

# morning tears

*Rebuilding worlds for children who lost  
their own*



morning tears  
we believe in children

## CHARTER

Adapted and endorsed by the Board of the morning tears alliance on march 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011

[koen.sevenants@morningtears.org](mailto:koen.sevenants@morningtears.org)

# Charter morning tears

The situation today.....	3
Our dream .....	5
Our Strategy .....	6
Our principles.....	6
Our structure .....	8
Funding: .....	11

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## The situation today

More than 9.8 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world, mostly as pre-trial detainees (remand prisoners) or as sentenced prisoners. Almost half of these are in the United States (2.29m), Russia (0.89m) and China (1.57m sentenced prisoners).

A further 850,000 are held in ‘administrative detention’ in China; if these are included the overall Chinese total is over 2.4 million and the world total over 10.65 million. Moreover, prison populations are growing in 71% of all countries of the world<sup>1</sup>.

When a father goes to prison there is about 80% chance that the mother will still be the principal caregiver for their children. However, when a mother is sent to prison the chances that the father will be the main caregiver for their children is reduced to about 20%. In order to estimate the number of children who will not have a parent as their main caregiver we will have to look at the number of women in prison.

More than half a million women and girls are held in penal institutions throughout the world, either as pre-trial detainees (remand prisoners) or having been convicted and sentenced<sup>2</sup>. 78% of these women were mothers when entering prison<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, 6% of the women are pregnant when they enter the prison. Most of the women are separated from their newborns soon after the birth<sup>4</sup>.

UNICEF says that there are currently 2,2 billion children in the world. Various sources confirm that at least 2% of all children have a parent in prison. Consequently, at least 44 million children have a parent in prison. The real number is likely to be significantly higher since these numbers are based on official governmental statistics which often underreport numbers of prisoners.

If a parent is sent to prison in a so called ‘developed country’ and the child consequently loses both caregivers, the child is typically brought up by another relative, by grandparents or they go in to foster care<sup>5</sup>. Most of these children change their foster placement at least twice while their parent is in prison<sup>6</sup>.

In developing countries the situation is much different. Families tend to have more children, hence a proportionally higher number of children lose both parents as caregivers. The chances that other relatives or grandparents take care of the child are smaller because of the pressure of poverty. Foster care is often a non-existing

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<sup>1</sup> World Prison Population List, International Centre for Prison studies, 8<sup>th</sup> edition

<sup>2</sup> World Female Imprisonment List, International Centre for Prison studies, 8<sup>th</sup> edition

<sup>3</sup> Numbers are based on data of US, but are unlikely to be significant differently in other countries.

<sup>4</sup> Data published on [www.asecnetenceontheirown](http://www.asecnetenceontheirown) from USDJ. 1994. Survey of state prison inmates, 1991: Women in prison, p.6. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. USDJ, Office of Justice Programs.

<sup>5</sup> Youth with incarcerated parents: an introduction to the issues – [www.TPRonline.org](http://www.TPRonline.org) 2006

<sup>6</sup> Estimation done foundation ‘a sentence of their own’, based on US situation.

option. Consequently, the imprisonment of a parent often leads to the start of a life on the street for the children. On the streets there is no help available to assist the children in the healing process from their traumatic experience of parental imprisonment, and the child is left alone to provisions of basic needs (food, shelter...).

Besides the scale of the problem in terms of numbers there is also the profound suffering that the children of prisoners have to cope with. The psychological and emotional problems that these children face are often overwhelming. The arrest of a parent brings fear, confusion and panic. Before and during the trial children feel anxiety and frustration. At the moment of sentencing there is hopelessness and helplessness. Upon imprisonment the child experiences abandonment, stigma and resentment. At the time and after the release, children have ambivalent feelings<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, if conviction is linked with domestic violence then the degree to which all of the above is traumatic might multiply. Additionally, the developmental and behavioural implications due to the imprisonment of a parent are many.

Infants of prisoners suffer from the lack of bonding between them and their parents..

For children between two and six years old, the ability to develop autonomy and initiative is likely to be damaged by the trauma of the parents' criminal activity and/or arrest and parent-child separation. The long-term impacts of parental imprisonment may be worst at this stage, because the children are able to understand and remember traumatic events, but lack the ability to process them without help.

In middle childhood (7-10 years old), parental imprisonment is likely to have a major impact on social adjustment; many children in this age group develop aggressive behaviours and difficulty getting along with others, particularly in school.

