

Custodial issues



Every year thousands of prisoners are released from prisons on parole or after completing their jail terms. To ensure that prisoners return to their normal lives without re-offending governments adopt programs meant to prepare prisoners for life after prison. Such programs may involve prisoners being allowed to work in community projects in order to instill a sense of responsibility in them. Additionally, prisoners may be allowed to work away from prisons and return when they have finished work. In some cases prisoners are permitted to visit the community.

But despite these noble initiatives, cases of prisoners re-offending soon after they are released from prisons are not uncommon. This reveals that the programs are not always effective and something needs to be done to improve the situation. I strongly agree with probation experts such as Maburi (2009) that the psychological confusion, social stigma and economic hardships that they experience are partly to blame for prisoners re-offending tendencies. I believe that the excessively punitive sentences issued to convicts harden them instead of reforming them.

Such sentences ignore the fact that convicts will at one time return to the community yet and do little to prepare them for life after prison. To prevent cases of ex convicts re-offending, courts should take bear in mind rehabilitation of prisoners back to the community after their jail terms. Towards this end, I believe there is need for further cooperation between the judiciary and the prisons and rehabilitation departments. By issuing humane punishments, courts will not only help in decongesting prisons but also save time and resources spent in charging and convicting the same persons for the same criminal offence repeatedly.

This will definitely boost efficiency of both departments. While the move by governments to rehabilitate ex-prisoners into the community is laudable, I think there is need to enhance cooperation between rehabilitation departments and prisoners' families and communities. This helps reduce stigmatization of prisoners thereby helping them regain their self esteem and quicken their reintegration into the community. The community also benefits from reduced cases of crimes. At the same time, by working closely with ex convicts, community leaders are able to monitor ex convicts movements and detect any criminal tendencies.

Such monitoring also protects reformed ex convicts from being accused of criminal behaviors. I also believe that there is need to increase financial assistance accorded to ex-prisoners. As a result of social stigma that faces ex convicts, they face challenges in securing employment, consequently some of them may resort to criminal activities such as robbery to meet their needs. To reduce chances of ex prisoners re-offending, I would strongly advocate for the creation of organizations based on the alcohol anonymous model. This would entail prisoners and ex prisoners coming together to help each other overcome their criminal behaviours.

Since they share similar experiences it would be easier for them to open up to each other and get assistance. Such a move will help reduce recidivism and other offences. Finally, I would propose that ex prisoners be made to pay back to the community for crimes committed. This could help deter them from committing crimes and boost reconciliation efforts in the community.

References Maburi T, K (2009) Re-Integration of Ex-Prisoners Back Into Society - What More Can We Do? In The New Times 26 October 2009

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