

Family Skills as a Prevention Measure for Substance Misuse and Child Protection for Families Affected by War and Displacement

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Healthy parenting is essential to early child development

Parenting supports a child's adjustment beyond their own individual resilience (Betancourt & Khan, 2008)

Harsh, inconsistent parenting predicts later poor outcomes: drug use, low school attainment, delinquency, poor mental health



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol

Effective Family Skills Programmes: what are they?

Programmes that aim to strengthen family protective factors such as **communication, trust, problem-solving skills, monitoring, conflict resolution** and **discipline techniques** that are relevant to their culture

Often include opportunities for parents and children to spend positive time together, as ways to strengthen the bonding and attachment between the two



Family Skills programmes
have been scientifically
proven to be successfully
adapted to different
contexts, needs and
cultures...

Can this approach help
families in humanitarian
or challenged settings?





One in every 113 people
in the world is a refugee



Families are the front line of defence

Over 1.5 billion people in the world are experiencing conflict and humanitarian challenges

**Primary caregiver-
'protective shield' or
further complicate war
stress**

**Family interaction
predictive of children's
adjustment in conflict
settings**

Qualitative exploration of the challenges of parenting children in refugee contexts

Recruitment areas: Syria and Turkey

Method: Interviews and Focus Groups

Sample: n=27, 8 interviews, 4 focus groups and 2 interviews with professional aid workers



El-Khani, A., Ulph, F., Peters, S., & Calam, R. (2016). Syria: The challenges of parenting in refugee situations of immediate displacement. *Intervention*, 14(2), 99-113.

El-Khani, A., Ulph, F., Peters, S., & Calam, R. (2017). Syria: coping mechanisms utilised by displaced refugee parents caring for their children in pre-resettlement contexts. *Intervention*, 15(1), 34-50.

A family multi-level
parenting and caregiver
support delivery model
for families living through
conflict and displacement

TRT+ Parenting Programme

5 child sessions (aged 8+ years) (15 children per group) + 5 parent sessions (15 per group); one child and one parent session per week

Strong Families Programme

3 sessions (families of children of all ages) (15 parents per group); one session per week

Parent Seminar + Booklet

1 or multiple parent sessions (20-30 parents) + booklet or handouts to take home

Leaflets providing basic parenting information

The Bread Wrapper Study

global mental health



INTERVENTIONS

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Daily bread: a novel vehicle for dissemination and evaluation of psychological first aid for families exposed to armed conflict in Syria

A. El-Khani*, K. Cartwright, A. Redmond and R. Calam

The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

Global Mental Health (2016), 3, e15, page 1 of 7. doi:10.1017/gmh.2016.9

Background. Risks to the mental health of children and families exposed to conflict in Syria are of such magnitude that research identifying how best to deliver psychological first aid is urgently required. This study tested the feasibility of a novel approach to large-scale distribution of information and data collection.

Methods. Routine humanitarian deliveries of bread by a bakery run by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) were used to distribute parenting information leaflets and questionnaires to adults looking after children in conflict zones inside Syria. Study materials were emailed to a project worker in Turkey. Leaflets and questionnaires requesting feedback

