

Preliminary Report

Supporting refugee families. A systemic analysis of family education programs: Welcome with IMPULS, HIPPY and Opstapje.

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Abstract

Canada and Germany both received a significant number of refugee families from 2015 to 2018 (Korntheuer et al., 2020). Between January 2014 and December 2018, approximately 144,000 refugee children under the age of seven arrived as asylum seekers in Germany (Gambaro et al., 2019). Recent research reports claim that refugee mothers need more flexible and individualized programs or peer to peer approaches for an effective support structure. Furthermore, a different outreach-strategy is essential for the inclusion of families (BMFSJ, 2018; Mörath, 2019).

This research study examines the role of family education programs in supporting successful integration trajectories for refugee families in Germany. Existing programs, such as Welcome with IMPULS (Wml), Hippy, and Opstapje have been investigated for transferable success factors. We aim to better understand the living situation of refugee families in Germany and the role of family education in their inclusion in the host society. The mixed method approach includes qualitative interviewing, participant observation, analysis of quantitative participant data and an online survey. The number of participating families from countries of origin of asylum seekers in IMPULS programs such as HIPPY and Opstapje in Germany displays an increasing trend from 391 families in 2015 to 719 in 2018. The participant data reveals that this trend is mostly explained by the steady increase in the number of participants from four countries of origin: Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Sudan. The number of participating families from Syria increased sevenfold in the period reviewed. We explain four central functions of the programs for the inclusion of refugee families based on our analysis of 22 family cases, seven program sites cases, and online survey (N= 68): i) building trust: emotional stabilization through long term relationships with home visitors; ii) building bridges: connecting with institutions of the host society; iii) Fostering children's cognitive, linguistic, and emotional skills and iv) reducing communication barriers by trusting the family language. We suggest limits and challenges of the programs such as standardized materials for heterogenous families and the limited time frame for the home visits. Our concrete recommendations for actions aim to increase the awareness about diversity and intersectionality in family education programs. We contribute eight concrete steps for providing programs adapted to the needs of families with a refugee experience.

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1. Introduction

Today, we sat down with the home visitor and she started to play and they put the food together and they cooked together and played together. I felt that she [the daughter] interacted a bit. I liked that. I felt that her personality is becoming stronger and that this will allow her not to become shy or scared of people (Transcription, 2_RK)

Nadia, a mother of a two-year old daughter, shares the positive effects of the Opstapje program on her child in this quote. Nadia and her husband fled from the war in Syria. They arrived in Germany over four years ago and had their daughter Mahdia. Mahdia's parents were among the many individuals and families that arrived in Germany in the summer of migration 2015. The sudden influx of people looking for protection in 2015 increased the awareness about the need for integration in every educational field. German and international practitioners, organizations, and public entities are trying to develop needs-based and tailor-made solutions to support the inclusion of families with refugee experiences.

This study is funded by Mothers Matters Canada through IMPULS Deutschland and examines the living situation of refugee families in Germany and the impact and implementation of family education programs. It aims to better understand the living situation of refugee families in Germany and the role of family education in their inclusion in the host society. Promising practices, necessary frameworks, and recommendations for action have been elaborated based on the results.

Canada and Germany are facing similar challenges

Canada and Germany both received a significant number of refugee families from 2015 to 2018 (Korntheuer et al., 2020). Between January 2014 and December 2018, approximately 144,000 refugee children under the age of seven arrived as asylum seekers in Germany (Gambaro et al., 2019). Canada resettled over 120,000 refugees between 2015 and 2018, about a third of whom came from Syria (Pritchard et al., 2020, p.14). Canada aims to resettle the most vulnerable persons. The process prioritizes complete families, women at risk, and LGBTI people (IRCC, 2018). This is apparent from over 25,000 Syrian refugees being resettled during the first wave from November 2015 to January 2016. Over 50% of this population was younger than 18 years, mostly belonging to families with 4-6 members (40%). Among the families that had arrived, 765 had over 6 members (IRCC, 2018, p.19). Canada also received high numbers of asylum seekers—50,000 in 2017 and 55,000 in 2018. A disproportionately high number—26%—of asylum seekers in 2017 were children aged between 0 to 14 (Pritchard et al., 2020; Statistics Canada, 2019).

Recent studies in Germany demonstrate that the new refugee cohort have integrated well, particularly into the labor market (Brücker et al., 2019b). More than 78% of refugee women in Germany are mothers according to a recent study (BMFSJ, 2019) and a growing body of evidence shows that refugee mothers face different barriers to inclusion in a host society (Brücker et al, 2019; Worbs & Baraulina, 2017). An important challenge for the families is the limited access to early childhood education and child-care (Gambaro et al., 2019). This has also been the practical experience of the NGO's in Canada and Germany, Mother Matters and IMPULS Deutschland e.V., respectively, that funded this study.

What is the role of family education programs in improving the success of integration trajectories?

Recent research reports claim that refugee mothers need more flexible and individualized programs or peer to peer approaches for an effective support structure. Furthermore, a different outreach-strategy is essential for the inclusion of families (BMFSJ, 2018; Mörath, 2019).

This research project aims to analyze the role of family education programs in supporting successful integration trajectories for refugee families. Existing programs, such as Welcome with IMPULS (Wml), Hippy, and Opstapje, in the German context have been investigated for transferable success factors. The mixed method approach includes qualitative interviewing, participant observation, and an online survey.

We want to know if family education programs can create social connections as important mediators for successful integration trajectories based on Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptual framework of refugee integration. We ask if these programs act as social bridges connecting families to members of the host society, building social bonds that establish relationships with members from their ethno-cultural, linguistic or religious community. We also question if they can create social links and provide access to institutions of the host society. Additionally, the evaluation criterion is defined by the conceptional and strategic goals of the IMPULS programs. They aim to strengthen the parent-child relationship, parental agency and support the children's development through a holistic early childhood education program (IMPULS Deutschland Stiftung e.V., 2018).

Outline of the Report

This report offers a short insight into the existing knowledge about the situation of refugee families in Germany, as the first step (2). Germany received a crucial large number of refugee families from 2015 to 2018. Families mostly arrived as asylum seekers—only a small number coming in through resettlement and humanitarian admission programs. Legal frameworks and procedures of the asylum system, along with individual and other structural factors can restrict the opportunities for parents and children with refugee experiences. Family education programs such as HIPPIY and Opstapje are bridges into the host society for migrant families. In a second step (3) we show how our mixed method evaluation study was conducted to explore the living situation of refugee families in Germany and evaluate the role of family education programs in their successful integration trajectories.

Our results are discussed in the next three sections. We offer a short overview of the families with refugee experiences in the IMPULS Programs HIPPIY, Opstapje and Welcome with IMPULS (Wml) (4). To discuss the role of the family education programs for this target group (5), it is important to explore and understand the living situation of refugee families in Germany (5.1). We explain four central functions of the programs for the inclusion of refugee families and suggest limits and challenges of the programs (5.2) based on our analysis of 22 family cases, seven program sites cases, and online survey (N= 68). The results are summarized by assessing the attainment of the evaluation criteria (5.3). Our concrete recommendations for actions (6) aim to increase the awareness about diversity and intersectionality in family education programs. We contribute eight concrete steps for providing programs adapted to the needs of families with refugee experiences.

2. The Situation of Refugee Families in Germany: The State of Research

2.1 Facts and figures about refugee families in Germany

The responses to forced displacement in countries like Germany and Canada vary considerably due to their geographical proximity to sites of conflict and migration trajectories, along with their national policy contexts and humanitarian commitments. Hence, legal definitions and categories of refugees differ with national contexts. In Germany, asylum seekers usually request refugee status upon arrival in the country. Other refugee protection programs at the national and European level such as the humanitarian admission program and the resettlement and relocation programs are less known and protect a smaller number of refugees. The largest proportion of the refugee population is accepted through an in-country asylum claim (Korntheuer, 2017). Conversely, Canada is a country with many years of experience in resettlement. Their support programs mostly focus on resettled refugees not on asylum seekers (Hynie et al., 2019).

Traditionally, refugees are legally defined based on the Geneva Refugee Convention. However, this definition can be criticized due to its failure to consider the heterogeneity and diversity of reasons and processes causing forced migration. (Labor) migration and forced migration should not be understood as opposites since the experiences of existential poverty and armed conflicts as well as the hope to access education and economic prosperity often overlap in individual cases (Scherr & Scherschel 2019). The Federal Statistical Office in Germany uses the term “migrants seeking protection” to define a broader category including asylum seekers, accepted refugees, people with the so-called “tolerated status” (Duldung) as well as resettled refugees (Federal Statistical Office 2019: p. 5). For this study, we choose the term refugee population to categorize this group that includes families seeking protection under a broad range of legal categories.

The following Figure 1 offers an overview of the numbers of refugee population in Germany. While there is a steady rise in numbers of “migrants and children seeking protection,” the numbers of newly arriving asylum seekers have decreased considerably since 2016. As of 31st December 2018, over 167,000 “migrant children seeking protection” under the age of six were living in Germany. Between January 2014 and December 2018, approximately 144,000 refugee children under the age of seven arrived in Germany as asylum seekers (Gambaro et al., 2019). The most common country of origin among the refugee population is Syria (745,645) followed by Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019, p.148).

A written expertise by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) provides insights on the family structure of refugee families in Germany. There are clear differences between men and women’s marital status. The vast majority—81 %—of refugee women are married while the number is 47 % for men (BMFSJ, 2019). At 81 %, most refugee women migrate to Germany accompanied by their family while 53 % men travel to Germany alone. 78.4 % of the women have at least one child under 18, more than half of the refugee mothers (51.8 %) have at least one child under six years (BMFSFJ 2019, p. 14). The report also provides some information about family size: 18 % of the women have a child, 24.5 % have two children and 36 % have three or more children under 18 years (BMFSFJ 2019, p. 16). 15 % of the refugee mothers but only 6 percent of the fathers are single parents. Nine percent of the refugee parents have at least 1 child living abroad. The separation from children affects their life satisfaction the most—one or all of the children living abroad, substantially deteriorates the well-being of the parents (BMFSJ, 2019).

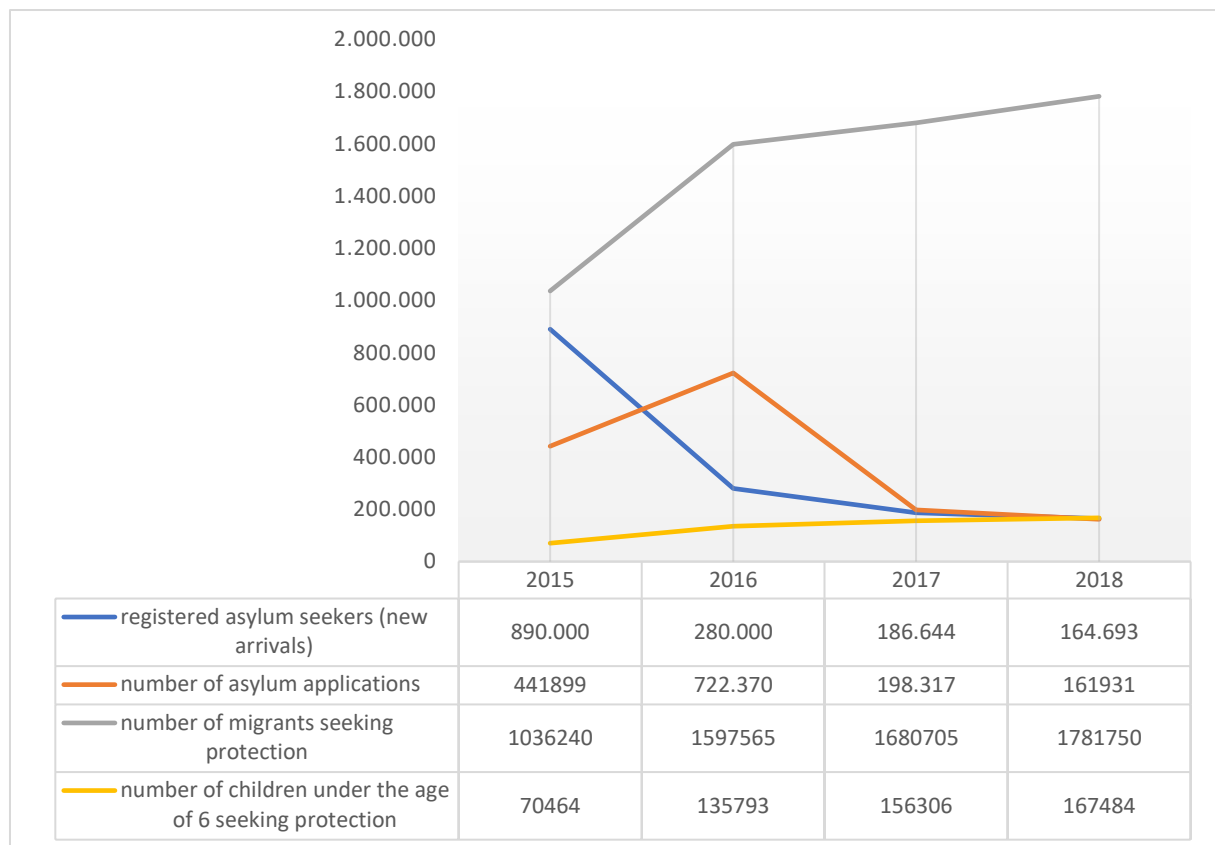


Figure 1: Refugee population in Germany. Source: (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2019b; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019)

2.2 Restricted opportunities: Participation of refugee families in the receiving society

Most refugee families arrive in Germany as asylum seekers. Restrictive asylum policies can lead to unstable and difficult living conditions which prevent their participation in the host society. According to the Asylum Seekers Benefit Act (AsylBLG), asylum seekers are provided with housing (mostly in mass shelters), basic health care, and basic income or benefits in kind. The length of the asylum process determines the duration of the refugee families being subjected to these living conditions. Prolonged status instability can have serious implications for their mental health and well-being (Lewek & Naber, 2017, p. 9). Asylum seekers are registered subject to a residency requirement, i.e., they are not allowed to leave the district of the reception facility. After transitioning to a more permanent accommodation, they are usually housed in City or Municipal shelters ranging from smaller units with only a few families to mass accommodation with a few hundred spaces. The implementation of a new reception model, the *reception, decision, distribution, and return centres* (Aufnahme-, Entscheidungs-, kommunale Verteilungs-, und Rückführungszentren), since 2018 is based on the national governmental coalition's agreement. However, it has not been put into practice in all the federal states yet. Asylum seekers, irrespective of their countries of origin and prospects of staying in Germany, are obliged to stay in these centres until the decision about their refugee claim (maximum 18 months and in case of families with children, 9 months) (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2019a). Legally, accepted refugees are allowed to move out of refugee shelters into private houses. They can access social assistance, state funded language and integration courses, and qualification programs through the job centers and the state employment agency. Nevertheless, they face fundamental challenges and barriers like the housing shortage in the major urban areas (Korntheuer & Hergenröther, 2020). Participation in and access to important sectors of the host society, such as health care, housing, labour market and education, is a multifactoral process influenced by individual and structural factors.

