

## Welcome to our sixth Newsletter

### Changes and new projects

The Children and War Foundation has a new look with a Board of Directors and now a Board of Research and Implementation – working hard to be even more effective and wide-reaching. We have updated our Constitution and are working on improving our website.

Unni Heltne has now taken over the mantle of Chair of The Children and War Foundation from co-founder, Atle Dyregrov, and we all welcome her in her new role. Atle remains on the Board of Directors so is still a very active participant in the charity

### Unni Heltne is New Chair

Unni has been a long-standing member of CaW. She is the Director of the Centre for Crisis Psychology in Bergen, Norway.



A licensed specialist in clinical psychology, she works as a clinician, lecturer and supervisor in the field of trauma psychology, both in national and international settings, including Asia and the Middle East. She has Middle East. She also chairs CaW's Board of Research and Implementation.

### Highlights

**Training:** CaW has been busy training more groups in the UK in TRT: two already this year (see pages 2, 5 and comment below) – and another two more due to take place in the autumn.

**“I found the course exceptional in terms of content and delivery and I have used its principles in my own clinical practice. I plan to deliver the training on Teaching Recovery Techniques at the ground level and train people in Iraq in December.”**

Dr Kiran Nijabat, Psychiatrist, child and adolescent mental health, Al-Ayn (see p. 2)

**Fundraising:** In the UK we have held another concert and raised another £2500 (see p. 5)

**Please sponsor wonderful Team Little Gem who are running a Half Marathon on September 24<sup>th</sup> in Windsor in aid of Children and War**

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/little-gem-marathon>

[www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com)

Maybe some of you saw their powerful television documentary fronted by Xand and Chris Van Tulleken : Frontline Doctors: Winter Migrant Crisis in March 2016 (still available on YouTube). The problems haven't gone away....



## Helping Iraqi orphans: TRT (Teaching Recovery Techniques) Training with Al-Ayn

**Helen Likierman reports:** At the end of May members of the charity Al-Ayn, who work to support fatherless orphans in Iraq, gathered together in their Colindale headquarters to train on the TRT to improve their skills in helping children and to be able to train others. Their task is daunting: there are more than 44,000 such children whose lives have been blighted by the loss of the wage-earner and family protector – and many will have lost other family members as well.

So, on a hot Bank Holiday weekend in the middle of Ramadan - which meant that the majority of the group could neither eat nor drink and had a very short night's sleep - everyone was keenly focused and involved, wanting to learn more. Meanwhile, as they and the three trainers (William Yule, Laura Tomlinson and myself) sat round the table, discreetly around us was continuing activity of the tasks that occupy Al-Ayn daily – such as the collection of (new) toys and clothes for distributing to the children in Iraq.



For the trainers it was a special experience. We talked through the particular cultural background of Iraqi society and how this might affect the running of groups for children and also the training of others, learning many things. At the same time we experienced great thoughtfulness, being served drinks and biscuits all day and taken to an (excellent) kebab restaurant for our lunches, which none of the group could share.

**Dr Amina Al-Yassin, Paediatrician, from Al-Ayn writes:** “On the 28th and 29th of May The Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation (Charity number 1163706) was honoured to host Professor William Yule, Helen Likierman and Laura Tomlinson who delivered the two-day 'Teaching Recovery Techniques' workshop to our team of fourteen people in London. Our team included paediatricians, child psychiatrists, teachers and volunteers and staff at the charity.

Al-Ayn is Iraq's foremost charity for the care of Orphaned children. **The workshop gave us a fantastic introduction to the principles of working with traumatised children, as well as equipping us with many useful techniques and activities that could be used to aid and promote recovery.**



Al-Ayn is launching many projects for psychological rehabilitation and wellbeing in Iraq. This includes the "Luminous Stars" centre in Kadumain, which has counselling and therapy facilities for children as well as the "Hikayati" centre in Najaf which will be a Centre for personal development, mentoring and early-intervention for the children for the children. We hope to be able to travel to Iraq in Christmas 2017 to start training the volunteers there when the "Hikayati" centre is will be completed in 2019.



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## Bill Yule's updates



Lots of things have been happening and CaW has been busy. There have been the trainings (see the Al-Ayn item), publication of new research (Ian Barron introducing TRT into secure units in Scotland, Rachel Calam and the Manchester team with a programme for Syrian refugees, and an update from Masa Al-Kurdi's TRT programmes in Iraq) and the need to respond to the terrible disasters in the UK. (the bombings and the Grenfell Tower fire).

On our own front, Maria Callias from the UK Supporters Executive team has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the CaW Foundation. We look ahead to October when several members of our team will fly to Bergen to train with me and Atle Dyregrov on the new Grief Manual so CaW can train more people how to help children cope with traumatic bereavement.

Money has been offered by the charity PLAN to do joint work – including a project in Brazil called Fight for Peace, which involves Ian Barron (see below for Ian's work in Scotland). And more projects are in the pipeline...

## Ian Barron's projects in Scotland

Ian has just published the results of his Pilot Study of TRT with a group of adolescents in Secure Accommodation in Scotland in the Journal of Family Violence. The group receiving TRT was compared with a waiting-list control group (who were told they would

get help at a later stage). The results showed reduced "subjective units of disturbance" and trend for fewer trauma symptoms and behavioural changes.

## Other international projects

CaW is involved with earthquake survivors in Italy in partnership with the Charity HOPE. Groups are reporting successful work in Ukraine. And in Dahouk, Iraq, Masa Al-Kurdi has trained a core team of 15 people who have completed two cycles of TRT with ISIS survivors.

