



ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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Executive Summary

Justice Nest was born from years of listening inside courtrooms and prisons.



 **Miriam Wachira, Founder & Executive Director**

Throughout my now over 17 years' career as a lawyer, I continue to meet people whose lives are shaped by the intergenerational cycle of poverty, silence and the absence of support, not necessarily the seriousness of their actions. Mothers are separated from their children for minor offences. People are held in remand for years, because they do not know how to speak the language of the law. Systems are designed to function efficiently, yet fail to be fair. Traditional justice responses focus on punishment and process, and Justice Nest exists to balance the scale especially for vulnerable people in contact with the justice system.

Justice Must Do More Than Punish!

The premise of founding Justice Nest is anchored on the belief that justice should aim to restore dignity and keep families together by deep listening before it decides. That accountability must be paired with care, and that systems must aim to protect society, and not to do so by destroying the lives of the most vulnerable among us. This belief continues to be strengthened by my longstanding work with the **National Council on the Administration of Justice**, where I learnt early that lasting change requires working from within systems.

The most defining moment of that journey was spearheading Kenya's first Judicial Children Services Week, a national effort that, since 2016, during inception, continues to ask a simple but radical question: **What**

happens when children are placed at the centre of justice decisions? That experience forms the core of Justice Nest's ethos: *Systemic change starts by shifting power to those closest to the issue.*

Becoming a Different Kind of Lawyer

My formation as a lawyer has been deeply influenced by **Notre Dame**, where I was challenged to see law as a profession and as a vocation. That being a different kind of lawyer requires being guided by conscience. One that measures success by human impact, not technical wins.



 : Miriam Wachira, Founder & Executive Director, during the Trial Advocacy Training at Shimo La Tewa Maximum Prison.

As an **Acumen Fellow**, I continue to strengthen my lens on poverty as a complex, systemic issue defined by a lack of dignity, agency, and choice, and not as individual failure. At Justice Nest, we are aware that we are not here for the quick wins. We invest in long-term solutions that address the roots of harm.

At **Parity Lab**, I learned that justice work must be **trauma-informed**. People affected by incarceration carry deep wounds. Programs that ignore trauma risk reproduce harm even when they intend to help. This learning shapes Justice Nest's emphasis on dignity, care, and healing alongside legal support.

Why Justice Nest Works from the Inside

For over seven years, I have worked alongside paralegals inside prisons. They are my greatest teachers. They continue to teach me that access to justice works best when it comes from within. That people in prison are not problems to be managed, but partners in change.

This is why Justice Nest invests in **prison-based paralegals**, not just external lawyers. It is why we focus on diversion for mothers, family preservation, and reintegration, not only case outcomes. We are at the **intersection of law, social support, and systems reform.**

The work with the **National Institute for Trial Advocacy (NITA)** training public defenders across Africa further reinforces this belief. Public defence is rarely glamorous and often under-resourced, yet it is essential for fair justice. Justice Nest carries that same ethic into spaces where legal support is mostly absent.

Justice That Restores: In 2016, I was humbled to be recognised by the **Law Society of Kenya** as a Pro Bono Advocate. For me, this affirmed a lifelong conviction. **Access to justice is a responsibility and a calling.**

Justice Nest exists because justice should feel like care, that systems should work for people, not against them, and that every voice deserves to be heard before a decision is made.

This work is slow. It is demanding. It is deeply human, but it is also hopeful.

Justice Nest is my commitment to building a justice system that does more than punish. One that restores, repairs, and remembers our shared humanity.



📷: Miriam Wachira with a client and her baby on her release day.

Holistic Approach:

Our Vision, Mission & Values

Justice Nest works to transform Kenya's justice system by reducing reliance on incarceration and strengthening families through legal education, holistic representation, and advocacy for community-based alternatives. Guided by a vision of fair, family-centric, and accessible justice, the organization is rooted in empathy and compassion, champions equity and restorative justice, and believes in collaboration and partnerships to create lasting, meaningful impact.

Justice Nest Family Centered Holistic Approach

Values

Empathy & Compassion, Equity & Justice, and Collaboration & Partnerships are our core values. These ensure genuine care, fair treatment, and effective program reach.



Vision

Advance a fair, family-centric, and accessible justice system in Kenya.

Mission

Transform the justice system and strengthen families by reducing incarceration. Provide legal education, holistic representation, and advocate for community-based alternatives to prosecution through partnerships.

