

## Branch Meeting - Information and Activity

Ask one or more [several voices help to make people listen more carefully] members to read the following information about the Literacy & Financial Education Programme.

## Literacy & Financial Education Programme

Community transformation through literacy and numeracy



*When I joined the literacy programme I could not believe that an illiterate and undermined woman like me could hold a pen and write. Now I can read posters, magazines, medicine prescriptions, calculate whether I am working for losses or profit. Before I buy products, I calculate first. Instead of buying one item I now buy more and my business is improving. Besides this, I also joined a saving group last year which encouraged me to work hard in order to pay the amount required and for my business to grow bigger... I have planned that when I get my savings, I will build a small shop for selling my items instead of selling from a table and it will save me from carrying the items home and to the market."*  
Roda Poni, LFEP beneficiary, South Sudan

Roda is just one of over 130,000 people across Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi, Sudan and South Sudan that by the end of 2013 will have achieved an accredited qualification in literacy learning as well as become economically empowered through the Mothers' Union's *Literacy & Financial Education Programme*.

Started in 2000, the programme was designed to give a holistic approach to empowering some of the most marginalised communities in the world, meeting millennium development goals of reducing poverty, increasing the participation of women and girls in education and employment, tackling HIV/AIDS and improving family health. The programme uses participatory methods to enable communities to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills whilst discussing and planning action on their daily issues and challenges.

Participants become engaged in:

- Tackling local issues such as domestic violence and harmful traditional practices
- Raising awareness of health issues and participating in local HIV/AIDS awareness initiatives
- Setting up of income generating projects and small businesses
- Promoting knowledge of women's rights, including democratic and inheritance rights

In addition, the programme specifically focuses on building knowledge and skills in business development and community savings group formation for its members. As a result women are now gaining financial independence, have more autonomy to manage their lives and are participating in household decision-making as well as community politics and leadership.

The programme is one of the most cost-effective literacy programmes in the world. We train community volunteers as literacy facilitators, who are then equipped to run literacy circles in their own community. All literacy circles and savings groups are open to everyone, crossing the boundaries of religion, age, gender or tribe enabling community cohesion, unity and empowerment. Our programme has been especially effective in reaching those who are the most marginalised in society including groups previously discriminated against such as the Twa pygmy tribe in Burundi and displaced communities in Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan.

The work of Mothers' Union has been extensively supported not only by the fundraising of our members across the world, but through the generous partnership funding of Comic Relief (Burundi 2004 - 2008 and 2013-2015), Lakarmissionen (Burundi 2010 - present), Comic Relief (Sudan & South Sudan 2010 - 2014), Whitcroft Foundation & Anglican Overseas Aid (Burundi 2010-present), Isle of Man Overseas Aid Committee (Malawi 2012-13), Church of Ireland Bishops Appeal (Burundi 2012 and 2013) and operational partnerships in the field from Five Talents (Burundi & Malawi 2010-present), Five Talents and World Concern (Sudan & South Sudan 2010-2014). Support from individuals as well as large funders is vital for the future of this programme.

Now **Play the Literacy Word Game** included in the pack.