

## Empathy in Action

### **STORIES AND COMMENTS FROM SOME OF THE ICDP PROJECTS IN THE WORLD**



## FROM ANGOLA

### Story of Jose

The ICDP team in the province of Huambo was contacted by the nuns running an orphanage, because they felt they needed assistance in dealing with an eight year old boy, called Jose. As for many other children in Angola, Jose's life was severely affected by the war. Having lost his mother shortly after birth, he was cared for by the nuns. When he was one year old an attack destroyed the orphanage, and he was moved to another part of the province and thus was separated from everybody he knew. After seven years the orphanage was restored, and Jose moved back, but he was not able to adjust. The nuns described him as being very aggressive and with poor concentration. He often created confusion and conflict around him, and had learning problems at school. The ICDP team helped Jose, by sensitising the nun who was closest to him. They focused on his emotional condition related to deep experiences of being separated, first from his biological mother, and then from the nun who had become like a mother to him. Gradually Jose began gaining confidence in the adults around him, and through a lot of positive support he developed into a more balanced child. He relates normally to others, and he enjoys taking part in school activities again.

### Story of Marion

Marion was around three years of age, at the time ICDP was approached for help. She attended a nursery, run by a church, in one of the poorest areas of Luanda. The caregivers were concerned because she was not able to speak at all, and was extremely passive and apathetic, unable to interact with the children and the adults around her.



The ICDP trainers began to sensitise the staff to focus on Marion and to provide better stimulation. They contacted Marion's mother, and after talking to her, it became clear that the family economic situation was very difficult. They were mourning the loss of their four children, and had not been paying much attention to Marion. She had been severely neglected, and even punished physically by her mother.

Gradually the ICDP team managed to change the mother's perception of Marion. Marion is now able to play and relates to others normally, as any other child of her age.

### **From the ICDP Angola trainer's report**

- One of the primary school teachers in Luanda, after we worked on the approach to 'regulation' and the importance of avoiding violence, declared: "I am a strong woman and a strong teacher because I was strongly beaten by my father. That is why I beat my son and my pupils too. Yesterday, I put my foot on my son's neck and I punched him so strongly that he fell on the floor. He has to learn and to become strong!" However, after some time she changed; she confessed she was now feeling guilty and was unable to behave the way she used to before. She said that even though sometimes she feels a surge of the old impulse, she does not give in to it.



- People receiving ICDP often ask the ICDP team members to which church they belong, because they feel so touched in their 'inner child'. They say, they are normally used to seeing these sorts of concerns, i.e. about building values and supporting children, only in context of churches and not in any way linked to scientific knowledge. I told them a little bit about the current studies on the concept of the 'inner child'. It was extremely interesting for all.

- When one of our Luanda teams started an intervention in M'Banza Congo, one of the nuns, a very strong and organisational type person, became very aggressive. She declared she had neither the possibility nor the will to 'lose time' with these kind of interventions. However, as she was responsible for a shelter home for children she had to attend the ICDP sensitisation program. After some time she became the most enthusiastic and participative trainee in the group. She was constantly inviting the team members for a meal or to visit the home of the nuns, so as not to feel alone after work and she was often sending them small gifts like cookies or fruits. At the end of the training she made a special appeal for new interventions to take place in a number of educational institutions where she wanted ICDP to be implemented.



- When M. M., one of the trainers, was in M'Banza Congo, she was introduced to two young very handsome Franciscan 'novices', who were obviously the local girls' attraction. She became worried because the two novices were to a certain extent giving in to the girls' signals; she felt that both of them were really sensitive and interesting people and saw them as eventual potential good husbands and fathers. She felt shocked by their subtle, not too honest behaviour, since they were preparing to become priests. As one of the two was especially capable and communicative with the ICDP people, she asked to speak with him in private. She told him, in the way she felt was most adequate in the given situation, (applying the ICDP guidelines about the importance of establishing a dialogue by giving meaning and explanation), that there were moments in life when we have to be strong and honest enough to take the right decisions and to respect our future life and ourselves. The young man listened very seriously and quietly. He went away with no answer. A few days later, he came to the ICDP premises and asked to talk privately with M.M. He told her how grateful he was to her for assuming his absent mother's role at that time; that she made him face himself, think things through and understand that his real decision was to become a priest. Some months later, the team received a special invitation to a ceremony celebrating the final commitment to religious life.

- Here is an example of the application of the ICDP principles of sensitizing by the coordinator D.C. in relation to the promoter P.S.: One of our promoters, P.S. went with the coordinator D.C., to a primary school whose director was a particularly strong, aggressive and proud woman. She affected P.S. negatively with her pride and social superiority and he felt so miserable that he did not feel he could give his talk about ICDP. D.C., who is a second grade teacher, jumped in his place, facing the director quietly but with strength. Afterwards P.S. wanted to resign from his ICDP work in that school, but D.C. did not accept it; instead, they both continued to visit the school together. Eventually, when D.C. felt that the school director was starting to understand what ICDP is about, and was becoming really interested and touched by the ICDP content, he asked P. S. for co-operation on a specific matter that he knew P.S. would handle well; in this way he pushed him to re-assume his key role and responsibility in the work once more. And P.S. did really well. Peace and mutual human respect was restored with the director and P.S. is standing on his feet again.

