Building hope and confidence: Stories of change

As we offer support to individuals and families through our various initiatives our aim is to bring about change for good, not only in practical ways, but also in building confidence and hope for the future. Below are examples of change from the UK and from overseas. Take time to read and reflect on them in your group. Then consider the following:

- **Before and after:**
  What practical changes have taken place in the lives of those being helped?

- **Before and after:**
  What changes in attitude and outlook have taken place in the lives of both those being helped and those supporting them?

- **Hope and confidence:**
  Highlight particular examples of hope and confidence being built in the lives of both those being helped and those supporting them.

Stories on the Street Church and Community Initiative in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire

This programme, which uses facilitator-led Bible studies with church groups to encourage them to foster economic, social and physical transformation within their communities, helped build the confidence of all those who participated.

Sue (the MU Families Worker) ran a coffee morning on Wednesdays at a local primary school in Wisbech and had the confidence to share one of the creative Bible monologues with the group of mothers who met there. Sue recounts how amazing it was that the room became silent as people heard the Bible story of the woman who touched Jesus' cloak for many for the first time. They were able to relate this to their own lives and how they or others had felt rejected or isolated and it gave the women confidence to share some of their deepest emotions and experiences.

This group is not only continuing today but there has been an offshoot from the group – *Mum and Me* - which is a Bible study group for mums who want to go deeper into how the Bible relates to their lives. One of the mums has also taken the step of getting baptised.

Early Marriage group for Anuk girls in Gambella. Ethiopia

This group is for orphans and children in the church who do not have parents. Orphans are more likely to have arranged early marriages and less likely to be told about women's issues by their families— e.g. menstruation and intercourse. The programme also provides sanitary napkins and sometimes underwear for the girls in the group because if girls are not wearing underwear, they cannot go to school. If girls have their period, they are not supposed to leave the house—according to traditional culture—so they may or may not get sanitary napkins from their home.

If girls have an arranged early marriage and they become pregnant it is very common for them to have obstructed labour and to die in childbirth. Also if they marry they commonly have to drop out of school, especially if they become pregnant. The group want the girls to stay in education and to know the dangers of early marriage.

The girls graduate from the programme in 2 years—others are already waiting to participate. They are considering whom among the older girls they could choose as two further facilitators to run a second group simultaneously. The current group started in October 2018 and will end in October 2020.

Nuch (17)
I thank God for this opportunity to learn as I didn't get it in school. I have learnt many things and I now know myself—who I am. Some of my friends are married, some with children and some have HIV. Before I didn't share my problems but now I realise it is important. Now I feel that I can share my plans and ideas—before I felt like I was a burden on the family since I have no father and no one cared what I thought. I'm happy. If I didn't have this opportunity I would be in a bad place. I have a plan to finish my education. Then afterward, I can marry. It has helped a lot. I want to give thanks to the facilitators they give of themselves freely —the training she has given me I didn't even receive from my mum. I want it to continue and I want more for my life.

Okohni (19)
This is something that God has given to me—I thought that I would get married at 16 or 17 and my family wanted to arrange it because they wanted to collect the dowry. It is the culture, the tradition. I quarrelled with my parents because I had heard of the dangers of early marriage. Because of this group I had the strength to say no—but they chased me from my home. I'm now part of the church and have seen some of my age-mates in a terrible situation— they have many problems and suffering a lot. Some are already pregnant, some with children.
I have the strength not to marry even if my relatives reject me. I know now that I will finish my education, I can marry much later. I want to be a model for the other girls in the group and a teacher for the others. I could be in a group and start a small business so we can plan for the future. I'm now in the second year of college. I have one more before graduation. I'm doing a road construction course

Aben Ajok (potential facilitator)
I am very happy about the course. I come each week and it has really changed my life. In the teaching they say we have to share what we learn with our friends. They say we are just a few – 25 – so go back to your friends and tell them all about it. I am happy to share all that I have learnt especially to those who are not able to join the group.

Now use the same three thoughts above to reflect on the changes being brought about through an initiative supported by your group or Diocese.

Celebrate where there is change for good and consider ways to build on this to increase hope and confidence both in those being helped and those supporting them.