Our DNA

Advisory Board

Provides independent, non-binding guidance and expertise to strengthen organizational impact, while supporting leadership through informed external insight.



Senior Management Team (SMT)

Provides leadership and strategic direction. Comprising of Miriam Wachira, Okari Magati, and Wangari Wachira.



Social Welfare Department

Oversees social support initiatives represented by Marie Michelle



Communications Department

Manages organizational communications and public engagement represented by Beth Gathirimu,



Volunteer Lawyers and Interns

Contribute significantly to the organization's mandate



Legal Team

Offers legal expertise and support. Comprising of Wesley Waku, Asha Saidi, and Diana Gakinya



Paralegal Captains

They play a key role in grassroots legal support and coordination. Comprising of Inspector Halima Jarso, Senior Sergeant Samuel Wachira, and Corporal Juma Karoyo.



Monitoring & Evaluation

Ensures program effectiveness and accountability represented by Verah Olweya



Donors, Partners, & Stakeholders

Supports the organization by contributing financial, technical, and strategic support towards the achievement of its mandate. They comprise of development partners, government institutions, civil society organizations, community leaders, and other collaborators who work closely with the organization to advance its mission and impact.



: Justice Nest Team.

Programs Overview

Our Why:

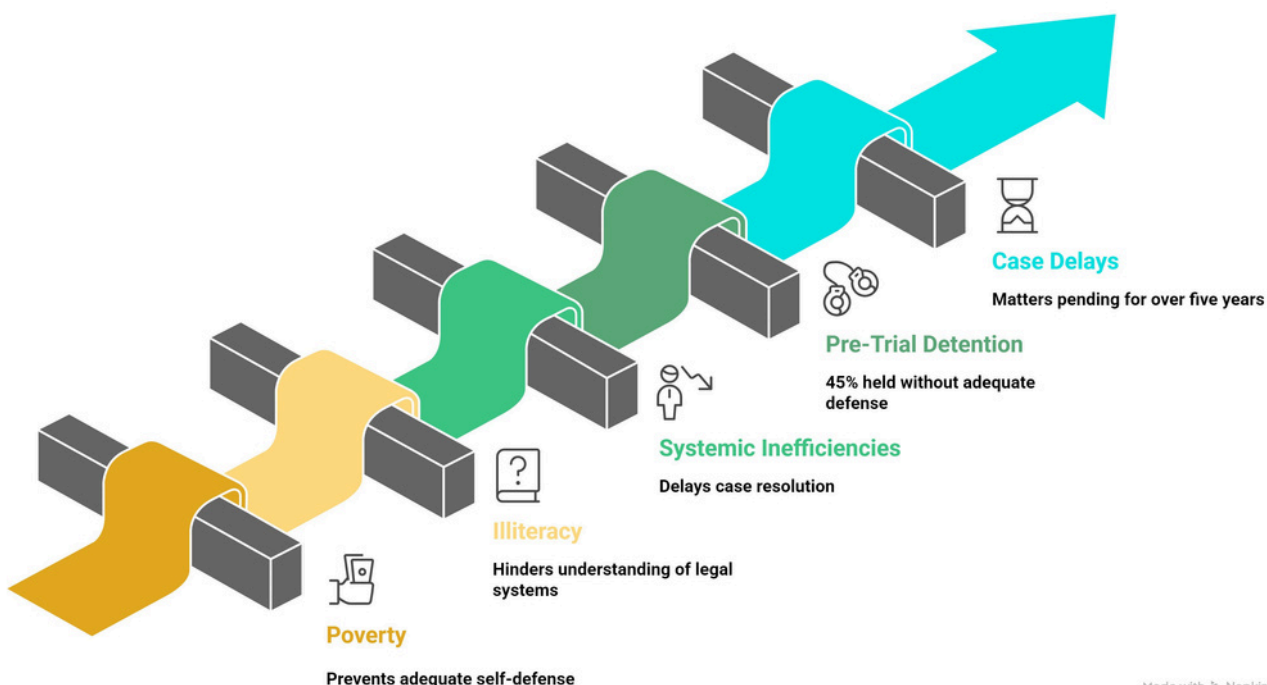
Kenya's prisons operate under sustained pressure from overcrowding and long remand periods. Official capacity stands at about 34,000, while occupancy reaches around 176.5% based on late 2024 estimates. Remand detainees account for about 42.9% of the prison population. ([World Prison Brief](#)) These conditions reflect a justice pathway where case progression slows, detention extends, and institutions absorb avoidable strain. A recent Law Society of Kenya position paper reports similar pressure, including capacity around 34,000 and remand levels above 40%. ([The Law Society of Kenya](#))

Inside this context, many detainees enter custody without legal guidance. They struggle to prepare bail applications, understand plea options, or correct basic file errors. Files move slowly between police, prosecution, courts, probation, and prisons. Low-complexity matters stall due to missing documents, unclear next steps, and weak follow-up. Women, young people, and low-income detainees face the highest barriers as legal services demand outstrips available support and justice actors manage high caseloads.