The following sections discuss two important and interlinked aspects of the current state of research the limited access to language courses and the labour market for refugee mothers and the restricted educational participation of refugee children.

Access to language courses and the labor market not only enables refugee women to participate in social life but also fosters self-determination (Babeyeva et al. 2018, p. 58). However, a variety of studies evidenced barriers for women, especially refugee mothers (BMFSJ, 2018; Brücker et al., 2019a; Gambaro et al., 2019; Liebig & Tronstad, 2018; Worbs & Baraulina, 2017). A recent study by the German Institute for Economic Research shows the increasing participation of the refugee population in language courses and the labor market (Brücker et al., 2019a). Nevertheless, access to language competencies is strongly related to gender and family situation. While 48% men without children have good or very good language competencies, only 19% of the refugee mothers share this accomplishment (Brücker et al., 2019a). 27 % of the refugee men were employed in the second half of 2017 but only six percent of the refugee women. Employment rates of refugee mothers with young children are particularly low at three percent (Brücker et al., 2019a).

The barriers to their employment can be identified under the following categories:

- qualification: lack of certificates and work experience
- psychological experience: traumatic experiences before, during, and after flight
- family: focus on family and care work
- culture milieu: traditional gender roles
- structural limitations: restricted access to language courses, the lack of childcare during the courses and the limited accessibility to early childhood education for younger children.

The key seems to be giving children the quickest possible access to the education system. However, this is also associated with clear difficulties, as demonstrated later in this section.

Refugee children and youth face important barriers to their educational participation (El-Mafaalani & Massumi, 2019; Korntheuer, 2016; Korntheuer & Damm, 2019; Pavia Lareiro, 2019, p.3).

Their access depends both on the state in which the child lives and their country of origin which determine their individual prospects of staying (Abdallah-Steinkopff 2018, p. 20; El-Mafaalani & Massumi 2019, p.10). The possibilities of accessing early childhood education increase with the increasing duration of stay, particularly after moving out of a mass accommodation (Gambaro et al. 2019, p. 809). When the children of refugee families finally visit early childhood education facilities, it is not only them but also their parents who benefit from the participation with increased social integration and well-being (Gambaro et al., 2019). Around 60 % refugee children go to a daycare center or kindergarten at three. At four and five, this increases to 72 %. Nevertheless, the attendance rates of refugee children are significantly lower than the national average of 90-95 % attendance rate in early childhood education for this age group (Gambaro et al. 2019, p. 809).

2.3 The state of research on migrant and refugee families in family education programs

After the summer of migration 2015, the awareness about integration needs of individuals and families with a refugee experience in every field of education increased. Geisen et al., (2019, p. 9), in their recent volume on family education and migration in Germany, state that "Migration has grown to be an obvious and signaling topic for providers of parenting and family education programs." Nevertheless, there is a significant and clear lack of empirical evidence about the role of family education in the integration trajectories of refugee families. So far, the few publications addressing family education for the refugee population mostly refer to study results about families with a general migration experience (Fischer, 2019) or practical experiences in the field (Abdallah-Steinkopff & Kupfer, 2018).

Lüken-Klaßen and Neumann (2019) analyzed 50 interviews with practitioners in the field of family education. They identified five central barriers for refugee families: i) language and communication barriers, ii) specific flight-related stressors, iii) limited experience with social work, iv) different value systems and v) inappropriate program implementation. To foster inclusion of refugee families they propose strengthening intercultural competencies and awareness of power imbalances through increased training activities for staff members along with strengthening community and neighborhood networks. They define refugee families as a target group with specific needs. Nevertheless, refugee families are heterogenous. The advantages of targeted support programs and the disadvantages of homogenizing “refugee families” must be carefully considered (Lüken-Klaßen, Doris, Neumann, Regina, 2019, p.201). Fischer (2019) similarly proposes an intersectional approach instead of an isolated focus on gender, age, education status, or migration experience. Targeted approaches risk essentializing and “othering” families. Building on the normative basis of human rights, she calls for recognition, anti-discrimination / anti-racism, participation, and empowerment as guidelines for action in the educational practice with diverse families (Fischer, 2019, p.33).

A few evaluation reports of HIPPY, Opstapje, and the “Rucksack Program” are available in Germany. HIPPY—Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters—and Opstapje are both internationally implemented family education programs. They aim to support parenting skills, foster family bonds, and helps children transition into preschool and school by, for instance, improving language and literacy skills. HIPPY was first developed in Israel in 1969 to support migrant families with high needs. The evaluation of the HIPPY program in Bavaria in 2008 showed significant advantages for the members of the participating families. The main reason for the parents to attend the program (73 percent) was that it supported their children’s German language acquisition (Bierschock et al., 2009, p.27). Improvements in parent-children interactions and increased integration of mothers and children have been observed. An increase in literacy activities such as the frequency of reading and communication has also been shown. The longer the families participated, the greater the likelihood of the parents taking the time to do the exercises and that they would become an integral part of their everyday life (Bierschock et al. 2008, p. 42.).

The mothers’ language skills improved, they became more confident, and maintained more social contacts with Germans. An improvement of sociability, creativity, and German language skills has been observed among the children (see Bierschock et al. 2008). The evaluation of the Opstapje program by the German Youth Institute in 2004 showed that immediately after the end of the program, children’s language and cognitive skills increased significantly (Izyumska, 2013, p. 34f.). However, a follow-up evaluation (2005) also demonstrated that nine months after the end of the program “the improvements achieved in children returned to their original level” (Izyumska 2013, p.42). Thus, long-term support for families and their children is highly recommended.

However, Opstapje has been criticized for its lack of materials in the family languages (Izyumska 2013, p.42). The “Rucksack Program” is based on a family education program that was first implemented in Netherlands. It works with parents as bilingual assistants in a multiplier-peer approach. It supports migrant families by offering educational materials in their respective mother-tongues and through group meetings and homework exercises. The multiplier-peer approach and the strong focus on family language strengthens literacy activities in the families and empowers mothers and former participants who take on the role of bilingual assistants (Roth & Terhart, 2015,p. 186ff.).

3. Implementation of the Mixed Methods Evaluation Study

3.1 Study Design

The exploration of the field was realized within a mixed methods research approach (Kuckartz et al., 2008; Kuckartz, 2014; Lamprecht, 2012). It includes case studies based on qualitative interviewing and participant observation, an online survey, and an analysis of quantitative participant data from 2015 to 2018. The combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods brings multiple perspectives to the analysis and enhances its validity by connecting and combining the data sources (Kuckartz, 2014).

The evaluation practice was not strictly limited to an organizational/ institutional focus, as substantiated by Lamprecht (2012). Evaluation should generate knowledge at the individual, institutional, and socio-political level. The evaluation process can stimulate the reflection processes of parents, home visitors and coordinators. IMPULS can use the results for organizational development, as an institution. Simultaneously, the results can also be brought into scientific and public discourses through a broader and qualitative-responsive evaluation practice (Lamprecht, 2011, p.280f.).

Subsequently, the evaluation criterion was based on conceptional and strategic goals of the IMPULS programs as well as on a broader theoretical base of the Ager and Strang (2008) integration concept.

3.2 Theoretical Framework and Evaluation Criteria

Common integration concepts (e.g. Esser,2008) might not adequately apply for the analysis of integration trajectories of vulnerable refugee families since these models often limit the successful integration within functional indicators such as labor market integration. The integration model developed by Ager and Strang (2008) offers a holistic orientation that accounts for individual and social factors. Therefore, it significantly expands the knowledge about the integration pathways of this group. Ager and Strang (2008) provide a conceptual framework of refugee integration and define ten core domains. Integration trajectories are shaped through social connections such as social bridges to the host community, social bonds to ethnic and religious communities and social links to institutions of the host society. Integration is framed by “connections between individuals and structures of the state, such as government services” (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 181). Referring to this model, social connections are defined as the evaluation criterion for this study.

Additionally, evaluation criterion is defined through conceptional and strategic goals of IMPULS programs. Beside variations between the different programs examined in this study (HIPPI, Opstapje, WELCOME with IMPULS), nine common program goals can be defined (IMPULS, 2018, p.14ff.). The following table (Table 1) offers an overview on the two fields of evaluation criteria.

Table 1: Evaluation criterion (Source: Own presentation based on Ager & Strang, 2008; IMPULS Deutschland Stiftung e.V., 2018)

Evaluation criteria for the successful integration through social connections	Conceptional and strategic evaluation criteria of IMPULS programs
<p>1. Social bridges: Social connections and relationships with people from the host society are enabled/ strengthened</p> <p>2. Social bonds: Social connections and relationships with people from the ethno-cultural, linguistic or religious community are enabled/ strengthened</p> <p>3. Social links: Access to institutions (daycare and preschool, schools, language courses, health care providers, social assistance) is enabled/ strengthened</p>	<p>1. Children receive holistic support in their development (motor, socio-emotional, literacy and cognitive skills, self-confidence and curiosity, and German language acquisition)</p> <p>2. Parent-child relationship is strengthened</p> <p>3. Parents' skills and self-confidence are strengthened</p> <p>4. Parents and children develop self-efficacy and are empowered</p> <p>5. Children experience their parents as active educational agents</p> <p>6. The program helps health promotion and prevention</p> <p>7. Strengthens network building and access to communities and neighborhoods</p> <p>8. Improves educational opportunities and educational equity for the children</p> <p>9. Qualification of home visitors to foster their labor market integration</p>

3.3 Research Questions

The study examines the living situation of refugee families in Germany and the impact and implementation of family education programs about this target group to elaborate promising practices, necessary framework conditions, and recommendations for action. Our research questions refer to the evaluation criteria. They are grouped under three leading question areas:

i) How are parent-child interactions / family relations shaped through displacement?

- What does the daily life of refugee families look like?
- What are the challenges and resources for refugee families?
- How does the displacement process impact family relations and parent-child interactions?
- What is the role of the social bonds to ethnic and religious communities?

ii) What is the role of family education programs in the integration process?

- How are the families connected to the host society and educational institutions of the host countries (social bridges/ social links)?
- How do families perceive their participation in the family education programs (what is seen as effective support/ challenges/ what should be changed)?
- What are the outcomes of the participation of refugee families in the program? How are these connected to the strategic and conceptual goals (see Table 1)?
- How are family relations influenced by participating in the program?

iii) What are the promising, transferable practice approaches to support the integration trajectories of refugee families?

- How are the family education programs implemented and how does this affect the success of the support offered to the different target groups?
- What are the success factors for effectively implementing the programs?
- How can these success factors be transferred to other contexts?

3.4 Data Collection and Sample

The mixed methods evaluation study is methodologically based on three pillars:

I. Analyzing the participant data in the IMPULS programs—HIPPY and Opstapje—from 2015 to 2018:

This helps identify a pattern of change in the number of families from specific countries of origin over the recent years and the areas where these families participate in these programs as well as dropout rates.

II. Analyzing of an online survey conducted in 2019. Sixty-four locations of HIPPY, Opstapje and Welcome with IMPULS provided detailed feedback about the participation of refugee families. This data details the living situation and the language skills of the participating families with refugee experience. It indicates the accessibility of the programs, the necessary framework conditions, and the ways of implementing of the programs for successful participation.

III. Qualitative Case Studies of 22 families and 7 locations to better understand the living situation of refugee families in Germany and to evaluate the impact of family education programs on families' integration paths. 50 interviews and participant observations with parents, home visitors, and coordinators were conducted for this. Children presented their perspective on home visits in drawings.

We aimed to have two points of data collection for each of the 22 families: i) qualitative interviews with parents and home visitors and ii) participant observation and qualitative interview with parents after at least 4 weeks of program participation. The response rate for the second interview phase was extremely positive with only four families unable to attend for the second data collection phase.

The **qualitative sampling strategy** aimed to acquire rich data from a broad range of interview partners to maximize dimensions, variations, and properties of the concepts that had been developed while analyzing (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Therefore, the sample included families from different ethnic and educational backgrounds from urban and more rural areas participating in different family education programs implemented through distinct site partners to provide a database for maximum and minimum comparisons.

Interviews with refugee parents, coordinators, and home visitors were conducted in the favored language of the interview partners:—German or mother tongue—using semi-structured protocols. All the interviews were recorded, summarized, and transcribed.

Field notes were used to document participant observation. Throughout the research process, the fact that refugee families often live under unstable and insecure living conditions were given consideration. The protection of research participants was considered to be a top priority¹.

3.5 Data analysis

Mixed methods approaches combine different sources of data and qualitative and quantitative analysis to broaden perspectives on the research topic (Kuckartz, 2014). While combining qualitative case studies with quantitative data from the online surveys and participant data, we were able to understand processes on a case level and subsequently enhance validity by connecting it with our results using bigger data sets.

For the case studies data was analyzed using Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2011). Categories were inductively formed sentence by sentence and sequence by sequence with the analysis proceeding by comparing and contrasting the interview and observational data sources.

¹ For an overview on the sample see appendixes.

4. Families with refugee experience in family education programs: HIPPY, Opstapje and Welcome with IMPULS

4.1 Overview on the programs in focus: HIPPY, Opstapje and Welcome with IMPULS

HIPPY—Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters and Opstapje—are both internationally implemented and licensed family education programs. They aim at supporting parenting skills, foster family bonds as well as a successful transition into preschool and school by improving language and literacy skills, for instance (compare evaluation criteria table 1). Target groups are families in difficult and socially deprived or disadvantaged living situations. There is a strong focus on families with migration experiences in the German context for both programs. HIPPY was first developed in Israel in 1969 to support migrant families with high needs. Opstapje is an adaption of an early prevention and support program for migrant families in the Netherlands (Bierschock, 2008; Jyrzikck et al., 2005).

