

Learning by Ear 2009
Children's rights and working for peace series
Episode No. 08: Children's Prisons
Author: Yaya Boudani (Burkina Faso)

**Learning by Ear 2009
Children's Rights Series
08 Children's Prisons**

Subject: Life in prison, how to prepare for rehabilitation?

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	Women	Men	Age	Language
IN/OUTRO		X	Unimportant	
Narrator	X		Ca. 25	
Luc Zina (Director)		X	Ca. 40	French
Jean- Martin Dabiré (social educator)		X	Ca. 40	French
Enriquet male prisoner 1		X	Ca. 15	French
Pablo male prisoner 2		X	Ca. 20	French
Franceline				Moore

Formatierte Tabelle

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Female prisoner	X		Ca. 15	
Adama Traoré		X	Ca. 35	French
Adeline Female prisoner	X		Ca. 30	French
Pierre Male prisoner (carpentry)		X	Ca. 25	French
Barthélémy (teacher)		X	Ca. 45	French
Pupil-prisoner male (moral)		X	Ca. 18	French
Edith (sewing)	X		Ca. 35	French
Old male prisoner		X	Ca. 55	Mooré

LbE Soundtrack

INTRO:

Hello everybody and welcome to this, the eighth and final episode of our Deutsche Welle Learning by Ear series on children's rights and working for peace.

Today, we're going to Burkina Faso and not for reasons of tourism. No, today we're going to find out about something that is rarely discussed and that we don't know much about. More precisely, we're going to MACO, the House of Arrest and Correction in Ouagadougou. We will meet some people – young and old – who have been pretty much condemned to spending years behind bars.

Report

1. Atmo: conversation 0'49

Narrator:

Ouagadougou's House of Arrest and Correction is in the city centre. But few of the city's inhabitants know what goes on behind the wall and the big blue gate that is always shut. The barbed wire, which is meant to prevent prisoners from escaping, also prevents passersby from dawdling.

1. Atmo: conversation up

Narrator:

A security guard pushes the big door that opens onto the prison yard. He is armed. Visitors to MACO are always accompanied by representatives of the Ministry of Social Action and the prison director.

MACO is the country's biggest prison and there are many problems. Luc Yina is the director:

2. Sound Luc overpopulation (French) 0'18

There's a problem of cells. We're in the big building here, which has the most prisoners. It was meant to have 500 prisoners but we've got 1349 -- three times more than it's supposed to have. We also have 66 minors and I have to admit that there really is a problem of space.

Narrator:

There's nowhere to sleep or to rest. Even for the youngest. And the costs keep going up. That's why the state has decided to build new detention centers. Another serious problem at MACO is that there isn't enough food. The prisoners only eat at lunchtime. For the rest of the day, they have to make do with water. Jean-Martin Dabiré is a social educator. He works in a prison in the east of Burkina Faso and he knows that the daily allowance of 150 FCFA, or about a quarter of one euro, per prisoner is not enough for food.

3. Sound Dabiré (French) 0'15

But thanks to some partners such as Prisoners without Borders, we're trying to make sure at least that there is soup for the prisoners. Otherwise, the food is not sufficient. It's very difficult for those who don't get anything from their parents.

Narrator:

Apart from hunger, it's difficult for the prisoners to cope with the isolation and closeness. That might seem like a paradox but it's not. The prisoners have very little contact with their families and friends on the outside but they are overcrowded inside and cannot develop intimate relationships. Luc Zina explains that this is not only a question of overpopulation:

4. Son Luc separation 0'14

Here the men are not mixed with the women and the minors are not mixed with the adults. But there are minor women mixed with adult women. That's because there aren't enough cells.

Narrator:

In most of the country's prisons Prisoners without Borders has built accommodation for minors so that they can be separated from adults. Each prisoner has about one square meter of space.

5. Atmo: congratulations 0'23

Narrator:

It took us several months to get permission from the Ministry of Justice. But it was worth it because the prisoners are happy to have visitors. They may come from different backgrounds but they share the same injustice and suffering on the inside.

Enriquet, who is about 15, first attracts our attention. He is in jail because he injured another teenager in a fight.

6. Enriquet (Français) 0'16

Sometimes we don't realize what we're doing. Otherwise I wouldn't have done it but since it happened we have to take responsibility. I didn't know him. We met one morning and he started insulting me. I told him to stop, he refused and so I hit him.

