

Running head: SITUATION OF CHILDREN OF IMPRISONED MOTHERS

The Situation of Children of Imprisoned Mothers: The Case of Addis Ababa Prison

Selamawit Abebe Kelbisow

Addis Ababa University

Graduate School of Social Work

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Advisor: James E. Rollin (PhD)

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Selamawit Abebe Kelbisow  
Graduate School of Social Work

Approved by Examining Board

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Advisor

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Signature

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Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Examiner

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Signature

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Date

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**Abstract**

*Despite the increasing number of women in prison who have children, little is known about their children's situation during their imprisonment. This study attempts to assess the situation of children of imprisoned mothers. Survey method was mainly used for the purpose of data collection. Accordingly, 34 mothers in Addis Ababa Prison were asked about the situation of their 61 children. In addition, five children were interviewed about their condition. The findings indicate that children of imprisoned mothers live in a very difficult situation deprived of their basic needs and right. The findings have led to some recommendations that will help to curb the unfortunate situation of the children.*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Background of the Problem**

Crime is a social problem, which threatens the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities as a whole. In all criminal justice systems when offenders pass through the court, or are sentenced to prison, men outnumber women by high proportion. The percentage of women in any prison system throughout the world varies between 2% and 8% (Coyle, 2002).

In many countries, tough anti-drug legislation has brought about a significant effect on the number of women in prison and, as a result, the number of women in prison grew at a faster rate than the number of incarcerated men. Unlike men, women prisoners are often single parents with dependent children (Coyle, 2002). Therefore, many children are left abandoned by incarcerated mothers. These children are at increased risk of coming in conflict with the law. Increased risk of drug and alcohol abuse, increased risk for behavioral problems and other problems are more likely to happen among incarcerated mothers' children (Anderson, 2005).

In most societies, women have primary responsibility for the family particularly when children are involved. Imprisonment of a mother will have very significant consequence for the family. If a father is sent to prison, the mother will frequently take the family responsibility as a whole. However, if a mother is sent to prison, the father frequently faces extreme difficulty taking all parental duties, especially if there is no extended family support (Coyle, 2002). Even with the existence of extended family support, the situation always puts emotional and economic stress on the family and it will have unpleasant effects for the children as well (McClain, 2000). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics 1999 report, in

1999 more than 1.5 million children in the US had a parent in prison. Among these only 25 percent of children stay with their fathers, when their mothers are incarcerated, compared to the 90 percent that stay with their mothers, when their fathers are imprisoned (Anderson, 2005). Hence, imprisoning the woman breaks up the family much more than incarcerating the man. The community also feels the effect of the family disruption while the adult caretakers are unavailable for parenting and contributing as a citizen to their community (O'Brien, 2001).

The children of prisoners face difficulties, which stem from situations they themselves have not caused. Even if there are many children, who are affected by the incarceration of their fathers, mothers' incarceration has more impact on children since it destabilize and affect them disproportionately (Baker & Cunningham, 2003). Unfortunately, there seems to be glaring lack of awareness and concern for these unseen victims. The punishment that these children suffer may not be intentional, but the effect is the same. These children have unique problems and special needs. They are often traumatized by the arrest and imprisonment of their mothers. In addition, in many cases forced separation from their mothers by itself is a cause of trauma to the children (cited in Bloom, 1993).

In Ethiopia, the number of women incarcerated in prisons and police stations has grown very rapidly. The majority of these women are single mothers who were the sole caregiver of their minor children before being incarcerated (Mentwab<sup>1</sup>, 2001). Although there is some research literature available in relation to incarcerated mothers and their children in prison, almost no reference is available for those children found outside the prison system in Ethiopia. As a result, it is difficult to get information about how many women prisoners have

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Ethiopian custom, the first name or given name is substituted for the surname and the father's name.

children, how the children of imprisoned women survive in the time of their mothers' incarceration, how they are affected by their mothers' incarceration, and what services and attention they need to improve their situation. Considering this, the present study tries to assess the situation of children of imprisoned mothers in general and to verify the hypothesis that "Children of imprisoned mothers encountered/ faced various problems while their mothers are imprisoned".

### **Objectives of the Study**

#### **General Objective**

The general objective of the study is to gain insight into the situation of children of incarcerated mothers in Addis Ababa Prison.

#### **Specific Objectives**

- To assess how children live when their mothers are incarcerated,
- To identify what kind of problems children face while their mothers are imprisoned,
- To identify programs and services available for children of imprisoned mothers, and
- To identify possible areas of intervention for children who have imprisoned mothers.

#### **Limitation of the Study**

The study is limited to Addis Ababa Prison. Moreover, the data about the children is mainly based on the information received from their mothers. Furthermore, the research work is limited to the use of questionnaires and interviews.

**Operational Definitions**

**Imprisoned Mothers** – refers to women prisoners who have children below the age of eighteen.

**Children of Imprisoned Mothers** – refers to minor children who have mothers in prison.

**Children Outside Prison** – refers to minor children living separately from their mothers because of their mothers' incarceration.

**Children Inside Prison** – refers to minor children living in prison with their mothers as a result of their mothers' imprisonment.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **The Scope of the Problem**

It is difficult to know precisely the number of children affected by parental incarceration even though estimation is possible. The problem is definitional, methodological and practical. In studying prisoner children, some studies count parents with children of any age, while others include only parents with minor children (Schafer & Dellinger 1999 cited in Johnson & Waldfogel 2002). Methodologically, studies rely on different data sources, including national surveys, samples from different regions of the United States, and personal interviews with small samples of inmates. Practically neither law enforcement nor correctional institutions collect information about inmates' children as a result there is no specific agency or system collecting information about this population (Johnson & Waldfogel, 2002).

In 1999 in US, there were 721,500 parents of minor children held in prison. Thus an estimated 336,300 US households with minor children were losing a resident parent. The magnitude of problems that children faced because of their parents imprisonment are quite large. 1.5 million children living in the US had a parent in prison in 1999, an increase of over 50 since 1991. Among these minor children, 22% were children below 5 years old. The majority (58.8) of the children were below 10 years, with average age of 8 years. Children of imprisoned parents accounted for approximately 2 % of the children in the US (Mumola, 2000).

In the US, an estimated 126,000 children were separated from their mother because of incarceration in 1999. 35,400 households were missing a mother because of incarceration (Mumola, 2000). In Canada an estimated 20,000 children are separated from their mothers

because of incarceration every year (Baker & Cunningham, 2003). In UK 17,000 children separated from their mothers by imprisonment each year (Fawcett Society, 2003 cited in Taylor, 2004).

Women prisoners are more likely to be poor, single mothers, less educated, unemployed or unskilled with little or no work experience, substance abusers and there are survivors of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse (Baker & Cunningham, 2003; Taylor, 2004). In the US, Female prisoners are more likely to have minor children than their male counterparts, 65% and 55% respectively (Mumola, 2000). In Canada, three quarters of federally sentenced women have children (Shaw et al., 1991 cited in Baker & Cunningham, 2003). In Brazil, 87 percent of female prisoners have children (Taylor, 2004). In UK 66 percent of female prisoners were mothers (Home Office, 2002 cited in Taylor, 2004). Although it is difficult to find studies carried out in Ethiopia, the study made by Mentwab (2001), entitled “Disposition of Female Prisoners in Ethiopia: Law and Practice” shows that 66.7 % of the sampled female inmates have children.

Even though the numbers of men in prison are more than women, the increase in proportion of female inmates is dramatic. In the UK the average number of female in prison increased by 140% in the years between 1993 and 2001 while the male increased by 46% (Home Office, 2002 cited Baker & Cunningham, 2003). In US the number of women, inmates increased by 106% while the male increased by 75% since 1990. As a result, the number of children with a mother in prison increased by 98% since 1991, while the number of children with a father in prison grew by 58% during this period (Mumola, 2000). If the rise in the female inmate population continues like this, it is likely that more and more children will experience the imprisonment of a mother during their childhood.

It is believed that the increase in women prison population is more a result of change in sentencing policies and law enforcement priorities than an increase in quantity and severity of crime committed by women (Coyle, 2002; Taylor, 2004). In 1991 women sentenced for drug related crimes in the United States reached 12,600 represented an increase of 432% from about 2400 female inmates for drugs in 1986 while the percentages increase of for drug offences for male was 281 %, from 36,100 to 137, 700 for the same time (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993). Unlike men, women are more likely incarcerated for drug related offences than other violent crimes. For example in UK, 35 per cent of women are imprisoned for drug offence and 9 percent of men; in Brazil, 48 percent of women and 10 per cent of men and in US 35 percent of mothers and 23 per cent of fathers (Mumola, 2000 ;Taylor, 2004). Besides drug-related crimes, women are more likely to be imprisoned for petty theft, which is often linked to a situation of family poverty (Taylor, 2004).

