



[pour l'Education dans la Famille
for Education in the Family]

EMIDA International

A beautiful adventure:
bring up your child with love

Understand and experience
a happy parent-child relationship

EMIDA and physical violence in a child's upbringing

In the large majority of human societies, physical violence is central to a child's upbringing. Sometimes severe, the purpose is to achieve submission of the child to the adult. Thus, violence is seen as normal, and even banal, with the heart of the family. Although the parents love their children and are loved by them, this use of violence was learnt from their own parents and is reproduced between individuals, between tribes, and is seen more generally within society, politics etc. This mode of education is therefore a widely-accepted norm.



The aim of this leaflet is:

- ❖ to present the normality of this violence
- ❖ to show the consequences of a violent education on personal development
- ❖ to underline the impact on families and societies where it is widespread
- ❖ to present the work begun 14-years ago in Cameroon to reduce the widespread use of violence

- ❖ to demonstrate the positive impacts of this change in style of upbringing on personal development, families and society
- ❖ to invite you to participate in extending this work across the world

The use of violence in a child's upbringing is a reality:

A study financed by UNICEF in four regions of Cameroon (representing 45% of the population) showed that 90% of children experience beatings at home and 96% at school! The following is an extract of the final report from this study which begins to explain the normality of this violence in Africa:

“In general, in African society, the family group does not consider a child as a small person in their own right but as representing an ancestor, whose name he often bears and whose lineage he must continue: he is therefore endowed with an existing personality and role within society. The child is considered as the property of the family group and is moulded through various educational means (including physical violence) to become the person that the family expects. Our observations show that in current African society, traditional upbringing is primarily through the use of physical violence”

The consequences of this violence on the child's development are serious. It must be recognised, nevertheless, that the parents who exercise the violence, desired the birth of the child, love him and are loved in return. But these parents, and other teachers, were also brought up in this way and experienced such violence themselves. They see this method as “normal”, as the only way, and as effective since it was demonstrated by those they loved and who were their first role models: their own parents.

From ignorance of any other method of upbringing, this violence unfortunately remains predominant in the majority of societies.

This violence is usually exercised through the use of an implement: the “chicotte”, a liana, a belt, a stick, a gas pipe, an electricity cable etc. and normally never with the hand – this limits the direct physical contact between the parent or teacher and the body of the child who they feel they must “correct” in order to steer their upbringing.



Violence inflicted without reason

The violence is inflicted without warning, without verbal explanation to the child. The parent expects the child to understand why he is being hit and with change his behaviour to avoid being hit again. Clearly, this method does not promote an open family environment.

The violence often begins the moment the child starts to walk confidently and wants to explore the world around him. He begins to wander away from his mother, but she fears he could harm himself if he wanders too far. Being busy, she gives him a quick tap with a stick on the front of his legs to bring him back: without any explanation as to why, he often does not even know it is his mother who has hit him!

Sometimes the approach begins with “the carrot” but changes to “the stick” when the parent no longer gets the child’s submission through the use of a bribe: a solution which seems normal and appropriate.

The main negative effects of violence

The following effects were noted by an outside observer who has a long-term integration into such a society where the upbringing of children is founded on the use of physical violence:

- ❖ Violence to obtain submission is seen as normal
- ❖ Lying, dissimulation and hypocrisy are seen as normal
- ❖ The child is not encouraged to make his own decisions and therefore does not develop any initiative nor real creative direction: this leads to irresponsibility
- ❖ Selfishness is over developed
- ❖ Appearances are given more importance than substance
- ❖ The child grows up with a feeling of not being respected or valued: eventually this can be felt as racism
- ❖ The child has difficulty expressing his emotions, affection and love and to experience sympathy
- ❖ The child has great difficulty, or even finds it impossible, to recognise if he has done wrong and to say sorry
- ❖ Material possessions are given great importance....

.....which can lead to corruption!

The early experiences of a child in the heart of their family have a critical impact on his development. The effects of violence used on a very young child can persist throughout his life and considerably restrict his ability to flourish. It is impossible to underestimate the immediate pain and suffering a child experiences during beatings.

