

# CONCEPT NOTE

# BEYOND THE BARS CONFERENCE 2023

MOVEMENT BUILDING TOWARDS A JUST AFRICA



*Teresa*

Teresa  
Njoroge

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Founder

**Location: Nairobi, Kenya**

**Proposed Venue: TBC**

**Dates: 30<sup>th</sup> November & 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023**

## **Introduction**

Clean Start solutions works with women and their children impacted by the Criminal Justice System. We are playing a unique role in restoring hope, dignity, and self-confidence to imprisoned and formerly imprisoned women and girls while breaking the cycles of poverty, crime, and recidivism. Clean Start supports successful reintegration and transition for women through employment training, psychosocial support, entrepreneurship, and vocational training, enabling them to find sustainable livelihoods post-release. Progressively, we have built a vibrant coalition of formerly imprisoned women, a movement that is driven by women themselves through the different chapters across Kenya. The coalition is peer driven and built on the requisite skills of the women to take an active role in advocating for prison reforms and Non-Custodial Sentences.

## Intervention Summary

As an advocate for the reintegration of formerly incarcerated women into society, Clean Start Africa is proud to present the Beyond the Bars Conference 2023. The conference aims at empowering and amplifying the voices of imprisoned and formerly imprisoned women who bear a disproportionate burden of the impacts of imprisonment, particularly as a result of petty survival crimes.

Over the past 7 years, we have worked on operationalizing our goal of providing dignified reentry and rehabilitation for women and girls leaving prison in Kenya. In Kenya, on any given day, there are approximately 5000 women in prisons on average. 18 % of the prison population are women and 90 % of these women are mothers and sole breadwinners of their families.

We are committed to creating second chances for women in and

out of prison. To get us there, we have created a theory of change, including successful rehabilitation and re-entry, policy advocacy and our National Beyond the bars conference.

Beyond the Bars Africa conference offers the formerly imprisoned community in Kenya and indeed beyond our borders, the ability to organize, speak up, and engage the leaders in the criminal justice system and other relevant institutions accountable, pushing them to fulfill their mandate of access and administration of Justice to all, irrespective of their social-economic status, and not punish the poor, vulnerable and marginalized.

It's an opportunity to raise their voices, have dialogue with and influence decisions, and hold key government decision makers to account, to change archaic laws still in our Penal code and Criminal procedure code, and economic opportunities and inclusion of all.

## The Problem

The grave reality facing women in and out of prison in Kenya is the relentless onslaught of challenges stemming from an unsupportive criminal justice system, notably that focuses more on punishing offenders rather than offering them smooth reintegration pathways. Findings elucidated in our recent research-Rethinking the Bars underscore the harsh realities about inequalities being reproduced in the Kenyan criminal justice system that inhibit fair, impartial, and non-arbitrary treatment for women who commit petty offences. The research spotlighted their susceptibility arising from limited access to income and reintegration opportunities, escalating marginalization, and discrimination.

In light of these sobering insights, it is critical to amplify the voices of formerly imprisoned women that deepens their vulnerability, magnifying the urgency to facilitate their inclusion in advocacy and policy discourses. It is for this reason that we are planning to host the Beyond the Bars conference in November 2023.

## Justification

The percentage of women in prison is growing globally and at a faster rate than the male population. The number of women being imprisoned globally has increased by more than 100,000 in the past decade<sup>1</sup>, despite international rules aimed at reducing the female prison population. This is raising questions about criminal codes, functioning of criminal justice system and socio-economic factors for example the criminalization and feminization of poverty. A large majority of women in conflict with the criminal law do not pose a high risk to society and their imprisonment does not help but hinder their social re-integration. Based on our research findings, the Kenyan criminal justice system still considers incarceration as the most appropriate punishment for those who offend including women petty offenders. Yet, evidence shows that Kenya has the best-developed infrastructure in the East African region for implementation of alternative sentences.

It is critical to bring this matter at the fore front and engage the impacted community, civil society actors, right holders and duty bearers, business community and educators

<sup>1</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/dec/10/alariming-number-of-women-behind-bars-rises-by-100000-in-past-decade>

to increase awareness and explore opportunities by various stakeholders aimed at fostering rehabilitation and social integration

of women, to provide a second chance in life' and strengthen the pillar on fair, humane and effective criminal justice systems.

## Proposition

### The Beyond the Bars conference

Clean Start seeks to hold a one of a kind Beyond The Bars Conference. Our ultimate goal is to amplify the voices of women impacted by the criminal justice system highlighting their priority needs, challenges opportunities and innovations. This intervention will catalyze a paradigm shift in policy realms and engagement with key stakeholders at both local and international corridors, pivoting toward the all-encompassing enabling environment that embraces women impacted by the criminal justice system.

The Beyond the Bars Conference 2023 is set to take place in November 2023. This event serves as a powerful convergence point for a wide spectrum of influential stakeholders. These include esteemed government officials, impassioned representatives from non-profit organizations, forward-thinking corporate partners, educators, civil society organizations and a remarkable cohort of 400 formerly incarcerated women, and inspirational community leaders. Beyond the Bars 2023 is not just an event; it's a catalyst for change and a beacon of hope for a brighter and more inclusive society for the formerly incarcerated women.

