The Strong Families Programme was developed and piloted in Afghanistan thanks to the generous support of the US-INL. To date, this programme has further been piloted in Central America, Central and West Asia, East and West Africa thanks to the support of Sweden, France and the US-INL.

**Structure of the strong families programme**

**Week 1**
- Caregiver pre-session: Understanding Strengths and Stresses
- Child session 1: Using love and limits
- Child session 2: Learning about stress
- Family session 1: Learning about each other

**Week 2**
- Caregiver session 1: Teaching children what is right
- Child session 2: Following rules and appreciating parents
- Family session 2: Supporting values and dreams

**Week 3**
- Parent session: 

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**Program process to address underlying causes**

**Decrease risk factors:**
- Favorable attitudes towards coercive parenting strategies
- Poor family management skills
- High levels of stress
- Environment favoring early initiation of drug use and of conflict and violence

**Increase protective factors:**
- Improved family interaction
- Enhanced relationships
- Non-violent discipline
- Prosocial involvement
- Caregiver social support

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**How does it work?**

Program process to address underlying causes

**Caregiver sessions**
- Goal: Normalise and manage stress, improve parenting confidence and skills to develop positive parenting strategies, enhance resources to deal with stress

**Child sessions**
- Goal: Improve mental health outcomes, better deal with stress, reduce challenging behaviour

**Family sessions**
- Goal: Improve communication and relationships, decreased coercive parenting

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**Short term participant and family impact**

**Caregiver sessions**
- Improved caregiver confidence in family management skills
- Improved family management skills
- Improved response to stress

**Child sessions**
- Improved child behaviour
- Reduced aggressive and hostile behaviours
- Improved mental health outcomes in children and parents

**Family sessions**
- Increased capacity to cope with stress

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**Long term impact**

**Caregiver sessions**
- Improved caregiver confidence in family management skills
- Improved mental health for caregivers and children

**Child sessions**
- Reduction in violence
- Reduction in substance abuse
- Reduction in risky behaviour

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**Contact Us**

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UNODC PTRS

UNODC STRONG FAMILIES PROGRAMME
A family skills prevention programme for families living in challenged settings
Families living in challenged settings

Globally, many families live in challenged settings, experiencing significant difficulties on their everyday lives. Challenges can be in rural or urban areas with inadequate access to safe drinking water, sanitation, electricity or schools, high unemployment etc. Other challenges include a history of invasion and war that leaves families internally displaced, access to safe drinking water, sanitation, electricity or schools, high unemployment etc. Globally, many families live in challenged settings, posing significant difficulties on their everyday lives.

Family skills programmes support caregivers to better parent and strengthen positive attachment relationships, promote family functioning and interactions. They promote development of warm child-caregiving where children feel safe, cared for and able to develop. They can change harmful behaviours, closely monitor development, enhance children’s strengths, patterns and become good parents. This content is designed to assist families to acquire to skills to make informed decisions. Owing to these characteristics, family skills programmes are effective in preventing a wide range of social and health problems, including drug use, violence against children and youth violence, and crime. Family skills programmes additionally provide positive effects on the mental wellbeing of parents and reduce parental and occupational stress and improved parental functioning, such as parental consistency or positive encouragement.

The Strong Families Programme was developed by UNODC to meet the needs of families of different socio-economic levels. 1) Brief in number of sessions: Families in challenged settings find it hard to attend more than a limited number of sessions. The programme has between 8 and 15 sessions. 2) Light in material needs: The rollout requires minimal and low-cost material easy to prepare per session (such as paper and pens, balloons, ropes, etc) and does not require the facilitation of a specific setting or material such as DVDs, DODs, projectors, etc. 6) Selective, yet covers a large spectrum of families: The programme requires specific technical skills and can be trained in 2 days by certified trainers. This makes it easier to be integrat- ed without the need for a highly technical facilitator and other special equipment and materials.

Families living in challenged settings

Purpose, goals & philosophy of the Strong Families Programme

The Strong Families (SF) Programme is a family skills pro- gramme that is evidence-based and aims to strengthen families for sustainable development, provide access to services and accountability and inclusive institutions.

Value of family skills programmes

Evidence-Informed: In line with the recommendations of the UNODC WHO International Standards on Drug Use Prevention and capitalizing on the experience generated from the global initiative of UNODC in adaptation and development of evidence-based family skills for low- and middle-income country, since 2010.

The Strong Families Programme was developed by UNODC to meet the needs of families of different socio-economic levels. The programme requires specific technical skills and can be trained in 2 days by certified trainers. This makes it easier to be integrated into existing systems. The programme’s facilitator’s manual was designed to be easy to follow to maximize the programme’s impact and meet the needs of caregivers.

While Strong Families was originally adapted and piloted in Afghanistan, it has evolved to a global version that can be applied (and is piloted) on families in challenged settings in many other countries. Preliminary data on its initial stages of implementation in Afghanistan and in Afghan refugee reception centers in Serbia showed significant changes on measures such as emotional and conduct problems, parental stress, increased capacity to cope with stress, improved child behaviour and wellbeing, such as parental consistency or positive encouragement. For example, these findings reflect the previously noted positive impact of the programme on the improved caregiver confidence in family management, improved family skills, improved caregiving in parenting, increased capacity to cope with stress, improved child behaviour, reduced aggressive and hostile behaviour and hence improved mental health outcomes in children with parents who received the programme.

The Strong Families Programme showed significant impact on both, girls and boys and their respective caregivers.

Philosophy of Strong Families

1. All families have strengths and skills. 2. Even in difficult times caregivers do the best they can to love and care for their children. 3. Families are stronger by sharing their challenges and responsibility among them. 4. The challenges families have faced often makes them stronger and give them more resilience and wisdom. 5. The programme offers ways to make caring for children easier and more effective. 6. Each family knows what is most likely to work in their situation.

Figure: Amongst children with high or very high (≥ 70) total difficulty scores of the SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) at baseline, as assessed by the caregivers in pilot studies in 3 cities in Afghanistan (n=41 out of 72 families overall) and in Afghan children in 3 refugee reception centers in Serbia (n=9/21). (Data in (1) and after the Strong Families programme, which was rolled out further after a media programme [funding submitted for publication])