**Social Deviance and Crime**

Deviance is behavior that members of a group or society see as violating their norms. Definition of deviance varies according to groups. Whether an action or behavior is considered deviant depends on time, place and social situations.

There are psychological and sociological explanations of deviance. Psychological theories focus on the personality of individuals. Certain genetic and biochemical abnormalities lead individuals to commit deviance and criminal acts. Sociological theories focus on the forces beyond the individual. Differential association theory maintains that people learn deviant acts through socialization; structural strain theory maintains that deviance occurs when conformity to widely accepted norms of behavior fails to satisfy legitimate, culturally approved desires. According to the control theory, every person is naturally prone to make deviance, but most of us conform to norms because of effective system of inner and outer control. It is those who have less effective control who deviate. Another sociological theory called labeling theory states that behaviors are deviant when and only because people label them as such (Caffrey and Mundy, 1995).

In general biologists and psychologists look into the individual, while sociologists look outside of the individual for explanations of why people commit deviance and crime,

**A Survey of Some Social Problems in Ethiopia**

A cursory look at the streets of major urban centers in Ethiopia shows that this is a time when our contemporary Ethiopian society is hosting a multiplicity of social problems. The nature, type, intensity and complexity of the social problems in contemporary Ethiopia are reflections of:

• The country's long history of underdevelopment;

 • Socio-cultural backwardness;

• Poor level of scientific and technological development;

• Lack of good governance and political instability;

• Uncontrollable natural conditions, such as droughts, famine, etc;

• The mismatch between rapidly growing population and economic development; and

• Urbanization and economic growth, among others.

**Vulnerability to Famine and the Problem of Food Insecurity**

Our country has been experiencing vulnerability to famine. It has successively been hit by severe droughts and resulting famine which claimed the lives of innumerable citizens and those of animals. The trend in recent years has worsened so much that in 2001/ 2002, there were about 14 million Ethiopians exposed to the danger of famine. The famines of early 1970s and 1984 were so severe that they were talking issues for the whole world. The problem is now one of the top agenda items for the Government of Ethiopia. It is no wonder that many people associate Ethiopia with famine, drought and poverty. The name of Ethiopia was so much popularized that some world famous individuals have amassed money through fund raising campaigns in the name of helping the starving Ethiopians and used the money for their personal gains (Mesfin, 1984; Nigussie, 2004).

The rural population is more vulnerable to famine. The quality of life of the rural people has as a result deteriorated very much. The most important sections of society that are more affected by the famine and drought are often children, women and the aged. Of the death toll due to famine, these categories constitute of the largest proportion (Fasil, op cit). Vulnerability to famine as a social problem, thus, results in a number of adverse consequences on health. “Famine and food insecurity aggravate the spread of diseases; it is now well known that the mass death and famine induced mortality are caused not only by starvation but also by the spread of diseases among the already vulnerable population” (Personal communication, Dr Teketel Abebe, AAU, Department of Sociology and Social Administration). Thus, many of the cases of morbidity and mortality are associated with famine and lack of adequate nutrition particularly in rural Ethiopia. Diseases like kwashiorkor, marasmus, and poor physical conditions like stunted growth, emaciation, etc, are.

**Prostitution**

Prostitution as a social problem seems to be associated with the growth of urbanization and urbanism as a way of life. Although it has existed throughout history, it has become rampant in this age of modernization. Some cities in south East Asian countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are notorious for the sex industry. The term prostitution now appears to be outdated and a more humane term is now commercial sex work. This term is introduced to indicate that like any other work, prostitution is also an industry, where individuals are, mainly due to factors beyond their individuals' capacity, forced to sell their bodies to earn money for a living.

As some studies indicate, the history of prostitution in Ethiopia goes back to the rise of urbanization and the introduction of Italian colonization. Commercial sex work has now become a major social pathology in the country. Urban centers like Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, Nazareth, Shashemene, Dire Dawa, among others are major centers of commercial sex work. A recent media dispatch disclosed that in Nazareth Town, there are about 3500 commercial sex workers. Multiple sexual partnership and commercial sex work are thus the most visible pathways for the spread of STIs and HIV/AIDS. Addressing this social problem at its root causes might, therefore, would help very much in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The root causes of commercial sex work are usually poverty, harmful traditional practices such as early marriage, forced marriage and marriage by abduction, among others. Dysfunctional marriages, entrenched poverty and economic dependency often drive females to prostitution; and this may in turn contribute to the spread of STIs including HIV/AIDS among women and the general population. Young girls from rural areas often flee to urban centers from harsh social and cultural conditions in the rural areas. They end up engaging in commercial sex work to earn a living.