



Federal Ministry of Justice

FG SET TO REPOSITION BORSTAL INSTITUTIONS, REMAND HOMES - WITH MANDATE TO REHABILITATE, REINTEGRATE INMATES AND JUVENILES BACK INTO THE SOCIETY.

The Federal Ministry of Justice in collaboration with the Presidential Committee on Correctional Reform and Decongestion has set to reposition Borstal Institutions and Remand Homes, with the mandate to rehabilitate and reintegrate inmates, most especially juveniles back into the society. This was disclosed at the Virtual meeting with Justice Sector Stakeholders from Ogun State on the Implementation of Amnesty and decongestion programme for Juveniles held on Friday, 9th July, 2021 in Abuja.



R-L HONOURABLE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION/MINISTER OF JUSTICE, ABUBAKAR MALAMI, SAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONAL REFORM AND DECONGESTION, HON. JUSTICE ISHAQ BELLO (RTD), SECRETARY TO THE COMMITTEE; MRS LETICIA AYOOLA - DANIEL AND SPECIAL ASSISTANCE, TO THE HAGF ON MEDIA DR. JUBRIL GWANDU, AT THE 1 DAY VIRTUAL MEETING WITH JUSTICE STAKEHOLDER FROM OGUN STATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF AMNESTY & DECONGESTION PROGRAM FOR JUVENILES, HELD ON FRIDAY 9TH JULY, 2021 AT MINISTER'S CONFERENCE ROOM.

In his Opening remarks, the Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice (HAGF) Abubakar Malami, SAN said the Federal Ministry of Justice in collaboration with the Committee, under the directive of President Muhammadu Buhari, flagged off the Presidential Pardon and Clemency, granted in April 2020 to convicts in Correctional/Custodial Centres across the country. This was done as part of measures to decongest the Custodial centres nationwide in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic.



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Malami explained that at the time, the primary focus then had been on adult offenders since strategies had to be put in place to properly handle juveniles in custody being that they are a more delicate and vulnerable group. Afterwards, the Committee saw the challenge and the need for a

comprehensive master plan to address the situation and welfare of juveniles in correctional centres.

Following this, the Federal Ministry of Justice in collaboration with the Committee and the UNICEF held the first phase of the Juvenile Decongestion programme on the 29th September, 2020 in a Virtual Interactive session with the HAGF and Attorney General, Head of Courts and Commissioners of Women Affairs of all the 36 States of the Federation.

HAGF further explained that the second phase commenced in May 2021 with the Committee/Assessment Team visiting remand homes and borstal institute in Lagos and Abeokuta, to target the necessary needs and requirements of the juveniles to be released. Details of the challenges observed and recommendations made by the team were contained in the Report forwarded to Stakeholder institutions.

According to Malami,” today’s meeting is aimed at organizing a coordinated judicial action with the Ogun State Hon. Attorney-General and Commissioner of Justice, Ogun State Chief Judge, Ogun State Commissioner of Social Welfare Department and the Controller, Nigerian Correctional Service, Ogun State, Principal of the Borstal Institute Ogun State, UNODC, UNICEF, Legal Aid Council, FIDA and CSOs in Ogun State would provide legal and psychological support to the released juveniles for proper re-integration back into the society”.

“While I applaud and appreciate the dedication and commitment of all stakeholders towards the implementation of the Juvenile Decongestion Programme, we shall continue to welcome the support of Development Partners and Donor Agencies in the ongoing programme”. Malami expressed. He charged the benefitting children to be of good behavior and responsible and wished them the best in their future endeavours.

In his welcome address, the Hon. Justice I.U Bello, Former Chief Judge of the FCT and Chairman, Presidential Committee on Correctional Service Reform and Decongestion disclosed that the Committee, after visiting

over 32 Correctional Centres in 18 states, observed that there were only three (3) Borstal Institutes in Nigeria; Ogun, Kwara and Kaduna states and detected that these institutes were grossly inadequate, and overcrowded which has resulted in the ugly practice of sending juveniles to adult Correctional Centres.

He revealed that in order to address the challenge, the Federal ministry of justice in collaboration with the Committee and with the support of development partners and NGOs such as Buni Yadi Foundation has commenced the second phase of the juveniles decongestion programme with a visit to remand homes in Lagos and Ogun States.

According to him, the programme was focused on rehabilitating and reintegrating qualified juveniles back to the society. To this end, the Committee has proposed a range of interventions to reduce reoffending in juveniles to the President. These according to him, include therapeutic measures to address the psychological causes of criminal behaviour, as well as provision of services to prepare juveniles for reintegration into the society after release.

He emphasized that, some of the services included enrollment in academic programs and skills acquisition, in areas such as carpentry, plumbing, shoe and soap making among others. The need for Female Borstal Institutions as well also was recommended.

Rtd. Hon. Justice Bello noted that, while the recent Correctional Service reform and the advocacy campaign of the Committee recorded some success stories with the release of over 7,000 adult offenders and the upgrading of the Skills Acquisition Programme at Keffi Nasarawa State Correctional Centre, there are still challenges, especially as it concerns child terror suspects, the juveniles' justice system generally and how such a vulnerable group could be rehabilitated and reintegrated back into the society.

“It is for this reason that the Ministry and the Committee in order to target the necessary needs and requirements of the juveniles to be

released dispatched an assessment team to the Borstal Institute at Adigbe, Abeokuta, Ogun State to conduct profile/needs and risk assessment of juveniles with minor offences” He added.

“At the request of the Hon. Attorney-General of Ogun State, this virtual meeting has been set-up to review the report of few of the boys who were assessed and determine the best rehabilitation and re-integration programme for each boy and were appropriate determine which boys can be re-unified with their families “he stated.

Justice Bello thanked the Ogun state government for releasing seven (7) boys who were assessed by the team; also appreciated the support of Buni Yadi Foundation in the payment of medical/surgery bills of some of the juveniles that the committee met in Lagos.

In his goodwill messages, the Attorney-General of Ogun State, Akingbolahan Adeniran assured that the state government will give full support to ensure that the welfare and trial of the juvenile are properly taken care of, adding that no child will be detained unnecessarily. Representing the Ogun State AG, Director Public Prosecution, Olaotan Olusegun said that they have legal advice within four (4) weeks to ensure that the future of the children is not jeopardized.

Also, the UNICEF Chief Child Protection, Ibrahim Sesay explained that Juveniles needed to be well reformed otherwise, the society would feel the consequences. He encouraged the Federal Ministry of Justice to sustain the programme while pledging both technical and financial support. On his part, the UNODC Representative Dr. Oliver Stople said his organization plans to join the Presidential Committee on its next mission to Kwara State and in addition have two of their Lead experts from the headquarters on juvenile justice and child psychology on the team.

He explained that, the enhancement of rehabilitation and reintegration of capacities at Maiduguri Maximum Security Prison where a large number of suspected associates of the Boko Haram have been held.

He expressed his gladness to announce that the project has actually commenced and the mission to upgrade the recreational, vocational and educational facilities at the prison and it is hoped to expand the project into 2022, 2023 provided there is additional funding.