



Families in Cultural Transition Report



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Foreword

Since my appointment as NSW Coordinator General for Settlement (previously NSW Coordinator General for Refugee Resettlement) in 2015, I have had the pleasure of working very closely with NSW STARTTS. They have been an integral member of the Joint Partnership Working Group. The JPWG is comprised of senior public servants and community leaders who have played a key role in developing a whole-of-community approach to improving settlement outcomes for refugees beginning new lives in NSW. They have brought compassion and care to their important work and have played a significant role in co-designing initiatives with the NSW Government. This has resulted in more than \$170 million of NSW Government additional investment since 2016/17 to improve refugee settlement in NSW and accommodate the additional intake of Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

Expanding and enhancing the Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) Program was one such important initiative. I have had the opportunity to see first-hand how well NSW STARTTS have oversighted the Program.

Family dynamics and relationships shift as new arrivals respond to new environments. Parents and their children can often feel misunderstood as they adapt to their changing circumstances. Not infrequently they often come to misunderstand each other. The FICT Program assists newly arrived refugees to develop a better understanding of key aspects of life in Australia, the settlement process and how this can affect their own families.

As evidenced in this report, the model of peer-facilitated conversations on sensitive topics are very well received by participants. This unique and personal process is generally viewed as a positive experience in itself – leading to deep friendships, new connections and broadened social networks. These outcomes show that FICT has become an effective way to improve social connectedness and break down barriers faced by refugees as they seek to become informed and active citizens of NSW. The Program also has a positive impact within the home, strengthening family relationships.

I am confident that this important program will continue to deliver beneficial outcomes for refugee families in metropolitan and regional NSW throughout 2021, particularly as they respond to the disruptive impact of COVID-19 on family dynamics and social connections.

Peter Shergold

Foreword

The Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) program is a STARTTS program with a long and interesting history. FICT grew organically from the needs expressed by newly arrived refugees who were finding the process of supporting their families through the challenges of resettling in a new country exceedingly difficult, particularly while healing from the impact of torture and other traumatic events. Consequently, FICT developed as a series of modules that helped participants develop a conceptual framework for making sense of the different key areas crucial to their resettlement and healing process. The fun and shared group activities also helped to increase their understanding of the resettlement challenges for family members in different age groups and to explore how to best support them as they navigate their way through their individual and shared settlement journeys.

Over the years the FICT program has been implemented with a broad range of different language and cultural groups. It has been adapted along the way to better meet the needs of those different groups through the adding of different tools and materials but always with the same aim:

Equipping group participants to better manage the challenges of life in a foreign country – learning to appreciate a different culture while growing a sense of belonging and purpose in their new society.

FICT has grown to become one of the tools of choice to assist refugee families become better equipped to handle the challenges of resettlement while preserving the family unit as the crucial and most fundamental building block of community.

Since 2016, access to additional funding from various sources has enabled FICT to become a fully-fledged program available to be offered to most refugee communities by a large panel of specifically trained bi-lingual facilitators. The results have been impressive, and I am enormously proud of the role that FICT has been able to play in the healing and resettlement journey of so many of our clients.

This report describes the process utilized to evaluate and document a program that is designed to achieve outcomes at a number of levels. I am satisfied that the report provides a wealth of evidence collected in different ways that together support the effectiveness of the program as a tool to support our clients' healing and resettlement journey.

**Jorge Aroche,
STARTTS CEO**

Executive Summary

The Families in Cultural Transitions (FICT) program is a ten week series of workshops designed to help newly arrived refugees develop understanding of conceptual frameworks underpinning Australian society, learn about challenges to family dynamics resulting from the process of cultural transition, develop coping strategies and settle successfully in their new country. FICT is not only an education program; it helps participants make friends and connect with community groups. Following a similar format to FICT, Older People in Cultural Transition (OPICT) is a group-based program that has been developed by STARTTS specifically for older people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Over seven sessions, participants discuss their experiences of ageing in Australia and learn new skills to help them deal with the challenges they may face.

This report presents the findings of a series of evaluations conducted on the impact of the FICT and OPICT programs during the period of 2016-2020. It includes the evaluation findings from focus group discussions conducted with participants from 2016-2020, findings from evaluations conducted with the Standard Clients Outcomes Reporting (SCORE) framework with Department of Social Services funded FICT groups from 2017-2020, and the findings from an evaluation conducted on the Working with Families from Refugee Background workshop conducted in 2019 by the FICT team as a key performance outcome for funding received by Families and Community services (FACS).

The thematic analysis of transcripts of focus group discussions conducted with FICT and OPICT participants from 2016-2020 show that FICT undoubtedly met its intended objectives of facilitating participants' cultural transition process. Over the many years during which FICT has been operating, participant comments consistently reflect positive changes in multiple areas of their lives, including

- the formation of new social connections and resultant reduction in social isolation
- increased confidence in a new environment, increased knowledge of and access to available support services in Australia
- increased understating of Australian laws, systems, services and of participants rights and responsibilities
- increased access to educational and employment pathways, and greater participation in Australian society.

Themes emerging from the thematic analysis of transcripts of focus group discussions with OPICT participants consistently reflected improvements to physical and mental health and well-being, and greater understanding of the health and aged care systems.

The results of evaluations conducted within the SCORE framework clearly show significant and positive changes to participants' community participation and networks, general mental health and well-being and knowledge and access to information, all of which significantly contribute to successful resettlement of new arrivals to Australia. Results also reflect a high level of participant satisfaction with FICT, with the large majority of participants indicating that they would recommend participation in FICT to others.

Evaluation findings show that the Working with Families from Refugee Background workshop delivered by the FICT team met all its intended objectives. Findings show that participants were more knowledgeable about the impact of the refugee experience on families, the needs and priorities of families from refugee background and about strengths-based and trauma informed approaches for working with families of refugee background. Findings all show a high level of participant satisfaction with the training.

³ FICT groups funded by the Department of Social Services are required to report on outcomes within the SCORE framework. The SCORE framework "allows organisations to measure client outcomes using a range of self-selected program specific tools and methods – but to report these outcomes in a consistent and comparable manner" (Department of Social Services, 2019).

Introduction and Background

This report presents the findings of a series of evaluations conducted on the impact of the Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) and Older People in Cultural Transition (OPICT) programs during the period of 2016-2020.

Families in Cultural Transition (FICT)

The FICT program is a ten week series of workshops designed to help newly arrived refugees develop understanding of conceptual frameworks underpinning Australian society, learn about challenges to family dynamics resulting from the process of cultural transition, develop coping strategies, learn about Australia and settle successfully in their new country. As well as finding out about Australian culture and systems, participants can talk about how their torture and trauma experiences may affect them and their families. They also learn about organisations that can help.

FICT is not only an education program; it helps refugees make friends and connect with community groups. The program provides comfort and support to the participants, allowing them to discuss how issues they are facing now may be the result of past experiences in their birth country, their journey to Australia and the challenge of making the transition to life in Australia. Role plays, discussion, brainstorming, interviews, games, guest speakers and case studies are all used to stimulate thinking, explore emotions and help learning.

In the first week participants meet, are introduced to one another and the concept of group work, and discuss the general impact of forced migration. Week two looks at both government and non-government support systems in Australia and includes an overview of Australian political systems, including the concepts of equality, multiculturalism, democracy and the welfare state. Week three looks at issues with money, budgeting and workers' rights. In week four participants discuss dealing with loss and how to begin recovering from their traumatic experiences. Families, children and

parenting are the topics for weeks five and six. Different cultural assumptions and laws about children and parenting, the impact of trauma on children and the more dominant family role that many refugee children play are all discussed in these sessions. The other topics covered are gender (particularly differences in gender roles and expectations in Australia) and youth. There is also an optional module on employment. In the final session the focus is on exploring their local environment, often incorporating a group-planned low-cost excursion that enables them to experience a little more of their new home city/town or suburb. During the last session an evaluation focus group is conducted.

Around twelve people from the same background come together for the program. STARTTS trains Bicultural Facilitators to deliver the program and groups are held in the language of the participants. Child-minding is provided to facilitate access by women. Bi-cultural Facilitators receive initial training followed by regular supervision and further professional development.

FICT facilitators are from the same community as the participants and are generally from refugee background themselves. They have a good understanding of both the participants' culture and Australian culture. STARTTS currently has FICT facilitators from a wide range of newly arrived refugee communities including Syrian, Assyrian, Bhutanese, Chaldean, Dari/Farsi, Hazara, Karen, Congolese, Mandaean, Yazidi, Pashtun, Ahmadiyya, Tamil, Armenian and Tibetan communities. FICT groups are overseen by FICT project officers who are STARTTS employees. The duties of the FICT project officer include providing training, support and oversight to the work of the FICT Bicultural Facilitators who actually deliver the program, and carrying out the 'back end' administrative tasks that ensure the program runs smoothly. This includes completing the administrative tasks to ensure facilitators, child minders and venue providers are paid and that the program is evaluated.

FICT group sessions are held at a time that suits the participants (weekdays, weekends or evenings), and since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the delivery of FICT has also become available via online platforms such as Zoom. Free child care and refreshments are also provided.

While there are a set number of modules to be covered, the program is flexible; the way issues are covered, what is emphasised and which guest speakers are chosen is determined according to the needs of the group.

Older People in Cultural Transition (OPICT)

Following a similar format to FICT, Older People in Cultural Transition (OPICT) is a group-based program that has been developed by STARTTS specifically for older people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Over seven sessions, participants discuss their experiences of ageing in Australia and learn new skills to help them deal with the challenges they may face.

The first session introduces OPICT and encourages participants to think about and discuss different social and cultural attitudes to ageing. The second session looks at the physical signs of ageing, lifestyle issues, the common risk factors that impact the health of older people and the need for good nutrition. The third session talks about how even gentle physical exercise can increase wellbeing and improve health. It also covers psychological stress: what causes stress and some strategies for managing it. The fourth session explores what money means to us, the ways we use it, and how our spending habits reflect our cultural values and past life experiences. It also gives practical tips for setting up a budget. The fifth session discusses the importance of family for older people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and how one's cultural values may be challenged by life in a new country. The sixth session deals with the increased risk of accidents that older people face in their own homes and in the community, and provides

strategies for reducing these risks and keeping safe and well. The seventh session covers the range of aged care services, both in-home and residential, and addresses the benefits of these as well as the barriers associated with accessing them. The final session involves an outing that provides an opportunity for the group to participate in a community-based activity and strengthen connections made during OPICT. The evaluation is also conducted in the final session.