Both programs are based on home visits combined with group meetings. Home visitors, mostly with the same ethno-cultural background, such as mothers or sometimes fathers, meet parents once every two weeks at home. During these approximately forty-five minutes to one-hour meetings, parents and home visitors review and interact with educational materials, or, in as in Opstapje program home visitor, parents and child play and interact together with the provided materials. Group meetings are also offered at centers in the community bi-weekly. HIPPY is based on a so-called triangularity approach, where the working and learning relationships between three interacting agents—the coordinator of the site, the home visitor, and the parent participating—are main elements of the program (Bierschock, 2008, p.7). Conversely, Opstapje includes the children in the play activities of the home visit. Between meetings, parents must spend 15 minutes per day with their child doing activities from the curriculum. Visitors, mostly local community members, and, if possible, past participants of the programs are trained to deliver the program.

Opstapje² supports families with children from six months to three years in a one and half year program. HIPPY³ is designed for families with children from three to six years and families can participate in it for up to two years. Welcome with IMPULS is a three-month adaption of these two programs offered to refugee families with children between zero to six years in Germany. The program works with materials from Opstapje and HIPPY as well as everyday objects. Home visits and group meetings can be offered. The program is more flexibly implemented, some sites choose to offer either only group meetings or home visits or a combination of both.

The following table (2) provides an overview on the three programs in focus, the sample size of the participant data, and the online survey:

² For this analysis including program Opstapje Baby

³ For this analysis including program Kids 3

Table 2: An Overview of the programs in focus and sample size (Source: Own presentation)

	HIPPY/ Kids 3	Opstapje/ Opstapje Baby	Welcome with IMPULS
Age of the children	3 years to 6 years	6 months to 3 years	6 months to 6 years
Length of program	12 months (kids 3) plus up to 60 weeks (HIPPY)	12 months (Opstapje Baby) 18 month (Opstapje)	Flexible a minimum of 12 weeks
Number of Group meetings	up to 12(Kids 3) bi-weekly (HIPPY)	up to 20 (Opstapje Baby) up to 30 (Opstapje)	Flexible
Home visits	up to 18 (Kids 3) bi-weekly (HIPPY)	up to 40 (Opstapje Baby) up to 45 (Opstapje)	up to 12
Program design (as stated in concept)	Group meetings combined with home visit: Home visitor interacts with parents Professional social worker coordinating program implementation	Group meetings combined with home visit: Home visitor interacts with parents and children Professional social worker coordinating program implementation	Flexible: Home visitor interacts mostly with parents and children Collaboration of volunteers and home visitors
Materials	Books, cards with learning and play activities, play materials (Kids 3) 12 learning units books and workbooks, craft and writing supplies, play materials (HIPPY)	Books, cards with learning and play activities, play materials	Books, cards with learning and play activities, play materials,
Number of sites in Germany (06/2019)	39 (HIPPY) 17 (Kids 3)	46 (Opstapje Baby) 62 (Opstapje)	21
Sample online survey	27	33	9
No. of refugee families participating in these sites 2019	188 families	292 families	84 families
Participant Data Number of refugee families* 2018	286 (HIPPY) 15 (Kids 3)	271 (Opstapje) 128 (Opstapje Baby)	No Data available

*number of families from country of origin of asylum seekers. Countries considered: Afghanistan, Eritrea, Nigeria, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Syria.

4.2 General results on program attendance, challenges and outcomes for refugee families

4.2.1 Program attendance

We refer to the participant data for HIPPY (including Kids 3) and Opstapje (including Opstapje Baby) from 2015 to 2018 and the data from our online survey with 68 participating program sites to analyze the general participation trends of refugee families. We defined five different groups according to the countries of origin of the mothers to analyze the participant data. The statistics from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2019b) and the specified countries of origin of refugees were used as a guide for defining the groups. The families with mothers from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, and Syria were set as countries of origin of asylum seekers. The data on families with countries of origin in Turkey, the Russian federation, and Pakistan were included in “others,” even so from 2015-2018 they figured in the top 10 countries of origin of asylum seekers in Germany (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2019b). We decided to exclude this families in the category of “countries of asylum seekers” since a high percentage of families from these countries of origin without a refugee experience live in Germany, and the specific data about their legal status was not available. Nonetheless, the number of participants who were from countries of origin of asylum seekers can only serve as a proxy for participating refugee families since some families without a refugee experience might be included.

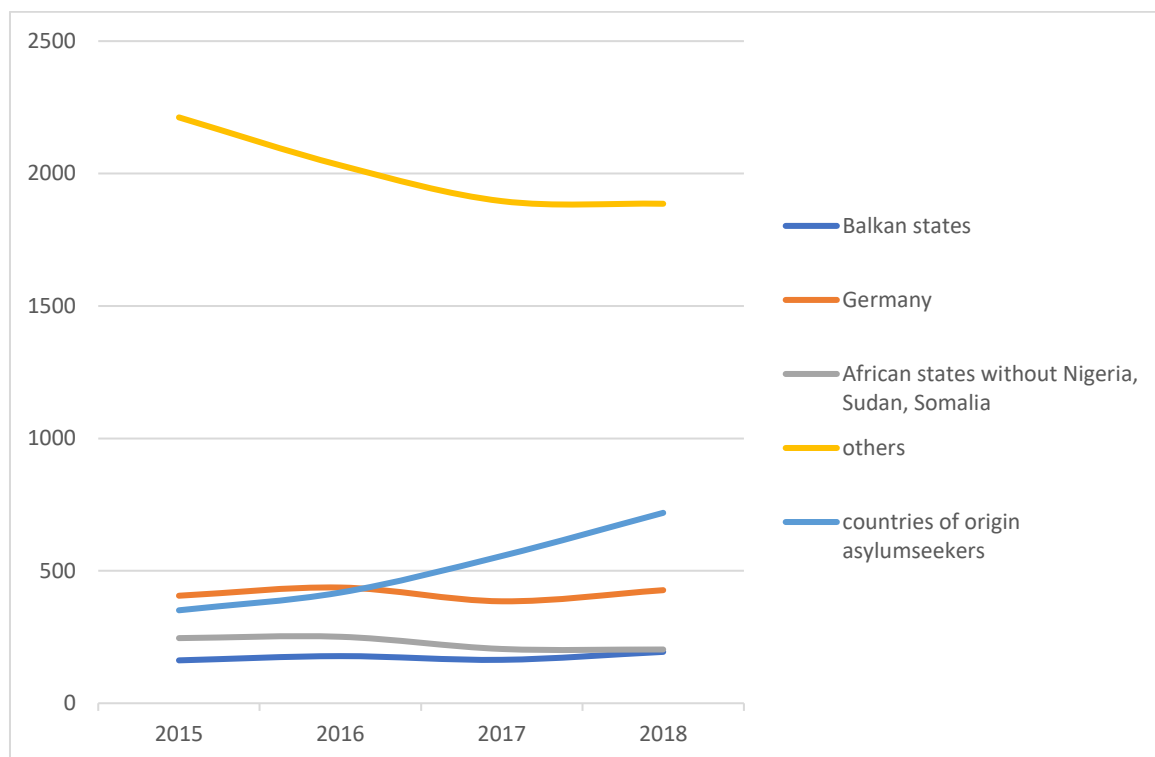


Figure 2: Development of participant numbers in HIPPY and Opstapje 2015-2018; Source: own presentation

The number of participating families from countries of origin of asylum seekers in Germany displays an increasing trend from 391 families in 2015 to 719 in 2018. However, the number of participants from the Balkan states, African countries without Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, and Germany remained stable or, in case of the all other countries of origin, were declined. Closely considering the data reveals that this trend is explained mainly by the steady increase in the number of participants from four countries of origin: Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Sudan. The number of participating families from Syria increased sevenfold in the period review (Table 3).

Table 3: Participants from countries of origin asylum seekers 2015- 2018 (Source: Own presentation)

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Afghanistan	81	92	121	138
Eritrea	11	20	31	35
Nigeria	47	35	28	20
Somalia	18	21	18	24
Sudan	5	5	12	15
Syria	48	113	222	357
Iraq	112	110	97	104
Iran	29	22	27	26
Others	3026	2897	2650	2710

Noticeably, the largest increase, based on the type of program, for these families is in the programs Opstapje and Opstapje Baby. Long-term participant data is only available for IMPULS' regular programs. For the bridging program Wml, nine program sites participated in the online survey and stated that over 80 refugee families participated in 2019.

Families of claimants from specific countries of origin asylum seekers mostly participated at sites in urban areas. Nevertheless, hundred families also participated at sites in small cities and rural areas with a population of not more than 20,000 inhabitants. The qualitative data indicates a high potential of the program implementation in rural sites for supporting the integration trajectories of refugee families (see chapter 5).

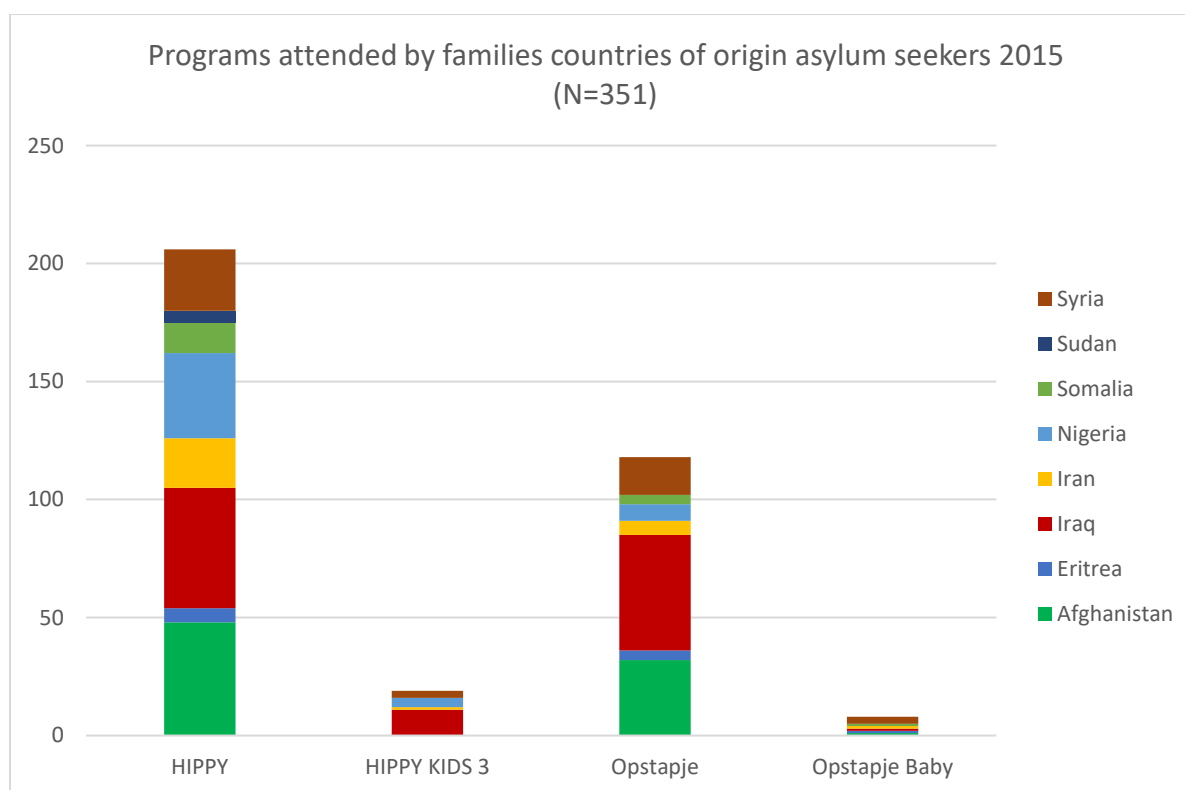


Figure 3: Programs attended by families from countries of origin asylum seekers 2015. (Source: Own presentation)

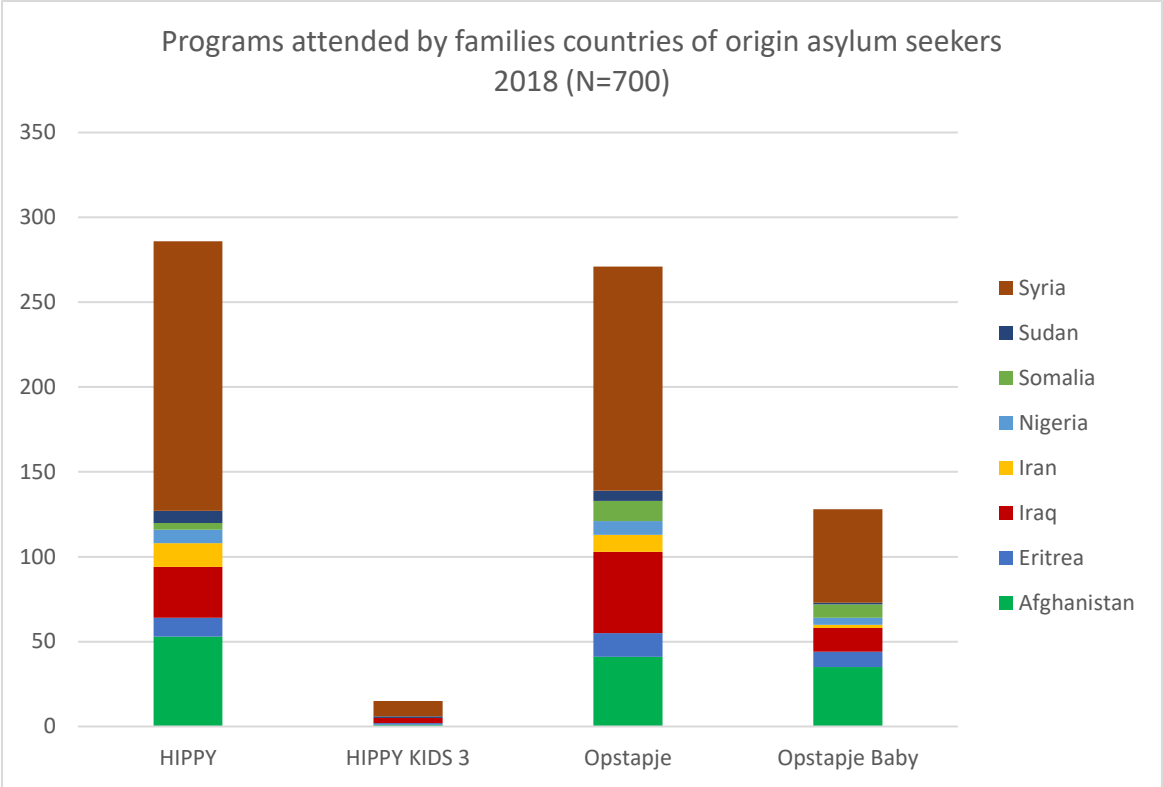


Figure 4: Programs attended by families from countries of origin asylum seekers 2018. (Source: Own presentation)

4.2.2 Access to the programs for refugee families

Sites participating in the online survey responded that refugee participants accessed Opstapje mainly through private networks and word of mouth recommendations (87.5) along with referrals from other agencies (81.3%). Flyers (37.5%) and the Internet (9.4%) also played a less important role. HIPPY had slightly different results. Families learned about the program mainly through word of mouth recommendations (79.1%) and referral from other agencies (75%). While flyers (58.3%) also seem to reach the target group, the Internet (12.5%) played a slightly stronger but still subordinate role. Similarly, for Wml, the vast majority of participating refugee families learned about the program through private networks and recommendations (77.8%) and through referrals from agencies (44.4%), to a lesser extent than the other programs. Flyers and the Internet seem to be the least important for the Wml program.