To cover this justice gap, Justice Nest has two programs:

1. Mothers and Children Diversion and Restorative Justice Program.
2. Prison-based paralegal program.

The Justice Gap



Children and Mothers Diversion and Restorative Justice Program (Mending the Nest):

This program is designed to break cycles of incarceration affecting mothers and children. **90% of women** in prison are single mothers, meaning thousands of children are left without their primary caregiver. These children are prone to delinquency, being in conflict with the law and being abused. This program prioritises restorative justice and diversion to reduce reliance on incarceration, ensuring that vulnerable families have access to justice.

By diverting mothers from prosecution and detention, the program addresses the underlying drivers of legal conflict that include poverty, trauma, and social exclusion. The holistic, family-centred approach works to keep families together, protect children from long-term effects of incarceration, and promote pathways to stability, dignity, and renewal.

We do this through:

1. Legal Representation

Providing pro bono legal services to mothers and children to safeguard their rights, promote fair treatment, and prevent unnecessary detention and incarceration.

2. Restorative and Rehabilitative Support

In partnership with trusted community service providers, the program offers counselling, mentorship, economic empowerment, and rehabilitation services that address the root causes of offending and support sustainable reintegration.

3. Child-Centered Interventions


We prioritise the best interests of children by offering psychosocial support, life-skills training referrals, and alternative pathways that reduce further contact with the justice system and promote healthy development.

By combining legal advocacy with psychosocial and restorative support, the program keeps families united, strengthens resilience, and ensures that children are protected from the lasting harm of parental incarceration.

Prison Paralegal Program (Bridging the Justice Gap):

This initiative addresses the justice gap within Kenyan prisons by providing structured legal education and training to incarcerated persons and correctional officers, equipping them to serve as paralegals. This model, trained paralegals deliver essential peer-to-peer legal support to incarcerated individuals under the supervision of qualified lawyers, ensuring improved access to justice for those most affected by systemic barriers.



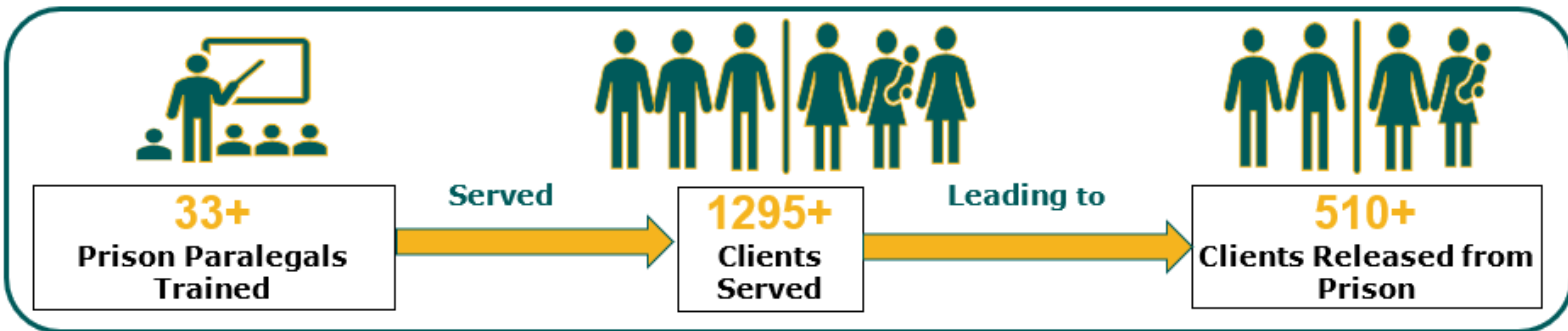
: Paralegals from Shimo La Tewa Prisons. Botton Right: One of the offices at Shimo La Tewa Prisons.