Evaluation Findings

This report presents the qualitative evaluation findings from three separate evaluations:

1. A qualitative evaluation undertaken between 2016-2020
2. An evaluation conducted with the Standard Clients Outcomes Reporting (SCORE) framework with Department of Social Services funded FICT groups from 2017-2020, and
3. An evaluation conducted on the Working with Families from Refugee Background workshop conducted by the FICT team in 2019.



01

Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) and Older People in Cultural Transition (OPICT) Qualitative Evaluation 2016-2020

This section presents the qualitative evaluation findings from FICT and OPICT groups run between 2016 and 2020 to determine the most significant changes participants experienced as a result of participating in FICT. This sections outlines the Social Capital theoretical framework that underpins this evaluation, the evaluation methodology and the results of the thematic analysis of qualitative data collected.

1.1. Evaluation Conceptual Frameworks

Social Capital Framework

The FICT program has a strong focus on building social capital. Social capital refers to social relationships, connections, networks and resources that exist within a community, as well as the 'norms' or formal and informal rules found in these relationships, such as trust and cooperation (Rostila, 2010). Social capital assists cooperation within and between communities. It is sometimes understood as a collective resource which can increase a community's capacity to address problems together and enhance community wellbeing (Putnam, 2000).

There are three main types of social capital. Bonding Social Capital refers to social connections to people within one's own social group or community. Bridging Social Capital refers to horizontal connections to people in the wider community, for example through professional networks or from other ethnic communities. Linking social capital refers to vertical connections to people in positions of authority or working in government or relevant social institutions (Granovetter 1973; Putnam 2000; Szretzer & Woolcock 2004).

High levels of social capital can help individuals and communities to navigate the negative impacts of trauma and resettlement. Systemic State Terrorism and organized violence, to which people of refugee background may have been subjected, act intentionally to destroy bonds, connections and relationships between individuals and within families and communities. This is achieved through the deliberate cultivation of distrust and fears between individuals which results in the fragmentation of communities (Martin-Baro 1989). This distrust can long survive the circumstances under which it was cultivated, making the process of building new connections and networks in the host country intimidating and challenging (Aroche & Coello 1994).

Further, social capital is potentially negatively impacted by the interaction of three key stressors that characterise the refugee experience: trauma-related stressors that include the sequelae of experiences that can interrupt a person's ability to access their internal resources and negotiate the complex demands of resettlement including forming new social connections; resettlement-related stressors including the demands associated with navigating an entirely new cultural context and physical environment; and the stressors of the normal life cycle to which people from refugee backgrounds are not exempt and are more vulnerable to due to the negative impacts of trauma and relocation. These stressors do not operate in isolation. Rather, the refugee experience is largely characterized by a complex interaction of the negative impacts of trauma, resettlement and stressors of the normal life-cycle (Aroche & Coello 1994). This interaction of stressors can negatively impact one's ability to form new social connections and to build social capital in the host country, which can contribute to social isolation. As such, initiatives that cultivate social capital are particularly valuable in the refugee resettlement context.

As FICT is one such initiative which actively seeks to cultivate social capital for the facilitation of successful resettlement, the data collected for this report was analyzed largely within the Social Capital framework. Social Capital is an important framework for both project design and evaluation within the resettlement context. With this recognition, The Glue that Binds: The Social Capital Evaluation Tool was developed in partnership between STARTTS and UNSW (Pittaway et al., 2013). The tool was developed using a participatory research process with input from over 100 people from refugee backgrounds, and aimed to provide a refugee perspective on which aspects of social capital are important during settlement. The tool contributed to theoretical understandings of social capital used in the analysis of data collected for the present evaluation.

National Settlement Outcomes Standards Framework

The National Settlement Outcomes Standards originally launched by the Settlement Council of Australia in 2015 and revised in 2020 each address a key issue which needs to be navigated by newly arrived people during their settlement journey (Settlement Council of Australia 2020). FICT and OPICT were designed before the National Settlement Outcomes Standard Framework was developed, so this framework was not used to conceptualise FICT, OPICT or its evaluations. However, STARTTS has found that the outcomes of FICT and OPICT evaluations correspond well to the National Settlement Outcomes Standards. Correlations between FICT and OPICT evaluation outcomes and the National Settlement Outcomes are demonstrated in section 1.8.

1.2. Evaluation methodology

Most Significant Change

This evaluation employs an adapted form of the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology (Davies and Dart, 2005) in which participants are asked 2 questions: “*What was the most significant change you experienced as a result of this program?*” and “*Why do you think this change took place?*” MSC provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on, and share, experiences and to identify changes in their attitudes and understandings of settling in Australia. It is a method suited to the learning approaches of FICT and enables the collection of data rich in context.

The evaluation questions are posed by the FICT/OPICT Project Officer during the last session, with bi-cultural facilitators acting as interpreters. The questions are typically posed to individuals within a group setting. The responses are usually digitally recorded and then later transcribed in some cases, detailed notes are taken to record the participants’ responses.

At the beginning of the evaluation session, the Project Officer explains the importance of hearing from the participants about their experience in the group and that this feedback helps the FICT/OPICT team to increase its understanding of the program’s efficacy, and to make sure that the program is meeting the community needs. The Project Officer explains that the questions are reflective, allowing participants to identify for themselves what has changed.

Once the MSC stories were collected and transcribed, the stories were thematically analysed and changes within the stories categorised to determine the Most Significant Changes that participants experienced as a result of their participation in FICT. The number of times a theme was mentioned was counted to calculate what percentage of the total responses each theme constituted.

This methodology is based on self-reporting. The themes presented below in section 1.3. emerged organically in the data analysis process. It is important to note that participants were not provided with subject areas to rate. Any percentages below reflect participants’ reflections on FICT’s/OPICT’s impact in their lives. *For example a percentage of 3.9 indicates that this number of participants highlighted this specific impact without prompting as being the most significant change in their lives as a consequence of participating in FICT/OPICT.*

Evaluation sample

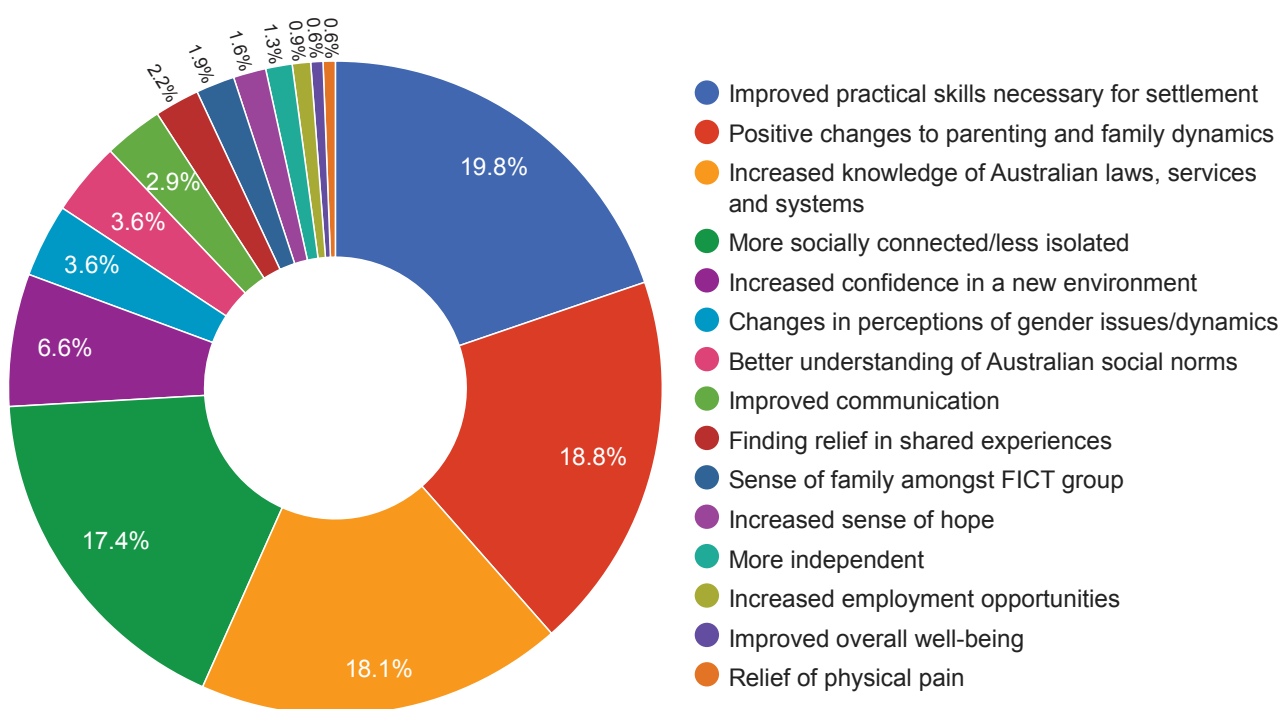
During the period of 2016-2020, STARTTS ran a total of 366 groups

Financial Years	Group Type		
	FICT	OPICT	TOTAL
FY 2016/17	65	22	87
FY 2017/18	89	28	117
FY 2018/19	76	34	110
FY 2019/20	40	12	52
Grand Total	270	96	366

