

**THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN IN  
LIDETA SUB CITY ADMINISTRATION OF ADDIS ABABA:  
CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES**

**MSW DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROJECT**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN IN LIDETA SUB CITY ADMINISTRATION OF ADDIS ABABA: CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES submitted by me for the partial fulfilment of the MSW to Indira Gandhi National Open University, (IGNOU) New Delhi is my own original work and has not been submitted earlier, either to IGNOU or to any other institution for the fulfilment of the requirement for any other programme of the study. I also declare that no chapter of this manuscript in whole or in part is lifted and incorporated in this report from any earlier work done by me or others.

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Mrs. Kelemua Hailemariam Abera** student of MSW from Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi was working under my supervision and guidance for her Project work for the Course MSWP – 001. Her Project Work entitled THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN IN LIDETA SUB CITY ADMINISTRATION OF ADDIS ABABA: CHILDREN’S PERSPECTIVES which she is submitting her genuine and original work.

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study is to assess and explore impacts of divorce on the wellbeing of children. To this end, descriptive survey method was employed. Data collection tools were questionnaires and semi structured interviews. Sources of data were fifty six children's, Two experts from Lideta Sub City Women, Children and Youth Affairs office and Two experts in lideta first instant court social science department. Random sampling techniques were used to select the children, whereas purposive sampling was employed to select the expert personnel. The collected data were analyzed using percentage. The major findings are the following: There is a two-step divorce related service given by two government entities before and during divorce. The first is psychological counseling; mediation and reconciliation for couples who failed to resolve their dispute on their own. The second is providing advisory service to the court on which parent should retain the right to raise the children, and how often and when the other parent will visit them. Lack of facilities, manpower, budget and other inputs has negative impact on the implementation process and the follow-up. Gaps have been observed in the way files are handled. Divorce is usually followed by poverty or a significant reduction in income. Economic hardships could lead children to drop out of school or to move to schools with cheaper fees. Children experience stress, sense of separation, displacement and loss of the father's or the mother's care. The overall psychological impact of divorce could also manifest itself in the children's decreasing academic performance, which in turn will affect their late personality and life. The parent who is allowed to keep the child will shoulder heavier responsibility. Non-custodial parents do not fare well with their children. Children report more distant relationships with their non-custodial parents. Based on these findings, conclusions were drawn and some feasible recommendations were made.*

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

According to Brotherson and Duncan (2004) divorce is the oldest social problem in human history. It is usually found along with the basic social institution called marriage. Further, Brotherson and Duncan described that marriage is a reference point for divorce. Divorce is directly related with the institution of marriage because it is the dissolution of marriage ties. Marriage is, thus, the only best reference for the analysis of divorce as a social problem. It is the impact of the dissolution of marital ties of spouses that always triggers people to seriously complain against the issue as a burning question of a society. That is why almost all governments in the world exert efforts in strengthening the stability of marital bonds through a variety of approaches. The societal trends in relation with family formation, marriage, and divorce often shape the interests of people in treating marriage to be stable as one of the social institutions

Divorce has its own impact on the lives of children. A child's perception of divorce will be largely determined by age and gender, as well as the child's history of stress and coping (Matthews, 2011). When stressful events outweigh available protective factors, even the most resilient child can develop problems. A growing body of information suggests that certain factors may make some children more at risk for maladjustment than other children. Some are unalterable and some existed before divorce. Others exert considerable pressure on children at the time of separation or divorce, and still others influence the children following divorce

(Matthews, 2011). Most divorcing parents are very concerned about their children's reactions to their separation and divorce (DeBord, 1997). They want to know whether their children will grow to be healthy and happy or not. Research shows that the effects of divorce depend on the age of the child at the time of divorce. It can also depend on the child's gender and personality, the amount of conflict between parents and the support provided by friends and family (DeBord, 1997).

The Impacts of Parental divorce on children as many researchers agree it's not uniform due to age of developmental stage, nature of temperament, the way their parents handled the process and post divorce changes including the economic and social change. (Furstenberg and Kiernan, 2001). Among much theoretical explanation, the economist, sociological and developmental psychologist frame of analysis are included.

To explain the impact of parental divorce on children the economist theory focus on the accumulation of resources in the family will change by divorce. Although there are adverse effects of persistent conflict in the family, the presence of both parents according to sociological and developmental psychologist raises skills, social capital, opportunities and a wider network of support for physical and social wellbeing and will serve as a spring board to the success and live achievements (IBD). This is because divorces parents with children will not able to raise the social capital after divorce all many responsibilities in and outside home.

The impact of divorce on the parent child relationships started before the divorce. The negative consequence of divorce on children according to Defrain and Olson (2000) includes distress, fewer ties with kin and friends, less happy marriage and a greater probability of future divorce were great in families where there was high conflict before divorce. Similar study by Chase Landsdale, Cherlin and Kierman in Great Britain (1995) cited in Defrain etal (2000) reported

that the negative consequence of divorce vary in degree depending on the emotional and behavioral problem of children before divorce.

The same study by Amato and Booth (1997) also found that the negative effects of divorce on the relationships of parents with their children greatly affects father's affection for children but not mother. The relationship of parents with their children is affected by the relationship between the two parents which negatively or positively affects the wellbeing of their child or children.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) article (12) states that parties shall assure to the child, who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting him or her and the views to be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Marriage and divorce in Ethiopia have a long history. Throughout this history, the marriage institution in the country has been challenged by the prevalence of higher divorce rates (Abate & Morgan, 1986). However, the impacts and the severity of divorce have different trends across different time in the country. In the contemporary Ethiopian society, the rate of divorce is by far higher than any previous time (Abate & Morgan, 1986). According to some research conducted, Ethiopia is among the countries having the highest divorce rate in the world (IBD). Tilson and Larson (2001) reported that 45 per cent of first marriage in Ethiopia ends in divorce within 30 years, and two-third of women and men who divorce do so within the first five years of their marriage.

In a study assessing parental divorce impact on children in Dessie Sisay (1997) showed that adolescents from divorced families had more psychological and social adjustment problems than children from stable families. The impact of divorce is further complicated as indicated in

the study that adolescent from step mother families had psychological adjustment problems great more often than those from single mother families (IBD) .

The improved family code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia states that if divorce has adverse effect on the wellbeing of children the court has the mandate to see the cases in favor of children (Family code, 200(80)(3).However, during the implementation procedure the voices of children are not heard.

Therefore, this study attempted to assess the consequences of divorce on the wellbeing of children in Addis Ababa City Administration at Lideta Sub City.

## **1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

A growing body of ‘divorce research’ has shown that divorce experience reaches beyond the lives of the marital partners to encompass their children and to some extent their kin and their social networks (Robertson, 1986). Besides, Robertson also explained that the establishment in the western world of laws for ending of marriage by divorce is usually explained in terms of changing religious and familial ideologies (Robertson, 1986).

There are several arguments among scholars on the consequences of divorce. One of such debates is concerned with the impacts of divorce on children. Some studies show the prevalence of strong effect of divorce on children while others argue that the differences between children of divorced parents and children of continually married parents or intact families are overestimated (Parrilo, 2008). However, most experts agree that children of divorced family has more negative outcomes on the education achievement, delinquency and crime, psychological well-being, teenage pregnancy, and behaviors when compared with children of “intact” family (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; and Parrilo, 2008).

This particular research describes the economic and social impact of divorce and develops contextual ways of care and custody for the children of divorced families. The researcher believes that the issue was so far not properly addressed by the Addis Ababa City Administration Lideta sub city Women, Children and Youth office and the problems of children were overlooked.

From the verbal information the researcher gained from the court officials the rate, prevalence and incidence of divorce is increasing at an alarming rate in Addis Ababa city particularly Lideta Sub City. According to the information I gathered from the local office, at least ten couples appeal for divorce per day to the court. From my observation in the town divorcees see one another in most cases as enemies. Even though it has to be assured by further research evidence, this poor relationship has an adverse impact on the social wellbeing of children. Afework argued divorce to be the most serious problem of the society (Afework, 2010).

In my view divorce should not be seen only from the angle of the marital partners. Its impact on the lives of children should also be looked at since it disintegrates the family unity. It is a social evil in itself and major contributing factors for most of societies ill such as prostitution, streetism, juvenile delinquency, homosexuality, drug addiction, alcoholism and other crimes (Afework, 2010).

According to Rahel, (1992) the real cost of divorce in terms of emotional, social and economic costs to the individuals involved, their children, their partners, friends and to the society they live in is devastating. Serkalem,(2006) made similar study on the impact of divorce on women and children but she did not address the issues of contextual care and custody and she also overlooked the decision of children in divorcing partners and the dissociation of children from their extended families. Zenaye, (2008) addressed the principle of the best interest of the child.

She argued that custody decision should precede the decision of the divorce itself and emphasized that children have to have a say in matters affecting their lives and the battle over legal custodies is instrumental that is to save the child support money.

Divorce affects the state or condition of being well; a condition characterized by loss of happiness, of children of divorced parents, its affects their health or prosperity: moral or physical welfare and affects an achievable degree of economic wellbeing. Parents are responsible for the economic, social, psychological and physical wellbeing of their child/children. (Webster's international 3<sup>rd</sup> edition dictionary) . Some psychological impacts are stress that can lead to anxiety, depression, substance abuse, mood swing. Sometimes, the children even make suicide attempts. Children from divorced family are socially isolated, they have poor peer relationship, and they are less sociable they have fewer close friends, spend less time with friends. And economically children from disrupted family might not get enough, health services, getting educational materials, books toys and other resources they need.

To this end, the researcher prior to engage herself in this study had with her the topic of interest because it is also learned that no research has been conducted on impacts of divorce on the wellbeing of children and contextual care and custody from the perspectives of children. So, after considering the aforementioned issue the researcher decided that it would be wise and worthwhile to conduct a research in this area. Therefore, the researcher of this topic aims to assess the following research questions.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To conduct this study the researcher inquires the general question, how divorce affects the child's /children's wellbeing and develop contextual care and custody. This general question is



further sub divided into the following specific research questions. Specifically, the study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the economic impacts of divorce on the wellbeing of children?
2. What are the social impacts of divorce on the wellbeing of children?
3. What are the psychological (emotional/happiness) impacts of divorce on the wellbeing of children?
4. How can we develop contextual ways of care and custody for children in post-divorce families?
5. What are the levels of service delivery to the children from broken families?

### **1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to assess and explore impacts of divorce on the wellbeing of children. More specifically, the study has set the following specific objectives.