4.2.3 Challenges and drop out

Psychological stress, a move by the family, a change of home visitors, the housing situation, and a focus on the legal situation were particularly detrimental to the complete participation of refugee families in the programs.

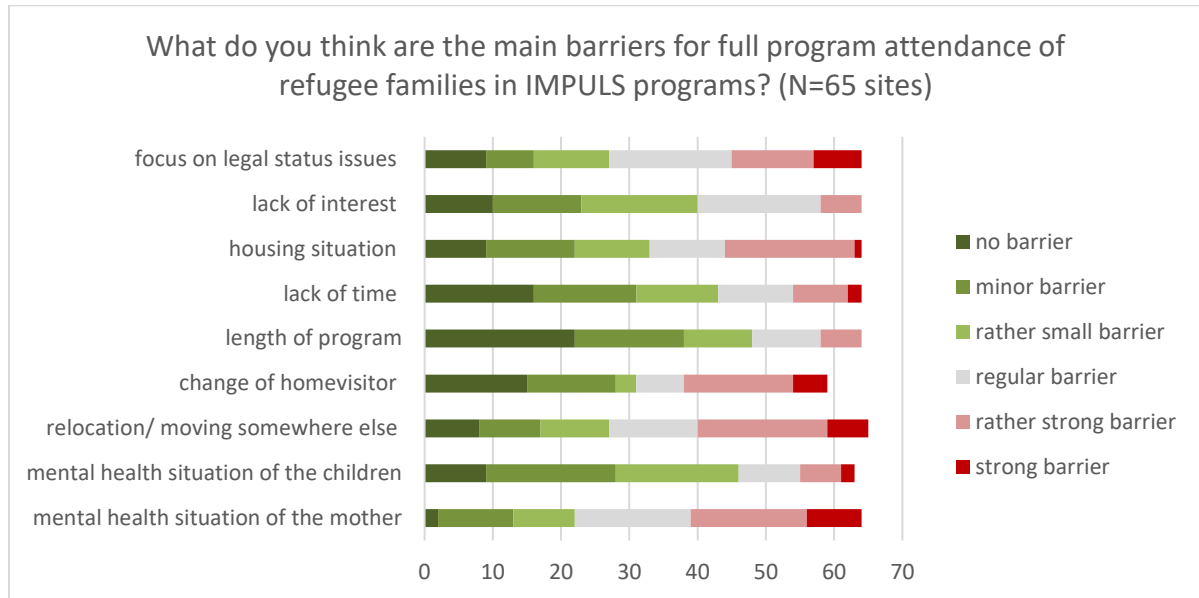


Figure 5: Challenges and reasons for drop out. (Source: Own presentation)

The main reasons for discontinuation according to the answers of the site coordinators in the online survey are a move of the family (55.1%) or a lack of time (32.7%). Dissatisfaction with the program (10.2%) and conflicts with the coordinators or home visitors (6.1%) are rarely the reason for a drop out. This result is supported by the results of the qualitative data (5.2.1). More than half (51%) of the responding sites in the online survey stated that refugee families did not terminate the program earlier than non-refugees. Analyzing the participant data yields slightly different results.

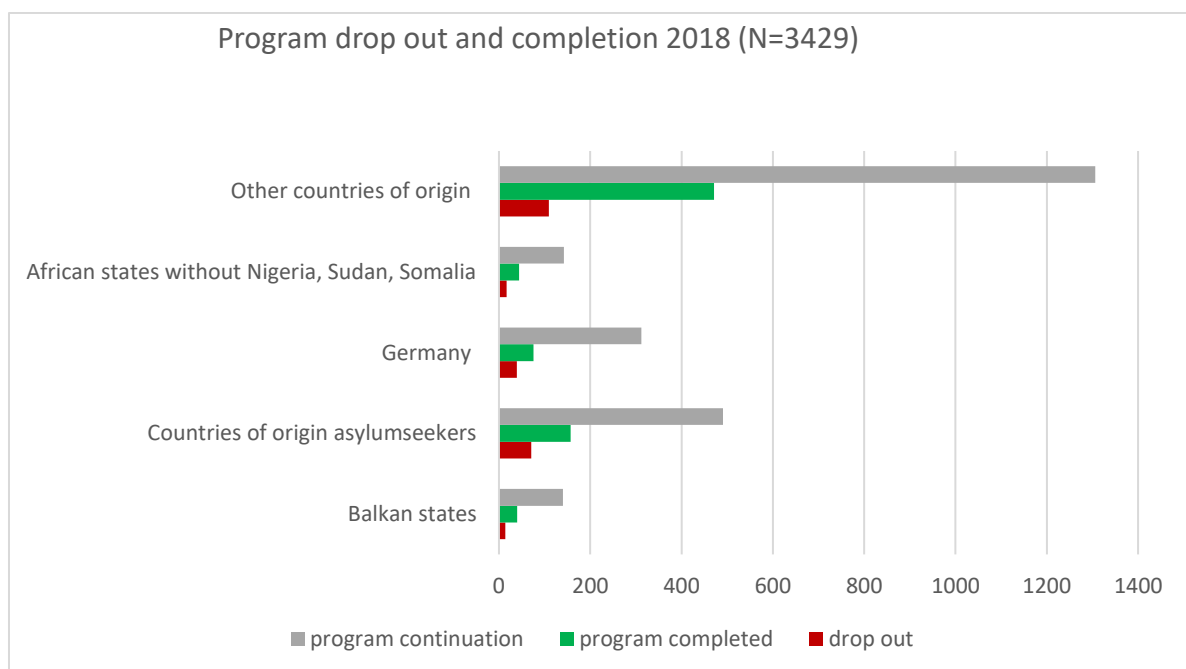


Figure 6: Drop-out, program completion and continuation, 2018. (Source: Own presentation)

Considering the available data on program completion, drop out, and program continuation in 2018, families from countries of origin of asylum seekers had the highest dropout rate (9.9%) followed by German participants (9.1%). A total of 250 program participants from 3429 participating families terminated the program prematurely (7.3%) while the vast majority continued to participate in the programs (69.7%) or successfully completed them (23%).

4.2.4 Program specific challenges

The survey respondents made several suggestions to improve refugee families' access to Opstapje such as improving the personnel key, providing information material, books, and the website in several languages, hiring more home visitors who speak the respective families' languages, strengthening the funding or offering meeting rooms close to their homes. Additionally, making the material available in various languages along with training for the home visitors would be beneficial.

Only six sites responded to the question about the possible improvements in Wml for refugee families. Again, information material in several languages was requested. Extending the program and gaining more participants as multipliers was also suggested.

The implementation of HIPPY for refugee families is mainly hampered by unclear or insufficient funding—a lack of participants or a change of personnel is not seen as a difficulty.

The respondents see potential for improvement primarily in the materials used which could be more varied and more clearly oriented on the living environment of refugee families. The respondents (N=20) suggest simplifying the content and shortening the time needed to complete the program, to improve the retention of refugee families in the program.

4.2.5 Program Outcomes

Responding sites in the online survey stated that participating in IMPULS improves the mothers' and children's German language skills, improves emotional stability, and enables them to maintain contacts outside the family or establish contacts with German institutions and the ethno-cultural community of the participants, to a lesser extent. Supporting labor market integration and assistance in finding accommodation has minor impacts which are not within the purview of the program goals (Figure 7).

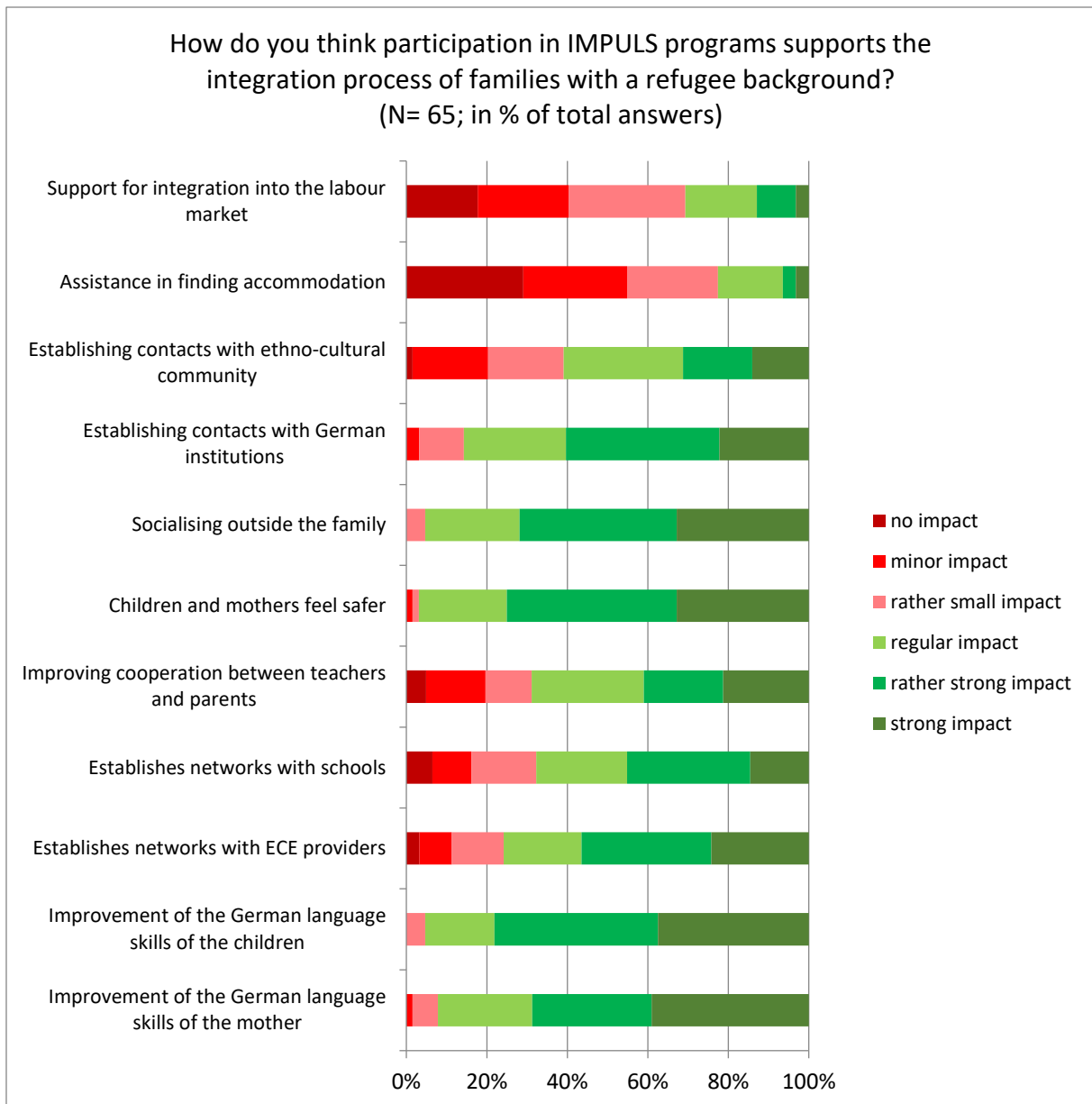


Figure 7: Program effects on integration of refugee families. (Source: Own presentation)

5. The Role of Family Education Programs in the Integration Trajectories of Refugee Families in Germany

5.1 The difficult life situations of families with refugee experience

As a first insight, we now show essential results within three example cases. We specify central aspects of the life situation of our interview partners in the second step.

We would like to further introduce three of our interview partners: Patricia who participates in Opstapje in a big urban center in the south of Germany, Om Samar who participates in Wml in an intermediate city in the north of Germany, and Soha who lives in a rural area in central Germany and participated in Opstapje and HIPPY. The following table offers an overview on the important dimensions of the cases.

Table 4: Case dimensions (Source: Own presentation)

Case dimensions	Case 1: Patricia and her two children	Case 2: Om Samar and her three children	Case 3: Soha and her two children
Program(s) attended	Opstapje	Wml	Opstapje/ HIPPY
Age of children and Family unit	4 and 5 years old; single parent family; two children abroad	5, 3, and 2 years old; family with two parents	5 years and 18-month-old; family with two parents
Rural/ urban area	Big urban center in the south of Germany	Intermediate city in the north of Germany	Rural area in central Germany
Housing	Mass shelter	Private apartment	Two story-apartment-building for refugees
Legal status	Asylum seeker without permanent status	Accepted refugee	Denied asylum seeker: so-called tolerated status "Duldung"
Country of origin	Nigeria	Syria/Kurdistan Region	Algeria
Use of family language in program	German as a program language	One of two Family language (Arabic) in the program	Family language (Arabic) in the program

Patricia has been living as a single mother with her two sons, aged four and five, in a large German city (1.5 million inhabitants) for two years and has been participating in Opstapje for about a year. Patricia lives in a mass shelter for asylum seekers and is originally from Nigeria. An uncertain legal residence status characterizes and determines many areas of the family's life. Not only is the living situation, spatial confinement, and sharing of the kitchen and washrooms stressful but the state of waiting for decisions and changes also adds to it. Patricia describes a life of **social isolation, difficult living conditions in the accommodation, and constant fear of deportation**. Her experiences have taught her to be suspicious of people and institutions to protect herself and her children. Patricia had to leave two of her children in her country of origin. Maintaining contact with the children who she left behind in the form of a **transnational family and care work** also marks her everyday life. Patricia did not have the opportunity to go to school in her country of origin. In Germany, she has only recently been able to take a course. Spoken and written linguistic barriers lead to a feeling of insecurity and exclusion which increase **Patricia's mistrust of others**. In her everyday life, Patricia has to sign papers that she cannot understand. She fears that employees of the shelter and the social

welfare office will fool her into deportation or taking her children away. Patricia **has limited supportive contact with others**. In addition to the home visitor, she names a friend from the same country of origin. For Patricia, the family is at the center of her life and the family's future. She keeps her children close to her and takes good care of them. **She hopes for a good future** for her children in Germany. It unsettles her when her children want to speak to her in German. The younger son cannot understand her when she uses her mother-tongue. The **family's language insecurity** contributes to the feeling of powerlessness and strains the mother-child relationship through communication barriers. Patricia questions the non-violent upbringing demanded in Germany because she sees her position vis-à-vis her older son weakened. For example, he threatens to call the police if she yells at him. Patricia cannot assess this threat. She is not exactly familiar with her parental rights in Germany and has repeatedly had the **experience of not being able to assert her own views and interests** when she contacts public authorities.

