



She Speakers

A Gender Justice
Resource for Girls'
Brigade Leaders



Contents

Pages 2-4	Introduction
Pages 5-6	Girls in the world today: what is gender justice?
Pages 7-8	Missing from school: improving girls' access to education
Pages 9-11	Being safe: ending male violence against women and girls
Pages 12-13	Staying well: shattering mental health stigma
Pages 14-15	Girls' Brigade Raises Hope
Pages 16-20	Resources



Introduction

The Girls' Brigade International wants to equip GB members to turn up the volume of Gospel hope for girls as well as challenge the systematic injustices that many girls encounter in communities across the world. The world is not a fair and equal place for girls and young women. Many girls remain missing from school and not able to access an education which would empower them to have a better future. Many girls feel unsafe in public spaces and within their own homes as they experience indiscriminate violence. This is not acceptable. Girls' Brigade cares for girls because God cares for girls. GB wants to celebrate the value and potential of girls and women across the world as they're made in God's image. After all, that's what Jesus did.

In the face of injustice, many girls and women (inside and outside Girls' Brigade) are choosing to speak up and speak in God's hope and light. This resource was created by GB leaders from around the world (Caitlyn Robinson, Jessie Emms, Hannah Morpeth, Nelly Banda & Ruth Utulu) assisted by GB International's Vice President Claire Rush. As GB's Delegation of Hope to the United Nations in 2021, they represented GB members and advocated for gender justice by hosting a session at the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (meet the team on page 16-17). You can watch a recording of their incredible session (which included drama and spoken word piece) here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1D_lxEJ7RM&t=500s

We pray that GB members around the world will be inspired by their example. As US poet and youth activist Amanda Gorman said: 'There is always HOPE if only we are brave enough to SEE it. If only we are brave enough to BE it.'

What are the aims of the resource?

We believe that Girls' Brigade members across the world are transformers, generations-shapers and hope-bringers! This resource will enable them to challenge injustices in their own community in creative ways and transform lives. The resource has two specific aims:

1. To equip GB leaders (particularly at local level) to be strategic and intentional about advocacy
2. To empower girls and young women to understand some of the key gender justice issues faced by girls around the world today and reflect on how they can advocate for change in words and actions.

The *She Speaks* resource is part of GB International's on-going advocacy strategy to enable girls and young women to turn up the volume of hope in their own communities.

Who is the resource for?

The resource is suitable for young women aged 13-25. Child and youth development is diverse across the world so please adapt the activity for the needs of your group.

How is the resource structured?

The structure of the *She Speaks* resource is designed to be flexible – it can be used for a one-off GB group meeting (pick and choose the most relevant activity) but it will be most effective when used over a course of five sessions or a residential. This amount of time will empower the young women to understand the issues and will enable them to plan to make a real difference. Here's an overview of the five sessions:

Session 1	Girls in the world today: what is gender justice? This session explores the opportunities and challenges of being a girl in the 21st century as well as introduces the concepts of fairness and justice.
Session 2	Missing from school: improving girls' access to education This session explores the complexity of girls' access to education through highlighting personal stories.
Session 3	Being safe: ending male violence against women and girls This session explores the insidious nature of male violence against women and girls which pervades all cultures and takes many different forms.
Session 4	Staying well: shattering mental health stigma This session explores the importance of girls and young women's mental health and well-being as well as the role of faith and faith-based groups in supporting people's mental health and emotional well-being.
Session 5	Girls' Brigade Raises Hope The final session encourages young women to understand that God calls them to use their influence to transform their communities and He equips them to do this.

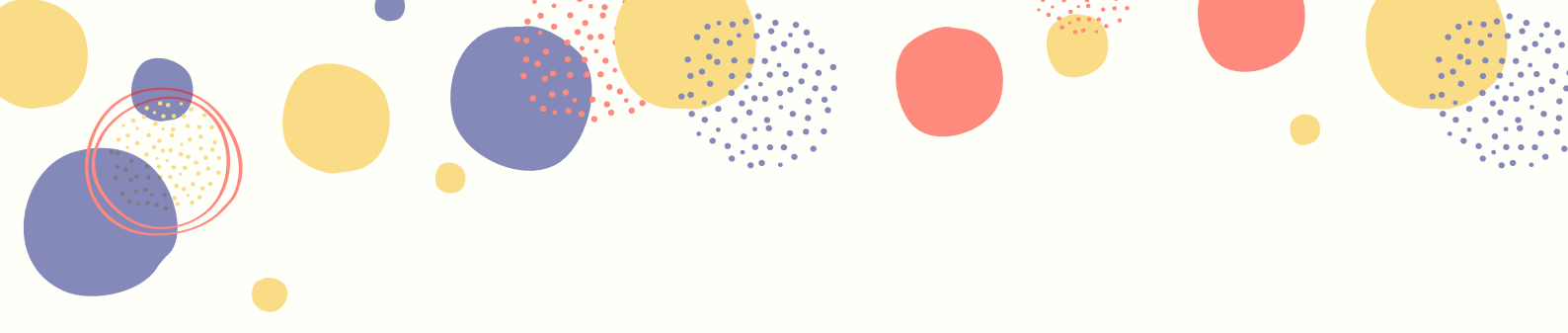
Each session contains the following elements:

- **Setting the Scene:** an interactive and fun game to introduce the issue.
- **Engage:** an interactive activity to help the group to understand the issue.
- **Reflect:** a pause to explore God's word and discuss questions.
- **Voices:** an opportunity to hear the voices and stories of our GB Advocates.
- **Be the change:** a creative activity to encourage the development of advocacy skills.

