



# **Empowering Local Faith Communities in Humanitarian Response: Lessons from the Field**

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# Introduction

MERATH<sup>1</sup> is a local, faith-based organization operating in the MENA region that engages in relief and development work primarily through local faith communities (LFCs), historically churches. With the recent emphasis on localization of aid there has been both great interest and great concern around localizing aid through LFCs. MERATH has been partnering with LFCs for the implementation of relief assistance in response to the Syrian crisis for the past five years. This case study presents an overview of MERATH's approach, challenges, impact, and recommendations for effectively localizing aid through LFCs based on MERATH's first-hand experience and lessons learned. Through this case study MERATH contends that while there are legitimate concerns and challenges localizing aid through LFCs, with adequate training, monitoring and equipping, LFCs can implement relief assistance according to humanitarian standards and be an excellent resource for the localization of aid, providing contextualized and holistic response in an efficient manner, that can enable the international humanitarian sector to have a greater reach and impact with more efficiency and cost effectiveness.

As MERATH, we believe that one of the core strengths of partnering with LFCs in humanitarian work is the unique opportunity to provide assistance in the context of community. This relational approach inherently affirms human dignity by fostering holistic engagement. It likewise carries the benefits of greater potential for far-reaching, sustainable impact in the form of transformational change that is organically contextualized by the pre-existing community and driven by local faith actors (LFAs). *Social capital* and *spiritual capital* are thus at the heart of our approach (ter Haar 2013).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the role of MERATH is best described as that of a *mediating actor* in translating secular humanitarian language and principles into appropriate religio-cultural terms, and complementing the work of local faith institutions through capacity building, provision of technical expertise, and advocacy to the broader international community (Kraft 2015).<sup>3</sup> MERATH currently serves over 6,000 refugee and displaced households in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq through the provision of food and medical assistance, non-food items, livelihoods opportunities, education, and child protection initiatives. For the past four years MERATH has been assisting local churches in establishing and running non-formal education projects reaching over 1,200 refugee and at-risk children in Lebanon, and for the past three years has been operating child friendly spaces for approximately 720 children through a church network inside Syria.

This case study will briefly examine MERATH's localized approach, including a spotlight on child-focused programming in education in emergencies in Lebanon and child protection in Syria, providing quantitative and qualitative evidence of its community-level impact based on focus group discussions, formal surveys (SDQs), and studies conducted by internal and external researchers (Tiwari et al 2016).<sup>4</sup> This analysis will thus serve to illustrate MERATH's unique approach, share lessons learned and provide key recommendations for effectively and successfully partnering with LFCs for the localization of aid.

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<sup>1</sup> Middle East Revive and Thrive (MERATH) is the Relief and Development arm of The Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD).

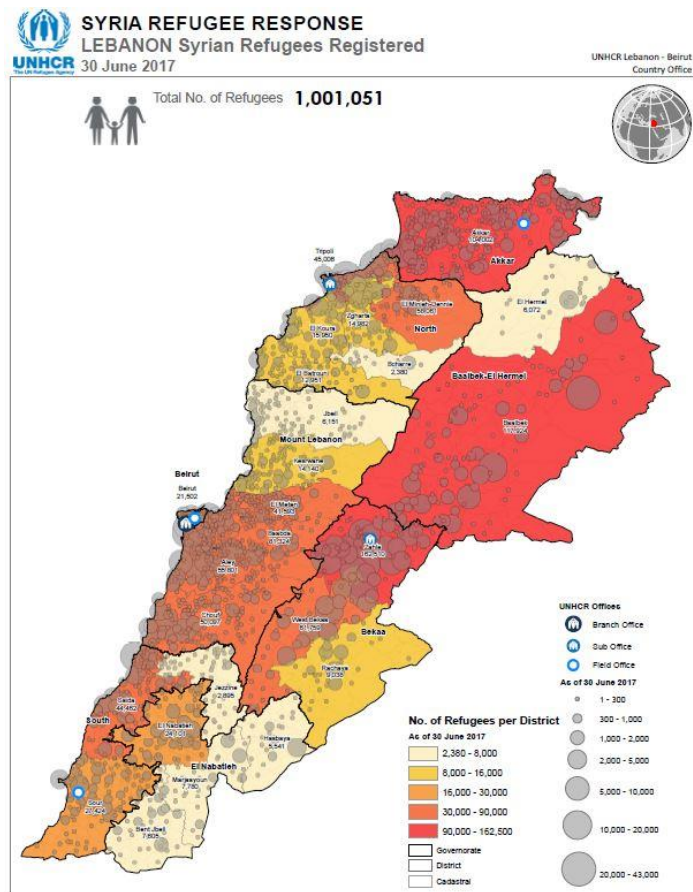
<sup>2</sup> ter Haar, Gerrie, *Faith in Civil Society: Religious Actors as Drivers of Change*, Report no. ISSN 1403-1264, Uppsala Centre for Sustainable Development, Uppsala University. Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2013, 31-44.

<sup>3</sup> Kraft, Kathryn, *The Many Roles of Mediating Actors in the Responses of Local Faith Communities to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*, Working paper, 2015, 1-26.

<sup>4</sup> Tiwari, Meera, Susannah Pickering-Saqq, and Kathryn Kraft. *Lessons-Learned Evaluation True Vine School, in collaboration with MERATH (LSESD)*, Working paper, International Development, University of East London, 2016. 1-26.

## Context

As the Syrian crisis enters the seventh year without a clear end in sight, the scale of humanitarian need continues to increase. The crisis has forced more than 5.2 million Syrians across borders and displacing an estimated 6.3 million internally within Syria.<sup>5</sup> Countries in the region, including Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, continue to host the vast majority of Syrian refugees. Resources are also increasingly strained in these host countries where the majority of refugees still remain, including Lebanon. As a result, 69% of people living in Syria are in extreme poverty with 35% in abject poverty, and within Lebanon 71% of Syrian families are living below the poverty line.<sup>6</sup> In order to survive, Syrians in both countries have adopted negative coping strategies such as selling household goods and assets like land and homes in Syria, incurring debt for daily survival expenses, reducing daily meals, and many are even resorting to child labor and early marriage<sup>7</sup>.



Within Syria currently 13.5 million people require humanitarian assistance, in addition to some 5.2 million people registered as refugees in neighboring countries,<sup>8</sup> 6.3 million people are displaced within Syria itself, with 928,117 recorded displacements in the last 12 months<sup>9</sup>. With an FAO estimate of human population in Syria at 18.5 million<sup>10</sup>, over half of the population has been forced from their homes, and many people have been displaced multiple times. Fragmentation of markets, lack of production for household consumption, lack of cash/income to purchase food items and declining purchasing power (as reflected by terms of trade) have contributed to reduced food availability at the household level. Some 50 percent of households reduced the number of meals and more than 30 percent restrict adult consumption to prioritize children.<sup>11</sup> Approximately 6.9 million people are food insecure and a further 3.1 million are at risk of food insecurity.<sup>12</sup> Children and youth, 1 in 3<sup>13</sup> (millions) of whom have known nothing but conflict, comprise more than half of the displaced, as well as half of those in need of humanitarian assistance.

