

Information Note

Removal Operation of Children Living and Working on the Streets of Kampala and Confinement at Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre -- March 27th 2008

A joint OHCHR/UNICEF assessment mission on Monday 31st March 2008 to Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre (KNRC) confirmed the following facts:

- On March 27, 81 children (51 boys and 30 girls) and 5 women were forcefully removed from the street of Kampala by law enforcement officials (Kampala City Council and Police) without the involvement of social workers.
- The 81 children and 5 women were taken by the Police to Kampiringisa on March 27. KNRC had not been informed about the removal operation nor about the placement of children and women in the center. Hence no preparation had been made by the center. By March 31, the five women had left KNRC with their babies.
- The majority of children are from Karamoja, and approximately 20 are from other regions of Uganda including suburbs of Kampala. There are approximately 10 children below the age of 5 with the youngest being around 2 years.
- Interviewed children stated that they had been forcefully removed from the streets on March 27 and taken to the Central Police Station and later that day to KNRC by KCC officials and the police. They also stated that some children managed to run away during the street round ups and hoped these would inform their parents about the operation and their placement in KNRC. While children were separated from their parents/caregivers, the children below 5 years were totally alone, that is without older siblings. None of the children interviewed had been informed of next steps or future plans.
- All boys (51) were locked up in their dormitory and not allowed to wear their shirts – this was devised as a KNRC measure to prevent them from escaping into villages. Approximately 6 older boys (15-17) were confined to a cell to prevent them from leaving the center (as they had previously been placed in KNRC and had escaped).
- KNRC facilities: Accommodation for boys and girls is separate. No men were brought to the centre (as had been the case in previous operations) The food reserves in store could cater at a maximum for 2 weeks (i.e. April 14). There is running water in the centre unlike in the past. All children were clean although approximately 10 children had mild skin diseases. The residences were also clean, had mosquito nets. At the time of the visit (4 pm) the clinic was open, and staff on duty had took on sick children for treatment. Drugs however are lacking.
- The registration database which was introduced in 2007 in KNRC was no longer operational. Screening and interviewing of children was underway and individual case information was being recorded. This process was describe as part of preparation steps to reintegrate children in their original communities

An update received from KNRC on April 11th indicated that: the number of children in the center is still 81. Interviews with children are on-going. Children have been engaged in some recreational activities. All boys (51) have been freed from the room in which they were confined to. No contacts have been made with the parents of the 81 children. No family tracing efforts are underway. KNRC has not received any instruction from the MoGLSD in terms of next steps, and hence intends to keep the children until further guidance is provided..

N.B.: KNRC is a rehabilitation center for children in contact with the law, who get placed in the center by order of the Family and Children's courts.