- P.S., the youngest member of the Luanda team has developed a special relationship with the children in the Kuzola orphanage - they elected him as their common 'daddy'. Whenever he arrives they inundate

him with manifestations of affection, calling him 'daddy'. They fight to get his attention. Sometimes, he confesses, he wants to run away because "it is too much love".

## **FROM LESOTHO**

### **Quotes from the ICDP trainer's diary:**

- I was impressed to see how well most trainee facilitators reported about their field work. They prepared their presentations very carefully. They produced written reports and included some material with pictures, drawings and personal comments or stories. Due to the general enthusiasm, some of the facilitators are already working with a second group of caregivers.

I went on a field visit to observe an ICDP meeting with a group of local women. It was quite positive but at the same time it revealed the huge difficulties people have to deal with: alcohol, drugs, violence, gender conflicts, HIV and grief ... children and women experiencing loneliness and abandonment. Most of men working at South African mines are alcohol dependent and HIV positive.



One interesting case was reported about a very recent widow; her husband was an alcoholic who died of HIV. She was in an ICDP group run by one of the local ICDP Promoters. Participating in the ICDP meetings helped her a great deal because she could express her grief and share numerous stories about her husband and his death process; including what that process caused psychologically and emotionally to the family. As a result she became extremely enthusiastic about ICDP.

## FROM TANZANIA

### Experienced and new facilitators in Moshi

The facilitators told success stories they had witnessed in their work with the caregivers. They also described how the programme had influenced and changed their personal lives:



"I used to abuse alcohol, because I was so stressed. My wife died, and I was very harsh to my children. I felt that the children were bothering me, and I said to them: "I did not kill your mother, so why do you bother me?" The children were afraid of me, and they ran away from home. I thought I could solve my problems, calm down and reduce the stress by drinking. Through sensitization in the ICDP group I learned to calm down and to treat the children differently. I learned to be close to them and to have a good atmosphere in the family. I stopped drinking, and everything is peaceful in the family now." Other facilitators added to his story by saying that he had changed completely, and appears to be a new person, both to his children and to other people.

"I had lots of anger inside me, and I felt that the children were bothering me. I was not capable of taking care of my own children. After the sensitization I became calmer, and now I take care of an orphan in my home, in addition to my own children. The people in my village keep asking what happened, and they think that I take medicine to calm down!"

"I have become enlightened and changed by the spirit of love. I have learned that even if a child does something wrong, he should be shown respect and love, not the stick."

"I was not aware that rudeness is not good for the child. Now I am humble and polite. My children cooperate now. We work together, and there is no spirit of problems in the family. The caregivers in the group I facilitated have also changed."

"I made much progress, and so did my family. I was a very tough mum, and when my child did something wrong, I hit him with the stick. Now I guide him and direct him, and I praise him. One of the caregivers in the groups I facilitated said that he had a child that was not good. Now, after the lessons, he can sit with the child and listen to the child's problems. They have become friends."

“When I came home after the first group meeting, I felt more humble. I started talking to my husband; I came close to him and we discussed how to raise the children in a good way. When the children experienced that we cooperated, they became very cooperative too. This programme is very good to our society, and I want to sensitize many more caregivers.”

“I learned that the best way to become close to children is to be as a child oneself. You can't rear the child by using the stick. When you show love to your child, the child will understand that he is a person, too.”

“I was an alcoholic, and so was my husband. He was cruel, and I was harsh with the children. After the sensitization I have reduced the drinking, and I have slowed down. Now I can sit with the children, and we became close. Now the children are very cooperative, and they arrange everything in the home when I am away. All the family members are quieter now. I am so happy about this knowledge.”

“I am a widow, and I used to drink too much alcohol. I didn't pay attention to my children or acknowledge their needs. After the sensitization, something happened in my heart. I have changed. I was harsh, and now I am polite. I learned about the guidelines, and I understood that I didn't follow them. I looked at the pictures, and I understood that I had to be closer to my children.”

“I saw all the activities from my grandsons as if they wanted to disturb me. Through the guidelines of showing love and following the child's initiative my grandsons and I feel together. Now they don't run away any longer.”

“I was very strict, and I didn't like the children to touch the TV or the video. Now I encourage them to examine things, because I understand that in this way they can widen their knowledge.”

### **Caregivers in Moshi municipal**

“My children were very scared of me. I shouted at them and used the stick to punish them, and they used to run away from me. Now the whole atmosphere in my family is different, and everything is going on very easily. The children behave in a good manner, and there are no problems. Through the sensitization in the group of caregivers I changed my mind and my behaviour. “

“I think this programme is very important to me as a man. I used to be harsh to my children, and so was my wife. After participating in the group, I transferred the knowledge to my wife, and also to the neighbours. There is a completely different atmosphere in my family now.”

“The ward leaders also experience a change. Previously they were overwhelmed by people coming to their office with family problems. Now they are relieved by the ICDP programme, and the cases in need of help are decreasing.”

“The difference with this programme is that the knowledge touched my heart. I could feel that this was true. We were asked to go home and practice our new knowledge through home tasks, and we reported the results in the next meeting. In that way we realized that the message really was true. We changed our behaviour, and the children also changed. The first home task was: How can you come closer to your children?”