Top tips for leaders

You know your group best and it is up to you to adapt the material provided to make it work in your setting.

- **Timing:** Each activity in the track has been given an approximate time scale. Estimate how much time to allocate to each activity based on the time you have each week, the size of your group and their interests.
- **Resources:** In places, modern technological resources are recommended for use. These are culturally relevant to young people so use them if you can. If, however, you cannot access the resources, adapt the session or use alternative approaches.
- **Flexibility:** If there is an activity which does not make sense to you, or which you are not comfortable with then adapt it. Beware, however, of changing something just because you do not like it – consider the young people's likely response as well as your own.

- 
- **Pastoral care:** Please be aware that this resource deals with difficult and challenging issues and you have a responsibility to create a safe space in GB. You can do this in a number of ways:
 - Ensuring at the start of the session that any member of the group knows that they can step out of the session (if they need a break from the material)
 - Making other leaders available to chat to and pray for members of the group if they wish to do so.
 - Increasing your knowledge of the topic in advance of leading the sessions
 - Seeking professional expertise from other charities or services (if required).
 - **Celebrating achievements:** Please make sure at the end of each week that you have time to recognise and celebrate the achievements of the group.

What's next?

Thank you in advance for using this resource and helping Girls' Brigade members to be transformers and hope-bringers in their communities.

Over the last few years, GB International (GBI) has been developing its advocacy emphasis. We have several resources that GB leaders can use for free including the GB Raises Hope advocacy toolkit. This is a perfect follow from this resource as it equips young people to develop their advocacy skills and effect change on a social justice issue which impacts their community.

It can be downloaded for free from the GB Worldwide website here: <https://gbworldwide.org/girls-brigade-releases-new-gbs-raising-hope-advocacy-toolkit-on-international-day-of-the-girl/>

Session 1

Girls in the world today: what is gender justice?

This session explores the opportunities and challenges of being a girl in the 21st century as well as introduces the concepts of fairness and justice.

SETTING THE SCENE: That's not fair!

You'll need: Luxurious snacks like chocolate or fruit and basic snacks like biscuits.

Here's a fun but poignant activity to help set the scene and introduce the concept of fairness. As the group comes into the room, tell people at random to go to the left or right side of the room. Set up the left side of the room with nice snacks like chocolate or fruit and a cosy place to sit. On the right side, don't put any chairs out so they have to sit on the floor and either provide no snacks or just basic biscuits. Give the group some free time to chat - enough time for them to understand that the two groups are being treated.

Ask: How does it make them feel? Are they being treated unfairly? What is fairness?

Explain: We live in a world which treats people unfairly. In particular, girls are often treated differently from boys. Over the next few weeks, we're going to explore this more.

ENGAGE: Because I am a girl (20 mins)

You'll need: Marker pens and two large pieces of paper per group and print out of the statistics below.

Divide the young people into small groups of four or five people and ask them to draw an outline of a girl on each piece of paper. Give the groups five minutes to discuss and write down the opportunities and challenges of being a girl today. After group discussion, invite them to share their thoughts with the wider group and ensure that you draw out that there are both challenges and opportunities of being born female.

Print or write out the statistics below on individual pieces of paper and place them on the floor or wall in your room. Invite the group to spend some time wandering around and looking at them. After a few minutes, ask them to stand at the statistic which they feel most shocked about.

- 129 million girls are missing from classrooms across the world (UNICEF).
- In countries experiencing conflict and violence, girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys (World Bank).
- 1 in 5 girls across the world are married before they are 18 years old (UNICEF).
- Every three seconds, another girl is forced to marry someone she doesn't want to (Girls Not Brides).
- 1 in 3 women across the world have experienced rape or other forms of sexual violence (UN women).
- Around 113 to 200 million girls and women are simply missing. Girls and women are at a greater risk of suffering gender-based violence such as honour killings and being trafficked.

Ask: is this the world that God intended? Let's read what God says.

REFLECT: What does God say? (15 mins)

You'll need: Bibles and questions.

Divide the group into two. Invite them to read Genesis Ch.1:26-28.

Explain: In God's eyes, every person has equal value. However, we still live in a world where some people are treated better than others. Explain that God created every single person on earth. This Bible passage also demonstrates that we were made in the image of God and, as a result, we have incredible worth and value. Our worth and value comes from God and it doesn't depend on whether we're a girl or a boy, young or old, or what colour of skin we have etc. Because of our worth in God's eyes, we should treat each other with dignity, value and respect. Injustice is when people are robbed of their God-given value and treated like they are worthless. Gender injustice is when we treat people differently because of their gender. God believes women and men have equal value and worth. Our hope is that women and men will be equally valued in words and actions in our present culture.

DEVELOP: Meet GB Advocates (15 mins)

You'll need: Printed copies of Resource A for the group to read.

Explain: The global Girls' Brigade family is full of amazing young women who are challenging the injustices that girls and women encounter. They are refusing to be silent and are instead speaking in God's hope and light. In 2021, a group of young GB leaders - Caitlyn, Jessie, Hannah, Nelly and Ruth - represented Girls' Brigade at the United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women, this is the largest global gathering of gender justice activists in the world. As part of the GB's Delegation of Hope, they facilitated an incredible online session sharing more about their personal experiences of injustice but also advocating for change. Let's meet the team and be inspired by them!

Distribute copies of Resource A. Ask the group to discuss the following questions:

1. What are the different issues that the young women are passionate about? Do you share a passion about any of the issues?
2. How has being part of GB impacted their lives?
3. How has GB made a difference in your life?
4. How has being part of GB and being a Christian motivated them to get involved in transforming these issues?
5. Do you think that it is positive for Girls' Brigade members to be represented at the United Nations? Why? Why not?

