

# Livelihood Outcomes and Behavioral Change Among Former Offenders: Evidence from Community Service Orders in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of livelihood opportunities on the behavioral change of former offenders who have completed community service orders (CSOs) in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania. The study was guided by Social Learning Theory and drew on both global and Tanzanian literature on community sanctions, rehabilitation, and reintegration, including barriers related to stigma and capital access. Using a qualitative explanatory design, data were generated from 15 key informants, including judicial officers, social workers, community leaders, and former offenders, through semi-structured interviews. The study explores how access to employment, vocational training, and income-generating activities affects the rehabilitation and reintegration process for ex-offenders. The study area, Ilala Municipality, was chosen for its diverse population and established CSO system. Data were analyzed through a thematic framework approach, categorizing themes around employment and income opportunities, the influence of stable livelihood on behavior, and barriers to livelihood reintegration. Findings show that, although livelihood opportunities are generally limited, those who secure stable employment or start small businesses are less likely to re-offend, regain community respect, and experience personal transformation. Key barriers identified include persistent social stigma, lack of start-up capital, and insufficient vocational support, which weaken the potential of CSOs to achieve sustainable reintegration and reduce recidivism. The results underscore the crucial need for multi-stakeholder interventions, especially by NGOs, employers, and social workers, to provide targeted vocational training and facilitate access to employment. The interventions are essential for maximizing the rehabilitative role of CSOs and supporting former offenders' positive behavioral change in urban Tanzanian settings.

**Keywords:** Livelihood Outcomes, Behavioral Change, Community Service Orders.

## Review Article

## Introduction

A stable livelihood is essential for fostering positive behavioral change among former offenders, as it reduces the risk of re-offending by promoting independence, dignity, and community reintegration. This study examines how access to employment and income opportunities, along with barriers such as stigma, limited vocational training, and lack of capital, affect the rehabilitation and future choices of individuals who have completed community service orders in Ilala Municipality. The findings highlight that even modest

livelihoods can significantly aid reintegration and support sustained behavioral transformation for former offenders.

## Background of the Study

Livelihood outcomes are critical in shaping behavioral change among former offenders, especially in the context of community service orders (CSOs) in Tanzania. The Community Service Act (2002) mandates offenders to engage in unpaid work for the benefit of the community, offering a legal alternative to imprisonment and emphasizing

rehabilitation through social and economic participation. In Ilala Municipality, CSOs are designed not just to punish but to reintegrate individuals into society through structured engagement and skill development, which is pivotal in transforming attitudes and repeated offenses (The Community Service Act, 2002).

Despite the progressive framework, barriers persist that undermine the reformative goals of CSOs. Studies have shown that effective behavioral change is often hindered by a lack of resources, inadequate monitoring, and insufficient vocational support, with Nyalusi and Mabula (2022) highlighting weak supervision and poor access to training as persistent issues in Tanzania. Similarly, Twaha and Salma (2020) note that offenders often perceive CSOs as punitive rather than rehabilitative, limiting their transformative potential. The limited provision of financial assistance and employment opportunities after service continues to hamper the reintegration process for many former offenders.

Research has consistently linked stable livelihoods with reduced recidivism and positive rehabilitation outcomes. Farrington et al. (2016) found that community programs offering economic stability significantly decrease the likelihood of reoffending, a finding echoed in the qualitative responses from Ilala, where former offenders who accessed employment or initiated small businesses were less likely to relapse into crime (Farrington et al., 2016). The testimonies of judicial officers and police in Ilala reinforce this, stating that steady work and income not only improve rehabilitation chances but also restore dignity and community respect (Nyalusi and Mabula, 2022).

The current study builds on earlier literature, confirming that livelihood opportunities act as a protective factor for behavioral change, yet are often limited by stigma and lack of capital. Buhori and Leonard (2024) underscore the role of social workers in supporting economic reintegration, consistent with the barriers identified in Ilala. The ongoing challenges, such as employers' reluctance to trust ex-offenders and a shortage of vocational programs, signal the need for integrated livelihood support within CSO schemes to achieve sustainable behavioral change and successful social reintegration (Buhori & Leonard, 2024; Twaha & Salma, 2020; The Community Service Act, 2002).