The program contributes to increased legal literacy, fairer legal outcomes, faster case resolution, and reduced prison congestion, while also helping to minimise stigma within the justice system. Building on previous successes, the initiative continues to expand its reach across prisons in Kenya through close collaboration with prison authorities and strategic partnerships that strengthen sustainability and impact.

The program cycle starts with Justice Nest putting a call out to incarcerated persons and correctional officers to apply for the positions. Those who meet the requirements are shortlisted and interviewed. Following the interview, the names of those who meet the requirements are sent to the prison administration, who approve them based on their current behavior while incarcerated.

2025 Impact

Prison Paralegal Program



- **33** trained paralegals have served **1,295** clients, achieving **510** releases.
- This represents a **39%** release rate, showcasing effective peer-led legal support within the correctional system.

Children & Mothers Diversion & Restorative Justice Program



- **87** mothers received legal representation and social support, resulting in **43** of them being released from prison.
- This yielded a **49%** release rate, underscoring the effectiveness of diversion for mothers.
- The core success is that **89** children were reunited with their mothers, highlighting the program's focus on reuniting families.

Overall Reach and Impact

- **Total Direct Impact: 1,382 (424 women)** individuals served across all programs.
- **Total Releases Secured: 553 (309 women)** clients (a 40% overall release rate).
- **Community Ripple Effect:** Programs have indirectly impacted an estimated 4,146 individuals (family), emphasizing the broader social benefit.

“It is the law in Kenya within the Bill of Rights and Article 27 on equality before the law and freedom from non-discrimination that no children should serve custodial sentences for their mothers’ crimes.”

Hon. R. Nyakundi while making a ruling in the case of Rose Cherop versus The Republic in the High Court at Eldoret criminal application no: E386 of 2025

Impact Stories

Restorative Justice at Work

Jacqueline, a single mother of two, is the primary caregiver for her children, her niece and nephew, her sister living with disability, her brothers and her aging father. Earning approximately Ksh 12,000 per month (USD 95) as a hotel waitress, she carried the full weight of her family's well-being. Her life was abruptly disrupted when she was accused of stealing goods worth Ksh 25,000 (USD 192) from a roommate and close friend. With no witnesses or evidence, the matter quickly escalated into a criminal case.

Unable to afford cash bail set at Ksh.20,000 (USD 154), Jacqueline was remanded at Lang'ata Women's Prison for three months. During this time, she lost her job, her children were separated from their primary caregiver, and her family faced significant emotional and financial strain. What began as a personal dispute turned into a cycle of punishment that benefited neither the complainant nor the accused.

When Jacqueline was referred to Justice Nest, the team assessed her case and found it suitable for the Restorative Justice Programme. We successfully advocated for a reduction in cash bail, enabling her family to secure her release and reunite her with her children.



Restorative Justice at Work...