### **Caregivers in Moshi Rural East**

“My grandson joined a group of bad boys. He let his hair grow, and he started to plat it. I didn't like it at all, but he said it was a matter of fashion. After the sensitization I asked one of the other caregivers in my group to sit down with him and talk with him. She approached him in a very nice way, and they built a trustful relationship. They were discussing the problem with the hair, and he agreed to cut his hair. Now he is very cooperative.” –Later in the meeting the teenager came to the group and told that he was very happy with this solution. He was so happy that the caregiver discussed with him in a nice way instead of being harsh to him. He had now left the group of bad boys.



“My son earned money as a porter in Kilimanjaro, but he spent the money in a very bad way by drinking alcohol. I didn’t know how to change him. After the sensitization I decided to approach him nicely and ask him to sit down and talk. It was very useful, and now he has changed completely. He has agreed to spend the money for building a house.”

A village leader told the following story: “I used to think that my child was bad. One day he threw an egg to the ground, and the egg broke. Usually I would have become angry; talk to him in a harsh way and maybe beat him to make him understand that this is unacceptable. However, since this was after the sensitization in the group, I stopped myself, and I asked him about the reason for throwing the egg. He answered that he was wondering what was inside the egg. In this way I understood that my boy is not bad, but that he is curious and wants to develop his brain. From there I could guide him and help him to understand that this could be done in a better way than throwing the egg to the ground. Now I am proud of him!”

## FROM GUATEMALA

**Ricardo Gomez, Country Director of Plan International, 7th February 2009:** “Most organizations engaged in the development sector have identified lack of nutrition as one of the main causes and consequences of poverty. Surprisingly malnutrition has been understood as just a biological problem and we have all been inclined to forget that “feelings” are the essential core of a human being. Emotional nutrition is the fundamental food for a child to develop self confidence, autonomy, social conducts among many other essential aspects of a healthy personality. We have discovered this via our direct practice with marginalized poor communities in rural Guatemala through the simple and precise ICDP tools so well introduced to Plan Guatemala. It is nice to see our staff exited and committed to ICDP methods; they continue to demand action from us so that we reach with ICDP every single family in all the communities that Plan is working with. An investment to extend ICDP tools across the country could be the softest investment a donor could make. At the same time we have no doubt this would be the best investment children could receive if our vision is for them to fulfil their potential.”

**From ICDP trainer's report, ICDP project Guatemala 2007:**



A father (on photo above) interviewed in the street on his way to the ICDP gathering said:

"I am going to a very important meeting, it is about a programme where I have experienced something I never had as a child which is to be appreciated only because I am a person; this is what we need in our community and these guidelines in the booklet I received need to reach not only families and children but also the elderly in our community as they need it just as much."

**FROM EL SALVADOR**



**Coordinator for ICDP in the Ministry of Education, Edith Vasquez, 2007:**

The trained teachers are very enthusiastic about the impact of the ICDP programme in schools. They noticed positive changes in the behaviour of children and an improvement in their academic achievement.

They also noted more commitment from parents for cooperation with the teachers. In 2008 they want to reach out with ICDP to 125 schools."

**Marina Morales, UNICEF El Salvador, 2010:**

- We have been applying the ICDP programme all over our country for almost four years now and the experiences have been very good. Carolina Guevarra, from ISNA (social services) is coordinating the practical sides of the ICDP implementation, together with the core group of local ICDP trainers. Carolina's great enthusiasm for ICDP spread to the leadership of ISNA, and there is now a strong institutional commitment to continue to support and expand the ICDP initiative. This year, UNICEF and ISNA made a major effort to involve in the ICDP process both the local authorities and the local community. As a result of this strategy we have succeeded to reach a significantly higher number of families with ICDP."

**FROM COLOMBIA**

**Dr Gladys Constanza Medina, (wife of the governor of Boyaca):**

- The ICDP pedagogy based on human love, the ICDP programme "I am a person too" has constituted the best seed in achieving a healthier society, a society which one day instead of learning about the concept of democracy in the classroom will be living it from the cradle. This beautiful methodology led to more than the national award; it led those who came across it to become happier people."

(The Boyaca government office implemented ICDP in 123 towns and for this work they received the "National award for human rights" in 2007.)

**Colombian social services - ICBF (Instituto de Bienestar Familiar), Myriam Tobar:**

There was an increase in the caregivers' (ICBF staff) self-esteem and confidence. The trained staff found new efficient tools to deal with conflicting situations in their everyday lives, both at home with their spouses and children and also at work with colleagues. There was a positive effect in terms of improved relationships inside their own families/children. We also noticed that the relations among ICBF colleagues became closer and more meaningful. Members of staff became interested in helping each other, reducing competition which was evident before they were trained in ICDP.

We observed positive changes in the families that participated in the programme. They managed to draw on their own past experiences, share and build on that. ICDP enabled them to identify with the children; to put themselves on their children's' levels. That led to a better understanding of their children's' behaviour, which in turn made their children happier.

**Story of Alejandro**

Alejandro used to sit for days in a tree without speaking or relating to the other children in the day centre. The staff knew it was due to the way he was treated by his violent father.

They decided to ask an ICDP trainer for help. The trainer recorded the following experience:



"I approached Alejandro who was sitting up in the tree as usual, and told him my name. Then I started to talk about the tree, noticing the shape of leaves, the beauty of the branches and the magnificent view from the tree.



I said I understood why he liked being up there. I asked for permission to take a photo of him. He didn't protest but was silent, looking intensely at me with his serious brown eyes.