<sup>5</sup> USAID Syria Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #7 August 4, 2017 p4

<sup>6</sup> Humanitarian Needs Overview Syria 2017 as of December 2016 p6

<sup>7</sup> Child Marriage Study UN Population Fund Jan 31 2017 p1

<sup>8</sup> USAID Syria Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #7 August 4, 2017 p4

<sup>9</sup> Syria Flash Update July 2017 p1

<sup>10</sup> FAO-WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to Syria November 2016 p43

<sup>11</sup> FAO Syria Sit Rep July 2017 p1

<sup>12</sup> FAO Syria Sit Rep July 2017 p1

<sup>13</sup> Whole of Syria Child Protection 2017 Operational Strategy p1

Lebanon hosts an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees, highest per capita rate in the world, and continues to receive new arrivals. Lebanon stopped allowing legal refugee migration in 2015 and to date over 80% of refugees reside in the country illegally. Overall this is why refugees are dependent on food, cash and in-kind aid to help provide for their families. Preliminary data from 2017 shows 92% of refugee households are food insecure in Lebanon with decreasing consumption and dietary diversity.<sup>14</sup> Nearly all refugees (95%) adopted food-related coping strategies to deal with the lack of food or money to buy food.<sup>15</sup> Close to half of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon are children, amounting to a population of school-age children that exceeds the number of Lebanese school children attending the public school. Out of approximately 487,000 registered Syrian school-age children in Lebanon, UNHCR reported that only 147,000 were enrolled in the public school as of June 2016. The 2016 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) reported that 48% of registered Syrian school aged children in Lebanon were out of school. This number increases in the Bekaa Valley with a reported 70% of school aged Syrian children out of school and 84% of secondary age Syrian students out of school. While the Ministry of Education (MEHE) is making good progress towards integrating refugee children into the public school system by opening second shifts for non-Lebanese students, there still remains a significant gap of 250,000 – 300,000 children who lack access to formal education.



With all of these issues the humanitarian system's resources are strained and insufficient to meet the need. This leaves large gaps for LFCs and other actors like MERATH to fill. Throughout the crisis MERATH has provided over 10,000 monthly food portions at times, with current numbers at 5,500 per month. Additionally, in education programs MERATH is seeking to fill the gap in education access by supporting over 1,200 out of school children with quality non-formal education in a safe, protective environment so that this generation of Syrian children will not be lost, but continue to have a hope and future. All of this work is accomplished, not through MERATH's large infrastructure and staffing, but through truly localized response of faith community members within church networks throughout Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

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<sup>14</sup> Lebanon Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASyR) 2017 Preliminary Data

<sup>15</sup> Lebanon VASyR 2016 p62



## MERATH's Approach

As a humanitarian organization MERATH's unique role is that of a *mediating actor*.<sup>16</sup> Rather than implementing projects directly, this approach equips and empowers LFCs to play a key role in both aid delivery and community development. The three core competencies of this approach are as follows:

**Connect:** MERATH connects LFCs to the broader international community, linking them to the humanitarian sector. This serves to empower LFCs ensuring that their values and perspectives will be heard, while also providing support through ties to external donors and stakeholders. MERATH likewise connects LFCs to each other forming broader networks that increase the capacity and scale of humanitarian interventions, while also allowing for mutual learning across LFCs, including the sharing of contextualized best practices.

**Catalyze:** MERATH catalyzes LFCs by tapping into their pre-existing desire and capacity for humanitarian response, while likewise augmenting that capacity through ongoing training and equipping. The forming of LFC networks is likewise a catalyzing force for transformative collective action on a broader scale.

**Complement:** MERATH complements the work of LFCs in order to maximize local capacity by easing some of the administrative and logistical burden of humanitarian response through its mediating role. This approach likewise helps to mitigate the risk of instrumentalizing LFCs in an assimilating process.



<sup>16</sup> Kraft, *The Many Roles of Mediating Actors*, 2015.

In very practical terms MERATH's approach is typically carried out in the following roles:

### **MERATH's Role**

- Provide sector specific technical expertise for program design and training
- Build and maintain relationships with external donors
- Raise and maintain project funding including proposal development and reporting
- Maintain sector and context specific knowledge and expertise
- Train and equip LFCs for project implementation including humanitarian minimum standards and best practices, community outreach and beneficiary selection, financial management and reporting, monitoring and evaluation
- Monitor and evaluate projects in partnership with LFCs
- Provide avenues for connection and collaboration between LFCs, CBOs and NGOs

### **LFC's Role**

- Conduct needs assessments and provide contextualized program design ideas
- Provide real-time information and feedback on change in the environment, needs and security situation
- Conduct community outreach, beneficiary targeting and selection
- Maintain relationship with beneficiary population
- Conduct relevant data collection for reporting in partnership with MERATH
- Coordinate with other LFCs and CBOs involved in localized humanitarian response
- Implement programs:
  - Recruit qualified volunteers and staff from the LFC and impacted community
  - Manage all aspects of food and NFI distribution
  - Provide facilities for relief programs
  - Implement CFS and non-formal education in emergencies
- Monitor and evaluate projects in partnership with MERATH, providing insight into relevant monitoring metrics
- Share relevant learning and feedback to MERATH

## **Challenges**

**Proselytization:** Working in partnership with LFCs, it is essential that clear and candid dialogue around non-conditionality and impartiality take place with LFCs on an ongoing basis, highlighting possible issues of power dynamics and religious manipulation and ensuring that clear mitigation strategies are in place (see Recommendations). However, it is likewise essential that the broader humanitarian community not be afraid to engage with these issues, as there is much learning that needs to be done around the important role of LFCs in local contexts as religious actors. Moreover, proselytization is something that all humanitarian organizations struggle with on some level (Gingerich et al 2017).<sup>17</sup> Secular NGOs who enter communities where religion plays an integral role in shaping the dominant worldview are often

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

just as guilty of imposing their “belief” framework on local populations. Thus, LFCs can often provide a more contextualized response, given a proper understanding of the power dynamics at play and provided appropriate mitigation strategies are in place.