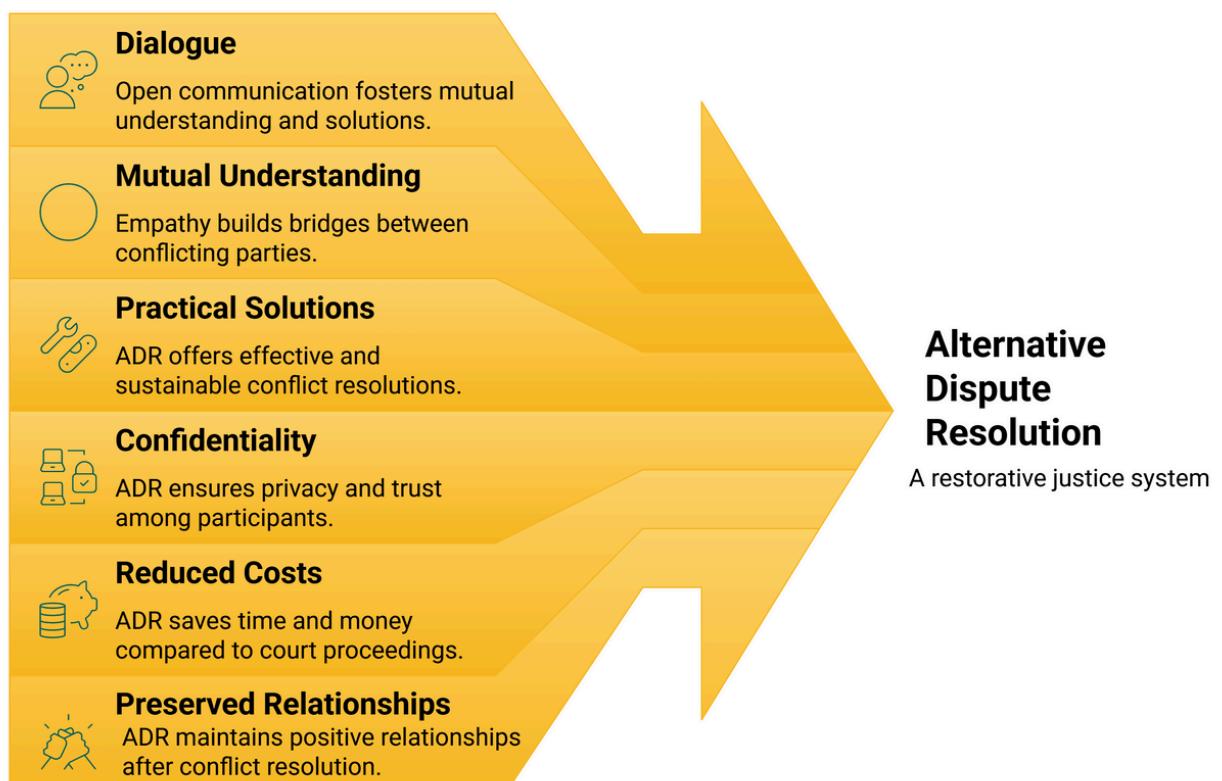
Recognizing that continued prosecution would only deepen the harm, we facilitated Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) between Jacqueline and the complainant. Through guided mediation, both parties were able to speak openly, rebuild trust, and reach a mutually agreed solution.

The complainant agreed to receive Jacqueline's cash bail as restitution, with the remaining balance to be paid gradually. In a meaningful act of reconciliation, she also offered to support Jacqueline in reconnecting with employment opportunities within the hospitality sector.

Following the agreement, the case was withdrawn, allowing both parties to move forward without the lasting burden of a criminal record or prolonged incarceration.

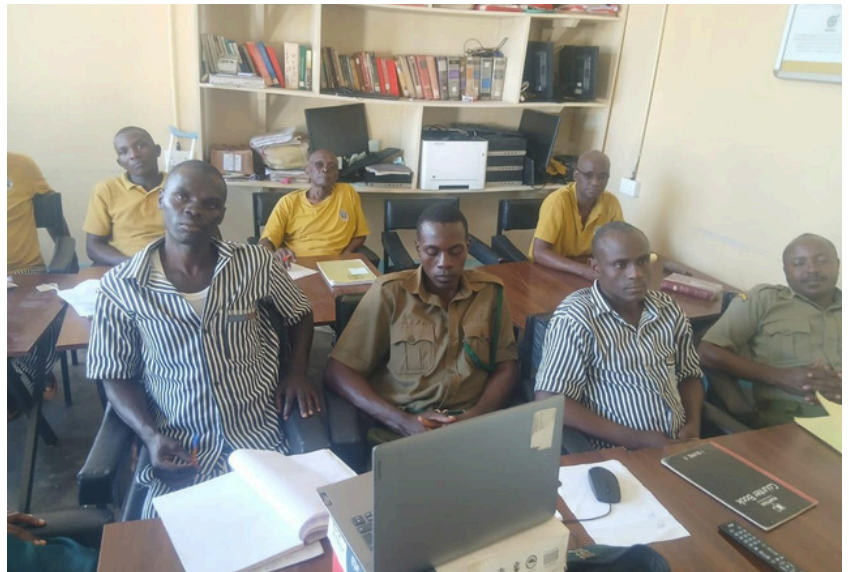
Today, Jacqueline is reunited with her children. Her case highlights the restorative power of ADR in resolving conflict, restoring dignity, and keeping families together.

At Justice Nest, ADR is a practice in line with our mission of reducing reliance on incarceration. It is a key factor in our advocacy for community-based alternative to prosecution.



A 25 Year Conviction Overturned

Mr. Salim visited our Justice Nest office on 3rd September 2025. He was very depressed and full of stress as a result of him being convicted and sentenced to serve 25 years imprisonment for the offense of robbery with violence. Mr. Salim told us that he had nothing to do with the said offence he was convicted of. He had earlier filed an appeal and was now requesting our help in drafting submissions for him.



