



Brief update on ICDP activities in Botswana

Year 2017

ICDP is an international parenting program adopted by Ark and Mark Trust and is piloted in Thamaga village. Thirty-six facilitators were trained. These comprised five social workers at Ark and Mark Trust (who would later take the ICDP country coordination); police officers, village development community volunteers; secondary school teachers, pastors, young people with and without children and local social workers. Following the two weeks training held on February 2017, 36 ICDP facilitators successfully conducted 12-week parents' group meetings. A total of 164 parents took part in these meetings. On the 12th July 2017 there was a certification award ceremony for the 36 ICDP facilitators and 164 parents. This occasion marked the first cohort of ICDP graduates and was held at Thamaga main Kgotla (the bid traditional meeting place). The event was embraced by Bogosi (the Chieftainship), high ranked District Administrative authorities and different key stakeholder in Thamaga village.

During this event parents were given opportunity to give testimonies and share experiences on how the ICDP Program has helped them. The following illustrate quotes from parents;

- 'ICDP has opened a new page in my life; it has increased my thinking capacity, not only for me as a parent but for the children as well. Our children are people with feelings therefore we need to include them in decisions that affect them and this is for the future of Thamaga Community'
- 'ICDP was therapeutic to my emotions, my father always beat my mother this destroyed my ego. As things stand we are able to discuss different issues freely in the household, no beatings. ICDP is a Godly thing it was prophetic to us, Thamaga is completely healed'
- 'ICDP is like a mirror. It has reflected that we have been far from our children. They are there, but in a corner somewhere.' Reflecting on how parents see their children, most parents confirm that after several group meetings they now realised that children are individuals: 'We must understand that we are the parents and that we must be there for them'
- 'ICDP has given us the benefits of learning from one another and realise that we all have diverse issues'

- ‘The program has drawn us closer to our children, as it is now there is consultation in my family-Open door Policy’
- ‘My habit of bad parenting is slowly going away. Indeed small progress is still progress. My children always reminded me to do and discuss ICDP home tasks with them. My children were so interested in this. They have recruited other children from the neighbourhood to join our discussion. Parents from the neighbourhood also joined. We are now a large group of ICDP mothers and children.
- ‘ICDP has helped me control my anger and be more open to my children’”

Parents’ testimonies were greatly impressive as they incorporated and linked ICDP with local cultural believes and values of the community.

Way forward

- ✓ Thamaga community concluded by appealing to Ark and Mark Trust to extend its proposal for funding to private companies so that the program could spread to other parts of the country and benefit more Batswana.

Year 2018

This year 21 of the 36-trained facilitators in 2017 conducted more parents’ groups meetings around Thamaga village, Botswana. The 21 facilitators managed to reach out to a total of 100 parents taking part in group discussions on weekly basis for a period of 12 weeks. Participants of ICDP were a combination of couples, youth, elderly people, pastors and traditional leadership. It is worth noting that we saw an increase in number of males taking part in the 2018 ICDP program. Some facilitators have had to drop out of the program due to moving location, job change/transfer, and pressures of other responsibilities including the urgent need to tend to farm lands. The majority, however continued running the parent groups.

Ark and Mark Trust social work team this time around did not participate fully in weekly parent meetings. They took the supervisory role by meeting all the facilitators on a monthly basis to get updates and provided guidance. The purpose was to instil independence and program ownership by the community and build commitment for facilitators. This relieved the coordinating team (Ark and Mark) from dependency issues and gave adequate opportunity for evaluation of the passion and commitment the facilitators have. One example of this was that facilitators who missed scheduled update meetings sent in their updates via WhatsApp, voice recording and were guided accordingly.

The ICDP weekly group discussions engaged parents in a series of dialogues where they discuss Psycho-social and emotional needs of children through key ICDP themes. These themes then guide parents on practical hands on observation, experimentation for self-

monitoring and self-evaluation. This helps many parents test out and adopt different and more positive ways of relating to children. The ICDP approach is based on the idea that the best way to help children is by equipping parents and caregivers with good parenting skills. Help in ICDP principles is understood in terms of building up competence and supporting the existing child caring network systems in the community. The program respects culture and operates within the cultural framework. This makes it easy to adapt to the Botswana traditional communities.

To conclude the parent meetings, we held a grant graduation on 23rd August 2018 for the 100 second cohort of parents who took part in the program. The celebration marked the conclusion of the parent group meetings which were held on weekly basis for a period of 3 months. The 100 parents who graduated from the parenting program reached out to a total of 681 people in Thamaga Village. This number was reached by parents as they shared the ICDP program with their children, relatives and friends. This has expanded the impact of the program in the village. The graduation ceremony which was held at Independent Assemblies of God (church venue) attracted around 150 people witnessing the success of ICDP in Thamaga Village.

The ceremony was embraced by different key local community leadership and stakeholders namely; Dikgosi (Chiefs/headmen), Station commander, District Commissioner, Office of the Parliament, School heads, Pastors and Child Protection Committee representatives.

Moreover, there were some testimonies from graduates and the following are some of the quotes captured:

1. "ICDP has taken us from Egypt to Canaan" the person was using this as a metaphor meaning that ICDP have moved them from slavery to freedom, from negative parenting to a joyful experience of parenting.
2. "ICDP brings unity, peace and joy to families "the home tasks that we were given during our group meetings have brought us closer to our children".
3. "I used to have no accommodation now my child has built me a tiled house with modern amenities. My relationship with him motivated him to complete it"
4. "ICDP has taught us how to raise a child."
5. "Our children's feelings towards us have become more positive than before."
6. "We are now confident in our role as parents/caregivers and understand the importance of our role in our children's lives."
7. "Crime rate has declined, Thamaga Village is now at 23% on youth risky behaviours and Molepolole (the neighbouring village) is at 53%. This is great achievement. In 2017 youth crime was as high as 60% and 70% respectively". Quoted from station commander's speech".

The day was concluded by certificates awards to graduates (parents) as a symbol of successful completion of the 12 weekly group meetings. This marked the closure of the 2018 ICDP program.

Program Sustainability initiatives

Venue Challenges

- ✓ Lack of venues to conduct meetings were some challenges experienced in continuation of program. To address this, facilitators pledged to use their homes.

Incentives to retain participants and encourage attendants to be committed

- ✓ Facilitators contribute small fees out of their monthly allowance and provide snacks to parents. In Botswana the culture of sharing a meal, even if it's a small snack, symbolises a token of appreciation which encourage people to continue being supportive.

Way forward

- ✓ To have second training of ICDP facilitators around March 2018.
- ✓ To train a variety of stakeholders from diverse backgrounds including kindergarten, members from parent teachers association(PTA), dikgosana (chiefs & headmen), Police department.

Report by

Mpho Sebako Community Intervention Manager

Gaborone, Botswana 6th December 2018