

Summary report Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Master Training

October 4-9 2021 Ghana

Introduction:

In June 2021 Ghana was visited for Cerebral Palsy Africa (CPA) Scotland, with an assignment as (final) part of the UK-AID funded program on Inclusive Education for children with CP. During this visit, contacts were established with Multi Kids Academy (MKA), Heart, Hands and Voice Foundation (HH&VF), University of Education Winneba (UEW) and the CBR program of the Salvation Army in Duakwa (near Winneba).

Purpose CPA:

Main ambition for CPA, since its inception in the Netherlands in April 2020, has been to establish an African network of Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (NDD)-Master trainers connected to CBR programs, aiming to improve a) practical tools and skills & b) coaching competencies of fieldworkers, to improve QoL (Quality of Life) of children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities and their families.

A 6-day curriculum was developed; and funds were raised.

CPA-NL main goals are to facilitate the development of the African network, train professional staff as well as CBR fieldworkers and offer technical support in reaching out to (severe) NDD children and their parents.

The first NDD Master training was originally planned in Ethiopia with Light for the World (LftW) and the University of Gondar (UoG), but due to the civil war this had to be canceled. Fortunately, the Salvation Army offered to take the lead in organizing the event in Ghana, co-hosted by UEW, MKA and HH&VF.

Criteria to participate:

From the 29 participants, 3 came from Uganda, 3 from Ethiopia and 1 from Congo. They were selected on basis of the following criteria: ¹

- Professionals with field experience on working with NDD in CBR programs
- Ready for a shift in thinking, open-minded to reflect on changing and accepting practices which are more evidence-based, aiming for better results 'on the ground', both for parents and the child
- Capable of coaching and influencing on basis of sound arguments their colleagues on improved, evidence-based management of children with NDD (within the ICF Framework)
- Commitment to start a pilot (within their own organizations) after the training, with 20-25 families, using a baseline; ensure proper documenting results; and using the outcomes of the pilot for further up-scaling.

¹ note: most of the Ghanaian participants were invited by the hosting organizations and not screened by us beforehand

Participating partner organizations had to be (and were) prepared for a (in some cases substantial) financial contribution.

The training:

It was made clear from the beginning that the NDD Master training is no rocket science invented by CPA and is not just another talk show on theories. Participants were supposed to be more than familiar with NDD and CBR.

Focus of the training:

- Promote a strategy to coach parents on integrating interventions in the daily life of the family and the child
- Use interventions which are functional & improving the Quality of Life of the child as well as the family
- Be result-oriented, based on evidence (with reference to e.g. publications and rehabilitation practices in western countries; the work done by CAN-child, and the LSTM&H)
- Follow a CBR-approach
- Use the ICF framework as a basis for common language and understanding
- Stop certain old-style practices especially harmful practices such as non-functional devices and useless routine massage and torturing passive stretching

Several tools and publications were shared (the Enablement RehApp on CP will be re-introduced in the 1st quarter of 2022); the problem-solving rehabilitation logbook which was introduced and practiced during the field visits that took place as part of the training: 5 groups visited 2 families, with plenary reflections afterwards.

Purpose:

- *Goal* of the NDD Master training was to establish an African network of NDD Master Trainers.
- *Objectives*: change the narrative and mindset on the management of severe (level 3/4/5) NDD within CBR programs.
- *Key elements*: functionality; mindset versus old-style 'fixing'; central role of parents (including attention for parent support groups and daycare facilities) and focus on results related to Quality of Life.

The Process:

- The knowledge-sessions were kept brief, assuming participants were already familiar with NDD and – CBR/ ICF. However, this was not always the case: out of the 7 trainees from countries other than Ghana, 5 were meeting this standard; out of the 20 Ghanaian trainees, about half were meeting this standard (reason: quite a number were university lecturers without field experience).
- Field visits were an important part of the program: two trips were made in 5 groups; assessments and action plans of 10 'cases' were made using the problem-solving logbook. The presentations and reflections afterwards were essential in the learning process. The ladder of life brought lively discussions, with consensus on its crucial element: being a support tool for an in-depth, empathic dialogue with the caregiver about the well-being of the family and the child.

Interaction and participation were (very) good: almost all (except only one) trainees were active, also those who in fact didn't qualify for the training: the university staff mainly from the University of Winneba (Disability Studies & CBR department) and 1 senior lecturer from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST).

- It remains to be seen what the future effects of this training will be at university level, especially related to the ambitions of the University of Winneba to develop with CPA a special module as part of their CBR training programs – and possibly KNUST as well.
- Some of the staff were resistant to accept the new approach, with a serious 'clash' with a senior Head of Department from the Salvation Army, but it finally all turned out (relatively) well.
- Kenneth Nangai, our Ugandan CPA-advisor, proved to be an excellent co-trainer, with convincing skills based on his vast experience within the STEP program of the Liliane Fonds since August '18.
- The overall atmosphere was positive; people were eager to learn and enthusiastic, also on the WhatsApp group.

Conclusions:

- A start has been made to organize an African Network of NDD Master Trainers, with a moderator from Ethiopia (Mr. Zelalam) and a vice from Uganda (Mr. Martin); participants implementing the pilot will become the initial members; a follow up Zoom to be organized in January 2022.
- Selection criteria for participants at future trainings need to be stricter.
- All participants employed by a CBR organization are invited to present a plan for a small pilot before the 1st of November 2021. Reporting on implementation of pilots will be the real proof of results 'on the ground': without implementation and evidence building this training will be just another useless talk show. But we're optimistic and positive: this will not happen!

Next steps for CPA:

- Develop a module for CBR Master students at the UEW in Ghana and possibly University of Gondar in Ethiopia on management of NDD
- Facilitate a Network of African NDD Masters
- Facilitate follow up trainings
- Facilitate support structures (Day Care facilities)
- Coach key persons in the field