📷: The Trial Advocacy Training is a great boost to the Prison Paralegal Program

Our paralegal Jeffa took up that task and attended to him. He first started by inquiring into his appeal status. Jeffa had to engage the trial court to get a copy of the proceedings. Jeffa went through the file and found that there were solid grounds that could lead to his acquittal.

He took the role and drafted the submissions and filed them in Garsen High Court, where the appeal was heard. After hearing the appeal, the court held that the prosecution did not prove their case and acquitted Mr. Salim. Mr. Salim came back to our office shaking with excitement and disbelief. He profusely thanked the Justice Nest family for helping him secure his freedom. He left prison on Monday, the 24th of November 2025. Before he left, Mr. Moses Mubia, a paralegal, had a brief chat with him and was very grateful.

“Of all the twenty five years I’ve lived on this earth, I’ve never been happy the way I am today. It still does not register clearly in my mind that I am free. That I am no longer a slave. It is still difficult to believe. Justice Nest people are miracle workers. Thank you very much. Am now heading home in Lamu county. I hope and pray that Allah will reward you more” Said Mr. Salim

Not everything should end up in the justice system

Dennis, a motorcycle taxi operator in Mombasa, Kenya, was arrested and remanded in prison in September 2025 after a dispute with a passenger who had refused to pay for a ride and Dennis in anger threatened to assault him. Unbeknownst to him, the passenger was an attorney, who later filed charges against Dennis for making death threats.



Dennis was arrested, charged, and pleaded not guilty, though he deeply regretted his outburst. He was remanded at Shimo la Tewa maximum prison. He visited Justice Nest legal office.

Our paralegal, Samuel Wachira, took up his case and contacted the complainant and, after persistent appeals for over a month, secured his agreement to forgive Dennis and withdraw the case.

On November 4, 2025, the complainant honored his word in court and withdrew the charges, releasing Dennis. Overcome with emotion, Dennis collected his belongings from Shimo La Tewa Prison and was escorted home by Samuel where he was joyfully reunited with family and neighbors.

Justice Nest's intervention transformed a moment of anger into an outcome of reconciliation, preventing a jail term and restoring Dennis to his community, fulfilling the organization's mission of bringing families together through restorative justice.

Resolving conflict is rarely about who is right. It is about acknowledgement and appreciation of differences. - Thomas Crum, The Magic of Conflict

Key Events & Milestones


First paralegal training: In February 2025, the Shimo la Tewa maximum prison opened its door to our first paralegal training. In December 2024, we had invited both incarcerated people and correctional officers to apply to work with us. We received 46 applications, 39 were shortlisted, and 33 were enrolled in the program. The paralegals are from three prisons (the women's prison, the men's medium prison, and the men's maximum). They were taken through an intensive 3-week training on criminal law and criminal procedure.

After the training, we opened the legal offices in the three stations. The legal offices are furnished with computers, printers, internet, and stationery, and they are supervised by qualified lawyers (advocates).



World Day of Social Justice (18th February 2025), themed Justice for All. Justice Nest focused on strengthening and promoting legal awareness among women in pretrial detention at Langata Womens Remand Prison. Our mission was clear: to provide legal services, listen to the stories of women in remand, and advocate for their rights. The team met one-on-one with over 100 prospective clients. For many, this was their first experience of being understood and heard.



: At Langata Womens Prison during the World Social Justice Day.

On International Women's Day (on 8th March 2025): Justice Nest honored the strength, resilience, and beauty of women in a meaningful event that included a beauty pageant held at Shimo La Tewa Women's Prison and other activities, embodying the year's theme, "Accelerate Change." Our very own paralegal, Ms. OMN, earned the title of Second Runners-Up, a testament to the inspiring power of hope and empowerment. The day stood as a true celebration of each woman's unique spirit and unbreakable courage.



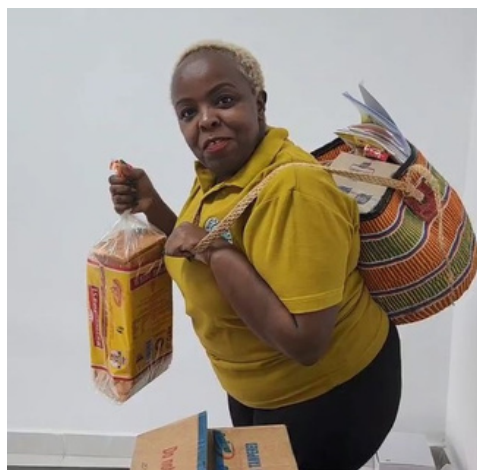
: Paralegals at Shimo La Tewa Women's Prison during the International Womens Day.