The majority of women in prison are awaiting trial. As the Planning Commission of Government of India (2004) reported, 77. 85 % of female prisoners in India were under trials in 1997. These women would be imprisoned for fewer years if they were sentenced for the offence they committed. However, they remain in jail since they do not know how to defend themselves or how to get legal help (Shankardass et al cited in Taylor, 2004).

### **Children Inside Prison**

Children in prison with their mothers can be those children who accompany their mothers when they are in prison, or those who are born in prison because the mother was imprisoned while she was pregnant. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding in prison have particular health problems and/or nutritional needs. Mother and child need to get adequate healthcare, both preventive and curative. In Brazil, prenatal care is absent for women in pre-

trial detention and inadequate in prisons. In addition, there is no clear postnatal care policy (Howard, 2003 cited in Taylor 2004).

In the US 6% of women entered prison pregnant. An estimated 2,341 of the nearly 39,000 female inmates were pregnant when they entered prison. Eighty six percent of these women received a gynecological exam related to their pregnancy. The majority of these women (70%) also reported having some form of prenatal care (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993). 2.91 percent of women in Indian prisons were pregnant while 20.19 percent were lactating mothers (Planning Commission of Government of India, 2004).

Pregnancy during incarceration is a high-risk situation, both physically and psychologically for inmate mothers as well as for their children. Inadequacy of prenatal and postnatal care, nutrition, parenting and childbirth education and preparation for mothers' separation from their infant after delivery by the correctional institutions expose inmate mothers for high-risk situation (Acoca, 1998 cited in Taylor 2004).

It is difficult to consider the imprisonment of mothers in isolation to children since women prisoners are often the primary care givers for their children. In many countries, babies and young children are usually taken into prison with their mothers. There are arguments on allowing children to be with mothers in prison both in support and against. Those supporting the idea stated that separating children from their mothers could cause lasting and serious emotional damage to the children, with additional concern regarding arrangements for alternative caregivers. Those who oppose the idea argue that prisons are not suitable places for children's healthy development since they need full freedom and a wide range of social contacts (Taylor, 2004).

Research on the effect of prison in the early development of children is very limited. A study made in UK by Catan (1989) compared the development of prison unit babies with their imprisoned mothers and those cared for in the community. Both groups of babies showed normal, healthy physical growth and their overall development fell within accepted norms. However, babies in the prison show a gradual decline in locomotor and cognitive scores after four months. In contrast, these babies showed a significant increase in general development score when they left the prison (cited in Taylor, 2004).

It is difficult to maintain all children in prison; therefore, it is only younger children who have a chance to remain in prison while the older ones are taken out from prison. Internationally, the age limits for allowing children in prison varies from country to country. For example, Spain six years; Netherlands four years; Hong Kong three years; UK nine or eighteen months and Canada one year (Caddle, 1998 cited in Taylor, 2004). There are also countries like Iceland, Sweden and New Zealand where children are not allowed to be in prison unless in exceptional circumstances (Taylor, 2004).

Even though it is important to have data on children living with their parents in prison, it is difficult to find such data in Ethiopia. However, the available data indicates that the number of children living with imprisoned parents has increased dramatically in Ethiopia. For instance, children who are living in prison with parents in prison increased by more than four fold, from 160 in 2002 to 659 in 2004 (Prison Fellowship Ethiopia & Save the Children Denmark, 2005).

A study made in Addis Ababa Central Prison indicates that 17.6 % of the sampled female inmates have children in prison. The majority of these women stated the absence of

special treatment for their children in the prison (Mentwab, 2001). Another study made by Prison Fellowship Ethiopia and Save the Children Denmark (2005) showed the minimal level of child right enforcement in Ethiopian prisons.

## **Children Outside Prison**

### **Household Disruption**

Most of the time, women are more likely to live with their children than men prior to incarceration. In the US, about 64% of mothers in State prison and 84% of those in Federal prison reported living with their minor children prior to admission, compared to 44% and 55% of fathers, respectively (Mumola, 2000). In UK, almost 75 % of the children were living with their mothers before imprisonment (Caddle & Crisp, 1997, cited in Taylor, 2004). This means that when mothers are sent to prison children lose their sole caregiver. When fathers are sent to prison, mothers are responsible to take care of the children, but when the mother is sent to prison fathers are less likely to care for their children. In the US, 28 percent of the children live with their fathers when their mothers are incarcerated compared to the 90 percent of children who lived with their mothers when their fathers were incarcerated (Mumola, 2000). Therefore, preparation for alternative care giving is very important while the mother is imprisoned.

### **Making Arrangements**

Making alternative living arrangement for children is a difficult thing for mother prisoners. First, country's policy of taking convicts immediately to prison after court sentence makes making arrangement for children impossible. Secondly, most women are sent to prison for lesser and non-violent offences, the woman might not expect to be imprisoned because of

her action. Therefore, she might not make any arrangement for her children before imprisonment. This can cause added distress to both the mother and the children, and indeed may leave children fending for themselves. However, some countries, like the Netherlands, have a policy of short-term sentence deferral for prisoners to make the necessary arrangement for their children (Taylor, 2004).

### **New Living Arrangements**

Children of imprisoned mothers often experience disrupted and multiple placements. This occurs more often than that of children of imprisoned fathers (Mumola, 2000). The most common type of arrangement while the mother is in prison is to live with grandparents. According to Mumola (2000), in US 52.9 percent of the children whose mothers are incarcerated live with grandparents, 28 percent live with their fathers and 25.7 percent live with other relatives. In the UK, children of imprisoned mothers are cared by grandparents (24 percent), other female relatives (17percent), fathers (9 percent), social services (8%), fathers and grand parents (5%), with older siblings (3%).However, there is no information for 30 % of the children (Caddle & Crisp, 1997, cited in Taylor, 2004). In both countries, the numbers of children cared by social service agencies are considerable. The number of children in foster care is 9.6 percent and 8 percent in US and UK respectively. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, Children Bureau 1997 report, incarceration identified as the presenting problem of the primary caregiver in 4% of the cases of children and families who received child welfare services in 1994. Many more children with incarcerated parents likely have intermittent contact with the child welfare system (Seymour, 1998).

These children experience multiple separations from their siblings as well as multiple relocations (Johnston, 1995). This multiple placement of children separated from their parents is identified as a source of traumatic stress (Doyle & Bauer, 1989 cited in Johnston, 1995). The new caregivers may be overwhelmed by the physical and emotional needs of the children as well as other familial and/or responsibilities of their own. In addition, they may lack of resource to meet the children's needs (Taylor, 2004).

### **Impact of Incarceration on Children**

Imprisonment does not only produce adverse effects on prisoners' but also on families, children, communities and institutions of the society. It may affect inmates by minimizing their employment opportunities following their release; families by creating emotional and financial problem; children by creating emotional, behavioral and financial difficulties; communities by losing working force; and other social institutions by spending much money on incarceration (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999).

The effects of parental arrest and imprisonment on children are profound. Studies suggest that parental incarceration can affect negatively the emotional, behavioral and psychological development of children. Most children with parents in prison exhibit fear, anxiety, anger, sadness, guilt, loneliness, low self-esteem, depression, emotional withdrawal, inappropriate behavior, disruptive behavior, anti-social behavior and reduced academic performance (Seymour, 1998). Besides, children may suffer from multiple psychological problems like trauma, anxiety and shame as well as negative behavioral manifestation such as truancy, substance use and aggression (Simmons, 2000). Furthermore, children may suffer from financial difficulties that precipitate a range of emotional and psychological problems,

including educational failures, aggression, depression and withdrawal (Johnston, 1995b cited in Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999).

Gender of the imprisoned parents has different effects on children. Absence of the father who normally assumes the role of disciplinarian leads to acting-out behavior like alcohol and drug abuse, hostile behavior, school truancy, running away, aggressive act and involvement in delinquent activities. On the other hand, absence of the mother whose usual function is to nurture and provide emotional support for her children contributes to acting-in behavior such as withdrawal, acting babyish, fear of school, a drop in school work, crying a lot and nightmares (Fritsch & Burkhead, 1981).

In addition to facing emotional, behavioral and financial problems, children of prisoners are at risk to have problems with the criminal justice system like their parents. Studies showed that children of incarcerated parents have more chances to have problems than children of non offenders. As stated by Bloom (1993), children of incarcerated offenders are five times more likely than their peers to end up in prison themselves, some before reaching adulthood. Likewise, Baker & Cunningham (2003) found that 40% of the surveyed women in prison had been separated from their mothers or fathers while they were child because of parental incarceration. Among the women, one third of their children who are 12 and above had spent some time in youth custody. In a prospective longitudinal study of 1,517 boys in Pittsburgh, half with arrested mothers (49.2%) were reported as delinquents (cited in Baker & Cunningham, 2003).