## Statement of the Problem

Despite the introduction of community service orders in Tanzania through the Community Service Act (2002), former offenders in Ilala Municipality continue to face significant barriers to achieving sustainable livelihoods after completing their sentences (Materu, 2021). As highlighted by Nyalusi and Mabula (2022), stable employment and reliable sources of income are essential for supporting rehabilitation, ensuring positive behavioral change, and reducing recidivism, yet these opportunities remain limited. Many ex-offenders encounter social stigma from employers, lack of financial

capital, and minimal access to vocational training, all of which severely restrict their ability to reintegrate into society and lead productive lives (Makaramba, 2020; Tanzania Legal and Human Rights Centre [LHRC], 2021).

Existing studies, such as the study of Twaha & Salma (2020), further emphasize that without comprehensive support for livelihood outcomes, including training, employment programs, and community acceptance, the risk of relapse into criminal activities remains high. While the intended aim of CSOs is to promote rehabilitation and self-sufficiency, weak supervision, resource constraints, and negative public attitudes undermine these efforts, resulting in incomplete behavioral transformation (Mnguni, 2021). This situation necessitates a focused investigation into the direct impact of livelihood interventions on behavioral change among former offenders, to inform policy reforms and targeted program development in Ilala Municipality.

## Literature Review

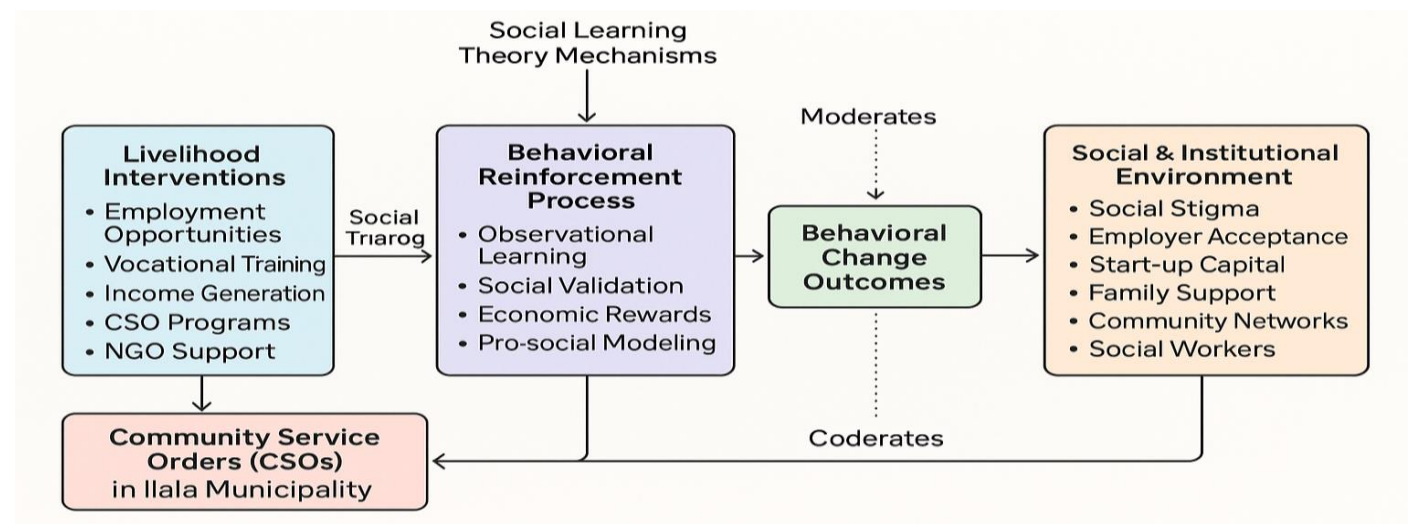
Livelihood, as a key concept in offender rehabilitation, has been variably defined. According to the Community Service Act (2002), a livelihood for former offenders refers to the means by which individuals attain economic self-sufficiency after serving non-custodial sentences. Batrievi (2022) further describes livelihood as the acquisition of skills, employment, or income-generating opportunities enabling ex-offenders to reintegrate productively into society, extending the Act's legal focus by emphasizing practical skill barriers overlooked in policy frameworks. Behavioral change, another central term, is defined by the United Nations (2020) as the process of transforming attitudes, habits, and actions following internal or external influences. Feikoab and Osafo (2021) emphasize behavioral change as a shift in decision-making and conduct resulting directly from exposure to correctional or rehabilitative interventions, offering a more targeted correctional lens than the UN's broader process-oriented definition, which this study reconciles through CSO-specific pathways.