A lack of limits also restricts a child's potential

Even a child lucky enough to live in a family who respects him, but who is completely submerged by a society built on violent relationships, will suffer the effects of the normality of this violence. Often his parents, lacking an

alternative model of upbringing, adopt an attitude of “laisser-faire” which is also detrimental to his development.

Parents, through modern more widespread communication, may hear the message that physical violence is not constructive and feel guilty. However, without training in any other means of upbringing, they risk abandoning any attempt to control the development of their children and adopt this “laisser-faire” attitude: thus children, having no real guides, risk getting their own way every time. This can even, eventually, lead to a worse violence than before as such selfish children could grow up to become tyrants! Parental education and training can avoid this.

Young girls are the main victims of violence at home

In the absence of social security, children are seen as the old-age security for their parents, but:

“Bringing up a girl is like watering your neighbour’s garden”
(Indian proverb)

In India (as in Africa and many other countries) the birth of a boy is celebrated with joy, with singing and feasting. The boy is the “old-age security” for his parents. In these countries, with no effective social security, the duty to look after aged parents falls on the son.

However, bringing up a girl is seen as a heavy task and the birth of a girl is often seen as unlucky. Daily discrimination follows: less food, less health-care, less schooling. Instead of going to school, or even just playing, girls usually have to do house-work and other domestic tasks including looking after smaller brothers and sisters. Along with this, girls often suffer the brunt of any physical violence in the home.



When physical punishment is the norm, a child from a ruling family also receives a harsher upbringing than others. This is seen as the way to create a dominant adult! Once chief or even head of state, he will see any method as acceptable which keeps his authority and power. There are many examples in Africa and Asia which confirm this!



The birth of EMIDA

To improve the situation described above, the EMIDA organisation was born in 1998 in Cameroon. From its inception, its work has been based on parental education: training parents in their role as parents.

During this training, the parents learn that they are the primary role models for their child and that the best relationship is based on:

- ❖ **Showing and expressing their love**
- ❖ **Dialogue and communication**
- ❖ **Mutual respect**

Parents are taught how to demonstrate the love that they feel in a tangible manner: as they used to do when, as an infant, the child was carried on the mother's back throughout the day or passed from arm-to-arm around the family!

Parents also discover that, even when the child cannot yet speak, he can still understand what his parents say and has intelligence and that, therefore, they should speak with their children, listen to them and encourage dialogue. This dialogue then becomes an essential part of family life, an absolute necessity.



The parents then begin to understand the reciprocal nature of respect: if they want the child to respect the adult, **the child is also worthy of respect in their own right.**

The child as the parents' social security

As part of this education, the parents learn that their security in their older years is better guaranteed if they bring up their children following the EMIDA principles. This is important in these societies without formal social security where the children, in particular sons, are seen as the real insurance for old age. The parents learn that a relationship built on mutual respect will lead to a greater personal development for the child and therefore the likelihood that the child to be better-off financially as an adult and therefore be in a better position to support the material well-being of their aged parents.

Other positive outcomes

Once the parents begin to reflect on the importance of their role as the child's first role-models, inter-couple violence also begins to diminish, which obviously leads to better family relationships.

The parents begin to see their child develop differently: often becoming more studious, particularly if the parents are also interested in his schooling and support him in this.

Parents quickly become aware that development of a new relationship with their child requires them to be more present, and to spend time with their children. This recognition may lead to the tendency for a reduction in the number children per family seen in areas which have benefited from the EMIDA education.

The importance of stopping the use of violence at source

EMIDA's desire is to work to prevent the use of violence at source by reinforcing social and educational capabilities of the main actors in a child's education: parents and teachers. In this way, there is a "bottom-up" improvement, not only in family relationships and personal development, but also in a more peaceful culture in society in general.

An investigation by UNICEF undertaken in Cameroon in 2000 and supported in 2002 by the *International Report on Violence and Health*¹ supports the EMIDA approach. The 2002 report recommends directly parental training in their role as parents to reduce the use of violence in education and abuse of children. The report envisages this as a primary action at source: “...we consider that it would be beneficial to educate and train **all** parents” and further recommends that this occur even before children are born!