He suddenly jumped down and climbed up another tree and I followed him. I said I thought he was really skilful. At that moment 3 little girls approached us walking by us.



I pointed at Alejandro and said to them: -I would never dare climb as high as Alejandro, would you? The girls looked at Alejandro with admiration. Alejandro climbed even higher and I took a few more photos of him.

Then a boy came to see what was happening and asked if I would take a photo of him too. I said:



-Ok, but you need to climb the tree; Alejandro might wish to show you how to do it.

Alejandro looked at me silently. Then climbed to the top of the tree and looked down at the boy. I looked up at Alejandro and our eyes met and I suddenly felt moved in my heart as I realized that Alejandro and I had established first real contact.

There were other children nearby playing in the sand. I looked up at Alejandro and said: - We could draw your tree in the sand but I need you to help me. He jumped down and started to dig the sand. We made the shape of a tree in the sand and then other children started to do the same."



After this episode the ICDP trainer continued to work with the staff of the day centre; they started to give Alejandro special attention. He is now happy to join in with others and likes coming to the day centre.

The staff decided to start running ICDP courses for the parents of the day centre. They told the ICDP team: - You gave us a tool to make parents rediscover love and beauty in themselves and in their children.

### Story of Joana



Johanna (photo above) was 14 years old, single, pregnant and severely depressed, living in a shack in the aftermath of the earthquake which hit and destroyed La Tebaida, near Armenia. The ICDP team invited Johanna to help with the implementation of the ICDP program in her own community. Afterwards Joana commented:

"At first I couldn't believe it that they wanted me to join in with their work with mothers and children, because I had no such experience. Little by little I found out that I can do it and surprised myself . I managed quite well and became an ICDP promoter. It is really simple because it is about love and patience with children. Actually I enjoy the work. I feel really good about myself now."

### **Ex-guerrilla fighter, participant of the ICDP project in Bogotá:**

"Very recently I left the guerrilla movement, primarily because my daughter was suffering abuse by her step father. I was planning to kill him. That was all I could think of until I came to this ICDP programme; it changed the way I see the world. I look after my daughter now; she means everything to me, she is the reason I live for. I thank ICDP because I did not know how to be a father; now I know what to do. Applying it has already given me results. I now know that inside myself there is love I can give."

### **ICDP with imprisoned parents, project in Nariño**

One of the trained facilitators took the initiative to introduce ICDP in the local prison and to run courses for imprisoned parents: " My experience as ICDP facilitator was very good; I ran several ICDP courses for parents in my community. Then one day I had the feeling that ICDP would really be of benefit for parents who are in prison. I wanted to give them hope and help them to reconnect with their children. I was convinced that ICDP would help them, so I decided to go and tell them about the guidelines and empathy. I asked for permission to run an ICDP sensitization course and I got it. It proved to be very successful. In fact the prison authorities asked me to do another one. " The photo below was taken at one of the ICDP meeting with imprisoned parents.



### **Saving a girl**

ICDP project in Nariño, from the diary of ICDP facilitator S.: I was told that J. (15 years old) wants to join the guerrillas and leave the village. When I heard this I felt moved and later decided to go and talk to her. I used in my approach things we practice in ICDP: to listen, not impose, share feelings together, explain, offer support.. – in fact it all came spontaneously. I spent most of the day with her but as a result J. changed her mind. I feel ICDP saved J.'s life.

## FROM UKRAINE

### From reports of the ICDP promoters working with staff and teachers in pre-schools:

1. Natalia: I noticed how differently staff greet the children now; I saw one of the teachers on several occasions going out to them individually, as they are arriving to the school, saying, " Good morning, I love you".
2. One teacher told me how she now, much more than before, makes a point of involving the children in cooperative activities, and she now makes sure that these activities are not imposed but are chosen and initiated by the children themselves. For example, just on the previous morning she had noticed Valya picking up a leaf and looking at it, so she said to the other children: - Let's all look at Valya's leaf; is it not beautiful, so yellow now that it is autumn... let us pick up many leaves so that we can then make a chain with many leaves to decorate our classroom.
3. Elena started sensitising preschool staff in Melitopol on voluntary basis, using the free time staff had while the children were having their afternoon naps. After a while the parents of the children started to say that they noticed their children being more eager to go to the preschool. So Elena told the parents about her work with ICDP and the staff and this aroused a lot of interest so that in the end the parents started to receive ICDP courses on regular basis. The enthusiasm spread and the example was followed by the neighbouring primary school teachers who later introduced ICDP in their school too.

### From reports of the ICDP Promoters Working with Families:



1. Vigo's mum used to think that Vigo should not be picked up much as it would spoil him and so she often avoided responding to his crying. This has entirely changed after her participating in the ICDP course meetings. It is hard to describe the joy on her face now when she holds her son and talks to him softly.
2. T. used to show a great deal of emotion and love for her son, but she seldom answered his requests to do things with her. "Later, we will do it later", she would say and then forget it. There was a change after ICDP; she is now aware of the importance of following the initiative of her son and doing things together. This improved their relationship remarkably.