**Capacity:** The linking of LFCs to form a broader network can provide the opportunity for large- scale humanitarian response without overwhelming the capacity of any one faith community. However, a relational approach is likewise essential in monitoring fatigue levels of local partners and mitigating the risk of burnout. Capacity building of LFCs can also serve to mitigate this risk through training around self-care, as well as through the passing along of more efficient systems for aid delivery and project implementation. Through experience, MERATH has learned that organizations must change the way local volunteers are supported in a short term and protracted crisis. In short term scenarios volunteers can persist with less support, but in a protracted crisis volunteers require additional support and appropriate stipends to avoid fatigue and burnout.

## Impact

- 8-10 full time MERATH program staff supporting programs that reach roughly 10,000 households (average of 5 per household) with assistance such as food aid, NFIs, health services and/or education and psychosocial support for children on a regular basis
- This wide reach is possible through localizing aid initiatives by equipping over 50 LFC partners and hundreds of volunteers operating in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq for direct implementation of humanitarian assistance:
  - 5,130 families in Syrian and Lebanon receive monthly food assistance
  - 4,300 NFIs distributed monthly including milk and diapers, blankets and mattresses
  - 1,200 out of school children (OOSC) provided with ongoing non-formal education, psychosocial support and child protection through eight learning center in Lebanon
  - 720 children in Syria provided psychosocial support, child protection and safe space to play through three child friendly spaces
  - 3,900 families enabled to remain inside Syria due to month assistance and community support of the LFC



*“Sometimes my husband sits with me and says, ‘I can’t believe where we were and where we are now’. In Syria, my family and I were happy, life was good. Now we live in a small tent in the Bekaa Valley. My husband tries to find day labor, but work is scarce and his health is not good. We were introduced to the church by some of our neighbors. They are helping us tremendously now. Through the church we receive monthly food assistance and my children are finally back in school. Between displacement in Syria and moving to Lebanon they missed four years of school. The education program at the church has helped them catch up on the years they missed and has changed them a lot. They are happy now and confident. Even during the weekend they want to go school. The teachers are like second mothers to them and care for them so much. One of my son’s said to me last week, ‘Why are you shouting at me, the teacher’s at school don’t shout at me!’ They were extremely sad to leave Syria and affected by the war. The school has not only helped them academically, but emotionally.”*



### ***Spotlight on Child-focused Programs implemented by LFCs***

During the 2016/17 academic year 1,200 out of school children were enabled to continue their education through the non-formal education programs implemented by MERATH's partnering LFCs. Many of these students had missed 1-4 years of school due to conflict, school closures, displacement and relocation, and lack of space in the formal school system in Lebanon. Over the past four years, MERATH's LFCs in Lebanon identified this need and sought to fill the gap in education access by providing non-formal education programs including basic literacy and numeracy, Arabic, English, Math and Science. These programs are offered in a safe, protective environment implemented by LFCs who are integral members of the local community, build relationships with parents and provide holistic support to the whole family through multiple services.

- 89.3% average attendance rates for non-formal education programs in Lebanon in the 2016/17
- 89.1% average completion rate for children in non-formal education programs in Lebanon in the 2016/17 academic year

*"I am from Syria! This school is my home, and I love my teachers!"*

*"I love the teachers! They teach us how to love and not hate."*

*-Girls age 8 and 9, Bekaa Valley Lebanon*



- Monitoring and evaluation including qualitative feedback from parents indicates this high success rate is due to much more than just quality teaching, but the result of the safe, caring and protective environment of the learning centers where children are protected from discrimination, have the opportunity to make friends and regain a sense of routine and normalcy, receive caring, loving treatment from teachers and parents are treated with dignity and respect and feel welcomed into a larger local community that cares for their needs and about them as individuals.



*"My biggest dream is that my children become successful and educated and learn how to read and write. My family is everything. I couldn't ask for anything else. I am so happy because my children are learning now. The educators are so kind, they really take care of my children and my children are so happy."*

*-Mother of a student, Beirut*



In Syria 720 children benefit from three Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) implemented by LFCs. These CFS provide children a safe place to play, be children, maintain a sense of normalcy and routine and receive psychosocial support. Despite having to pause programming periodically due to ongoing conflict, the CFS provide an important support to Syrian families who made the decision to remain in their community or were internally displaced. To enable an objective and quantitative assessment of the psychosocial impact of the program, MERATH provided training and materials for CFS caregivers to administer a behavior and well-being assessment with parents of a sample group students. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief behavioral screening questionnaire for 3-16 year olds. Parents answer a questionnaire that assesses the well-being of their child by evaluating the following five areas – emotional difficulties, conduct difficulties, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship difficulties and pro-social behavior. Baseline and end line assessments were conducted for two CFS in 2016 and 2017. Analysis of the results show a marked increase in the psychosocial well-being of students involved in the CFS (see Appendix A and B for detailed report)<sup>18</sup>.

- In CFS “A” children scoring “high” or “very high” in the total difficulties score decreased from 46.25% in 2016 to 8.33% in 2017
- In CFS “B” children scoring “high” or “very high” in the total difficulties score decreased from 32% in 2016 to 12% in 2017

## Recommendations

After five years of experience, learning and evaluation of partnering with LFCs for the implementation of humanitarian assistance, it is MERATH’s belief that LFCs can be qualified and highly effective partners in the provision of humanitarian assistance, even providing more contextualized and holistic support than INGOs. MERATH encourages the international humanitarian community to consider LFCs as viable, valuable partners in the localization of aid and offers the following recommendations from key learning and evaluation of programs. MERATH recognizes the valid concerns and challenges of partnering with LFCs but asserts that these challenges can be effectively overcome and offers the following recommendations for addressing those challenges.

- **Prioritize training in humanitarian standards before crisis response begins:** The tendency for LFCs to proselytize or show partiality to LFC members is common, natural and should be expected because proselytization and care for members are key tenets of most religious communities. However, care for the poor and marginalized, standing for justice and unconditional love are also common tenets of LFCs. Many LFCs will have previously responded locally to small-scale needs of their community intuitively, out of religious motivation or compassion, but training in key international humanitarian standards, including impartiality, non-conditionality and reporting requirements, is essential to equip LFCs to respond on a larger scale according to international standards. Such training should be done well before LFCs begin implementing projects to ensure projects begin in alignment with international standards and meet donor expectations. MERATH’s experience has shown that when this training is prioritized before planning and implementation begins, the program has much greater success in complying with international standards. In the midst of crisis, the temptation is to respond rapidly, leaving little time for a foundation of training. LFCs with little background in professional humanitarian response will not be as successful in professional response without a strong

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<sup>18</sup> Results use accurate randomized samples but did not have corresponding control groups due to limited resources.

foundation of training. Therefore, equipping LFCs for rapid response in disaster and conflict prone areas is highly recommended for successful rapid response.