Om Samar is a Kurdish woman from Syria who participated with her children in Wml. She and her family had to leave Syria because of the war. She now lives with her three children and husband in an intermediate city with 168,000 inhabitants. The German authorities moved her and her family to this city because it has a special school for children with hearing disabilities and her older daughter has a hearing disability. **Social isolation and alienation** predominate the family life situation: on her first visit she was much stressed and expressed her negative feelings towards the city, the neighborhood, and the general lifestyle of the place. She has no friends except a woman she often meets in the park. Besides, she has nothing to do except caring for the children and cleaning the house. Om Samar did not work in Syria either. However, her life was full of social relationships with her family, her friends and the neighborhood community. Om Samar feels isolated and useless in her new life. She could not attend a German language school before sending her children to kindergarten. She has no social relations in the city and misses her family in Syria. Her **difficult mental health condition** was gleaned from her responses to the interviewer. She was happy to talk to someone from Syria but it brought her close to tears. She was clearly willing to register and send her daughter with a hearing disability to a special school. However, she was angry and sad **that she had to move** to this city because of the school. In the previous village, where she lived for nine months before coming to the city, **she found a small collective Syrian community that reduced her feelings of alienation and isolation** to a certain extent. Above all, **she could not speak good German** yet, which highlighted her feeling of vulnerability while communicating with people or managing her daily activities like reading posts, attending meetings, among other **everyday things**. In the second interview, Om Samar was more positive. Her children had started kindergarten then and she was going to attend language school soon. She was also very pleased with her daughter's progress at the special school. Since social relations are very important in Om Samar's life and culture, **she was happy to meet some Syrian women** who also sent their children in the kindergarten. She also participated in a monthly meeting where some mothers met. However, she was not able to attend another program by IMPULS since this program site only offered Wml.

Soha and her family's daily life is strongly influenced by an **unstable legal situation and discrimination**. Soha is a 22-year-old woman with two children—a five-year-old and an eighteen-month-old. She left Algeria two years ago with her husband and one child. Her first destination was in another European country. Subsequently, they moved to Germany where she birthed her second child. Since their first country of arrival was another European country, the family has not been accepted as a refugee family yet (Dublin Convention). The other reasons are rather vague. Based on the way Soha expresses herself, it became obvious that the whole situation was unclear to her and that she feared her families' case being processed unfairly. However, she cannot influence the proceedings in any way. According to Soha, their asylum claim was denied after an Algerian family living in their neighborhood in the rural

area **discriminated against her and her husband**. Soha was attacked by the Algerian woman in the street and hurt her ear. Her husband was attacked by two men and saved by the bus driver who called the police. Additionally, the Algerian women sent threatening messages on Soha's phone. However, after all these incidents, Soha **received a deportation order** from the German authorities. They have to pay a lawyer to appeal against the deportation order. These challenges and **the emotional insecurity** they caused, negatively impacted the family's life. Soha's family moved into the current apartment in 2018, a year ago. Before that, they had to **constantly move** from one camp to another. When they moved into the current two-story house, they had to share it with a Syrian family whose children attended a school. Living with this family increased the pressure on Soha's family since their children were going to school every day, while her five-year-old was not offered a spot at the local kindergarten. This situation increased the feelings of discrimination and helplessness in the child and the parents. Moreover, it was culturally difficult for Soha to live in the same house with an entire family, especially since she is a veiled woman. However, the Syrian family recently moved to another house, and Soha now shares the house with an old woman and things in the house are much better. Another positive development is that her child has been attending the kindergarten for several months now and is very happy about it. **Soha cannot speak German** and usually has no translator during her visits to the social welfare office. **Soha and her husband seemed to suffer from trauma due to their current situation**; she cried during the entire interview and even before it began. However, she refused to stop because she had to speak out. Recently, she randomly cut her hair because she felt helpless. Her husband stays in his room most of the day. Soha said that her husband has **decided to stay home and do nothing**. This is his strategy to avoid new problems. He helps Soha with some tasks, like taking care of the children when she is outside or bringing the child home from the kindergarten. However, Soha is responsible for most of the housework.

Families with refugee experiences **are highly heterogeneous**. Nevertheless, numerous aspects that we recognize in these three cases characterize the lives of many of our interview partners:

- Emotional uncertainty and fears due to an unstable legal status
- Living spaces and housing accommodations that are not suitable for families and children
- Social isolation, limited contact with the host society
- Language and communication barriers that lead to a feeling of being exposed, oppressed, and helpless along with experiencing discrimination
- Traumatic experiences of violence and loss (before, during, and after forced migration) and the consequent lack of trust in institutions and other people along with the heavy burden of new life changes and new relationships breaking up again
- Family and care work as a transnational everyday activity
- Difficult mental health situations of parents
- Family language insecurities and the concrete fear of harming the educational opportunities of one's children by speaking the language of origin
- Unstable housing and living situation—constantly moving houses or changing shelters
- Resilience and hope for the future, particularly evident in the educational aspirations for the children
- Contact with their ethno-cultural or religious community as an important resource

5.2 How do family education programs influence the inclusion of refugee families?

5.2.1 Building trust: Emotional stabilization through long term relationships with home visitors

The home visitor as a central support person in the host society

Building trust is challenging and needs time. The interviews and observations demonstrated that home visitors build trustworthy relationships with families and their children, in most cases. Feeling recognized and safe is an important first step to include refugees and asylum seekers into the society. This can be substantially fostered by regular home visits.

All parents, regardless of nationality, expressed that they struggle to support the education of their children, which is why they welcomed the home visitors in the first place. Their trust and rapport were built due to the regular visits. This trust helps them cope with the challenges they face and gives them hope for the future. Patricia, a single mother, was referred to the Opstapje program by the youth welfare office, which initially made her feel anxious about the home visits. However, the home visitor quickly gained her trust because she explained the meaning of letters and documents to Patricia, thereby strengthening her ability to act and react to the youth welfare office. With the help of the home visitor, Patricia got access to a German literacy course. This is another important step in reducing feelings of helplessness and trusting her own abilities. The home visitor empowered Patricia in difficult situations like when she was afraid of the child welfare office taking her children away:

She [the home visitor] told me: Do you know the paper you signed? I said no, I can't read I can't write. They [the youth welfare office] told me to sign, that's why I signed. (...) She said: no, don't be afraid, as I saw you, I know you are strong women, because what they told me is not what I see in the children. (Transcription, 4_RK)

The home visitor is the only German person with whom Patricia has had positive contact for months. A German volunteer quickly disappeared from her life a while ago.

While evaluating the cases as well as the online survey, home visitors are shown to be the central support persons in the host society. Mothers especially emphasize the reduced linguistic barriers, the linguistic development of their children, and the possibility of positive contact with a person from the host society due to the contact with German-speaking home visitors. The emotional support and the development of optimism about the future are central to the function of the home visitors speaking the family's native language. Home visitors become important role models setting an example for how it is possible to manage successful integration pathways. Other central support aspects, regardless of the language implementation, are fostering skills and the general development of the children, networking with daycare, school and other institutions, and the positive atmosphere and joy of home visits.

The importance of home visitors speaking the family language for successful participation in the IMPULS programs is also evident in the evaluations from the online survey

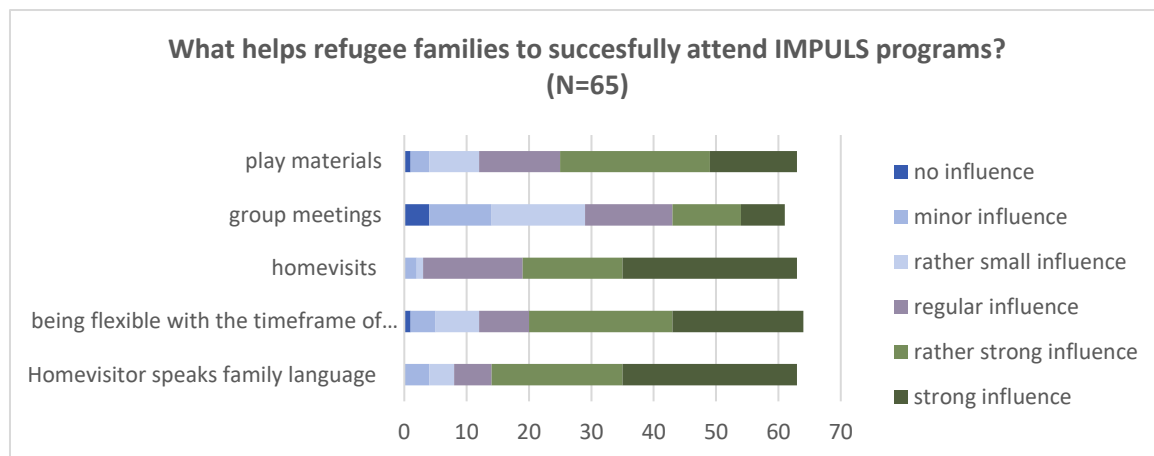


Figure 8: Primary resources for successful program attendance. (Source: Own presentation)

The home visit as central element in establishing trust with refugee families

The home visit is clearly a central element of the programs for refugee families. In many cases, the implementation in the homes of the families, at the place of their everyday family life, helps build relationships between parents, children, and home visitors. Many of the interviewed families describe the visit as a positive highlight of an otherwise socially isolated everyday life. They associate the visit with their positive experiences before fleeing their countries of origin, when many families used to be a part of strongly connected larger families and neighborhood networks. Back then, everyday life used to be full of frequent “family visits.” Additionally, the encounter between the home visitors and parents in their own apartment or accommodation is positively differentiated from the experience of visiting other German institutions where they often feel marked as “refugees.”

5.2.2. Building bridges: Connecting with institutions of the host society

The impact of the program on the access to central institutions: Early Childhood Education (ECE) providers and language courses

In this study, the wish to be better connected with members and institutions of the host society emerged as a concern for almost all the interviewed parents. The interviewed home visitors also highlighted the importance of mothers’ social contacts. The program coordinators and home visitors informed the parents about the possible activities for families within or outside their organization. Regardless, the exclusion from important institutions of the host society, such as early childhood education providers and language schools, is a recurring topic among the refugee parents. In some cases, it is not within the possibilities of the home visitors or coordinators to enable this access. This is reflected by the answers in the online survey (see Figure 7). 24.2% of the respondents found that the family education program had limited to no impact on building networks between refugee families and ECE providers. Even for schools it was 32.3%. They found that it had little to no influence.

Lama is a young mother from Syria with a two-year-old daughter and a newborn baby living in a large city in northern Germany. She came to Germany through a family reunification process and has acquired a solid educational background from her home country. However, she cannot continue to study German because there is no daycare for her daughter. Lama and her home visitor made multiple efforts to enroll her daughter in an ECE facility. Lama is convinced of the importance of her daughter learning and adapting to the new society and culture by accessing early childhood education and she is eager to develop her own language skills and professional life. However, even the home visitor could not help her access the institution. The home visitor has been trying to find some non-formal alternative, as described in this interview:

She [the home visitor] told me about the playgroup and she went with me, she is trying to find a place for my daughter in the kita [ECE facility], but this is what she can do, she cannot force them to give me a place, everybody now is telling me that I do not have a right to put my daughter now in the kita [ECE facility]. (Transcription,NH_10)

Amime is a young mother of two who left Syria four years ago because of the conflict there. She was not able to attend a language school in the past years and will have to stay at home for another year because of her newborn. While her husband managed to pass the C1 level in German and got a job in at a school. Amime stated that

When I came I was pregnant with Ahmed, the school did not accept me because I had no residency. Then when I got the residency I was in my 8th month so they did not accept me to be enrolled. After this was my maternity, and so on. (Transcription,NH_15)

Nevertheless, 6 of the 22 families studied described that they had been successfully supported by the home visitor in registering their children in the kindergarten or ECE facility. This way they were able to participate in other activities or attend German courses.

Reducing language barriers through the programs

The lack of language skills makes some mothers feel powerless and unable to access institutions of the host society. Everyday tasks such as making appointments with doctors or going to the job center are major challenges for them. Tuba, a mother of three, who left Afghanistan three years ago, described her experience at a doctor's appointment as:

A very hard day I was so upset that I was there and searching so much and could not find the right one. The day after that my husband called again and got appointment and again I went there and could not find the place again (sigh). I was feeling so bad my daughter was crying so much and said to myself god dame to me that I cannot talk German and cannot find or ask anybody for the right answer.(Transcription, NT_5)

However, the situation seems to be better for mothers who came to Germany in the process of family reunification. Their husbands have already attended the language schools and can speak German well. This gives the mothers the opportunity to start the language school and share the responsibility for the children with their husbands. Saleh, who came to Germany from Iraq, fleeing the persecution of Yesidi population by ISIS in 2014, now cares for six children while the mother, who came later, with the children, is learning German in a language school. He was also supported by the local job center. His counsellor asked him to stay at home to give his wife the opportunity to attend language courses. The program can decrease language barriers. The programs' home visits and weekly contacts with someone are essential for mothers who are socially isolated.

This is substantiated by Sara, a Syrian woman, discussing her home visitor's support:

I am shocked until now. Like how did I become courageous, how I am talking? I was not sure of them coming to me, because I don't know German. I barely finished the A2. But she (the home visitor) motivates me when comes to me. Like I need this word and I have to memorize it...and I memorize more. I have a motivation to learn more words and make myself better in German so I can talk when they come to me or I go to them. I am more excited towards the language now. Before, since I as staying home and not taking with anyone, I was feeling that I am losing the vocabulary. I am staying alone and with Arabic atmosphere/ groups...our neighbors and so...I found myself forgetting...the program helped me a lot (Transcription,RK_6).