3. There was a mother who could not understand why her boy had a bad relationship with other children, never joining in with others. After we made a video of this mother's interaction with her son, we noticed that she was constantly doing things for him; before he even starts doing something, she has already guessed what he wants to do and would do it herself on his behalf. We approached her in a positive way and started praising her son in front of her for wanting to do things by himself - and then we discussed how important it is for her son to be allowed the space to do those things he is motivated to do. It took several meetings for us to help this mother let go and notice her sons intentions and let him carry them out. Gradually the boy gained confidence to do things with other children also.

4. Nastja's mother complained that her daughter was an aggressive child. After attending our ICDP workshops she started to talk about feelings with her daughter. How it feels when you are tired, happy or excited, how it is when you feel sad or upset; how it hurts when someone takes your favourite toy away from you etc. They discussed how it is for other children in similar situations. Now things are very different and it is Nastja who makes peace between children who are squabbling.

5. Ira's mother had poor communication with her 3 year old daughter. They each lived in separate worlds. Ira was quiet, withdrawn, scarcely speaking. I started to play with Ira during home visits and gradually involved the mother, father and their other child. I demonstrated over several meetings that it was easy to talk and play together. I would start playing and the mother would join in. Ira gradually started to look happier as the communication improved.

## **FROM ARGENTINA**

### **ICDP project for families linked to the soup kitchen "La Amistad", Berazategui, Buenos Aires. From the project leader's report:**

"Thirty mothers from "La Amistad" took part in the ICDP workshop and were divided in three groups that were each coordinated by one trainer and one facilitator in training. After the workshop there were ten group meetings and two home visits.

This soup kitchen is in the house of one of the mothers in the settlement. This is a very poor neighbourhood with very basic housing, some made of second-hand building materials and others of wood and corrugated iron roofs. Some of them have toilets, other don't. They are all built in State Property. The dining hall is a very humble construction without window panes and entirely made out of wood or corrugated iron which makes it very cold in winter. It is also poorly lit. Eight mothers cook and feed 120 children, most of them range between 0 and 5 years old. They serve breakfast, lunch and a light supper. They also have two kindergarten rooms that are run by two youngsters of the community and a little wardrobe which consists of the recycled clothes that these mothers can put together and make into handicrafts for sale.

The mothers began to share their worries in relation to their children at the ICDP workshops and meetings. One issue that came up strongly was the violence towards their children, as well as in the relationship with their partners. There was a lot of change in this area, the women themselves started to find alternative ways of relating to their children without hitting them, they started to talk to them more often and show them their affection and openness. They took the ICDP booklets home and read them together with their children. Some of the mothers cannot read and they would ask their children to read for them and it was thus that the issue of interaction got started in their homes.

When we spoke about visiting their families some women asked us immediately to visit them at their homes, other preferred we met with them and their children at the dining hall. We realized that they feared we would want to control them like the social workers usually do. But when they saw that our attitude was one of acceptance without judging them, they asked us to visit them all at their homes and started to bring up more specific and intimate issues that they did not dare treat openly in the group meetings.

For us, as the working team constituted by four trainers and three facilitators, it was a very strong experience and it had some very difficult moments. We were in touch with such a hard social reality, of extreme poverty, associated with violence, alcoholism and drug addiction. It was very important to be there for each other and support each other. There were also some very comforting instances when we would see the changes and the affection with which we were received as the trust increased. We all affirmed ourselves as human beings, they in their role as mothers and the rest of us in our respective roles.

We have now finished the stage of sensitization and we are onto the stage of consolidation and cultural reactivation. We celebrated with the mothers and children the "Children's Day" for which we got donations because they had nothing to give their children. We will set up a reading workshop on children's stories with the Social Development Ministry with which we got connected through UNICEF. We will also take on a Plastic Arts Workshop for both mothers and children. We will carry out a Facilitators' Training Workshop with some of the mothers that we chose for their capacity and enthusiasm so that they can continue sustaining the program in the neighbourhood.



#### **ICDP facilitator - Z.:**

I have a sixteen-year-old daughter, M. I teach drawing and I work in public schools and also with special needs children. ICDP helped me to improve my relationship with my daughter and my students and with many of my other relationships with people. It is now incorporated into my life.

ICDP work with mothers: At first we had to go through a period where they faced very painful aspects of their present reality and their past, since the large majority of these women have been beaten by their mother or father and now they beat their own children. On top of this there is the problem of alcoholism and unemployment. No pleasant memories seemed to emerge from their past but little by little things improved as we were providing a space for understanding where they could feel comfortable. Once they faced their own rejection towards their painful memories they were able to change their attitude. Now they

have stopped beating their children. Finally they are accessing some pleasant memories and with it a new will to live, play and dance is developing.

My experiences with families:

G.: G. and her children: E. (16), C. (21), G. (4), S. (4), V. (12) and J. (8). The whole family put down E. (16) and constantly insulted her but she did not react to this situation. The atmosphere felt violent and tense until, at one moment, I managed to reach E. and get her to trust me. She first started crying and then she told us what she needed from her family. When we provided her with a trusting and affectionate atmosphere, E. was able to open up and tell us what she felt. I tried to make them look at each other and listen as a family. Gradually things improved for E.

C.: C. and her daughter S. (12). I asked S. whether she felt she could count on her mother, whether she listened to her and S. said yes, that before that wasn't the case but that her mother had changed. Their relationship changed a lot, they moved from always fighting with each other and shouting to treating each other with love. C. used to be a very angry mother and she is now a loving and capable of caring for her daughter's needs. She realized that once she changed her whole family followed.