- **Understand and capitalize on LFC religious motivations:** LFCs have strong religious and cultural convictions that inspire and motivate their community service. Training on humanitarian standards using humanitarian language alone may not connect and inspire LFCs. Worse yet, if organizations partnering with LFCs are not seen to understand the religious language and convictions, LFCs may apply their own religious language and activities ad hoc, resulting in programs that may not align with donor expectations and international standards. Therefore, it is essential that staff be able to speak the “language” of the LFC and understand their religious motivations, while also possessing the ability to translate it into the standard vocabulary of external stakeholders and the broader humanitarian community. This can be achieved by hiring staff from within LFCs or acquiring staff with a moderate to advanced level of religious literacy.
- **Create clear partnership agreements:** After providing foundational training in essential humanitarian standards, it is recommended to draft clear partnership agreements outlining guidelines and standards for implementation in addition to expectations and responsibilities of both the LFCs and the partnering organization. MERATH has found that with clear partnership agreements in place, LFCs know up front what is expected of them and what guidelines and standards they are expected to follow in order to implement the program. If certain LFCs are not comfortable with those standards, they can opt out of the partnership. Additionally, this agreement provides the partnering organization the foundation to hold LFCs accountable to humanitarian guidelines and standards.
- **Clearly defined separation of religious activities from humanitarian work:** MERATH has found that training and setting clear separation guidelines in the partnership agreement at the beginning of the program is essential for program success. This helps to ensure that beneficiaries are free to choose to engage or remain separate from the broader life of the LFC (e.g. holding food assistance distributions separate from church meetings), and provides perimeters for the LFC to continue their vital spiritual role in the community.
- **Maintain a relational approach:** Recognize LFCs as equal partners, not employees or merely contractors. Such an approach prioritizes time for listening, mutual learning and capitalizes on the local, contextualized and communal knowledge of the LFC. MERATH has experienced that LFCs have been providing holistic, local and contextualized support within their communities on a small scale long before humanitarian agencies enter to respond to specific crises. Therefore, LFCs have valuable knowledge and lessons learned that can be shared to inform larger humanitarian response. It is recommended to value this knowledge and partnership, allowing the experience and knowledge of LFCs to inform larger response initiatives.
- **Promote LFC holistic engagement in the context of community:** LFCs are able to meet a variety of human needs, providing physical, emotional, and spiritual care. This can likewise help to uphold human dignity and serve as a source of hope to vulnerable and displaced populations. MERATH recommends recognizing the additional support that LFCs can provide that may be outside of the traditional humanitarian response and encouraging LFCs to continue their holistic engagement and spiritual role in the community with clearly defined separation as noted above.
- **Form networks of LFCs:** This helps to drive large scale collective action, strengthens ties between communities, and facilitates mutual learning. The latter can be further enhanced by creating platforms for sharing of contextualized best practices within and across sectors.
- **Provide ongoing training and equipping of LFCs:** This helps to ensure quality programming in line with humanitarian standards, while also providing an opportunity to raise awareness around issues such as child protection and SGBV.

- **Make use of proprietary tools and seasoned external evaluators:** This helps to lend legitimacy to the contribution of LFCs through an evidence-based approach that seeks to capture transformational change by documenting and evaluating the impact of the work.

*Before the war our situation was stable and good. I was married and used to dream about having babies. I worked in the house and made it nice while my husband worked on our farm and provided a good living for our family. I had five girls, but dreamed of having a boy. When I finally had my son I felt all my dreams had been fulfilled - I had my house, children, both girls and a boy. I was satisfied. When I would look at my son I would think I owned the whole world.*

*My world came crashing in when the war started. Fighting came to our village and in thirty minutes I lost my son, my niece and my father. There is nothing I can do to explain this moment, there aren't enough words. I was very lost when we first arrived in Lebanon. It was winter and very snowy, a new place, and I was responsible for my five young daughters on my own. I didn't know what to do.*

*My cousin was the first one in our family to meet the pastor of the nearby Lebanese church. She told me I should meet him. I was depressed and thought if I could just be happy again it would be better than money. If I could feel good on the inside it would be better than anything else. It affects the kids a lot since I'm the mom. If I am not happy, my children are also not happy. So I went to the church and found out that they were helping refugees in the informal camp where I lived. They were providing food vouchers, blankets and stoves for winter, and had opened a learning center for Syrian children who could not get in the Lebanese public school. I benefited from all these things, but even more I found friends, a community and hope. After two years, I am happy again. Sometimes I think if I never came to Lebanon and met this church, what would have happened to me. Sometimes I still feel bad, but this community helps me and makes me feel better. Money is important but at least now I have happiness again and believe that someone loves me.*

*My children go to the learning center at the church. Everything has improved for them since they started going to school here. They are learning, growing and aware of everything around them. They are emotionally better now too. They have friends and a place to play. They ask to go to a park to play, but there is nowhere safe to play except at school.*

*I hope to go back to Syria. I dream of a stable life with my husband and daughters in one home again. I hope my children continue to learn and get an education. It is the most important thing that they get an education, learn the value of life, how to respect others and live a civilized life.*

*-Mother, Bekaa Valley Lebanon*

## Acknowledgements

MERATH acknowledges, with gratitude, the hard work and dedication of its LFC partners and volunteers who give of their time and resources in order to serve vulnerable communities and make this work possible. MERATH also thanks their generous funding partners for their continuing support and partnership as MERATH grows and learns in this unique approach of engaging LFCs for the localization of aid.



## Appendix A

# CFS “A” Phase II- SDQ Results

June 2017

Report Author: Kezia M’Clelland, Children in Emergencies Specialist, VIVA

## Survey Sample

Children surveyed were of a similar age/gender breakdown, with slightly higher numbers of older boys and fewer older girls in 2017, but with a similar average age of 8.3 in 2016 and 8.2 in 2017:

	Girls 4-9	Girls 10-16	Boys 4-9	Boys 10-16	Total
2016	31	21	20	9	81
2017	32	13	23	16	84

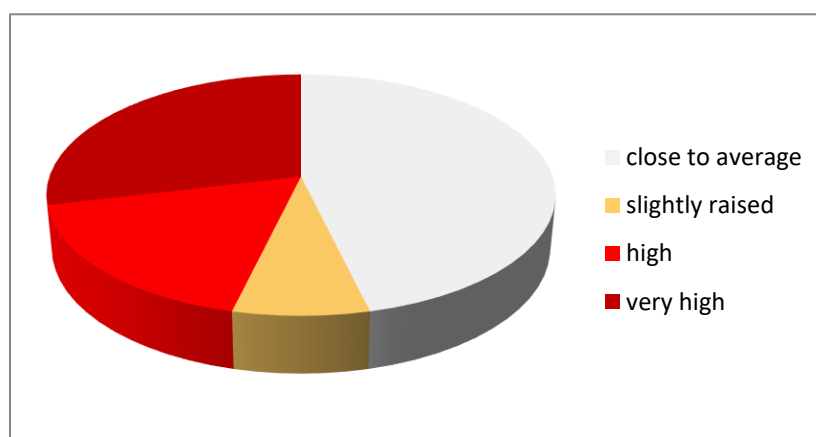
*Figure 1 Survey Sample Age-Gender Disaggregation*

## Total Difficulties

The average total difficulties score overall has reduced from 14.5 to 9.9, a reduction of 4.6 points (where a score of 14 or more indicates a raised level of difficulties). The most striking change in the SDQ results in CFS “A” can be seen in the reduction of children who have raised total difficulties scores. In 2016, almost half of all children (46.25%) had scores that indicated high or very high level of psychosocial difficulties, while in 2017 this has reduced dramatically to only 8.33% of children. Over 80% of children now have scores which are close to average.