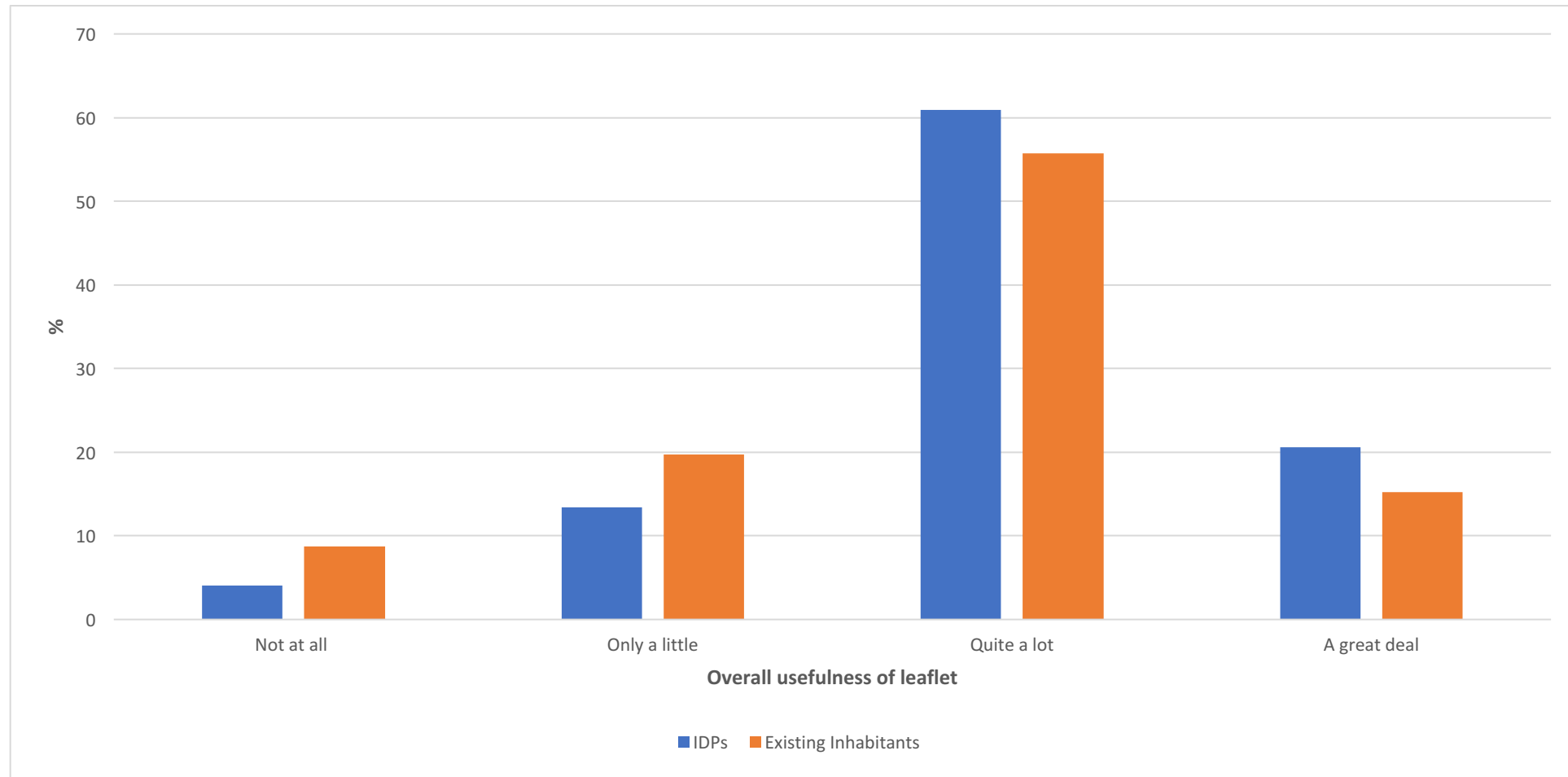




Parenting through the Syrian conflict

- NGO Watan suggested using their humanitarian supply routes into Syria
- Bread delivered to everyone in the conflict area
- All recipients and households are listed, so information can be sent specifically to families

Perceived overall usefulness of parenting leaflet



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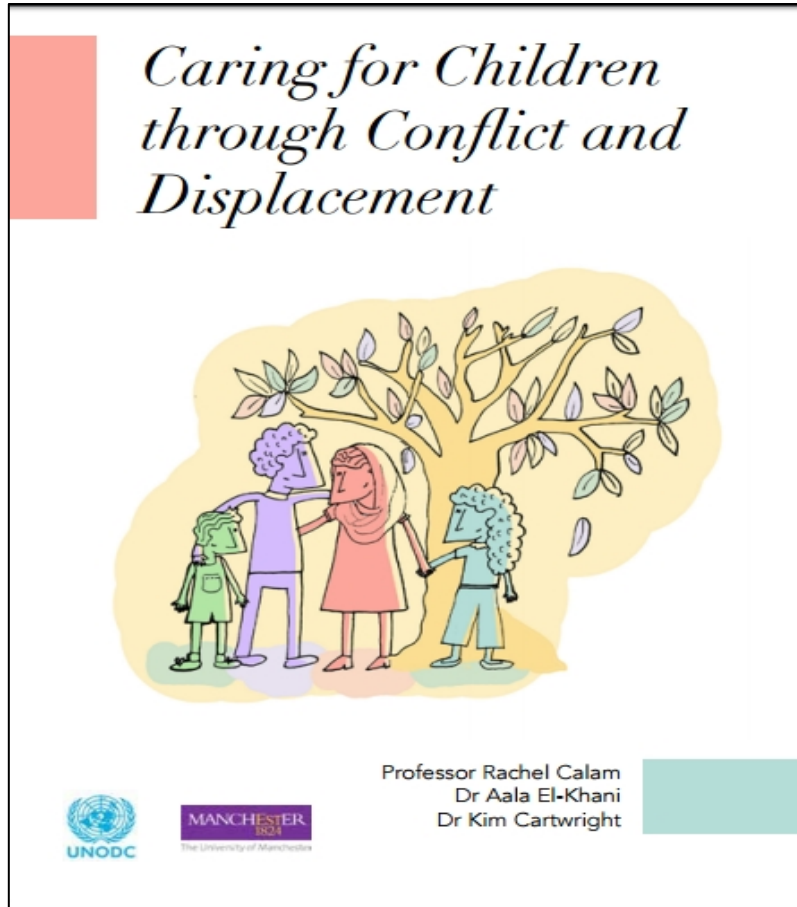
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Leaflets providing basic parenting information