Connecting through group meetings and other leisure activities

During the interviews, the women spoke of being active in different group meetings or engaging in other activities. They intend to sufficiently learn German to be able to integrate faster and get a job in Germany through these activities. The programs' group meetings positively impact women's connections. Mothers often mentioned enjoying and being happy to be a part of these meetings. However, not all the sites have group meetings. Instead, mothers could participate in other meetings such as a "Frauentreffen" (women's meeting) in a café or a weekly breakfast with other mothers, which helped them discover common interests and build new relationships. Excursions and celebrations at the end of the programs also played an important role. A trip lasting several days organized at one of the sites was mentioned as a positive highlight of their new life in Germany by various mothers and home visitors. Such activities and possibilities were mostly mentioned by mothers who lived in a medium-sized city or a big city. After interviewing families who were living in remote areas and small villages, it was apparent that getting connected was even more challenging there and the programs' group meetings were the only possibility for them to network. A memo of an interview with Amina, a Syrian mother from a small village, by one of the researchers substantiates this:

She did not leave this city during the 3 years of her residency. This is because of her husband's situation mainly and because they do not know where and how to go. She feels as if she is stuck in this small area. She has no friends; she is not involved in any activity rather than the mother meetings of this program. Amina expressed that she really likes these meetings because it is the only way to communicate with other women (memo, NH-14).

Group meeting are valued especially by parents in remote areas who cannot contact other parents, mothers who are not newcomers anymore, and those with a solid educational background. However, the most vulnerable among our interview partners seemed to find these activities to be less important than the regular home visits. A result that is supported by the online survey (Figure 7).

5.2.3 Fostering children's cognitive, linguistic, and emotional skills

Supporting the high educational aspirations of refugee parents

Almost all the parents in this study wish for their children to improve their learning and education. They have stated that their children could improve considerably by joining the program and through home visits. Mohamad and his wife did not get the opportunity to go to a school in Afghanistan, their country of origin. Now they live with their eight children in small city in Germany. Being illiterate, they hope for a better future for their kids. Education is a recurring topic of interest among the parents:

Mother: I am happy when I see my child learn something.

Mohamad: I am happy for my children, some time I cry and tell them your mother and I are both unschooled and we are like blind since cannot read at all, you should study and improve, don't leave your paper and pencil. (Transcript, NT_7)

Parents recognizing play as an important educational tool

Understanding the purpose of children's play differs from one family to another. It is influenced by the cultural and social understanding of play in the countries of origin and is aligned with what the parents have observed and experienced in Germany. Some parents stated that the purpose of children's play is entertaining rather than educating them in their countries of origin. A home visitor and a mother of four who left Syria three years ago explained that this concept has changed for some refugee families in Germany; through the programs and the kindergarten, parents now understand the importance of play as a learning tool for children:

Because we as mothers from Arabic countries, we think this toy is only for fun and free time (...) This toy has a meaning or one can learn many shapes, can learn colors, can learn big and small. (Transcription, NT_14)

Additionally, play methods differ between Germany and the countries of origin. Some mothers mentioned that their own parents did not have time to play with them during their childhood while other mothers had different experiences of playing with their fathers outside the house. However, most commonly, the kids used to play outside the house. This method of play does not work in most of the new living spaces in Germany due to the cold weather, the housing situation, and not having their siblings and relatives around them. The educational programs (Wml, Opstapje and HIPPY) have helped the parents a lot to learn more about the importance of playing in the new space they moved to. Most parents expressed their joy at being able to conduct play sessions at home with their children. Especially parents whose children are too young to attend kindergarten or have not yet found a place for them in an ECE facility. They are comfortable to have someone help prepare the children for the next step in the early childhood education. Saleh who takes care of his six children while their mother attends a German course, mentioned the importance of the HIPPY program as a preparatory phase for the kindergarten:

I believe that this program is very helpful for my daughter to learn German words and colors and to prepare her for going to kindergarten. At the moment she is waiting for a place in kindergarten and this program is the only way for her to learn anything. (Memo, NT_13)

High importance of the programs for illiterate parents

Additionally, these educational programs are a great help for single and illiterate mothers and illiterate refugee parents in general. Some have no other family members to support them in the new place and they are afraid of not having the language skills to teach their children. Therefore, they used to have several concerns about their children's education before the program. Especially since the best possible education of the children in Germany is one of their primary goals. Participating in the education program relieves the parents to a certain extent. They have one person (the home visitor) who is familiar with the educational system in Germany and they notice how home visitors improve their children's skills during home visits. The parents of ten children who moved away from Afghanistan four years ago said that:

When our children can study and reach in a good place in society we will be happy .we know very well what does it mean to be illiterate .Since we are arriving in Germany I am very happy when I see my children can go to school and I am proud of them so much. (Transcription, NT_7)

Anyhow, the lack of appropriate materials for illiterate parents was also mentioned as an important challenge of the programs (see 5.2.5).

Empowering children and parents through flexible and situation-oriented play offers

The home visitors could achieve several goals through the play sessions with the parents and their children. They strengthen the parents' relationship with their children by involving both the parents or one of them in the visit activities. In one of the observation sessions, the field researcher explained the dynamics between the home visitor, the mother, and the child.

The home visitor called the mother to fetch baking utensils and then she took out the ingredients out of her own bag including Molds. The mother looked happy and she laughed together with the home visitor. (Observation, NT_20)

Additionally, the home visitors adapted the play methods according to the family's context. In a Syrian family where the mother gave birth to a newborn baby, the home visitor adapted the play method to strengthen the older child's relationship with his newborn sister.

The home visitor and the child came to the sitting room; Mona showed him a frame of the picture and explains for him that she would like to decorate it with pictures of him and his sister. She was showing him some pictures which developed before and asked him to choose two pictures for them. The child chose a picture of his face and a picture of his little sister and the home visitor was holding him in her arm then with hot glue, they tried to stick around the frame and put some flowers and things for decorating. (Observation, NT_23)

Patricia, a single mother wants to support her children more but is worried that she will not know the right way since she is illiterate. The home visitor shows her ways to support her children and brings materials and games. They also play games that Patricia knows from her own childhood with her sons such as cooking with spoons, mugs, and natural materials. Here, the home visitor takes up what she and the mother are developing together in the play situation.

Fostering children's emotional and motivational skills of the children

The participating parents explained that the educational programs improve their children's skills on several levels. Some of the children became more social after enrolling in the program. Nadia, the mother of a 2-year-old child, explained the positive effects of the program on her daughter's personality:

She is not playing directly with the kids, she did not learn how to do that yet. But she is playing with the toys that are present inside. This strength the personality of the kid. Also, what I felt with my daughter, is that she has trust in those people now. In the beginning, she was not talking if we meet a new person. Today, no, we sat down with the home visitor and she started to play, and they put the food together, and they cooked together and played together. I felt that she interacted a bit. I liked that. I felt that her personality is becoming stronger and that this will allow her not to become shy or scared of people. (Transcription, 2_RK)

Another improvement in the children skills that the parents noticed is related to how the children are motivated to learn new things. Most of the parents expressed their happiness about their children being encouraged to use scissors, cut papers, sing songs, play with memory cards, and solve puzzles.

5.2.4 Living a multi-lingual family life: Reducing communication barriers by trusting the family language

The change in family roles and power dynamics through language barriers

Some of the parents and their children have been discriminated against and they have been unable to defend themselves because of the lack of proficiency in the language. Others have been confronted with situations where they have been asked to sign papers in institutions without knowing the contents of these papers. The lack of proficiency in the language affects the relationship between parents and their children. Children who can speak German better than their parents are the main translators. This can negatively affect the relationship of trust and power between the children and their parents.

Recovering parental agency

Experiences of discrimination and of not being able to express and defend themselves (5.1) among family members negatively affect the relationship between parents and children and the family's relationship with the new community. They increase emotional instability and can make the parents feel that they are unable to manage and control their lives and their relationships with the children. Programs such as Wml and Opstapje help reestablish trust among the family members and the family's position in the society. Home visitors are foundational to this positive effect.

Having a home visitor who speaks the parents' native language and German at the same time gives parents the space to express their feelings and challenges. Additionally, it helps some mothers practice German with the home visitor and to freely ask for the meanings of some words in their mother tongues. Nada, a mother of four, expressed that she greatly benefits from the multilingual play sessions with the home visitor and the children:

The home visitor speaks Arabic and German. It is good for me, since she speaks the word in German to the children and I repeated it in Arabic, so we speak both languages but German more than Arabic. (Transcription, NH_9)

The results of the online survey show that a combination of family language and German is the case for most of the home visits in refugee families (66%). An important percentage of the families receives home visits in German only (28%), while home visits exclusively in the family's language are a minority (6%) and none of the responding sites used another, third language for communicating during the visits.

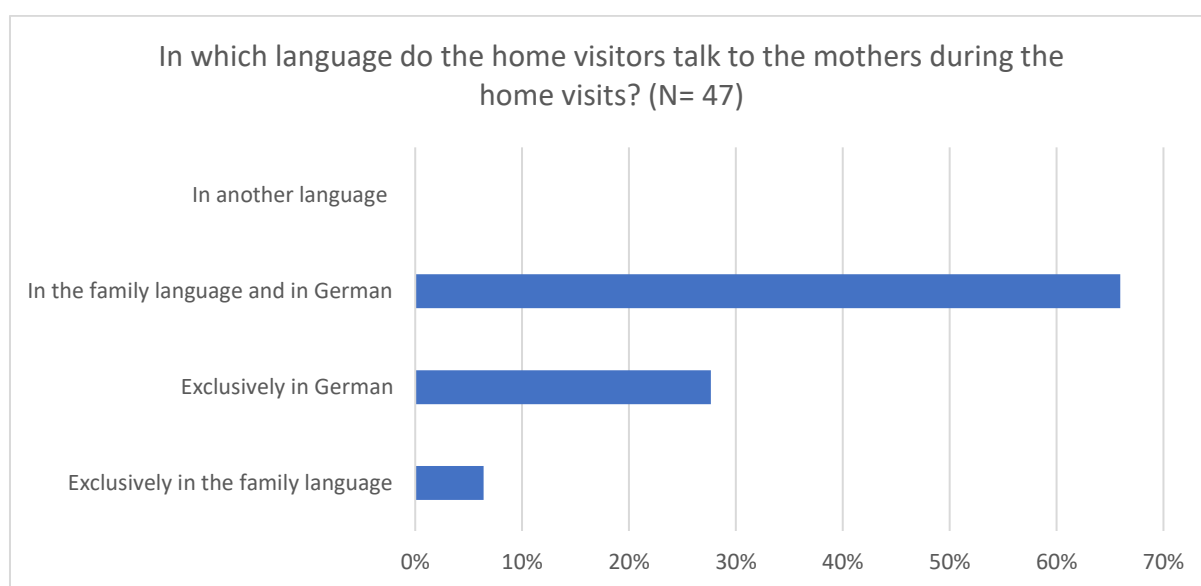


Figure 9: Language used during home visits. (Source: Own presentation)

Some of the parents were actively exercising parental agency by asking the home visitor to continue speaking to the children in their mother tongue so that they do not forget it. Mona, one of the home visitors, mentioned this situation in one of the families:

I don't teach Ahmed. German, I am not allowed to talk German with him, since his father said I had to talk to him just Arabic. He believes otherwise he will forget his Arabic, he thinks he will learn German anyhow in kindergarten. (Observation, NT_23)

Feeling confident to speak the family language with the children

Being a newly multilingual family, some of the mothers are confused about which language to speak with the children. They want them to learn German but they are also afraid that the children will forget their mother tongue. In the case of Patricia and her two children, the younger son cannot understand his mother's native language. The family's language insecurity contributes to the feeling of powerlessness and strains the mother-child relationship through communication barriers.

It is a frequently and explicitly mentioned topic by eight mothers and three home visitors that parents are encouraged to continue speaking the mother tongue with the children. Home visitors explained the positive psychological effects of communicating with the children in their language.

Such advice relieved the mothers and eased their worries about their relationship with the children and reduced their insecurity and uncertainty about using their mother tongue in the house.

Additionally, it encouraged them to develop social relationships with people who speak the same language. Moreover, some of the home visitors with a German background were interested in learning the languages of the families. They expressed that learning the family's language would help them better understand family relationships and the family context which would provide additional tools to become more involved during the sessions. Such initiatives reflected the level of involvement of the home visitors and their positive attitude towards the family language.

5.2.5 Limits and challenges for refugee families

Diverse participants and standardized materials and program structure

The interviews and observations in this study have demonstrated that there is wide diversity of cultures, educational backgrounds, living and legal situations among the interviewed families.

These diversities were often mentioned by home visitors and they emphasized that they should be flexible with each family. This flexibility could differ with the material of the program of IMPULS or the time that they were expected to spend. Sometimes, instead of one child, they could consider a brother or sister who had not been enrolled in the program yet. Often, the home visitor has to use a different language to communicate with each family.

Another theme which should be mentioned is the diversity in parent's education which sometimes makes it difficult for the parents to understand the aim of the programs' materials or to read and understand the program's books. Sometimes the participants mentioned in the interviews that the material is very boring for their child, others mentioned that they could not help their children without a home visitor since they could not read the book or did not understand it. The material mostly being based written was a barrier for illiterate parents. Some home visitors suggested having a variety of materials to choose from according to the child's or family's needs.

Furthermore, home visitors believed that some parents could not comprehend the aim and the strategy of the program which became a barrier for the home visitor to reach the goal of the program. This is substantiated by a Farsi speaking home visitor:

They [migrants' families] are diverse, for some of them it is easy to understand but a few of them that understand very little about the aim of program. But all in all 99% of them are very content and happy with the program, may be 1 or 2% of them are thinking that we are taking their time and it is hard for them to keep scheduled appointments. Especially for those who are single parent households. (Transcript, NT_1)

Implementing flexible programs with broader and more flexible time limits for the visits or with the possibility to play with more than one child at the same time was suggested. The Wml program, where all the family members are sometimes involved in the program and the home visitor is allowed to work with the other children during a visit, provides a more flexible structure. On the other hand, it was seen critical by coordinators that Wml is a collection of materials from the regular programs. If families transfer to those after the bridging program, they already know some of the materials.

Some parents' suggestions for the activities in HIPPY program are developing a more interactive program. Materials of the HIPPY program were described as being more complex (than Opstapje) and too difficult for some of the refugee families. Simplifying the program materials and orienting them more strongly to the life environment of the families was suggested in the online survey as well (chapter 4.2.4). Participant numbers for families from countries of origin of asylum seekers mainly increased in the programs Opstapje Baby and Opstapje between 2015 and 2018 (Figure 3), the HIPPY materials can be one of the reasons for this. Additionally, some home visitors and parents suggested having the Opstapje cards and the books for the programs in the family languages.