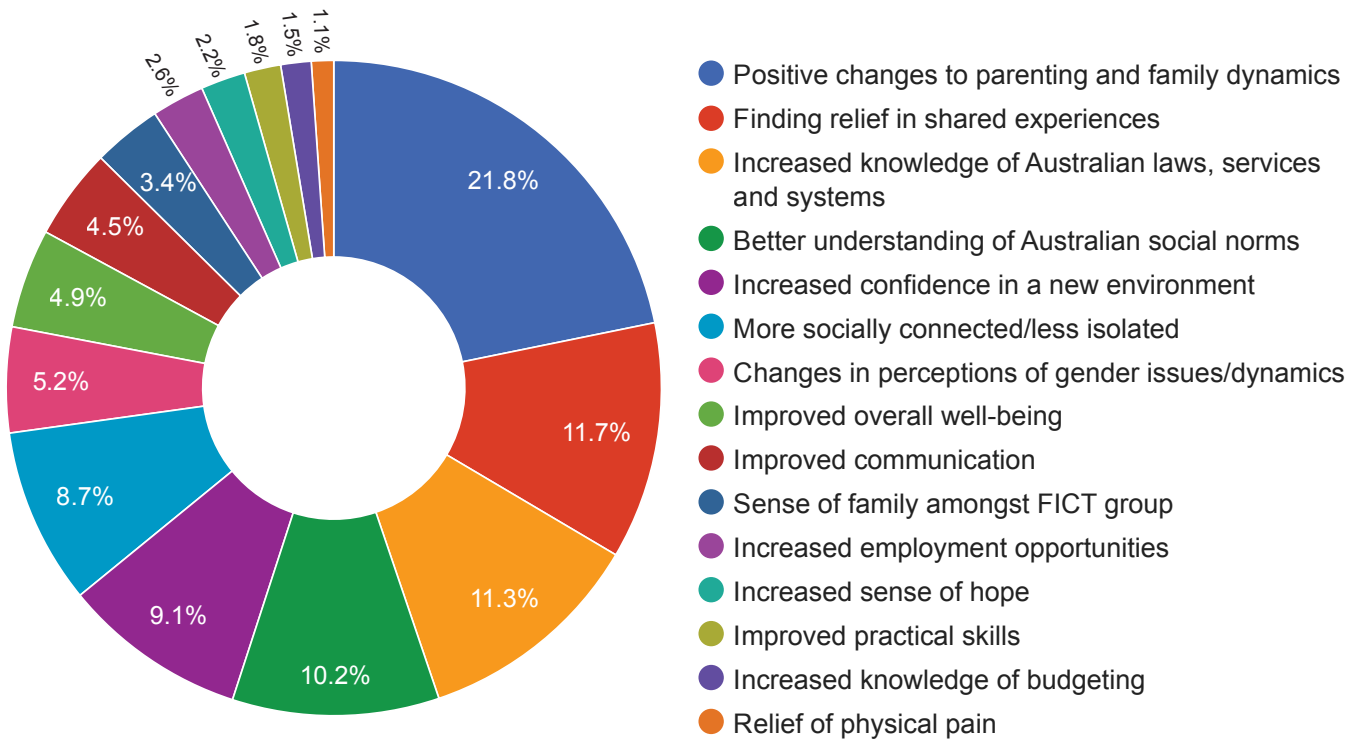
Of the 366 FICT and OPICT groups conducted from 2016-2020, a significant sample of 201 group evaluations (55% of total groups) are included in this report.