2016

Close to Average	46.25
Slightly Raised	7.5
High	17.5
Very High	28.75



*Figure 2 Individual Total Difficulties Scores- 2016*

2017

Close to Average	82.14
Slightly Raised	9.52
High	3.57
Very High	4.76

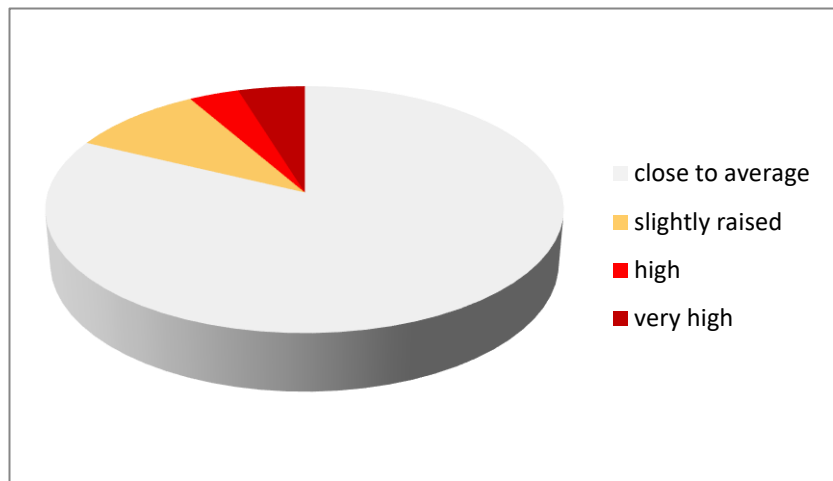


Figure 3 Individual Total Difficulties Scores- 2017

## Change by Age and Gender

Girls have continued to have a slightly lower total difficulties score than boys, and the reduction in difficulties has occurred on a similar scale in both genders. The noticeable difference is that boys aged 10-14 have seen the most significant reduction (more than 5 points), with less of a change for younger boys (3.4 points).

	Girls	Girls 4-9	Girls 10-14
2016	14.14	14.4	13.76
2017	9.09	9.03	9.23

	Boys	Boys 4-9	Boys 10-14
2016	15.11	14.91	15.67
2017	10.91	11.46	10.13

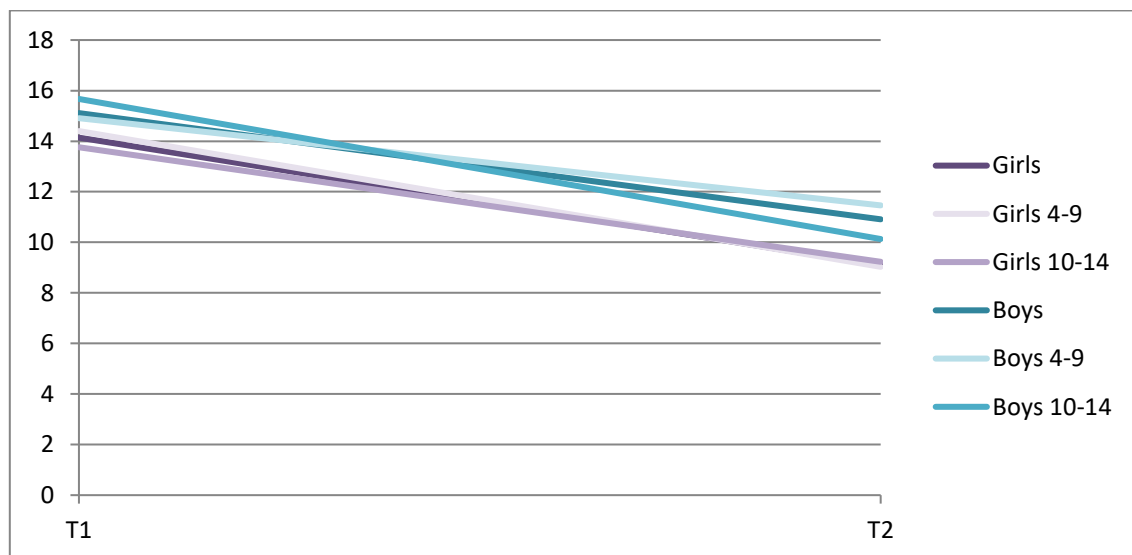


Figure 4 Change in Total Difficulties by Age & Gender: T1= 2016, T2= 2017

## Change in High and Very High Scores

Scores for difficulties in these four areas have reduced. While the proportion of children having high or very high levels of difficulty in their conduct (behaviour) has stayed roughly the same at around 23%, and is now the most significant of these difficulties. Peer problems have also seen a smaller reduction from 13.8% to 8.3%. Children having significant struggles with hyperactive behaviour and emotional difficulties have seen significant reductions – for emotional difficulties the figure is at one third of what it was in 2016 (now 10.7% compared to 32.5%), and hyperactivity has reduced to just 6% of children having serious problems in this area compared to 15% in 2016.

	Emotional	Conduct	Hyperactivity	Peer problems
2016	32.5%	23.8%	15.0%	13.8%
2017	10.7%	22.6%	6.0%	8.3%