BE THE CHANGE: Create the world that you want to see for girls (15 mins)

You'll need: Paper and a variety of different craft materials like pens, crayons, chalk and paint and GB International's Hope for Girls short film (<https://youtu.be/BrCtzwsBm8U>).

Show the Hope for Girls film which features the voices of young GB members from around the world. What do you think the world would look like if everyone equally valued girls and boys like God intended? Give the group some time to reflect on this. Invite them to create the world that they want to see for girls as a piece of art - a drawing, painting or even collage. You could display them in your church and invite others to look and pray over them. Don't forget to send us a photo so we can upload it onto our website or social media pages - email home@gbworldwide.org.

Session 2

Missing from school: improving girls' access to education

This session explores the complexity of girls' access to education through highlighting personal stories.

Note for leaders:

Girls' education can feel like an abstract issue, especially if you are born in a country where girls finishing primary and secondary education is normal. In countries where school is compulsory, attendance can feel like a chore. It can be hard for younger participants to understand why school is so important. Creating an emotional connection to an issue can be incredibly impactful in promoting understanding. Gaining an appreciation of your privilege to attend formal education can provide you with a personal connection to this complex issue. We're aware that girls in the GB family have different experiences of this issue. Please amend the session plan accordingly especially if you live in a culture where the challenges facing girls are very real.

SETTING THE SCENE:

School stories

You'll need: Paper and pens.

As the group arrive, ask them to think of funny moments which they've had in school. Invite them to write them down on slips of paper (without their name) and put them in a bowl. Go around the circle and one at a time, instruct each person to read a slip of paper. Ask the group to guess whose funny story belongs to who.

Split the young people into smaller groups of four or five people and ask them to discuss the following questions:

1. What is your favourite thing about attending school?
2. Is there something you learnt at school that has been important for your everyday life?
3. How has school challenged you to be a better person?

ENGAGE: A face behind the number (15 mins)

You'll need: Printed copies of Resource B or access to technology to play the spoken word video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1QSJNdh0YM>).

Explain: 129 million girls are missing from classrooms around the world. 129 million! Like any issue, it is easy to focus on numbers and statistics. But behind every statistic, there is a person and there is a story. What is it like to not have the choice of going to school? Let's meet Esther and listen to her story! Esther's story helps us understand the disappointment, fear and uncertainty that many girls inside and outside the GB family experience.

The monologue was written and created by Ruth Utulu, a GB leader in Nigeria who is passionate about enabling girls to continue in education.

Get a volunteer to read the monologue or allow time for the group to read it and reflect. It is also available in video format (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1QSJNdh0YM>).

Give each group a large piece of paper and marker pens. Invite them to divide the piece of paper into bricks on a wall. Give the group time to discuss what the barriers are that some girls have to overcome before going to school. Invite the group to fill up the bricks with ideas. Ensure that you have some time at the end to draw together discussions. Here are some of the barriers that girls face:

- Poverty – in some poorer communities the cost of school is too much (fees, books, uniforms). Poverty can force families to choose which children to keep out of school. When faced with this impossible choice, girls can often lose out.
- Attitudes – some families don't understand the importance of educating girls. Girls can be viewed as home makers while boys' education is perceived to have greater value.
- Child marriage – some girls become wives and mothers at a very young age. As this role takes priority, they're unable to go to school.

ENGAGE (Continued.)

- Disasters and emergencies - when a disaster strikes, girls can spend hours fetching water or wood and this leaves little time for education.
- Facilities - many schools in the developing world don't have proper toilet facilities so many girls have to miss school during their period.
- Threat of violence - even if families wanted to, and could afford to, send their daughters to school, they won't because of the threat of violence. Schools can be situated a long way from home - girls are at risk of assault when they walk to school. Many are not even safe in school -Boko Haram kidnapped over 200 girls from their boarding school in Nigeria at night. Due to the lack of electricity at night, the terrorists were mistaken for the army.

REFLECT: What does God say? (15 mins)

You'll need: Bibles.

Read 2 Timothy Ch.1:5 and 2 Timothy Ch.3:15 together.

Explain: The God we serve is a just God, that is, he is fair in his treatment of people. He doesn't play favourites, that is why in John Ch.1:12 He says, for everyone who believes, He has given them the power to become children of God. Boys and girls have equal rights in becoming children of God which means they are equal before God. With this understanding you will agree that it is God's desire that girls should be educated as much as boys are. The Bible recorded that Timothy knew the Scriptures from a very young age because his grandmother and mother taught him (2 Tim 1:5, 2 Tim 3:15). If they weren't educated they wouldn't have been able to teach Timothy about faith in Christ. Encourage discussion amongst the group after reading the passage together.

DEVELOP: What do you think? (15 mins)

You'll need: flipchart paper and pens.

Following the reading of the monologue and the bible study, split the young people into small groups of 2-4 and discuss the following questions. They can use flipchart paper to jot down their responses:

1. Can you relate to Esther's story, or is your story different? If so, how?
2. Were you shocked with the statistics that 129 million girls are missing from classrooms around the world? Why? Why not?
3. How does Girls' Brigade help you to learn informally and develop your talents and skills?

Facilitate a period of discussion between the small groups.

BE THE CHANGE (15 mins)

Here are two options:

(1) If you live in a culture where girls have equal access to education

Give the group some time to explore how they could creatively educate the girls in the rest of the group about the challenges that some girls in other cultures must overcome in order to go to school - perhaps in the form of a drama, poem or poster. Encourage them to perform it for others to inspire other members to be grateful of the benefits of education and become aware of the injustice.