Children of prisoners may be sensitive to stigma of their parent's crime and imprisonment and feel embarrassed or resentful around their peers and other adults.

Caregivers may experience shame and uncertainty about how to deal with parental imprisonment, leading them to maintain a “forced silence” and denying the children a critical outlet in which to express their grief and anger (Taylor, 2004). Literature on children’s coping suggested that lack of information about parental incarceration undermines children’s ability to cope. It is also found that children who are not informed about their parent’s incarceration are more anxious and fearful (Johnson, 1995 cited in Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999).

Not all children are equally affected emotionally, psychologically, and physically by parental incarceration. The extent to which an individual child might be affected depends on the existence of factors such as the predisposition of the child, the age of the child at the time of separation, length of the separation, strength of parent child relationship, results of previous separation, and the availability of formal and informal support and the quality of the care (Baker & Cunningham, 2003; Seymour, 1998).

### **Maintaining Family Contact**

Parent-child visitation is one of the most important interventions for children during parental imprisonment (Hess, 1987 cited in Johnston, 1995). Human Rights Watch (2002:8) listed the following beneficial effects of parent-child visit:

- allow parents and children to maintain their existing relationship, which may also help the family to reunite upon release
- allow children to express emotional reactions to the separation, which they may not feel able to do elsewhere.
- allow parents to work out their feelings about separation and loss, and there by help them become better able to help their children with the same issues.

- allay some of the more extreme fears that children may hold about prison conditions and dispel fantasies that they may develop about parents in their prolonged absence
- reduce feelings of abandonment among children, as well as the anger and guilt that may accompany such feelings.
- counteract, by seeing other children and families at prison visiting centers in similar circumstances, some of the alienation that children experience.
- quell the separation anxiety to which children of incarcerated parents are particularly prone.

Review of literatures affirms that maintaining family contact is more likely to increase the inmates' reintegration upon release as well as helping prisoners to cope better with custody (Sack & Seidler, 1976; Human Rights Watch 2002; Caddle & Crisp 1997). Even though parent-child visit has many benefits, it is difficult for parents to maintain contact with their children while they are in prison. In US more than half (54 %) of incarcerated mothers had not received any visits from their children while they are in prison (Mumola, 2000). Concerning frequency of visits, Human Right Watch (2002) reported that 20.6 % of women inmates in New York have at least once a month visits from their children while 52.5 % female inmates never have any visits from their children. Thirty percent of women inmates in Maryland had no personal contact with their children while incarcerated (Block & Potthast, 1998).

As stated by Women's Prison Association (1996) in US inhibiting factors for visit are inadequate information about visiting procedures, distance of prisons , difficulty of scheduling visits, family's inability to afford transportation, visiting procedures that are

uncomfortable or humiliating, visiting places that are inhospitable to children, unwillingness of care givers to facilitate visits (cited in Travis, McBride & Solomon, 2005). Maintaining contact through phone calls and letters are more common than visits (Mumola, 2000).

Besides, mothers and/or children may not want to have visits in some circumstances. Mothers may consider the visits as cause of extreme distress to the child and/or the mother herself, particularly when they are separated after visit. Mothers may not also want their children to see them under prison condition. Children may be angry or ashamed of the mother's action, may feel abandoned by the mother, and may not want to visit (Taylor, 2004; Human Right Watch, 2002).

In many cases, prison visit conditions are difficult for children to understand. Security measures may not allow mothers to have physical contact with their children. Children seeing their mother but not able to touch her find it difficult to understand and feel distressed. This may affect the quality of parent-child relationship (Taylor, 2004).

To sum up, from the researcher's observation, Ethiopia is not exceptional from the reality described in the literatures cited above. Like, the countries where the studies have been conducted in the number of female prisoners is increasing in Ethiopia over time. The majority of these women are single mothers who were the sole caregivers to their minor children before being incarcerated. As Ethiopia is a poor country, the condition of children in general and the condition of children of imprisoned mothers in particular is worsening. Though, the traditional family tie is still strong because of poverty, often members of the extended family, for instance, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives and neighbors cannot fulfill the need

of the child. In addition, there is lack of institutions and/or system or policy to support these children.

In the developed countries, there are well-developed welfare systems, which accommodate these children. In addition, the problem is well-studied and different alternatives or intervention modalities have been introduced. In the contrary, in Ethiopia the issue itself is not discussed publicly in a formal manner like using the mass media, let alone studying the problem.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methods of the Study**

The major components of this part include sampling, the development of measuring instruments, data collection and analysis. The survey method was the primary data collection tool used for this study because it was found to be an appropriate means of collecting information from quite a large number of respondents.

### **Sampling**

Participants of the present study were imprisoned women who have children in and out side of the prison. Addis Ababa Prison was purposely selected since it is the only prison in which individuals who are sent by the court are imprisoned. The location of this research was selected due to the convenience that will allow the researcher to do the study, make follow up and participate in future intervention.

In this prison, there were 34 women prisoners who have children in and outside of the prison. However, the researcher selected the population so as to make the study more representative in showing the nature of subjects and the size was found manageable. Thus, after collecting information on the number of imprisoned women who have children, all have been considered as potential respondents of this study.

### **Data Gathering Instruments**

In this study, questionnaire and interview method were used to gather relevant information.

## **Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was the main instrument used to collect data. The questions were intended to obtain information about the living situation of children while the mother is in prison and the kind of problems children are facing because of their mothers' imprisonment. The researcher adopted questionnaire items that were designed by Friends World Committee for Consultation (no date) in order to build the instrument used in this study. The questionnaire was structured in combining both closed and open type of questions. Before administrating the questionnaire, which was prepared in the English language, it was translated in to Amharic so as to increase the clarity of the questions and enable the respondents to easily answer the questions without language barrier. A pilot test was held to see the clarity of questions included, and subsequently appropriate modifications were made based on the feedback.

The data collection was done by the researcher. The questions were read by the researcher to the respondents. If the question was not clear to the respondents, the interviewer read the question again for clarification.

## **Interview**

In-depth interviews were carried out with five children who have mothers in prison and one person from the prison administration.

## **Ethical Consideration**

The prison administration was contacted and informed about the whole purpose of the project in order to get support. The respondents were also informed about the purpose of the

study and their right to participate or not to participate in responding to the questionnaire. In addition, respondents were told that their information and identity would be held confidential. After gaining verbal consent from respondents, the questionnaire was administered and the interview was held. In addition, permission was also asked from the mothers and guardians in order to contact the children for the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

The questionnaire has both qualitative and quantitative questions. The questions were analyzed using distributions for quantitative data and narrating the qualitative data in statement.

This is exploratory research on a small sample. The quantitative data is reported in univariate analysis since the sample size is small. Significance testing is not done because the sampling techniques and sampling distributions do not meet the assumptions of the significance tests. The qualitative data obtained from children's interviews is summarized by identifying main themes in the form of table.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**Findings and Analysis**

**Profile of Imprisoned Mothers**

**Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Mothers by Socio-Demographic Characteristics**

<b>Socio-Demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Age</b>			
19- 24	11	32.3	32.3
25- 29	8	23.5	55.8
30- 34	4	11.8	67.6
35 - 39	2	5.9	73.5
40- 44	5	14.7	88.2
45 and above	4	11.8	100.0
Total	34	100.0	
<b>Religion</b>			
Orthodox	30	88.2	88.2
Muslim	4	11.8	100.0
Total	34	100.0	
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Oromo	12	35.3	35.3
Amhara	11	32.3	67.6
Gurage	4	11.8	79.4
Tigrea	4	11.8	91.2
Tigre Worge	1	2.9	94.1
No response	2	5.9	100.0
Total	34		

<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married	11	32.3	32.3
Separated	9	26.5	58.8
Widowed	9	26.5	85.3
Divorced	1	2.9	88.2
Never Married	4	11.8	100.0
Total	34	100.0	
<b>Level of Education</b>			
Illiterate	2	5.9	5.9
Basic education	4	11.8	17.7
1 to 6 <sup>th</sup> grade	11	32.3	50.0
7 to 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	7	20.6	70.6
9 to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	7	20.6	91.2
College and above	3	8.8	100.0
Total	34	100.0	
<b>Type of Work Engaged in Before</b>			
Minor retail trade	10	29.4	29.4
House wife	7	20.6	50.0
Daily laborer	5	14.7	64.7
Domestic servant	4	11.8	76.5
Civil servant	3	8.8	85.3
Others	5	14.7	100.0
Total	34	100.0	

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in the above table. 34 women who have children and were imprisoned in Addis Ababa Prison have participated in the study. The youngest respondent in the study is 19 years old and the oldest is 50 years old. Mean age of respondents was 30.5. 11 women (32.3 %) were between the ages of 19- 24; 8 women (23.5 %) were between the ages of 25-29; 4 women (11.8 %) were between the ages

of 30-34; 2 women (5.9 %) were between the ages of 35- 39; 5 women (14.7 %) were between the ages of 40-44 and 4 women (11.8%) were above the age of 45. Age appears to be a factor in the likelihood of imprisonment since the majority of the women as stated above are young.