Mother's Day campaign: Pendo la mama (mama's love): In April 2025, Justice Nest launched a **40-day campaign** towards **Mother's Day** with the hashtags #PendoLaMama and #MamasLove. We visited and delivered care packages filled with groceries and school supplies to the children of incarcerated mothers and mothers who were out of prison.

Why This Campaign Mattered:

- **A Crisis of Poverty:** In Kenya, 92% of incarcerated women are mothers jailed for poverty-driven offenses, not violence (KNCHR 2023).
- **A Lifeline of Support:** The care packages delivered vital meals and school supplies, easing the burden on children forced to grow up too quickly.
- **Healing the Unseen Wound:** Each day of separation deepens a shared trauma, felt by mothers clinging to drawings on cell walls and by children whispering lonely prayers into the dark.

Pendo la mama halipaswi kukatika (A mothers love should never be severed).



📸: Miriam on a heart-to-heart chat with the children, the team visiting one of the children, & Kiki carrying a kiondo full of the care package for the children of the mothers in prison.

Intensive trial advocacy training (23-27th June 2025): Justice Nest, in partnership with Jones Day, led by Hon. Judge Ann Claire Williams (Rtd) and the National Institute for Trial Advocacy (NITA), conducted a rigorous, week-long **Trial Advocacy Training** inside Shimo la Tewa maximum prison. The program brought together a remarkable and diverse faculty and trainees: 6 judges, 14 international lawyers, 12 local advocates and paralegals, who themselves included 18 correctional officers and 13 incarcerated people. This groundbreaking initiative created an unprecedented forum for learning, collaboration, and justice.



On Universal Children’s Day (20th Nov 2025), Justice Nest gathered with mothers and children we serve for a day of healing and connection in Karura Forest. We laughed, played, shared a meal, and listened to powerful stories about life during and after incarceration. We were grateful to be joined by counselors from the Wangu Kanja Foundation and other partners who helped create a safe, restorative space.

Mothers narrated the difficulty of reintegrating back into society; one said the hardest challenge when she returned home was finding out that her children had fallen into depression. They talked of neglect by family members and the suffering their children underwent while they were away in prison. “I found my father has sent my children to different relatives; that broke my heart,” said Clara, one of our clients.

“I miss my mother so much, I pray that she will come back home soon,” said 9-year-old Njeri, whose mother is still in the prison.




📷: Justice Nest Team, the mothers & children in our program at Karura Forest to celebrate Universal Children's Day.

Justice Nest Anniversary celebration: we marked our first anniversary since our launch on 5th December 2025. We were joined by our supporters and partners to celebrate a year of courageous advocacy, compassionate service, and meaningful change in the justice system.



We concluded the year on the 19th December, with a potluck picnic lunch and secret santa gift giving. People can **COOK!!** We reflected, learned about each other and from each other. The day was such a delight!



 Staff potluck picnic & secret santa gifting.

Partnerships

Partnership: Justice Nest prioritizes working with other partners to amplify impact and achieve system change.

We partnered with the **University of Notre Dame Club of East Africa** to observe **#NDGlobalDayOfService** on April 26, 2025. Together, we visited **Kamiti Youth Corrective Centre** and **Kamae Girls' Borstal**, spending time with children in the juvenile justice system. Through prayer, conversation, and listening, we created a space for the children to share their experiences. Their stories of pain and resilience only strengthen our commitment to stand in the gap and ensure every child receives the legal and emotional support they deserve.



📍: At YCTC, Kamiti Youth Correctional Center and Kamae Girls Borstal Institution

We are also working in partnership with **Wangu Kanja Foundation** who offer support to our clients who are survivors of domestic violence. Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya is offering mental health training to our team.