Narrator:

Pablo used to be a mechanic. But he didn't earn enough to lead his lifestyle of choice, so he gradually fell into crime.

7. Pablo (Français) 0'12

When I was on the outside, I wanted easy money, to have a nice life and I forgot about my future. That's what landed me in jail.

Narrator:

Franceline has another story:

8. Franceline 1 (Langue locale) 0'08

I was living with my brother and his wife. They had a fight. The wife left the conjugal home and I followed her.

Narrator:

Franceline says her brother forced her to make false accusations. He pressured his sister Franceline to accuse his wife of having asked Franceline to poison him.

9. Franceline 2 (Local language) 0'05

I said what he wanted and I was arrested at the same time as the wife.

10. Atmo kitchen 1'46

Narrator:

The days are long in jail. People busy themselves as they can. Jean-Martin Dabiré, the social educator, says that the physical and psychological consequences of this closeness and inactivity are tough:

11. Dabiré: inactivity in prison (French) 0'25

Generally, there's no activity so some people develop symptoms linked to inactivity. Feet swell and then you have to go to the infirmary. Lack of pre-professional activity is also a problem. They're usually unemployed before going into jail and when they get out they haven't learnt anything.

Narrator:

Helped by NGOs, the institution offers the prisoners some activities to fight off the physical and psychological impact of doing nothing. There are workshops so they can learn how to reintegrate into society when they are released:

In the women's quarters, some are cooking, others are training for a football match. Adeline prefers to use her hands:

12. Adeline activités (Français) 0'12

Some cook, others do weaving, there's a school for learning the national language and for making soap. I do weaving.

Narrator:

Sewing and carpentry are usually for men. Pierre is learning to do metalwork in prison.

13. Pierre: workshop (French) 0'29

Gates, openings. The head taught me to do this. I am very happy. When I get out I'll be able to do jointing. It's a question of deciding. If you're in prison you have to come out with honor, with something good. To prove that prison gave you some advice. Prison has helped us to catch up on life.

14. Atmo reading 0'22

Narrator:

There is also Barthélémy, a teacher who gives literacy classes in the national language.

15. Barthélemy: literacy (French) 0'12

The prisoners learn to read and write five days out of seven. It's going well and I can assure you that it's the main activity of the minors.

Narrator:

It's not easy to set up ongoing classes because the students have sentences of differing lengths. Edith Ouedraogo, who is in charge of social action at MACO, explains:

16. Edith: sewing workshop (Français) 0'14

The sewing workshop is going well. The problem, however, is that we don't know how long a minor will stay. He might start learning how to sew and then he's gone.

17. Atmo sewing workshop 0'38

Narrator:

Generally, whatever effort is put in to train prisoners, their rehabilitation into society is always extremely difficult. When they come out they find themselves in the same environment as before, surrounded by poverty and problems. Sometimes it's even more dangerous because they have been with criminals inside and they fall back into crime immediately. Adama Traoré is from Prisoners without Borders. He identifies the reasons for this failure:

18. Traoré: reasons for failure (French) 0'27

It's both -- before and after prison. Idleness. The prisoners have nothing to do. Once they're in detention they do nothing but talk and rub their bad behaviour onto each other. That's why the reintegration projects fail, for many prisoners. Prisoners without Borders wants to set up a social rehabilitation center for ex-prisoners.

Narrator:

Basically, the moral of the story is that it's best not to end up in prison at all. That's what the MACO prisoners have concluded. Whether young or old, male or female, they all regret the actions that landed them there.

19. Adeline, advice (French) 0'09

We advise our friends on the outside to think really carefully about what they are doing. We're here already and we're not going to encourage them to boost the numbers.

20. Pierre, advice (French) 0'05

They shouldn't want easy money. Stealing is not a profession.

21. Old prisoner, advice (local language) 0'17

I was sentenced to 20 years in jail. I have known all sorts of suffering here. And I have discovered that the job makes the man. I call on young people to learn a profession. Prison is not good, it delays life.

End music

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OUTRO:

On this note from MACO's oldest prisoner, our program, a report by Yaya Boudani, comes to an end. Thank you to all the prisoners and people in charge of the Ouagadougou prison for agreeing to answer our questions. You can find all the Learning by Ear programs that have already been broadcast by Deutsche Welle at our website:

www.dw-world.de/lbe

Thank you and good luck!

End music