The majority of the women (88. 2%) were Orthodox Christian while the rest 11.8% were Muslim. The largest portion of the women were Oromos (35.3%) followed by Amharas (32.3 %), Gurages (11.8 %), Tigreas (11.8%), Tigre Worges (2.9 %) and the rest (5.9 %) did not answer. Most of the women (67.7 %) were single parents. Among the women 26.5 % were separated, 26.5 % were widowed, 11.8 % were never married and 2.9 % were divorced. 32. 3% of the women reported that they were married. Since the majority of the mothers are single, children are more likely to be with out parents.

Most of the women (70.6 %) are below high school; 5.9 % are illiterate, 11.8 % have basic education, 32.3 % are between grade 1 to 6 and 20.6 % are between grade 7 to 8. The rest 20.6% and 8.8% have some high school and college education respectively. Therefore, it is possible to say that the majority of these women have low educational attainment.

Regarding their occupation prior to imprisonment, 29.4% of the respondents reported that they were minor retail traders, followed by housewives (20.6%), daily laborers (14.7%), domestic servants (11.8%), civil servants (8.8%), and others (14.7%). This means that the women were engaged in laborious activities, which bring meager income to support themselves and their children. The imprisonment of the mother may worsen the situation of children who already lived in poverty.

**Mothers Criminal Offence and Type of Sentence**

Among the 34 women, 14 (41.2 %) are serving a sentence and 20 (58.8%) are on remand (awaiting trial). Thirty five percent of the women spent some time in local jails before coming to the prison for the same crime. Those in detention had so far spent an average of 21 months in custody, with a range of 1 to 72 months. Women under sentence are expected to serve on average 7 years and 5 months with the longest term being 22 years. For all of the women this is the first time to be in prison.

**Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Mothers by Type of Crime**

Type of crime	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Homicide	19	55.9	55.9
Assault	2	5.9	61.8
Theft	2	5.9	67.7
Crime against public order	2	5.9	73.6
Other	9	26.4	100.0
Total	34	100.0	

Regarding types of crimes committed by mothers in prison, the majority (55.9%) of the women were imprisoned for homicide, followed by assault 5.9 %, theft 5.9 %, and crime against public order 5.9 %. Other crimes contribute to 26.4 % of the imprisonment.

Among the 14 sentenced women, half of them admitted that they committed the crime they have been sentenced for, and mentioned the following reasons that made them to commit the offence: Three of the women stated anger; two of the women cited economic problems; one of the women pointed out self-defense; and the other one stated lack of knowledge. All of the women said that they were not using any alcohol or chat during and before the crime.

**Profile of Children with Imprisoned Mothers**

Questionnaires completed by imprisoned mothers provided data representing 61 children. The average number of children per woman was 1.8 with a range of 1 to 5 children. 36.1 % of the children were under 5 years old, about 21.3 % were aged 5 to 9 years, about 21.3 % were aged 10 to 14 years, and about 21.3 % were aged 15 to 17 years. The average age of these children was 10.8 years old. The number of male and female children was almost equal. The number of female children were 31(50.8 %) while the number of males were 30(49.2 %). Among the children of the interviewed mothers, the majority (85.2 %) of the children were living outside the prison while 14.8 % of the children were living inside the prison with their mothers.

**Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Children of Imprisoned Mothers by Age, Sex, and Place of Residence**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Age range</b>			
Less than 1 year	2	3.3	3.3
1 to 4	20	32.8	36.1
5 to 9	13	21.3	57.4
10 to 14	13	21.3	78.7
15 to 17	13	21.3	100.0
Total	61	100.0	
<b>Sex</b>			
Female	31	50.8	50.8
Male	30	49.2	100.0
Total	61	100.0	
<b>Place of residence</b>			
Inside prison	9	14.8	14.8
Outside prison	52	85.2	100.0
Total	61	100.0	

## **Situational Analysis on Children Living In Prison with Their Mothers**

### **Pregnancy and Childbirth**

The women prisoners were asked about pregnancy and childbirth in prison. Though majority (91.2%) of the respondents reported that they did not deliver any child in prison during their imprisonment, however, three inmates delivered their babies in prison. At the time of survey, one of the interviewed women was found pregnant. Pregnant women were asked whether there was any special place and treatment for women while pregnant. Three of the women responded negatively and one answered positively. In addition, the women were asked whether they were happy with the medical attention that they received while they were pregnant. Three of the women said they were happy while one was unhappy.

Concerning their pregnancy and childbirth in prison, the pregnant women stated that during their pregnancy they did not receive special food different from other prisoners even though nutritious food is important for the health of the fetus and the pregnant women. They usually eat the same type of food ('injera<sup>2</sup> with wot<sup>3</sup>') for their lunch and dinner while they eat bread with tea for their breakfast. In addition, there was no additional food for the mothers while breast-feeding. Furthermore, there was no psychosocial support that helps the women to deal with their imprisonment as well as their pregnancy. There is lack of special treatment in prison during pregnancy. This indicates that the prison administration does not give much attention for the needs of pregnant women.

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<sup>2</sup> Local bread similar to pan cake mainly made of staple crop known as teff.

<sup>3</sup> Sauce made up of different ingredients.

**Children in Prison with Their Mothers**

**Table 4 : Reasons Why Mothers Preferred to Care for Their Children Together with Them Inside the Prison**

<b>Reasons why mothers bring their children inside prison with them</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Nobody outside to care for child	6
Pregnant when admitted	1
Child needed breast feeding	1
Total	8

Eight mothers, who had children inside prison, were asked to give information about the situation of their nine children who lived with them in prison. As it is reported in the above table, the major reason for the majority (six) of the women that influences the mothers to bring their children with them is unavailability of a person who will take care of their children out side of prison. This implies that the mothers bring their children to prison because of lack of any other alternatives. In this regard one mother stated, “if I had family it is completely unnecessary for my child to be in prison with me, unfortunately I don’t have any”. The remaining two women mentioned being pregnant and child’s needs breast-feeding as the cause to bring their children with them.

Mothers who had children in prison were also asked about whether there is special area for mothers and children in prison or not. In response all the respondents indicated the presence of special area which is prepared for mothers with their children. With this regard, as the women explained about the characteristics of the special area, there is one room serving for pregnant women and women with children together. The room is found in the same

compound with other prisoners' and it is overcrowded; thus, it is difficult for the mothers to say it actually a special area.

All the respondents said that the service provided for their children is 96 birr budgeted per month until the child reached 18 months. The budget allotted is small to meet the needs of children such as nutritious food and clothing. Among the nine children in prison, six are above 18 months, ranging from 19 months to 42 months (3 years and six months). Therefore, these children have to share the food of their mothers since they do not have any budget. The interview made with one of the prison officials explains that the prison allowed children to stay with their mothers after 18 months due to absence of other alternatives. The mother inmates don't have relatives or others who can take care of their children when they reach 18 months old. In addition, there is no organization or system established to care or support the children of prisoners. If the prison administration forced these children out, the children might be in a more vulnerable situation than in the prison.

In general, mothers reported that there are no minimal facilities for educational development of children, nutrition, health care, recreation/play and accommodation in Addis Ababa Prison for children who live in prison with their mothers.

From this presentation, one can understand that the prison administration attempted to give special services for children in prison with their mothers. However, the type of service provided in terms of room/place assigned to children and mothers and the budget allocated for a single child is too minimal. Further more, the prison service is limited to those children who are up to age of 18 months.

**Table 5 : Mothers Level of Happiness on the Medical Treatment Their Children Received in Prison**

<b>Mothers level of happiness about their children’s medical treatment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Very happy	1
Happy	-
Fairly happy	3
Unhappy	1
Very unhappy	3
Total	8

The mothers were asked to rate their happiness level over the medical treatment their children received in prison. As indicated in table 5, three of the respondents were fairly happy about the medical treatment their children received in prison. It seems that the inmates might not expect medical treatment for their children in prison and the existence of the medical treatment makes them happy. However, three respondents stated that they feel very unhappy regarding the medical treatment offered to their children while the remaining one said that she felt unhappy. Another respondent stated that she is very happy about the medical treatment her child received. Therefore, it is possible to say that the medical treatment children receive is not satisfactory.