Children of prisoners in early adolescence (11-14 years) have typically had multiple experiences with parental crime, arrest, and imprisonment. Many children in this age group display maladaptive behavioural patterns and reject limitations on their behaviour.

During late adolescence children of prisoners often show increased delinquency and negative perceptions of the criminal justice system. In summary, parental imprisonment and related enduring trauma, separation, and inadequate care interfere with the child's development, resulting in negative long-term outcomes, including intergenerational imprisonment<sup>8</sup>. If a parent goes to prison the children suffer deeply interfering with their chances to live a successful adult life.

Despite the significant and growing number of children with imprisoned parents and the immense emotional pain they experience, the world today does not seem

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<sup>7</sup> Described in fcnetwork, see [www.fcentwork.com](http://www.fcentwork.com), 2006

<sup>8</sup> Johnston, Denise. 1995. Effects of Parental Incarceration. In *Children of Incarcerated Parents*, ed. Katherine Gabel and Denise Johnston, 59-88. New York: Lexington Books

to find the situation of children of prisoners much of an issue. Very few governments around the world do have procedures to address the specific problems that these children face.

Although the number of international groups helping children of imprisoned parents are on the increase most are run by brave and well intending missionaries who take care of small groups of children. Their work is admirable, but in most cases they do not aspire to change the system that continuously excludes children of prisoners.

On the research agenda children of prisoners also do not get much attention. A relatively small amount of research is done about children with imprisoned parents in ‘developed’ countries and hardly any research is available about the specific situation of these children in developing countries.

Even on an interpersonal level the problems that these children of prisoners face are not perceived to be an issue. In many societies people are biased and have prejudices against children with an imprisoned parent. Instead of surrounding the children with a loving and understanding environment many parents want to protect their own children against what is considered as the negative influence of those *failing* children. *It is not good to play with those children*. Instead of helping these children people tend to give them isolation and a negative self-image.

Not taking care of children of prisoners is inconsistent with the logic of justice systems in all countries. If these systems exist to protect, correct and change society for the better then they also ought to focus on the prevention of people becoming criminals. Providing assistance to children of prisoners should be an important strategy in their mission. It is not an impossible mission. It is not expensive and not overly difficult. The investment will quickly pay itself back with the costs saved in the penal system. Intergenerational incarceration can easily be avoided if children of prisoners are surrounded with a supportive environment. Children are not criminals by nature or heritage. We know them. We have been working with and for them for since 1999. It is the society that through social exclusion breeds distortions in normal child development.

## **Our dream**

Morning tears dreams of a world in which the rights of the child<sup>9</sup> are available to all children of prisoners. All people would consider it their task to create a loving and caring environment for children of prisoners in which respect and understanding gain the way from biases and prejudices. Governments of all nations would continuously safeguard the interests of children of prisoners. In the world that morning tears dreams of children of prisoners would grow up in dignity.

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<sup>9</sup> As formulated in the UN-convention of the rights of the child.

## Our Strategy

The strategy of morning tears to realize its dream is threefold:

1. morning tears undertakes action to create and nurture a worldwide movement of people who individually and in group stand up for the interests of children of prisoners.
2. morning tears acts as a lobby group to governments and state authorities to take up responsibility for ensuring that all basic and special needs of children of prisoners in their country are guaranteed. morning tears will act on behalf of children of prisoners as a watchdog to all governments.
3. morning tears provides technical assistance to governments who are willing to take up the responsibility for the children of prisoners, including building and operating children homes, give training, policy advice and engage in drafting legislation and procedures. morning tears includes, where possible, all actors of civil society and therefore it also works with national and international organizations.

morning tears uses high quality minimum standards for its care and protection of children and strives to convince other organizations and institutions to follow the same standards.

## Our principles

The organization morning tears adheres to a number of principles in its development and realization of its mission. Individuals involved in morning tears might have slight disagreements about some of the organizational fundamental ideas, but when they act or speak on behalf of the organization this will be done in line with the principles listed hereunder:

- **morning tears is a non-religious organization.** As an organization, we do not carry out our work because of religious motives and we do not adhere to specific institutionalized beliefs. Our only motivation in our work is to help children. However, morning tears is respectful towards different religions and cultures. Religions can be helpful in restoring the ethical frameworks of children who experienced imprisonment of parents. Religions can give clear indications on values in life.
- **morning tears is a non-profit organization.** morning tears acts to reorganize the world allowing children of prisoners to grow up and have a life in dignity. Funds allows–programs to be implemented and political work to be carried out. Money is in no way a goal by itself. morning tears is volunteer driven. Volunteers are driven by the internal motivation of assisting children.. The people who receive compensation for their work are paid the same amount as a common salary for social work in order to allow them to build and maintain their own family.

