodate any more children.

"The fate of the 57 children we host here is unknown with some having stayed for between 11 months to about three years," she says.

The institution is old and in dire need of repair and upgrade. "At times it is unhygienic as the children have to share beds. It is not pretty."

It is a sad situation because some of the children will finally be cleared yet they will have wasted their best time.

"Majority of the minors have denied charges they face; murder, defilement, housebreaking, robbery with violence, stealing, felony, among others. They are presumed innocent unless proven otherwise," she says.

During the launch of the Judiciary Service Month on Tuesday, presentations by the children told the tales of the tough time they face while at the institution.

One girl regretted, through a poem, how her stealing behaviour landed her in trouble, vowing never to repeat. She spoke of the harsh life away from her parents.

It is worse for one boy who has already been cleared of theft charges but cannot leave because his father in Molo does not want him home.

"The father says that once released, the people in the village will not have peace. He is notorious and allegedly steals valuables from neighbours," said his lawyer, Washington Kenda.

In another presentation, a boy admitted to stealing a sheep Kiambugo, but exonerated his



The Judiciary launches the Children service month at the Nakuru Juvenile Remand Home on Tuesday. Nakuru Chief Magistrate Edna Nyaloti said they are working with lawyers, prosecutors, children's and probation officers to fast-track minors' cases. [Kipsang Joseph, Standard]

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CHILDREN

NUMBER of minors, 54 boys and three girls, held at the Nakuru Juvenile Home over various crimes, including murder.

14-year-old co-accused.

"We have been charged with him for stealing stock, but I swear, he was not there during the incident. He was just in the wrong place at the

wrong time," said the suspect. However, there is hope for the minors as the judiciary plans to dedicate the months of November and December to hearing and determining their cases.

Justice Teresia Matheka donated a laptop to help the children appear in court virtually to save time.

Nakuru Chief Magistrate Edna Nyaloti said the Judiciary has partnered with lawyers, prosecutors, children's and probation officers to fast-track the cases.

"We will begin dealing with cases of children who have overstayed in the remand homes as per the new Children's Act," she said.

"We will consider their (suspects) character, remorse, probation report and other factors in deciding cases to divert from courts to arbitration or other alternative justice systems."

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GARISSA

Victims of election day violence cry out for elusive justice

Abdullahi Hudle has visited almost all offices of the criminal justice system, but his hope for justice is diminishing.

During the August 9 General Election, a group of youth stormed a polling station at the Dadaab Boarding Primary, causing a commotion.

Armed with machetes, clubs and knives, the attackers left three people seriously injured.

Some witnesses claimed they were 10, but police arrested six people, who were later released on the same day.

They incident was reported under OB numbers 04/09/08/2022 and 09/09/08/2022, but since then no one has been arrested.

Hudle sustained several injuries, while Abuhureira Bashir had deep cuts in his head and right hand. Another victim Ali Barut suffered cuts in his shoulders.

While Barut had his case resolved by local elders known as Maslaha, Hudle and Bashir are yet to taste justice despite visiting several offices.

They have been to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution, the Directorate of Criminal Investigations, Internal Affairs Unit under the National Police Service, the Independent Policing Oversight Authority, and the Commission on Administrative Justice (Ombudsman).

Even after several letters from ODPP asking the police to make available the investigations file for advice, this has not happened.

Letters ignored

"Its now one month since we wrote to them (SCCIO Dadaab) and the duplicate police file relating to the complaint is yet to be submitted to our office, kindly take up the matter and let us have the file for perusal and advice within seven days," reads a letter dated October 13 by Renson Ingonga, Senior Assistant Director of Public Prosecution, to Garissa County Police Commander.

While at the Internal affairs Unit, Mohamed Amin, the head of DCI, also wrote on September 7 to the regional officer asking that the matter be expedited and report made in 21 days.

The Garissa police boss referred our inquiry to the county criminal investigations officer, who said investigation into the matter is not complete.

Meanwhile, the victims continue moving from office to another with their files hoping for justice.

They are now asking Interior Cabinet Secretary Kithure Kindiki to intervene. **[Abdimalik Hajir]**