

## REVALUE SYRIA

### A change Story

#### Hope returns to Syrian families

*"For the first time in a long time, we have been able to share our feelings and thoughts in a safe way, and we have been able to feel like ordinary people again,"* says the father of a Syrian family who participated in "Revalue Syria" project with his wife and daughter (a project supported by Danmission and implemented by the Compassion Protestant Society) in Syria.

The war in Syria has been going on since 2011 and has left its scars on the country and its people. Large parts of cities like Aleppo and Homs are in ruins, and many have lost their lives.

Danmission and the Compassion Protestant Society (CPS) are behind the project 'Revalue Syria', where families from different parts of the country and with different religious backgrounds met during 12 sessions and talked about their experiences, thoughts and hopes for the country. The CPS is a Christian, Lebanese aid organization working for the poor and marginalized in Syria and Lebanon.

Sandy is 25 years old and one of the facilitators of the project implemented in Aleppo and Latakia.

*"After 10 years of war with destruction and grief, it is clear to everyone that the Syrians have lost their will to live and hope. "The purpose of 'Revalue Syria' is to rebuild the values of the citizens and give them some hope back - especially for the children who have never experienced anything but war," she says.*

#### Transformed Children

Sandy has just finalised the 12 sessions workshop with children and parents in their respective groups. The children of her group were initially nervous about talking to each other - especially those of a different religious background. Some were bullied

in the beginning, but as they got to know each other better, they started sharing about their experience, and became friends.

*"The children were transformed, and they felt more secured and at ease. They had a better understanding of who they were as a human being, became better at listening to their feelings - and to each other. They were used to harsh living conditions, where family members have either left the country or died, and where the parents may be out of job" says Sandy.*

## **Priests and professionals are behind the workshop**

During each meeting, a topic was discussed, such as peace, conflict, diversity, 'how do I express my feelings' and 'my family and I'. Subjects and teaching materials were made in collaboration between priests and other professionals (sociologists and psychologists), and the teaching of the children involved practical exercises like drawing, painting and games.

*"With this project, we wanted to give both children and parents an opportunity to open up again and feel human. Our hope is that the families bring new values home and that they will help turn negative years into something more constructive and positive," says Sandy and continues:*

*"It is our aim that adults and especially children can return home with the feeling that they too have a responsibility towards society and towards the future of Syria. And they should learn to accept others, especially those who are different from them. A girl with a head scarf is no different just because she is from another religion."*

## **Hope for the future**

The Wess family was one of the families who participated, Sandy a 7-year-old girl with her parents, living in Salaheddin area in Aleppo.

*"We have lost family and friends in the war and other friends have disappeared and we do not know if they are still alive," said a clearly affected father.*

The family heard about the project through their church and saw it as an opportunity to meet other people.

*"We are grateful to participate in this project because we are very isolated and alone, here we had the opportunity to share our fears, thoughts and experiences with others like us. Our daughter was raised during the war and is always scared when she hears the bombing. Today she is less scared and happier" says the mother, and the father adds:*

*"It is the first time in a long time that we have been able to share our thoughts in a free and safe way. When we met with the other parents, we could laugh a little and feel like ordinary people again,"* says the father.

Sandy from CPS feels that the participants have been very happy to participate, and that several of them even wished that the project would continue. The mother of the Wess family expressed that they have new friends and more hope for the future after this workshop:

*"Before the war, we did not care if others had a different religion than us - we were good friends despite that. But the war has created cliffs between us citizens of Syria. It is good that through this project, we can find each other again - also with people from other parts of the country and with different religions. It has given us hope for the future,"* she says.