- **morning tears is a non-political organization.** morning tears is not affiliated or associated with any political party, pro- or anti-government movements, or any other interest group. morning tears does not express or develop opinions about political issues other than the policies related to the protection of children of prisoners. morning tears does not interfere in judicial system of countries. All people involved in morning tears will safeguard our neutrality. morning tears only accepts funding from political interest groups if there exists a clear common understanding that the group will not endanger the neutrality of morning tears by openly associating itself with us.
- **morning tears believes that the protection of children of prisoners should be in hands of state authorities.** Children without parental care need continuously protection and care. They are highly vulnerable for abuse and neglect. Authorities should take up this responsibility. morning tears encourages governments to take up their responsibility and provides assistance if they are willing to do so.
- **Education and well being of all children in the world are the responsibility of all adults in the world.** People are exchanging goods, services and media products over international borders. New communication technologies give rise to contacts between people in which their geographical location is less relevant. But the driving force in globalization has been commerce and the quest for profit. If commercial motives do not go accompanied with a body of ethics, conscious and ideas that go beyond individual profits then non-intended effects of the system will hit the most vulnerable groups in society. Solidarity with economically non-productive (or even costly) groups of society – like children of prisoners - would be non-existing. Therefore morning tears aspires to be one of the movements that adds ethics and values of solidarity on the platforms of the globalized marketplace.
- **morning tears has the duty to take up the interest of the children, wherever they are.** In a globalized world we should not limit our rights to selling and buying products internationally. We have the duty to stand up and act for respect for one of our most fundamental values: the protection of children. We cannot close our eyes for misery in the world while at the same time being a joyful consumer of products from all over the world. We have the duty to globalize dignity for children of prisoners.
- **morning tears is not only ‘for’ but also ‘of’ children of prisoners.** morning tears is not an organization of people who assist children of prisoners. We are also an organization partly consisting of children of prisoners. The voices of the children are deeply penetrated in morning tears through our continuous work at grassroots level with the children. We listen to their needs. We communicate their issues and learn from and together with them. In our volunteer corps we have and welcome people whose parents were or are imprisoned. They are great advocates for our interests. Only together we can rebuild worlds.
- **morning tears aspires the creation of care systems rather than charity.** morning tears encourages governments to take up the responsibility of caring

for its most vulnerable citizens to which children of prisoners belong. It is not the intention of morning tears to take the responsibility of nation states to establish, run or finance centres for children of prisoners. Notwithstanding, morning tears does realize that taking up responsibility for centres can be a good strategy to build relations of trust with relevant authorities and to gain expertise about the needs of the children in their specific socio-cultural context. morning tears might also engage in charity activities simply because the political constellation in a country does not (yet) allow for work on system level. Therefore, morning tears does engage in charity work, but merely as a strategy and always with the ambition of convincing the government to take up responsibility.

- **morning tears will use and share its acquired expertise to help all children who face similar difficulties as or partly the same problems as children of convicts.** This can be children whose parents are in psychiatric institutions, children who are left temporarily without parental care because of divorce, children who are traumatized by abuse, natural disasters/accidents, etc.
- **morning tears sees the child in a broader context and addresses issues in these contexts that cause difficulties for the children.** However, morning tears will not involve in the justice or penitentiary system. Contextual elements in which morning tears can intervene include: helping parents who come out of prison reintegrate in society, teacher training for school teachers to address issues of parental imprisonment in the right way etc.

## **Our structure**

morning tears is a growing movement of people who take the interest of children whose parents are in prison in their heart.

The people inside this movement are groups of volunteers worldwide supplemented by staff who provide specialized services and facilitate the creation of a framework in which the volunteers can operate.

The volunteers are organized in committees. A committee consists of a group of volunteers that live in the same geographical location. In one country there can be several committees. In countries where committees are operational, morning tears will register at a national level as a charity foundation and open a bank account. If there are more committees active in one country then they will share the registration benefits and bank accounts. The registration and running of a charity requires a lot of administration and time. Therefore there is only one registered morning tears group in a country. In case more committees are active in one country, one committee will be hosting administration and bank account of morning tears. This 'hosting' should be seen as providing services to the other committees and not as a hierarchical superiority. All committees delegate one person to the national board and all national boards appoint one person to be a member of the board of the morning tears alliance.