1.3. Summary of thematic findings by year

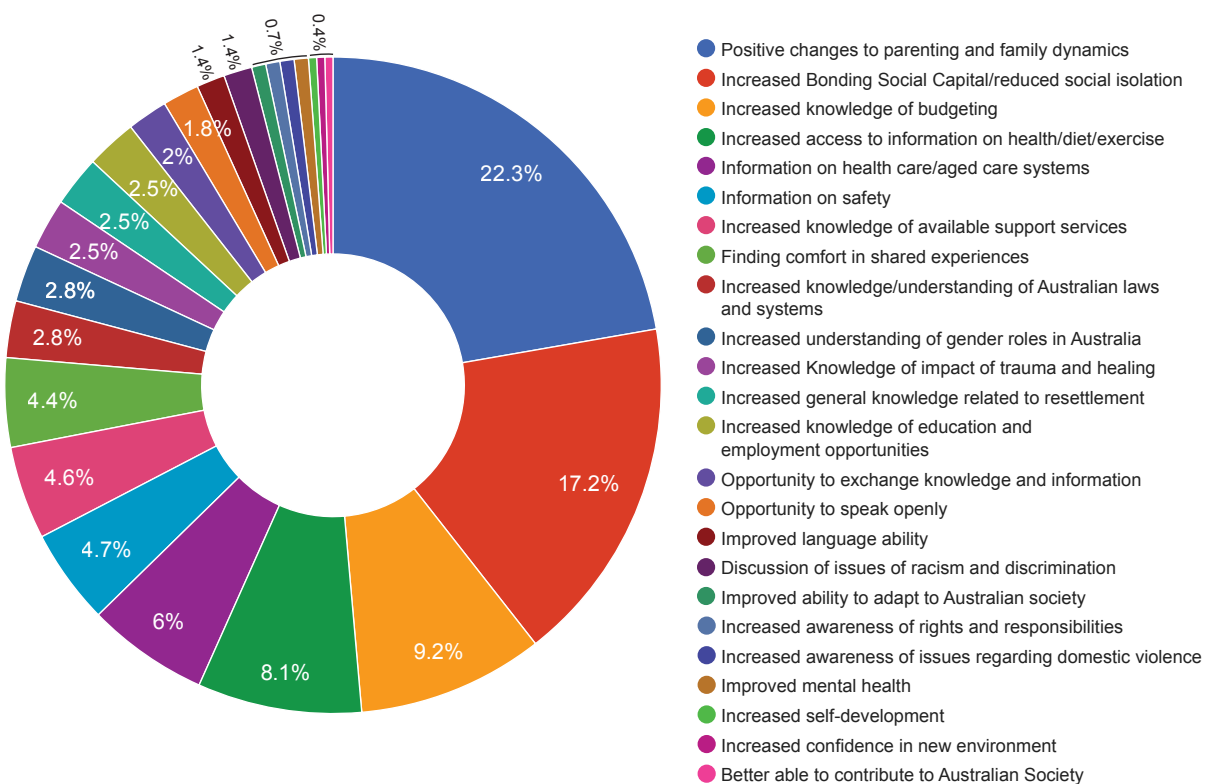
Thematic Findings FICT and OPICT 2016



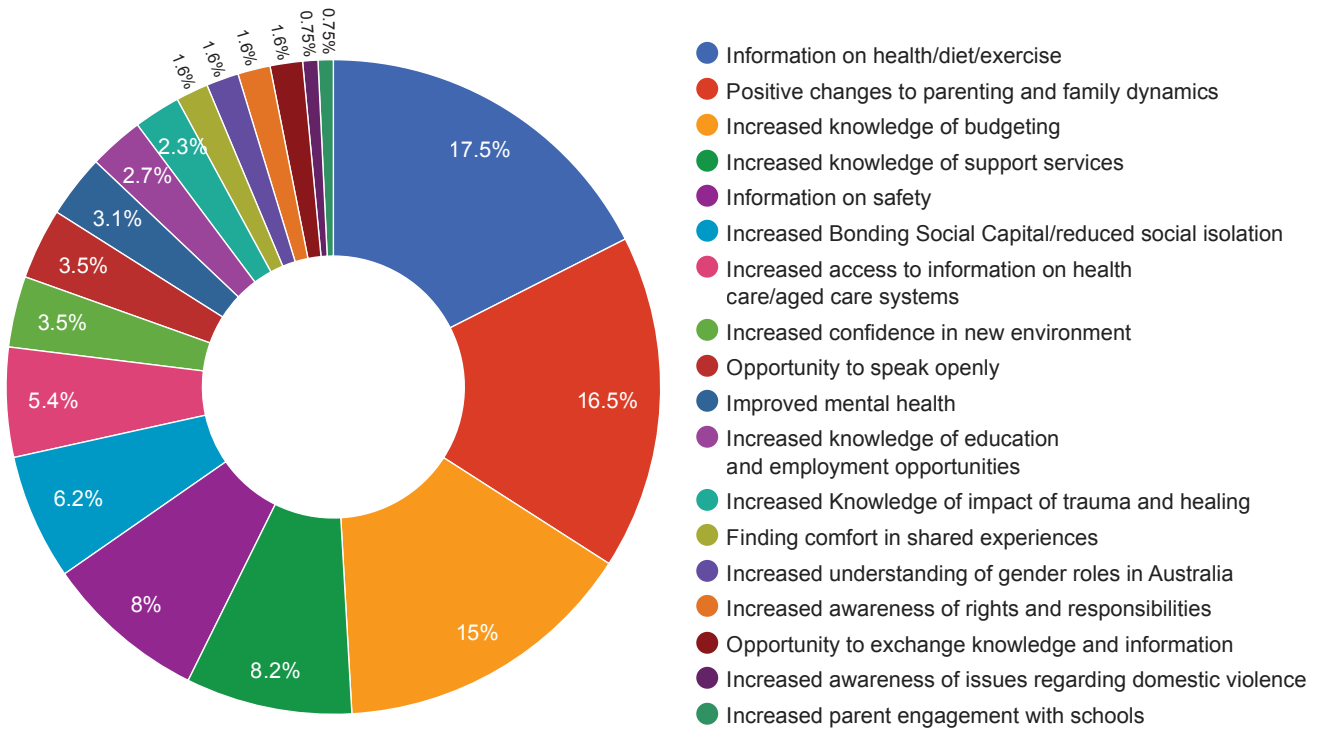
Thematic Findings FICT and OPICT 2017



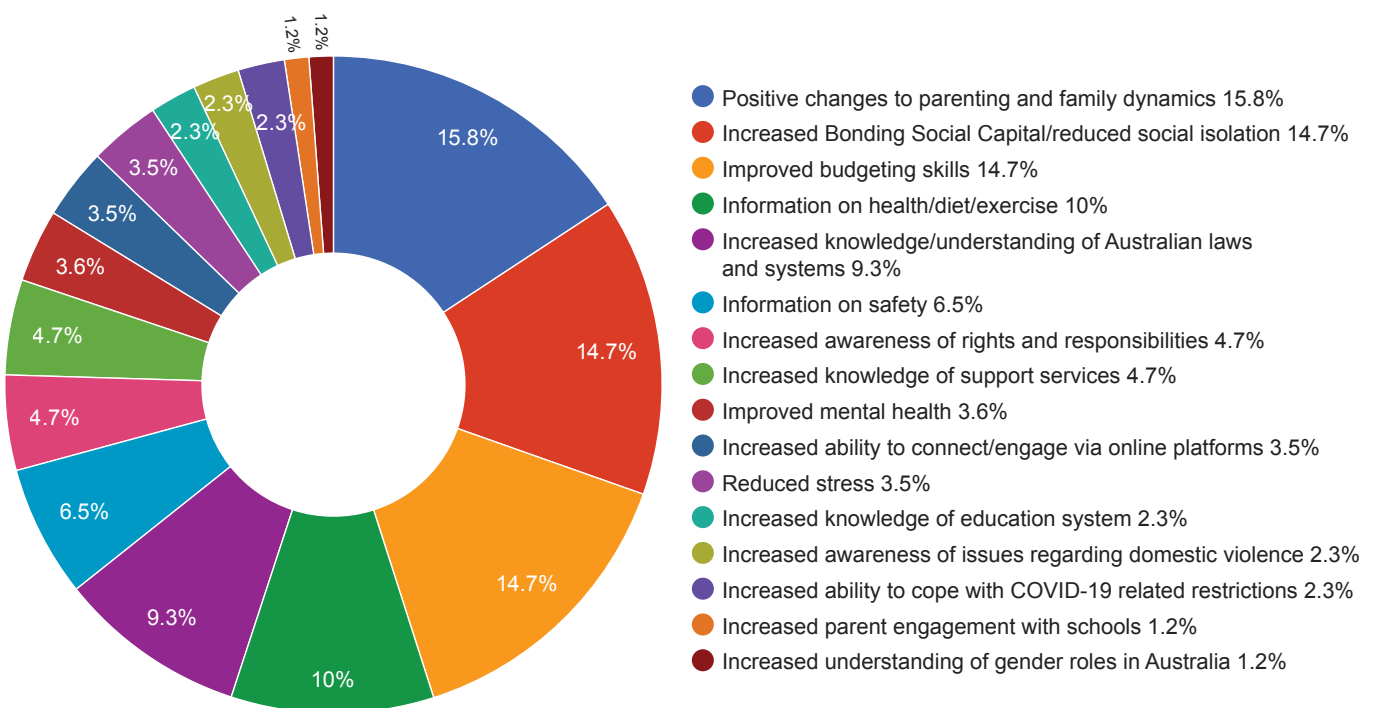
Thematic Findings FICT and OPICT 2018



Thematic Findings FICT and OPICT 2019



Thematic Findings FICT and OPICT 2020



1.4. Results: Thematic analysis (FICT and OPICT 2016-2020)

1.4.1. Positive changes to parenting and family dynamics

Participant comments reflected that, as a result of participating in FICT, they experienced positive changes to parenting styles and family dynamics. Participants shared that parenting styles in Australia can differ significantly from parenting styles in participants' countries of origin. Through participation in FICT, and through the resultant expanded insight into the challenges participants' children might experience in a new context, participants were able to adapt their parenting styles to suit the new cultural context in which families find themselves during the resettlement process. Changes to parenting styles included greater flexibility, more positive communication between parents and children, and parents listening to their children more.

Positive changes to family dynamics included fostering a greater balance between embracing the culture of the host country with preserving the culture of participants' country of origin, resulting in more harmonious inter-generational relationships. As will be further discussed below, participants also benefitted from learning about Australian Child Protection laws.

Strengthened familial relationships and more harmonious family dynamics are two clear indicators of increased bonding social capital on the family level, which greatly facilitates successful resettlement.

“ We talked about children and families, very good in Australia to talk about this, families change here”

“ We need to teach our children to be part of this country, but also part of our culture”

“ Parents should be friendly with their children and explain about the problems they might face here in Australia in a new culture”

“ Sees change in parenting and interaction with family”

“ I learnt how to be more flexible, how to listen to and interact with others and how to become closer to my family”

“ I learnt how to handle my teenagers and how to deal with them through positive communication. I have learnt to have a friendly relationship with my daughter who is 11 years old”

1.4.1. Positive changes to parenting and family dynamics

“It prepared me for future to handle my children better when they grow older as I am more aware of the issues now”

“Children’s Module made us reflect on our parenting practices and that we should have more self-control when dealing with our children. Professionals like [name] from FACS helped us to gain more knowledge and that child abuse/ neglect can be reported if observed in the future”

“I learned to show love for my kids, learned to use kind words like ‘darling’ and ‘dear’ and how to play with kids as we do not play with kids”

“Since the group commenced until now, I was able to obtain information about Australian society that I didn’t previously know. I felt some of the most important information we were able to discuss was pertaining to the rearing of our children. We discussed and gained further insight into some of the challenges that they may experience in school and elsewhere and also about ideas around discipline. We were very grateful to the facilitators for this, who have lived in Australia longer, and come from similar backgrounds to us and who also have children. It was an important topic to learn”

“It also has assisted me to know that I can give my children the confidence so that they can grow”

“We learned more information about raising children, the children’s rights, schooling, what adolescence and how to deal with our children and how to encourage them to become independent”

“We also learnt a lot about how to discipline our children because it is very different from where we come from”

“Learning not to beat children and relevant laws pertaining to child protection and sharing ideas pertaining to such. In many countries it is viewed as quite normal to beat children and it was important to hear such information”

1.4.2. Increased Bonding Social Capital and Reduced Social Isolation

Also reflective of increased Bonding Social Capital are the participants' comments on community building and the resultant reduction in the social isolation many newly arrived refugees experience. Comments reflect that FICT offered an opportunity to 'get out of the house' and meet, interact with and develop social connections with new people. Some participants shared that the group offered an opportunity to reconnect with childhood friends from their countries of origin. Whether reconnecting with old friends or developing new connections, comments reflected that FICT significantly reduced social isolation by offering connection to people from similar cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Participants shared that the FICT group felt like a 'family', further indicating the formation of Bonding Social Capital.

“When I joined this class I felt really happy and felt as though I was in my own family with my own sisters”

“Before we didn't know each other, but we have come here and now we feel like a family”

“This group is like having a large family”

“Increased social interaction for house wives enabling us to get out of the house and received encouragement to move on with life”

“Felt very grateful to connect to other women of similar culture, religion and language”

“The group has been very supportive which has been very good for me and family”

“We found friends in this group”

“I feel very happy to be in this group and I made a lot of new friends after coming to this group”

“I used to feel isolated and lost as there is none to talk with in my own language. I used to cry a lot. I am happy as I got a place to talk with people who can understand my language and culture. I am able to share my worries in this room with people confidently. I can make friends in this group”

“I do not have my family here with me. I am happy that I was able to come to this group and meet new people and make friends”

1.4.2. Increased Bonding Social Capital and Reduced Social Isolation

“The connection we had is renewed deeply after coming to this program. We did not meet some of our childhood friends for a long time. This group united us again”

“I loved coming here every week to talk to everyone like my family, we are very isolated here and I met really nice people”

“We are very isolated here in this area, we don't go out much, this group helps to socialise”

“I like meeting my friends and talking, I don't have much to do sitting at home, I prefer to go out and talk with people”

“I'm here alone, I don't have anyone, I feel lonely, this group helps me to socialize”

“I started talking to my neighbours”

“I socialize with my friends”

“It was how the sessions were conducted, I did not feel that I am a stranger.”

“It took me out of my depression; I was very isolated at home”

“I was thinking about all the things I left behind, now I'm not constantly thinking about it because I met new people and we are looked after”

1.4.3. Increased knowledge/understanding of Australian Laws and Systems

Noting that laws and systems in Australia can differ significantly from those of participants' countries of origin, participants shared that FICT offered a greater understanding of Australian laws and systems which is vital for successful settlement.

Participants shared that as a result of participating in FICT, they had a greater understanding of Australian Child Protection Laws and of liberty and democracy. Participants also benefited from a greater understanding of Australian systems including Centrelink, Fair Trading, Legal Aid, banks, how to pay utility bills and how to file tax returns. Participants also reported feeling more comfortable approaching and interacting with the police in Australia.

Better understanding of Australian laws and greater ability/confidence to engage with Australian systems and with Australian police indicates increased Linking Social Capital. Better understanding of systems through participation in FICT creates greater opportunity for participants to access resources through Australian systems that they may not otherwise have been able to.

“By coming and attending FICT I improved my knowledge especially laws in regards to children”

“Lot of information about fair trading, their rights and duties with housing. All worried about families overseas they want to come here. Met a lawyer. Someone from Centrelink came. Get a lot of messages”

“Bills, how can pay electricity bills, how to apply for new providers. About bonds. Laws in Australia, different to our culture”

“I learned a lot about democracy and multiculturalism”

“We learned that Human Rights is the basis of liberty and democracy in Australia”

“Learned about laws in Australia, money, how to find a job, Centrelink banking, bills, community services”

“I learned about Australian laws and systems”

“We learned a lot about the system and organizations which can help us”

“Legal and support system are the best in Australia but no one told us about them [before FICT]”

1.4.3. Increased knowledge/understanding of Australian Laws and Systems

“ know more about Australian laws, child raising youth and it was very good when the police came to the session because my wife and I were very scared before and don't want to go near the police because of the experiences in my own country”

“ Before I didn't know about tax returns but I have learnt a lot of that in support systems and Centrelink really helped a lot with that, I want to thank Centrelink”

“ I learned about the services available for us in Australia through FICT. FICT broadened our knowledge skills”

“ We learn more about the banking system and how to save money”

“ I learned about Centrelink, and how to deal with our own issues regarding Centrelink. [...] We have learned about Australian laws and systems”

“ Most of the social services within the region and in Australia we did not know. Or we did not know how to navigate these new systems. We did not know about legal aid, their work and what they do. Similarly what Centrelink can offer our families”

1.4.4. Increased knowledge of support services

In addition to increased access to resources vital to successful settlement through increased understanding of Australian laws and systems, FICT participants also benefitted from greater knowledge of available services. These services included business support for refugees, English classes, counselling, the library and aged care services (further discussed below). Greater access to these services indicates increased Linking Social Capital as a result of participating in FICT.

“ We learned of different organisations helping refugees to establish a business”

“ The module on support services gave a lot of information to access help”

1.4.4. Increased knowledge of support services

“ I learned about the area and the services available for me in this area as I am new. The facilitators took me to the library and enrolled me in the English class and got me a member ship card to access the services in the library. I take my kids to homework class in the library”

“ I was also provided new contact numbers of support services”

1.4.5. Increased knowledge/ understanding of employment, education and school systems

In line with greater access to services and greater engagement with Australian systems as being indicators of Linking Social Capital, FICT participants' comments also reflected increased Linking Social Capital in the form of increased knowledge and understanding of opportunities for further education, employment and Australian school systems. Participants' comments reflected increased confidence and capability to seek and secure employment and pursue further educational opportunities as a result of participating in FICT. Participants also better understood Australian school systems as a result of participating in FICT (further discussed below).