1. To describe and explore the economic impacts of divorce on children's wellbeing.
2. To describe and explore the impacts of divorce on children's social wellbeing.
3. To suggest ways of developing contextual care and custody for children of divorced families.
4. To describe and explore the service delivery of Lideta sub City Women, Children and Youth Affairs office to the children of divorced families

#### **1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research result will have the following significance

- For institutions under investigation to enhance divorce related environment by understanding the needs of the children, they will be able to devise a mechanism to and improve their service.
- For decision makers (like, The Youth, Children and Women's Affairs Bureau, the court House of peoples representative and Ethiopian human right commission), it is a good stepping stone to design and implement appropriate policy.
- For the researcher to enhance the existing theoretical knowledge concerning divorce and its impact on the wellbeing of children.
- For interested individuals and researchers to lay ground to conduct a wide and in-depth study with respect to divorce and its impact on the wellbeing of children.

#### **1.5. SCOPE (DELIMITATION) OF THE STUDY**

It is quite difficult to assess all broken families dispersed over the country. Therefore, it is essential to delimit the study from the stand point of manageability. Considering time limit, lack of finance to overcome the distance factor, this research delimit itself Lideta sub city only.

Furthermore, the data collected covers children age from 10-18. Moreover, this research mainly focused on issues related to impact of divorce on children among other things.

## **1.6. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The researcher has faced serious obstacles related to literatures and other study materials related to impact of divorce. Especially unavailability of sufficient materials in Ethiopian context has limited the researcher to access information related to the phenomenon under study. However, to fill the gaps, literature from other countries as well as information downloaded from the internet, were used.

A time constraint was also another problem. The time allocated for doing the research was very minimal compared to the nature of the study. In addition, a researcher who sought information from divorced parents needs more time to familiarize with respondents for making them feel free, confident and be able to deliver out information related to their experiences.

## **1.7. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

**Child:** For the purpose of this MSW dissertation, Child is human being with parents are separated or divorced and whose ages between 10 to 18 years. This age range is purposely determined age group of the researcher to get more independent responses from the child. This definition includes all boys and girls whose parents have stayed from 2 to 5 years after their separation or divorce and are living in Addis Ababa city Administration, Lideta Sub city, whose parents are both alive. It does not include child/children from intact families and whose parent(s) passed away.

**Custodial Arrangements:** is about with whom the child or children live after the separation or divorce of their parents. It tells us about the space, the time and condition under which the child (children) is living. From the experience of different countries custodial arrangement is contextual and differs from country to country and across sub cultures. Some of the children

live with their mother from Monday to Friday and visit their father on weekends. There is still experience of different traditions where fathers visit their child/children at their mothers home and supervise randomly about their food, hygiene, secured attachment, in secured attachment and avoidant attachments and might claim custody of their child /children or suggest better well being of the child/children. Joint custodial arrangement is not practiced in many developing countries and it is the practice of western cultures.

**Intact Family:** This study is not comparative and the researcher is not interested in describing or exploring the intact family. Intact family is unbroken, stable family for the time being but which might endure or breakdown in the future.

**Family:** The researcher operationally defines family in its multiple forms in the globe. These are nuclear family, extended family, conjugal family, gay family, lesbian family, reformed family, broken family, family of orientation, family of origin ...etc. The focus of the researcher is on broken families with child /children who have lived for 2 to 5 years after their separation or divorce, according to my definition these are bi-nuclear families where one nuclear family is broken in to two and still children perceive them still as a nuclear family. The other interests of the researcher are nuclear and extended families. The extended families include: grandparents, parents, children, grand children, uncles and aunts who are supposed to be the potential resources for the children of broken homes. These extended families of the child might go beyond the current residence of the child and trans local. Nuclear families are families with husband, wife and child/children.

**Child Parent relationships:** parental divorce might affect the parent-child relationship and might disrupt the equilibrium of the relationship. This disequilibrium has adverse impact on the lives of the child. A post divorce parent child relationship requires independent study by itself,

but the researcher is interested to describe and explore some of the impacts of this relationship on the wellbeing of children. The positive or negative relationships have impacts on the economic, social, psychological, contextual and custodial arrangements of the child/children of broken homes.

**Wellbeing:** divorce affects the state or condition of being well; a condition characterized by loss of happiness, of children of divorced parents, its affects their health or prosperity: moral or physical welfare and affects an achievable degree of economic wellbeing. Parents are responsible for the economic, social, psychological and physical wellbeing of their child/children (emphasis added).

**Social Wellbeing:** is refers to ability to interact successfully within a community, with a peer groups, having fun and meeting friends. As a member of a community, develop satisfying relationships, a capacity for intimacy, an understanding of self in relation to others, and a sense of belonging.

**Psychological wellbeing:** the child/children sense of how happy or content feels with life and also about being actively engaged with life and with other people.

**Economic wellbeing:** for the purpose of this study, economic wellbeing defines the resources for children's nutrition, health services, and support of educational materials, support of books toys and other resources they need.

**Impact of divorce:** are multifaceted. For the purpose of this study divorce has different impact on the divorcees and their child/children such as economic, social and psychological impacts on the lives of children of divorcees. The researcher describes and explores these impacts in depth.

## **1.8. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The study is organized in five chapters. The first chapter deals with background of the study, problem statement, objective, significance, delimitation, limitation and definition of terms respectively. Chapter two comprises review of related literature, chapter three briefs method of the study. The Fourth chapter includes presentation, analysis and discussion of the data, while the last chapter brings the study to final, by presenting conclusion and recommendations. The final chapter also attempts to give grounds for further research

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITREATURE**

#### **2.1. DIVORCE**

According to The Covenant Divorce Recovery Leader's Handbook (2008) Divorce (or dissolution of marriage) is the termination of a marriage or marital union, the canceling and/or reorganizing of the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage, thus dissolving the bonds of matrimony between a married couple under the rule of law of the particular country and/or state. Divorce laws vary considerably around the world, but in most countries it requires the sanction of a court or other authority in a legal process. The legal process of divorce may also involve issues of alimony (spousal support), child custody, child visitation / access, parenting time, child support, distribution of property, and division of debt.

#### **2.2. CAUSES FOR DIVORCE**

Divorce grounds vary significantly from country to country. Marriage may be seen as a contract, a status, or a combination of these. Where it is seen as a contract, the refusal or inability of one spouse to perform the obligations stipulated in the contract may constitute a ground for divorce for the other spouse.

Ambert (2009) point out that the reasons or explanations that people give for their divorce, such as alcoholism, domestic violence, infidelity, “didn’t get along,” “no longer loved each other” and “money problems” actually flow from the socio-cultural and demographic factors. For instance,

without an emphasis on individualism and gratification, people would not divorce as often because they “fell out of love.”

In countries where marriage is embedded within a context of family solidarity, these reasons would be considered frivolous. In a society where divorce is more difficult to obtain and less acceptable, or where marriage may represent the only legitimate means of forming and maintaining a family or obtaining economic security, only reasons such as abuse and abandonment are tolerated. Therefore, before people decide to divorce on particular grounds, a social and cultural climate has to exist that offers a legitimate framework for their reasons.

Furthermore, personal grounds for divorce such as fighting, alcoholism, violence, tend to be mentioned more by couples with some of the demographic characteristics, such as youthful marriages, parental divorce, multiple prior cohabitations, and poverty. Thus, cultural and demographic factors related to divorce “push” people into divorce via their own interpersonal mechanisms (*Ambert 2009*) pp. 16-17.

### **2.3. THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN**

#### **Children’s adjustment following divorce**

For children, the process of experiencing their parents’ separation, of learning to alternate between households, and of potentially moving schools or neighborhoods can be very challenging (Ruschena, Prior, Sanson & Smart, 2005). Contact with the non-residential parent may be sporadic and may diminish over time. Given the stressors and difficulties related to the divorce transition, a large body of research has examined the relationship between divorce and



child adjustment, largely in studies comparing child adjustment – expressed as the presence of behavioral, social and emotional problems – in divorced versus intact families. The two major predictors of children’s adjustment consistently identified in the literature are the exposure to interparental conflict and the quality of the parent-child relationship. Thus it is not separation or divorce per se that is problematic, but ongoing exposure to conflict and a difficult parent-child relationship, that impacts negatively on child wellbeing.

### **Normative outcome of resiliency, but not invulnerability**

Although there is little doubt that divorce brings a number of important stressors for children, the research indicates that the majority of children from divorced families are emotionally well-adjusted (Amato, 1994; 2001; Hetherington, 1999; Leon, 2003). Several quantitative literature reviews (e.g., Emery, 1988) and a meta-analysis of the literature (Amato & Keith, 1991) have found that overall, the differences in the psychological adjustment of children whose parents have divorced in comparison to those whose parents remain married are statistically significant, but small in magnitude (Emery, 1994).

Thus, although divorce is associated with an increased risk for a number of adjustment, achievement and relationship difficulties, resilience is the normative outcome for children, and most children who experience parental divorce adjust well and do not exhibit severe or enduring behaviour problems (Amato, 2001). Resilience refers to the capacity to endure stressors and difficulties without developing clinically significant adjustment problems (Thompson & Amato, 1999). However, although children of divorced parents may be characterized as resilient, they do experience significant psychological distress and pain following separation and report a number of fears and wishes, including fears of abandonment, wishes for reconciliation, grief at separation

from, or the loss of contact with a family member, and worries about the increased stresses in a single parent family (Emery, 1994).

The normal outcome of resiliency for children from divorced families is not equivalent to being invulnerable to the impact of divorce; indeed children of divorce have been found to experience substantial distress (Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000), although as a group they are not psychologically disturbed. Nonetheless, children and adolescents of divorce report that the divorce, and the following years, is a significantly painful period of their lives (Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000).

### **Psychological and social impact of divorce**

Of all child emotional and behavioral difficulties associated with various stressors, divorce is most strongly and consistently related to a greater risk of externalizing problems (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991a). Compared with matched samples of children from non-divorced families, children of divorced parents have been found to be more disobedient, aggressive, non-compliant and lacking in self-regulation (Wadsworth et al, 1985). This increased risk of externalizing problems for children of divorce has also been found on indices of school misconduct, such as classroom misbehavior and suspension from school. The research strongly suggests, however, that family processes, such as inadequate parenting and inter-parental conflict, not family structure alone, account for many of the externalizing problems found among children (Emery, 1999).

