

#### **April 2022 *Learning to S.I.N.G.* update:**

A third group went through the *Stories in Grace* curriculum in the Dominican Republic. This international group was made up of nine girls, ages ranging from eleven to twenty, who have been rescued from sex traffickers. Most of the girls live in a full-time residential shelter, while two of the older girls live independently but come to the shelter daily for education and ongoing support. The shelter has a full-time teacher and a full-time counselor on staff to work with the girls individually and in a group setting. The counselor requested to use the full 36-week lesson curriculum rather than the 15-week abbreviated version. A pre- and post-evaluation was used to self-measure the change in the individual girls participating.

There were considerable differences in the results when comparing these younger girls who completed a 36-week curriculum to the initial groups who participated in the 15-week version. The Dominican Republic group had the following results: 51.29% reduction in depression; 48.22% reduction in anxiety; 18.4% reduction in troubling thoughts; 18.13% reduction in inner-conflict; 49.1% reduction in addictive behaviors; 54.91% increase in self-esteem; 142% increase in ability to function daily; 273.51% increase in satisfactory relationships; 243% increase in physical health; 426.67% increase in Bible study and prayer; and 298.33% increase in the reality of God in the participants lives.

These results clearly demonstrate that the long version of the curriculum produces better outcomes. This makes sense when considering the significance of joy and healthy attachments in the healing of trauma. Most encouraging are the increases in Bible study and prayer combined with the increase in the reality of God in their lives. The increases in these categories should function as a leading indicator of further transformation in the future.

Additional study is still needed. In June 2022, Ekklesia is launching the *Healing the Wounds of Trauma Initiative* in northern Uganda. More groups are forming in the Dominican Republic. There will also be training and support for domestic congregations and agencies interested in offering hope and healing to traumatized women at home. If you would like more information on any of these projects or would like to support the important work of trauma care, please contact Rev. Dr. Rob Cornelison at 616-821-7474 or [rob.ekk.org](http://rob.ekk.org).