

Family Life Programme

Helping communities help themselves



The Mothers' Union *Family Life Programme* is a holistic community development programme which brings together community groups to solve issues they hold in common in order to bring about positive change.

In eight regions of Uganda, the programme brings around 15 - 30 people of a community together. Working with a trained facilitator the groups identify issues they all face such as food security, poverty, health and sanitation, environmental protection, agricultural skills, living with HIV/AIDS, or good nutrition. They then work as a group developing ways to bring about change and improvements in their community by prioritising the issues they want to tackle then thinking through solutions. Common issues are solved and a real community spirit grows up through mutual support: this is especially good to see in communities where the vulnerable, such as those living with HIV/AIDS or orphan-headed households have been isolated. Communities learn they are stronger, rather than weaker, when they work together.

Each community selects one or two community members to be group facilitators and to receive training from Mothers' Union. Facilitators, being from the community themselves, have a strong motivation to bring about community cohesion and change. After training they work with their own groups to find solutions to problems, to source assistance where necessary and to establish a community that is empowered to lift itself out of poverty, sickness and ignorance.

The *Family Life Programme* is not about giving handouts. It is about helping communities identify the resources and assets they already have to be able to tackle some of the challenges they face. In essence, the programme helps people to believe in themselves and work together as a community.

The programme places complete ownership of the project into the hands of community members and is open to the whole community regardless of age, gender, faith or ethnicity. All progress and benefits are the rewards of their own hard work and determination. Through this empowerment some incredibly creative and diverse activities and projects have been established. Communities have started juice-making enterprises, medicinal plant farming, livestock rearing and introduced networks of carers for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Since its inception in 2003, over 400 *Family Life Programme* groups have been established with around 10,000 participants. Indirectly, through benefitting family members and neighbours, the programme has now reached an estimated 500,000 beneficiaries.

From 2013/14 the Family Life Programme will be combining its existing work with a *Church & Community Mobilisation Process* approach, enabling the programme to mobilise church groups to become catalysts for change, and allowing the programme to expand across Uganda.