WELLS OF HOPE

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS FACED BY CHILDREN OF PRISONERS AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Francis Ssuubi,
Founder/Executive Director
About Wells of Hope

- Wells of Hope is a Christian non-government organization based in Kampala, Uganda.

- Our key work is to support children with incarcerated parents, with particular emphasis upon children who have a parent on death row.
Some Facts

- More than 2.7 million children in the U.S. have an incarcerated parent and approximately 10 million children have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives.
- An estimated 160,000 children in the UK have a parent in prison.
We estimate that 200,000 children in Uganda have incarcerated parents.
Voices of Children:

Abolish Death Row

My mother died, now when you kill my father I will miss my parent’s love. Rebecca 11 years Wells of Hope
Abolish Death Penalty.
If you kill my father, I will be discriminated.
They will call me names
Solomon 13 years
Wells of Hope
“No one explained anything. I knew he was getting kept in, but I didn’t know where.”

Daughter (12)

“Someone should have just asked me what was wrong at school.”

Son (19)

“I’ve never talked to anyone at school about it…. I’m scared to.”

Daughter (15)
Impact of Parental Imprisonment upon Children

They experience some or all of the following emotions.
‘Disenfranchised grief’

... the grief experienced by those who incur a loss that is not, or cannot be, openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported.

Doka (1999)
Children’s Responses:

- Low self esteem
- Psychological stress
- Embarrassment
- Eating disorders
- Halt in menstruation
Sleeping Problems

- Bed wetting
- Sleep walking
- Nightmares
- Insomnia
- Snoring
- Night terrors
Community Responses

- Extreme stigma - and therefore more discrimination
- Hostility
- Ostracization
Behavioral issues

- Aggression and violence
- Alcoholism and drug abuse
- Running away from home
- Disobedience/stubbornness
- Job seeking
Children with parents on death row are at risk for mental health difficulties

- Absent-mindedness
- Withdrawal behavior
- Wandering minds
- Hallucinations
- Conversion disorders
- Psychosis
- Depression
- Mental Lapses
Risks and Other Difficulties

- Early marriages
- Defilement
- Dropping out of school
- Rape
- Stunted growth
- Child Sacrifice
• Becoming household heads
• Poor grades
• Homelessness
• Unwanted pregnancies
• Death
• No contact with parent on prison and loss of bond

*Children may pass many years without seeing their parents or even knowing where they are.*
Children at the Center of Risks

- Child Labor
- Invisible and at Great Risk
- School Drop Out
- Child Sacrifice
- Stunted Growth
- Rape
- No Self Esteem
- Denial to Parenthood
- Denial to Medical Care
- No Direct Contact with Parent in Prison
- Likely to Follow Parent in Prison
- Child Headed Homes
- Night Mares
- Child Headed Homes
- No Right Play
- Psychological Torture
- HIV / AIDS
- Hunger
- Early Pregnancy

Wells of Hope

www.wellsofhope.org
Where Are These Children?

They are with grandmothers, aunties, uncles, or by themselves.
Manner of Arrest Affecting Children

Suspects are most of the time violently arrested, often in the presence of their children.
Children are traumatized by seeing their parent, whom they regard as the most powerful person on the planet, being treated in such a way.

One of the key strengths of Wells of Hope is its triangle model. By addressing the triangle of a child’s life, the likelihood is that an impact will be made on the difficulties outlined above.

-Dr. Owen Gill, Barbados
WELLS OF HOPE
CHILD OF A PRISONER
LIFE TRIANGLE APPROACH
Wells of Hope Academy

... is a residential school for children of prisoners. It was started by Wells of Hope to offer education and implement programs that prevent harmful effects of parental imprisonment on children.
WHAT WE DO FOR CHILDREN OF PRISONERS

- rescue and protect, help them cope with parental imprisonment, offer them free education, provide general welfare, and most importantly we facilitate them to visit to their parents in prison
Meals
Scouting
Music
Games
MARY 14 (BEFORE)
MARY 14 (After)
Visits to Parents
Each Visit Might Be Their Last
States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests.
I think it’d be good if teachers got a kind of lesson on how kids like me feel and what it’s like for us.”
Son of prisoner, 14

“Someone should have just asked me what was wrong at school.”
Son of prisoner, 19
The aim is for each school to actively participate in the process of offering support and guidance to children who have a parent or close relative in prison.

The Point Of Contact teacher is the person children and/or family can approach for advice and support.

It is not about identifying children, but creating the opportunity for support, should they want it.
liaise with partner agencies; tell families about services
challenge unhelpful attitudes
courage on-going contact between children and imprisoned parents
offer support to children affected
Schools can
be a community that is aware and supportive
actively build positive relationships with families
provide information for children affected
reach out to the parent in prison
help reduce bullying
Supporting parents and caregivers
How YOU can Help Children with a parent in Prison.

- Foster **Communication with their parents** in Prison, especially through quality prison visits
- Attend to their **general welfare**
- Help them **Cope with the Trauma**, and all emotions.
- Provide them with help to **enjoy their rights** in full.
Children with incarcerated parents exist under conditions in total contradiction of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (commonly abbreviated as the CRC).

- The Convention deals with the child-specific needs and rights. It requires that states act in the best interests of the child.
In its omnibus resolution on the rights of the child, adopted without a vote on 18 December 2013, the General Assembly “acknowledges that a parent’s deprivation of liberty, sentencing to death or life imprisonment has a serious impact on children’s development, and urge States, in the framework of their national child protection efforts, to provide the assistance and support these children may require.”
Key Recommendation: Policy & Practice

1. Research

2. Child-friendly criminal justice systems

3. Ensure that children maintain contact with the parent in prison (facilitate visits, improve visiting conditions and environment)
4. Advise and support parents and caregivers
5. Support and cooperate with agencies (NGO, FBO & CBO)
6. Involve schools
7. Create a system where children are protected from risks, defended, fed, clothed, sheltered, and given medical care
8. Improve public awareness
9. Policy recognition & implementation
10. Adherence to the UNCRC
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