This study is guided by Social Learning Theory (SLT), first articulated by Bandura and later extended by criminologists, which posits that behavioral patterns are acquired through observation, imitation, and modeling within social contexts (Smith, 2018; Akers, 1998). In the context of community corrections, SLT explains how offenders' attitudes and behaviors are influenced, either positively or negatively, by their social environment, including direct contact with pro-social role models, ongoing feedback, and reinforcement mechanisms (UNODC, 2019; Miller, 2015). Walters (2017) and Farrington et al. (2016) have demonstrated the relevance of SLT by showing that structured, supportive environments facilitate behavioral transformation through consistent exposure to pro-social norms and opportunities for positive imitation—contrasting UNODC/Miller's broader institutional applications by proving SLT's superior efficacy in

supervised CSO-like settings, a distinction this study applies to Ilala's urban dynamics.

The theoretical framework of this study is constructed around SLT's assertion that the rehabilitation and livelihood outcomes of former offenders are determined by the quality of their interactions during community service. The framework specifically links the structured, supervised nature of CSOs to opportunities for observational learning, skill acquisition, and reinforced pro-social attitudes (Akers, 1998; Walters, 2017). Within this structure, key variables such as access to training, employment, and supportive community

networks are hypothesized to directly foster behavioral change by providing ex-offenders with both the means and social incentives for prosocial conduct (Farrington et al., 2016; Buhori & Leonard, 2024). Thus, SLT provides a coherent lens for analyzing how livelihood interventions embedded within CSOs can create sustainable behavioral shifts and reduce recidivism among former offenders in Ilala Municipality, bridging Farrington's global meta-analysis with Buhori & Leonard's Tanzanian specificity. The following figure, illustrates the conceptual framework (Livelihood Behavioral change model)



**Figure 1:** Livelihood Behavioral change model

This conceptual framework illustrates how livelihood interventions, grounded in Social Learning Theory (SLT), drive behavioral transformation among former offenders completing Community Service Orders (CSOs) in Ilala Municipality. Livelihood inputs trigger behavioral reinforcement processes, moderated by social/institutional factors, leading to reduced recidivism and successful reintegration (Field Data, 2025).

Empirical studies from around the world and within Africa emphasize the influence of livelihood interventions on behavioral change among former offenders. Farrington et al. (2016) demonstrated that structured community programs that promote positive social interactions significantly reduce criminal behavior by altering offenders' learning environments and reinforcing pro-social conduct. Batrievi (2022) highlights Serbian evidence, showing that livelihood-focused community service improves rehabilitation outcomes by strengthening offenders' capacity to reintegrate through vocational experience. Yet contrasts Farrington's quantitative breadth with context-specific vocational detail. In Tanzania, Buhori and Leonard (2024) found that social workers play a pivotal role in improving offenders' economic reintegration and reducing recidivism by providing support and linking ex-offenders to economic opportunities. Despite such interventions, empirical literature points to persistent barriers such as stigma, lack of capital, and inadequate

vocational training, which undermine ex-offenders' access to stable livelihoods and limit the rehabilitative impact of community-based sanctions, gaps more pronounced in Ilala than in these studies' settings.

However, major research gaps remain. While earlier studies like Wafula and Murenga (2019) and Arreola and Mabbayad (2024) have illuminated challenges and examined the benefits of community service to the broader community or focused on structural issues, they have not systematically analyzed how post-sentence livelihood outcomes directly foster or hinder lasting behavioral change among former offenders themselves, prioritizing systemic over individual pathways. Most existing studies also lack a localized focus on Tanzanian urban settings such as Ilala Municipality, where unique social and economic factors may affect reintegration. Therefore, this study sought to fill this empirical gap by examining the specific pathways through which livelihood support, employment, and vocational training shape behavioral change and successful social reintegration for former offenders in Ilala Municipality, extending prior descriptive analyses into causal, context-specific comparisons.

## Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative explanatory approach to investigate livelihood outcomes and behavioral change

among former offenders who completed community service orders in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania. The explanatory design was chosen for its capacity to generate rich, context-specific insights into how structured community sanctions influence rehabilitation and reintegration processes for ex-offenders. Specifically, this design allowed the researcher to capture nuanced perspectives about the impact of employment, vocational training, and income-generating opportunities on the behavioral transformation of offenders, focusing only on those directly affected by CSO provisions (Yin, 2018; Etikan & Bala, 2021).

Purposive sampling was used to select a total of 15 key informants, including judicial officers, social workers, police officers, former offenders, community leaders, and religious representatives. These participants were chosen for their direct experience with CSOs and knowledge of offender rehabilitation. Data generation concluded when responses became repetitive and no new insights emerged. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data generation instrument, employing open-ended questions tailored to elicit detailed narratives about employment access, financial challenges, and the role of livelihoods in behavioral change. This method fostered in-depth interaction and allowed the researcher to probe for emerging themes as they developed during interviews.

A thematic approach was employed to analyze data. Interview transcripts were coded and categorized to identify recurring ideas and relationships, with participant quotations used to illustrate each key theme. The analysis prioritized patterns relating to livelihood barriers, successful reintegration experiences, and structural factors affecting

behavioral change. To ensure validity and reliability, the triangulation of data sources and peer debriefing were employed. The research instruments used for data collection in this study were carefully validated to ensure their credibility and appropriateness. The semi-structured interview guides were developed based on existing literature and reviewed by experts in social sciences and criminology to establish content validity. A pilot test was conducted with a small sample of similar participants outside the study area to identify ambiguities and improve clarity. Member checking was also employed during data collection to confirm the accuracy and interpretive validity of responses. The instrument validation measures enhanced the reliability of the qualitative data collected. Ethical clearance for the study was duly obtained from the Research and Consultancy Department of St. Augustine University of Tanzania, ensuring that all research procedures complied with institutional ethical standards. Participant confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent were strictly maintained throughout the study to protect the rights and welfare of all informants.

## Findings and Discussion

### Respondents' Characteristics

This section presents the demographic and role-based characteristics of the 15 respondents who participated in the study. The characteristics help to contextualize the findings, as the diversity of perspectives was ensured by including multiple stakeholder categories directly involved in or affected by the implementation of community service orders. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics.

**Table 1:** Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	9	60.0
	Female	6	40.0
<b>Age (years)</b>	25–34	3	20.0
	35–44	5	33.3
	45–54	4	26.7
	55 and above	3	20.0
<b>Stakeholder Role</b>	Judicial officers	2	13.3
	Social workers	3	20.0
	Former offenders	3	20.0
	Community leaders	2	13.3
	Police officers	2	13.3
	Family members of ex-offenders	2	13.3
	Religious leaders	1	6.8
<b>Education Level</b>	Secondary education	4	26.7
	Diploma/Certificate	5	33.3
	Bachelor's degree and above	6	40.0

**Source:** Field Data, 2025

The data in Table 1 indicate that both genders were represented, with males (60%) slightly more represented than females (40%). The majority of respondents were aged between 35 and 54 years, suggesting that perspectives were drawn from individuals in their active professional and community engagement years. Stakeholder representation was balanced across different categories, with former offenders and social workers contributing significantly to the findings (20% each). Education levels of participants ranged from secondary education to higher learning, indicating that respondents had varying levels of knowledge and experiences relevant to community service orders and behavioral change.

## Livelihood Outcomes and Behavioral Change

This study aimed to determine the livelihood outcomes on behavioral change of former offenders in Ilala Municipality. Respondents were asked to reflect on employment and income opportunities for former offenders, the role of stable livelihoods in influencing behavior, and the challenges they face in securing jobs or engaging in income-generating activities. From the analysis, three key themes emerged: access to employment and income opportunities, the influence of stable livelihood on behavior, and barriers to livelihood reintegration.

### Access to Employment and Income Opportunities

Access to stable employment and income-generating activities emerged as a critical theme influencing the behavioral change of former offenders in Ilala Municipality. Participants consistently highlighted that having a reliable source of income significantly enhanced their ability to reintegrate into society and resist recidivism. One participant emphasized that, *"Offenders who find employment soon after community service are less likely to re-offend because they have financial stability and a renewed sense of purpose."* (KI1, Judicial officer). Similarly, another participant shared, *"When I started my small business, I felt respected by my family and neighbors, which motivated me to stay on the right path."* (KI6, Former inmate). The expressions demonstrate the link between economic opportunities and improved social standing, which reinforce sustained behavioral transformation.