(2) If you live in a culture where it's common for girls to face barriers to education

Encourage the group to think of practical ideas about how they can promote the benefits of girls' education. Perhaps this is creating posters which could be displayed in a public place like the local library or community hall. Or perhaps they could write a letter to a local government representative urging them to make girls' education a priority as it benefits the whole community. Urge them to take action to transform their community. Please be mindful of political sensitivities.

You may need to extend this activity to the following week.

Session 3

Being safe: Ending male violence against women and girls

This session explores how male violence against women and girls pervades all cultures and takes many different forms. It is often rooted in cultural attitudes that regard women as inferior and objectifies and dehumanises them. Male violence against women is so endemic in every country that it has been called the hidden pandemic by United Nations.

Note for leaders:

Please be aware of the sensitivities of this topic. According to statistics, it is likely that a member of your group may have already experienced some form of violence. Male violence against women pervades all cultures, countries and classes. Please read the pastoral care tips on page 4 which will help you ensure that you create a safe environment for girls to explore this use.

SETTING THE SCENE: How much is it worth?

You'll need: Various objects or photos of objects of varying value, a photo of a boy or girls, pens and paper.

Here's a fun but poignant activity to help set the scene and introduce the concept of value and worth. Gather a number of different objects or photos of objects together and split the group into small teams. Give them each paper and pen. Show each group an object and ask them to write down how much they think it's worth. You can throw some tricky ones in - perhaps an object which looks old but is valued highly. The closest team to the actual monetary value of the item gets the point. At the end, show the teams a photo of a boy and a photo of a girl. Ask 'how much are they worth?' Explain that in God's eyes, women and men have equal value. However, we still live in a world which can treat women with less respect and less worth than men.

ENGAGE: Spot the difference (15 mins)

You'll need: Marker pens, two large pieces of paper per group, true and false signs.

Split the group into smaller groups of four or five people and ask them to draw an outline of a girl on one piece of paper and an outline of a boy on the other. Give the groups five minutes to discuss and write down how boys and girls are perhaps treated differently in your society and countries around the world. For example, they may be paid different for the same job, boys may be more likely to go to school etc. After group discussion, invite them to share their thoughts with the wider group.

Explain: in many countries, the false idea that women and girls are less worth than men and boys has devastating consequences. It can lead women to be wrongly considered inferior to men and it can often mean that women and girls are subjected to male violence. Male violence against women takes many forms - assault, abuse, coercive control, harassment, child marriage and honour killings are just a few recognised forms.

Put True and False signs in two different walls. Explain that you're going to read out a number of statistics and invite the group to vote with their feet and decide if it is true or false.

(All statistics have been taken from the UN Women website: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>).

1. Globally one in three women have experienced violence at least once in their life.
TRUE. This figure does not include sexual harassment.

ENGAGE (Continued.)

2. Most violence against women is perpetrated by current or former husbands or intimate partners.
TRUE. More than 640 million women aged 15 and older have been subjected to intimate partner violence. Of those who have been in a relationship, almost one in four adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 (24 per cent) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner or husband.
3. Globally, violence against women disproportionately affects low and lower-middle income countries and regions.
TRUE. Thirty-seven per cent of women aged 15 to 49 living in countries classified by the Sustainable Development Goals as “least developed” have been subject to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their life.
4. 50 million women are killed by a member of their family every day.
FALSE. It is 137 million women.
5. Less than 40 per cent of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort.
TRUE. In the majority of countries with available data on this issue, among women who do seek help, most look to family and friends and very few look to formal institutions, such as police and health services. Less than 10 per cent of those seeking help appealed to the police.

REFLECT: What does God say? (15 mins)

You'll need: Bibles.

Read John Ch.8:1-11.

Explain: This woman has been caught in the act of committing adultery. The religious leaders refer to the Law of Moses but it condemns both the woman and man, yet no man is brought before Jesus. This immediately demonstrates that in Jesus' society, there are different standards for men and women. Jesus subverts the status quo and gives the woman the opportunity to move from her old life to a new one, to a life of wholeness – and he does the same for her accusers.

Discuss the following questions:

1. How do you think that the woman felt?
2. Do you think that it is fair that only the woman was condemned to death?
3. Why would the woman willingly enter into a relationship that could end in her death? Do you think that there was a possibility that the woman was forced?
4. Do you see examples of how women and men are held to different standards in your community? If so, explain.

DEVELOP: Nelly's story; running and harassment (30 mins)

You'll need: the short film of Nelly's story (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAsERvAcw7M>).

Explain: Nelly from Girls' Brigade Zambia is an accountant, a trained mentor for adolescent girls and an advocate for girls and women through Girls' Brigade. Nelly is committed to ending male violence against women. In 2021, Nelly shared her own story of street harassment as a part of a parallel event at the UN's Commission on the Status of Women, the largest annual gathering of gender justice advocates in the world. Let's hear from Nelly.

After playing the short film clip, discuss the following questions in small groups:

1. How did experiencing street harassment impact Nelly?
2. Have you experienced street harassment? How did you react?
3. When was the last time that you felt unsafe in a public space?
4. Street harassment is a form of male violence against women. How can we play our part in creating a world where all women feel safe in public space?
5. How does Nelly believe that Girls' Brigade plays a crucial role in ending male violence against women?