And I think sometimes it might be smart to have multilingual materials. We once had it. Books were also available in Turkish. Sometimes that's really nice, for cards like that. As I said, I have a family that hardly speaks, whether I give the cards or not. It will never translate everything and sometimes it is not worth giving it. (Transcript, 8_AN)

Lack of time

There are some limitations that were mentioned by the mothers and home visitors. One of the recurring themes is the insufficient time of the visit. Most of the mothers and home visitors reported that 30 to 45 minutes were too short for them. All groups, parents, home visitors, and coordinators, frequently expressed the need to have more time for the weekly home visits. One of the Arabic speaking home visitors described her view about the time of the home visit:

I think that this program is really good for the whole family, the mother and children, it really helps the mother to customize a specific time to play with the children. I find that the session time is a little bit short, it is now 30-45 minutes, I think it will be better to make it one hour, since I need time with the children and with the mother, also I need sometimes to have conversation with the mother about general things and this is important to build a trust relation. (Transcript, NH_3)

The lack of time also has negative impacts on the learning situation of the children as described by Sara, a Syrian mother of two, who participated in Opstapje and HIPPY:

Sara: The problem is that the duration of the visit is very short. It ends very fast, what will you do for the kid during it? It starts with the welcoming and then giving the toy and when the kids starts to interact with it the time is over. The duration is very short.

Interviewer: That's the main problem?

Sara: Yes. If it was for one hour, things could be better. I would prolong the time. (Transcript,6_RK)

Stronger focus on the needs of the refugee mothers

Mothers often mentioned that they would like to have more time for conversations with the home visitors or ask for help translating a letter or have them as a guest and serve them tea. Another home visitor suggested the possibility of supporting mothers and informing them about the different health care services or other activities for social networking and better integration into the society. She stated that:

One other suggestion: since this families open their home's door for us, we could also help them answering their questions and help for their problems. I wish, in this program we would have also a package with more possibilities for helping them; for example we could give them names of the different contacts, which would be useful for them. (Transcript, NT_1)

The possibility of the families for networking is also frequently mentioned because mothers often feel very isolated. This demand to make friends and meet new people did not only come from mothers living in small cities and villages but also from those in the big cities. However, families living in the villages were a lot more limited from participating in meetings or activities. In the interviews, many parents wished to have more opportunities to attend different communities and meetings to feel less lonely. Moreover, some mothers were suffering from very difficult mental health situations due to their experiences before, during, and after fleeing their countries of origin. They experienced loss of family members, war, and the difficult situations as newcomers with an unstable legal status (see Chapter 5.1). Home visitors quickly became important support persons, but they were neither equipped with professional skills nor with the right program structure to fulfil the demands of the most vulnerable among the interview partners.

Difficult work conditions, overburdening, and the professional skills of home visitors

It is a challenge for home visitors to build trust with the family and maintain their own boundaries at the same time to deliver the home visit as a professional learning program. Home visitors and parents constantly mention that the support is not limited to the program goals or content. Home visitors support parents in diverse matters. For instance, they accompany parents to appointments, translate post and official forms, and register children in ECE facilities and parents in language courses. They organize clothing and household items and, in some cases, even find new housing for the families. In the interviews, home visitors constantly reflect on their conflict at witnessing the diverse needs of the families and their own limitations. The higher the family's needs and the lesser the other networks and support systems available, the more pressured they are about being responsible for providing for these needs. A home visitor in a rural area explains her situation:

From a humanitarian point of view, for example, I would do everything for them. Everything they say. Yes, I would do. But from the time and my own mental stress I cannot afford everything, because at some point it is too much for me. (Transcription, NT_12)

For some home visitors, it is more difficult to deal with the difficult life stories of the families and to not take them back home because of their own experiences of fleeing and migration, as mentioned here by an Iranian home visitor:

I keep thinking of the families and the children even when I am home. I always thinking of families who escaped the war and I understand their suffering. (Transcription, NH_3)

Most of the home visitors are trained to some extent but not all of them mentioned it as a positive and valuable asset. Some of the home visitors had a professional background in the social, pedagogical, or psychological field from their countries of origin. This seemed to be highly beneficial for the program implementation and families. On the other hand, it is worth questioning if such professionals with important language skills should be working as home visitors and not as educators, social workers, or psychologists. Flora, a home visitor, clearly sees having the professional skills and the migration experience as a huge advantage:

I believe both. Because without training- I don't know. That's a good question so I went to college. I studied psychology and I attended many seminars on social behavior, integration, languages, mother tongues. and I think if you have the knowledge and your experience then it is a good combination. (Transcription, 5_RK)

Some mothers with a solid educational background questioned the professional knowledge of the home visitors without professional training in the field of education. For instance, Sara, a mother from Syria:

But the point is that I felt that she is not really an expert. Not expert in dealing with kids. But in general, she is a good person. She is a mom at the end so she has an experience with kids. But as education, like the teachers in the kindergarten study their profession and they have knowledge about it. (Transcription, 6_RK).

Most of the home visitors claimed to enjoy being part of the program and working with the parents and children but they were critical of the work conditions such as low working hours, low salary, and the need to use their own resources in the rural areas (such as their own cars) to reach out to the parents. Some home visitors wished to be financially supported for the extra time that they spend with the families to help them with their needs.

Greater awareness about the vulnerabilities through the refugee experience

Refugee families often experience trauma and loss. Furthermore, they live in difficult situations that makes them vulnerable to exclusion from society and mental health problems (5.1). Home visitors often become the central support figures in their lives rather quickly for such families. Beside emotional stability, these relationships also create dependencies. Home visitors feel overburdened. Their personal boundaries and limits are not accounted. This can lead to a situation that makes ending the relationships between a home visitor and families especially risky, on one hand, and more probable, on the other.

One topic mentioned in the second round of interviews is the sudden disappearance of home visitors. Two interviewed mothers stated that their home visitor had stopped visiting them after consistent, regular home visiting. This left the mother and child surprised and puzzled. For families that already experienced loss and the breakup of important relationships, sometimes in tragic ways, this can be a challenging moment. The trust and relationship between the families and the home visitor is often very strong. So, an abrupt end to the visits can emotionally hurt the families. Our online survey showed that the home visitor's early termination is mostly triggered by them taking up training or employment, followed by other and private reasons, while conflicts with the families played a minor role (7.3%).

A good alternative to this issue could be continuing home visits in another way after finishing the program. For example, by transitioning from Wml into a regular program, or from Opstapje to HIPPY, which is the case for four of the interviewed families. It should be carefully considered if Wml is offered at institutions that do not have the opportunity to transfer families into the regular programs of Opstapje and HIPPY since this means a break-up of the home visitor-family relation within three to four months only.

5.3 An overview of the evaluation criteria: Building social connections and meeting program goals

This chapter discusses the evaluation criteria and offers an overview of the extent to which they are met through the program implementation. This is done by referring to the results presented in Chapters 4 and 5⁴. The program sites and family cases analyzed in this study are heterogeneous and diverse. Hence, the following overview can show the trends of the criteria that can be observed in most of the sites and cases and the extent of the impact of their implementation.

5.3.1 Criteria that does not apply or applies only partly

Qualifications of home visitors to foster their labor market integration was a criterion that could only be partly evaluated based on the current results. Our analysis suggested that home visitors are trained for their professional activities in the program (see 5.2.5). An early termination of the program by the home visitor is mostly caused by their training or getting employment. The change to another workplace could be caused by a promotion (due to the skills developed as a home visitor) or the difficult working conditions of the home visitors in the program (see 5.2.5). For an evidence-based evaluation of this criteria, additional data is needed.

⁴ For the assessment of the criteria we developed a scale from 1= criteria are not met, 2= criteria are partly met; 3= criteria are mostly met, to 4= criteria are fully met. We added 0 for criteria that does not or only partly apply.

5.3.2 Evaluation criteria partly or mostly met through program implementation

Home visitors from the same ethno-cultural background can be a central figure for fostering **social bonds** with other families and individuals from the same religious, linguistic, or ethno-cultural communities. Group meetings also provide this opportunity to many participants, even to families that cannot be provided a home visitor that speaks the family's native language. Regardless, finding these contacts through the program was mentioned to a lesser extent as a goal and result in interviews and the online survey (Figure 7; 5.2.1; 5.2.2) than contacting people and institutions from the receiving society. Furthermore, strengthening the family's native language through materials in the mother tongue is proposed as a way of improving the program in the online survey and interviews (see 6.4). Maintaining the family language serves as an important tool for establishing social bonds.

Refugee families often expressed feelings of being powerless and helpless in their current living situation (5.1). Two closely interlinked criteria—**parents and children experiencing self-efficacy and empowerment** and **children experiencing their parents as active educational agents**—are attained when home visitors, parents, and children develop situation-oriented play together and emotional and motivational skills of children are fostered (5.2.3). Increasing emotional stability through long-term relationships and connecting with other parents through group meetings and institutions of the host society can empower the parents (5.2.1; 5.2.2). An important aspect of fostering parental agency is the reassurance of home visitors that speaking the family language is not harmful for the educational prospects of the children (5.2.4). For a stronger attainment of these criteria, materials and program structure need to be handled flexibly (5.2.5). Parents should be further involved in developing the program structure and materials to be able to include their own resources and experiences (6.6).

A high risk for the mental health crises among the parents is closely linked to the experience of refugee families before, during, and after flight (4.2.3; 5.1). Worries about the family members that are still in conflict zones or dispersed all across the world lead to a constant and daily transnational family and care work that can further impact their well-being (2.1; 5.1). **The program promotes health** by emotionally stabilizing the parents and by connecting the families with other institutions (5.2.2). Home visits as an outreach strategy and central element of the program play a very important role in reaching the most vulnerable families (5.2.1). Emotional and motivational skills of the children are fostered in play situations (5.2.3). The time constraints, program structure, and competencies of home visitors are limits to the mental health support (5.2.5). A stronger focus on the needs of the mothers has been suggested. Furthermore, the transnational family and care work should be included more strongly in program materials and group meetings (6.3; 6.5).

5.3.3 Evaluation criteria mostly to fully met through program implementation

Participation in the program strongly affect **network building and access to communities and neighborhoods**. Beside connections with the ethno-cultural, linguistic, or religious community (**social bonds** 5.3.1), **social bridges** that are relationships with people from the host society and **social links**, that are connections to institutions of the receiving society, have also been fostered through a variety of processes. Decreasing language barriers (5.2.2) and improving German language skills of mothers and children (Figure 7) are one of the main outcomes of the family programs. For many parents, participation is a first step to establish social connections within the neighborhood and new living situation. Home visitors from Germany were frequently mentioned as a first and positive connection with a person from the host country (5.2.1). Through home visits and group meetings, participating parents gain access to a variety of institutions and informal networks (5.2.2). Many families describe themselves as socially isolated and experiencing language and emotional barriers to network and connect with others in the new living situation (5.1). The home visit is an important and

appropriate outreach strategy to include these families in their new communities. Moreover, the home visit is described by the parents as a positive highlight of the family life and an opportunity to act as an active host rather than a passive recipient of support (5.2.2). Mothers and fathers are addressed as parents not refugees in this situation.

Families from countries of origin asylum seekers have a slightly higher drop-out rate in the regular IMPULS programs than other groups. Access to the programs is mainly gained through word of mouth and referrals from other agencies (4.2.2). It can be assumed that, for these families, programs that rely mainly on meetings in centers and institutions would be very challenging to successfully attend, group meetings play a less important role than home visits for the families (5.2.1). However, there are some limits to the capacity of creating social links: networks with institutions of the host society. Access to important institutions of the host society such as ECE providers and language courses can only be supported by the program if they are available in the city or village (5.2.2). Furthermore, program coordinators and home visitors need to consider and act responsibly because the emotional risks of a disruption in these families in a newly established relationship is very high (6.2).

Participating **children receive a holistic early childhood education program to support their development.** Both the online survey and case studies show a broad and important direct impact on the children through the play situations during the home visits and an indirectly impact by strengthening the skills of their parents. Through the program parents learn about the importance of play based interactions and can experience them directly during the home visits (5.2.3). German language skills and emotional and motivational skills are among the most mentioned competencies that children gain through the program (Figure 7; 5.2.3). In some cases, access to formal educational institutions is not possible for families. In these cases, parents see IMPULS program as a temporary substitute for formal education—as the only possibility of preparing their children for their next step in school or preschool (5.2.3). However, there are some coordinators, home visitors, and parents that ask for improvements of the used materials and question the cost of the licensed material and program (see 5.2.5; 4.2.4). The development or provision of mother-tongue materials as well as material with a more interactive character is suggested (see 6.6).

Educational opportunities and equity for the children is improved among participating refugee families who are especially vulnerable to exclusion and suffer from restricted educational opportunities (2.2). After the summer of migration in 2015, the number of participating refugee families increased quickly and considerably (4.2.1). Online surveys and case studies show a broad variety of positive effects on parent-child interactions, social connections, and the skills of the children and parents. However, the improvement of educational opportunities and equity can be limited through the structural context, such as availability of formal early childhood education, language learning opportunities for parents, legal status insecurity, and the housing situation in refugee shelters (2.1).

6. Concrete recommendations for action: Strengthening awareness for diversity and intersectionality in family education programs

The IMPULS program's goals are clearly linked to a normative basis of social justice, equity, and human rights (Table 1). To serve diverse families through family education programs, Fischer (2019) proposes the operating principals of recognition, acceptance, anti-discrimination, participation, and empowerment. A growing awareness for diversity and intersectionality is the basic requirement for a needs-based implementation of family education programs for families with a refugee experience. As we could show through this analysis of Opstapje, HIPPY, and Wml—they have the high potential to support the inclusion of refugee families in Germany. The following recommendations are based on the evaluation of these three programs. They can be an important framework for action for family education on the intersection of forced migration in general.

6.1 Provide more and tailor-made training opportunities and support coordinators and home visitors

Training and support opportunities for home visitors and coordinators that work with refugee families should include anti-bias / anti-racism elements, elements of trauma-sensitive pedagogy, and information on legal status implications. Interdisciplinary or psychological counselling (supervision) for home visitors and coordinators should be offered to staff members working with mentally challenged and traumatized participants.