The committee's national boards and the board of the morning tears alliance have obligations, rights and working procedures.

### **Committees**

The obligations of the committees are:

- To accept and follow this charter entirely
- To undertake initiatives to increase awareness of the problems that children of prisoners face
- To undertake initiatives to raise funds for activities of morning tears International
- To safeguard the reputation of morning tears.

The rights of the committees are:

- Determine its own ambitions and scope of actions within the charter
- Set up and run own projects directly benefiting children of prisoners on the condition that:
  - These projects fit in the 5 year strategy plan of the morning tears alliance
  - These projects take place in cooperation with the morning tears alliance
  - The projects accept technical assistance of the morning tears alliance

The working procedures of the committees are:

- In the beginning of every calendar year the committee proposes and negotiates with the board its objectives and activities for the year
- At the end of every calendar year, the committee provides a brief report related to the realization of the objectives that were planned for the year and the activities that have been carried out
- In the beginning of each calendar year the committee provides a financial statement to the board

### **The national boards**

The obligations of the national boards are:

- To safeguard that committees follow the charter
- To support the committees
- To coordinate between and among the committees in order to make full use of synergies
- To provide the committees with morning tears strategies

The rights of the national boards are:

- To carry out the daily management of morning tears in their country
- To decide on allocations of budgets
- To report annually on progress
- To report annually on spending
- To prepare annual budget forecasts

### **The morning tears alliance board**

The board meeting is the place where the broad policy of the morning tears alliance is discussed and decided.

The board consists of :

- **Full Members**

- Are legally recognized non-profit organizations in their country.
- Are named morning tears [*country name*]
- Adhere to the morning tears charter
- Provide program support to the Associate Members
- Can sign contracts with new Associate Members

A list of the Full Members is available at the head office of the morning tears alliance.

- **Associate Members**

- Are managed or receive support (technical and/or financial) of one of the full members
- Can be support or referring centres
- Basic requirements to become and stay an associate member are
  - to cooperate in capacity building
  - to accept visits from Full Members and donors of morning tears
  - to agree that information and visual images can be used for fundraising and awareness raising
  - to cooperate in research programs
- Can only have contracts with one Full Member
- Becoming an Associate Member requires the approval of the Executive Committee
- Have the duty to give visibility to their associate membership to the outside world (e.g. “Associate Member of the morning tears alliance”)

The Board has competence to:

- elect the President of the Executive Committee by a majority of vote
- adopt and modify the bylaws
- ratify the Executive Committee’s recommendations of membership applications

The board is advised by a board of children and young people whose parents are or have been in prison.

## Funding

The financial basis for morning tears are:

- Financial donations from private people and companies
- Community sponsoring program
- Home sponsoring program
- Income from fundraising events
- Subsidies from governmental funds and international bodies
- Grants from foundations

On the side of budget allocations morning tears has:

- Costs related to core activities
  - Costs directly related to assisting children (including salary costs of staff who works on daily basis directly with children)
  - Costs for related to persuading governments to take their responsibility for children of prisoners
  - Costs of assisting governments in setting up care systems.
- Overhead costs
  - Costs related to the development and expansion of morning tears
  - Costs of staff that are not involved in child care
  - Costs of training of volunteers and staff

For management of finances morning tears applies following rules:

1. **morning tears operates with a high level of financial accountability.** morning tears will keep an accounting system of international standards. Expenses can only be made within strategy and receipts provided
2. **morning tears operates with a high level of financial transparency.** morning tears will publish an overview of income and spending on an annual basis. Donors are welcomed to access our financial documents. morning tears' accounts will be audited on a regular interval annually by a recognized audit office
3. **morning tears will use the money for community sponsorship effectively for care of children.** morning tears recognizes the financial efforts of individuals and families when sponsoring a community and we internalize the moral duty to spend the money on the children they support. Also, the sponsorship contributions do not go directly to a specific child. Instead, the contributions serve to pay the share of the costs of one child in the costs of the community of children.
4. **morning tears will not accept funds from non-ethical sources.** morning tears will not accept money from companies or organizations that in their activities directly or indirectly damage the interest of children. This includes companies that, among others, use child labour, companies that produce unsafe toys, companies that use unethical ways for selling their products, companies involved in the

production of landmines, organizations that promote values opposite to solidarity and tolerance, etc.