BE THE CHANGE (15 mins)

We realise that it is most likely that members of your Girls' Brigade group have been directly impacted by male violence. Please choose the most appropriate activity:

1. Invite a guest speaker

Invite a local agency or charity who works to end male violence against women in your community to come and share more about its work, ministry and services. This would be useful if you feel that there are girls at risk in your GB group and community.

2. Get involved in the 'Thursdays in Black campaign'

Created by the World Council of Churches, Thursdays in Black is an international campaign of solidarity and advocacy focusing on resisting attitudes and practices that permit male violence against women. The simple act of wearing black on Thursdays is a protest against societies that encourage violence in any form, mourns those harmed and killed in sexual violence, raises awareness, and hopes that a different reality is possible. It would be great if your Girls' Brigade group could encourage your church to also support the initiative. Find out more here: <https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/thursdays-in-black>

Session 4

Staying well: Shattering mental health stigma

This session explores the importance of girls and young women's mental health and well-being as well as the role of faith and faith-based groups in supporting people's mental health and emotional well-being.

Note for leaders:

Having a Christian faith can be helpful when struggling emotionally and it can bring hope in difficult times. Practices such as prayer can be comforting for a lot of people. A faith community can be important, that community should be supportive and understanding – which is why having sessions like this is important. As the Bible demonstrates, having a Christian faith does not make any person immune to mental health difficulties. Having access to support is important. Leaders may find it helpful to visit www.mindandsoulfoundation.org. This is a Christian website which contains lots of great resources that can support developing knowledge on mental health which may help you to feel more equipped when delivering sessions.

SETTING THE SCENE: Quiz (5 mins)

You'll need: Resource C – a copy of answers to the quiz.

Depending on the numbers in your group it may be appropriate to do this in teams/pairs or as a more interactive quiz with people raising their hands or having one side of the room as 'true' and the other as 'false' to get people moving around. This will help ease them into the topic of mental health and clarify their understanding of mental illness. See Resource C for answers.

1. Mental health problems effect children and adults.
2. Christians shouldn't suffer from mental illnesses.
3. We all have mental health.
4. Eating a good balanced diet can help our emotional well-being.
5. Being active and having a good routine can help improve emotional well-being.
6. People don't recover from a mental illness.
7. Drinking alcohol and taking drugs can result in our mood being worse.
8. Mental illnesses only effect certain types of people, eg. From certain backgrounds, ethnicities, communities etc.
9. Talking to someone can help with how you feel.
10. It isn't normal to worry.

ENGAGE: Jessie's story (10 mins)

You'll need: Printed copies of Jessie's story (see Resource D).

Read Jessie's story (Resource D) together. This personal story was published as a blog post by koko (which stands for keep on keeping on), an online space for teenage girls run by Girls' Brigade Ministries. It is a great resource for youth leaders and features films, blogs, insights and support about living life to the full – enabling girls to 'keep on keeping on' in a hope-filled way.

Explain: This article was written by Jessie from Girls' Brigade England & Wales when she was 17 years old. Jessie is now a mental health nurse working to end mental health stigma and she shared her story at the United Nations.

Discuss the following questions:

1. What was Jessie's experience of mental illness?
2. What are the different things that helped Jessie recover from mental illness?
3. How did being a member of Girls' Brigade help Jessie recover?
4. If your best friend was unwell and experiencing depression, what would be your advice to her?
5. How can we help GB members to be honest about their mental health and ask for help if they are struggling?

REFLECT: What does God say? (15 mins)

You'll need: Bibles and questions.

Read 1 Kings Ch.19 then 2 Corinthians Ch.12-13 together.

Explain: In 1 Kings Ch.19 we see Elijah exhausted and suffering and asking God to let him die. The angels tell Elijah to get up and eat for this will give him strength for he will need this for his journey. Then the Lord comes to him and what we see is a kind, caring approach from God, he whispers to Elijah and gives him guidance and hope. In 2 Corinthians: Ch.12-13 we hear Paul talking about his weakness, a man full of faith still expressing weakness. Discuss the following questions with your group:

1. Are you surprised to be talking about what the Bible has to say about mental health?
2. What do you think about God's response in these situations? What does this teach us about how to respond to the people we know and how to treat ourselves?
3. What are the different emotions that Jesus expressed in the Gospels? Ask the group to list them and discuss the situations that Jesus faced.

Explain: We see Jesus experience a whole range of very human emotions - some of which are what people might class as 'extreme'. If it is okay for Jesus to feel sadness, upset, anger then they are perfectly normal emotions for us to feel too. There are no good or bad emotions but we need to manage our emotions in a healthy way.

DEVELOP: Hope in the Bible (20 mins)

You'll need: Pieces of paper, card, canvases, paints, crayons, felt tips, collage materials, pencils etc.

There are some unhelpful messages in the Bible regarding mental illness. These are likely to be a reflection of society's understanding at the time. However the Bible does contain many hope-filled messages and promises from God to His people. Allow your group to get creative by colouring in or using paint/canvases to create a reminder of a passage that is encouraging and which they can look at when they feel sad or upset.

Here are some examples to share but encourage your group to find their own/use their favourite encouraging passage:

Isaiah Ch.40:28-30

Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Lord is the everlasting God; he created all the world. He never grows tired or weary. No one understands his thoughts. He strengthens those who are weak and tired. Even those who are young grow weak; young people can fall exhausted. But those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.

Jeremiah Ch.29:11-12

I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for. Then you will call to me. You will come and pray to me, and I will answer you.

Deuteronomy Ch.31:6

So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the Lord your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you.

Perhaps your GB group could use this art to display to the other members of GB or even to your church. It could form part of an exhibition that could help to destigmatise mental health taboos.