6.2 Foster institutional awareness for specific risks through flight experience

Create institutional guidelines and procedures for sudden disruptions of home visitor-parent-child relationships and for the transfer from bridging them into regular programs. Provide training opportunities about anti-bias/ anti-racism / trauma-sensitive pedagogy.

Increase the time for the home visits to 60 minutes for refugee families with a high need or combine the existing program: add hours as integration assistant for the home visitor to expand the time resources and skills.

6.3 Recognize transnational family ties in the programs

Include the topic of transnational family and care work in program materials and group meetings.

6.4 Create flexible and up to date concepts for linguistic diversity

Develop conceptual guidelines for second-language learning and promoting family language based on new knowledge about language acquisition and translanguaging. Develop or provide already existing mother tongue materials. Concepts for program layout and materials for working with illiterate parents or parents that cannot read and write the Latin alphabet.

6.5 Strengthen the focus on support for refugee mothers

Link the family educational program with services and support for refugee women and mothers. Invite these women to get these services at group meetings. In rural areas with scarce support structures, combine family education with other existing programs. Add hours as integration assistant for the home visitor to expand their time resources and skills.

6.6 Tap into the funds of the knowledge of refugee parents to strengthen empowerment

Implement a parent steering group that provides feedback on program structure and materials to better integrate resource and experiences of parents into the program. Strengthen the flexible program implementation to foster situation-oriented play offered during home visits.

6.7 Improve work conditions of home visitors

For sustainable program implementation, improve work conditions of home visitors in terms of salary, working hours, and support structures through interdisciplinary and psychological counselling services. Provide possibilities for promotion and training opportunities.

6.8 Implement flexible programs in rural areas

Use the experiences with Wml to develop a flexible family education program for rural areas. Be flexible about addressing the different family members in a home visit to maximize the use of resources. Combine materials and program structures for the different age groups. Organize a pick-up service for the group meetings as program standard.

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8. Appendix with survey instruments and tables

8.1 Sample of Case Studies

8.2 Sample of Qualitative Data

8.3 Interview Guide Home visitors

8.4 Interview Guide Coordinators

8.5 Interview Guide Parents

Appendix 8.1 : Sample of Case Studies

Case dimensions	Program(s) attended	Age of children	Family unit	Rural/ urban area	Housing	Legal status	Country of origin	Use of family language in program
Case 1: Patricia and her two children	Opstapje	4 & 5 years old	Single parent family, two children abroad	Big urban centre in the south of Germany	Mass shelter	Asylum seeker without permanent status	Nigeria	German as program language
Case 2: Om Samar and her three children	Wml	5, 3 & 2 years old	Family with two parents	Intermedium City in the North of Germany	Privat apartment	Accepted refugee	Syria/ Kurdish	Use of family language (Arabic) in program
Case 3: Soha and her two children	Opstapje/ HIPPY	5 year & 18 months old	Family with two parents	Rural area in central Germany	Two storey-apartment-building for refugees	Denied asylum seeker: so-called tolerated status "Duldung"	Algeria	Use of family language (Arabic) in program
Case 4: Matin and her two children	Wml/HIPPY	5 & 12 years old	Family with two parents	Intermedium City in the North of Germany	Privat apartment	Asylum seeker with 3 years permission	Iran	Use of family language (Farsi) and German
Case 5: Hamda and her six children	HIPPY	6 & 10 13 & 16 & 18 & 20 years old	Family with two parents	Small city in the south of Germany	Privat apartment	Asylum seeker with 1 year permission	Syria	German as program language
Case 6: Elham and her three children	Wml	6 & 4 & 2 and half years	Family with two parents	Big city in the North of Germany	apartment-building for refugees	Asylum seeker with 3 years permission	Afghanistan	German as program language

Case 7: Marjan and her four children	Wml	16&14&13&2 and half years old	Family with two parents	Big city in the north of Germany	Privat apartment	Asylum seeker with 3 years permission	Afghanistan	Use of family language (Dari) and German
Case 8: Fahimeh and her three children	Wml	12&5& 3 years old	Family with two parents	Big city in the north of Germany	Privat apartment	Denied asylum seeker: so-called tolerated status“Duldung”	Afghanistan	Use of family language (Dari) and German
Case 9: Tuba and her three children	Wml	9 &5 & 3 years old	Family with two parents	Big city in the north of Germany	Privat apartment	Asylum seeker with 3 years permission	Afghanistan	Use of family language (Dari) and German
Case 10: Sainab and her three children	Opstapje	3year&4 &5years	Family with two parents	Big city in the south of Germany	Privat apartment	Accepted refugee	Somalia	German as program language
Case11: Mohamad and his seven children	HIPPY	17&16& 10& 7& 4&2 years	Family with two parents	Small city in the south of Germany	apartment-building for refugees	Asylum seeker with 3 years permission	Afghanistan	German as program language
Case 12: Erica and her 3children	Opstapje /HIPPY	5years and 2 yeas and newborn	Family with two parents	Rural area in central Germany	Privat apartment	residents with job permission	Moldavia	Use of family language (Romanian) and German
Case 13: Ajjan and her son	Opstapje		Family with two parents	Privat apartment	apartment-building for refugees	Asylum seeker with 3 years permission	Somalia	German as program language
Case 14: Amime and her two children	Opstapje,	Kid1: 3 years Kid 2: newly born	the parents with the kids	Rural area in central Germany	Private apartment	Refugee status	Syria	German as program language And Arabic (with the mother)

Case 15: Lama and her daughter	WMI	2 years	the parents with the kids	Big city in northwestern Germany	Private apartment	Reunification (refugee status)	Syria	Arabic as a main language with some German
Case 16: Maram and her six children	WMI	19,18,16,15,12,8, and 3 years kid in the program	the parents with the kids	Big city in northwestern Germany	Apartment in a camp	Reunification (refugee status)	Syria	Arabic as a main language with some German
Case 17: Nada and her 4 kids	WMI Opstapje	Kid1:8, kid2:3, kid3: 2, kind 4:2	the parents with the kids	Medium city in northwestern Germany	Private apartment	Refugee status	Syria	WMI: Arabic. Opstapje: German (Arabic with the mother)
Case 18: Nadia and her kid	Opstapje	Kid: 2 years	the parents with the kids	Medium City in west southern Germany	Private apartment	Refugee status	Syria	German and the mother translate in Arabic to the kid
Case 19: Sara and her two kids	Opstapje, HIPPY	Kid 1: 4 years. Kid 2: 1 year	the parents with the kids	Medium City in west southern Germany	Private apartment	Reunification (refugee status)	Syria	German
Case 20: Amina and her two kids	Opstapje	Kid 1: 4 years. Kid 2: 2 year	the parents with the kids	Rural area in central Germany	Private apartment	Refugee status	Syria	German with the kid and Arabic with the mother
Case 21: Hosein, khuolud and their 2 children	Opstapje	Kid 1: 3 years Kid 2: 18 months	the parents with the kids	Rural area in central Germany	Private apartment	Refugee status	Syria	German with the kid and Arabic with the parents
Case 22: Naj and Saleh and their 6 children	HIPPY and Opstapje	16,13,11,7,5,4 years	the parents with the kids	Rural area in central Germany	Private apartment	Refugee status	Iraq	German

Appendix 8.2: Qualitative Sample

Type of interview/ observation	Urban site < 500,000 inhabitants	Small & intermediate city site >500,000 inhabitants	Rural site/ site at villages	Total
First interviews with parents	8	8	6	22
Interviews with home visitors	3	5	2	10
Interviews with coordinators	1	3	1	5
Second Interview with parents/ observation of home visit Children: arts based (painting home visit)	6	7	5	18
Total	18	23	14	55

Appendix 8.3: Interview Guide Home visitors

1. Warm up

Would you like to tell me a bit about yourself? (country of origin/ how long in Germany/ educational background...)

How was it that you started to work as a home visitor?

Did and how did it change your situation to become a home visitor?

What are your responsibilities as a home visitor? (What are not your responsibilities)

What did you learn from being a home visitor?

2. Context

How many families are you working with?

Can you tell me a bit about the refugee families: how is their life in Germany? (easy/ hard/ integration)?

What should be changed about the organization of the program? (for example, working hours, numbers of families...) to make it better for you?

Did you get a training to be a home visitor? Can you describe this training for me- what did you learn?

3. Program for the families we are interviewing

How is the program working for this family?

What changed for the mother/ family life/ children through the program?

Could you connect the family to institutions in Germany (school, family centres...)- how exactly did you support the family in this?

What is easy for this family / what is hard about the program?

Do they like the materials- what should be changed about them?

Is this only hard/ easy for refugee families or for other families as well?

Can you describe me a home visit – what you are doing with the family and why are you doing it?

What language are you speaking with the mother and the child?

Did you have any kind of difficult situation as a home visitor? Can you describe it?

4. Good Practice and Challenges

What makes the program valuable for you? For the families?

What are main challenges?

If you would be IMPULS what would you change in this program?

If a new home visitor starts in this program tomorrow what would be your advice for this women, so she can be a good and successful home visitor?

5. Wrap up

What do you like about being a home visitor?

What are your plans for your future?

Appendix 8.4: Interview Guide Coordinators

1. Warm up

Own background and function?

General information about the location: How long

2. Program implementation

What is being implemented? Welcome with IMPULS; HiPPY; Opstapje?

Frequency?

Type of family visitor (voluntary, mother tongue, professional)

Group meeting? Where? How often?

Training for home visitors?

Funding the program (via KITA entry?)

3. Flexibility in customizing the program

What opportunities are there to meet families flexibly or to organize groups flexibly?

What role does the funding play in this aspect?

4. Framework conditions and infrastructure

Rural / Urban?

Existing networks (volunteer work and advisory institutions)?

Existing organized communities?

Institutional links to daycare centers and schools?

5. Evaluation and monitoring of the program

How do you obtain statistics on the program implementation?

How is the program evaluated with the participants?

6. First insights into program outcomes

What are benefits of programs for the families?

How would you describe the main impact on parents? the children)?

Are there any effects on networks and participation in other institutions or opening up the vicinity?

How important do you think visiting families is?

Are there any other effects on family integration?

For which families is it possible to participate successfully?

Which families find it difficult to participate successfully?

What do you think are the most important factors that support and hinder integration?

What are the main challenges of working with refugee families?

Good practice and challenges

What makes the program valuable?

What is transferable?

What are the key challenges?

7. Interviews and further collaboration

When do programs start? Which?

Can you imagine participating in qualitative interviews with parents and home visitors?

When would be a good time?

Which languages would be necessary?

Appendix 8.5: Interview Guide Parents

1. Warm up

Introduction of researcher/ Informed consent / Permission to record interview

Short questionnaire (based on online tool: demographic data on family)

Can you tell me about your life here in Germany as a family? What does a usual day look like?

Please tell me a bit how everything went since you came to Germany (how long have you been here/ did you move/ did it take you long time to arrive in Germany/ did you stay at refugee camps first)

Where do you live right now? What is good and bad about it?

2. Participation in the program

Why are you participating in the program? (Motivation to participate)

Who did tell you about it?

What are you doing in the program (homevisits/ groupmeetings)

What do you think will be good about it?

What do your kids like about it?

Do you have any fears- what might be difficult in this program?

Do you like the other people – so far? What do you like about them- what not so much?

How about the homevisitor (what is helpful- what isn't?, language spoken during the visits; background of homevisitor similar/ connection and relationship)

What do you think are the responsibilities of the homevisitor?

Do you prefer meet at home or in another place (School, family center.... Why?)

What is the program about?

How was it so far?

Do you have any suggestions so far for the program?

Do you look at the materials with you children without the homevisitor? (how often?)

For how long do you play with your children with the materials?

What do you learn in the program?

What are your children learning in the program?

3. Family life in Germany & Mother- child relationship

Please tell me about your family? (who is your family, who is here with you...)

Could you tell me more about you and your children- what are the things you do together? (playing, reading, going to the playground, doing other programs, watching TV together....)

What do you think- what are your children learning from you? How can they learn this?

What are the three most important things your children should learn from you?

What makes you happy when being with your children? (please describe the situation what happened step by step)

What languages are you using when speaking to your children?

What makes you angry or sad when being with your children? (please describe the situation what happened step by step)

What are your responsibilities in the family/ what are the responsibilities of the children and your partner/ husband...?

How about transnational family ties? Do they form part of the every day activities?

Do you have more relatives around that are helping with the children?

If you compare how you and your children were living before coming to Germany and now here in Germany- Do you think something changed between you and your children?

Do you still have family members in other countries? How can you keep in contact with them?

4. Social Connections

Contact to Institutions in Germany (Social Links)

Do you participate in any kind of programs beside the (Willkommen/ Opstapje/ Hippy)?

Have you been in a German School/ Kindergarten already? (Why not?/ Did you speak with teacher or educator how often)

Did you go somewhere to get help with housing/ language courses/ money....?

Who helped you in Germany?

What was hard or difficult?

How did people treat you in these places? (good- why, please describe; discriminated- why, please describe)

Contact to ethno- cultural or religious community (Social Bonds)

Do you know other people from your country?

Would you like to meet more people from your country (Why yes, Why no)

Do you have a meeting place you can go to? (also for religious community)

Contact to Germans/ in the Neighbourhood (Social Bridges)

Do you know people from Germany?

How often do you speak to other people in your neighbourhood or school and so on...?

How are the people here in Germany?

How are they treating you and your family?

Is there somebody else helping you here in Germany?

Would you be interested in coming to know more people in your neighbourhood? (What is interesting/ not interesting about it)

5. Role of Playing and Learning

What kind of play do you remember from your childhood? What did you play as a kid? (were parents involved in some way?)

What do you think is different between parents and children in Germany and where you are from?

What kind of things are you doing with your children? (play/ read/ sing/ make them help ...)

What do you know about school in Germany?

What do your children need to do in school in Germany to be successful? (What do teachers want or expect the students to do in Germany?)

What does teacher want from parents in Germany?

What kind of future are you hoping for, for your children in Germany?

6. Well being in Germany

Are there situations in your life you feel happy (can you tell me more about it, please describe a situation)

What is hard/ difficult about living in Germany?

Do you have any health issues (also psychological problems)

How are you managing these challenges ? (feeling confident- or not)

Do you think you can find your own solutions? (How are you handling it so far)

Can you tell me about a situation that was difficult and you were able to find a solution?

Are there situations you can't do anything about?

What should change to make it better?

7. Closing

If you would be the German chancellor Angela Merkel what would you change?

If you could look into the future. What would you like to see in 10 years from now? (for you/ for your children) Did I miss something- would you like to add something else?