**Table 6: Number of Children Who Get Opportunities to Leave the Prison**

<b>Child has the opportunity to leave the prison</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Yes	3
No	5
Total	8

As indicated in table 6, most of the respondents' children did not get any opportunity to leave the prison from the moment they get in and/or are born. Those respondents who stated their children get opportunity to leave the prison; the children did so when they go to court with their mothers.

The respondents were asked about whether their children are attending school or not. All the respondents stated that their children in prison did not attend school. The main reason stated by the mothers is most children are too small to attend school. In addition, there is no educational facility for those children who are of school age. This indicates that there is no attempt made by prison administration to send children to school or to prepare a nursery.

The respondents were also asked whether prison has bad effect on their children or not. Accordingly, all the mothers stated that being in prison has had bad effect on their children. Respondents have revealed how their children and the feeling of their children's affected badly while in prison. The facilities in prison, according to the respondents, affect the physical and mental wellbeing of children. The children in prison lack proper nutrition, accommodation, proper clothing, proper hygiene, proper medical treatment in time of sickness, and facilities to play and recreate. As the mothers further explained lack of these basic facilities affect the children's physical and mental development. Besides, the prison environment will also affect healthier development of children.

The mothers pointed out that, children learn from their environment, but the nature of the prison would not provide suitable environment to children take lesson out of it. They also pointed out, women in prison are violent, addicted and use abusive/bad language. The children would learn from the inmates with whom they live. These children are born and raised in

confined place and this affects their capacity to explore and learn. All these things affect the psychological development of children. In addition, as the mothers indicated, when the children go out, it is difficult for them to adjust themselves with the community since they take all the things they learnt from prison life.

In dealing with this, mothers stated some of the behaviors that their children develop while reared up at prison are the following:

- fear of strangers especially male,
- become fearful since they see all sorts of punishment,
- develop delinquent behavior ,
- consider themselves as prisoner ,
- act like adults,
- children speak in their daily play predominantly about those individuals who are coming in and went out of the prison,
- the children talk bad words and show bad behaviors, and
- children in prison are daily playing and talking about things related to arrest, crime and punishment.

**Situational Analysis on Children living Outside of Prison**

Thirty-one mothers, who have children outside the prison, were asked to give information about their children (52) who live outside the prison.

**Table 7: Mothers’ Level of Knowledge on the Situation of Their Children Living Outside the Prison**

<b>Knowledge about the situation of children</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
I know very much	4	12.9	12.9
I know	6	19.3	32.2
I know fairly	10	32.3	64.5
I don’t know much	4	12.9	77.4
I do not know anything	4	12.9	90.3
No answer	3	9.7	100.0
Total	31	100.0	

As table 7 depicts, most (77.4 %) of the mothers in prison have some knowledge about the situation of their children outside the prison while 12.9 % do not have any knowledge about their children’s situation outside of the prison. The rest 9.7 % did not answer the question.

**Table 8: Child Care Arrangement**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Mothers lived with children before imprisonment</b>			
Yes	28	82.4	82.4
No	5	14.7	97.1
Other/Pregnant	1	2.9	100.0
Total	34	100.0	
<b>Mothers made arrangement prior to admission</b>			
Yes	2	5.9	5.9
No	29	85.3	91.2
Other/No response	3	8.8	100.0
Total	34	100.0	
<b>Reasons why mothers didn't make prior arrangement</b>			
Not expect to imprisoned	24	82.8	82.8
Child was not living with the mother	3	10.4	93.2
Lack of saving	1	3.4	96.4
No response	1	3.4	100.0
Total	29	100.0	

As the above table shows, the vast majority (82.4%) of the women lived with their children prior to being incarcerated. While five (14.7%) of the women were not living with their children and one woman was pregnant. This means that when mothers are sent to prison children lose their sole caregiver and preparation of alternative living arrangement is very important for the children.

Regarding making arrangement prior to admission, 29(85.3 %) of the respondents did not make arrangement while two made arrangements. The remaining three did not give an answer to this question. Those two women who made child care arrangement for their children asked about the kind of arrangement they made for their children. One woman gave her children to aunts because she thought it is right while the other women bought foodstuffs to provide for a year for her child. The women were also asked whether they are happy about the arrangement they made for their children. Both of them said yes since they made what they think was an appropriate decision for their children.

As can be observed from table 8, 82.4 % of the respondents reported that they were not expecting their imprisonment and they were sent to prison directly from court immediately after the hearing as their reason for not making arrangement for their children. Three of the respondents replied that their children were not living together with them prior to arrest. The other one stated the reason was due to lack of saving while one remained without a response. The process of the court; sending offenders directly to prison after sentencing makes it difficult for mothers to make arrangements. Failure to make arrangements for children has its own impact on the children outside the prison. It might make them vulnerable to abuse and neglect. It might also leave children to fend for themselves and to care for their youngest siblings without any kind of economic, social and emotional support from significant others. This can add stress on children who are already affected by separation from their mothers. One child interviewed remarked "...being like a mother and brother to my sister is hard responsibility... I worry too much about my sister than me". The other child also stated that "... If I am not out to look some kind of job to have money for the family I will stay home to keep my small brother...I can't be with my friends..."

**Table 9: Where Children Are Living While Their Mothers are in Prison**

<b>Where Children Are Living</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Father	12	23.1	23.1
Alone	12	23.1	46.2
Grandparents	9	17.3	63.5
Uncle/Aunt	7	13.5	77.0
Nonrelatives	5	9.6	86.6
Neighbors	4	7.7	94.3
Agency/ Institution	3	5.7	100.0
Total	52	100.0	

From the above table, it can be seen that 23.1 % of children cared by fathers while another 23 % are left alone. Grandparents care for 17.3 % of the children, uncle/aunt for 13.5 % of the children, non-relatives 9.6 % of the children. Children cared by neighbors and institution consist of 7.7 % and 5.8 % of children respectively.

Almost quarter of the children living by themselves indicates the severity of the condition of children who have mothers in prison. As stated above, the absence of pre-arrangement for the children might create such a problem. To leave such significant number of children without any care, support and supervision has its own impact on the psychosocial and emotional development of the children. The children might be vulnerable to abuse as well as a tendency to involve in crime and delinquent activities. On the other hand, the proportion of children cared for by institutions in relation to other categories is small. This shows that institutional care provided for these children is not well developed.

**Table 10: Number of Children Who are Aware of Their Mothers Imprisonment**

<b>Children know about mother imprisonment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	37	71.2	71.2
No	15	28.8	100.0
Total	52	100.0	

As table10 shows, the majority of children (71.2%) knew about their mothers' imprisonment. Those mothers who said their children knew about their imprisonment asked about the reaction of their children. Mothers respond about their children's feelings on their imprisonment are as follows:

- Sadness
- hopelessness
- grievance
- crying a lot
- hurt feelings
- worried about how to live with out mother
- deeply disturbed about what must be happening to their mothers
- negative attitude towards the police who put their mothers under arrest
- anger
- longing for the mother
- guilt
- fear
- low self esteem
- lack of purpose and direction in life
- lack of concentration in school and forgetting things learned in class

The reports by the mothers show how these children are psychologically and emotionally hurt by their mothers' imprisonment.

The respondents whose children did not know about their mothers' imprisonment were asked the reasons that hinder their children to know about their imprisonment revealed the following:

- there are children who are not mature enough to understand,
- to save the children from being worried,
- not to harm the feeling of their children, and
- to prevail children's health socialization

This shows that mothers of some children are trying to take some measures in order not to hurt their children. However, other research shows this cannot be a solution. As literature stated lack of information about parental incarceration undermines children's ability to cope. It is also reported that children who are not informed about their parent's incarceration are more anxious and fearful (Johnson, 1995 cited in Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999).

**Table 11: Parent-Child Relationship**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Child has communication with mother</b>			
Yes	38	73.1	73.1
No	14	26.9	100.0
Total	52	100.0	
<b>Child frequency of visit</b>			
At least once a week	19	50.0	50.0
At least once a month	10	26.3	76.3
Less than once a month	6	15.8	92.1
Other	3	7.9	100.0
Total	38	100.0	

The above table shows parent-child relationship during the time of imprisonment. As can be seen from the above table, the majority (73.1%) of children have communication with their mothers. These children mainly communicate with their mother through visit. Moreover, half of the children visited their mother at least a week while 26.3 % visit their mother at least once in a month. However, 15.8% of children visit their mothers less than once a month and the rest 7.9% of the children visit their mothers occasionally like in holidays.

Those mothers who are not visited by their children were asked to indicate their main reason. Accordingly, the mothers mentioned distance of the prison, economic problem and unwillingness of guardians to bring children to prison as main reasons. Children’s lack of interest to visit, physical weakness of the guardians, and inconveniency of prison visit are the other reasons mentioned by female inmates. This finding is similar to the literature findings in

other countries (cited in Travis, McBride and Solomon, 2005; Human Right Watch, 2002 and Taylor, 2004).