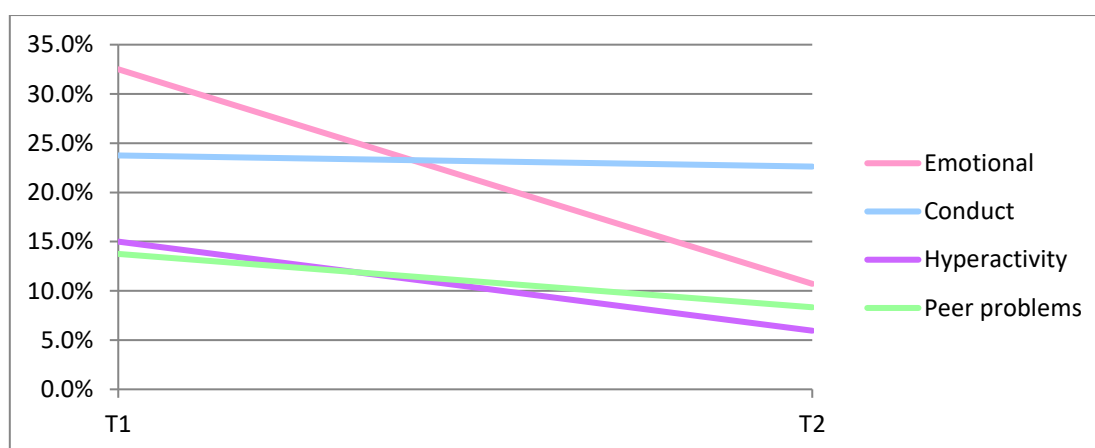
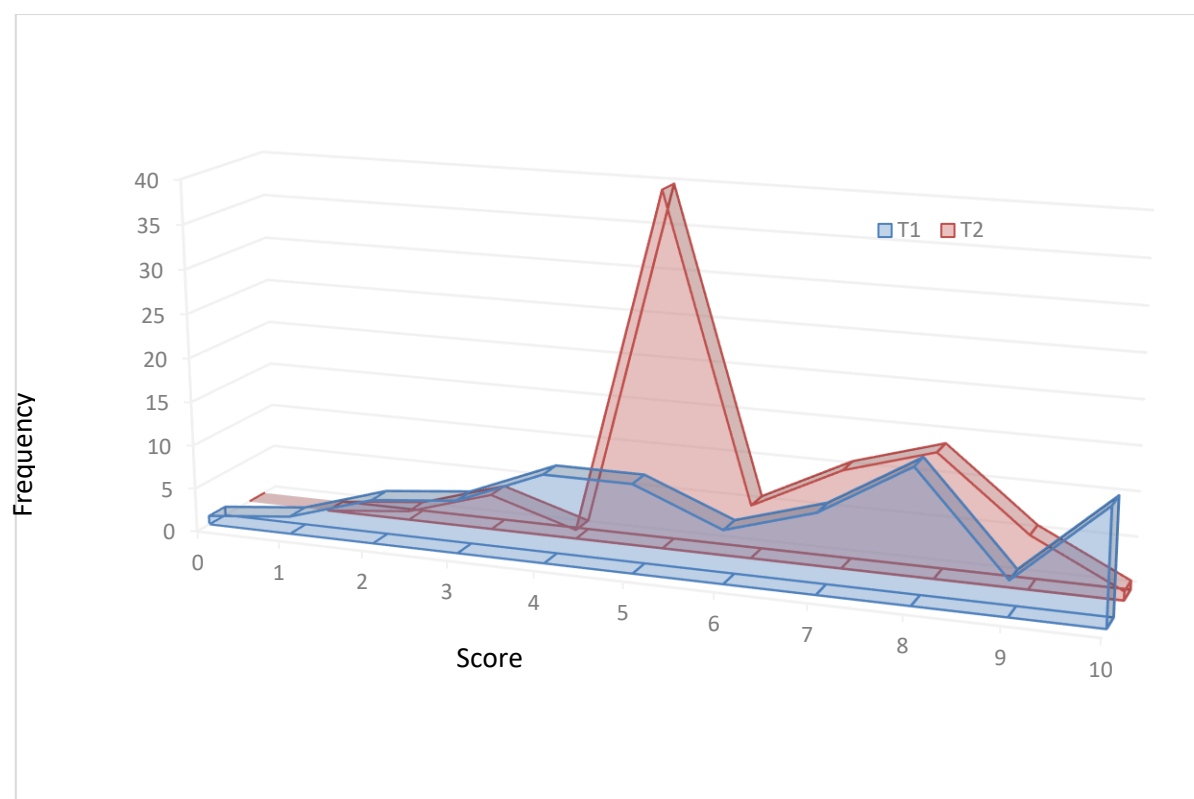


Figure 5 Change in Number of Children with High or Very High Scores by Category: T1= 2016, T2= 2017

## Prosocial Behavior

One possible area of concern in the SDQ results is the negative change in the proportion of children having high or very high levels of difficulty with prosocial behaviour, measured as a separate total score by the survey and indicating kind and helpful behaviour towards others. Looking at the number of children who are having high or very high difficulties in this area, the proportion has actually increased from 38.8% to 61.9%.

However, because prosocial behaviour is marked on a scale out of 10, where anything less than 7 indicates a high level of difficulty, this figure masks some progress in this area. There were actually fewer children with the very lowest scores in 2017 (24 scored 4 or less in 2016, compared to just 6 in 2017), but results clustered in the middle of the scale, with almost half of children now scoring 5 points on the scale in 2017, which is also ranked as a 'very high' level of difficulty. While scores were low on average in 2016 at 6.2, indicating a high level of difficulties, the average remains similar in 2017 at 6.0. In 2016 the median prosocial score was 7, while in 2017 it had dropped one point to 6. Overall then this appears to be an area of challenge where the CFS could focus, and may be linked with the less significant positive change for the areas of conduct and peer problems previously mentioned.



*Figure 6 Clustering of Prosocial Behavior Scores*

## Conclusions

Overall, the SDQ results show a remarkable level of improvement in psychosocial wellbeing marked by a 44% increase in children with close to average total difficulties scores, and an 82% decrease in children with high or very high total difficulties scores. By category, scores in emotional wellbeing, conduct, hyperactivity, and peer problems all showed improvement. The only overall negative change recorded was a decrease in prosocial behavior, which showed as an increase of 60% in children having difficulties in this area. However, clustering of these results do show an improvement in the number of children with the very lowest scores.



## Appendix B

# CFS “B” Phase II- SDQ Results

July 2017

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## Survey Sample

The interim data collection for CFS “B” was carried out in February 2017- 10 months after the initial SDQs were conducted in April 2016. The surveys covered a similar number and range of children. However, there were fewer older girls and more older boys in the 2017 data set.

