



Family assembly sheet – case studies

Emery's story

Emery was born and brought up in Rwanda, Africa. When he was just 15 years old, Emery's mother died, leaving him alone to care for his four brothers and sisters. With no family close by, Emery had no choice but to leave school. For a while the children survived on what they could grow on their small piece of land, and on money scraped together by carrying water to people's homes.

When we first met the family they were living in extreme poverty, and in need of urgent help. All the children had dropped out of school and were often going for days without food.

A Hope and Homes for Children social worker visited Emery and his brothers and sisters, and together they worked out a long-term care plan. Food parcels brought immediate relief and we helped to rebuild their home, which had long since fallen into disrepair. We also made it possible for all of the children to go back to school. Perhaps most importantly, we arranged for a community volunteer to regularly visit the family to offer them advice and support.

Four years later, Emery graduated from college. He has now set up his own small business, with our help, which brings in enough money to pay for his siblings' school fees, food and clothes. Emery said that he is happy that his family has been able to stay together and that he can provide for them. He now feels confident about his future.

Aleksander's story

In 2007, 10 year old Aleksander experienced his first full year in a family. Previously, he was living in the Dom Most institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We recently closed this institution as part of our work to ensure that children grow up in caring families.

Aleksander said, "My life now does not compare to how it was in the institution. It was terrible in the institution – we shared everything but in a family I am happy that I have my own clothes, school things and even my own bedroom.

"Before, I did not like to study but now I go to school and my favourite subject is Maths. I also take drama classes and have started piano lessons because I have always wanted to do these things.

"Last year, I went on holiday to the beach with my foster family and I learnt how to swim. We also went to visit my new aunt in the countryside and I enjoyed it a lot, especially as I helped look after her cow. These were all new experiences for me.

“My latest hobby is to collect plants and leaves and I stick them into a book. I then research what they are and write all the information next to them. When I grow up I would like to explore plants on the River Amazon as it is the biggest river in South America.”

Dana’s story

“My name is Dana, I am seventeen and I live with my foster family in Chechis village, Romania. When I was growing up I lived in an institution with over one hundred other children – it was awful. There were bars at the window, the food was terrible and some young people were even taking drugs. It was a nightmare and I often cried, as I had no one to look after me. I used to spend my time in the room I shared with seven other girls studying. Occasionally, I spent time in the yard; apart from going to school we never went anywhere. We were not taught anything that would be useful for our future lives. I did not feel that I had a future.

“When I was fourteen I found out that I was going to be fostered by the Georgescu Family. I went on several weekends to visit the family. I did not know if the family would like me or if I would like them. When I visited their house I was so taken aback as I had forgotten what life was like in a family. The Georgescu’s have a big family and they were laughing together, smiling and teasing each other – it was so different from the institution.

“At the beginning, it was very difficult for me and I was very shy. After a while I settled into family life. The Georgescu’s were very patient with me and treated me as if I were their child. I even remember the first present they gave me – a hat and scarf. We did not receive any gifts in the institution.

“I have learnt so much from my foster mother, she really helped me a lot with my schoolwork and she has been so supportive and encouraging. Mr Georgescu is an extraordinary person and father; any child would be lucky to have such a father. I am now planning to go to University to further my education. I know that I would not be where I am today without them.

“Life in a family cannot compare to anything else. In a family there is always someone who can offer you advice, even if you don’t agree it is still advice. When you are in an institution you are on your own and there is no one to think about you or your future. I know that I will accomplish something with my life now as I have my family beside me.”