EMIDA’s work in Cameroon

EMIDA’s work in Cameroon has been achieved through 4 principal routes:

- ❖ The creation of a national umbrella organisation which undertakes the training and supervises extension of the work
- ❖ Training of parents and teachers on the ground in this new educational relationship which prevents the use of violence in education.
- ❖ Participation in economic development and environmental protection through the creation and support of community Revenue Generating Activities (RGA).
- ❖ Focus and priority given to the role and education of women who, in many societies, have the principal responsibility for the family’s education and welfare.



¹ OMS International Report on Violence and Health, Geneva, 2002

EMIDA's work in practice

Throughout its work in Cameroon, the financial means of EMIDA have always been limited, and therefore the “snowball” approach was chosen to optimise the reach of the action:

- ❖ Initial workshops are set up to teach **EMIDA trainers**: these are often young psychologists, sociologists, teachers etc. who are pleased to find a practical application for their studies.
- ❖ These trainers, convinced of the value of EMIDA, in turn train **EMIDA facilitators** in each area which has expressed an interest in EMIDA.
- ❖ Upon completion of their own training, the EMIDA facilitators are then able to train a large number of **parents and teachers** within their own area.
- ❖ The EMIDA facilitators in each area form a local association and set up a local EMIDA Support and Listening Centre
- ❖ This centre allows the local facilitators to receive and provide educational advice to parents
- ❖ This ensures follow-up to the training is available
- ❖ The local EMIDA associations look to extend the action and undertake new training



The European Union has chosen EMIDA

Following an ideas completion at the beginning of 2012, the European Union chose EMIDA to achieve a high-profile development project linked to construction of major axis road in the East of Cameroon. The project consisted of creation of specific RGA's and thereby to improve the income (*cash* and livestock), development of community infrastructure (wells, barns) and construction of schools.

It was the pertinence of the EMIDA approach which appealed to the EU. The *lateral* action of preventing educative violence generates such an obvious improvement in social relationships and community life. This specific EMIDA project, to run over 2 years, will allow the training of thousands of parents in their role as parents.

Linking education, fight against poverty and environmental protection

EMIDA in Cameroon works in areas which are essentially rural and poor, and with communities which, outside of questions of education, have a simple and urgent need: basic material welfare such as improvements in nutrition, healthcare, clean water, schooling etc. For this reason, EMIDA has become, through its own work, also involved in meeting these basic needs and in improving standards of living and community development.

The strategy chosen to meet these needs is the establishment of community RGA's (Revenue Generating Activities) for the local communities, and particularly for women's groups.

In these areas, environmental protection is a particular challenge: there is not enough organised support for these people who, for centuries have lived through hunting, fishing and basic agriculture within a biotope which is becoming more and more prohibited!

The greater economic independence stemming from the AGR's also enhances environmental protection since the local population have an alternative to deforestation and poaching of protected species. The material improvement in standard of living brought by the AGR's also favours the

acceptance of the educational aspects of EMIDA's work within the populations concerned. The educational work is then maintained within these areas as a result of the creation of the local EMIDA Support and Listening Centres.



Results after 14 years of EMIDA in Cameroon

To date, more than 15,000 parents and teachers have received EMIDA training in exercising their roles without the use of violence.

This achievement is the fruit of collaboration between a wide range of groups: Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA's), Women's groups, Religious communities, Community Initiative Groups, etc.

The training has only been possible thanks to the generosity of a number of development partners who have recognised the pertinence of EMIDA's work in Cameroon:

UNICEF

AEN (Norwegian Church Aid)

CRS (Catholic Relief Services)

PPTE (Highly indebted poor countries)

UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)

ONUSIDA

DDC (Swiss government development office)

BACC (Canadian development Office)

DED (German Development Office)

BROT FUR DIE WELT (Bread for the world)

USA Embassy

Swiss Embassy

Decade to eradicate violence of the Ecumenical Council of Churches

The first 3 years of the day-to-day finances of the EMIDA Cameroon office in Yaoundé were covered by a mecene and subsequently, and to this day, by the EMARKIDA foundation in Vevey, Switzerland.

Since the beginning, EMIDA has developed its own training programmes, continually sought to improve its teaching, created its own manuals and researched its own financial support options.



The organisation has not, for the moment, been able to record in a systematic manner the results of its work. It is only following a recent collaboration with the European Union that it is possible to envisage EMIDA Cameroon, or an independent organisation, can do this.