	Girls 4-9	Girls 10-16	Boys 4-9	Boys 10-16	Total
2016	28	19	27	12	91 <sup>1</sup>
2017	29	10	26	18	83

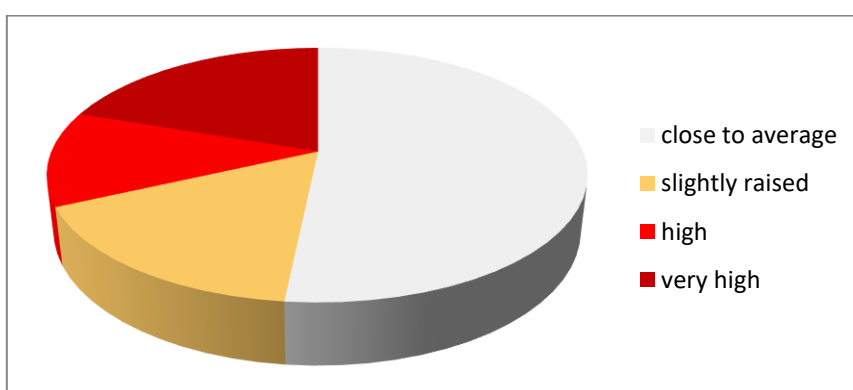
*Table 1 Survey Sample Age-Gender Disaggregation*

## Total Difficulties

There was a great reduction in the number of children exhibiting very high levels of psychosocial difficulties: this reduced from 20% of children to just 6%, while the proportion of those with ‘high’ levels halved from 12% to 6%. The proportion of children who have close to average psychosocial wellbeing has increased slightly from about half to now almost two thirds of children.

	Close to Average	Slightly Raised	High	Very High
2016	52%	16%	12%	20%
2017	63%	25%	6%	6%

*Table 2 Percentage of Children with Individual Total Difficulties Scores*



*Figure 1 Percentage of Children with Individual Total Difficulties Scores- 2016*

<sup>1</sup> Five of the surveys completed did not indicate gender

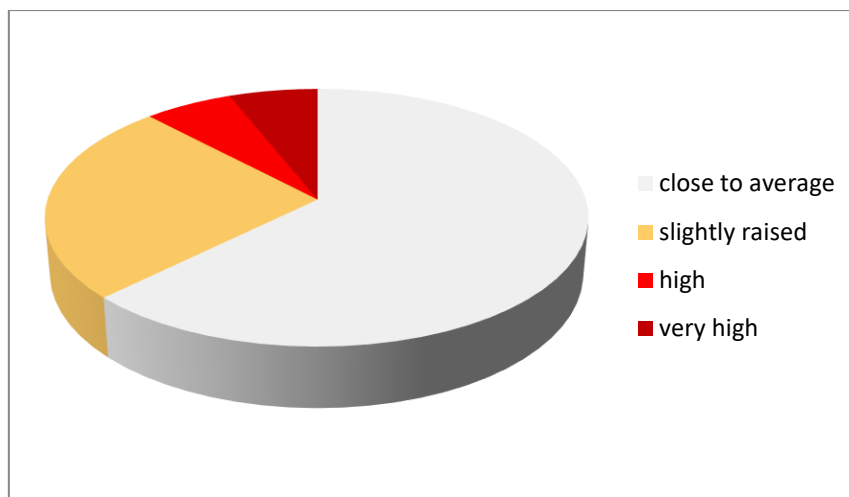


Figure 2 Percentage of Children with Individual Total Difficulties Scores- 2017

## Change by Age and Gender

Boys continue to have higher average total difficulties scores overall, with younger boys especially struggling- they are the only group whose average score is 'slightly raised', while all other groups are now within the 'close to average' range. However, all age groups have seen a drop in difficulties scores of at least 1 point. Younger girls have seen the greatest change, with the average total difficulties score dropping by almost 4 points.

