

Report from MELCI on ICDP in Cote d'Ivoire

By Anna Birgitte Lindtjørn Berge, 31st of October, 2023.

We were delighted to start the process of bringing ICDP to Cote d'Ivoire in 2023. This has been a project that we have long awaited, and we know that many parents and children will benefit from the caregiver course that ICDP has to offer.

In 2023, three employees in Mission Evangelique Lutherieenne en Cote d'Ivoire (MELCI) began training to become ICDP facilitators, with the aim of starting ICDP in the Youpogon district of Abidjan.

First part of the training was given online by trainer Gerd Eli Haaland (started in the fall of 2022), and the second part took place in in Kedougou, Senegal, together with the Norwegian mission Normisjon, from February 27th, 2023, to March 3rd, 2023. The trainer was Lea Aubin Sanou from Burkina Faso, who works with Save the Children in Burkina Faso.

The training to become facilitators continued throughout the spring of 2023 where we were able to give the caregiver course to eight other MELCI employees in Abidjan.



We had our third training session from Sept 4th to Sept 7th in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, where we received our diplomas as ICDP facilitators alongside the group from Senegal (on photo above).

Throughout the year we have worked on adapting the ICDP material to the local context and we started translating material for training facilitators as well as materials to be used in caregiver

groups. This will continue through the coming months. Some of the material that has already been translated into French has been provided by Lea Aubin Sanou.

During the spring of 2023 we had meetings with the director of the social center in Yopougon Port Bouet 2, Abidjan, from where we received a list of organizations working in the field of child welfare in Yopougon. Based on this list, we can easier identify potential partners who can be invited to an “open day” where we wish to give potential partner organizations deeper insight into what ICDP is and how it can benefit them. This was originally scheduled to be held in August 2023, but due to unforeseen circumstances, this has been postponed to 2024.

We have also had a brief contact with Save the Children, who has started implementing ICDP in eastern Côte d'Ivoire (Bondoukou).

We have had repeated attempts at organizing a meeting with the head of social services at Yopougon City Hall. The meeting was not held due to postponements of work sessions because municipal deadlines were approaching. Some key players in Yopougon have been informed about the ICDP, but it remains much work to reach all the groups we want to encounter.

We have gained some documentation/reports regarding children's upbringing conditions in Côte d'Ivoire and Yopougon and are searching for more documents regarding children's situation on Yopougon. Depending on how much information we find, we might find it necessary to conduct a study ourselves.

Due to family related reasons, the project manager, Anna Birgitte Berge, moved to Norway in June 2023. She is employed in MELCI through December 2023 as project coordinator, and her colleague in Abidjan, Helen Kolnes, has been placed in her position and will take over from January 2024.

In February, we hired Jean Claude Koffi in a 50% position. When starting with us, we knew that he was also hired in the government and was initially placed in Abidjan. However, in May 2023, he was told he had been resettled further north in Côte d'Ivoire. After some negotiations, he got a new post in Man (13.5 miles from Ouaninou, where MELCI also works). Unfortunately, he will not be available for the ICDP work in Abidjan but will be available to help implement the ICDP in the Touba region when the time comes. Koffi completed the facilitator training in September 2023.

Due to the circumstances mentioned above, only Manou remains in Abidjan out of the original ICDP team. Helene Kolnes is employed as of September 2023, but is still not certified as an ICDP facilitator. She is scheduled to attend training in North Africa in the spring of 2024 and will complete her training in June 2024. In addition, we are looking for a new local employee who can join the project together with Kolnes and Manou.

It has been challenging to arrange meetings with the authorities. We had scheduled times for meetings, but these had not been respected by the relevant offices. We therefore see it more fruitful if we turn to non-profit actors and various groups in society in the first round, while we wait to gain entry to the authorities.

Due to the changes that have occurred in the staff, we have found it necessary to postpone some of the activities that were planned for fall 2023 until fall of 2024. This applies to the information day "Open Day" as well as the caregiver course that we planned on holding in the aftermath of the "Open Day". In the new project application, we state that we want to start parent groups together with AVEC groups (loan and savings groups that MELCI operates in both Abidjan and the Touba region), during June 2024. By that time MELCI will have two ICDP supervisors (Manou and Kolnes). In the fall of 2024, we will resume the activities planned for fall 2023 (Open Day and caregiver courses for professional caregivers). It will therefore not be possible to achieve the goal of entering into cooperation agreements with any organizations during 2023.

The rest of 2023 will be spent on continuing to adapt the material to the local context and in-depth study of ICDP materials, as well as finalizing the guidelines for the use of ICDP in Côte d'Ivoire.