



Reducing Pre-Trial Detention in Uganda's Criminal Justice System: Policy Analysis and Reform Strategies

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Abstract

Reducing pre-trial detention is a critical component of criminal justice reform in many countries, including Uganda, where the backlog of cases and prolonged incarceration have significant social and economic implications. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with prosecutors, judges, and defence lawyers to understand current practices and challenges. Quantitative data from court records are also analysed to identify trends in pre-trial detention durations across different types of cases. Analysis reveals that over 70% of defendants remain detained pending trial, often due to procedural delays rather than lack of evidence or guilt. This prolonged detention can lead to financial ruin and social stigma for individuals who may be ultimately found not guilty. The findings underscore the need for systemic changes in pre-trial procedures to streamline case management and reduce unnecessary detention, while ensuring fair legal proceedings are upheld. Recommendations include implementing electronic court registries to expedite case processing, providing training for judicial staff on efficient procedural handling, and exploring alternatives to incarceration such as community-based supervision programmes for low-risk defendants.

Keywords: *African jurisprudence, pre-trial detention, criminal justice reform, detention practices, restorative justice, community-based alternatives, sentencing guidelines*

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