Children of divorce have also been found to have problems in social and close relationships, such as those with their mothers and fathers, authority figures, siblings and peers (Amato & Keith,

1991b; Hetherington, 1997). They have also been found to be two to three times more likely to associate with antisocial peers (Amato & Keith, 1991a). Children of divorce have also been found to commence sexual activity earlier, have twice the probability of child bearing in adolescence, and have more pregnancies outside marriage than children of non-divorced parents (McLanahan, 1999; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Children of divorced parents have a greater risk of substance use than children of non-divorced parents. According to research findings reasons given for this include reduced parental monitoring, poorer quality parenting, and less effective coping skills (Neher & Short, 1998).

### **Emotional or ‘internalizing’ problems**

Divorce has also been associated with child internalizing problems (Amato & Keith, 1991a). Children and adolescents from divorced and/or high conflict families experience higher levels of depressed mood in comparison with those from non-divorced or low-conflict families (Conger & Chao, 1996; Peterson & Zill, 1986). Similarly, research also indicates a greater incidence of anxiety disorders in children with divorced parents, although differences have typically been modest (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). Children with divorced parents are also two to three times more likely to receive psychological treatment, have more illnesses and medical problems and visits to the doctor, than children with non divorced parents (Howard et al, 1996; Zill et al, 1993).

### **Effect on educational outcomes**

Parental divorce in Australia has been found to reduce children’s educational attainment, particularly the chance of completing secondary school (Evans, Kelley & Wanner, 2001). Compared to children from non-divorced families, children of divorce are more than twice as likely to drop out of school, even when socio-economic factors are taken into account (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Factors accounting for the reduction in school completion and educational attainment include disruption to family functioning, increased changes of residence,

and a reduction in parental involvement, monitoring and supervision of homework (McLanahan, 1999). Observing overt conflict between parents is a direct stressor for children, and children experiencing this have been found to be at increased risk of antisocial behavior, anxiety, depression and difficulty in concentrating – factors known to influence school performance (Davies & Cummings, 1994).

### **Gender differences in adjustment to divorce**

Recent studies have found that gender differences in response to divorce are not pronounced (Amato & Keith, 1991a). Female adolescents from divorced and remarried families are more likely than their male counterparts to drop out of high school, and both male and female adolescents are equally likely to become teenage parents (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Some girls in divorced, mother-headed families emerge as exceptionally resilient individuals following divorce, but this does not typically occur for boys following marital transitions, or for girls in stepfamilies (Hetherington, 1989). For some girls in divorced families who have been overburdened with responsibilities or emotional support of a parent, there is an increased risk of depressive symptoms, low self-worth, and a sense of inadequacy and failure, despite their achievements (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999).

Boys are more likely than girls to benefit from being in step-father families (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Hetherington, 1993). Close relationships with supportive step-fathers are more likely to reduce antisocial behaviour and to enhance the achievement of step-sons than of step-daughters (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Hetherington, 1993; Zimiles & Lee, 1991).

### **Effects on the Family**

Divorce damages society. It consumes social and human capital. It substantially increases cost to the taxpayer, while diminishing the taxpaying portion of society. It diminishes children's future competence in all five of society's major tasks or institutions: family, school, religion,

marketplace and government. The reversal of the cultural and social status of divorce would be nothing less than a cultural revolution (Amato, 2000).

Divorce also permanently weakens the family and the relationship between children and parents.( Amato and Sobolewski, 2001) It frequently leads to destructive conflict management methods, diminished social competence and for children, the early loss of virginity, as well as diminished sense of masculinity or femininity for young adults. It also results in more trouble with dating, more cohabitation, and greater likelihood of divorce, higher expectations of divorce later in life, and a decreased desire to have children. Paul Amato, professor of sociology at Pennsylvania State University summed it up: divorce leads to “disruptions in the parent-child relationship, continuing discord between former spouses, loss of emotional support, economic hardship, and an increase in the number of other negative life events.” (Amato, 2000).

## **2.4. INTERVENTIONS IN DIVORCES**

### **PARENTING PLANS FOR HIGH-CONFLICT DIVORCE SITUATIONS**

Many jurisdictions have created statutory procedures in their equivalents to our Divorce Act, whereby the parents of children in a divorce action agree to a parenting plan in which the duties and obligations of parents for taking care of the children of the relationship are set out and must be followed by the parties. However, it is important for our purposes to note that experts in high-conflict divorce see a need for greatly detailed, highly structured parenting plans that minimize the possibility of conflict between the parents.

(Garrity and Baris, 1994) pp.101-120, argued that high-conflict divorces necessarily have complex dynamics. Therefore, issues in high-conflict divorces cannot be resolved through mediation. An arbitrator in some joint-custody situations or a guardian *ad litem* in other situations may help resolve specific issues. However, in many high-conflict situations, no professional is appointed.

Therefore, a parenting coordinator is needed in high-conflict situations, one who is experienced in problem resolution, mediation techniques, communication, the legal aspects of divorce, adult psychology, developmental psychology, and children's adjustment issues that are specific to divorce. The parenting coordinator would have the following responsibilities:

- Creating a parenting plan to contain or reduce inter parental conflict.
- Ensuring execution of the residence and visitation arrangements specified in the divorce decree or in temporary orders.
- Monitoring visitation and mediating disputes between parents.
- Teaching parents communication skills, principles of child development, and children's issues in divorce.
- Exercising the power to modify visitation as a means of reducing conflict.
- Ensuring that both parents maintain ongoing relationships with the children.
- Acting as arbitrator (that is, final decision-maker) on any issue over which the parents reach an impasse (Garrity and Baris, 1994) pp.120-121. Stewart (2001: 45) suggested that for high-conflict families, the key elements of a parenting plan should be:

- Minimal or no contact between parents;

- A great amount of detail with little flexibility left to parents;
- Regular routines for children;
- A primary parent for decision making;
- Access may be limited or supervised;
- Any communication between parents is through use of a “communication book”; and
- Use of neutral places for exchange of children.

This contrasts with the key elements of a parenting plan designed for low conflict families, which would have the possibility of joint and shared decision-making; the possibility of equal time with both parents based on the child’s needs; parenting plans that provide guidelines but allow for flexibility for the parents; and a focus on contentious issues, leaving most items for parents to negotiate (Stewart, 2001).

## **COUNSELLING AND THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS FOR HIGH-CONFLICT FAMILIES**

As Stewart (2001) pointed out, these are clinical initiatives developed from the experience of therapists and counselors working with divorced and separated families. But the majority of therapeutic interventions reported in the literature are based on small, relatively untested programs.

## **DIVORCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Stewart (2001) pointed out that many education programs offer information only about the divorce process, options such as litigation and mediation and perhaps about some of the associated emotional hazards for children. It is argued that the programs are not truly educational because they do not help divorcing parents learn new skills to deal effectively with their children in their new life situation. Critics of divorce education programs caution against expecting too much in the way of either prevention or solution to divorce hostilities.

## **MEDIATION**

In the early 1980s, divorce mediation was introduced as a popular alternative to the more traditional method of resolving issues of custody, access and support, which usually involved the courts. This was seen as a less expensive, less adversarial and more effective method of helping parents resolve their issues (Stewart, 2001).

Stewart (2001) argued that these and other studies indicate a need for the pre-selection of mediating families. As with counselling and therapeutic programs, further study is needed to investigate how effective mediation works with families struggling with different levels of conflict. Other emotional and structural factors also need to be identified and considered to get an accurate picture of mediation's potential. Finally, long-term follow-up of these families is necessary. Because of the failure to follow up the studies, it is simply not known how many families who use mediation later return or give up and choose to litigate.



Glenn A. Gilmour (2004) point out A Spectrum of Alternative Dispute Resolution Services for Divorcing Families and Proposed Criteria for When to Use Each Type

### **First Level**

**Parenting education after separation and divorce:** Workshops, videos, literature, divorce adjustment groups for all parents and children with attention to special needs of never-married parents, ethnic minorities, and parents with infants and young children.

### **Second Level**

**Mediation and consultation:** For parents in custody and access disputes, including brief issue-focused mediation and consultation and counseling with collaborative attorneys and therapists. Children not usually included and Content and process confidential from court.

*Success* is likely for parents who, with a mediator's help:

- have the capacity to contain emotional distress and focus on children's needs;
- Despite anger, can distinguish children's needs apart from their own;
- have some history of parental cooperation;
- can acknowledge the value of the other parent to the child;
- obtain early intervention (in which cases it is likely to be especially effective); and
- are able to design access schedules and custody arrangements according to their individual needs.

Mediation and consultation are inappropriate for cases involving serious allegations of abuse, molesting, domestic violence, severe mental illness, substance abuse, etc.

### **Third Level**

**Specialized education, psychological interventions and assessments:** For parents unable to mediate stable settlements.

**Education and skill-building:** Classes to explain laws about custody, domestic violence, contempt, psychological effects on children of conflict and violence, parallel and cooperative parenting; exercises to teach effective communication and problem solving. Does not deal with specific child or family situations, hence confidentiality is irrelevant to court.

Appropriate for families who:

- lack knowledge about laws and procedures of family court;
- are overly dependent on litigation to make parenting decisions; and
- are deficient in communication and problem-solving skills.

Inappropriate when there are:

- Serious allegations of child neglect and abuse, domestic violence, substance abuse or mental illness; or
- Character disordered parents who tend to use educational information to further strategic advantage in litigation.

**Therapeutic or impasse-directed mediation:** Counseling about psychological factors that lock parental disputes and about the child's needs prior to mediating issues. Children included. Content confidential; only status report on progress goes to court.

Appropriate for families when:

- Emotional issues keep intruding and disrupting mediation/negotiation;
- Children show symptoms of distress and parents are unresponsive and preoccupied with their own pain or with the fight;
- Parents are experiencing acute reactions to humiliation and loss inherent in divorce;
- There are traumatic separations; or
- There is “tribal warfare” (new partners, extended kin, and professionals involved in dispute).

Inappropriate or insufficient for:

- Serious allegations and substantiated abuse and violence; or
- Serious parental character pathology, substance abuse and mental illness.

**Custody evaluation:** Court appoints or parties stipulate child-focused evaluation, home-school study to investigate allegations, Children and collaterals included, Written report and recommendations to court.

Appropriate for families when there are:

- Serious allegations of abuse, molesting, domestic violence, severe mental illness, substance abuse; and
- If allegations are substantiated, in which case the court must impose and monitor a protective custody and access plan.

Inappropriate:

- As a routine response to failed mediation and negotiation (consider a confidential child-focused assessment instead); and
- When the facts are not in dispute (consider ongoing parenting and co-parenting help instead).

#### **Fourth Level**

**Co-parenting counseling and arbitration:** For parents who continue in high conflict despite mediated or court-ordered settlement. Various called special master, wise person, custody commissioner, med-arb, this professional is appointed by stipulation of the parties or an order of the court to manage ongoing conflict, help co-ordinate parenting, make timely and flexible decisions, and case manage with other professionals involved.