BE THE CHANGE: Making pledges (15 mins)

Encourage young people to create a poster which challenges misconceptions about mental ill-health and encouraging people to share with others if they're experiencing any difficulties. A small act can make a difference, showing that you seek to understand people who struggle with their mental health makes a difference. End the session by praying with the young people drawing on the conversations that have come out of the session.

Session 5

Girls' Brigade Raises Hope

The final session encourages young women to understand that God calls them to use their influence to transform their communities and He equips them to do this.

SETTING THE SCENE: Obstacle race (10 mins)

You'll need: Blindfolds and a simple obstacle course.

Line up the young people in two teams, all but one blindfolded. The first blindfolded girl is to walk through the obstacle course assisted by the seeing team member. The seeing team member stands at the end of the course, calling instructions to help the blindfolded girl navigate the course. Once she reaches the end of the course she removes her blindfold and calls instructions for the next blindfolded girl.

Ask: what would have happened if the girls who could see (who weren't blindfolded) decided that she was not going to help direct her partner through the course? If this was so, most likely some of the girls would have stayed where they were - not venturing out, some of the girls would have stumbled upon an obstacle unsuccessfully while trying to make it on their own, and only a couple would be courageous enough and lucky to manage to navigate the course by themselves despite their disadvantage of being blindfolded. The girl without a blindfold was working on behalf of the blindfolded girl to ensure her safety during the course.

Explain: In a similar way there are people within our countries who endeavour to create a safer (whether that be physically, mentally or spiritually) environment for those challenged. In fact in order to create a fairer society, we all need to play our part, work together, and care for one another.

REFLECT: What does God say? (15 mins)

You'll need: Bibles.

Explain: Esther is a fantastic example of a young woman who despite being in a difficult situation found courage to speak God's truth and light into a dark situation. Give a quick overview of the book of Esther. Raised by her cousin Mordecai, Esther was a Jew who married King Xerxes. Mordecai was an official who worked at the court of the King. Hamman disliked Mordecai and plotted against him by tricking the king to decree the death of all Jews. Mordecai went to Queen Esther to see if she could persuade the king to save her own race from genocide, a massive injustice. Used to being valued for being silent and passive, Esther initially refused to help - feeling fearful for her own life. Esther was upset about this and thought it was unjust but Esther knew she could be killed if she went and spoke to the king without being invited. However she did find her voice and, using her intelligence and courage, Esther helped to save a nation. God had really placed her in the king's court 'for such a time as this'. Because Esther used her voice to speak up for what she believed was right she saved many, many people from an unfair death.

Read Esther Ch.4 and discuss:

- Why do you think Esther initially said no? Have you ever refused to do something that was difficult even though they knew it was right?
- How do you think Esther must have felt when she approached the king?
- What are the injustices that surround you in your local community?
- Where do you think God has placed you 'for such a time as this'?

DEVELOP: A hope-filled community (30 mins)

You'll need: A map of your local community, A4 papers and pens, music in the background.

Instructions: Divide the group into smaller groups but make sure a leader can accompany them. Ask them to walk around their local community with a map and answer the following questions:

- Is there one or two places in your community which are making a positive difference to people's lives?
- Where are the injustices in your community? They can mark their ideas on the map...

OR if you are not able to go for a walk, get the group to draw a map of their local community and answer the same questions.

Please note: This activity can draw out the complexities of injustice as groups may record the same place as making a positive difference to people's lives as well as being a place of injustice. For example, a school building can be a place of hope where children and young people are inspired to make a difference and empowered with skills which gave them future choices. But it can also be a place of injustice – children may experience bullying and perhaps girls are missing from school for a number of different reasons – poverty, cultural attitudes and risk of violence etc.

Instructions: After the group has returned from their walk or completed the mapping activity, invite them to list all the injustices that they saw in their local community. Ask them to write each one on a separate piece of paper. The injustices in your community will look different around the world but here are some examples:

- Girls' don't get to go to school
- Girls' lack access to sanitary products or are embarrassed by the stigma surrounding period taboos
- Young people have poor access to mental health services
- Elderly people are neglected and lonely
- Families don't have enough money to feed themselves
- People with HIV or other health conditions are despised
- People are living in extreme poverty
- Girls' self-worth is undermined by unrealistic images of women in the media
- Girls and boys are restricted by gender stereotypes
- Children are forced into marriage
- People are being sold into human slavery
- Children and young people are being bullied and intimidated.

Feel free to add these to the lists if the young people are struggling for ideas.

BE THE CHANGE: A prayer of HOPE (5 mins)

You'll need: pieces of paper from the above activity.

Instruction: Get the girls and young women to rearrange all the pieces of paper on the floor to read the word – HOPE. Stand in a circle around the word hope. Invite the young people to say short prayers of hope or even write them on slips of paper.

Explain: Some of us tend to use the word hope a lot. We hope that we get to see our friends this weekend. We hope that we don't miss the bus. For me, hope is not wishy washy optimism. In Scripture, hope is an indication of certainty. It means a confident expectation. Rather than being static or passive, it is dynamic, active and life sustaining. There is only one true source of hope; God. Psalm 62:5 reminds us: 'For my hope is from Him.' And God calls each of us to be hope-bringers.

Hope is not just a nice word – it involves action; action that will lead to transformation. Over the next few weeks, we will be planning actions that will lead to real change in our communities. We may only be able to tackle one injustice but God knows and sees all the injustices in our communities; He loves all the people who are impacted. Let's lift up all these situations to God and pray that God will mobilise others to tackle them so they will be transformed.