J: She has 3 children and her husband is unemployed and drinks quite a lot. J. stopped beating her children; when she feels like hitting them, she leaves and then comes back. She now tries to listen to them and is able to give them advice, even though she knows that she has to talk to them better and that it is hard for her to express her feelings. J. has put a limit to the sexual violence of her husband. ....



**ICDP facilitator – S.:**

The ICDP experiences brought about significant changes in my life, both at a personal level, in how I relate to other people, and also in the field work. I am studying Sociology and it was incredibly useful to apply in practice through ICDP what I had learnt at a theoretical level.

Two of the ideas that made the strongest impact on me (which I plan to take them not only as a working methodology but also as a way of live) were the idea to base the work on whatever happens to be one's

strength, to place emphasis on both the capacities and the abilities and to work from what people have to offer and then build from there. The second idea was respecting the way people bring up their children in different cultures. This last aspect seems to me essential in order to be able to approach any social work.

Experiences with families from "La Amistad" :

From the beginning I felt very involved in this project since the settlement is located a few kilometres away from where I live even though their reality is very different. The economic and social problems that our country is going through leave their marks and traces in each and every one of these people. It is a hard reality but one that can be modified. I worked with a group of 9 mothers. In the first meetings the emphasis was on listening, of getting to know each other; they would talk about their lives and their memories. We then began to work with the guidelines, and asked them to provide all kinds of examples and wondered what the best way to raise the kids was, observing what the child's needs were and how we could help to make them grow in the best possible environment. Gradually we saw changes.

S.: S. has 3 children, aged 3, 4 and 8. She had a very difficult past and she had to make a huge effort – and continues to do so – to avoid repeating the same story with her children.

M.: (4 children ages ranged from 6 to 16 and wants to adopt a 1 year old baby) M. progressed a lot during the course of the meetings. She used to hit her children and now says that things have changed dramatically. When I visited her in her home, I noticed that with the three little boys she is very loving, and also to the 1 year old girl. But she has more problems dealing with her teenage daughter and criticizes her all the time. This is why we worked on guideline # 4 (to praise and build self-confidence) so that they could find a way of understanding each other.

M.: (3 children aged 2, 4 and 6) She is a very young and shy mother but slowly she began to open up. One day she said that her 4 year-old boy had asked her: "Mother, what is going on that you don't hit me anymore?" and that her children look at her surprised because she now talks to them and explains everything to them. Since she began to pay more attention to them, they have improved at school. These changes have not been easy. At the beginning, to restrain herself from beating them, she would lock herself up in a room and cry. She would then come out more relaxed. Her achievements are many but there is still a lot of work that remains to be done.

G.: (5 children, ages ranged from 3 to 19) During the first meetings she remained silent and had an angry look in her face. After the visit to her home, where we worked on the conflict with her daughter Y. (12), she notably changed her degree of participation in the group and opened up to the group. At the following visit, her relationship with her daughter had positively improved.

## **FROM AUSTRALIA**

### **ICDP trainer from Brisbane:**

- I had the opportunity to go to Moonyah Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre where I met up with several of the men who participated in the ICDP course I held there last year. One father has spent Christmas with his son for the first time in 3 years. Another who had not seen his son for 7 years is now visiting him every weekend. Others told me they have re-engaged with their children and are doing really well. It was truly amazing and inspiring to see that the changes have been sustained.

## FROM RUSSIA

### Comments from ICDP participants, project in Arkhangelsk:

- This is different from the other projects I took part in. Our opinions were taken into account and we are sincerely glad and grateful for that. We had an opportunity not only to listen, but also to express our opinions, communicate, sometimes even to argue and discuss. There was a productive, emotional and sincere dialogue between us. This was not present in our previous work, where we were only recipients of information.
- Realization of the program does not require additional time. The program is simple to understand. This program has no time limits. The ICDP program can be used with different categories: caregivers, parents, future mothers, candidates for adoption, etc.
- We want to use ICDP to remind all adults who are in close contact with children how important it is to establish good dialogue with the child. Parents, foster parents and caregivers in general need ICDP to help them see the positive features and capacities of children.
- We will pay special attention to the use of video materials, i.e. filming interactions. It is part of the ICDP approach which enables the caregiver to see him/herself from another direction. It is a very good stimulus for improvement of the quality of relations between adults and children.
- In the ICDP books there are descriptions of different aspects of interaction between adults and children, which any reader can apply. The self assessment exercises designed to help caregivers analyze their interactions with children are useful, both at work and with own children. For example I have transferred this experience to my family and also shared it with families of my friends and relatives.
- Caregivers, nurses and other staff have learned how to provide love, understanding and tenderness to children – and these children lacked this before. Therefore, the topic of dialogue between «caregiver and child» discussed within the program is very urgent for us.
- The program allowed me to develop my own communicative skills, activity, sensitivity to problems of other people, expanded my knowledge on children with special educational needs.
- I learned to be facilitative and positive with the other person, instead of using an instructive tone.
- Now when I look through videos from my family archive, I automatically start to pay attention to some moments and analyze them, whereas before I did not think of such things.
- From all the things that we have heard and seen we have understood that we are like-minded persons.
- Participants have noted, that during the meetings they received satisfaction from dialogue, interactions and exchange of experience with one another. All expressed the wish to stay in touch after the meetings ended.
- All participants noticed that they give more value to their actions when interacting with children; they pay more attention to feelings and emotions when relating to children; they analyze their own actions and observe how other parents address their children (noticing both their positive and less positive moments).