Booklet and Seminar: 'Caring for Children through Conflict and Displacement'

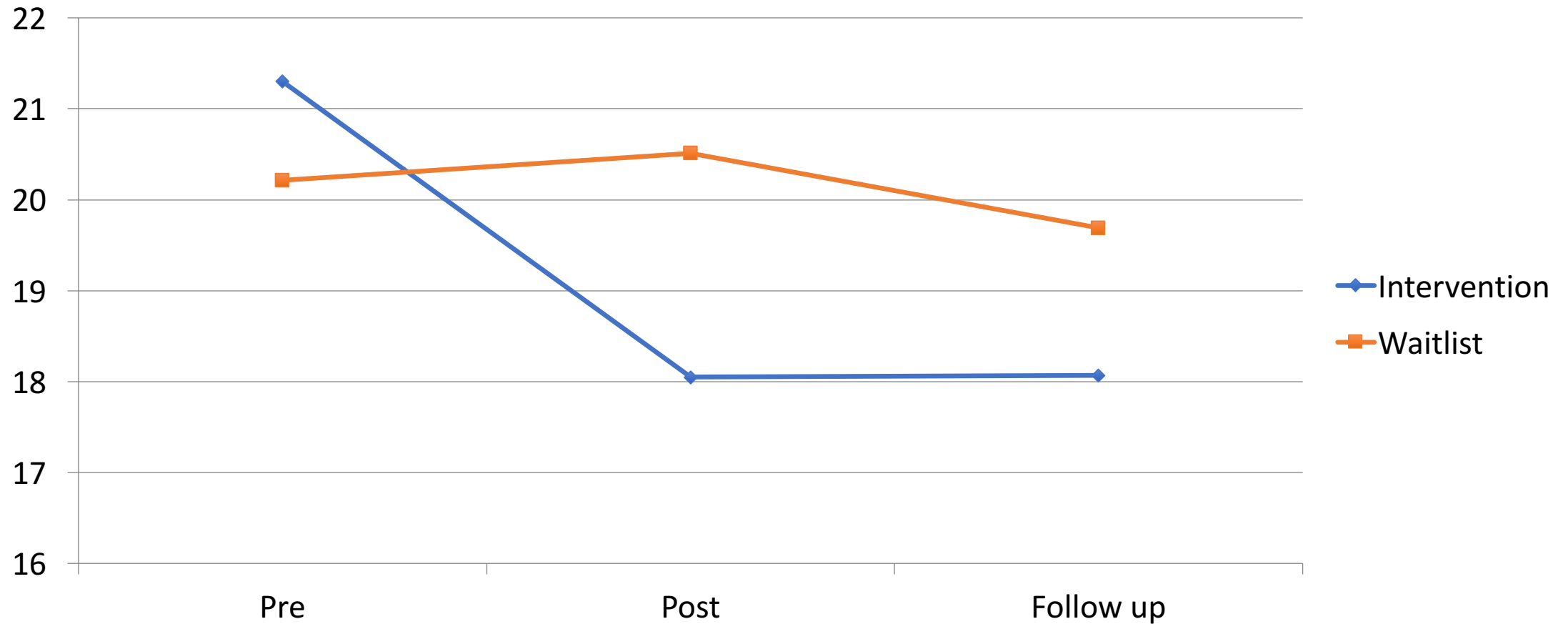


- No extensive training-
for low resource
settings
- 119 caregivers in
Nablus
- Open access

El-Khani, Maalouf, et al., 2019. Caregiving for Children through Conflict and Displacement; A pilot study testing the feasibility of delivering and evaluating a light touch parenting intervention for caregivers in the West Bank. Journal of International Psychology.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Child Total Difficulties