## Help from Manchester...for Syrian refugees

The Parenting and Families Research Group at the University of Manchester developed an adapted version of the TRT programme to include 5 sessions of parent skills training.

This version is called TRT + Parenting. A pilot study of this version was carried out in 2015 with Syrian refugees in Turkey and found a significant increase in parental self-efficacy and a reduction in child problem behaviours. Another trial of the effectiveness of TRT + Parenting with Syrian refugee families this time in Lebanon is just coming to an end. The scientific "gold standard" of measuring the effectiveness of treatments, the use of Randomised Control Trials (RCT) was put in place (so we can be sure that if the results show improvements for the children and parents then that is really the case: it will not be due to attention or anything other than the programme itself). This trial is being funded by several organisations (including The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) that have taken a strong interest in the work that the group is conducting globally with vulnerable families.



**Syrian children and caregivers in Lebanon : a celebration and graduation ceremony for having gone through the TRT + Parenting programme**

## **Evaluation, evaluation, evaluation**

The Foundation is committed to evaluating all its projects - like the Manchester groups are doing with their TRT + Parenting programme. A recent study from Sweden confirms that a widely-used questionnaire of 8 items constituting the Children's Revised Impact of Event Scale, CRIES-8, is a useful screening measure for PTSD symptoms (and

so the mental health needs) of unaccompanied refugee minors when seen for medical check-ups (though some children would need reading support). However, the large number of children showing difficulties in this study highlighted the need for more early prevention and intervention programmes....

## **London Fundraising Group Report**

**The Allegri Quartet** has done Children and War proud again. Long time and generous supporters they suggested that they could do a pre-concert rehearsal in aid of the charity. As ever this was a hugely pop magical event

which took place at the end of April in front of an audience of over fifty people. Over 2,500 pounds was raised. Thank you Rafael Todes, Dorothea Vogel, Vanessa Lucas Smith and Martyn Jackson.



## News from Austria and Germany from two newly trained trainers

**Sabine Kampmueller writes:** I am happy to share some news from Austria, after I attended the TRT training in London in February (see Newsletter Number 5). I very much appreciate the newsletter as a way to follow developments. My own interest is very much to learn lessons and understand any new evidence, in particular in regards to working with refugee children in Europe.

In Vienna, we just started a TRT group with unaccompanied refugee girls from Somalia. This is our pilot group; we are learning lots of interesting lessons, which I hope to exchange with other TRT implementers in the near future. Our next step is hopefully a training of TRT facilitators in Vienna and a roll out to schools or neighbourhoods with refugee kids.

**Veronika Dobler, writes from Ulm, Germany, where she is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist:** In Germany there are currently about 60,000 registered unaccompanied minors with refugee status. This poses an unprecedented challenge to all youth services, especially social care, CAMH services and the voluntary sectors. They have come from many cultures and may have suffered multiple traumas over years. On arrival at a final place of safety there are further challenges ahead, such as facing a new culture, new language and, with many not having had formal schooling, acquisition of basic academic skills that will eventually

facilitate some integration into a new society and working life. With a high prevalence of posttraumatic symptoms and general distress, conflicts with peers, escalating behaviors, but also depression, self-harm and withdrawal are commonplace. Unsurprisingly, trauma clinics are overwhelmed by demand.

At the University of Ulm we have started to offer TRT Based Groups, though some adaptations have been necessary to deal with the special challenges of this group. Because of the multi-ethnicity of the children, we had to transform some of the content into picture materials. We invited support workers to some of the sessions for psychoeducation but also to practise some of the therapeutic content together with the refugees. The additional benefit being that this would endow support workers with strategies to help others. A CBT based module on dealing with worries was added. Finally it was deemed necessary to promote networking of the young refugees with other youngsters but also with other agencies and charities offering support.

The work so far has been well received and rewarding, though formal evaluation is still outstanding. We hope for the exchange of ideas and further collaboration with others working with unaccompanied minors with refugee status.



## Masa Al-Kurdi's training in the Middle East – an update

Masa and her team continue their substantial training programme – most recently in Dohouk, Iraq, where there were many displaced people due to the ISIS invasions of their home towns. A group of 24 new trainees - mostly Kurdish speaking “inexperienced” volunteers - received five-day TRT training in conjunction with the NGO SOS Children Village. Masa and Lamia Gorra

as co-trainer enabled the participants to practise the techniques thoroughly and gave them feedback as to how to improve their skills even further. Everyone was found to have grasped the concepts well. It is great news for the many traumatised children running from ISIS that the chance of help is now so much more likely.

## Ongoing Work

### CaW responds to recent terror events...

When the terrorist bomb harmed children attending a concert in Manchester, Richard Meiser-Stedman (from the newly created CaW Board of Research and Implementation) ) coordinated a number of our members to produce a leaflet for parents suggesting how they can talk with their children about such awful events and what to look for if the child is distressed over following weeks. This was very widely disseminated, including on a website where by the end of two weeks, over 3,500 hits were recorded.

### and disasters

When the dreadful fire devastated the Grenfell Tower, the leaflet was adapted and again circulated. In addition, in both places, CaW has offered to train local people in TRT should they wish it. But CaW cautions against well-meaning people offering unhelpful advice. Bill Yule notes: “it’s has been reported that outdated and potentially harmful advice is being promoted by some high profile professions. There is a need for appropriate social support to survivors from the beginning. NOT individual treatment at that stage, but help with stress and bereavement. We have been in contact with the British Red Cross who have been appointed to coordinate the humanitarian assistance needed.”

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[newsletter@childrenandwar.org](mailto:newsletter@childrenandwar.org)

**Helen Likierman and Julian Hale (Editors)**

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