Furthermore, another participant noted: *"Few employers are willing to trust former offenders, but some NGOs and small businesses offer them casual jobs"* (KI3, Community leader). Another one added: *"Some who learned tailoring and carpentry during service have managed to start small businesses"* (KI2, Social worker). A former inmate supported the observations by stating: *"I got a small job in construction after my service, and it helped me avoid going back to old friends"* (KI7, Former inmate). The opinions show that, informal and NGO-supported employment opportunities provide crucial lifelines that facilitate positive behavioral changes.

However, many informants noted that livelihood opportunities are severely limited by structural and social barriers. As the challenge noted by one participant: *"Employers are often reluctant to hire ex-offenders due to stigma and mistrust."* (KI3, Community leaders). The lack of vocational training and start-up capital were also cited as key obstacles. Participant observed, *"Even when training is available, many offenders cannot translate skills into gainful employment without financial support."* (KI2, Social worker). The findings reveal gaps in support systems undermine the potential of CSOs to foster long-term economic independence and rehabilitation.

Persistent social stigma further restricts livelihood access, reinforcing exclusion and psychological distress. A participant pointed out, *"Society often judges former offenders harshly, making it difficult for them to get jobs or community acceptance, which can lead to relapse."* (KI4, Police officer). Despite the challenges, some participants praised the role of NGOs and community groups in providing informal work or microloans, which, although limited, offered vital lifelines to survival and behavior change. The themes highlights access to employment and income as a powerful catalyst for positive behavioral change but stresses the need for comprehensive support mechanisms to mitigate barriers.

### Influence of Stable Livelihood on Behavior

Stable livelihoods significantly influenced positive behavioral change among former offenders in Ilala Municipality. Respondents observed that having a consistent source of income reduced dependency and the temptation to re-offend. As observed by one participant: *"When ex-offenders secure employment, they are less likely to re-offend because they can support themselves and their families"* (KI1, Judicial officer). Another participant added: *"Those who have something to do, like small businesses, change completely. They become respected again"* (KI11, Family member). Another one confirmed this by stating: *"I have seen that most people who get steady jobs do not come back to police custody"* (KI4, Police officer). The responses accounts for a stable livelihood acts as a protective factor against recidivism, strengthening rehabilitation outcomes.

The emphasis on livelihood stability also related to offenders regaining dignity, independence, and community respect, which further reinforced their behavioral transformation. One participant noted: *"Having a steady job gave me purpose and a place in my community, which kept me away from crime."* (KI9, former inmate). The narratives demonstrate that economic stability provides offenders with continuous reinforcement for maintaining pro-social behaviors.

However, participants stressed that without reliable livelihood opportunities, the behavioral change sparked by community service orders remains fragile and vulnerable to reversal. The theme underscores stable livelihoods are the foundation for sustained rehabilitation, but not only supporting economic

needs but also helping restore social identity and acceptance crucial for long-term behavioral change.

### Barriers to Livelihood Reintegration

Despite the positive influence of employment, respondents emphasized that stigma, lack of capital, and limited vocational training posed major barriers to livelihood reintegration for former offenders in Ilala Municipality. One participant explained: *"The biggest problem is stigma—most people don't want to hire someone with a criminal record"* (KI2, Social worker). Another participant added: *"Even when they have skills, they lack capital to start something of their own"* (KI8, Former inmate). Another one reinforced this by saying: *"There are few training opportunities linked to community service, so many finish their sentences without skills to survive"* (KI12, Religious leader). The findings suggest that although livelihood support is crucial, systemic and social barriers continue to undermine its effectiveness in sustaining behavioral change.

The barriers created a cycle of exclusion that threatened the fragile behavioral gains achieved through community service orders. Social workers and community leaders highlighted how employer discrimination and financial constraints prevented ex-offenders from translating skills into sustainable livelihoods. A participant noted, *"Even motivated offenders struggle without seed capital or acceptance from employers."* (KI3, Community leader)

The persistent nature of the obstacles underscores the need for targeted interventions to break the reintegration cycle. Without addressing stigma, capital shortages, and training gaps, the rehabilitative potential of CSOs remains significantly limited, leaving many former offenders vulnerable to recidivism despite demonstrated willingness to change.