**Table 12: Visitation Issues at the Time of Imprisonment**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Physical contact allowed</b>			
Yes	15	75.0	75.0
No	5	25.0	100 .0
Total	20	100 .0	
<b>Children find prison visiting upsetting</b>			
Yes	16	80.0	80.0
No	4	20.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	
<b>Mothers find children’s visit upsetting</b>			
Yes	18	90.0	90.0
No	2	10.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	

Table 12 shows visitation issues at the time of imprisonment. Regarding special arrangement for children’s visit by the prison administration, 85% of the respondents stated that there is no special arrangement for children’s visit while 15 % say there is. The special arrangements mentioned by the mothers are longer hours to visit and special arrangement made by the prison administration when mothers request by application to see their children.

The respondents, who are visited by their children, were asked whether it is allowed to have physical contact with their children at the time of visit. Seventy five percent of the respondents mentioned the possibility of having physical contact between children and mothers at the time of visit while 25% of respondents reported lack of physical contact at the

same time. Mothers who said it is allowed to have physical contact with children during visit were further asked to mention the type of contact allowed. The mothers stated that, it is possible to hold, hug and kiss if the children are small and to shake hands from distance by passing the long bar if their children are big. The long bar is a fence that separate the prisoner from the visitor.

In addition, mothers were asked how they see the treatment of prison staffs while their children visit them in prison. As the mothers stated, there is disparity among guards in treating children during visit. Some expressed the guards' treatment as good while others stated as bad. The guards stated by the mothers as "good" are those who are friendly to children and treat them fairly during the visit. The guards considered as "bad" by the respondents are those who mistreat the children and apply differential treatment among prisoners' children during visit.

Regarding children's feelings at the time of visit, as shown in table 12, the majority (80%) of children found prison visit upsetting. The main reason for this seems that as stated by the mothers are the uncomfortable visiting conditions for children in prison. One child interviewed remarked about the visit that "I was longing keenly to hug and hold my mother during my visit but I could not.... It is only allowed to see my mother, this makes me sick. That is why I don't want to visit my mother."

Mothers were also asked about their feelings during the children visit, as shown in table 12, most (90%) of the mothers found it upsetting when they receive visits from their children. In addition, the prison regulation allows visits only on Saturday and Sunday. The visiting place becomes crowded on these days since all the prisoners' families including children come to visit. There is also long bar/fence demarcating the visitors and the inmates.

As the women stated these things create inconvenience in expressing their own feeling as well as their children’s feeling.

Even though parent-child visitation has important functions for children as well as the imprisoned mothers, the prisons lack favorable visiting facilities and condition for children.

**Table 13: Percent of Children Outside Prison Who Attained School**

<b>Children attend school</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	29	55.8	55.8
No	18	34.6	90.4
I don’t know	5	9.6	100.0
Total	52	100.0	

As indicated in table 13, 55.8 % of children are attending school while 34.6 % are not attending school. The respondents do not know the school attendance condition of the 9.6% of the children. Those respondents who stated their children are not attending school were asked about the reason why their children did not attend school. The majority of the respondents stated economic problems as a major reason that keeps their children from attending school, where as, the other remain home since they are too young to attend school.

Respondents who stated children are attending school asked whether they are happy about the education their children received. The majority (70.6 %) of the respondents are happy about the education their children received. Twenty three percent of the respondents are not happy about the education their children get. The main reason mentioned by mothers as source of unhappiness is the decrease in school performance of their children after their imprisonment.

**Table 14: Percent of Children Outside Prison Who Get Medical Treatment**

<b>Children get medical treatment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	17	32.7	32.7
No	15	28.8	61.5
I don't know	20	38.5	100.0
Total	52	100.0	

As indicated in table 14, 32.7 % of children are getting medical treatment while 28.8 % are not getting medical treatment. Respondents did not know whether 38.5% of the children get medical treatment or not. Those respondents who stated that their children did not get medical treatment were asked about the reason why their children did not get medical treatment. The majority of the respondents stated economic problem as a major reason that hinders their children from getting medical treatment.

Respondents who stated children are getting medical treatment were asked whether they are happy about the treatment their children received. The majority (69.2 %) of the respondents are happy about the treatment their children get. Twenty three percent of the respondents are not happy about the medical treatment their children get.

**Problems of Children of Imprisoned Mothers**

**Table 15: Percent of Women Who Perceived Their Children Encountered Problem Because of Their Imprisonment**

<b>Mother imprisonment cause problem on children</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	29	93.6	93.6
No	1	3.2	96.8
I don't know	1	3.2	100.0
Total	31	100.0	

Respondents were asked whether their imprisonment caused problem for their children. As indicated in table 15, the vast majority (93.6 %) of the respondents think that their imprisonment caused problem for their children. One of the respondents said that her imprisonment doesn't cause any problem on her children while another one stated that she isn't aware whether her imprisonment caused problems for her children or not.

The respondents who stated their imprisonment caused problem for their children were asked to mention the problems. According to the responses obtained, the problems children are facing are listed as follows:

- Basic needs attainment
  - Inadequate food; lack of nutritious food; inadequate clothing and shelter provision-inability to pay house rent.
- Health related problems
  - Poor hygiene and inadequate or absence of medical care
- lack of the opportunity to play and recreate

- Problem of Schooling (Learning/school problem)
  - Lack of concentration while attending class and studying, lack of follow up in schoolwork, dropped out from school, decrease on school performance, lack of educational material and lack of time to study
- Emotional and Psychological problem
  - Longing, loneliness, depression, shame, sadness, worry, lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, lack of concentration, stigma, hopelessness, and being indifferent.
- Lack of parental care and support
  - lack of role model to look for , lack of love and affection , children left to fend for themselves (unaccompanied), lack of supervision , lack of person who prepare food, and absence of responsible person to facilitate needs of medication and education.
- Problem in Social relationship and Socialization
  - Lack of communication with friends and relatives and exclusion from social engagement

### **Concern of the Mothers**

Respondents were asked about their biggest worries and problems they have while in prison. As the respondents stated their main concerns are families particularly their children, their trial, health and their future.

The greatest concern of mothers in prison is that what is happening to their children. The mothers in Addis Ababa prison stated their concern about their children as follows:

- I worry about my child more than myself – whether he got food, good treatment, attend school etc
- The government gives me food, shelter and medical treatment but my concern is about my children.
- My child is not in school even though he reached school age.
- I am worried about my daughter ....she is only six years old but she is left alone for the whole day.
- It is the responsibility of my fourteen years old daughter to take care of herself as well as her aunt who has a mental problem
- I am worried about my child since my child's caretaker told me that she is no longer keeps my daughter.

### **Summary of Children Interview**

In this study, five children of imprisoned mothers who live outside of prison were interviewed in May 2&3, 2006. All of the children were male and their age ranged from 12 to 17. These children were mainly asked about their feelings of mothers' incarceration, availability of communication with their imprisoned mothers, availability of special arrangements for children's visits in prison and problems they faced because of their mothers imprisonment.

All of the children were emotional and psychologically affected by their mothers' imprisonment. The major feelings expressed by these children were sadness, hopelessness, grievance, crying, hurt feeling, anger, guilt, fear, and problem in attending school. In addition, the children were extremely worried about their situation as well as their mothers' condition in prison.

The children mentioned a range of problems they faced due to their mothers' imprisonment. The major problems mentioned by these children were lack of basic needs, economic constraints, and lack of emotional and psychological support. They recommended economic, emotional and psychological support to improve their living situation. The summary of the interviews conducted with the children presented in the following table.

**Table 16: Summary of Children Interview**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Child's feeling about mother imprisonment</b>	<b>Communication with mother</b>	<b>Availability of special arrangements for children's visits</b>	<b>Problem faced by the child as a result of mother imprisonment</b>	<b>Recommendation made by the child to improve the situation</b>
1	12	Male	Sadness, crying, worry about the mother situation in prison	Yes	No	Dropped out from school, lack of clothing, inadequate food, stigma and discrimination	Provision of food, clothing, education, love and affection
2	16	Male	Sadness, worry, lack of interest & concentration in school and forgetting things learned in class	Yes	No	Low self esteem, decrease in school performance , dropped out from school, inadequate food, lack of clothing ,exclusion from social engagement , caring for younger brothers	Economic support
3	16	Male	Shame, sadness, hurt feeling,	Yes	No	Loneliness, fear, lack of concentration in school, decrease in school performance, lack of communication with friends, stigma, hopelessness	Economic support, emotional and psychological support
4	17	Male	Sadness, fear, hurt feeling, lack of interest in school, lack of purpose and direction in life	No	No	lack of self-confidence, loneliness helplessness, conflict with students in school, school change, dropped out from school, grievance , lack of parental love and affection,	Provision of conducive environment in school setting, emotional support, conducive visiting condition in prison, expediting the legal process for mother prisoners
5	17	Male	Anger	Yes	No	Lack of affection to the mother	To improve the visiting condition in prison and time

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Conclusion, Recommendations and Implication for Social Work Practice**

#### **Conclusion**

The mothers in the Addis Ababa Prison are poor and found in an unstable living situation. Most of them are single parents with one or more dependent children. Many of them are young and gave birth in their adolescence. They have low level of education and were engaged in minor work that does not pay much. The largest numbers of women are on remand and had so far spent an average of twenty-one months separated from their children. The mothers were the primary caregivers for their children even with the presence of their husbands/ partners and their imprisonment put their children at greater risk.