Includes access to children or their therapists, Scope of arbitration authority is defined by stipulation or court order, usually not confidential from court.

Appropriate:

- When entrenched custody conflicts and chronic litigation emanate from serious psychopathology, personality disorders and parenting deficits;
- To monitor potentially abusive situations;
- To support a parent who has an intermittent mental illness;
- To make timely decisions for infants and very young children; and
- To coordinate the care of a child with special needs.

Inappropriate for:

- A family crisis when problems are acute and temporary;
- When custody and access arrangements have never been established in the first place; and

- When there is “tribal warfare”, especially when professionals are disputing about the family.

**Supervised visitation and monitored exchange:** To provide protected parent child contact and safe transfer of child by order of the court or stipulation of parties.

Appropriate when there is a high risk to the child or victim parent because of:

- Ongoing high conflict and domestic violence;
- Parental substance abuse;
- Concerns about physical abuse, neglect or molesting of the child;
- A threat of or actual child abduction;
- Serious mental illness of a parent; and
- As a temporary measure while investigation is proceeding.

Inappropriate:

- As a substitute for child assessment/custody evaluation by a mental health professional;
- As a substitute for therapy for the child or parent-child relationship;
- To quiet the fears of an accusing parent when allegations are unfounded; and
- When the child is chronically distressed and refuses parental contact.

**Other specialized services needed to help foster parent-child relationships:**

- Reconnection/reunification supervision for non-custodial parents who have long been absent or never been involved with their children;
- Parenting and co-parenting assistance in domestic violence families;

- Therapeutic supervision when there has been a major violation of the child's trust in the non-custodial parent; and
- Protocols between court and professionals for the management of parent alienation cases.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The assessment of divorce and its impact on children needs effective research methods for studying and addressing it. To make things moved on, the researcher had applied multiple source of evidence approach which seemed to be relevant with regard to the Nature and Scope of the study. To this end, the research design employed was descriptive survey, which is a systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purpose of constructive quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members (Groves et.al, 2004) In addition its objectives according to William Emory (1980) is to learn who, what, when, where and how of a topic.

#### **3.1. DATA SOURCE**

The study was used both primary and secondary source of data and information. The primary data relied mainly on three groups of respondents: children, parents and officials from Lideta first instant court social science department and youth, women and children's affairs office. Secondary sources also intensively used which includes: proclamation, annual report, and manual.

#### **3.2. SAMPLING PROCEDURE AND SAMPLE SIZE**

The researcher used both probability and non probability sampling technique (method) to select her samples for the research. First, the total population of the children whose parents were either separated or divorced as per the source in *Lideta* Sub City Women, Children and Youth Affairs office are about 200. Therefore In order to achieve the objective of the study fifty six



respondents were selected by random sampling. Second, Two respondent from *Lideta* Sub City Women, Children and Youth Affairs office, Two from lideta first instant court social science department were selected purposely. To this end, a sample size of the study is (n = 60)

### **3.3. DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENT**

The primary data of research relied on three instruments. First, Questionnaire was the main data gathering tool that was widely used so as to obtain adequate information. It was designed in a closed format. The language construction of the questionnaire was in Amharic with the belief that it would provide maximum opportunity to accurate communication of ideas between the researcher and the respondents. To this end, Amharic versions of questionnaires were used for the actual data collection. (See Appendix I)

The second data gathering instrument was interview. This is employed to collect data from the officials in Lideta Sub City Women, Children and Youth Affairs office and lideta first instant court social science department. The researcher used semi-structured interview so as to make conducive atmosphere for the respondents to express themselves freely and undoubtedly. It also provides qualitative depth by allowing officers, experts and to talk about their experiences, difficulties they experienced and for the same time enabled the researcher to ask follow up questions that target to obtain certain important information which are important to the study. (See Appendix II)

Before conducting interviews the researcher contacted and asked permission of respondents in person to voluntarily participate in the study or decline not to participate. As the permission was granted the researcher gave description of the research to each of them.

### **3.4. DATA ORGANIZATION AND ANALYSIS**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to organize and analyze the data. The quantitative method involves a serious of tabulation.

The researcher started with, tallying the data collected through questionnaire and transcribing interviews into organized data. Transcribing went together with interpretations of statements made by interviewees to bring real meaning that they were intended to give to the researcher. The researcher continued to sort out core categories then formed themes that are related to ascertained research questions. Consequently, themes were analyzed in detail in the analysis section to bring meaningful study results.

### **3.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Ethical choices are also present when study people comes from broken families .it is believed that when Researchers deal with such categories of people need to be value neutral. Equally, in this study, however, the researcher had maintained ethical issues throughout the process. Hence respondents need kind of assurance as well as protection. Therefore, the following ethical elements were vividly adhered to:

#### **(A) INFORMED CONSENT**

The researcher before conducting and distributing questionnaires, and conducting interviews had informed respondents about the objectives of the study and that participation was voluntary. Furthermore, respondents were informed to decline participation or not to answer questions if

they like to do so. In addition, letters of informed consent were circulated to all participants prior to filling the questionnaire.

#### (b) CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Privacy means having control over the extent, timing, and circumstances of sharing oneself (physically, behaviorally, or intellectually) with others. confidentiality — treatment of information that an individual has disclosed in a relationship of trust with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure without permission. ([http://www.humanresearch.msu.edu/hrp\\_manual](http://www.humanresearch.msu.edu/hrp_manual)).

The researcher had maintained confidentiality to information that is produced by respondents, including storage of information which used in interviewing respondents and they were labeled respondent 1, 2, 3..... It was important to do so because exposure of respondent's' information might breach a good image which they are trying to build in the society.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

This section is marked out to analyze different data in order to find answer for the basic questions of the study. Basically, this part comprises of three subsections. The first section devoted to analyzing data gathered through interview from Youth, Children and Women's Affairs Bureau and the Social Science Department in the First Instance Court. The second section presents mainly data gathered through questionnaire from children. A total of 62 participants were involved in the study. The third section presents the case study analysis.

#### **SECTION I**

##### **4.1. DIVORCE RELATED SERVICE IN LIDETA SUB-CITY**

The Youth, Children and Women's Affairs Bureau provides services to settle divorce and related issues. The services are divided into two: first, Psychological counseling mediation and reconciliation for couples who failed to resolve their dispute through discussion and Referring the cases of those who shunned the mediation option to courts to be resolved through the judicial process by assigning lawyers to women and children who can't afford to hire a lawyer, etc.

On the other hand, the duty of the Social Science Department in the First Instance Court begins by providing expert advice to the court after couples divorced through the judicial process. The department advises the court on which parent should retain the right to raise the children, and, how often and when the other parent will visit them.

## **4.2. NUMBER OF CASES**

Responding to the question of how many people come to their office to settle divorce and related cases, Respondent 1 from Women and Children Affairs Bureau of Lideta sub city said that when couples come to us after a quarrel, we do our best to reconcile them. In this regard, This year alone (in 2007 EC), we have averted the potential divorce of 418 couples with psychological counseling, mediation and reconciliation. In addition, legal consultancy to 864 people, psychological consultancy to 122, drafted legal charges for 124 people, handled 23 cases of rights violation, and assigned lawyers to 81 people. Totally, we provided services for 4291 women and children.

Respondent 2 from the social science department of first instant court of Lideta Sub city, on his part said on average, 5-7 divorce related cases are filed every week. That number decreases from July to August when the court is in recess. This year (2007 EC), 2157 cases have been filed of which 604 have been settled and the children involved have been taken by the parents who won the cases.

## **4.3. CAUSE OF DIVORCE**

Asked to mention the causes of divorce the office identified in divorce-related cases it handled, Respondent 2 replied that ..... Although the causes of divorce are different, the major ones identified by our department are cheating, economy, age of marriage (early marriage), family interference as well as lack of transparency and communication.

## **4.4. RECORDING DIVORCE-RELATED CASES**

Answering the question of what kind of information they gather regarding divorce-related cases, both Respondents explained that ... We gather the following information when divorce related

charges are filed at the court: marital year, divorce date, number of children, reason for divorce, family situation (members of the family), the roles of the father and the mother in the family, source of income, opportunities and threats anticipated if the child lives with either parent, etc.

#### **4.5. WHICH PARENT SHOULD RAISE THE CHILDREN AFTER THE DIVORCE?**

Answering the question to elaborate the process to determine which parent should raise the children after the divorce, Respondent 2 said.... Couples who no longer want to live together come to the court seeking legal divorce. The court approves their request following the legal procedure. But the process doesn't end there. The court seeks expert consultancy to decide on the fate of under-18 children of the divorcees and which parent the children should live with. So it is the responsibility of the Social Science Department to provide expert advice to the court. We gather the following information when divorce related charges are filed at the court: marital year, divorce date, number of children, reason for divorce, family situation (members of the family), the roles of the father and the mother in the family, source of income, opportunities and threats anticipated if the child lives with either parent, etc.

The department carries out its duties bearing in mind that children are among the most vulnerable parts of the society who need special care. The department also take into consideration the level of the children`s physical and mental growth, their rights enshrined in the country`s law and international conventions including unbiased treatment, primacy of their welfare, the right to life, growth as well as participation.

The process has five major parts: entrance conference, data collection, fact finding, exit conference and report preparation.

#### **4.5.1. Entrance conference**

As soon as the expert receives court order, he notifies the litigants about the arranged time to meet in his office.

1. After the two sides meet in his office, the expert introduces himself and gives explanation about his work, the process it takes as well as the rights and obligations of the litigants. He also explains to them that:
2. His duty is to gather information and provide expert advice to get a verdict that serves the children`s interests best.
3. The litigants must prove the authenticity of the information they provide through questionnaires and interviews, and that they could be held accountable for any deceit as the information will be sent to the court.
4. The information they provide will not be kept secret as it will be used as evidence in the court.
5. The expert also informs the litigants about the time the legal procedure could take, their obligations and other useful information.

#### **4.5.2. Data collection and theme verification techniques**

The expert can use different techniques to gather data for his study. The following techniques can be used depending on the nature of each study.

- Interviews
- Observations

- Home visit
- Information from any potential institutional sources including courts, schools, hospitals and police stations.
- The expert may also gather information from his discussions with other family members

### **Written and verbal interviews**

Questionnaires are filled in by the people involved in the legal case. The expert may fill in the questionnaires on behalf of parents (caretakers) and others who could not fill in the questionnaires by themselves because of illiteracy, disability or other problems. Alternatively, he can direct them to places where they can get support to fill in the questionnaires. The expert must make sure that the people who filled in the questionnaires put their signatures at the bottom of the papers. He also gives the children involved all the questions prepared for them. He encourages that the children themselves write the answers in the questionnaires if they are able to do so. But if they cannot do that due to young age or their level of education, then the expert will write the answers they tell him.