	Girls	Girls 4-9	Girls 10-14
2016	12.84	13.46	11.92
2017	9.67	9.52	10.1

Table 3 Change in Total Difficulties: Girls

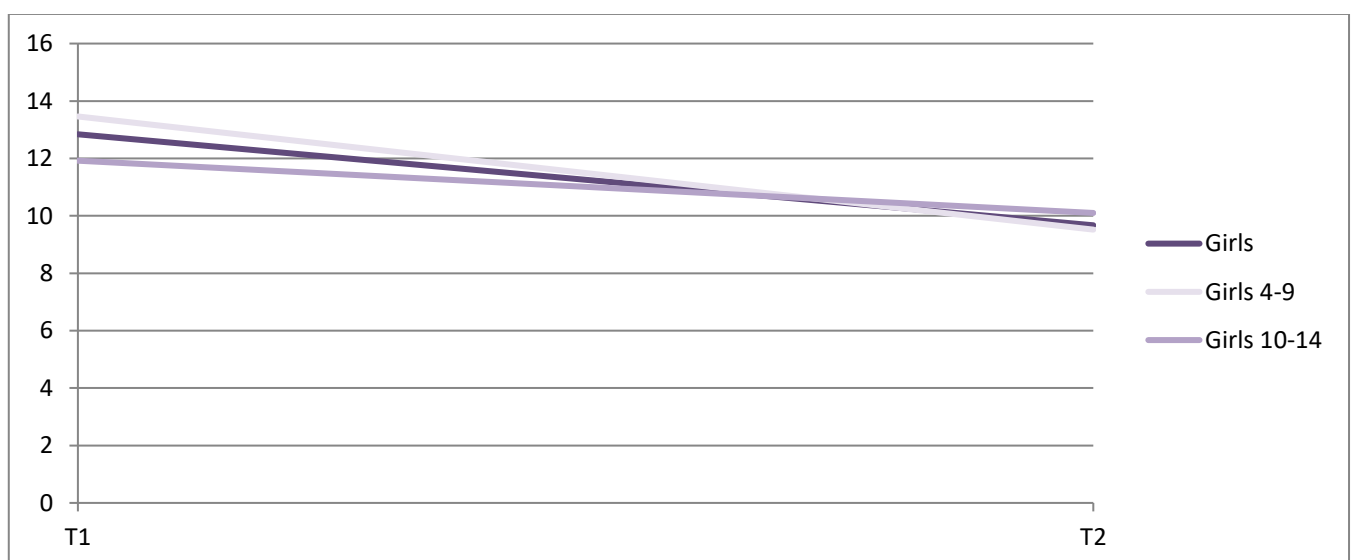


Figure 3 Change in Total Difficulties: Girls

	Boys	Boys 4-9	Boys 10-14
2016	14.4	14.62	12.85
2017	12.5	13.38	11.22

Table 4 Change in Total Difficulties: Boys

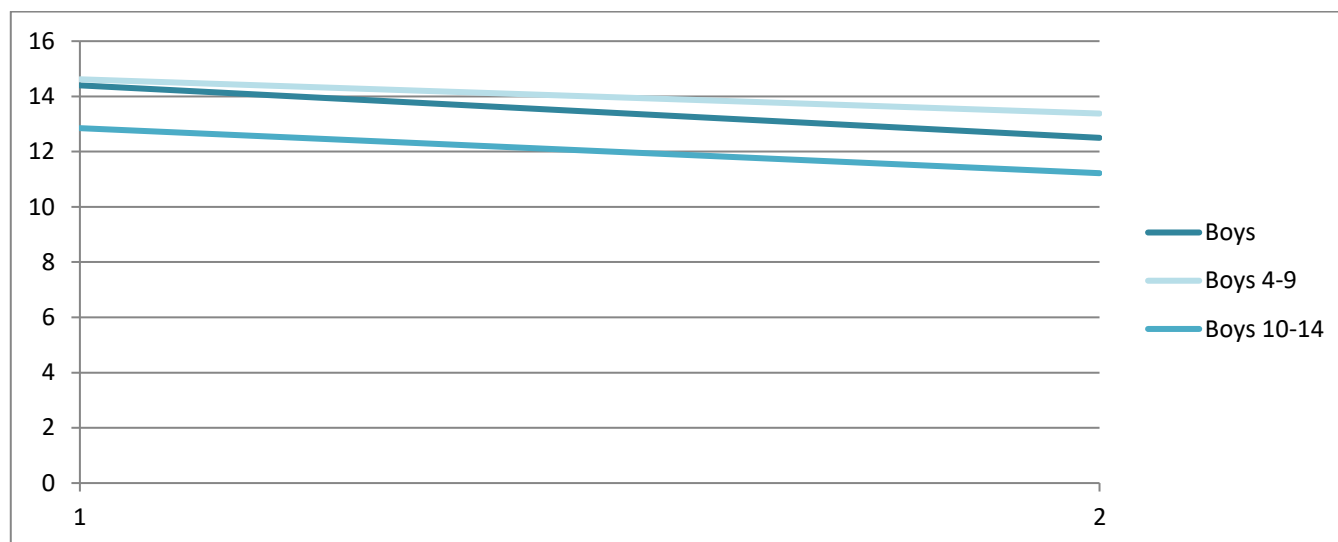


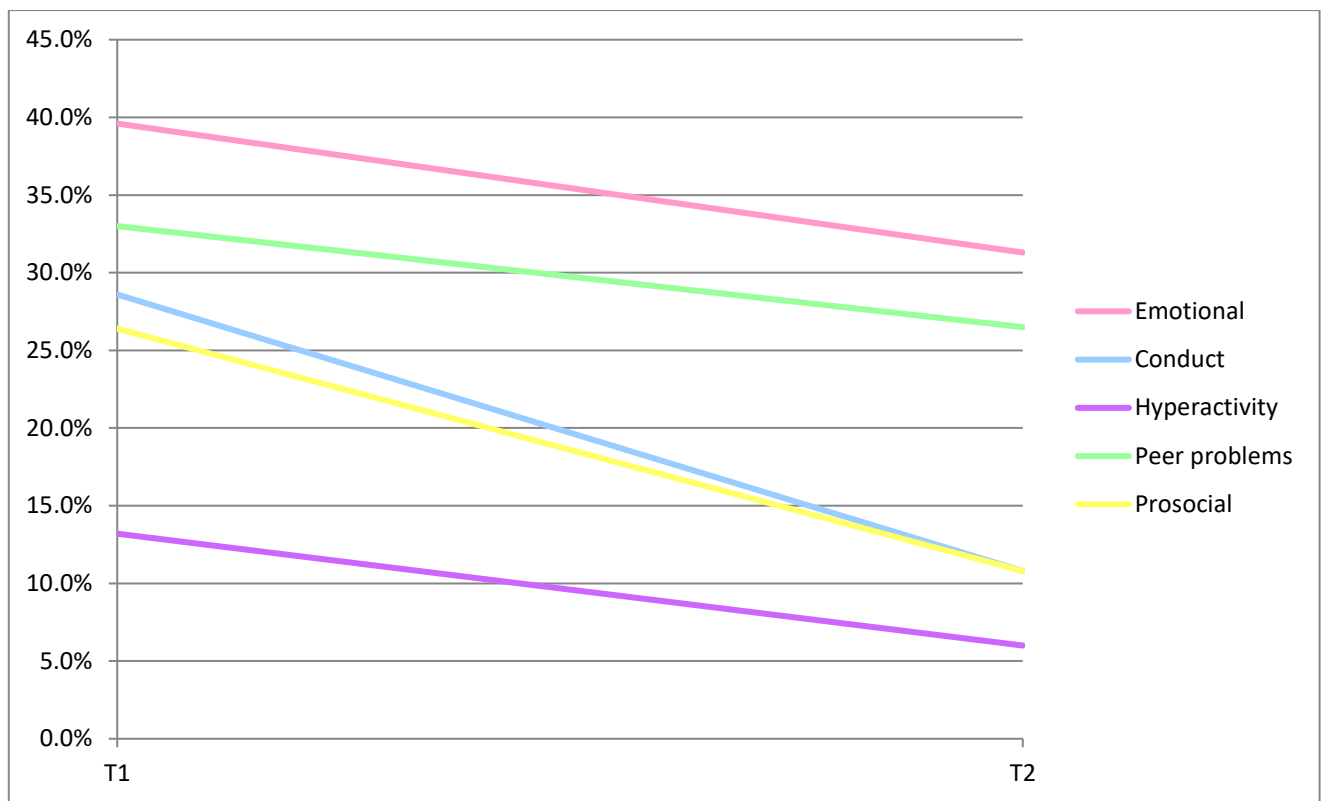
Figure 4 Change in Total Difficulties: Boys

## Change in High and Very High Scores

In terms of analysing high and very high scores per category, all areas of difficulty have shown improvements. This has been especially marked in the areas of conduct (children's behaviour) and prosocial behaviour (having kind and positive relationships with others)- the proportion of children having high or very high levels of difficulty in these two areas has more than halved. Hyperactive behaviour has also decreased substantially from 13.2% to 6% of children now having significant struggles in this area. Peer problems and emotional difficulties have not reduced as much, and remain potential areas to work on more through the CFS activities. Unfortunately, almost one third of children continue to have significant emotional struggles, while more than a quarter have a high or very high level of peer problems.

	Emotional	Conduct	Hyperactivity	Peer problems	Prosocial behaviour
2016	39.6%	28.6%	13.2%	33.0%	26.4%
2017	31.3%	10.8%	6.0%	26.5%	10.8%

Table 5 High and Very High Scores per Category



*Figure 5 High and Very High Scores per Category*

## Conclusions

SDQ results from 2016 and 2017 show overall improvement in psychosocial wellbeing, with an increase in children exhibiting close to average levels of psychosocial difficulty (from 52% to 63%), and a reduction in the percentage of children with high and very high levels of difficulty (from 32% to 12%). This likewise included a reduction in the percentage of children experiencing difficulties in each category (emotional, conduct, hyperactivity, peer problems, and prosocial behaviour), with the most significant improvement recorded in the areas of conduct and prosocial behaviour. While this analysis likewise provides insight into potential areas for focus and improvement moving forward (e.g. younger boys and emotional and peer problems), overall it is encouraging to see quantitative evidence of the positive impact that the CFS is having on the psychosocial wellbeing of the children being served.