“ Learning about employment most significant in next transition”

“ Employment Module had role plays of interviews which was very helpful. It brought more awareness to our own skills and capabilities”

“ STARTTS officers and facilitators sharing their employment experience enabled us to learn and understand better”

“ I have also understood and value that learning never ends. We can continue to study even if not young”

“ The school system is new so it is nice to know about them”

“ Employment is important for us. We learned a lot from this program. I applied for a job this week for the first time in Australia. I did not know about the cover letter as we do not have it in our country”

1.4.6. Greater parental involvement in school/education

The abovementioned increased understanding of Australian school systems also translated into greater parental involvement in schools as a result of attending FICT. This increase in Linking Social Capital can potentially also be attributed to the FICT in Schools Program.

“The most important lesson for me was how to best be involved with my children and be aware of their issues, and am now very confident in communicating with their teachers and best aiding in finding solutions to issues my children may be having”

1.4.7. Sharing of knowledge, information and experience

Participants appreciated that the participatory nature of FICT offered an opportunity for participants to share and exchange knowledge, information and experiences that they do not usually have.

“I liked coming here every week and sharing information with other participants and the facilitators”

“I liked the conversations, rather than sitting to hear someone talking”

“We get support and we become brave to share our stories in this group”

“It’s really good to talk to people on a regular basis, about issues or experiences we don’t generally talk about with every one we meet”

1.4.8. Finding comfort in shared experiences

Participant comments indicated that FICT normalised their reactions to and feelings about their experiences of trauma and settlement. Prior to attending FICT, many participants felt as though they were alone in their experiences but found comfort in the realisation that many of their experiences, feelings and reactions were shared by other group members. The realisation that participants were part of a shared experience was reported by them as having brought about a reduction of stress and frustration.

““ We were grateful to talk and to see that our experiences were not unique to us”

““ The ability to make new friends and to understand that we are not the only person to encounter difficulties is something that has helped us to reduce stress in my life and see the challenges I have overcome. Thank you for facilitating the program”

““ When I was able to bring such issues up within the group, I realised that it was not just me, but everyone in a similar situation and it helped calm frustration. I felt understood and sharing time amongst those with shared experience”

““ I came here 5 months ago and I wanted to go back, I cried every day, now I feel that many people are in the same situation and we can help each other”

““ I felt lonely and frustrated and I was always complaining about feeling isolated. I had no self-esteem because I was not feeling confident speaking English. I did not know where to start from, where is the starting point. Now I know that I was not the only one who was feeling this way. I knew people who have experienced similar difficulties and lived similar circumstances. I felt that I am normal and my confidence increased”

1.4.9. Better equipped to adapt to Australian society

One of the most significant changes reported by participants as a result of participating in FICT was being better able to adapt to Australian society. Participants reported having a better understanding of Australian social and cultural norms, increased cultural flexibility, being more accepting of different cultural norms, and being more open to engaging with people from different cultural backgrounds. These changes are indicative of increased Bridging Social Capital between refugee communities and between refugee communities and the broader Australian society.

“We learned about how to meet people from other cultures and try their food, we need to adapt to Australia”

“The topics we covered were really good, significant and relevant to our lives here in Australia. Talking about children, about how to keep the family together, how to adapt to Australia and the culture. Very different from our culture”

“Through FICT I now understand the new way of life in Australia”

“We need to listen to our children, this help us to face the new culture better”

“We need to change our culture, adapt to this new culture, we need to be more accepting, I learned to be more flexible and accept other cultures in this group”

1.4.10. Opportunity to discuss issues regarding multiculturalism and/or racial discrimination

Comments reflect that while FICT covers topics relating to the benefits of multiculturalism, it also offers an opportunity for participants to discuss challenges relating to racial discrimination. As mentioned above, the program also allows participants to find comfort in shared challenges/experiences.

“It’s good to learn about multiculturalism and the law in Australia, it’s hard to believe that they talk about this and at the same time they discriminate against people from other countries. We have lots of barriers to find employment, to buy a house and to adapt to Australia. This program will help us to understand how things work”

1.4.10. Opportunity to discuss issues regarding multiculturalism and/or racial discrimination

“It was good to talk with other people about our experiences, at the beginning when I came to Australia, I found everything beautiful, I thought I can live a good life in Australia, but now sometimes I think it’s ridiculous to talk about harmony, when many cultures hate each other here”

“It’s good to talk about the things we have experienced, it’s very difficult to come to this country and feel you are not part of it, you are treated differently because you are different”

“We learned about Multiculturalism and how it keeps the society together”

1.4.11. Improved budgeting skills

One of the most significant changes experienced by participants was an improved ability to budget/manage finances. Participants reported learning new ways to reduce costs and to grow their savings, sometimes even with limited financial resources.

“Budgeting Module was very useful as it made us think about our expenditures and savings”

“How we could reduce our expenditures and save more even with little finances”

“I have learnt how to save money and reduce our electricity bills by following energy saving strategies”

“I can better manage money now with new and important information. I even took this information to my spouse and family”

“I learnt how to budget and how to prioritise spending”

“I thought that the money module was helpful and it is a good idea to think about saving, to think about allocating money for rent, for food etc. And think about having some money for saving”

“For me one of the key things has been learning how to budget properly. Previously I found it difficult to manage the meagre funds I had, yet gained better tools in how to make it last and for the future”

“Yes! There is some changes in my life as example I learned how to save money for the future and how we can communicate with a receptionist”

1.4.12. Increased understanding of gender roles in Australia

Participants reported having a greater understanding of gender roles in Australia, which can differ significantly from those in participants' country of origin. Comments reflect that the gender module was particularly empowering for female participants who became more aware of their rights as a result of the module.

“Australia can provide special opportunities for women, to address health concerns, to learn new skills and achieve greater independence”

“Another lady shared that after attending the Gender Module she opened a new account to save her money from her husband”

“Gender modules helped to understand relationships better and as well as deal with problems through improved communication”

“The Gender module also helped her understand her rights as a woman and the equality that exists between men and women in Australia”

“We also learned about different attitudes pertaining to men and women. We learned about our rights and had the opportunity to discuss gender issues that we might not have talked about in our home country”

1.4.13. Increased awareness/knowledge of issues regarding domestic violence

Comments indicate that participants' awareness and knowledge of domestic violence increased as a result of participating in FICT. The FICT program also explores options for those experiencing domestic violence.

“I can understand domestic violence now and handle it better”

“I loved the DV session, it's very important to talk about these issues that many women experience”

“I learned the seriousness of domestic violence after coming to this program”

1.4.15. Increased knowledge/ understanding of the impact of trauma and healing

Participants reported that, as a result of participating in FICT, they developed a greater knowledge and understanding of the impact of trauma. Participants reported, as mentioned above, that participation in FICT normalized their trauma responses and encouraged them to seek counselling if needed (further discussed below).

“The Trauma and Healing topic was very helpful, I suffered a lot of trauma in my life, I’m looking after myself now.”

“In the Trauma and Healing module the narration of the facilitator’s true story was a lesson not to let stress overwhelm us and gain control of our emotions. The psychologist made us more aware through excellent activities which showed that we are unable to enjoy our present life because of our stressors and anxieties”

“The Trauma and Healing module and the counsellor helped me to understand my fears and sadness”

“The counsellor told that is normal to feel sad. I was always worrying and thought I am not normal. But after listening to the counsellor, I am convinced”

1.4.16. More confident in new environment/increased participation in Australian society

Participants reported feeling more confident in their new environment as result of participating in FICT. This increased confidence positively impacted on their independence and ability to participate more actively in Australian society.

“I am more confident. When we first arrived in Australia, we did not know anything about the new country and we realised that it was going to be hard to live in Australia. By attending the program, we learnt, by example and explanation, how to understand the country and its systems. Our confidence and hope increased”

“I don’t feel so scared now when I go out to the shops”

1.4.16. More confident in new environment/increased participation in Australian society

“ I am confident to ask help from my neighbours now. My relationship with the neighbours has improved. I am thinking of going for swimming classes with my neighbours”

An increase in self-confidence was also reflected in a comment from a participant who reported that it was having access to a counsellor that made her more confident.

“ When I joined this class I found out that there is a counsellor where I can go to talk about my problems and make ourselves confident”

Other participants commented that their participation in FICT increased their understanding of their rights and responsibilities in Australia, and that this increased understanding helped them to feel more confident.

“ When someone who does not understand their rights and responsibilities becomes familiar with them, they feel confident that they will be heard and feel respected when they speak”

Another participant commented that feeling comfortable around her FICT facilitator helped her to feel confident.

“ When the facilitator talks with me I feel so confident and I feel like I am with my family”

Increased confidence is a social capital enabler as it increases social and familial abilities and the likelihood of engagement with other people and organisations.

1.4.17. Opportunity to speak openly

Comments reflect that FICT offered participants a safe space in which they could speak openly. Several participants commented that this was the only opportunity/space in which they had ever felt safe to do so, without fear of judgement. One participant commented that the opportunity to speak openly made them feel respected and honoured as a human.

“ FICT provided me a safe place to express my feelings without fear of being judged”

“ It was the first time that I could speak freely without having to worry if I was right or wrong”

“ I never talked about my experience of coming to Australia [before FICT]”

“ I can feel that everybody understands each other in this group and I can feel that people really understand me and I'm not being judged”

1.4.17. Opportunity to speak openly

“ I have never experienced this before where I have the opportunity to say something whether it's wrong or right, the facilitator always encourage me to speak when I want to and I really feel so honoured and respected as a human”

1.4.18. Improved mental health

Importantly, participants reported experiencing improved mental health as a result of participating in FICT. Participants reported feeling happier, calmer, more relaxed, more positive and less depressed. These changes can be attributed to reduced social isolation (discussed above), a safe space to share and discuss common experiences and challenges and increased access to/awareness of support services such as STARTTS counselling.

“ We learned about counsellors and psychologists, STARTTS has these professionals to help us to reduce our isolation and stress”

“ I am very happy to be relaxed and as I get relief when I am in the class”

“ After attending FICT I feel happy, confident and positive”

“ Reduced depression, breathing exercises were good. We can do it any time at anywhere. I learned to do them. It helps to reduce our arousal of feelings”

“ I am so happy, I changed a lot. I learned to become calmer and relaxed and I think more positively than earlier”

“ I was depressed and sick in the last three and half months. I was in my home in Northshore. I was very shy and did not feel like sharing my pain with anyone. But I was able to open up my heart. I was able to wear coloured clothes. I change my train three times and catch a bus to come here. I start my trip at 6.30am to be here but I made it for the last 8 weeks and I am proud of myself”

“ We are refreshed psychologically and we feel the positive change in our thinking pattern than earlier”

“ Coming here every week helped me to keep my sanity, I have been going through a difficult time with depression, but this groups helps me not to think too much and distract myself by talking with other people and sharing our experiences”

1.4.19. Increased hope

Responses reflected that some participants felt hopeless before their participation in the FICT program, particularly because of their limited ability to speak English. Participants reported that their participation in the FICT program has helped them to feel more hopeful.