Resource A

Meet GB International's Delegation of Hope

Jessie from Girls' Brigade England & Wales



What is an injustice that you're passionate about transforming?

The key injustice that I am passionate about transforming is in the area of girls' education. This isn't just access to education but all the barriers that prevent girls from accessing the quality education that they deserve. For example: period poverty, child marriage, stereotypes that girls can only do certain subjects/careers, access to mental health support and the lack of resources and role models that help propel girls towards success. I really believe that if we can educate one girl, we can educate a whole generation. We can break down barriers and bridge those gaps.

Because of GB, I am the young woman that I am today.

GB really has given me endless opportunities and experiences that have enabled me to literally now live 'life to the full'. Because of GB I am a hope-bringer, generation-shaper and transformer. It is wonderful to see how God is using me to make the world a more fairer and hope-filled place.

What is an injustice that you're passionate about transforming?

I am committed to educating, empowering and enlightening the Girl Child because I believe that it is a viable tool for a nation's development and advancement. I'm working for gender equality, equal pay and more opportunities for women and girls.

Because of GB, I am...

Because of Girls' Brigade, I became a committed Christian, learning about Christ and His ways. I learned selflessness and service in Girls' Brigade which had led to the advocacy work I do today in championing the cause of the Girl Child. Through GB, I have developed many skills in leadership, communication, teamwork, project planning and management.

Why were you excited to be part of GB's Delegation of Hope team?

I was excited about this rare opportunity because it enabled me to watch, listen and learn how policies are made and shaped for a just society. I was also excited for the opportunity to network with other young people driving social change in their different spheres.

Ruth from Girls' Brigade Nigeria



Nelly from Girls' Brigade Zambia



What is an injustice that you're passionate about transforming?

I am passionate about ending male violence against women and girls. Because I believe that girls are vulnerable in society and knowing that when I advocate about it, I can help girls and women have some form of security and decency.

Because of GB, I am...

I am empowered and I feel a sense of belonging. GB has provided me with platforms where I need to be out of my comfort zone.

Why were you excited about being part of GB's Delegation of Hope team?

I was excited to be part of the Delegation of Hope because it provided me with a platform to learn and be equipped on how policies are made on different issues.

**Hannah from Girls' Brigade
England & Wales**



What is an injustice that you're passionate about transforming?
I feel really passionate about giving Christians access to a more helpful, hopeful narrative around mental ill-health. There is a big gap in this area presently. Often Christian people are given access to a purely medical or a purely spiritual response whereas a helpful response often lies somewhere in the middle of both. There is a risk that without this there is a barrier to people being able to access mental health care and treatment. I am also a member of the GB Europe Executive team and in this role, I led a mental health workshop on a mission extension trip to Macedonia.

Because of GB, I am...
Because of GB, I am inspired. Girls' Brigade has given me so many incredible opportunities in my life which have improved my world view, confidence and faith. I would never have dreamt that these opportunities would exist to me let alone that I would take them, and they have such an impact on my life.

What is an injustice that you're passionate about transforming?

I am a passionate advocate for women's education. I believe that education is a foundation for improving the quality of life for many women around the world. Educating girls has been identified as a way to reduce child marriages, reduce poverty and even combat climate change. I am excited to see how we can shape the future of education to improve the lives of girls and women globally.

Because of GB, I am...

Because of GB, I am empowered to fight for causes I believe in. At Girls' Brigade, I am surrounded by women who are passionate about social justice. My leaders and friends have always been supportive of my charity work; their encouragement is invaluable. I love that GB equips girls to make a difference and speak up about issues they are passionate about.

Why were you excited about being part of GB's Delegation of Hope team?

Girls' Brigade has long been a place where girls are empowered to make a difference. I was excited to be part of the Delegation of Hope, because I know that GB can provide a unique perspective on gender equality and faith. Being provided with the opportunity to network with women from around the globe is a fantastic way to strengthen Girls' Brigade bonds across the fellowships.

**Caitlyn from Girls' Brigade
Australia**



Resource B

'Esther's' story

They said I was lucky to still be in school at age 14. Can you believe that? Hmm lucky, they said. Well, truth be told, I sometimes did consider myself lucky as not so many of my peers were still in school at that age. I loved studying and still do. I loved my school, and especially my uniform. We wore green skirts, white shirts and a necktie. It always made me feel professional as an aspiring Doctor. I was hopeful about my future because I had older brothers in the university and one who had graduated. I rehearsed in my head receiving my certificate in my graduation gown - have you ever done that too?

One day my Uncle came visiting and in my usual habit, I positioned myself to eavesdrop so I could be the bearer of the latest news in the family. I began to blush as he talked about how I was growing into a beautiful woman, with a beautiful face, a beautiful shape. You can all agree I'm beautiful, don't you? But suddenly my heart started racing fast when I began hearing the other details of the conversation. My uncle had just told my dad that I wasn't supposed to still be in school at the age of 15 because of how much I had developed. But I thought hard, how can that be a problem? My uncle went on to say if I'm not given into marriage, I might become wayward and bring shame to the family seeing that my body can easily lure men. I waited for my parents to say no; for them to say Uncle was wrong. I waited, but they stayed silent. The decision was made. God! My heart sank, I could literally feel my heart coming out of my body. Hot tears rolled down my cheeks as my shaky legs were trying to find balance. Could this be the end of my lifelong dream? My future had been decided and I didn't have a say in it.

I fought the decision the best way I could. I wept and I pleaded. I asked family members to intervene, I even ran from home but was brought back by the same person I sought solace from. My teachers and classmates worried about me. The school sent a delegation but my dad didn't budge. A date was fixed for my wedding and that was that.