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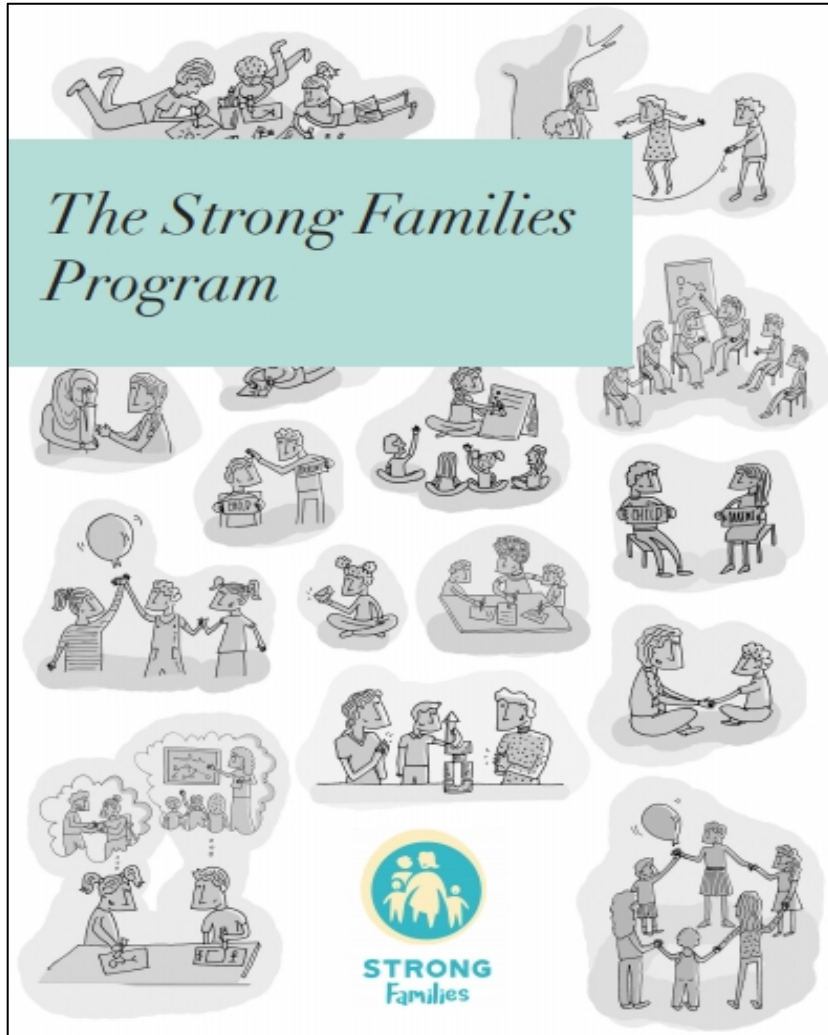
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The Strong Families Programme