“*Before I came to the group I felt hopeless and that I couldn't learn English. Now coming to this group it has made me realise that I can learn and that day by day I am learning more*”

Increased hope is also a social capital enabler. Hope increases the enthusiasm to make plans for the future such as study, work or starting a family. An increased sense of hope also increases likelihood of engagement with the wider community, thereby encouraging the development of linking social capital.

1.4.20. Improved family communication

Responses reflected that participants were able to communicate more effectively (also discussed in 1.3.1). As a result of this improved communication, participants reported that they were able to create a better family environment, and also ask for the help that they require.

“*They taught us how to communicate with other members of the family and if necessary go to a counsellor. If we can work things out with the family we can have a good family environment with the friends and family. [...] That helped a lot too because before we thought we couldn't talk about these things but now we think it's ok to talk about our problems. We can ask for help and seek help*”

Improved communication between family members is a clear indicator of increased bonding social capital.

1.4.21. Physical pain relief

Two participants reported a relief of physical pain as a result of participating in FICT. While it is unclear what exactly led to this change, one participant attributed his pain relief to having the opportunity to talk about problems and overcome them. He indicated that this support had an effect on his physical pain.

“Previously I would have regular headaches, yet after having spent this time amongst the group, I have come to forget that pain and headaches. Talking about the problems with others has helped me to forget and overcome”

“When I came here I saw a lot of improvement in my body- I’m very happy about this”

1.4.22. Practical skills

Other comments reflected that their acquisition of practical knowledge and skills to navigate their transition was one of the most beneficial aspects of the FICT program. As mentioned previously, several participants found that learning to budget was very beneficial. Others found other practical skills such as learning to use a map, make appointments and learning to use the public transport system very helpful during the transition process.

“Now we can easily find a place using a map. Which makes life wonderful and it save our time as well”

“We can find anything we need in the shopping centre by looking its name or by asking staff. These point that we learned is so beneficial in our life which we are so thankful from those who provide these type of programs for us”

“FICT let us talk the issues very deeply. We had been in buses but we did not have the discipline of forming a queue, taking tickets before sitting, not chatting loudly in the bus and behaving mindfully in the public transport. FICT trained me to do those things with a discipline”

1.4.23. More Independent

Participant responses reflected that learning practical skills such as those mentioned above have made them more independent, and less reliant on others, particularly on their spouses and children. This sense of independence was important to the participants.

“It was very good for me I was and I love it because it upgrades my knowledge and it is very good for me. I used to have to ask my children, my husband how to find out things but I learned how to use the telephone and find things out myself and how to use an interpreter service and how to get things done by myself. This is very important for me”

1.4.24. Increased Employment Opportunities

Through the skills and social networks acquired as a result of participating in FICT, a small number participants were able to start a business or gain employment.

“I got a lot of information about child protection, education, employment. I started a small business and through this group I have made a lot of contacts and now I have got some orders. And I’m earning money”

1.4.25. Improved overall well-being

One participant reported changes across several areas of her life, indicating that her participation in FICT improved her overall well-being. Her comment indicated that she had a more positive overall outlook on life as a result of the connections she has made with the other women in her group.

“The group relaxed me, calmed me down and the meditation is really something. I couldn’t believe myself I was able to sleep. It was also so nice to spend the night with my sisters all of them talking a lot and so happy. Even my children say “mum you look so bright”. Today was the first time I put on jewellery [starts to cry] this is a big difference for me and thanks to everyone from the bottom of my heart. It’s my only joy and I look forward to coming. The reason it is so good I think is because we are together and we share our experiences and we learn things we never would know but we have each other”

1.4.26. Increased ability to connect/engage via online platforms

In 2020, the majority of FICT groups were conducted via Zoom due to the COVID-19 crisis. As a result, participants reported feeling more confident to connect via Zoom, which also translated to increased connection with friends and family via Zoom outside of the FICT group. This increased connection was particularly crucial during the social isolation period.

“We learned about Zoom”

“I learned how to talk in Zoom with my friends and family”

“I am confident to talk to people on Zoom now”

1.4.27. Increased ability to cope with COVID-19 related restrictions

As mentioned above, FICT groups continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic via Zoom. Participants reported that the information they received during the FICT sessions, and interaction the sessions offered better enabled participants to cope with the uncertainty and social isolation brought about by the pandemic.

“We both had nowhere to go and nothing to do, due to lockdown. We feel connected and we have somewhere to go and someone to talk to during this difficult time”

“It is a good program especially for people like us during lock down”

“I am upset to see and hear all the bad COVID stories in TV but coming to this group helped me to know the truth”

“I am a shy person but I was able to share my feelings in computer [Zoom] easily as I am talking from my home. I am happy to meet all these people through Zoom during this lock down time. We are able to share our fears with all”

1.5. Themes specific to OPICT

While many of the positive changes that came about as a result of participating in FICT/OPICT were shared, some themes that emerged through the thematic analysis were specific to OPICT. These themes are presented below.

1.5.1. Increased access to information on health/diet/exercise

OPICT participants reported receiving useful information on health, diet and exercise through participating in OPICT.

“ I enjoyed talking about healthy eating and exercise”

“ We learned a lot of good things, about exercising and health”

“ It was good to share information about health and healthy living, the only way to feel good in this country is to be healthy, that way we can enjoy our families, we can go out and enjoy the environment”

“ We learned about health and how to look after our eyes”

“ Learning about the thyroid gland was very useful for me”

1.5.2. Increased access to information on safety

Similarly, OPICT participants also reported receiving useful information on how to keep safe such as on how to prevent falls and how to seek help in case of an emergency.

“ It’s very important to have a phone next to you, even when you go to the bathroom, just in case anything happens to you”

“ It was very good to talk about safety, especially in the bathroom”

“ The information is good for older people to prevent falls”

1.5.3. Provision of information on health care/aged care systems

Following on the above-mentioned theme of increased understanding and awareness of Australian services (1.3.4.), OPICT participants particularly benefitted from increased understanding about and knowledge of the health and aged care systems as a result of participating in OPICT.

“*Very happy and more confident to use My Age Care services*”

“*We learned lots of things about the health system*”

“*I enjoyed all the topics; it was good to know about My Aged Care*”

1.5.4. Improved vocabulary

OPICT participants also reported having improved language ability as a result of participating in OPICT.

“*We learned lots of new things, even English words*”

1.6. How did the process support the change?

Presented below are participants perceptions of what aspects of the program brought about the above identified significant changes.

1.6.1. Facilitators

Participants commonly reported that the ways in which the program was facilitated, and the fact that the facilitators speak their language and understand their culture, greatly supported the changes that participants experienced as a result of the FICT program.

““ *The facilitators are very good and knowledgeable, they have helped us to adapt to Australia*”

““ *The facilitators and the group were very supportive and listened to us patiently*”

““ *The use of Arabic language, the language we speak, made us easy understand the information provided*”

1.6.2. Sharing food

Participant comments also reflected that the sharing of food was an important element that facilitated the formation of social connections and assisted with connection to culture.

““ *Loved the food*”

““ *The food and eating together is like being with your family*”

““ *We liked the restaurant and having traditional food, it was fun*”

““ *Having morning tea and lunch together*”

1.6.3. Freedom to communicate openly/ trusting environment

As mentioned above, participants appreciated the opportunity to speak openly within a trusting environment. Participants attributed the above mentioned changes to the open and trusting environment created by facilitators.

““ *The group environment that made feel safe to share and talk about what happened to me”*

““ *The friendly environment and the facilitators’ ability to listen, acknowledge and not judge us”*

““ *Everything was good in this group, the food, the facilitators, the conversations, this is the first time I have the chance to talk about the experiences of coming to Australia”*

““ *I felt the freedom to talk and share my experience”*

1.6.4. Provision of child-minding during FICT session

Participants also attributed changes they experienced to the provision of child-minding. Participants were able to participate fully knowing that their children were being well taken care of. Participants’ children also had the opportunity to make new friends with other children while their parents were attending FICT sessions.

““ *My kids feel very happy to be here as they are always with me at home but they meet new kids, speak our language and play in a safe place”*

““ *Childcare facility gave me a big happy relief as I was able to take time and enjoy the time for myself by being in this group. I am happy and thankful”*

1.6.5. Venue

Lastly, participants attributed the changes to the suitable and easily accessible venues in which the sessions were held.

““ *The venue is good and easily accessible”*

““ *This venue”*

1.7. Conclusion

Thematic analysis of participant stories of Most Significant Change show that FICT undoubtedly met its intended objective of facilitating participants' settlement in a new context. Over the many years during which FICT has been operating, participant comments consistently reflect positive changes in multiple areas of participants' lives including:

- The formation of new social connections and resultant reduction in social isolation
- Increased confidence in a new environment
- Increased knowledge of and access to available support services in Australia
- Increased understanding of Australian laws, systems, services and of participants' rights and responsibilities
- Increased access to educational and employment pathways
- Greater participation in Australian society.

Themes emerging from the analysis of OPICT participants' stories of Most Significant Change consistently reflected improvements to physical and mental health and well-being, and greater understanding of the health and aged care systems.

Participants attributed the significant changes they experienced as a result of participating in FICT to the bi-cultural facilitators, facilitation style, and the creation of a safe and trusting environment, to the provision of child-minding and to the easily accessible venues at which FICT groups are run.