Children of imprisoned mothers either were left outside or accompanied their mothers into prison. These children suffer from psychological, emotional, economic and other problems. Their living conditions during the time of their mothers' imprisonment and the availability of formal and/or informal support determine their current wellbeing as well as their future development. Among the children of the interviewed mothers, the majority of the children were living outside the prison.

Most of the women, who are living in prison with their children, indicated that they are forced to bring their children due to lack of alternative. Children in prison are living under difficult situations and are deprived of their basic needs and rights. They lack proper nutrition, accommodation, proper clothing, proper hygiene, proper medical treatment in time of sickness, and recreational facilities. Lack of these basic facilities affects the children's

physical and mental development. Besides, the prison environment in which the children live is hostile to their healthy psychosocial development. Thus, these children are more likely to suffer from psychosocial problem, which may manifest in some forms of antisocial behavior in later life and/or they may develop abnormal behavior and wrong orientation to life.

There is an attempt made by prison administration to give special service for children in prison with their mothers. However, the type of service provided in terms of room assigned to children and mothers and the budget allocated for a single child is too minimal. Furthermore, the prison service is limited to those children who are up to age of 18 months. Therefore, children who are above 18 months are forced to share their mothers' meal and other resources.

The vast majority of the women lived with their children prior to incarceration. However, most of the mothers did not make arrangements for their children when they were sent to prison. The process of the court, which sends offenders directly to prison after sentencing make difficult for mothers to make arrangements. Failure to make arrangement for children has its own impact on the children who stay outside. It may limit the extraction of available options that can be useful for the better upbringing of children. It may also make them vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Furthermore, it may also leave children fending for themselves and caring for their youngest siblings without any kind of economic, social and emotional support from significant others.

Almost a quarter of the children with mother in prison are left to live by themselves. To leave such significant number of children without any care, support and supervision has its own impact on the psychosocial and emotional development of the children. The children may

be vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Besides, the children may be at risk of involvement in crime and delinquent activities.

Parental incarceration can affect negatively the emotional, behavioral and psychological development of children. As stated by the mothers, their children exhibit sadness, hopelessness, grievance, crying a lot, hurt feeling, anger, guilt, fear ,concentration problem, and low self esteem. In addition, children extremely worry about their situation as well as their mothers' condition in prison. Furthermore, children show negative attitude towards the police.

Parent-child visitation has important function for children as well as imprisoned mothers. For children, it will minimize the psychological and emotional impact of separation while for mothers it helps to cope better to imprisonment and for better family reintegration upon release. According to this study, most of children have communication with their mothers in prison through visiting. However, the majority of these children found prison visiting upsetting because of uncomfortable visiting condition. Most of inmate mothers also became upset during their children's visit since the prison facilities and conditions during visit is not conducive to address their own feeling as well as their children.

Even though it is important to maintain family contact, a significant proportion of the children did not have contact with their mothers. Distance from prison, economic problems and unwillingness of guardians to bring children to prison are the main causes that limit contact between mothers and children. Children's lack of interest to visit, physical weakness of the guardians, and inconvenience of prison visit are the other reasons.

Children have a range of problems during their mother's imprisonment. Accordingly, most of the children left outside were found to have problem in meeting basic needs; health problems; school related problems; emotional and psychological problems. Besides, they lack the opportunity to play, recreate, and they have problem in social relationship and socialization. Furthermore, they are found to suffer from lack of parental care and support.

Despite the fact that children of imprisoned mothers live in difficult situations and face many problems, they lack formal and informal support, which is important for the children to cope with the situation. This indicates that their problem did not get attention from policy makers, service providers, researchers as well as the larger society. Lack of support not only affects their current wellbeing and development but also their future. Therefore, these children are highly vulnerable and seek attention from different sectors of the society.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings the following recommendations are made:

- Prison administration has to be made more sensitive and responsive to the problems of the children of imprisoned mothers. The prison should be provided with sufficient resources to ensure that physical and emotional development of children living with their mothers in prison.
- Prison stay should be minimized for those mothers on remand by expediting the legal process and improving the legal system. Since majority of the mothers in prison is awaiting trial.

- The prison staff should be provided training and orientation on how to deal with children during visit as well as how to care for children living in prison with their mothers.
- Prison administration should make an effort to enhance parent-child visiting program in a way that benefits children as well as mothers. The prison administration has to provide a comfortable place for meeting between the mothers and children as well as longer time and frequent visits.
- Providing alternative arrangements and/or institutions for children of imprisoned mothers is necessary to ensure the safety of children. When women are arrested, it is important to ensure mothers can plan for alternative caregivers such as fathers, relatives, neighbors and friends.
- Female inmates who have children should be provided with appropriate training, skills, education and other psychosocial support in prison for their proper rehabilitation and better reintegration into the community. Encouraging voluntary individuals, associations and organizations to participate in helping mothers in prison can contribute a lot.
- Promoting family preservation and support service is needed. The condition of children of imprisoned mothers became more challenging when their mother is imprisoned. The new caregivers and/ or the remaining partner might be overwhelmed or lack resources to meet the needs of the children. This condition might have an adverse effect on the psychosocial and emotional well being of children. Empowering the family members to cope with the problem by using their strength and other external

sources is important. It is necessary to maintain meaningful contact between the imprisoned mothers and other family members including children. Having a family to return is one of the most important factors to an offender's successful reentry into society and for their successful rehabilitation in prison.

- Counseling service should be provided for children. These children need counseling service since the criminal behaviors exhibited by their parents prior to incarceration, the trauma of parent-child separation, and/or the significant stigma associated with incarceration. In addition, counseling is important for children to release their anxiety; to alleviate their uncertainty; to build their self-esteem and confidence and deal with other psychosocial issues that arise due to their mothers' imprisonment. Counseling is also important for the mother to deal with her concern about the children.
- In order to understand the needs of children of imprisoned parents and to develop effective interventions, it is important to promote and undertake research on the effect of parental incarceration on children while addressing the socio-cultural condition of the country since most of the studies available in this area are done in the developed countries.
- Encouraging the establishment of voluntary clubs on the issue of children of imprisoned mothers is important. Recruit and train advocates to support children during and / or after a parent's arrest. Besides, developing, implementing, and evaluating programs that deal with the psychosocial and economic needs of children of imprisoned mothers is vital.

- One of the major problems faced by children of imprisoned mother is stigma and humiliation in the community they live. The children are judged by their parents act and treated badly. Therefore, awareness creation on the situation of children of imprisoned mothers to the community is needed by using conferences, community conversation and workshops. Here, religious leaders, teachers, politicians, law enforcement bodies, social workers have a considerable role.

### **Implication for Social Work Practice**

The study on the Situational Analysis of Children of Imprisoned Mothers in Addis Ababa Prison shows the presence of children inside prison with their mothers and children left behind in the community. These children are living in difficult situation deprived of their basic needs and rights. In addition, the children are profoundly affected socially, economically, and psychologically. The results of this study have implications for social work practice. Social work deals with the disfranchised groups like children of imprisoned mothers. These children have multifaceted problems so the intervention should be holistic. This means that the interventions have to address their economic, psychological, emotional and social needs. Besides, the interventions should be at different levels (individual, family, community government) and must be interlinked.

Social workers can act as counselors to those children whose mothers are incarcerated thereby making the children to be self-confident, improve their social functioning as well as their educational stance. This approach can benefit the children helping them to cope with their situation better and be successful citizens in their future life. Social workers can also work as counselors to mothers in prison as well as the non-imprisoned parents. The counseling

can help the mother to deal with her concern about the children. It also helps the non-incarcerated parent to deal with the problem of single parenthood.

Social workers can play a great role in the area of development, implementation, and evaluation of programs dealing with the psychosocial and economic needs of children of imprisoned mothers. The programs can include provision of their basic needs such as food, clothing, and housing. It can also provide them with day care services, which can including a playground.