Family Skills programme for families in Humanitarian & challenged settings

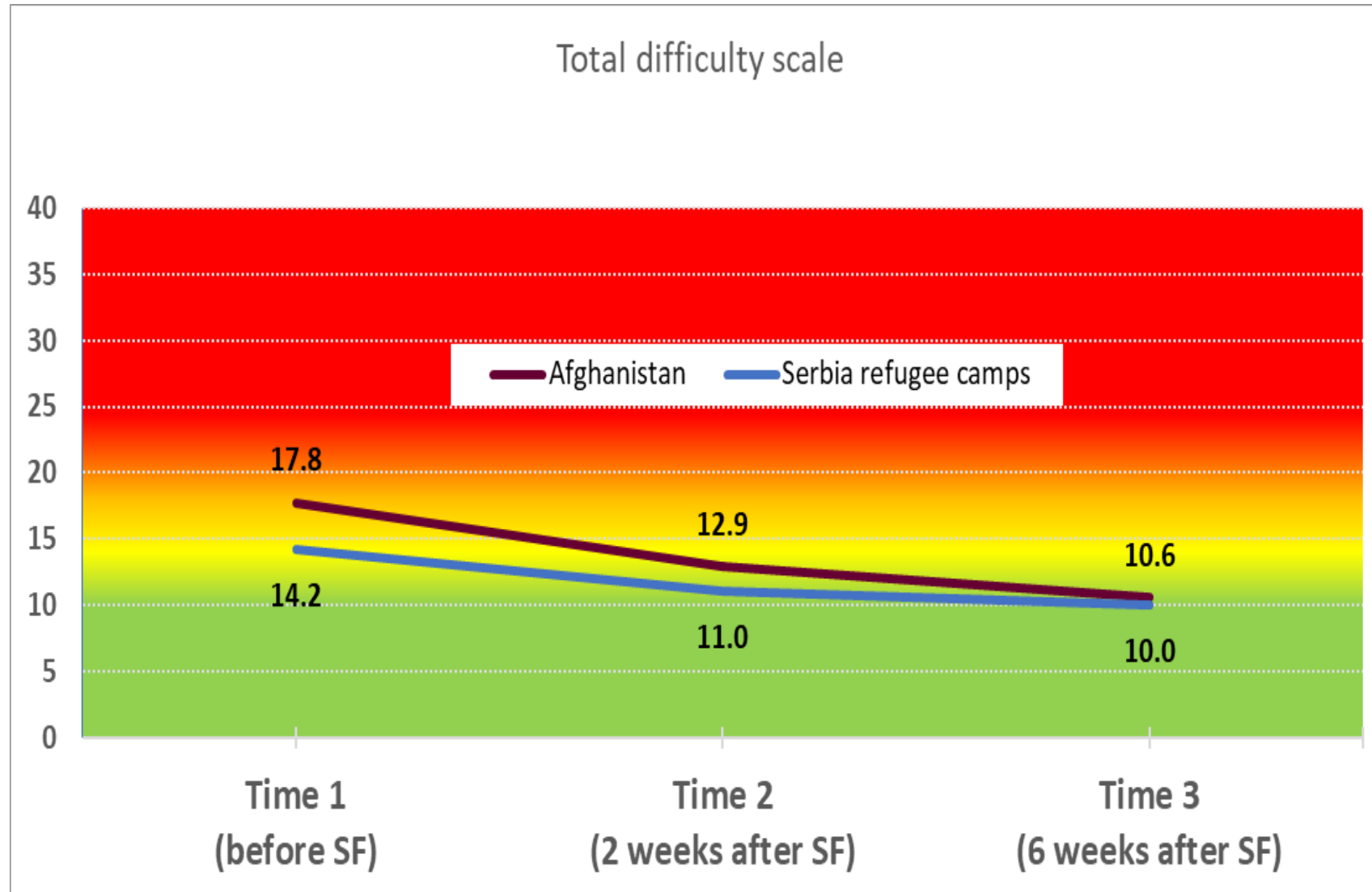
Aims to improve parenting skills, child well-being and family mental health

For caregivers with children aged 8-15

Light touch-only 3 sessions



Change in Total Strengths and Difficulties scores for children in **Afghanistan** and in refugee reception centers in **Serbia**