1.8. National Settlement Outcomes Standards: FICT and OPICT Evaluation Findings

As previously mentioned, FICT and OPICT were designed before the National Settlement Outcomes Standard Framework; therefore, the Framework not used to conceptualise FICT, OPICT or its evaluations. However, STARTTS has found that the outcomes of FICT and OPICT evaluations correspond well to the National Settlement Outcomes Standards. The table below demonstrates how:

National Settlement Outcome Standard	Indicator	Corresponding Evaluation finding	Participant quote
Education and Training	Women are supported to access education and training programs, such as by making childcare available and accessible, and promoting the value of women's education in culturally appropriate ways	Provision of child-minding during FICT sessions	<i>"Childcare facility gave me a big happy relief as I was able to take time and enjoy the time for myself by being in this group. I am happy and thankful"</i>
	Young people, their families or carers, receive targeted support to understand and navigate the education and training options available, and can build positive relationships with education and training providers	Increased knowledge/ understanding of employment, education and school systems Greater parental involvement in school/education	<i>"The school system is new so it is nice to know about them"</i> <i>"The most important lesson for me was how to best be involved with my children and be aware of their issues, and am now very confident in communicating with their teachers and best aiding in finding solutions to issues my children may be having"</i>
Employment	Employment programs apply a strengths-based approach to supporting newly arrived people in order to overcome any barriers to employment, such as by valuing skills, experience and qualifications attained prior to arrival	Increased Employment Improved knowledge about employment in Australia via Employment Module Opportunities for the Bi-cultural facilitators who are largely people with lived refugee experience themselves.	<i>"I got a lot of information about child protection, education, employment. I started a small business and through this group I have made a lot of contacts and now I have got some orders. And I'm earning money"</i> <i>"Employment Module had role plays of interviews which was very helpful. It brought more awareness to our own skills and capabilities"</i>

National Settlement Outcome Standard	Indicator	Corresponding Evaluation finding	Participant quote
Health & wellbeing	<p>Newly arrived people have easy access to a wide range of responsive, affordable and quality health and wellbeing services, supports and interventions</p> <p>Settlement service providers are aware of the impact torture and trauma can have on the mental health and wellbeing of newly arrived people, and are able to make appropriate referrals to specialist torture and trauma rehabilitation services when needed</p>	<p>Increased access to information on health care/ aged care systems</p> <p>Increased knowledge/ understanding of the impact of trauma and healing and available support services</p>	<p><i>“Very happy and more confident to use My Age Care services”</i></p> <p><i>“We learned lots of things about the health system”</i></p> <p><i>“The counsellor told that is normal to feel sad. I was always worrying and thought I am not normal. But after listening to the counsellor, I am convinced”</i></p> <p><i>“We learned about counsellors and psychologists, STARTTS has these professionals to help us to reduce our isolation and stress”</i></p>
Language services	N/A	Improved vocabulary	<i>“We learned lots of new things, even English words”</i>
Transport	Newly arrived people are supported to access information, and to develop their skills and confidence in using public, private and community transport	Increased confidence to use public transport	<i>“FICT let us talk the issues very deeply. We had been in buses but we did not have the discipline of forming a queue, taking tickets before sitting, not chatting loudly in the bus and behaving mindfully in the public transport. FICT trained me to do those things with a discipline”</i>
Civic participation	<p>Service providers assist newly arrived people to develop their knowledge and understanding of Australia’s social and political systems, and reinforce knowledge of their rights and responsibilities</p> <p>Newly arrived individuals and communities are supported to share their own stories and opinions, to ensure that their voices help to shape Australia’s civic and political landscape</p>	<p>Increased awareness of rights and responsibilities</p> <p>Opportunity to speak openly</p>	<p><i>“I know now about my rights and responsibilities, I never knew before”</i></p> <p><i>“I have never experienced this before where I have the opportunity to say something whether it’s wrong or right, the facilitator always encourage me to speak when I want to and I really feel so honoured and respected as a human”</i></p>

National Settlement Outcome Standard	Indicator	Corresponding Evaluation finding	Participant quote
Family and Social Support	<p>Service providers assist newly arrived individuals, families and communities to preserve and enhance their relationships during the settlement journey</p> <p>Newly arrived people are supported to preserve their own cultural identity and values (for example, through establishing cultural community associations and facilitating celebrations), whilst learning and integrating new Australian values and norms</p> <p>Settlement service providers have a specific domestic and family violence strategy to ensure culturally competent services are available to support newly arrived individuals and families</p>	<p>Improved family communication</p> <p>Positive changes to parenting and family dynamics</p> <p>Increased Bonding Social Capital</p> <p>Increased awareness/knowledge of issues regarding domestic violence</p>	<p><i>“They taught us how to communicate with other members of the family and if necessary go to a counsellor. If we can work things out with the family we can have a good family environment with the friends and family. [...] That helped a lot too because before we thought we couldn’t talk about these things but now we think it’s ok to talk about our problems. We can ask for help and seek help”</i></p> <p><i>“Felt very grateful to connect to other women of similar culture, religion and language”</i></p> <p><i>“We liked the restaurant and having traditional food, it was fun”</i></p> <p><i>“I learned the seriousness of domestic violence after coming to this program”</i></p>
Justice	<p>Newly arrived individuals and communities are supported to develop positive and trusting relationships with law enforcement agencies</p> <p>Programs and initiatives are developed in response to specific justice and legal issues experienced by newly arrived people, such as programs that increase awareness of workplace rights and obligations.</p>	<p>More confident to approach police</p> <p>Increased understanding of domestic violence and child protection laws</p>	<p><i>“I know more about Australian laws, child raising youth and it was very good when the police came to the session because my wife and I were very scared before and don’t want to go near the police because of the experiences in my own country”</i></p> <p><i>“I got a lot of information about child protection”</i></p> <p><i>“I can understand domestic violence now and handle it better”</i></p>
Finance	<p>Newly arrived people are able to manage their money and save regularly, at least to the same standard as the broader Australian community</p>	<p>Improved budgeting skills</p>	<p><i>“I can better manage money now with new and important information. I even took this information to my spouse and family”</i></p>



02

Families in Cultural Transition Evaluation using Standard Clients Outcome Reporting (SCORE) Framework

This section presents the evaluation conducted within the Department of Social Services' SCORE framework.

FICT groups funded by the Department of Social Services are required to report on outcomes within the SCORE framework. The SCORE framework “allows organisations to measure client outcomes using a range of self-selected program specific tools and methods – but to report these outcomes in a consistent and comparable manner” (Department of Social Services, 2019).

The SCOREs used to record changes for individual client outcomes (applicable to FICT participants) are:

- **Client Circumstances SCORE**—based on an assessment of changes in the client’s circumstances in the areas relevant to the assistance provided.
- **Client Goal SCORE**—based on the client’s and/or organisation’s assessment of progress in achieving goals related to the issues they sought help with.
- **Client Satisfaction SCORE**—based on client’s self-reported perceptions about the responsiveness of the services and whether they are better able to deal with issues they sought help with.

2.1. Evaluation Methodology

In order to accurately report within the SCORE framework, pre and post questionnaires were designed in alignment with the above 3 SCORE outcomes (circumstances, goals and satisfaction) and completed by participants of DSS-funded FICT groups.

On a five-point scale, participants were asked to rate themselves in the following areas:

Circumstances (pre and post)

- Knowledge of available support services for families
- Confidence to work with an interpreter
- Frequency with which participants feel lonely or isolated
- Confidence to find help with a personal problem
- Confidence to cope with stress
- Motivation to do things participants enjoy
- Ease with which participants can find solutions to problems
- Satisfaction with general health and well-being.

Goals (pre and post)

- Knowledge of rights and rules that apply to families in Australia
- Knowledge of difficult feelings that may be experienced by new arrivals to Australia
- Knowledge of causes of difficult feelings
- Knowledge of how to manage difficult feelings.

Satisfaction (post only)

- How well FICT helped participants prepare for life in Australia
- How well facilitators understood participants' needs
- How likely participants were to recommend FICT to others.

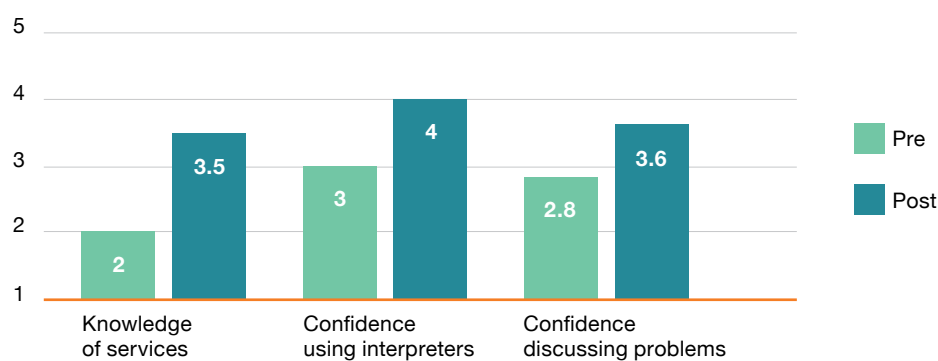
The 'pre' group set of 12 questions is given to all DSS funded FICT group participants at the commencement of the first group session (sometimes conducted within the second but no later than the third session). It is provided to group participants in hard copy and in the language in which the group is being facilitated. Where a group participant is not literate in that language (or any other language for which we have available translations) the survey is conducted verbally by one of the group facilitators.

The 15 question 'post' group survey is conducted at the conclusion of the last group session in the same manner as the 'pre' group survey. Completed forms are collated by the group facilitator and forwarded to the FICT Administration Officer for data entry. The pre and post survey results are presented below.