More information on EMIDA and its work:

www.emida-afrique.org or www.emida-international.ch



Support from witnesses of our work

Swiss Ambassador, 2 August 2009

Dear Sir,

Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting your colleagues in Yaoundé. I was able to see their excellent work and the extensive reception of their message on the ground in the Noun area.....I wish to re-iterate here, not only the confidence that this Embassy places in your work, but also my personal conviction that your work in Cameroon contributes very effectively to the essor of the population socially, and in aiding their understanding values which should help all Cameroonians achieve more quickly a more just and balanced society, as well as at the family level which is at the heart of the local training centres.

With my best regards,

Etienne Thévoz,

Ambassador



CICR Representative

In 2004, the work of EMIDA was presented to a CICR Representative in Cameroon. After a time of reflection he declared: *“The work of EMIDA is so essential and fundamental that one day, it will be present in every country, just as the International Red Cross is today”*

The need for EMIDA International

The achievements of EMIDA in Cameroon justify and require the birth of EMIDA International .

In 2006 EMIDA was invited to participate in the IX World Conference of Churches in Porto Alegre, Brasil.

The work of EMIDA was consolidated by:

- ❖ Requests for expansion from other Countries in the South and the North
- ❖ Encouraging remarks such as: *“Why has no-one thought of this before?”*

The first request for expansion to another country came in 2002 from an organisation in Haiti. EMIDA Cameroon regularly receives requests from other African countries for an expansion of its work. The small organisation in Cameroon is not in a position to respond.

The aim of EMIDA International is to be able to respond to these numerous existing demands in order to extend as far as possible the work in Cameroon that has already be proven by the recent choice of the European Union.

EMIDA International is the logical result of the work and experience undertaken by EMIDA in Cameroon since 1998.

Setting up EMIDA International

The founding members of EMIDA International are people already involved over a number of years in work linked to the educational objectives of EMIDA and who are convinced by the results obtained in Cameroon, and also by the gratitude expressed by families who have received training.

EMIDA International exists already as an organisation. Its committee will create and supervise an executive office. In order to do this, the following steps will be required:

- ❖ Appoint an executive secretary, responsible for organising and managing the activity of the organisation
- ❖ Appoint the minimum necessary personnel
- ❖ Create the executive office
- ❖ Create new national EMIDA associations
- ❖ Support the existing national EMIDA associations (i.e. Cameroon)



The role of the executive office of EMIDA International will be:

- ❖ To create and supervise new EMIDA national antenna in countries who have already requested this
- ❖ To supervise the training of the first trainers within these countries in order to cascade the EMIDA training throughout these countries in the most cost-effective method using the “snowball effect”

- ❖ Research possibilities of working with existing RGA's or creating new revenue generating activities
- ❖ Ensure that women are fully integrated into all activities that are set-up
- ❖ Help with the conception or adaptation of training material
- ❖ To consider how to help countries without any organisations already linked to EMIDA International
- ❖ Follow and check all work and the spirit with which it is undertaken

How will EMIDA International achieve these objectives?

The founder members, currently all Swiss, want to achieve these objectives with the minimum of structural development necessary. Therefore, they have already established contact with existing organisations engaged in aid work with children and families, in work against violence or other development activities. They propose that new EMIDA structures in interested countries will be established through the local bases of these existing organisations.

The first organisations contacted immediately gave their agreement. The initial EMIDA training will be undertaken with the help of these local NGO's and then the "snowball" effect will be encouraged in a way that is adapted to the specific conditions of each country.

Therefore the essential financial requirements of this initial set-up, which are fundamental to the success of the project, relate to:

- ❖ Staff salaries in the executive office
- ❖ Office rental and associated expenses
- ❖ Training material, office equipment and supplies
- ❖ Travel to the new EMIDA bases
- ❖ Translation and essential publications

The EMIDA International committee hope that this document has convinced you:

- ❖ That the EMIDA work is essential
- ❖ That there has been international recognition of its value
- ❖ That the results obtained by EMIDA Cameroon are tangible
- ❖ That it is necessary to extend the work into other countries
- ❖ Of our strategy for this extension



We hope that you will consider supporting us financially so that the birth of EMIDA International is assured.

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