The limited employment opportunities identified in Ilala Municipality extend Farrington et al.'s (2016) findings on structured community programs by revealing how socio-economic instability specifically undermines CSO effectiveness in urban Tanzanian situations, where ex-offenders face acute job scarcity post-sentence. While Buhori and Leonard (2024) documented social workers' role in Tanzanian prison reintegration, this study uniquely demonstrates their extended need in CSO settings to bridge gaps between service completion and actual employment, highlighting a policy implementation shortfall not emphasized in prior local research. Similarly, Batrićević (2022) found livelihood-focused community service improved Serbian outcomes, but Ilala's data reveal greater structural barriers in developing contexts, where NGO involvement remains inconsistent compared to European models.

Stable livelihoods' role in reducing recidivism strongly confirms Social Learning Theory's reinforcement principle, as articulated by Akers (1998), where employment provides

tangible rewards that sustain pro-social behaviors beyond initial CSO exposure, unlike Silva and Andrade's (2020) Brazilian vocational programs, which showed relapse reduction primarily through skill acquisition alone. Hyatt (2023) linked behavioral interventions to income opportunities, yet this study's Ilala evidence adds nuance by showing how restored community respect acts as social reinforcement, amplifying SLT's observational learning in African collectivist settings where family validation exceeds individual economic gain.

The relative understandings challenge Wafula and Murenga (2019), who focused on Kenyan CSO behavioral rehabilitation without livelihood integration, by demonstrating Ilala's superior outcomes when employment pathways exist, though persistent stigma echoes Nyalusi and Mabula (2022) supervision concerns. The findings thus contribute to Tanzanian correctional literature by positioning CSOs as viable alternatives to imprisonment (Community Service Act, 2002), provided multi-stakeholder collaborations, unlike Twaha and Salma (2020) magistrate-focused analysis, prioritize post-sentence economic linkages to fulfill rehabilitative mandates.

### Conclusion

The study demonstrates that access to stable livelihoods is a critical driver of sustained behavioral change among former offenders who have completed community service orders in Ilala Municipality. Employment and income opportunities, though limited, offer ex-offenders the means to regain confidence, independence, and societal respect, significantly reducing the likelihood of recidivism. Conversely, persistent barriers such as stigma, insufficient vocational training, and lack of capital continue to undermine the full potential of community-based corrections to promote successful reintegration and long-term rehabilitation.

### Recommendations

The study recommends that NGOs operating in Ilala Municipality should expand tailored vocational training and microenterprise support programs specifically for former offenders to address skill gaps and promote economic self-sufficiency. Employers in the private sector are encouraged to implement inclusive hiring policies and collaborate with probation officers to provide fair employment opportunities for rehabilitated individuals. Community social workers and religious leaders should intensify outreach and advocacy activities aimed at reducing stigma and fostering social acceptance, while judicial officers coordinating CSOs should develop formal mechanisms linking service completion directly to available job placements and start-up funding for small businesses derived from community partnerships. Government and non-government organizations to support offender-led small businesses through micro-loans, savings groups, or start-up toolkits.

To operationalize the recommendations, table 2 presents a policy intervention matrix that maps specific barriers

identified in this study to targeted strategies, responsible actors, measurable outcomes, and implementation timelines.

**Table 2:** Policy intervention matrix for livelihood reintegration in Ilala CSOs

BARRIER	INTERVENTION STRATEGY	RESPONSIBLE ACTOR(S)	EXPECTED OUTCOME	TIMELINE
Social Stigma	Employer sensitization workshops	Judicial Officers, NGOs	30% increase in hiring acceptance	6 months
Lack of Start-up Capital	Micro-loan scheme for ex-offenders	Government, Banks, NGOs	50 ex-offenders funded annually	12 months
Limited Vocational Training	CSO-linked skills certification	Social Workers, TVET Centers	80% trainees employed post-CSO	Ongoing
Weak Post-CSO Linkages	Job placement database	Probation Officers, Employers	70% placement rate within 3 months	9 months
Community Rejection	Public awareness campaigns	Religious Leaders, Community	Reduced stigma incidents by 40%	18 months

**Source:** Field Data, 2025

The policy intervention matrix demonstrates the way coordinated action across judicial officers, social workers, NGOs, employers, and community leaders can systematically overcome reintegration barriers.

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