## **FROM NORWAY**

ICDP PROJECT WITH PARENTS IN CHILD PROTECTION, MINORITY LANGUAGE GROUPS

### **Post – intervention interview with mothers, seven months after the end of ICDP course:**

#### **1) Tell me how you have experienced participating in this course?**

"It has been nice to be able to attend the course. Fun and adventure. I have learned very much. "

"It was important to attend the course; before I had a different relationship with my children. I was a little unsure about many things - to be honest I was a little afraid to decide. It's different now. That's how I advise others to attend the ICDP courses if they can. "

"I must say I completely agree with the others, it has been very good for me and my children to be part of the course."

#### **2) Have you had any benefit from attending the course? If yes, in what way?**

"I have learned many things I can, for example, mention that I have taught my children that when they are angry, they can count to 10".

"I practice recognition in a way I did not do before - I reward children when they have done something positive, I am better at praising children when they deserve it. "

"It is not easy to cooperate as parents with my husband who has just come from Somalia. I have learned a lot, but I need to bring him in .... "

"I am a more positive mother and put more attention to how kids are. I can say that I have become more flexible and I am more patient than I was before. "

"I see my kids more as whole people."

"I have become more friends with my children. We have built a kind of trust between us, for example, my son does not hide from me anymore certain things as he used to. "

#### **3) Is there something about the course that you think should be improved?**

"I think that fathers should also participate in such ICDP courses."

"Yes, but there should be separate courses for men / fathers. Men also do well to discuss their own opinions and attitudes ".

"Yes, it is easier for men to change the opinion and attitudes in groups with other men. They will not be able to do it with women, because then they have another way of talking and discussing things. "

## **Interviews with the mothers about being an immigrant in Norway and their attitudes towards their own children and child rearing (conducted before and after intervention)**

Selected quotes that convey the main ideas expressed in regard to questions asked.

Note: All mothers who participated are speaking Somali at home

### **The greatest difficulty about being in Norway:**

"It is difficult to get a job here. I have worked in nursing care before, but it is not so easy. Norwegians get a job easier than me, it is an insecure job situation. "

"Cultural Differences: When children grow up with two different cultural influences it is difficult to raise them - especially young people ..."

### **What do you miss most?**

"There are lots of things. Missing family, people line up and help each other. There is a lot of loneliness. "

"The climate - very good and hot. Here, I wear so much clothing. And so it is more stressful here, when I came to Norway, I was surprised that all race around so much and always look at the clock. "

### **The benefits of living in Norway?**

"Freedom, security and the people are nice, kind and helpful. There is equality here, and the children can go to school. We immigrants will also be the same as the Norwegians. "

### **Do you plan to continue to live in Norway?**

If there was peace, they will all return to Somalia

### **Perceptions of own children**

All describe their children as "good and straightforward" and with great understanding of their difficulties:

"He's a nice boy, has much heart for other people. Helpful. But he dislikes the others speaking to him in a loud voice, he gets angry. "

"He's a very nice and thoughtful boy, and he is helpful. He likes to have lots of close contact with me. "

### **Perception of ideal children**

"The child should listen to adults, especially parents. The child must show respect for others, going to school and do well. "

"The child must be quiet and calm, think and consider the consequences of their actions. I also wish that such a child shows a willingness and desire to do well in school. "

"... Go to school and do what adults request ..."

### **Good parenting**

"The culture and religion provides guidelines for the upbringing. The language / Somali is important ...

"You have to build trust with the children from an early age so they are not afraid of you. If they are afraid they will lie, but when children know their mother well, they will not. Important to have a friendly tone. "

"Provide for their behavior and their schooling. One must know what they do and who they're with. Must also pay attention to what the child thinks and is concerned about, talk to them and follow up. "

### **What children need most of all from his parents?**

"Food, education and clothing."

"The children need safety; parents must ensure that they are doing well. Provide for health and education, it is important ... "

"Stability; it's healthy for kids to know where mom and dad are, good example.!

### **Differences and similarities in child-rearing**

"Yes, there are very large differences. It is difficult to raise him here now that he has started school. Here everything is fine and you can talk about everything, but we have some things that are taboo. We have strict rules for what to talk about and what is right, and it makes it difficult. "

"Where I come from, children are obedient and listen to their parents, they know that the parents decide and live by their rules with respect. But here, I do not know if they've been told this at school, but the children say that they are those who decide and they do not care about what we say. In Somalia, we know how important parents are to us, we dare not contradict what they say, but here it's different. Sometimes I wonder if the children understand that it is we who are their parents ... "

"In Somalia, it is so that when we ask children to do or not do something they listen to us. After we came to Norway, we have been told that the children have more rights, more freedom - they can do almost whatever they want. In Somalia, before the children were 18, it is parents who have the last word in everything. The children are not truant from schools in Somalia, they are too afraid of what would happen when they get home. Do I think parents are less strict here in Norway? Yes! "

### **Is there anything you think is particularly difficult to be a mother / father in Norway?**

"To be alone with children. In Somalia, there are always others around to help out. When you have five children and the husband has gone to work it can be very difficult. "

"Even if I had been divorced in Somalia, I would still have had his father nearby. Being alone with the children is difficult. "

### **Mother's and father's role in child rearing**

"The first phase of language learning is the mother's responsibility, and it is she who prepares the children on how to meet others later in life. For example, they learn to cook, but also how to behave towards others. The mother is with the children most of the time when they are young. "

"The mother's duties are mostly at home, the father has other responsibilities. He will get money, food, etc. Who is responsible for the children? Mother cooks and is with them at home, decides on how they dress, what they think and how they behave.

