

**ACCESS TO SERVICES BY CHILDREN LIVING WITH THEIR INCARCERATED  
MOTHERS IN PRISON: A CASE STUDY OF LUZIRA WOMEN'S PRISON**

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## Abstract

The overall objective of the study was to assess the level of access to services by children living with their incarcerated mothers in Luzira Women's prison and the coping strategies adopted by the mothers. The specific objectives of the study were; 1). To assess the nature of children incarcerated with their mothers; 2). To assess the level of access to the needs of children living with their incarcerated mothers and their coping mechanisms; 3). To examine constraints affecting access to services by children living with incarcerated mothers in Luzira prison.

The study was cross-sectional and employed qualitative research design. Fifty-five key informants were purposively selected from three categories, i.e.; a). 19 mothers living with their children in incarceration, b). 10 pregnant women, c). 20 other women prison inmates, d). Six prison administration staff including, Officer in Charge, Welfare officer, two Prison wardens, prison nurse and day care attendant. Data was solicited from them using semi structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Focus group discussions were also organised with key informants and data obtained using interview guides. Additionally, observation checklists were also used in the investigations.

Raw data was edited and coded. Content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected.

The findings revealed that the nature of children incarcerated with their mothers are those in the category of one week to four years. Eighty percent (80%) of these children were girls and the rest (20%) were boys. The findings also revealed that the needs required by children of imprisoned mothers such food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, protection were inadequate. It was indicated that as a means to cope up with inadequate services, incarcerated mothers resorted to their relatives for provision of food, others get supplies from well-wishers and charity organisations while others indulge themselves in art and craft activities and in turn sell the products to support themselves. Additionally, others do voluntary work such cooking for fellow inmates who are well off in turn for food. Furthermore, the study revealed that there are a number of constraints affecting access to services by children living with their incarcerated mothers which range from logistical, administrative and budgetary constraints.

There are three major conclusions and recommendations of the study. 1) Children imprisoned with their mothers are always very young and vulnerable and need specialized support care services. The study recommends that legal entities should consider a non-custodial sentence as an alternative to imprisonment with the aim of creating a normal environment that promotes and facilitates the physical and emotional development of the child for the period that such a child remains in prison with the mother 2) the level of access to services by children incarcerated with their mother is inadequate and therefore there is need to come up with policy measures to mitigate the problem. 3) Children incarcerated with their mothers are faced with a number of challenges which affect their access to basic necessities. Most of these challenges are financial in nature. It is recommended that government creates a special to cater for such children in prisons.