I was dressed and led to meet a man I barely knew. A day people looked forward to, I dreaded mine. A day a brides' faces beams with excitement, mine was covered in sorrow. A wedding night couples should cherish, I feared mine. I was led down the aisle like a lamb to the slaughter on my wedding day. (Sobs)

Here, I'm today sharing my story, speaking eloquently and with a degree. Do you wonder how? Let's say the luck they said I had actually worked for me eventually. The husband I was married to happened to be a young man that had a degree and was still aspiring for more. I was lucky that he ALLOWED me to continue schooling. Was it difficult? Sure, it was. I saw myself sitting with my classmates. Whilst they had only their studies to worry about, I had pregnancy to deal with, children to nurse, a husband to satisfy and a home to keep. I'm only here today because of a bit of luck and determination. I never became the doctor I planned for but at least I have a degree and a chance to tell my story.

But I'm just one of the girls this has happened to. Their stories are different to mine, and their circumstances too. But we all share the same shattered dreams. Please, can you help stop this happening to the next generation? Please, will you join us today to help girls get the education they deserve?

This monologue was written and performed by Ruth Utulu, a GB leader from Nigeria.

Resource C

Mental health quiz answers

1. Mental health problems effect children and adults. True or false?

True! Depending on the illness the average age of it starting is different but mental illnesses impact people of all ages.

2. Christians shouldn't suffer from mental illnesses. True or false?

False! Being a person of faith doesn't give you immunity from health conditions. Being part of a community however might mean you have additional support around you that may help in recovery.

3. We all have mental health. True or false?

True! Just like physical health we all have mental health, how healthy it is may vary at different times in our life and for some people they may develop a specific illness.

4. Eating a good balanced diet can help our emotional well-being. True or false?

True! Just like every other part of our body our brains need to be fed to work well and part of working well is about how we feel emotionally.

5. Being active and having a good routine can help our emotional well-being. True or false?

True! Having a good routine can be really important in ensuring we remain active in our lives whether that is going to work, school, keeping on top of things at home, getting washed and dressed. All of these are important daily living activities which feed into our overall well-being.

6. People don't recover from a mental illness. True or false?

False! As with physical illnesses, mental illnesses have treatments too meaning that people recover all of the time!

7. Drinking alcohol and taking drugs can result in our mood being worse. True or false?

True! People mistakenly think that drinking alcohol may make them feel better but alcohol is a depressant so it makes our mood worse. There is also risks of addiction and dependency with alcohol and drugs.

8. Mental illnesses only effect certain types of people, eg. From certain backgrounds, ethnicities, communities etc. True or false?

False! Mental illnesses can impact anyone irrespective of where they come from, that means it doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, religious or not, have everything you've ever dreamed of or feel as if you have very little.

9. Talking to someone can help with how you feel. True or false?

True! Having someone to talk to can be helpful. This can be informal such as being able to confide in a friend or seeking professional help.

10. It isn't normal to worry. True or false?

False! Having worries is really normal, we all worry about something at some point. Some of us worry more than others and if the amount of time you are worrying feels as if it is taking over your life it may be sensible to get some support.

Resource D

Jessie's story: Recovery isn't all sunshine and rainbows

The blog post below was written by Jessie from Girls' Brigade England & Wales when she was 17 years old. Jessie is now a mental health nurse working to end mental health stigma.

Did you know 1 in 4 people live with a mental health problem? I have been among them. Here's my story of living with an eating disorder and depression. A journey of pain, but also a journey of hope and transformation.

Depression was spending every waking moment worrying about every single thing I did or said. Wishing I was dead was definitely my lowest point, you feel that the fight is too much and the mental and physical energy has been drained from you. I was so low I was throwing away opportunities, throwing away creativity, and losing my spark. Having an eating disorder was not just about weight loss and being obsessed with calories and restricting, it was pushing my entire family and friends away. I was having irrational thoughts that nobody liked me, that I wasn't enough.

Mental illness for me was spending every day feeling that I was standing on the edge of a cliff and with one tiny step I would fall to never return. It took courage and bravery to accept help. It felt too overwhelming but I knew I couldn't carry on the way I was. I was fading into nothing, becoming more and more depressed. I couldn't even go to school anymore. After a pre admission assessment to a mental health hospital, I started to engage with support.

Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) offered me Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), medication and dietician appointments to cope with food increases. They even offered family therapy so my family could understand my illness better. It took months and months of hard work but I slowly started to make changes and regain my life.

The journey from then to now has been tough. Getting used to taking antidepressants was hard to come to terms with. I remember standing on the scales and then running into the toilet staring at myself in the mirror. Tears, anger, frustration. But, with the weight I gained, I also gained back life, energy, family and friends. People ask me if it gets easier. Yes, it does, but you can't do it without support. My family, church community and Girls' Brigade provided me with so much support. Whether that was through the relationships that existed by being a part of these faith communities to the space they created to heal and learn again to live life to the full. It's little steps that make the process manageable. I encourage anyone hearing this who may be living with a mental health problem or knows someone living with a mental illness to speak to someone about it. Be brave enough to seek those conversations.

So where am I now? Recovery isn't all sunshine and rainbows, it can be difficult. When I come across a bump in the road I try and be rational about the situation. I put my faith in God and find my support in Girls' Brigade. I still struggle with my weight, wanting to fall back to bad habits to feel in control. Having to fight thoughts like that constantly can be exhausting but recovery is worth it. It's worth the pain, it's worth the tears to know that I'm living, not just surviving. Knowing that I can make a difference in this world, injecting hope.