Social workers can be involved in the development and provision of foster care. Foster cares provide alternative care to children who need either temporary or permanent home and for a variety of reasons that cannot live with their families of origin. As such, the development of foster care programs would be helpful for those children who do not have family or relatives to live with and/or support them as result of imprisonment of the mothers.

Social workers can also play a role in raising the awareness of the community about the problem of children of imprisoned mothers. In the process, social workers will have the chance to link children with the available community resource and services like education and medical services. This will help the children to stay in school and improve their school performance.

Moreover, social workers can advocate for the needs and rights of children of imprisoned mothers. The following points can be taken as area of advocacy by social workers.

- Since it is harmful for children to remain in prison beyond the 18 months requirement set by the prison administration, social workers can advocate for alternative arrangements for the children with concerned bodies
- Foster care for children of imprisoned mothers who are left alone outside is also another area where social workers can advocate and lobby.
- Pressure towards the law enforcement bodies is needed. In this country, the focus of the prison is in punishment of offenders rather than rehabilitation. In addition, there is no interest on the effect of imprisonment beyond the individual prisoner i.e. families and children. To minimize the problem associated with separation due to imprisonment the criminal justice system needs to focus on community based sentencing instead of prison-based sentencing.
- The issues of imprisoned mothers' children have to get attention by child welfare organizations. Even though there are many government and nongovernmental organizations working on child welfare in the country, there is almost no organization working in supporting children of prisoners. Therefore, social workers need to advocate the issues of children of prisoners as any other child welfare agenda.

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## **Annex**

### **Addis Ababa University Graduate School Of Social Work**

#### **The Situation of Children of Imprisoned Mothers: The Case of Addis Ababa Prison**

#### **Questionnaire – For Mother Prisoners**

Only women with children under 18 will be asked to complete the survey

The purpose of this research is to assess the condition of children of imprisoned mothers in general and to identify the problems of children of imprisoned mothers in particular.

Any information you give will be kept confidential and get rid of after use. If you do not want to answer some of the questions, you do not have to.

Thank you very much for your willingness to be interviewed.

#### **I. Personal Information**

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Religion
  - A. Christian (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Adventist)
  - B. Muslim
  - C. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Ethnicity
  - A. Amhara    B. Oromo    C. Tigre    D. Gurage
  - E. Other (please specify)
4. Marital Status
  - A. Married    B. Single    C. divorced    D. Separated    E. A widow
5. Educational Status
  - A. Illiterate (can't read and write)    B. Read and Write only (Basic education)
  - C. 1 to 6<sup>th</sup> grade    D. 7 to 8<sup>th</sup> grade    E. 9 to 12<sup>th</sup> grade

F. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

6. What was your work before being imprisoned?

A. House wife    B. Domestic servant    C. Civil servant

D. Student.    E. No work.    F. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Questions about your offense and Sentence

7. What is your correctional status?

A. Detained/Suspect (    )

B. Sentenced/convicted (    )

8. For what offence are you in prison?

A. Fraud /cheating    B. Assault    C. Theft    D. Homicide

E. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### If your answer for question 7 suspect go to question 14

9. Did you commit the crime you were sentenced for? Yes (    ) No (    )

- If yes, why do you think you committed the offence?

A. Economic problem

B. By mistake

C. Revenge

D. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

10. Did you use alcohol/chat often? Yes (    ) No (    )

11. Were you using alcohol/chat when you commit the offense? Yes (    ) No (    )

12. Did your offence have anything to do with illegal or restricted drugs?

Yes (    ) No (    )

If 'Yes', how were drugs involved?

- Did you steal in order to get money to buy drugs?

Yes (    ) No (    ) somewhat (    )

- Were you under the influence when offending?

Yes (    ) No (    ) somewhat (    )

13. How long is your sentence? \_\_\_\_\_

- How long have you now been there? \_\_\_\_\_

14. If you are suspect, how long have you been here? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Did you arrest before this time? Yes (    ) No (    )

- If your answer is yes, how many times have you been in prison (including this time)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How long have you spent in prison in your whole life including this time and past times? \_\_\_\_\_years

**III. Questions on children**

16. Have you been pregnant while you are in prison? /Did you give birth during your sentence? ( ) Yes ( ) No

- Was there any special place and treatment for women who are pregnant?  
( ) Yes ( ) No
- Were you happy with the medical attention that you received while you were pregnant? ( ) Yes ( ) No
- Please comment on anything else regarding your pregnancy or childbirth which you think is important, or which bothered you:

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17. The general condition of children

No	Sex	Age	Where the child live		With whom the child live						
			In side prison	Out side prison	A*	B*	C*	D*	E*	F*	G*
Child 1											
Child 2											
Child 3											
Child 4											

A\*. Father    B\*. Grandparent(s)    C\*. Uncle/Aunt    D\*. Other relatives  
 E\*. Friends    F\*. Institution    G\*.Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

18. Did you live with you children before imprisonment? ( ) Yes ( ) No

19. Did you make any (child care) arrangement for your children before imprisonment?  
 ( ) Yes ( ) No

- If yes, what kind of arrangement?

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- If no, why?

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- Are you happy about the arrangement you made for your children?

( ) Yes ( ) No

If no, why?

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**For prisoner mothers who have children with them in prison (Question 20-27)**

20. Why do you prefer to bring your child with you?

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21. Do you live together with your child in a special area prepared for mothers and children, in a place separated from other prisoners? ( ) Yes ( ) No

If so, please comment on these facilities. (For example: What condition are they in? Is there adequate healthcare? Do the children have access to schooling? Do they seem happy?) Are there any more comments you would like to add?

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22. Are you happy with the medical treatment that your child receives?

1. ( ) very happy; 2. ( ) Happy; 3. ( ) fairly happy; 4. ( ) unhappy;  
5. ( ) very unhappy

23. Does your child have the opportunity to leave the prison? ( ) Yes ( ) No

24. Does your child attend school? ( ) Yes ( ) No

- If yes, is this ( ) inside the prison ( ) outside prison?
- If inside the prison is it formal/government ( ) non formal ( )?
- If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_

25. Do you think that being in prison is having a bad effect on your child?

( ) Yes ( ) No

If 'Yes', why do you think this?

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**For prisoner mothers who have children outside the prison**

26. How much do you know about the situation of your children?

1 ( ) I know very much; 2 ( ) I know much; 3 ( ) I know fairly

4. ( ) I don't know much 5. ( ) I do not know anything

27. Does your child/ren know about your imprisonment?

Child-1 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

Child-2 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

Child-3 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

Child-4 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

If they know, what was their reaction?

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If No, why do they not know?

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28. Do you have communication with your children?

Child-1 ( ) Yes ( ) No

Child-2 ( ) Yes ( ) No

Child-3 ( ) Yes ( ) No

Child-4 ( ) Yes ( ) No

- If you communicate, how?

Visits ( ) Letters ( ) phone ( ) other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

- If you don't communicate, why?

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29. If your children visit you, how often?

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If you do not get visit, what is the reason?

- A. The prison is far ( Distance)
- B. Money problem
- C. Guardians reluctant to bring the child (children)
- D. Other ( please specify )

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30. Are there any special arrangements for children's visits (e.g. extended hours, special visiting rooms, toys to play with)? ( ) Yes ( ) No

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31. Are you allowed physical contact with your children during visits (e.g. to hold child on your lap, to hug your child)? ( ) Yes ( ) No

If yes, what kind of contact?

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32. How do the prison staffs treat your children when they visit?\_\_\_\_\_

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33. Do your children find visiting you in prison upsetting? ( ) Yes ( ) No

34. Do you find it upsetting when you receive visits from your children?

( ) Yes ( ) No

35. What do suggest to the improve visit for your children?

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36. Does imprisonment cause problem on your children? ( ) Yes ( ) No

If yes, what problems do you think your imprisonment has caused for your children?

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37. Does your child/ren attend school?

Child-1 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

Child-2 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

Child-3 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

Child- 4 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

If your children attend school, are you happy with the education that your child/ren received? ( ) Yes ( ) No

- If you are not happy, why?

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- If you children did not attend school, why?

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38. Does your child/ren get medical treatment?

Child-1 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

Child-2 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

Child-3 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

Child-4 ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) I don't know

- If your children get treatment, are you happy with the medical treatment that your child gets? ( ) Yes ( ) No

- If you are not happy, why?

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- If you children did not get treatment, why?

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**Questions for both mothers who have children outside the prison as well as inside**

39. What are the biggest problems or worries that you have in prison (e.g. family, health, addictions, the future)?

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40. What should be done to improve the situation of children of imprisoned mothers?

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41. Please tell me anything else about your experience in prison that you think is important.

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**Thank you very much for your cooperation.**

## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, declare that, this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledge.

Name: Selamawit Abebe

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Place: Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Date of Submission:

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University advisor.

Name: Professor James E.Rollin

Signature \_\_\_\_\_