📸: Justice Nest with Wangu Kanja Foundation Team



📸: Justice Nest with Wangu Kanja Foundation Team

📸: Miriam & Marie from Justice Nest with Guyana OJ from Basic Needs-Basic Rights Kenya

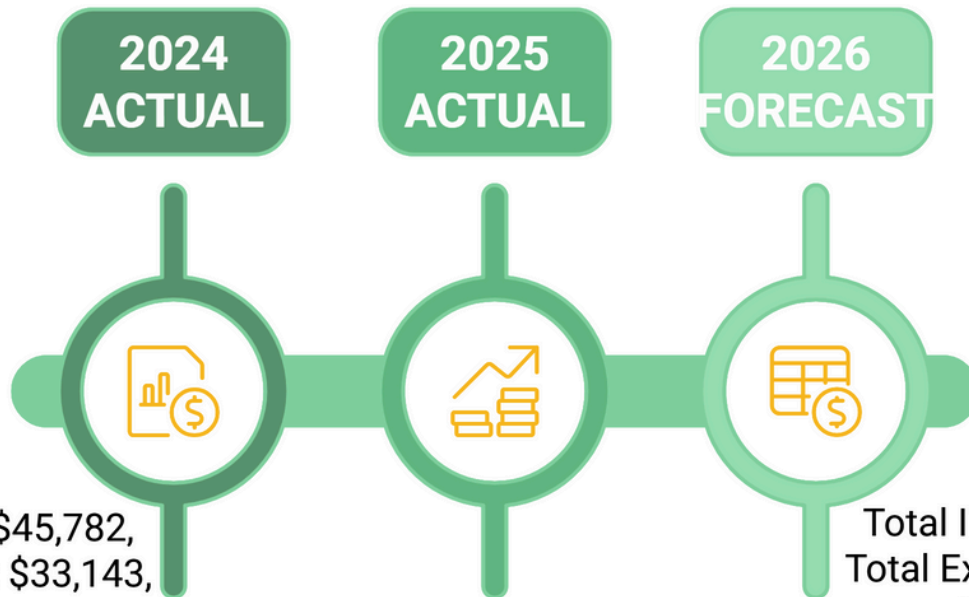
We are members of different court users' committees, where we participate in the deliberation of dispensing justice within the specific courts. We are also members of the National Council of Administration, which is an organ that brings all justice actors together to develop policies and coordinate the dispensation of justice in Kenya.



📸: Court Users Committee visiting Langata Womens Prison

Financial Report

Financial Growth Over Three Years



NOTES:

- 1. Program Evolution:** In 2026 we aim to expand the Livelihoods Program after internal assessment and mothers' feedback, strengthening family resilience and income stability.
- 2. Transition to Scale:** 2026 being our year 3, marks the shift from pilot to scale phase, with increased budgets for staffing, operations, and digital systems to sustain proven models.
- 3. Enhanced Paralegal Reach:** with the extensive training in 2025 our paralegal will increase the number of clients they each serve from the current 4 clients to 8 clients per month per paralegal, which gives us a target 3,168 clients annually
- 4. Growing Demand:** Increased visibility and referrals from communities, prisons, and justice institutions, expanding Justice Nest's footprint and trust.

Logical Framework

LEVEL	SMART INDICATOR	ACTUAL (2025)	TARGET (2026)	STRATEGIC NOTE
IMPACT	Kenya's justice system becomes more restorative, inclusive, and cost-efficient, reducing pre-trial detention and promoting reintegration for women and families. -		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 20% reduction in pre-trial detainees. · 3× cost efficiency vs. National legal aid average (KES 2,705 vs. 10,000 per case) Aligns with SDG 16.3, NCAJ and NLAS priorities, and national decongestion targets.	
OUTCOME 1	% of released clients re-incarcerated within 12 months	-	≤10%	Measures long-term rehabilitation and justice system effectiveness.
OUTCOME 2	% of released mothers reunited and sustaining stable care for their children	43 mothers released	≥80%	Strengthens family restoration, reduces child vulnerability, and supports diversion.
OUTPUT 1	# of inmates receiving direct legal aid and case resolution support (paralegal clients)	1463 clients served	3,168 clients annually	Expands equitable access to justice in prisons and accelerates case resolution.
OUTPUT 2	# of mothers and children supported through the diversion and restoration programme	80 mothers + 243 children = 323 individuals annually	120 mothers + 360 children = 480 individuals annually	Promotes gender-responsive, family-centred justice and livelihoods recovery.
OUTPUT 3	# of indirect household members and caregivers positively impacted	1584 (client households) + 240 (mothers' caregivers) = 1824 individuals annually	3,168 (client households) + 120 (mothers' caregivers) = 3,288 individuals annually	Demonstrates community-level social impact and reintegration ripple effect.

Contact Us



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