The questions designed to elicit information from the children should be prepared taking their age into consideration. The children`s age is an important factor to measure the questions prepared for them.



### **4.5.3. Fact finding**

The pursuit of truth is the responsibility of courts. The major duty of the experts in the Social Science Department is to support the court to achieve its goal in such a way that prioritizes children`s interests. The expert can use the following fact finding techniques together or separately.

#### **Expert observation**

This is an understanding the expert gains during discussions with the people involved in the study. This technique helps the expert to understand the level of intimacy that exists between the children and their parents (caretakers).

#### **Visit to the home of the children**

A visit to the place the parents/caretakers have prepared for the children helps the expert to gather additional information and get a sense of the living conditions of the children. This is true because the environment in which children live contributes to their physical and psychological growth. Such visits are also important to follow up the behavior of the children and the parents (caretakers) in addition to ensuring that the place is suitable for the children to live in.

#### **Information obtained from schools, hospitals, police stations and the like**

It helps the expert to understand the children`s behavior and the nature of the contacts parents/caretakers have with schools. Similarly, data which is sourced from hospitals will help the expert to confirm health related issues contained in the study. If children had previous contacts with police stations in one way or another, those stations could serve as additional sources of information which will broaden the expert`s understanding of the situation.

### **Discussions with family members (such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc)**

Family members who play significant roles in the lives of the children can be included in the study depending on their importance. This will increase the expert's understanding of the children's future upbringing and related issues. The expert may hold such discussions in his office or during home visits.

### **Things to take into account when drafting recommendations**

The expert should keep in mind the following points as he prepares recommendations

#### **Healthy Attachment**

Studying the nature of the relationship between parents/caretakers and children is the major duty of the expert. The expert includes information in the study that shows which parent has better intimacy with the children and how healthy the relationship is. Although the parent/caretaker who took care of the child during his/her early age is likely to have closer ties with the child, this should not be taken as a precondition. Rather, it is the responsibility of the expert to take into consideration the potential of the parents/caretakers to create healthy relationship with the children.

#### **Parenting style**

This part of the study focuses on the styles parents use in bringing up their children. Approaches used to enable children to become fruitful citizens will be explored by the expert. The expert can gain better insight into the styles of parenting by holding discussions with the parents/caretakers and the children together.

## **Values**

As parents are the primary role models of the children, the things they care about in life and their values will have an impact in shaping the character and worldview of the children. The expert looks into whether the parents/caretakers lack such values and what effect that will have on the children. The expert carries out his study carefully without letting his bias interfere in his work.

## **Availability**

The expert investigates whether the parents/caretakers spend time with the children when the kids seek their company such as when they go to and come from school, when they are at home as well as in times of sickness. This part of the study also focuses on identifying the parent/caretaker who supports the children with their studies.

## **Attitude towards education**

The expert also looks into the attitude of the parents/caretakers towards fulfilling the academic needs of the children and the efforts they make to achieve that. He may gain an insight into that by investigating the parental follow-up of the children's level of participation in school.

## **Recognizing and accepting the role of the other parent in the life of the child**

In his study, the expert finds out whether one of the parents/caretakers wants the other parent/caretaker to continue his/her relationship with the children. He indicates that the absence of such a relationship sours the ties between the other parent/caretaker and the children and leads the kids to harbor resentment.

### **Level of compliance**

During the study, the expert takes into account the level of cooperation of the parent/caretaker with the other side. Although it might be difficult for the two sides to leave their personal issues aside and work together, this should not affect the lives of the children.

### **Fulfilling the basic needs of the children**

The expert looks into the financial capacity and spending pattern of the parents/caretakers to fulfill the basic needs of the children such as food, clothing and shelter.

### **Physical and psychological wellbeing**

The expert also carefully investigates whether the parents/caretakers have physical or psychological problems. He assesses whether those problems have negative impacts on the relationship between the parents/caretakers and the children.

The expert carries out his study taking the following factors as indicators: the existence or absence of psychological problems in the parents/caretakers, whether they suffer from some form of addiction, their tendency to abuse the children physically or psychologically, etc.

### **Involving the children in conflicts**

Some parents use children as a means of attacking the other parent of the children. The expert finds out whether a parent uses the children to spy on the other parent as this behavior could affect the children's character. This can be known based on the extent of the children's understanding of the disagreement that exists between the parents.

### **Other members of the family**

The intimate relationship between family members in our society has a huge significance in helping children enjoy healthy growth in all aspects in addition to the love and care they get from their parents/caretakers. In light of this, the expert recognizes that the children will benefit better if they live in a place close to where other members of the family live. This doesn't mean that the parent which has more family members will be the first priority. However, the expert will take into account other related factors such as the economic and academic situation of the family members and the level of intimacy among them.

### **Wishes of the children**

Though the wishes of the children is valued based on their age and level of maturity, it is also understood that it can be a source of wrong information. Therefore, the expert examines the soundness of the children's preference considering their age and level of maturity.

### **Children with special needs**

During the study, the expert can identify parents/caretakers who try to evade the responsibility of the raising children with special needs (such as those with different mental disorders and disabilities). When he confirms that such a situation exists, keeping other factors as they are, he gives priority to the parent/caretaker who is genuinely interested in raising the children.

### **Presumptions to consider regarding children`s best interests**

It is presumed that shared parenting is in the best interests of the children. Children will likely benefit better from shared parenting as it will sustain the love and care they used to get from both parents before the divorce.

**The expert notes that the parent who is taking care of the child better is the** primary choice for taking the responsibility of raising the child. He recognizes that children, especially under-7 ones, will benefit better if they live with the parent who has been taking good care of them (by feeding, dressing and shaping their character properly as well as following up their education and helping them to relax). This presumption could also be true for children of older age. However, it can be voided with sound evidence, especially concerning children older than 7.

### **Wishes of older children**

It is assumed that children older than 14 will not find it hard to choose the parent who serves their best interests. Therefore, due attention should be given to their wishes. However, this assumption is less significant than others for two reasons. The first is the fact that it is not appropriate to influence the children to involve in the conflict between their parents. The other is because the court has to examine how and where the children`s wishes emanated.

#### **4.5.4. Exit conference**

Before finalizing the report, the expert may summon the litigants and recommend that they resolve the disagreement through negotiation. If the litigants fail to attend the exit conference or if their situation is difficult to resolve through this process, the expert can avoid the exit conference and should send the report to the court on time.

- A. The report must include the following elements: child factors, parental factors, inter-parental factors and situational factors. It is also expected to elaborate major themes, and show the merits and demerits of giving each parent the right to raise the child. Finally, the report must include conclusion and recommendations.
  
- B. The expert's advice should elaborate which parent better deserves the right to raise the children, the right of the other parent to visit the children as well as the time and situation of the visits.

#### **4.5.5. Forwarding the report to the court**

The report should be forwarded to the court before the date of the next hearing of the case. If the expert cannot send the report on time, he must ask for additional time in a written request before the next hearing explaining why he didn't finish the report on time.

#### **4.6. KEEPING DIVORCE-RELATED FILES**

An assessment to see how divorce-related files are handled has shown that the First Instance Court keeps the files relatively well. However, gaps have been observed in the way files are handled in the Youth, Children and Women's Affairs Bureau.

#### **4.7. FOLLOW- UP**

Asked whether there is follow up after divorce, Respondent 2 replied we follow up the cases of reconciled couples. But the cases of those who chose to divorce don't come to the Women and Children Affairs Bureau as they are handled by courts. Respondent 1 on his part replied that lack of facilities, manpower, and budget are factors that hinder the follow-up process.

#### 4.8. LEGAL INSTRUMENTS PROTECTING THE INTEREST OF THE CHILDREN

Asked whether the country`s divorce-related laws protect the interests of the children involved, Respondent 2 replied ... What we have on paper in our country regarding children and their rights is very good. However, lack of facilities, manpower, budget, etc has negative impact on the implementation process. It`s hard to say that our country`s law to handle such cases is satisfactory and we can`t say that the children`s interests are protected. Despite those gaps, our department was established to serve the interests of the children.

## SECTION TWO

#### 4.9. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

**TABLE 1:** Demographic Characteristics of Children`s

No.	Items	F	%	
<b>1</b>	Sex	Male	37	66
		Female	19	34
	<b>TOTAL</b>		56	100
<b>2</b>	Age	Below 10	0	0
		10-18	56	100
		Above 18	0	0
	<b>TOTAL</b>		56	100
<b>3</b>	Level of Education	elementary school	8	14
		High school	13	23
		Preparatory	32	57
		Never been to school	0	0
		Non formal education	0	0
	<b>TOTAL</b>		56	100
<b>4</b>	Religion	Christian	34	61
		Muslim	22	39
	<b>TOTAL</b>		56	100



Table 1 represents classification of children respondents based on sex, age, education and religion. As is presented, 37 of the respondents are males while the remaining 19 are females. The findings on gender differences in children's responses to divorce have been contradictory. Some research points to more adjustment problems for boys in divorcing families than for girls (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Hetherington *et al.*, 1979, 1985; Kaye, 1989; Kurdek, 1987); other research finds more negative effects for girls (Farber *et al.*, 1983; Frost & Pakiz, 1990; Slater, Stewart & Linn, 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975); and some research has found no differences in the effects of divorce on boys and girls (Kinard & Reinherz, 1984; Mechanic & Hansell, 1989; Rosen, 1979; Zill *et al.*, 1993).

All 56 respondents are between the age of 10 and 18. Studies found out that children at every age are affected by divorce, but in differing ways. for example, Krantz (1988) suggests that early separations may be associated with deficits in social and emotional functioning, but not in intellectual functioning. From an examination of numerous studies, Demo and Acock (1988) argue that young children encounter problems with personal adjustment and peer relations, while adolescents encounter problems with sexual relations and antisocial behavior.

Regarding the education level of the respondents, 32 of them are in preparatory classes, 13 in high school and 8 in elementary school. Concerning religion, 34 of the respondents are Christians while the remaining 22 are Muslims.