SDQ SCORES

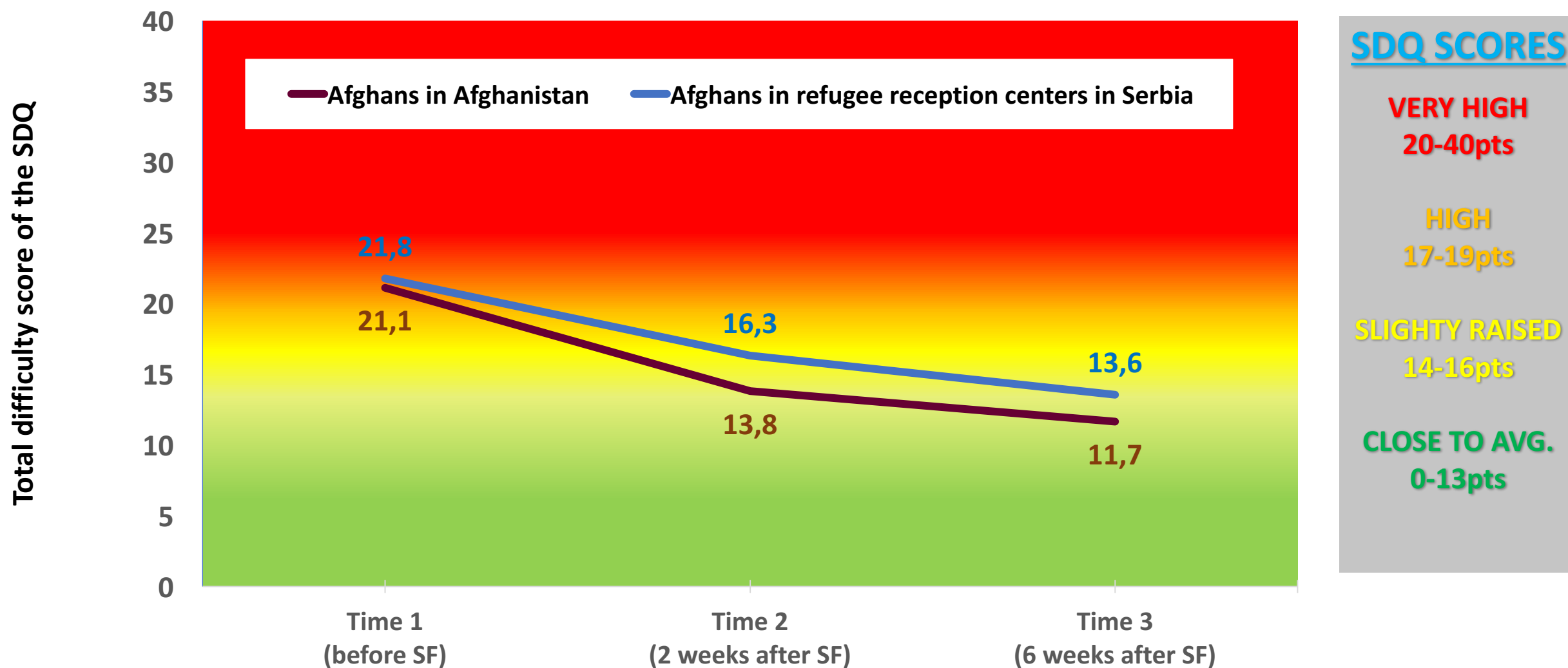
VERY HIGH
20-40pts

HIGH
17-19pts

SLIGHTLY RAISED
14-16pts

CLOSE TO AVG.
0-13pts

Change in Total Strengths and Difficulties scores for children in the very high or high category in Afghanistan (n=41) and in refugee reception centers in Serbia (n=9)



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Teaching Recovery Techniques plus Parenting (TRT+)

- Original program

Teaching Recovery Techniques (TRT)

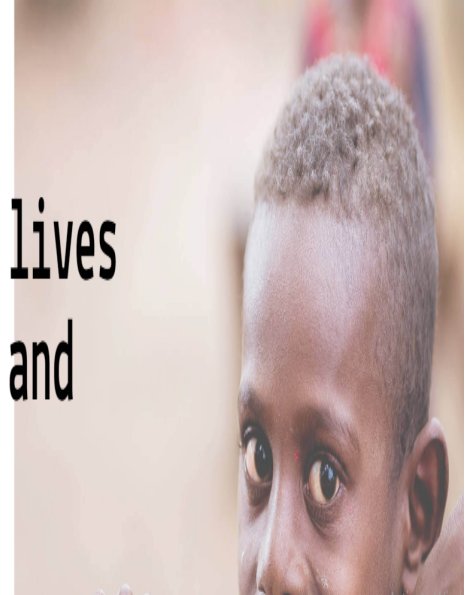
5 child trauma recovery sessions and 2 parent support sessions

- Enhanced program

Teaching Recovery Techniques plus Parenting (TRT+)

3 additional sessions for parents on parenting children experiencing post-traumatic stress

Improving
children's lives
after wars and
disasters



The University of Manchester

Testing TRT+ Parenting Program Turkey

- Significant improvements in children's wellbeing, behaviour and parental efficacy
- High engagement and completion rate



El-Khani, A., Cartwright, K., Ang, C., Henshaw, E., Tanveer, M., & Calam, R. (2018). Testing the feasibility of delivering and evaluating a child mental health recovery program enhanced with additional parenting sessions for families displaced by the Syrian conflict: A pilot study. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 24(2), 188.

