## Songs for Syria

## **SCHOOLS LEARNING RESOURCE**

## **Assembly for 7 – 11 year olds (15 mins)**

As

**Show title slide (slide 1).** *Once the pupils are seated, sing a song together. This could be a school song, a hymn, or even a pop song, but choose one that all the children will know.*

*Afterwards, ask them to think about how they feel when they are singing together.*

**Show slide 2**. *Explain:* I love the sound of singing! Not only are the music and words often beautiful, but there is something very special about people singing together. Human beings have been making music together for many thousands of years. Mothers sing to their children to get them to sleep. And I’m sure all of you have favourite songs that you like to belt out when you are in the car or in your bedroom! Songs can be a source of comfort, joy and hope.

**Show slide 3.** Today we are going to find out about a family who have been helped by singing. This family comes from a country called Syria, in the Middle East. *Ask pupils if they have heard of Syria, and what they know about it.* Syria has been in the news a lot because there is a terrible war going on in the country. *Ask the children what they know about war.*

**Show slide 4.** Until five years ago, people living in Syria led normal lives, very much like our own. They went to school, played with their friends, watched TV and enjoyed their hobbies. Their parents had homes and jobs.

**Show slide 5.** But five years ago, all that changed. Some boys who were walking home from school wrote some graffiti against the Government on a wall. Now we all know that writing on walls can get you into trouble. In our country too, we’re not allowed to draw graffiti on walls.

**Show slide 6.** But there is a big difference between this country and Syria, because in our country we’re allowed to criticise the Government. This means that we can say if we don’t think our politicians are doing a good job, and we can vote them out of power if they don’t behave in ways that we think are good for the country. But in Syria, you’re not allowed to say anything against the Government and you’re not allowed to vote them out of power. And the trouble that these boys got into was much more serious than anything that would happen to someone drawing graffiti on a wall here – they were thrown into prison and treated very badly by the police.

When their parents and neighbours protested about how badly the boys had been treated, they were shot at by police and some of them were killed. People were so upset about this unfair treatment, and so angry with the Government, that the protests soon spread across the country. And bit by bit, the arguments between the people and the Government got more serious and more violent, until the country was at war.

**Show slide 7.** Over the last five years, many thousands of people have been killed. The fighting has got very confusing, as there are now lots of different sides arguing over different things. Life is extremely difficult and dangerous for people living in Syria right now. They are frightened, because their families are at risk of being hurt by bombs or guns. Even walking down the street in certain parts of Syria can be very dangerous. Try to imagine that.

And normal life has been turned upside down, so all the things that we usually take for granted – like having electricity, and getting enough food, and going to school – have become much more difficult because the fighting gets in the way of everything happening normally. Because things are so dangerous and difficult in Syria, many families have left.

**Show slide 8.** They have become refugees – people looking for refuge (a safe place) in other countries. Lots of Syrian refugees have come to Europe, and many have ended up in the countries next to Syria, like Iraq and Turkey. But being a refugee is not at all easy. These people have left behind everything that they know and love to travel to a strange place. Often, because they had to leave quickly, they were not even able to take their things with them. Many just walked out of their houses and never went back. Now, it is quite possible that those houses will have been destroyed by bombs.

**Show slide 9.** So Christian Aid is working hard to help Syrian refugees wherever they are. In Iraq, which is next to Syria, and now home to thousands of people from Syria, Christian Aid works with a group called REACH who are helping refugees to settle down and try to live a normal life in their new home.

**Show slide 10.** One of the families they work with are Navene and Johan’s family. Navene is eight and Johan is seven. They left Syria when their house was bombed, and now they live in a small garage next to a house in Iraq. They live in this garage because they can’t afford to rent a proper flat or house – the rent is cheap in the garage because there are no windows and the lady who owns it still parks her car in there. Can you imagine living in a small garage with no windows and a parked car? It’s far from perfect, especially because there isn’t a proper water supply, so their mother has to fill up cans of water for them to drink and wash with. But it’s still better than the dangers that they faced once war had started in Syria.

**Show slide 11.** Navene can still remember these dangers – and the very frightening journey that she had to make to escape the bombs. Life can be very difficult when you have experienced a lot of stress and frightening things, but Navene is being helped to recover from this stress through the singing group she goes to with her brother Johan. In this group, they can make new friends. In fact, Navene says she ‘made friends with everyone there… I love all of them’ and her mother says that ‘the children come back singing with joy’!

**Show slide 12.** It’s wonderful that this family can still find joy in singing, despite all they have been through and the hardships they still face. Christian Aid will keep working with Syrian refugees across the world to make sure that they are supported to feel happy and safe in their new countries. No one knows when the war in Syria will end. But we do know that Syrian refugees deserve a safe and welcoming place to live until it does.

*If you have the facilities to play videos, you could show the short Christian Aid film ‘A Syrian family sings’, which is available on YouTube* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZy-5clLKME).

*You could finish by singing together the hymn ‘Make me a channel of your peace’.*

## **Assembly presentation**

Theme: Conflict and Violence

Focus countries: Syria

Additional materials/preparation (optional):The ‘Songs for Syria’ PowerPoint Presentation



Dear God,

We pray that we can change the story told about refugees in our school and community. We pray that those living in areas of conflict or violence might be able to find peace. We thank you for Christian Aid’s partners who are willing to put themselves in dangerous places to help other people. Give us the strength to treat others with kindness, always and everywhere.

Amen

Amen

## **Prayer**

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* For more information on the Syrian conflict, you could look at the CBBC pages on Syria, which feature a good overview of the conflict and some interviews with Syrian children: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/16979186>
* Could you fundraise in school to support Christian Aid’s refugee crisis appeal?
* Church schools might be interested in looking at Christian perspectives on helping refugees. Read what the book of Matthew has to say about helping others: Matthew 25:35-40

## **Action**