## 5.0. INFORMATION ABOUT BROKEN FAMILIES BEFORE AND AFTER SEPARATION

Table 2: Children’s Response about Their Family

No.	Items	F	%
<b>1</b>	When did your parents got married or united irregularly?		
	5 years ago	0	0
	10 years ago	0	0
	15 years ago	56	100
	<b>TOTAL</b>	100	100
<b>2</b>	For how long did your parents stay together?		
	Less than a year	0	0
	2-5 years	0	0
	6-9 years	<b>23</b>	<b>41</b>
	<b>Above 10 years</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>59</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>3</b>	Do you have siblings?		
	Yes	<b>16</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>No</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>71</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>5</b>	Were you aware of the process of your parents’ divorce (separation)?		
	Yes	21	38
	No	35	62
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows children’s response about their family after separation. All 56 respondents (100%) confirmed that their parents married legally or otherwise before 15 years. Asked about how long their parents lived together, 33 of the respondents said for more than 10 years while 23 replied for 6 to 9 years. Responding to the question ‘Do you have siblings?’ 40 of them confirmed that they have no siblings while the remaining 16 said ‘yes’. As far as awareness of their parents’ divorce (separation) is concerned, 35 replied “No” while the rest 21 replied “Yes”.

Some researches indicated that, While sibling support has been identified as an important buffer against the stresses of divorce (Neugebauer, 1989), other research findings offer qualified support for this observation. Kelly and Wallerstein (1977), for example, found that interactions between siblings had the potential for becoming negative, serving to increase a child’s feelings of alienation, injustice and anger. On the other hand, sole children who faced marital disruption were found to be exhibit higher levels of stress and alienation.

Table 3: Children’s Response about their Life after Separation

No.	Items	F	%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		
<b>1</b>	With whom are you currently living?		
	With Father or father side	6	10
	With Mother or mother side	41	73
	Other	9	16
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>2</b>	Was your decision incorporated into the current arrangement?		
	Yes	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	No	<b>56</b>	<b>56</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>3</b>	Do your parents use you as go between your parents?		
	Yes	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	No	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4</b>	Do you know the international and national instruments to protect the rights of the child?		
	Yes	0	0
	No	56	100
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in table 3, 41 of the respondents said they are living with their mothers or mother's side while 6 of them replied that they are living with their father or father's side. 9 respondents said they are living with neither of their parents nor their sides but with people who have no blood ties with them or in state-run orphanages. Asked if they had a part in choosing their current living conditions, all 56 respondents replied 'No'. Similarly, all 56 respondents replied 'No' to the question "Do your parents use you as go-between for themselves?" Finally all respondents confirmed that they have no knowledge of international and national instruments to protect the right of the child.

(Wallerstein, 1985) point out that Children like their parents, often suffer the stress associated with lengthy battles over financial and custodial issues. But, often the custody arrangements granted are what is best or more suitable for the parents, and do not take into account children's wishes or needs (Wallerstein, 1985b).

## 5.1. PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF DIVORCE

TABLE 4: Children's Response about Psychological Impacts of Divorce

No.	Items	F	%
1	Are you happy about the current arrangement?		
	Yes	0	0
	No	56	100
	Other	0	0
	TOTAL	56	100
2	The time and amount of Attention given to a you by custodial parents		
	Increased	3	5
	Decreased	46	82
	Remain unchanged	7	13
	TOTAL	56	100

3	What type of playing do you prefer?		
	Cooperative	16	29
	Parallel	26	46
	Solitary	14	25
	TOTAL	56	100
4	Is your academic performance after the divorce or separation of your parents?		
	Increase	9	16
	Decrease	36	64
	Remain unchanged	11	19
	TOTAL	56	100
5	Are you assigned the role of parental child?		
	Yes	39	70
	No	17	30
	TOTAL	56	100
6	Are you actively engaged in extracurricular activities?		
	Yes	19	34
	No	37	66
	TOTAL	56	100

Table 4 shows the psychological impact of divorce on children. All 56 (100%) respondents replied that they are not happy with their current living conditions. With regards to the time and amount of attention given to them by their custodial parents, 46 of the respondents replied that it has decreased, 3 said it has increased while the remaining 7 said they saw no change. Asked about the type of game they prefer, 26 of the children replied that they choose parallel, 16 said they prefer cooperative while the rest 14 confirmed that they like solitary type of games. Concerning academic performance after the divorce of their parents, 36 of the children replied that it has declined while 9 said it has increased. The remaining 11 respondents said their academic performance remained unchanged after the divorce. Responding to the question "Are you assigned the role of parental child?", 39 replied `Yes` while the rest 17 replied `No`. As far as engagement in extracurricular activities is concerned, 44 of them replied that it No, 12 while the remaining 12 respondents replied Yes.

From interview it is also understood that the impact of divorce on children is huge and multifaceted. Psychologically, the children experience stress, sense of separation, displacement and loss of the father`s or the mother`s care. Children could also be subjected to things they are not supposed to hear and resentful treatment between the parents. This leads the children to harbor grudge in their hearts which in turn will have negative impact on their late personality.

(Jeynes, 2005) evidenced that decreased parental involvement in children`s academic life is the main factor behind decline in school results. In most cases, marital dissolution leaves the discussion of school topics, monitoring study at home and reviewing school tasks under the responsibility of the parent who has been granted custody. In addition, (Alice and Peter, 1997) point out that, Children`s relationships with their parents worsen after a divorce. Marital disruption creates distance between parents and children.

This implies, Divorce permanently weakens the family and the relationship between children and parents. Families receive less emotional support, financial assistance; Children have lower educational aspirations and test scores during the process of their parents` marital disruption. As a result, Children`s experience greater unhappiness hardship in their life after separation.

## 5.2. ECONOMIC IMPACT AFTER SEPARATION

**TABLE 5:** Children`s Response about Economic Impact after Separation

No.	Items	F	%
1	Did your parents own their private house?		
	Yes	13	23
	No	43	77
	TOTAL	56	100
2	If your answer to the above question is yes,		
	Did they sale it and shared	13	100

	They left it for one spouse	0	0
	They left it for me (us)?	0	0
	Our elder sibling(s) shared their own	0	0
	TOTAL	13	100
3	If your answer is no what kind is it?		
	Government	0	0
	Rental	43	100
	TOTAL		
4	What is the source of your income for your survival after divorce?		
	Mother income or and Child support fee from my dad	41	73
	father income or and Child support fee from my mom	6	10
	Support from government or nongovernmental organization	9	16
	TOTAL	56	100
5	After the divorce or separation of your parents is your income		
	Increasing	0	0
	Decreasing	56	100
	Remaining constant	0	0
	TOTAL	56	56
6	After the divorce or separation your needs like nutrition, health, educational materials and other resources fulfilled sufficiently		
	Yes	10	18
	No	46	82
	TOTAL	56	100

Table 5 shows the economic impact of divorce. Asked if their parents own a house, 43 replied `No` while the remaining 13 said `Yes`. Of those who replied `Yes`, all 13 said that their houses were sold and they shared the money among themselves. On the other hand all those who replied `No` confirmed that they lived in rented houses after the divorce. Answering to the question ``What is the source of income for your survival after separation?``, 41 replied that they live on their mother`s income and/or child support fee from their dad. On the other hand, 6 of them replied that they live on their father`s income and/or child support fee from their mom. The rest

of them replied that they depend on support from donors as their parent`s income decreased after separation. As far as the level of income that their parents earned after the divorce is concerned, 49 of them replied that it decreased, while the remaining 7 respondents said it increased. Finally all 46 respondents confirmed that their needs like nutrition, health, educational materials and other resources not fulfilled sufficiently. While, the rest children`s replied positively.

(Corcoran, 2001 and Paach, 1994) evidenced that Marital dissolution often leads to a decline in financial security. Parents who have maintained custody of their children experience drastic decline in financial resources available to provide for the family`s needs. Indeed, the decline in financial security is one of the main risk factors for a child`s adaptation parental divorce, once a reduction in family income may reflect upon their own real and subjective well-being, due to the reduction of resources available for healthcare, education, after-school activities, access to cultural and entertainment goods, and purchase of everyday products.

This implies Divorce reduces household income and deeply cuts individual earning capacity. Economic hardships could lead children to drop out of school or to move to schools with cheaper fees. They could also be deprived of adequate care, clothing and food.

## **SOCIAL IMPACT OF SEPARATION**

TABLE 6: Children`s Response about Social impact of Separation

No	Item	No	%
1	Do you have successful interaction with your school community?		
	Yes	46	82
	No	10	18



	TOTAL	56	100
2	Do you have successful interaction with your neighborhood?		
	Yes	51	91
	No	5	9
	TOTAL	56	100
3	Do you have intimacy with your peer groups, having fun and meeting friends?		
	Yes	49	87
	No	7	13
	TOTAL	56	100
4	Do you have positive and strong relationship with your non custodial parents?		
	Yes	10	18
	No	46	82
	TOTAL	56	100

Table 6 shows the children`s response about non custodial parents. 46 of the children replied that they have successful interaction with your school community while the remaining 10 confirmed that they do not have. With regards to interaction with neighborhood, 51 children replied `Yes` while the rest 5 replied `No`. Again 49 children replied they have positive intimacy with their peer groups, having fun and meeting friends. While the rest 7 replied “No”. Finally 46 of the children replied that they have loose and weak relationship with their non custodial parents while the rest of them replied `Yes`.

Respondent 2 also explained that the nature of the relationship between the child and the parent who retains the child differs depending on different factors including the cause of the parents` separation. Some parents resolve the situation through negotiation although the majority of divorcees regard their exes as enemies. Therefore, the relationship between the children and the parent who do not raise them is not healthy.

(Amato, 2001, Demo and Acock, 1988) also evidenced that, children's social relations are likely to be damaged in several ways and characterized by more problems relating to peers, fewer childhood friends, and a greater tendency to complain about lack of peer support and compared to children from intact families, children of divorced parents did worse when rated by both parents and teachers on peer relationships, hostility towards adults, anxiety, withdrawal, inattention, and aggression.

## **SECTION THREE**

### **CASE STUDY**

In this part, the impact of divorce on families has been presented from different angles. All names are changed for this study)

#### **THE CASE OF ALMAZ BEKALU (CUSTODIAL MOTHER)**

My name is Almaz Bekalu. I am 49 years old housewife. I was born in Southern nations and nationalities and follower of the Orthodox Christian faith. I and my ex husband got married 20 years ago, and we stayed together for 14 years. It has been 6 years since we divorced. We have a 2 daughter who are living with me.