2.2. Findings

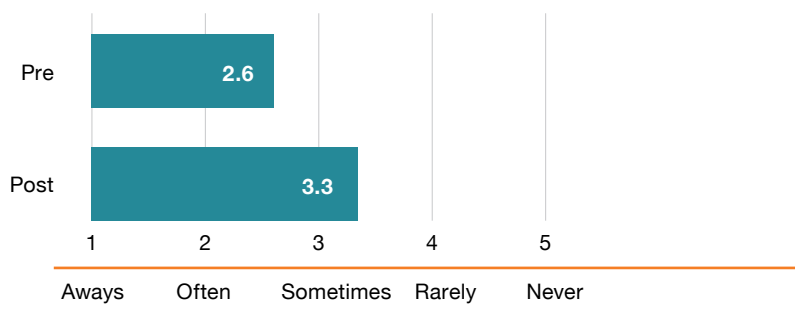
2.2.1. Circumstances

Community Participation & Networks

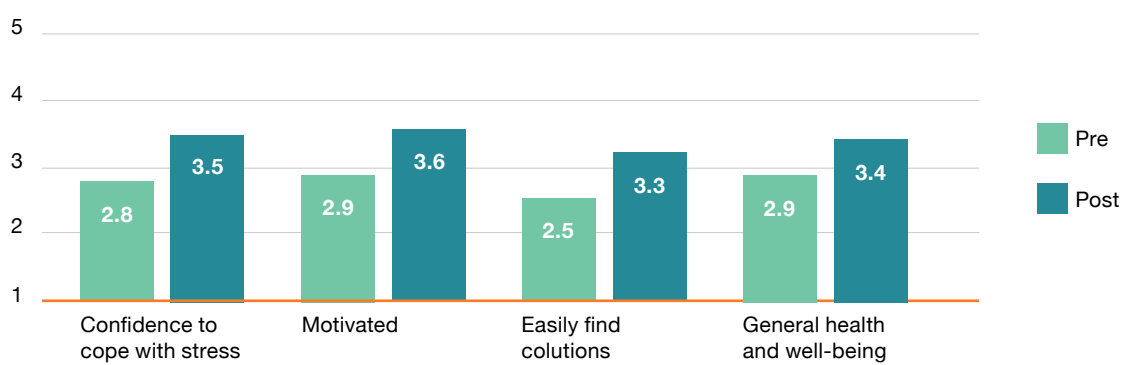


2.2.1. Circumstances

Often lonely / isolated



Mental Health, Wellbeing & Self-Care

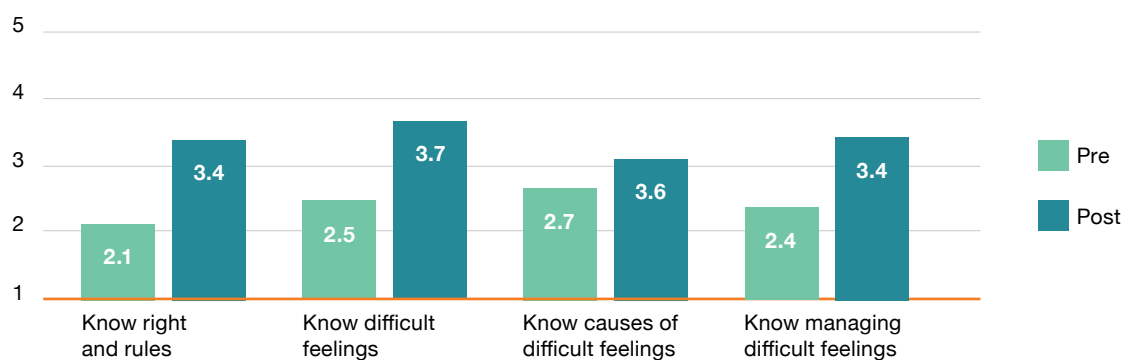


The above graphs show clear and significant positive changes in all rated areas of participants' circumstances relating to community participation and networks, and mental health and well-being. The most significant increase was shown to be in the area of knowledge of available support services, which can have a profound effect on participants' ability to actively participate in Australian society.

The significant decrease in the frequency with which participants felt lonely/isolated also indicates an increase in new social connections as a result of participating in FICT. The findings presented in the above graphs (particularly the areas of knowledge of available services, general health and well-being and frequency with which participants feel lonely/isolated) correlate with the qualitative findings presented in the previous section.

2.2.2. Goals

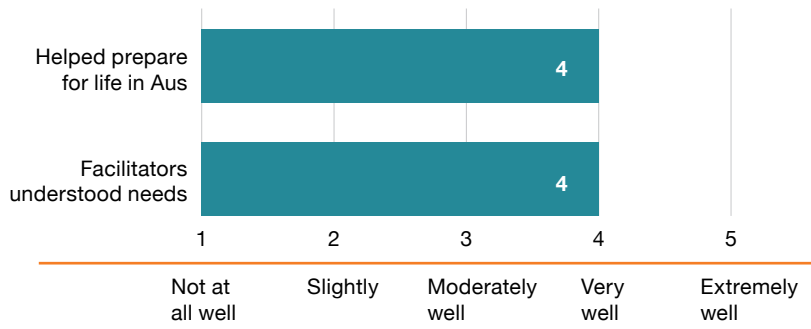
Changed Knowledge & Access to Information



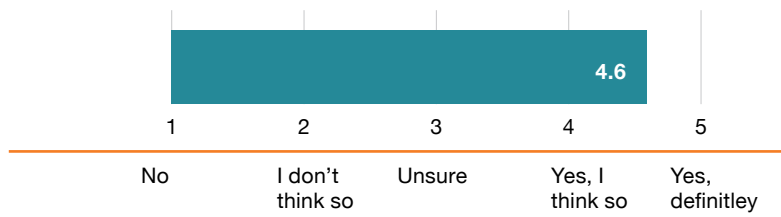
The above graph again shows clear and significant changes in all rated areas. Results show that participants were more knowledgeable about the rights and rules that apply to families in Australia (congruent to qualitative findings presented in the previous section), about the root causes of the difficult feelings that new arrivals to Australia may experience, and about how to manage them.

2.2.3. Satisfaction

Satisfaction



Recommend FiCT to others



The results presented in the above graphs indicate high levels of participant satisfaction with the FICT program. Participant responses indicated that, as a result of participating FICT, they were better prepared for life in Australia. Results also reflect that facilitators understood the needs of participants very well. Lastly, results show that the large majority of participants would recommend FICT to others.

2.3. Conclusion

The results of evaluations conducted within the SCORE framework clearly show significant and positive changes to participant community participation and networks, general mental health and well-being and knowledge and access to information, all of which significantly contribute to successful resettlement of new arrivals to Australia. Results also reflect a high level of participant satisfaction with FICT, with the large majority of participants indicating that they would recommend participation in FICT to others. .

03

Evaluation of the Working with Families from Refugee Background Workshop

This section presents the evaluation of the Working with Families from Refugee Background Workshop delivered by FICT staff conducted in 2019. The training was delivered as a key performance outcome of Families and Community Services (FACS) funding. The workshop was delivered at STARTTS, Carramar, for 13 representatives from various service providers. Participants primarily included case managers, support workers and coordinators. This section presents the evaluation results from this workshop.

3.1. Workshop aims

The aims of the Working with Families from Refugee Background Workshop were:

- to build an understanding of the effects of refugee trauma and torture, resettlement and other stressors on families
 - to increase service providers' awareness of the strengths, needs and priorities of parents and families from refugee backgrounds
 - to consider elements of a strengths based approach to working with families from refugee backgrounds
-

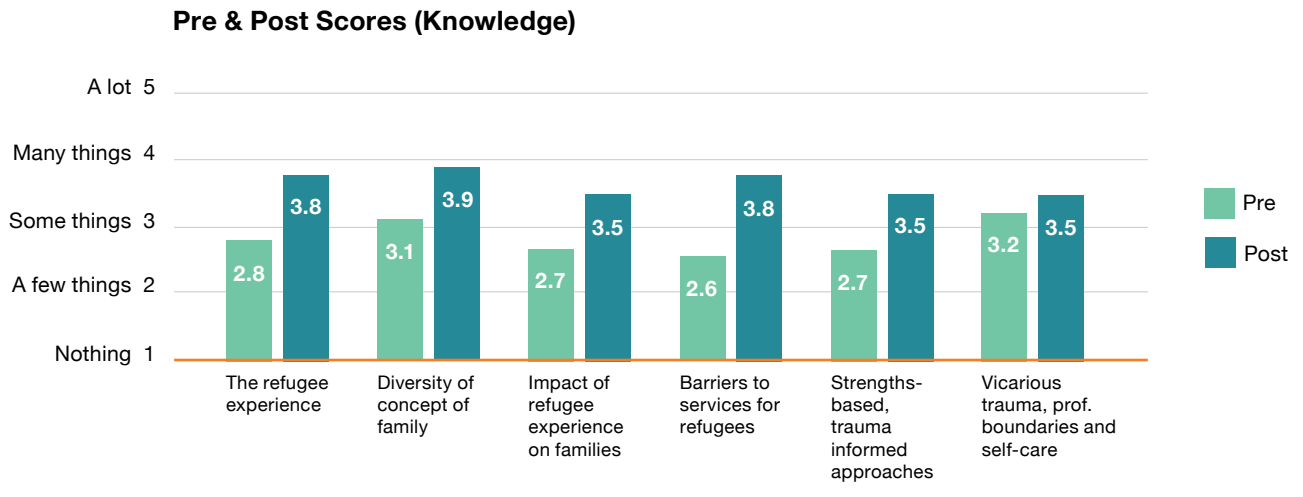
3.2. Evaluation methodology

The Working with Families from Refugee Background workshop was evaluated using a pre and post survey which measured participants' knowledge of key areas covered in the training, as well as participants' overall satisfaction with the training. On a five point scale, participants were asked to rate their knowledge of the below areas, before and after the workshop:

- The refugee experience and its impact on families
 - The diversity of the concept of family
 - Potential barriers to services for people from refugee background
 - A strengths-based, trauma informed approach to working with refugee families
 - Vicarious trauma, professional boundaries and self-care.
-

3.3. Results

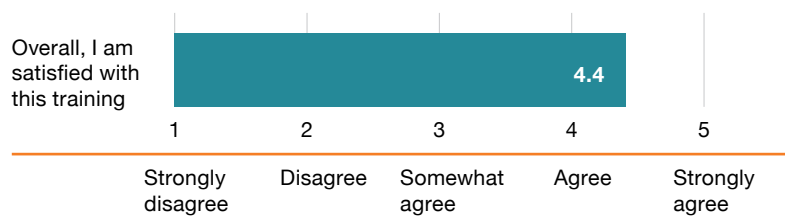
3.3.1. Results: Participant knowledge



The above graph shows clear and significant increases in participant knowledge in all areas asked about in the survey, including the refugee experience and its impact on families, diversity of concept of family, potential barriers to people from refugee background accessing services, strengths-based and trauma informed approaches to working with families from refugee background, vicarious trauma, setting and maintaining professional boundaries and identifying and implementing self-care strategies. Areas that showed the most significant increases were knowledge of the refugee experience and knowledge of potential barriers refugees face when seeking to access support services.

3.3.2. Results: Participant satisfaction

Satisfaction with Workshop



3.3.3. Additional feedback

Participants provided additional positive feedback about the workshop:

“Great training. It has given me a more open view of barriers that refugees face when coming to Australia”

“I found it very valuable and informative”

“Well-structured, engaging, different approaches to content matter”

“Resource booklet is great”

3.4. Conclusion

The evaluation findings show that the Working with Families from Refugee Background workshop met all its intended objectives. Findings show that participants were more knowledgeable about the impact of the refugee experience on families, the needs and priorities of families from refugee background and about strengths-based and trauma informed approaches for working with families of refugee background. Findings all show a high level of participant satisfaction with the training.



04

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Appendix 1

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