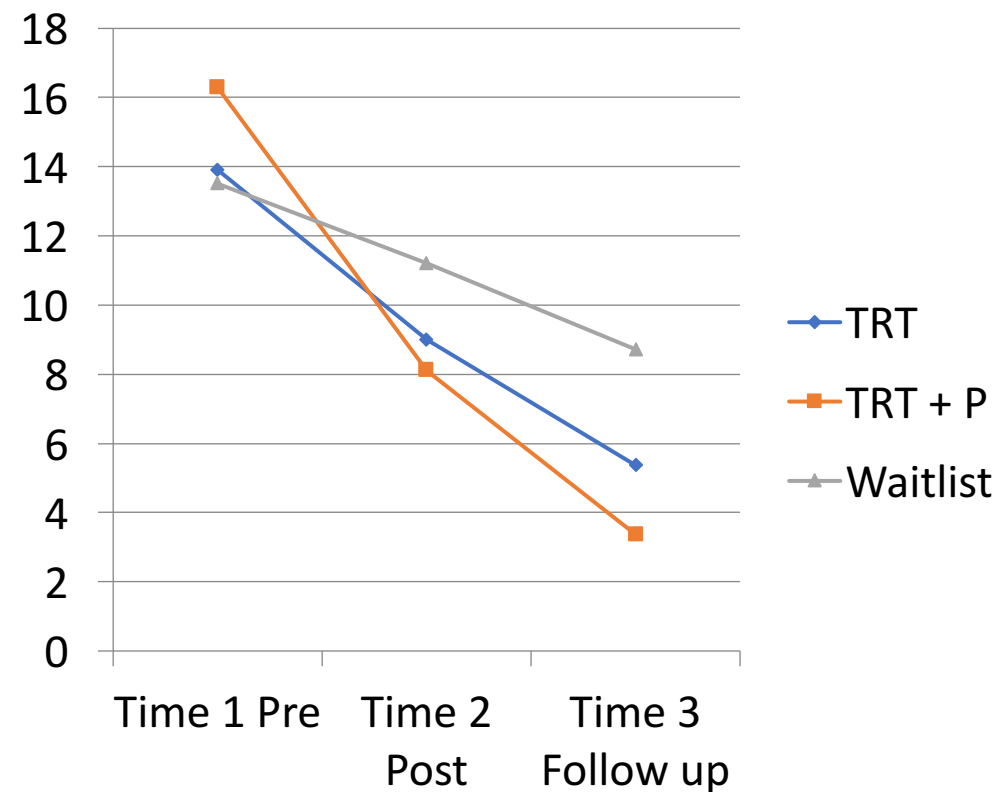
TRT + Parenting Program- Lebanon

- Developed remote Skype training
- 119 families
- RCT comparing TRT, TRT+ Parenting, Waitlist