My ex was the breadwinner of the family. He was the one who covered the house rental, children's school fee, health and clothing expenses, etc. Actually, I also had a job. But because it was hard for me to work while raising children, I had to quit the job and became a housewife. When the divorce came after my resignation, it was like a nightmare for me because I was supposed to cover all those expenses on my own. My ex treated me well when we were together, but after the divorce, he was like a stranger to me. The money I received to raise the children was barely enough to cover the house rental. So I was left with no choice but to move to my family's house to withstand the burden. My family took me in, may God bless them, and we survived those terrible days. So, as far as I understand, my children did not face any economic problem.

As far as the social impact is concerned, I should point out that my family is a big one. The fact that my children joined this big family has impacted their social skills positively. Therefore, they have good relationship with people in the neighborhood and also the school community. The divorce has not affected their social relationship.

Let me explain the psychological impact in two ways. First of all, I can't describe the enormity of the anxiety I suffered when I went to my father after the divorce. I openly succumbed to defeat, loss and shame. Whenever I think of life after divorce, I feel terrible. However, I try my best not to show that suffering to my children. Secondly, the fact that my children separated from their father and became dependent on my family had a serious psychological impact on them. Especially, soon after the divorce, my youngest daughter couldn't sleep at night and had very little appetite because she was very anxious. I was very concerned about her situation. But later on, she got used to her new situation slowly but surely. Raising children after divorce has its own psychological burden. You feel nervous when they play or when they are sick. All in all, it is very difficult. I have no words to describe it.

### **THE CASE OF ANBESSE KEBEDE**

My name is Anbesie Kebede. I am 17 years old and tenth-grader. I was born in an area called Asco, and is a follower of the Orthodox Christian faith.

My parents started living together 18 years back (in 1990 EC) without entering into a legal marriage. I am their only child, and I used to live with both of them in a rented house. But after 12 years, my parents divorced. I was 11 years old at the time and I had no idea why they separated. My father stopped coming to the house. My mom and I kept on living in the house.

Previously, it was my father who covered all our bills including house rental, food expense and school fee. After the divorce, my mother went through a lot of ups and downs to get some source of income. Once she told me that she got a job. She left home in the morning and came back at night. But later she began to go for work after I come back from school, and came back early in the morning. After I lived with her for one year, she took me to the house of one of our relatives,

where I lived for two years. Then she took me to another relative. I have lived there for four years until now. Then my mom got sick and came to us. She suffered for two months and died.

Though my relatives are poor, they have taken me into their home to live with them. My mother used to give them small amount of money from time to time when she came to visit us. After she passed away, I began working as a shoeshine boy. Now I work as a laborer at a store near my neighborhood. I have managed to save some money.

Concerning my education, I am now in grade 10. I do my best not miss classes. But sometimes I miss classes if I have to work. The fact that I am a working student has negative impact on my education. I struggle with some lessons which I can understand easily if I took the time to study. I get low scores due to that. I want to study but there is no suitable environment for me to do that. Because I am a laborer, I get too tired to study at night; so I go to bed.

I am sensitive and feel offended easily when someone reprimands me or treats me unfriendly. Even when people rebuke me because of my own mistake, I feel as if I am targeted because I am an orphan. I feel anxious whenever I think of my life and that of my family. I want to do something, but then I feel a sense of hopelessness and insecurity. All in all, the fact that my parents separated has made me timid and unconfident, and affected my academic performance.

I had a good relation with my mom, but I didn't meet her frequently. I never saw my dad again after they divorced. He didn't even attend her funeral ceremony. I have heard that he remarried and has three children. I don't want to see him again, nor hear anything about him. I feel resentful whenever I think of him because I believe that things would have been better if he helped my mom and discharged his responsibility.

I have a good relationship with my mom's family. I have lived with two of my relatives at different times, and have had good relations with them. On the contrary, I have no information about the relatives on my father's side. No one of them has ever sought to meet me or looked for me. I didn't look for them either, and I don't want them.

I have good ties with the society. For example, I have nice relations with my schoolmates and teachers. My family has never received any complaint regarding some misconduct or problem on my part. Our neighbors too like me as I help them with some errands.

## **THE CASE OF HAGERE TADESSE**

My name is Hagere Tadesse. I am 16 years old and 9<sup>th</sup> grader and follows the Orthodox Christianity faith. I have a brother who is two years younger than me.

My parents separated four years ago after staying together in marriage for 9 years. We used to live in a rented house. I don't know the exact cause of their divorce. But I remember that they usually quarreled. My mom used to rebuke my dad when he got drunk and came home late in the night.

One day my mom told me not to go to school. Then we loaded all the furniture in our house on a truck and moved to her mother's house with my brother and myself. I saw my dad only twice or thrice in a court after we moved out. I don't know what my brother feels about him, but I like our dad. When I was a kid, he used to buy me cake and take me with him to relax. I feel happy when I think of those days. So I'm not happy because of the divorce.

Our father was our breadwinner, and we relied on him. Our mom has told us that he studied abroad and was a clever man. He was the one who covered all our expenses as our mom is a house wife. After the divorce, that responsibility has fallen on my mother's shoulders. Because

we stayed with the family of our mother, our expenses for food and other minor things were covered by my grandmother, uncles and aunts.

However, as the school fee became unaffordable, we shifted from Cathedral school to a public one where we are learning until now. We are still provided with new clothes and shoes from time to time though not as we used to get previously. After a while though, our mom got a job and our income increased.

After the divorce, our living conditions have worsened as we saw changes to the food, clothing and education we were provided with. That has a lot of psychological impact on us. As far as education is concerned, as I am a clever student, I spend much of my time studying. So I stand 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> in class. I never scored less than that. But my brother's academic performance declined, and he usually missed class. His friends are rogue. I always offer him my advice, but he is beyond my control.

The separation of my parents has a lot of impacts on my family. First of all, we have lost contact with our dad. I miss him a lot and whenever I think of him I feel as if I have lost something. My mom and I love each other very much. But I don't meet her as frequently as we used to. We don't find her at home when we come back from school. She comes home at the night. So our emotional attachment became weak. Rather we have closer relation with my grandmother. If there is something I want, I prefer to ask my grandmother to provide it for me. But my brother is very reserved and keeps his feelings to himself. Generally, there are things which are difficult to explain.

I have good relationship with my mother and her family. They don't alienate me. When we first switched to a public school, we struggled to familiarize ourselves with the new environment because it was different from what we are used to.

## **THE CASE OF DAGNACHEW MOLLA (NON CUSTODIAL FATHER)**

My name is Dagnachew Molla and I am 46 years old. My legal marriage with my ex-wife took place 12 years ago, and we stayed together for 8 years. It has been 4 years since we divorced. We have a 4 year daughter who is living with her mother.

When we were together, we lived in a rented house. After we divorced, I continued to live in a rented house while my ex moved to her family`s house with our daughter. My ex retained the right to raise our daughter in line with my consent and the verdict of a court. However, I am not happy. I wish I could keep my daughter with me and take care of her. I visit her every week or in 10 days interval at the latest. When I want to take her to spend time with her, I go to the house of my ex-in-laws and send for her from the outside. My ex and I celebrated the birthday and graduation of our daughter together before and after we divorced.

There is a sense of resentment between my ex and myself after the divorce. But we never showed that in the presence of our daughter. Our daughter knows that we separated, but I don`t think that she knows about the hatred we harbor in our hearts. So I think she has good relationship with both of us.

I think our daughter also has good relationship with my ex-in-laws. Her mother also confirms that. I don`t think that they are too overbearing. Nor do I ask about that fearing that I could make things worse. I don`t push her too much to tell me whether they mistreat her because I couldn`t do anything about it. But from what I observe, I think she has a healthy relationship with them. On the contrary, her contact with my family is very loose. She has no chance of meeting them unless I take her to them. Despite that, she gets along with my family very well when she meets them sometimes.



Nothing has changed regarding our daughter`s relationship with the society. I have no information of any problem in that regard. Had there been any such problem, I would have been informed about it by her mother or teachers. Like any child, she plays with her friends in school. She spends the rest of her time at home. Nothing has changed regarding her education either. She is a clever student.

Regarding my income, I had a good business before the divorce. But after we separated, things got messed up. Currently, I am employed as a driver, and hence my income has fallen. Despite that, I spend much of my salary to cover my daughter`s school fee and other expenses. I do my best to continue providing what she needs just as used to do before the divorce such as covering the expenses for food, cloth, shelter, school, medication, etc. Nothing has changed in that regard.

I can tell for sure that our daughter was happy before the divorce. When I take her to relax and relieve her of any potential stress or depression, I get the impression that our separation has made her feel uncomfortable. By the way I lived with my ex for 3 years even after the divorce for the sake of sparing our daughter from a potential psychological trauma.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn.

There is a two-step divorce related service given by two government entities before and during divorce. The first is psychological counseling; mediation and reconciliation for couples who failed to resolve their dispute on their own. If the couples shun the mediation option, the Social Science Department in the First Instance Court refers their cases to courts to be resolved through the judicial process. In this case, the department assigns lawyers to women and children who can't afford to do so. The second is providing advisory service to the court on which parent should retain the right to raise the children, and how often and when the other parent will visit them.

This advisory service is carried out keeping in mind that children are among the most vulnerable parts of the society who need special care. The department also takes into consideration the level of the children's physical and mental growth, their rights enshrined in the country's laws and international conventions including unbiased treatment, primacy of their welfare, the right to life, growth as well as participation. The process has five major parts: entrance conference, data collection, fact finding, exit conference and report preparation.

The study found out that there is no follow-up by both governmental entities about the broken families. Lack of facilities, manpower, and budget are factors that hinder the follow-up process.

The impact of divorce on children is huge and multifaceted. In addition to being separated from one of the parents, members of the family also face economic and psychological problems.

As far as economic impact is concerned, divorce is usually followed by poverty or a significant reduction in income. Economic hardships could lead children to drop out of school or to move to schools with cheaper fees. They could also be deprived of adequate care, clothing and food.

With regards to the psychological impact of divorce, the children experience stress, sense of separation, displacement and loss of the father's or the mother's care. Besides, the children's custodial parents might not give them adequate attention and spend enough time with them. The children could also be subjected to things they are not supposed to hear as their parents treat each other resentfully. This leads the children to harbor grudge in their hearts. The overall psychological impact of divorce could also manifest itself in the children's decreasing academic performance, which in turn will affect their late personality and life.

Apparently, the parent who is allowed to keep the child will shoulder heavier responsibility. This situation will lead to psychological burden. Divorced fathers, especially non-custodial fathers, do not fare well with their children. Children report more distant relationships with their fathers.

Pertaining to legal instruments, the study found out that Ethiopian has laws which, if properly enforced, will ensure the protection of the interests of children affected by divorce. However, lack of facilities, manpower, budget and other inputs has negative impact on the implementation process and the follow-up. Despite those gaps, the government exerts its best efforts to defend the interests of children.