## Objectives of the conference

1. This event aims to celebrate the resilience, strength, and accomplishments of these women while fostering a supportive environment for their ongoing journey towards a brighter future.  
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2. Provide a transformative experience, designed to address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities faced by formerly incarcerated women as they navigate the path towards reintegration into society.  
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3. The Beyond the Bars Conference 2023 will delve into critical topics such as access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare, mental health support, housing, and policy reform targeting women impacted by the criminal justice system  
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4. Spotlight successful reintegration stories, innovative programs, and strategies that have proven effective in breaking down barriers and fostering a supportive environment for these women.  
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5. Create an environment where women impacted by the criminal justice system feel comfortable participating in criminal justice system negotiations for non-custodial sentencing and other aspects while advocating for their needs and priorities.

## Our proposed partners

### Academia:

We are partnering with the Academia because we know, Law schools play a critical role in positively intervening in criminal justice system by educating students on its inequities, as well as equipping students with the practical experience necessary to create real change. Colleges of law play a critical role in criminal justice reform and the most important part is educating students on the realities of criminal law and this conference offers first hand interaction, with those impacted by the system and the right holders and duty bearers in the criminal justice system offering an unparalleled learning experience for the students.

### Corporations:

Beyond employing people. Beyond developing products and services. Beyond satisfying customers. Corporations play a broader role in society – one that includes helping solve some of the world's greatest challenges. Income inequality and workforce development are among the most pressing concerns we face today and one that has the largest impact on the world.

We invite corporations to make social efforts at Beyond the Bars Africa conference, where we believe we can make the greatest positive impact. For a purposeful strategy, we can collaboratively be on a mission to be a force for good. Making the world a better, more sustainable place by empowering people and innovating products that speak to the people.

### Faith-Based Partners:

Healing Through Service: The Necessity of Faith-Based Justice Reform

Across different faith traditions there exists a shared belief in the individual's dignity and the potential of that individual to redeem themselves. For those who have been isolated and alienated (as is the nature of incarceration), the opportunity for identity transformation, to



be a valued part of something bigger than themselves, is life changing. It is a chance to be defined not by their biggest mistakes, but rather by who they can become and how they show up in their community.

We are offering an opportunity to Faith Based organizations at the Beyond the Bars conference to offer direct services to address basic needs, connect the individuals impacted with resource agencies, offer educational seminars and workshops, and advocate for people's rights on multiple platforms.

### **Civil Society Organizations:**

Governments and NGOs have identified many policies and practices which in our experience, would improve the success of the efforts to alleviate poverty. Many of these policies will be discussed at the conference, and we hope the collaborative approach will be more successful than previous efforts. The Beyond the Bars conference will create an opportunity for the civil society organizations present to establish ways they can broaden and deepen their contribution to achieving sustainable development goals including poverty alleviation and, most importantly, the criminalization of poverty.

## Expected Impacts

Through this intervention, targeting 400 women impacted by the criminal justice system, the women will be able to strategically position themselves through their stories of power, resilience and innovation to influence key decisions and reach a wider audience which will include policy makers, Private and public sector, Civil Society, law makers, human rights activists, and community members. This will lead to increased awareness of the multifaceted challenges confronted by women impacted by the criminal justice system, their needs and opportunities for change within the criminal justice system.

## Key Impacts

- a. Women who are proactive storytellers and potent advocates for their inherent rights in Criminal Justice matters.
- b. Provide a wide engaged community culminating as a crucible for the dissemination of experiences of women impacted by the Criminal Justice System and active engagement and support by policymakers, business community, civil society actors, government representatives and educators.
- C. A commitment towards embedding the social inclusion of women impacted by the criminal justice systems into prison reforms blueprints, employment opportunities access to justice and community engagement.

## Target Audience

1. 400 formerly imprisoned Women.
2. Community members and local administrators
3. The Judiciary and Criminal Justice system Actors
4. Corporates and the Business Community
5. Educators and the Academia
6. Funders and donors

### **Our Ask:**

1. Offer monetary sponsorship for the conference to cater for (venue, meals, sound system, Publications, décor, etc.
2. Offer gift packs to the Formerly imprisoned women in attendance.
3. Offer social media awareness and advertisements on your social media platforms.

## Benefits to the sponsor

1. Prominent exposure in mass emails to our email list  
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2. We will include your logo and message on our website and all communication leading to the conference.  
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3. We will Include your logo on our event registration landing page.  
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4. We will showcase your company and what you do on our social media cover photo spotlighting you in your event discussion posts.

5. Invite some of your company employees to tour Clean Start Africa and better understand what we do.  
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6. We will arrange for you to meet our community, our volunteers and partners, board members to network and talk more about your products and services.  
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7. Every sponsor will be given a table decor and will be allowed to include their products and services.  
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8. All sponsors will be given free tickets to the event.  
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9. **Networking Benefits-** The conference will create a unique opportunity for the sponsor to tap into our social capital. Over the years, Clean Start Africa has been able to build its social capital globally. This emanates from both individuals and organizations.  
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10. **A chance to Speak at the Conference.** - Clean Start Africa will ensure that you have a chance to speak at the Conference. This will be a perfect opportunity to market your products for the specific demographic at the event.

## **Contact Us:**

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For inquiries, please contact the following individuals:

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# 1 NO POVERTY



Globally, there are **122 women living in extreme poverty** for every 100 men in the same age group (25 - 34 years).



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**5** GENDER  
EQUALITY



**10** REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



**16** PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS





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Creating Second Chances



Beyond The Bars Africa