Dad must also monitor their children's development "

"Father is a role model for boys and is more demanding and more strict than the mother. Children who grow up with both parents are luckier than those who do not have this. "

"Where I come from, it is mostly the father who has the greatest responsibility for the upbringing, it is he who is the protagonist in the family. He also has a special responsibility to educate his sons to become men. It is mostly fathers who earn a living for the whole family, mothers are at home with their children. Father is the main character and stands for it all. **Would you say that it is he who protects the family?** Yes, if the family does not have a father, they have almost no chance to survive; especially when there are many sons in a family. "

#### **Parents' reactions when the child misbehaves:**

##### **If you found your child fighting with other children, what would you do?**

"One must talk with one's child and show that what is done is stupid, dangerous and unacceptable. The child must also be punished, for example, by withholding allowance. **Have you tried this yourself?** Yes, and it has worked well. "

"I do not want him fighting, but there are a lot of bad things in school and he must defend himself."

##### **When your child is lying, what do you do?**

"I use mostly our religion and says that it is Haram. I talk to them - and also with the teacher."

"I would ask him why. Finally, I would give him a warning and make it clear that he does not have to do it again. "

##### **What is the strictest punishment you would give your children?**

"In Somalia, it is allowed to punish children physically, it is quite common, but here in Norway it is forbidden."

"It is common to physically punish children in Somalia - also with sticks - and it is more usual to punish without talking with your children."

"That child is not allowed to go out and play with other children. This I could deny him up to seven days. Not to be allowed to watch TV and to stay in the room are also severe penalties. "

#### **Comparison of mothers' responses in interviews before and after intervention:**

One would perhaps expect that there would be some difference in the mothers' answers after they have undergone the ICDP course (with 12 meetings), but it has not been possible to find any systematic patterns here when one takes all issues into account.

##### **On a couple of questions there was a difference, for example:**

When one asks why some children are easier to teach than others, more mothers responded in pre-intervention interviews that "it is innate," and that "parents have to be patient," while the same mothers in the post interview puts more emphasis on that "parents must give extra time to follow them up "or that" they need more support from parents "

There were also differences in the responses to questions about why some children are afraid and what

parents can do in that context. On the question of why some children are afraid, some parents in pre-intervention interviews answered that "it is natural - it is God who created the children" and "maybe they suffer from a disease." When asked on what parents can do they answer: "It is difficult" or "they must go to the doctor".

In the post interview, however, they answered that "it is difficult to know" (why children are afraid). When asked what parents can do they answered: "They should take the time to talk to them", "parents must take the time to talk with them and listen to what they think".

The difference in the post-interview is that the parents perceive that it takes time, that it is important to be with your children to talk and listen to what they think, that this can help the children. This is clearly in line with the ICDP's messages.

### **Overall impression about the interviewed mothers**

We need to take into account that any mother whose child is in care will necessarily be on guard when asked to respond to a questionnaire. Therefore, it is likely that some of the mothers adjusted their responses to what they thought would be an acceptable answer for the interviewer and the institution he / she represents. The general impression is that the mothers are involved with their children and that to a certain degree they possess insight and sensitivity. More precisely the following emerged:

#### Traditional framework

The responses show that they work within a traditional normative picture of the child where obedience and respect for parents is central (Rogoff 2003). This is also associated with religion; religion is an important factor in the upbringing in the sense that children should not do something that is "haram" (sinful, impure), such as for example, lying to parents. Likewise, it is often referred to God as an explanation since it is he who has created everything, including humans.

#### Gender differences

Similarly, gender differences are strongly prominent in both the rearing and parental function and responsibilities to children, with a mother who has special responsibility for the daughters to be housewives responsible for home and food. The boys are taken more care of by their fathers as future family heads with the responsibility to care for and protect their family outwardly - and to protect the family's honor.

#### Empathic identification and "mentalizing" ability

Interviews showed that some mothers have 'empathic identification' with their children and the ability of "mentalizing" i.e. they show the ability to understand the children, not only externally but also internally in how they think and feel. For example, one mother said:  
"Parents need to adjust to the children so they know what they do, how they think and feel ..."

Another mother responds to the question whether the child had lied: "We must build up confidence from an early age so they are not afraid of you. If they are they will lie, but if he knows the mother well, he will not. Important to have a friendly tone ..."

#### How to deal with problems

In general, most mothers responded that they must take the time to be with the children, talk to them and be patient. In their reply they rejected the corporal punishment even though it is common in Somalia.

Strong emphasis on education

All the mothers placed a very strong emphasis on education and for their children to succeed in school.

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\*"Mentalizing" is a term associated with psycho-analyst Fogany and it is the ability of parents to immerse themselves in the child's inner experience in order to understand the child's actions on the basis of how the child feels and thinks. This is considered as the most essential quality in the parents' relationship with their children. It is when this fails that psychopathology develops (Fogany 2003).