Finally, the study revealed that divorce-related files are handled relatively well by the First Instance Court. However, gaps have been observed in the way files are handled in the Youth, Children and Women's Affairs Bureau.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings obtained and the conclusions drawn the following suggestions are forwarded

The government, Religious institutions, Media and other concerned organizations have to work hard to create and raise the awareness of the society about the dangers and ill effects of divorce. The efforts to create high level of awareness should focus on informing would-be couples about marriage, the commitments it requires, their shared responsibility in raising the children, and marital conflict resolution. Would-be couples should also be educated on the fact that divorce affects not just the lives of the children and the family, but also the country.

Parents should exert maximum effort to protect the children from the ill effects of divorce as the separation is caused because of their will, not the children's. The parents should also make sure that the kids are not subjected to their wrangling and fight. However, the children need to be informed, by both parents in a collaborative discussion, about an impending divorce. The divorcees should, therefore, clear the following points for their children: both the parents love them; they (the children) are not responsible for their parents' break-up; everyone will work together to make the situation as painless and comfortable as possible; their needs will be taken care of; and their parents will be there to talk and listen to them about concerns and fears.

Those pre-divorce preparations are important in that they help to reduce a child's emotional reaction to the upcoming separation or divorce. An honest explanation at the child's level of understanding can facilitate the healing process. In addition, it is helpful for children not to change schools.

The divorcees should keep positive relationship for the sake of their children and their healthy growth and the custodial parent should maximize access for the other parent to visit the children. They should refrain from using the children as a means to gain advantage over each other, including as spies to sniff out information related to the other parent.

The Youth, Children and Women's Affairs Bureau and Social Science Department in the First Instance should recognize that the service they offer is very important, and should equip themselves with adequate manpower and other inputs to diversify their services and improve their quality.

The two entities should also improve and modernize their file handling system bearing in mind that the data contained in the files could serve as inputs for the formulation of divorce-related directives and policies by the government as well as for researches purposes.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: – Questionnaires

#### Demographic Characteristics of Children's

- |                       |                      |        |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------|----------------------|
| 1. Sex                | Male                 | female |                      |
| 2. Age                | Below 10             | 10-18  | above 18             |
| 3. Level of Education | Elementary school    |        | High school          |
|                       | Preparatory          |        | Never been to school |
|                       | Non formal education |        |                      |
| 4. Religion           | Christian            |        | Muslim               |

#### Children's Response about Their Family

5. When did your parents got married or united irregularly?  
5 years ago      10 years ago      15 years ago
6. For how long did your parents stay together?  
Less than a year      2-5 years      6-9 years      Above 10 years
7. Do you have siblings?  
Yes      No
8. Were you aware of the process of your parents' divorce (separation)?  
Yes      No

#### Life after Separation

9. With whom are you currently living?  
With Father or father side      With Mother or mother side      Other-
10. Was your decision incorporated into the current arrangement?  
Yes      No
11. Do your parents use you as go between your parents?  
Yes      No
12. Do you know the international and national instruments to protect the rights of the child?  
Yes      No



## Psychological Impacts of Divorce

13. Are you happy about the current arrangement?  
Yes                      No
14. The time and amount of Attention given to a you by custodial parents  
Increased              Decreased              Remain unchanged
15. What type of playing do you prefer?  
Cooperative              parallel              solitary
16. Is your academic performance after the divorce or separation of your parents?  
Increased              Decreased              Remain unchanged
17. Are you assigned the role of parental child?  
Yes                      No
18. Are you actively engaged in extracurricular activities?  
Yes                      No

## ECONOMIC IMPACT AFTER SEPARATION

19. Did your parents own their private house?  
Yes                      No
20. If your answer to the above question is yes,  
Did they sale it and shared                      they left it for one spouse  
They left it for me (us)                      our elder sibling(s) shared their own
21. If your answer is no what kind is it?  
Government              Rental
22. What is the source of your income for your survival after divorce?  
Mother income or and Child support fee from my dad  
Father income or and Child support fee from my mom  
Support from government or nongovernmental organization
23. After the divorce or separation of your parents is your income  
Increased              Decreased              Remain unchanged
24. After the divorce or separation your needs like nutrition, health, educational materials and other resources fulfilled sufficiently  
Yes                      No

## **SOCIAL IMPACT OF SEPARATION**

25. Do you have successful interaction with your school community?

Yes

No

26. Do you have successful interaction with your neighborhood?

Yes

No

27. Do you have intimacy with your peer groups, having fun and meeting friends?

Yes

No

28. Do you have positive and strong relationship with your non custodial parents?

Yes

No

## **Annex II Interview Guide Questions to explore the impacts of divorce on the wellbeing of children from parents' perspective**

### **Section 1. Back ground questions**

1. When did you conclude marriage? For how long did you stay in marriage life or irregular union? When did you get divorced or separated?
2. How many child /children do you have? Would you please tell me their age, sex, and level of education of your child /children?
3. Did you have commonly owned house or residence before your divorce? Was it private, rented, (government /private)? What about now? Would you please tell me about your religion or belief?

### **Questions to explore the impacts of divorce on the economic wellbeing of children.**

4. Tell me about your income. Is your income increasing, decreasing, or remaining constant after your divorce/separation? How much of your current income is expended for your child /children? Please disaggregate your expenses for your child /children.
5. Do you have extra or mutual support from your ex-spouse, your relative /s, the relative /s of your ex-spouse, other institution/s? Which side of the parents or the extended family is /are more /less supportive of the child /children, mother's/ father's side? What do you think are the reason/s do you think it is ignorance /neglect, lack of access to the child /children or your post-divorce relationship?
6. Please would you compare and contrast the economic wellbeing (food, clothing, shelter, school, health, etc) of your child /children before and after you get divorced or separated?

What reason /s do you put forward for the less /more /most improvement/worsening of the wellbeing of your child /children? Do you think there is impact of your relationship to ex- spouse that attributed to the condition or any other reason(s)?

Questions to explore the impacts of divorce on the Social Wellbeing of children

7. How do you express your relationship to your ex- spouse after divorce? Do you think your relationship has impact on the social wellbeing of your child /children? How do your child /children perceive it? How did you know the perception of your child /children? Were your child /children aware of your divorce or separation? If yes or no what was the benefit or lose of the divorce on the social life of your child /children?
8. How do you explore the relationship of your child /children with your parents/ relatives? And or the parents and relatives of your ex-spouse?
9. Is/are the interaction of you r child /children with his /her /their peers in the village /school, teachers, community members changing? Is there any report from his /her /their peers in the village /school, teachers, community members thus far on change? What do you guess the reason /s for the changing behavior, academic performance, attitude or value?
10. Did you observe the sense of longing to his/her father /mother or either of the relative/ prejudice to any of their kin's? What is your response on their longing /or sickness on your behalf? Did you celebrate the birth days or graduation of your child or children after you get divorced or separated?
11. After your divorce or separation did you go to the house of your ex-spouse? How often is it? If yes, what was/were the response of your child/children? Was/were sense

of attachment to his father /mother changing /equal treatment to both? If no, is their prejudice /enmity or fear of your new spouse, relatives or any other person to whom the parents have attachment? What is /are this aggressive attachment impacts on your child/children?

**Section 2 Questions to explore the contextual custody and care of children of divorced families.**

12. With whom is /are the child /children are /are living right now? Is /are the child /children happy by the current arrangement? How do you express the views of your child /children on the arrangement? Was /were their decision/s incorporated into the arrangement?
13. How often /number of days the child/ children is/are permitted to visit or temporarily live with his father /mother within a month? How did you arrange it this way? Can you tell me the possible procedures and action steps on the arrangements?
14. How do you arrange the care and custody for your child / children? Why do you prefer it this way for the wellbeing of your child/children? Did you include the decision/s of your child/children into the arrangement or did you make it by your negotiation only or by legal prescriptions?
15. How do you evaluate the current arrangement and living conditions of your child/children? What alternative arrangements do you suggest for your child/children's social wellbeing in the future?
16. Tell me about your income, whether it is increasing, decreasing or remaining unchanged after the divorce/ separation of your parents? How much of our parents' income is expended for you? Please disaggregate your expenses for different cost items, is there income difference between or among your siblings?
17. Is /are there any point(s) I have to omit from or add to my interview guide questions?

### **Annex III**

#### **Questions to describe and explore the service delivery of the family bench at the federal high court at Lideta (key informant interviews)**

1. How do you understand the impacts of divorce on the economic wellbeing children of breaking families?
2. How many children are recorded for belonging to divorced (separated) couples?
3. What do you understand about shared residence for children of divorcees? How do you relate it to the international/national instruments in maintaining the best interest of the child?
4. Are you familiar with joint physical and legal custody?
5. How do you evaluate parental quality?
6. How do you arrange for the child to be visited by the non-physical custodial parent? What do you understand by contextual care and custody?
7. Does your office have systematically arranged archival documents and data base about the children of divorcing or separating couples? If yes, for how long and what elements are recorded over time?
8. Do you think that the new family code of Ethiopia fully addresses the best interest of the child? Property transfer to the generation of children, contextual care and custody, hearing the voices of children about the divorce itself, on matters affecting their lives etc.
9. How do you fix the child support fee paid by the non physical custodial parent?
10. Do you have trained social work practitioners to assist court decision? Would you please tell me what they are actually doing?
11. How do you evaluate the social class of parents in determining child support fees?
12. What is (are) the power(s) of the child/children in reversing the decision of their parents' to its (their) best interest?
13. Do you have the practice of exercising periodic revision of physical custodianship by taking into account the changing condition of one or both of the parents?

## **Annex IV**

### **Questions to describe and explore the service delivery of the Lideta Sub City Women, children and youth office (key informant interview)**

1. What services do you provide for the children of divorced/separated families?
2. Do you have archival records and documents about the children of divorced/separated couples?
3. For how long did you collect data about the children of divorced/separated families? What elements are included in these documents?
4. Do you categorize children of divorced/separated parents as marginalized segments of the society or population at-risk?
5. Are children of divorced/separated couples connected to their respective extended families or friendship networks of their non-physical custodial parent? Do you include this aspect in your decisions (practices) and what is actually on the ground (down to earth)?
6. Do you have the practice of separate consultancy, counseling, enabling, broking children of divorced (separated) couples and their parents?
7. Does divorce/separation affect boys and girls equally or differentially?
8. Your general recommendations, points to be added or omitted.
9. Do you have information about the economic wellbeing of children of broken families?
10. Do you think these children are population at risk? Why or why not