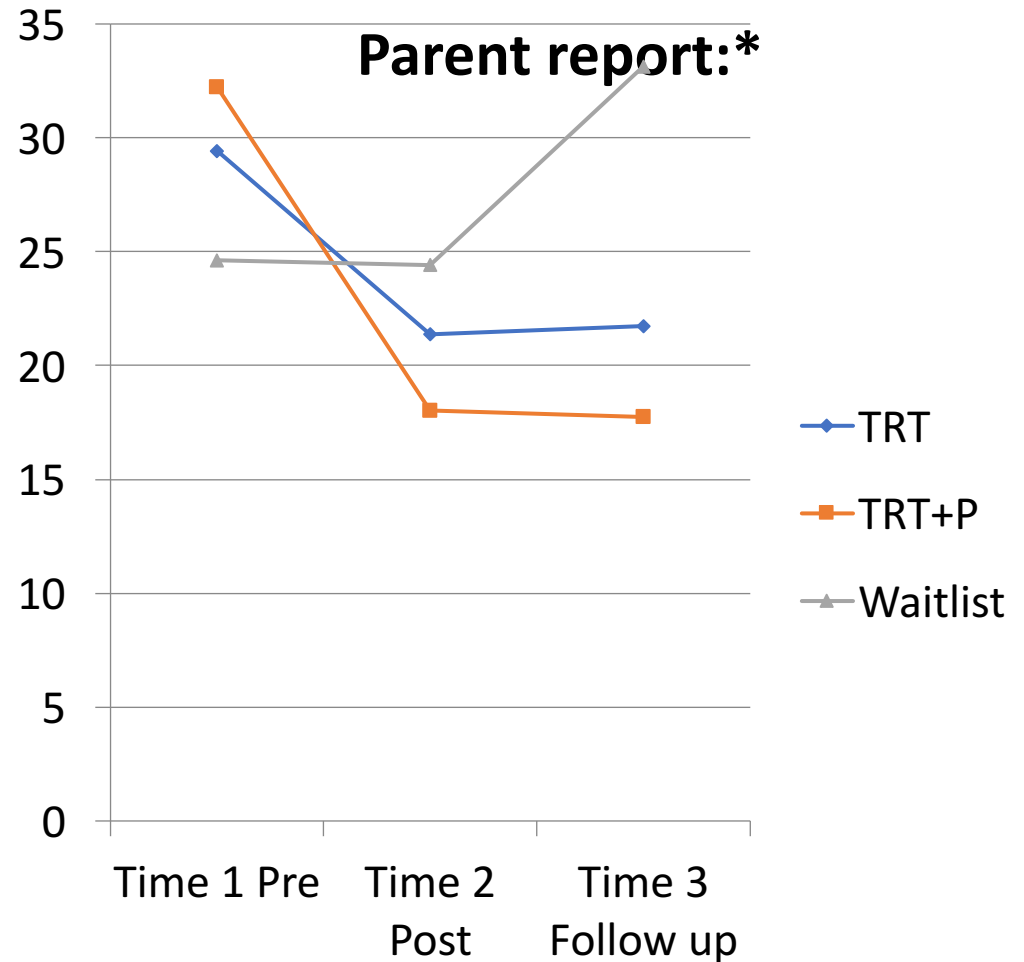
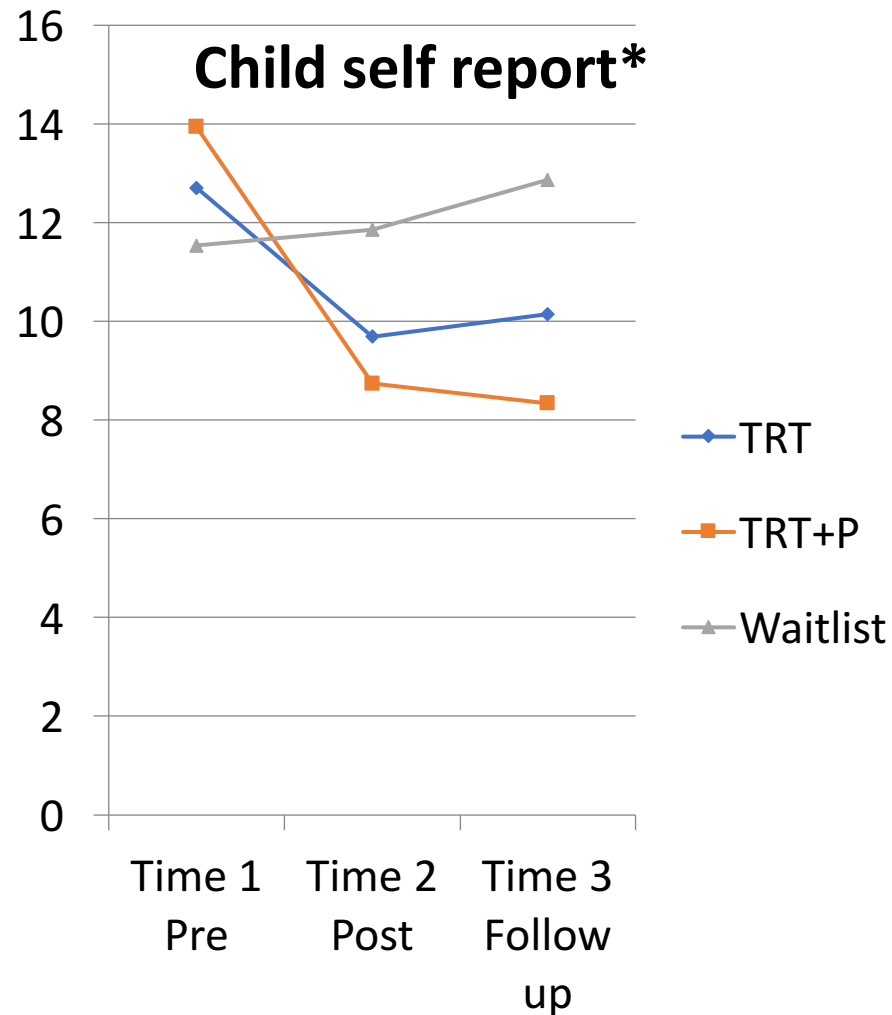
Child: CRIES

Intrusion **



- CRIES measures three aspects of stress post trauma: Intrusion, Avoidance and Arousal.
- All three showed significant effects, with significant effects of time
- Greatest reductions were in the TRT + Parenting group

SCARED Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders



Summary

Parenting is PREVENTION

Family skills programmes can be delivered in humanitarian and challenging circumstances

These tools are significantly improving child behaviour and family functioning—key features that build protection against uptake of drug use and engaging in risky behaviours



A happy ending to my nightmare, Refugee boy aged 11

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